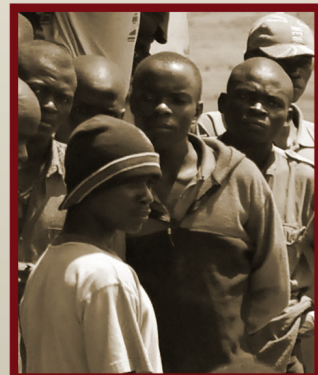


# **A Study of Gender, Masculinities and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Rwanda:** Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES)

## **Analytical Report**

**AUGUST 2014**

**LOGiCA Study Series**





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First published August 2014  
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# Preface

The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) – created and coordinated by Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) – is one of the most comprehensive studies ever on men’s practices and attitudes as they relate to gender norms, attitudes toward gender equality policies, household dynamics including caregiving and men’s involvement as fathers, intimate partner violence, health and economic stress.<sup>1</sup> As of 2013, it had been carried out in 10 countries with additional partner studies in Asia inspired in part by IMAGES.<sup>2</sup>

The data provide insights on men’s use of violence against partners, participation in caregiving and men’s reactions to the global gender equality agenda, among other themes. The survey includes both women and men and is carried out with respondents aged 18 to 59 years. In keeping with World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations on survey research on sexual and gender-based violence, surveys are carried out with men and women in the same communities but not in the same households. All ethical procedures are followed. The survey is

carried out together with qualitative research in order to map masculinities, contextualize the survey results and provide detailed life histories that illuminate quantitative key findings. In the case of conflict and post-conflict settings, the IMAGES questionnaire includes additional questions on the effects of conflict and displacement on gender relations.

## Promundo

Founded in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1997, Promundo works to promote caring, non-violent and equitable masculinities and gender relations internationally. Promundo’s independently registered organizations in the United States (Promundo-US), Brazil (Instituto Promundo) and Portugal (Promundo-Europe), and its representatives in Rwanda and Burundi, collaborate to achieve this mission by conducting applied research that builds the knowledge base on masculinities and gender equality; developing, evaluating and scaling-up gender transformative interventions and programs; and carrying out national and international advocacy to achieve gender equality and social justice.

## Research and Project Coordination

Henny Slegh served as research manager and principal investigator of the study. Angela Jansen did the quantitative data analysis and served as co-investigator of the study. Benoit Ruratotoye and Augustin Kimonyo conducted the qualitative field research in the Mutobo Center. Kate Doyle served as the project manager.

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1 For more information on IMAGES, see Barker, et al. (2011). *Evolving Men: Initial Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES)*. Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Promundo. Available at: <http://www.promundo.org.br/en/activities/activities-posts/international-men-and-gender-equality-survey-images-3/>

2 For more information on the studies inspired by IMAGES in Asia, see <http://www.partners4prevention.org/>

# Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Rwandan Demobilization and Reintegration Commission in Kigali for their continued support in conducting this research. Special thanks to Jean Sayinzonga (Chairman), Francis Musoni, George Tukesiga, Jane Karera and Louis Rutazinga. Their support expressed itself in many ways: their confidence in the project and the research team; hospitality at their office in Rwanda; and their constructive contributions during the data analyses and reflection process. Many thanks to Frank Musonera and Jean Marie Turabumukiza at the Mutobo Center in Musanze for receiving the research team, facilitating the research with the ex-combatants and sharing their valuable information about the Demobilization and Reintegration (D&R) program. Special appreciation goes to the ex-combatants we spoke with for their trust and willingness to participate in the interviews.

We thank the ten data collectors, recruited with the help of the Rwanda Men's Resource Center (RWAMREC), for carrying out the survey. We are also grateful for the valuable support of World Bank advisors Pia Peeters and Harald Hinkel for sharing their expertise in the Demobilization and Reintegration Program. Special thanks go to Emilie Rees Smith for her valuable contributions throughout all phases of the study. Finally we would like to thank the World Bank, LOGiCA Program, for the financial support that made this study possible.

Suggested Citation: Slegh, H., Jansen, A., Barker, G., and Doyle, K. *A Study of Gender, Masculinities and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Rwanda: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES)*. Washington, DC: World Bank, LOGICA and Promundo. August 2014.



# Acronyms

D&R	Demobilization and Reintegration
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FARDC	Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo ( <i>French: Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo</i> )
FDLR	Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda ( <i>French: Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda</i> )
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GEM	Gender Equitable Men
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMAGES	International Men and Gender Equality Survey
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
M23	March 23 Movement ( <i>French: Mouvement du 23-Mars</i> )
MIGEPROF	Rwandan Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
PDOP	Pre-Discharge Orientation Program
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RPA	Rwandan Patriotic Army
RDRC	Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission
RDRP	Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Program
RWAMREC	Rwanda Men's Resource Center
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
VAW	Violence Against Women
WHO	World Health Organization

# Summary of Findings

## Background

The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) was conducted in the Mutobo Demobilization and Reintegration Center in Rwanda by Promundo and partners during October 2013 and January 2014. The study aims to understand men's practices and attitudes as they relate to gender equality, and the impact on men of participation in collective violence and armed groups, with a specific focus on the effects of demobilization and reintegration programming on gender dynamics and male identity construction. The study consists of both quantitative survey data, collected from 145 ex-combatants in the Mutobo Center, as well as qualitative research, consisting of focus group discussions and in-depth individual interviews carried out with members of the same group of ex-combatants. The qualitative research focused on exploring men's lived experiences of manhood, in childhood, as partners and fathers and as combatants, and men's perspectives on their male identity as civilians.

## Key Findings

### *Ex-combatants spent most of their childhood in armed groups and were socialized to use violence*

Most of the ex-combatants surveyed in the Mutobo Center are young adults (with an average age of 31 years old) and have been serving in armed groups since childhood. More than 70 percent of the ex-combatants interviewed were children (zero to 15 years old) in 1994 – the year that most arrived in DRC from Rwanda due to the conflict. Half of the men joined an armed group when they were 15 years or younger. This indicates that the gendered identity of many of the respondents was partly shaped in a context of conflict, in which they were active participants. Findings show that many of the ex-combatants experienced a shattered childhood and were exposed to multiple traumatic events be-

fore and during their time as combatants.

For a large number of ex-combatants, the members of the armed group took on the role of “care-takers” during their childhood. This indicates that at a young age they survived by being tough and violent, and they learned to endure humiliation and extreme suffering under the authority of superiors in armed groups. They also learned to abuse their power over others in order to get what they wanted. In relation to socialization of gender roles, the ex-combatants that grew up in armed groups were more than twice as likely to witness gender-based violence than those growing up with their parents.

### *Ex-combatants have mixed attitudes about gender equality*

The data in this research show that ex-combatants generally have attitudes and opinions that are moderately equitable regarding gender equality. However, findings on attitudes and opinions regarding gender relations indicate that acceptance of violence against female partners is high among ex-combatants. Respondents with low scores on the Gender-Equitable Men (GEM) Scale (meaning they have less gender-equitable attitudes) more often exhibited symptoms of depression, indicating a relation between mental health conditions and low support for gender equality. Similar findings were demonstrated in other IMAGES settings: Men who suffered high levels of stress and felt depressed scored lower on the GEM scale.

### *Ex-combatants are well informed about gender equality policies in Rwanda*

The ex-combatants surveyed are largely informed about the laws and policies regarding gender equality and gender-based violence (GBV) in Rwanda. Many ex-combatants think that laws against GBV in Rwanda are too harsh towards men and thus “over-

protect” women, while they think that GBV laws in DRC do not protect women enough.

### ***Economic activities and income generation adds to burdens of stress for ex-combatants in the process of reintegration***

During their life as combatants, the men surveyed were more concerned with survival rather than the need to provide for their family. Looting, using arms and displaying their power in a military uniform gave them access to food and means of survival. Economic stress was less of an issue before they returned to Rwanda, at which point economic stress levels increased. As ex-combatants, they need to develop economic activities and generate income, but feel they lack the skills and start-up capital to do so. They see that their peers and other Rwandans are more “developed” and have skills and education levels that may give them access to jobs, while as ex-combatants they never learned to have a job.

In IMAGES data on the economic stress reported by men in DRC and Rwanda, the ex-combatants in each country show similar levels of stress. The ex-combatants saw the lack of economic opportunities and poverty as one of the biggest challenges in their process of reintegration. The stress includes fear of living in extreme poverty and feelings of regret about having lost so many years in the bush.

### ***Ex-combatants are not accustomed to managing a household together with wife and children***

The ex-combatants surveyed (almost 23 percent) reported using intimate partner violence, but at rates significantly lower than those seen in the previous IMAGES studies in DRC and Rwanda. Men in Rwanda and DRC were more than twice as likely to report having perpetrated any form of intimate partner violence. This can probably be explained by the fact that most of the ex-combatants never had a family life in which they regularly lived with a partner and children. Even having a wife and children, many of the men lived separately from their family. Family life, living with a partner and managing the household while dealing with daily life stress were generally not a part of the experiences of ex-combatants.

### ***Perceptions regarding sexual relations in the context of war include confusion about the concept of mutual consent***

Ex-combatants had various ways to satisfy their sexual needs: Some ex-combatants had regular sexual partners other than their wives, and some negotiated sexual relations with or without the use of power and arms. Many young men showed a lack of experience in courting girls and negotiating sexual relations, and showed a lack of understanding of the meaning of mutual consent. The findings show that young men (under 30 years old) more often believe that women who have been raped did something to deserve it, when compared to older men (30 years old and older).

While sexual violence and rape are reported to be taboo and forbidden in the armed groups, several accounts and some survey data indicate that sexual violence and rape did occur (and were likely under-reported). One notable finding is the ex-combatants’ confusion about the meaning of negotiating sex and the role of force and arms in obtaining sex. The results suggest that the militarized environment and lack of security in which to build partner relations have shaped these men’s ideas of mutual consent and having sexual relations.

### ***Ex-combatants have high levels of psycho-traumatic stress and mental health problems, and increased violent behavior and alcohol abuse***

The transition to the Mutobo Demobilization and Reintegration Center brought men from a war zone to a place where they are physically secure. This has had an impact on their current state of mental health – many suffer disturbing images and memories from their time in the bush. While physical security has been achieved, mental insecurity has become more pronounced. The men have significant free time to think, and many are worried about their uncertain new life. Their old strategies of dealing with stress are not working any more, and the men have no idea how to deal with their new psychosocial stress and worries.

One third of all respondents scored high in indicators for a severe mental health problem. Men who have been victims of sexual violence during child-

hood or who were forced to witness or perpetrate sexual violence faced high rates of mental health problems. In addition, younger men (under 30 years old) were significantly more likely to be affected by a mental health disturbance. A significant trend was also found between having committed sexual violence and experiencing severe mental disturbance

***Transition to civilian life demands adaptation of male identities***

The findings show a shift from ex-combatants' old understandings of masculinities toward a new version of masculinity that places the family at the center. As a combatant, it was important for these men to be tough, powerful and in control, while findings show that their perspective on civilian life focuses on wanting to be "good family men."

During this transition, the findings show a gap between ex-combatants' current perceptions of what it means to be a real man in civilian society and their current opportunities to be such a man. A "real man" is viewed as someone who should provide for the family, live together with his wife and children in a house and own property. However, ex-combatants currently have no house, no job and no land. They lost their former status as military men who had guns and power, and they do not yet have an idea of how they can obtain the status of a respected man in their new life. The fear of rejection by family and community, as well as fear of accusations of participation in the Rwandan genocide by society, troubles them. On the other hand, most men feel relieved that they have left the war zones and hope to build a new life where they can live in peace.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 IMAGES in the Demobilization and Reintegration Context

Until recently, the development field focused mainly on promoting gender equality by emphasizing the disadvantages that women and girls face in many societies. With growing recognition of the importance of involving men as part of gender equality work, attention has turned to the question of how to engage them in such initiatives. In addition, there is increased focus on men's "gendered" realities – understanding how men and boys are socialized, and how gender creates vulnerabilities and challenges for them – as these gendered realities also construct inequalities for women and girls. The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) is a response to this globally recognized need for men to be actively engaged in the process of achieving gender equality. IMAGES is a comprehensive multi-country initiative, taking a unique approach by using representative household samples, together with qualitative research, to study men's attitudes and practices on a wide variety of topics related to gender equality and life experiences. In most settings, IMAGES also includes interviews with women that address women's own realities as well as their assessment of men's practices and attitudes.

In the past three years, Promundo has worked with multiple partners to further develop IMAGES and add new questions, especially on the effects of conflict on gender relations and men and women's lived experiences. For this study, IMAGES was conducted in the context of a Demobilization and Reintegration (D&R) program in the Mutobo Demobilization and Reintegration Center, located in Musanze District in Northern Province of Rwanda. Mutobo center, named for the village where it is based, is run by the Rwandan Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, with support from the World Bank.

Interviews were held with men<sup>3</sup> who have been actively involved in actions of collective violence and whose life trajectories have been shaped by conflict and displacement. All of the interviewees in both the qualitative and quantitative research were men in the Mutobo Demobilization Center. All of the men are ex-combatants and are originally from Rwanda. Most of the men fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 1994, while one third of the men went to the DRC before or after 1994. All of the ex-combatants are currently participating in a demobilization and reintegration program at the Mutobo Center.

This study specifically focused on the effect of the D&R trajectory on gender dynamics and male identity construction, as well as on understanding the impact on men of participation in collective violence and armed groups.

## 1.2 Demobilization and Reintegration in Rwanda

In Rwanda, national demobilization and reintegration activities supported by the World Bank form part of a series of multi-agency regional efforts contributing to peace and stability in the broader Great Lakes Region of Africa. These activities began in the aftermath of the 1994 Rwandan genocide and regional conflicts of the early 2000s centered on Democratic of the Congo (DRC).<sup>4</sup> In 1997, the

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3 In all other IMAGES studies, women are also participants in the research. Men in the D&R camp are not accompanied by their partners and children, thus it was not possible to interview women as part of this study.

4 Terms of Reference: Demobilization and Reintegration and Masculinity in Rwanda – International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), LOGICA 2013

Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC) was established by the Government of Rwanda to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate ex-combatants into civilian life. The first stage of the D&R program was implemented from 1997 to 2001. In the first phase, the Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Program (RDRP) succeeded in demobilizing and reintegrating 18,692 ex-combatants who had been members of the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA).<sup>5</sup>

The continued need for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) activities following the first phase was clear, given the ongoing challenges posed by the presence of armed groups in the border areas of DRC. The second phase of the program (RDRP II) centered on a regional approach, including community-based reintegration and capacity development. In phase II, the program succeeded in demobilizing 22,675 soldiers from the Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF), 12,969 members of former government forces (ex-FAR) and 7,091 members of various other armed groups in DRC.

In phase III (2008-2013),<sup>6</sup> the RDRP continues to focus on combatants who have not yet been repatriated. Most of these combatants are Rwandans who joined the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (*Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda*, or FDLR) in DRC in the past. RDRP phase III entails a livelihood component that is continually evolving to meet the needs of the ex-combatants as they face the many challenges of reintegrating into civilian life. Types of support given range from cash transfers to vocational training.<sup>7</sup> Generally, the ex-combatants receive daily courses under a comprehensive curriculum that covers a broad range of topics, of which the majority focus on civic education and engagement.

Ex-combatants in RDRP phase III also receive in-

formation on gender-related topics. One session on gender-based violence and gender norms is currently included in the demobilization curriculum.<sup>8</sup> In addition, RDRP phase III also offers a psychosocial support system. Ex-combatants are screened for physical and mental health, and those with categorized disabilities receive care and support from RDRC staff. The RDRC program includes some models of formal and informal peer support that help strengthen the emotional and psychological wellbeing of the ex-combatants. There is one female nurse present who is able to provide basic counseling for ex-combatants and refer severe cases to local health facilities.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.3 Linking Gender and Demobilization and Reintegration Programming

It is useful to focus on gender norms and gender-related values in the Demobilization and Reintegration (D&R) trajectory because new forms of masculinity and femininity are constructed during armed conflicts, forms that differ from the ones ex-combatants may encounter after demobilization. This research takes the perspective that constructions of masculinity are relational – constructed both in men's relations with other men and in their relations with women. This study examines the construction of gendered identities and these gender relations in the D&R trajectory, in which men are taking the first steps towards transitioning from combatants to civilians. The research seeks to understand the gendered dimensions of this transition process.

As a starting point, we note that the enormous scale of collective violence that occurred in Rwanda in 1994 suggests that many research participants likely experienced violence prior to fleeing to Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In addition, Rwandan men are traditionally considered defenders of the country and their families, as seen in the 2010

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5 ICRW Mission Report to Inter-Agency Working Group, HIV-DDR sub Working Group, 2012, p. 4.

6 This phase has been extended to 2016 (World Bank and RDRC key informants).

7 ICRW Mission Report to Inter-Agency Working Group, HIV-DDR sub Working Group, 2012, p. 5.

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8 ICRW Mission Report to Inter-Agency Working Group, HIV-DDR sub Working Group, 2012, p. 22.

9 ICRW Mission Report to Inter-Agency Working Group, HIV-DDR sub Working Group, 2012, p. 24.

IMAGES study conducted in Rwanda.<sup>10</sup> Past experiences of violence and the violence men witnessed or perpetrated in DRC may, therefore, have influenced and affected their self-esteem, self-perception and gendered sense of identity.

Men's past experiences, as well as the contextual changes they undergo during the D&R trajectory, have likely influenced their gendered identities. The participants in this study have been living in DRC in recent years, and most were actively involved in armed violence against the Congolese military, other armed groups or local civilians. Their return to Rwanda places them in a new context in which violence is no longer overtly accepted as an instrument to gain or maintain power. They are no longer in possession of arms, and will lose their military ranks as well as the privileged positions they often gained while in the armed group. They have moved from being combatants in a country that was generally not native to them to being civilians in what is, ostensibly, their home country, but which has changed significantly in the last two decades.

The former combatants have returned to a Rwandan society that is quite different from the society they left years ago, especially in terms of gender relations. New laws and policies on gender equality and an emphasis on parity for women in education, income generation and political representation may be new and confusing for men socialized in traditional, inequitable norms. In addition, there are new laws on gender-based violence (GBV), anti-GBV clubs and actions at the community level that hold men accountable in ways that did not occur two decades earlier. This means that former combatants have returned to a society that is attempting to inculcate new norms and practices around violence against women.

This study examines how past experiences as a child and as a combatant, as well as the current process of transition to civilian life, influence ex-combatants' gendered identities, including their perceptions of and attitudes towards gender equality norms. The

research was conducted while the respondents were taking part in the Demobilization and Reintegration trajectory, a process that includes deliberate questioning and examination of their combatant past. Thus, the study examines how masculinities were shaped through past experiences before and during joining the armed groups, and explores how the transition from combatant to civilian impacts male identity and perceptions of masculinity. These findings are linked to the challenges and opportunities ex-combatants face in the process of reintegration into society.

## 1.4 Definitions and Key Concepts

A number of key concepts related to gender and violence informed the creation of IMAGES and the present report. These concepts are defined below in order to provide a basis for shared understanding and terminology.

**Gender** is understood as the social construction of the differences between men and women. Gender differences are defined by socially ascribed assumptions and not by biologically determined differences between men and women. Gender includes masculinity (male roles) and femininity (female roles).

**Gender equality** refers to equality in rights, opportunities and responsibilities for women, men, girls and boys. The term "equal rights" refers to equality of rights under the law. The term "equality of opportunities" refers to equality of access to work, land, education, health and other resources that enable opportunities. The term "equal responsibilities" refers to equality in tasks and contributions to the development of society.

**Masculinity** is defined as the perceptions of men and women about the role of men in the society. The perceptions are social expectations and not determined by biological characteristics.

*The following definitions refer to central concepts related to the experience of violence:*

**Gender-Based Violence (GBV)** is violence involving men and women, in which the female is usually the victim and which is derived from unequal power relationships between men and women. The

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<sup>10</sup> Masculinity and gender-based violence in Rwanda, experiences and perceptions of men and women, 2010, Rwanda Men's Resource Center.

term “gender-based” refers to the roots of violence in gender inequality. In this report, the term refers to the most common types: physical, psychological, economic and sexual intimate partner violence committed by men against women.

**Violence Against Women (VAW)** is a form of GBV and is defined in this report as any manifestation of physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence occurring in the family and in the general community, including battering, sexual abuse of children, dowry-related violence, rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation.

**Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)** refers to violence carried out by one partner against the other in the course of a married, cohabitating or intimate/romantic relationship. In the IMAGES questionnaire, we ask only about men’s use of this violence. This includes physical, sexual, economic and psychological violence in the context of partner or couple relationships (as defined above).

*The types of violence against women in this study include the following acts and behaviors:*

**Physical violence:** Slapping, beating with or without an object, threatening with a weapon, attempts to strangle or murder, locking a person in or physically preventing a person going out, among other forms of violence that involve use of physical force.

**Psychological violence:** Controlling the outings and the relationships of a person, imposing specific behavior, despising, undermining the value of a person, denigrating a person, bullying, isolating a person, threatening, blackmailing or insulting them.

**Sexual violence:** Forcing someone to have intercourse, forced to have intercourse with other people, rape, imposing unwanted sexual practices and touching, or being forced to witness acts of rape.

**Economic violence:** Controlling women’s income or preventing someone from having access to resources, refusing to share the income or means that are necessary to meet basic needs: food, clothes, or housing.

## 1.5 Problem Statement

In 2012, the ICRW Mission Report<sup>11</sup> argued that Demobilization and Reintegration (D&R) programs should specifically address the gendered needs and realities of program beneficiaries to increase effectiveness and sustainability of program results. In order to achieve this, a clearer image of gender norms, roles and identities in this specific context should be developed to understand the causes, impacts and dynamics of violence in post-conflict societies and D&R programs.<sup>12</sup> Emerging research has already linked (young) men’s involvement in conflict and violence to rigid and binding gender roles in society which poor young men are unable to fulfill, thereby often leaving them feeling frustrated, humiliated, trapped and vulnerable to influence and exploitation.

The research suggests that men’s use of violence or engagement in criminal behavior is related, inter alia, to their employment status, sense of wellbeing, childhood and adult experiences of witnessing or being victims of violence, sanctions or impunity related to violence and stress levels. However, little research has been carried out on how masculine identities and gender perceptions alter during the transitional process from combatant to civilian. Some men entered the armed groups while they were still boys. For these men, the transition from childhood to manhood occurred in a hyper-militarized, violent environment. With this in mind, this study aims to capture the main factors that play a role in altering men’s gender identities, perceptions, behaviors and attitudes during the combatant-to-civilian transition period.

The main research question of this study was: “How do previous experiences as a combatant and the process of demobilization and reintegration affect the gendered identity of ex-combatants and their

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11 ICRW Mission Report to Inter-Agency Working Group, HIV-DDR sub Working Group, 2012.

12 ICRW Mission Report to Inter-Agency Working Group, HIV-DDR sub Working Group, 2012, pp 3; Blame it on the war, IAWG 2012, pp 18.



perceptions, practices and attitudes towards gender equality and gender relations?”

The secondary research questions were:

- What is the impact of childhood experiences on gender equality attitudes and men’s use of violence against women?
- What are the perceptions of demobilized men on masculinity and gender equality?
- How is the mental health condition of demobilized men related to attitudes and practices towards gender equality?
- What are the coping strategies of demobilized men in relation to gender equality attitudes and the use of violence against women (VAW)?
- What are the challenges and needs encountered by men in transition from militarized to civilian identities?

## 2. Research Methodology

### 2.1 Research Implementation and Sampling

This study was conducted among men participating in the Pre-Discharge Orientation Program (PDOP) of the Demobilization and Reintegration (D&R) trajectory facilitated by the Mutobo Demobilization and Reintegration Center of the Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC). Two phases of data collection were conducted with two different groups of ex-combatants participating in the program. The first phase took place October 9-10, 2013 and the second phase took place January 10-11, 2014.

The IMAGES questionnaire used in the Mutobo Demobilization and Reintegration Center was fully adapted for ex-combatants returning to Rwanda, with the objective of exploring male-specific gender dynamics in the context of D&R programming in Rwanda. The questionnaire was carried out with two different groups of ex-combatants, aged 18-59 years old, participating in the Demobilization and Reintegration program. Every four months, new groups of ex-combatants start in the center. Most of the men surveyed had fled to the DRC with their families as children on or around 1994. More specific details on the profiles of the interviewed men are presented in Chapter 3.

The IMAGES survey was conducted in conjunction with qualitative research to map masculinities and gender relations, contextualize the survey results, and provide detailed life histories that illuminate key quantitative findings. The qualitative research focused on exploring men's lived experiences of manhood, in childhood, as partners and fathers and as combatants, and men's perspectives on their male identity as civilians.

#### 2.1.1 The Research Team

Ten male Rwandan data collectors who were trained in the application of the survey and in ethical procedures administered the adapted the IMAGES questionnaire. Each interview took approximately 45 minutes. Two senior Rwandan researchers conducted the qualitative research.

#### 2.1.2 Sampling

The research was carried out with ex-combatants who had spent at least four weeks in the Mutobo

**Table 1: Overview of Respondents**

<b>Table 1: Overview of Respondents</b>	
<b>First Phase: October 9-10, 2013</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
75 Questionnaires	75 Ex-combatants
3 Focus Group Discussions	22 Ex-combatants
6 Individual Interviews	6 Ex-combatants
<b>Second Phase: January 10-11, 2014</b>	<b>Respondents</b>
70 Questionnaires	70 Ex-combatants
3 Focus Group Discussions	34 Ex-combatants
4 Individual Interviews	4 Ex-combatants

**Table 2: Stratification of Groups for Qualitative Research**

<b>Stratification</b>	<b>Age (Years)</b>	<b>Number of Focus Group Participants</b>	<b>Number of Individual Interviews</b>
Young men	20-22	20	3
Higher military ranks	30-48	21	4
Lower military ranks	19-39	15	3

Center. This criterion was established based on the advice of the RDRC staff members, who observed high levels of fear and insecurity among ex-combatants in the first weeks after their arrival. Thus, only men who had spent four or more weeks at the center were interviewed. In the first phase, 75 questionnaires were completed, and in the second phase, 70 questionnaires were completed. Six individual interviews were completed in the first phase and four in the second; three focus group discussions were held in each phase. Three Mutobo staff members in from the RDRC in Kigali and three staff members working in Mutobo Center served as key informants and were interviewed in different phases of the study.

## 2.2 Research Methods

The survey questionnaire is an adapted version of the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) designed by Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). See Annex 1 for more detailed information about the IMAGES questionnaire, including the Gender-Equitable Men (GEM) Scale and the questions on violence in this study.

The IMAGES questionnaire was adapted in collaboration with a local technical advisory group (TAG), including staff of the RDRC and representatives of the World Bank. Questionnaires were translated into Kinyarwanda and pre-tested in the Mutobo Center. The main adaptations were related to the different family contexts of ex-combatants; the questions were reformulated to include perceptions on partner relations of men who were not married and not living with a partner. A section on mental health conditions and post-traumatic stress reactions, as well as more detailed questions on men's coping behaviors, were added in light of the fact that most ex-combatants had endured long-term exposure to many forms of violence due to war.

### 2.2.1 Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed in SSPS software, while qualitative data were manually coded and analyzed. In the first round of analysis, we focused on descriptive statistics and a comparison with qualitative data. The objective of the first phase

of research was to identify the main trends and questions for further analysis after the second round of field research. After the second round of analysis, bivariate and multivariate analysis was done.

This report focuses on descriptive statistics and bivariate analyses of association of survey data regarding a wide range of topics related to gender, equality and conflict. Using SPSS software, we generated descriptive tables and figures and used  $\chi^2$ -tests to test associations between variables of interest. Where statistically significant, differences are reported; these are at the  $p < .05$  level unless otherwise noted. In general, "don't know" or "not available" responses were coded as missing and omitted from the analyses underlying the figures presented in the tables.

Qualitative data were analyzed using content frame analysis. Findings from analysis of quantitative data were compared with findings from qualitative data, and both are discussed throughout the report. The comparison of quantitative and qualitative findings allowed for a holistic understanding of the dynamics that play a role in the way ex-combatant men relate to women.

### 2.2.2. Comparative Analysis with IMAGES studies in Rwanda and DRC

The data collected were compared with two recently completed IMAGES studies: (i) *Masculinity and Gender-Based Violence in Rwanda: Experiences and Perceptions of Men and Women* (Slegh and Kimonyo, 2010), and (ii) *Gender Relations, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and the Effects of Conflict on Women and Men in North Kivu, Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo* (Slegh, et al., 2014). The IMAGES studies in Rwanda and Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) were carried out among men and women ages 18 to 59. IMAGES in Rwanda was implemented on a national level, with samples in each province of Rwanda; in total, 3,612 men and women participated. IMAGES in DRC was conducted among 708 men and 754 women in four different areas of North Kivu, with samples drawn from Goma town, two internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, a military base and two rural villages. Comparative analysis between the answers of men from the DRC, Rwanda and Mutobo Center studies aimed to provide in-

sight into the unique characteristics of the group of ex-combatants in Mutobo Center compared to non-combatant men in DRC and Rwanda.

Indeed, in comparing some of the results with data from DRC and Rwanda, we found several significant differences and similarities between ex-combatants and non-combatants. However, as the IMAGES questionnaire used in the Mutobo Center was modified in order to respond to the unique nature of the D&R context, comparative analysis was not possible across all items included in the IMAGES questionnaire.

## 2.3 Ethical Considerations

All appropriate ethical procedures (confidentiality, informed consent and anonymity) and “do no harm” principles were followed during interviews and data collection in accordance with World Health Organization (WHO) ethical procedures in carrying out research on intimate partner violence, including specific recommendations for carrying out research in conflict and post-conflict settings.

Given the vulnerability of the ex-combatants and the sensitivity of the questions, attention was given to ethical issues to protect confidentiality and the safety of the participants. Names, age, and military ranks were kept anonymous in all reports. Before both rounds of data collection, the researchers explained the objectives of the study to all the ex-combatants present in the center. The researchers also explained how all responses would be kept confidential, and highlighted the fact that participation was voluntary and would not affect any participant’s place or participation in the D&R program. Before each interview, data collectors read aloud the consent form and asked each respondent to provide oral consent. Once oral consent was provided, the data collectors signed the consent form. No staff members of the Mutobo Center were present during any of the interviews.<sup>13</sup>

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13 Similar caution was taken in the selection and training of the data collectors. Before the training started, a selection of data collectors was made among a trained group of data collectors who had participated in the 2010 IMAGES study in Rwanda. A group of 15 senior and experienced men was selected to participate in a group

## 2.4 Limitations and Scope

### 2.4.1 Sample Size

The total sample of this research is relatively small compared to those of the IMAGES studies conducted in DRC (702 men) and Rwanda (2,301 men), given the numbers of men being reintegrated. The small sample made it hard to find statistically significant associations in bivariate and multivariate analysis; therefore, several findings are presented in the report as trends that call for further research and analysis.

### 2.4.2 Reluctance to Disclose Information

In the initial focus group discussions (FGDs), we observed that men were reluctant to disclose information in a group context. This was partly related to the presence of men of different ages and military ranks within a group, as lower ranked ex-combatants felt they were not allowed to speak in front of their former superiors. In subsequent data collection, we selected new samples and segregated the groups according to: age groups and military ranks.

Ex-combatants who had recently arrived at the Mutobo Center often still felt insecure and were not sure what would happen to them after they arrived in Rwanda and at the center. Although we selected men who had been at the center for at least four weeks or longer, we observed very high levels of reservation from respondents, as well as answers that generally complied with social norms in current Rwandan society. The qualitative interviews provid-

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debate with two senior Rwandan researchers. They discussed how the personal experiences of data collectors during and after the genocide in 1994 could be an obstacle to obtaining non-biased information. The risks of vicarious traumatization were also discussed and assessed in this group. The two senior Rwandan researchers then selected a group of 13 men that participated in a two-day training in the application of the survey. At the end of the training, 10 men were selected as data collectors. All data collectors signed a confidentiality agreement in which they acknowledged that they were not allowed to talk with any person about the interviews other than the research coordinator and research assistants. During the data collection, the research team had a list of medical, psychosocial and legal assistance services available in order to be able to confidentially refer a respondent for services if such assistance was requested. The service providers on the list were in alignment with RDRC trained service providers.

ed some space to go beyond this, but the findings of this survey should be regarded with caution: the answers may be highly influenced by the internal insecurity that ex-combatants may have been experiencing. Nevertheless, the comparison of different sets of questions and qualitative data show interesting trends and patterns that are presented in this report.

### **2.4.3 Low Rates of Cohabitation or Living with Family**

Most ex-combatants have fewer experiences of living with (intimate) partners and family than civilian men from their home or adopted countries. This made it hard to capture data on household practices and partner relations, and required substantial adaptation of the original IMAGES questionnaire.

### **2.4.4. Complexity of Studying a Process**

The ex-combatants are currently going through a Demobilization and Reintegration (D&R) program, which implies a transitional period in their lives. One of the aims of this research is to study the impact of this particular transitional process on the participants' perceptions and behaviors related to gender identity and equality. However, as this study included data gathered at only one specific point in time, changes in participants' perceptions and behaviors over the course of the transition process were not easily identifiable and verifiable. Nonetheless, this study did examine past experiences of participants, and it is able to provide insights on the relationships between past experiences and participants' current perceptions and behaviors.

# 3. Demographics

## 3.1 Profile of the Respondents

The average age of the participants in this study was 31.06 years. The majority of the participants were 25 to 34 years old at the time the study was conducted, and 21 percent were even younger: 20 to 24 years old. This indicates that more than 70 percent of the ex-combatants interviewed were children, zero to 15 years old, in 1994, which is the year that most of the ex-combatants arrived in DRC. Table 3 displays respondent characteristics in terms of age, educational level, marital status, country of birth and the year of arrival in DRC.

Almost all participants said that they came to DRC with their parents (29 percent), relatives (20 percent), neighbors (13 percent) or friends (17 percent). Most of the men were born in Rwanda, but three percent were born in neighboring countries. The numbers show that the majority of men spent their childhood in a context affected by war, living in refugee camps or in the bush. This explains the low education levels: only three percent of the respondents had completed secondary school and 34 percent did not have the opportunity to complete primary school. More than half of the ex-combatants never had any schooling or had only a few years of primary school.

Most men were not officially married but did report having a sexual/intimate partner. The survey showed that about 59 percent of the men were living with a partner but were not married, and almost 10 percent of the men were legally married. The 2010 IMAGES study in Rwanda found that more than half of all men (67 percent) and women (53 percent) were married. Qualitative data on ex-combatants indicates a lack of financial means as the main reason for not marrying, as men are unable to pay the dowry. The practical meaning of a marriage as perceived by ex-combatants is explored further in Chapter 5, in the sub-section on partner relations.

The majority of the respondents (69 percent) had children: of these, more than half of the men had one to two children, and remainder had up to 10 children. The ex-combatants reported that all of their children lived in DRC; some lived with the ex-combatant, but most lived with the mother or others in villages or base camps for the families.

## 3.2 Household Composition

*“It was difficult to be with my wife and children together. Since I was married in 1997, I have never lived with them together.” (ex-combatant)*

Most men reported never having lived with their partner or family on a daily basis, but rather visited them only a few weeks per year. Table 4 shows that most men shared their households with other combatants while in DRC, and only about 32 percent shared their households with their partner/wife and children. Many men stayed in the bush and on the frontlines of the conflict, while their wives and children stayed in bush camps with other families. The men visited their families during leave, which they reported could mean spending weeks, months or even years without seeing their family. Ex-combatants who were tasked with protecting the base camps could live more often with family, but most lived away from their wife and children.

## 3.3 Work and Economic Situation

*“We, in the military, we had no field to cultivate food. We had no money to buy food, so we had to steal and take it by force.” (ex-combatant)*

The survey results show that the majority of the men (120 men) did not earn money but only received in-kind goods (e.g. food). Only 24 men reported earning some money, ranging from \$15 to \$120 United States dollars (USD) per month. The ex-combatants reported various ways in which they were able to ei-

Table 3: Characteristics of the Respondents	
Background characteristics	Men (n=145) Percent
<b>Age group in years</b>	
20-24	21.4
25-34	48.3
35-49	27.6
50-60	2.8
<b>Country of Birth</b>	
Rwanda	97.2
DRC	0.7
Uganda	0.7
Tanzania	1.4
<b>Year of arrival in DRC</b>	
Before 1990	0.7
Between 1991-1993	0.7
In 1994	65.5
Between 1995-2000	12.4
After 2001	20.7
<b>Came to DRC with</b>	
Alone	21.4
Parents	29
Other relatives	20
Wife	2.1
Friends	16.6
Neighbors	13.1
<b>Educational level</b>	
No schooling	20.0
Incomplete primary school	34.5
Primary school	24.1
Secondary school	3.4
Incomplete secondary school	15.2
Vocational school	2.8
<b>Marital status</b>	
Legally married	9.7
Not officially married but living with partner	58.6
Never married	8.3
Never partnered	22.1
Separated	1.4

Table 4: Household Composition in DRC (Percent Report)	
With whom did you share a household?	Percent (N= 145)
Wife and children	31.7%
Fellow combatants	69.7%
Friends	12.4%
Other relatives	4.1%

Table 5: Work and Income-Generating Activities (Percent Report)	
Income generating activities	Percent (N=145)
Doing business or agriculture	38.6%
Getting food and other means from a leader of an armed group	32.4%
Robbing and stealing	77.2%

ther earn money or acquire basic needs – these are listed in Table 5.

Qualitative data revealed that nearly all the men had to steal and rob in order to obtain food and meet their basic needs. The commander of the group would order them to go and find food, which usually meant that they had to rob and loot villages or attack cars on the road. The men reported that the clothes and cell phones they stole were sold for cash. If possible, men would share some of the stolen goods or money with their wives, who would often use it to start small businesses in the village or camp.

#### Box 1: Interview with an Ex-Combatant on Looting for Food

**Ex-combatant:** We did “ravitaillement” [looting for food].

**Interviewer:** How did you do that?

**Ex-combatant:** You would go to farms belonging to nearby communities and collect what you think is needed and take it back to your barracks.

**Interviewer:** How easy was that?

**Ex-combatant:** You know, when you have a gun, people respect you.

**Table 6: Work-Related Stress  
(Percent Report “Frequently” or “Sometimes”)**

Statement	Mutobo Center (N=140) Percent Report “Frequently” or “Sometimes”	DRC (N=708) Percent Report “Frequently” or “Sometimes”	Rwanda (N=782) Percent Report “Frequently” or “Sometimes”
I have felt ashamed to face my family because I had no work or income to support my family	64.0%	69.4%	No data
I have felt ashamed to face my family because I was not able to support them financially (e.g. with food, school fees)	50.0%	73.4%	42.2%
I sometimes started drinking or stayed away from the family, because I had nothing to support them	19.3%	44.2%	11.1%
I spent most of my time finding means and/or money to survive	80.0%	72.6%	31.8%
I considered leaving or have left my family because I was not able to support them	15.6%	51.2%	16.2%
I am frequently stressed because I was not able to sustain myself and/or my family	36.2%	76.1%	No data

More than 70 percent of men financially supported others in the family while they were combatants. Although only 24 men said they had an extra income, several men found some form of financial support by selling looted goods. Almost half of the men (48 percent) reported that they were never able to meet the needs of the family, 22 percent sometimes met the needs of the family and 30 percent were always able to provide for the family. The survey included questions about the perceptions of men regarding their role as income providers for the family at a time when many men did not have income or money to support their families. Economic stress refers to a man’s worries, expressed in shame, drinking, depression and leaving the family, when he cannot find enough material and financial means to support or sustain the family and himself. The results from the ex-combatants are compared to those from the household samples in Rwanda and Eastern DRC in Table 6.

The findings indicate that more than half of the ex-combatants regularly or sometimes felt ashamed to face their families because of not being able to support them. Among the IMAGES studies in DRC,

Rwanda and the Mutobo Center, men in DRC reported the highest levels of shame and stress due to not having means to sustain the family.<sup>14</sup> The IMAGES D&R findings suggest that ex-combatants in the Mutobo Center spent most of their time trying to find means to survive, and that their looting and other activities were as much for their fellow combatants as for their families. It may also be noted that shame and economic stress for combatants are different because they do not face their families on a daily basis.

It is interesting to note that having a weapon helped combatants meet their basic food needs. Several informants explained that, in the bush, they were “less occupied with material things” and that gaining access to food was not a problem: “When you have a gun, people respect you and they will bring you whatever you need,” they said.

<sup>14</sup> The findings, however, must be taken with some caveats. In Rwanda, the questions were only asked to men who had no work, in DRC to men who said that they did not have enough means to provide for the family, and to all the men in the Mutobo Center study.



# 4. Childhood Experiences and Socialization

## 4.1 Growing Up in the Context of War

### 4.1.1 Caretakers of the Ex-Combatants

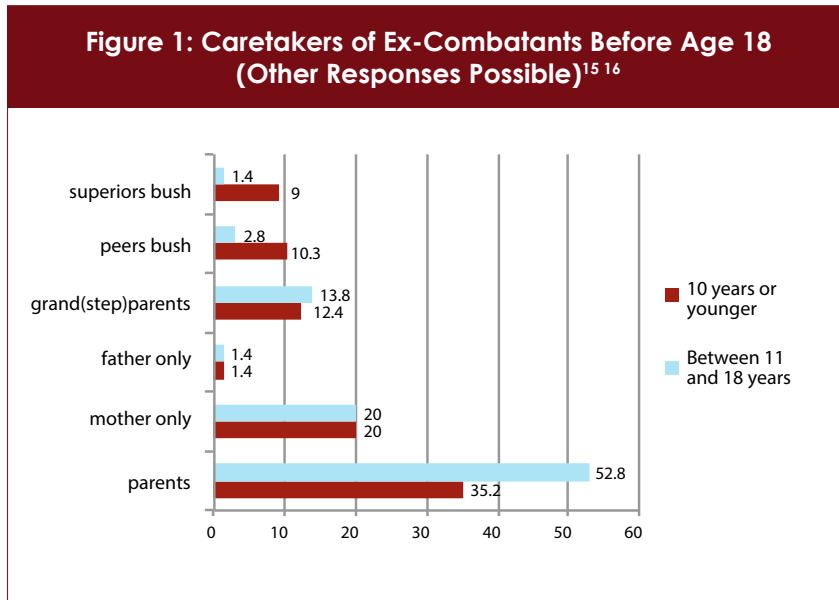
The survey results indicate that only 46 percent of the respondents had always lived with both parents (mother and father) before age 18, while 24 percent stated that they had never lived with both parents.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the individuals whom ex-combatants perceived as their most important caretakers during their childhood years (zero to 18 years). More than half of all respondents indicated that both a mother and father (parents) were the most important caretakers during at least some of their childhood.

The figure also shows that fellow combatants and/or superiors in the armed group acted as the main caretakers for a significant number of the ex-combatants. From the data, we see that this number is not very high under the age of 10 years (4 percent), but rises significantly (19 percent) between the ages of 11 and 18 years. This suggests that many ex-combatants started to serve in armed groups well before they were legally adults.

**Table 7: Living with Parents Before Age 18 (Percent Report)**

Did you ever live with both a mother and a father before you were 18?	Percent
Never	23.5%
Always between 0-18 years	45.5%
Between 0-5 years	5.5%
Between 0-10 years	25.5%



15 'Superiors in bush' refers to adult combatants who took care of younger combatants; 'peers in the bush' refers to combatants of the same age; 'grand(step) parents' refers to both biological and non-biological grand parents; 'parents' refers to both biological and non-biological parents.

16 The other response possible included being brought up by 'others' (7.5 %). Most of these respondents grew up in an orphanage or religious institution, and two respondents lived with Congolese families.

### 4.1.2 Growing Up in the Context of War and Armed Groups

Many of the ex-combatants interviewed joined an armed group as a child. At least half of ex-combatants were under age 16 when they went to DRC, and almost a quarter (24 percent) joined the armed groups when they were age 15 or younger. Overall, 65 percent of the men were less than 21 years old when they began to serve as combatants. Only a minority of the men (15 percent) was older than 25 years when they began serving as a combatant.

A recent report published by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) on child recruitment in armed groups in DRC 2012-2013 confirms the high number of children recruited for armed groups, and notes that child recruitment is systematic. Most children were recruited for the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, or FDLR), March 23 Movement (Mouvement du 23-Mars, or M23) or Nyarura groups. The report notes that children were recruited on the way to the market, at school or in the field. In the majority of cases, children were forced to join the armed groups; others were promised money, education or jobs.<sup>17</sup>

### 4.1.3 Armed Groups as an Alternative Family for Young Boys

For a significant number of men, their superiors and peers in the armed groups played important roles or held significant meaning in their lives. Superiors and peers were their comrades and protectors. Several accounts in the qualitative interviews indicate that young men joined armed groups because they had lost their family, and lacked security and protection due to war and displacement. Over the years, many of the men switched membership between different and opposing armed groups, varying between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo, or FARDC), Mai Mai, FDLR and other smaller groups. This indicates that survival often played a more important role than ideology in

**Table 8: Age at Arrival in DRC and Joining Armed Groups (Percent Report)**

At what age did you move to DRC?	Percent
Younger than 10 years	28.3%
Between 10-15	22.1%
Between 16-20	24.1%
Between 21-25	17.9%
Older than 26	7.5%
At what age did you start to serve as combatant?	Percent
Younger than 10 years	2.1%
Between 10-15	22.1%
Between 16-20	40.7%
Between 21-25	20.0%
Older than 25	15.1%

men's participation in an armed group.

One informant revealed that, after he was recruited as a 14-year-old boy, he found two "uncles" or older men in the armed group who became his protectors. He felt protected and taken care of by them:

*"They even could take me away when there was a very dangerous situation, they really took care of me. It is maybe because of them that I never became mad, as some of my other comrades who had nobody, because I always felt that there was still someone taking care of me."*

Several accounts reveal that men joined the armed groups at a very young age because they had lost their parents and family:

*"I arrived in DRC when I was 2 years old. My parents were killed in a refugee camp in Bukavu in 1997. I became a street child. It was FDLR who gave me protection and education."*

*"I witnessed the death of my parents and siblings. I survived by miracle. And I do not know how they were buried. In the forest I was eating grass and mud; you cannot believe it but it's true. I frequently see their images as dead bodies. I used to cry without any visible reason, but this finished when I joined the military life. That is actually why I joined FDLR, to revenge my family."*

<sup>17</sup> MONUSCO. (2013) Child recruitment by armed groups in DRC from January 2012 to August 2013.

*“I was a child when I arrived in a refugee camp in Goma in 1994. My entire family was killed in the camp and I was recruited by the FARDC, later by FDLR.”*

These testimonies illustrate that when combatants entered the armed group at a young age, the armed group took over the role of “the family.” However, the power dynamics in this context obviously differed from those experienced in the context of family life. The relationships with their new role models were often based on reciprocity. Men were obliged to follow orders from these role models, which often involved using violence, in order to receive real or imagined protection from the group or their superiors. In this way, these children and young men navigated between being both victims and perpetrators of violence in this environment.

#### **4.1.4 Exposure to Multiple Traumatic Events During Childhood**

The early childhood of most respondents was marked by numerous traumatic events. A traumatic event means any experience that is seen as threatening one’s life, directly or indirectly. The loss of a parent or caretaker is a direct threat for children’s survival. Losing a house, other relatives, or fleeing to other countries and living in dire conditions with lack of food and security can also be considered to be traumatic events.

More than half (60 percent) of all respondents had lived in a refugee camp, and 50 percent had lived in a military camp or in the bush. A fifth of the ex-combatants (20 percent) had lived between eight and 16 years in a military camp in the bush, and one third of all respondents had never lived in a normal village. More than half of all respondents lost one of their caretakers before the age of 18. Generally, children in armed groups were treated very badly; they lived in extremely poor conditions, were often abused and maltreated and severely punished by superiors. MONUSCO’s 2013 report describes children working as cooks, porters, combatants and slaves, sometimes being forced to work in shifts of 24 hours.

The findings in this report also suggest that a high number of ex-combatants lacked a safe environment in which to grow up. Though further research

is needed to explore the impact of this on the way the ex-combatants were able to build relations based on trust and affection, we can assume that identity construction was seriously affected through those experiences. As described above, many ex-combatants did not experience a “normal” childhood and learned at a very young age to survive by all means possible and to build identities based on being strong, tough and independent. In short, their masculinities were shaped from a very young age by violent versions of manhood characterized as tough and powerful. In the words of an ex-combatant who joined FDLR when he was 13 years old:

*“The fact that I had a gun helped me to survive; it gave me security and to grow up very fast in my head. I resolved my problems and difficulties without any money. I had to take care of myself alone. The possession of a gun helped me, because I had all the power to do what I wanted. For me, an arm [weapon] gives me security and power. My life in the FDLR has formed me how I am now. We have this proverb saying: “que la souffrance est une fournaille à recuire l’âme.” This means for me that I had to suffer, but the suffering made me big and mature.”*

*“I never was a child like others, I had to become a man at a very young age and take care of myself. It made me hard and strong: I am able to survive on my own.”*  
(young ex-combatant who joined an armed group at age 10)

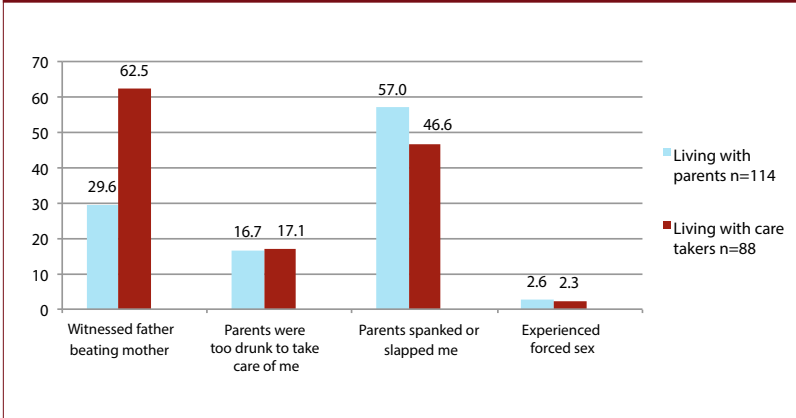
## **4.2 Socialization into Gender Roles**

The respondents were asked a series of questions about the gender role models they observed before they were 18 years old. The questions were formulated for men who grew up with their parents or stepparents in a family situation, and for men who grew up with superiors in the bush or with other (non-adult) peer caretakers.

### **4.2.1 Exposure to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) During Childhood in Family**

The findings show that many ex-combatants witnessed a father or other male caretaker beat their mother or other female caretaker before they were 18 years old. This indicates that many of the ex-combatants learned at a young age that men beat women.

**Figure 2: Men Witnessing or Experiencing Violence at Home during Childhood**



As shown in Figure 2, men who lived with caretakers witnessed violence by the male caretaker against the female caretaker two times more often than men who lived with their parents.

The survey also asked questions about men’s childhood experiences of being beaten by parents or caretakers. The results of this study are similar to earlier IMAGES studies conducted in Rwanda and DRC, which indicated that physical violence perpetrated by parents against children is common in both countries. In this study, it was observed that men who were raised by caretakers other than parents

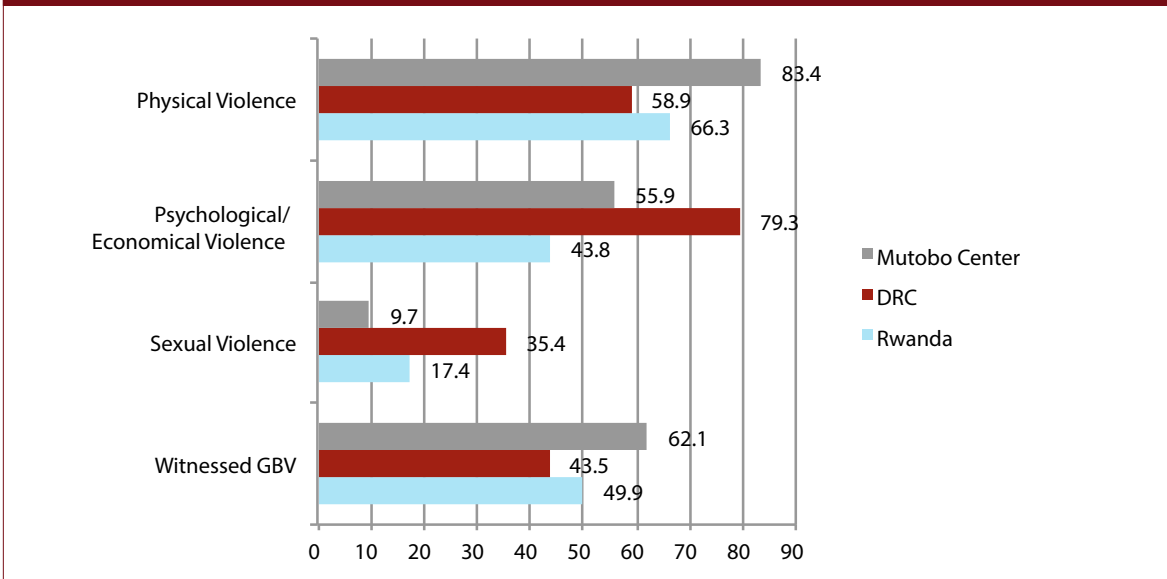
reported slightly lower levels of being hit during childhood than men who were raised by their parents.

Figure 3 shows levels of exposure to different forms of violence during childhood, including witnessing GBV or experiencing physical, sexual or psychological violence across the Mutobo Center, Rwanda and DRC IMAGES studies. Psychological violence includes the experiences of being expelled from the house, being

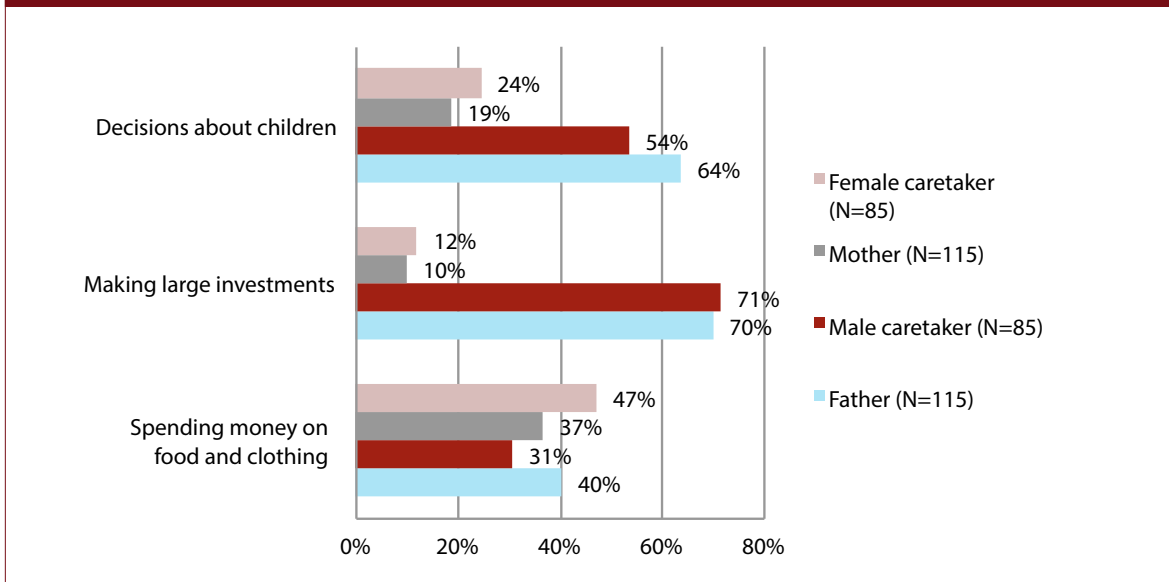
refused food, as well as being insulted or humiliated by someone, while sexual violence refers to forced sexual acts including touching of the buttocks, genitals or forced sexual intercourse.

Figure 3 shows that most men experienced different forms of violence during childhood. The levels of experiencing physical violence and witnessing gender-based violence reported by ex-combatants are higher than in other IMAGES studies conducted in DRC and Rwanda. However, reported levels of sexual violence experienced, including sexual abuse at home by family members or caretakers, and

**Figure 3: Experiences of Violence at Home Before Age 18 Across IMAGES Studies (Percent Report)**



**Figure 4: Who Made the Final Decisions in Your Childhood Household?<sup>18</sup> (Percent Report)**



sexual violence in school and the neighborhood or comrade groups, are significantly lower compared to levels reported among civilian men in Rwanda and DRC. Further analysis is needed to explain these relatively lower rates. It is possible that ex-combatants were indeed exposed to sexual violence at lower levels. However, it is also possible that men fear to report sexual violence. It is also possible that as combatants, they were exposed to such extreme forms of violence, or that those forms of violence are no longer remembered.

#### 4.2.2 Gender and Household Decision-Making

During childhood, most men saw a traditional division of gender roles, in which men are considered the main decision-makers on big investments and have the final word on money spent on children (e.g. school fees, health). These findings are highlighted in Figure 4. It is noteworthy that, during childhood, fathers had more decision-making power over food and clothing in the family context, while in the context of the armed groups, female caretakers were more often in a position to make these decisions.

This indicates that gender roles were divided differently in the context of armed groups compared with the family context. Many respondents also indicated that other individuals (apart from parents or caretakers) were responsible for these decisions, referring to other persons in the specific situations where they were brought up.

The data on ex-combatants' childhoods illustrates the significant impact of war-related experiences on their personal lives. Many of the respondents grew up in situations without their parents, where other individuals took over "care-taking" roles. However, it is important to note that, even for those men who grew up within a family, family and gender dynamics were probably strongly influenced by the circumstances of war and survival. The next chapter will explore the relationship between childhood experiences and gender-related attitudes and perceptions.

<sup>18</sup> Some respondents answered both questions because they grew up in both situations.

# 5. Attitudes and Practices in Gender Relations

## 5.1 Attitudes Towards Gender Equality

The IMAGES questionnaire includes a set of questions on attitudes and perceptions about gender equality, gender roles, power differences, sexuality and gender-based violence; these attitudes are assessed using, among other questions, the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) Scale. For more information on the GEM Scale, see Annex 1. These questions are used to rank respondents according to their GEM scores. Respondents who score in the lowest third are considered in the “low equity” category, those in the middle third in the “moderate equity” category and those in the highest third in the “high equity” category. “High equity” applies to the group of respondents that support more equitable views.

The results in Table 9 show that most ex-combatants had moderate GEM Scale scores, suggesting they have moderate support for gender equitable views. A quarter of the men surveyed scored “high” on support for gender equality. The findings show that ex-combatants in the Mutobo Center had a lower percentage of “low equity” scores than the men surveyed in DRC and Rwanda. The results should be regarded with caution, however, for reasons described earlier in this report: Men may think they need to give more gender-equitable answers now that they are in Rwanda. Also, during their stay in the Mutobo

**Table 9: GEM Scale Scores**

GEM SCORE	Mutobo Center (N=144) Percent	DRC (N=698) Percent	Rwanda (N=2301) Percent
Low equity	9.7%	32.6%	16.4%
Moderate equity	65.3%	49.0%	45.4%
High equity	25.0%	24.4%	38.2%

**Table 10: Ex-Combatants’ Attitudes About Gender Equality Progress and Implications (Percent Agree or Partially Agree)**

Statement	Percent Agree / Partially Agree
Gender equality has been achieved for the most part in DRC	4.2%
Men and women should be treated equally	86.8%
When women get rights, they are taking rights away from men	11.8%
Gender equality has been achieved for the most part in Rwanda	93.8%
Gender equality today benefits mostly well-to-do people	53.5%

**Table 11: Ex-Combatants’ Attitudes About Gender Roles (Percent Agree or Partially Agree)**

Statement	Percent Agree / Partially Agree
A woman’s most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family	81.3%
Changing diapers, bathing and feeding kids are a mother’s responsibility	68.1%
Men in armed groups cannot accept orders coming from women	53.5%
A man should have the final word about decisions in his house	67.4%
A wife who works outside the house is neglecting her role as wife and mother	41.7%

Center, ex-combatants receive trainings on gender policies and gender relations in Rwanda, so the “right” answers might be the first ones that come to mind. Moreover, many men have never lived together with a wife and family, so some of their opinions on gender equality may never have been practically tested in real life.

Tables 10 and 11 list some of the statements pertaining to gender equality that are included in the IMAGES questionnaire. The responses from ex-combatants indicate opinions that support gender equality, and most men think that, in Rwanda, gender equality has been achieved. However, findings on practices and statements relating to gender roles indicate that most men support traditional gender roles in which women cook and take care of the children, and men make the final decisions. Most men see themselves as the main decision-makers on spending money on houses, land or cows, as well as spending money on clothes and food. Similar trends were found in IMAGES results in DRC and Rwanda: Men are the “bosses” at home and women do the care work.

In general, it appears that men in DRC show less support for gender equality, but it is hard to draw strong conclusions about this, since gender policies and laws are less enforced in DRC than in Rwanda. Therefore, men in DRC may feel less constrained in their responses. In contrast, Rwandan men, including the ex-combatants in the Mutobo Center, are clearly more informed about gender policies and may be more likely to give what they perceive to be the correct answers.

## 5.2 Partner Relations

### 5.2.1 Marriage and Family Life as a Combatant

As previously noted and shown in Table 3, most of the ex-combatants interviewed were not in a legal union, but lived with a partner. Further analysis of qualitative and survey data shows that family life, marriage and sexuality for ex-combatants were strongly influenced by their life as combatants. Almost 70 percent of the respondents are currently younger than 35 years old, and 65 percent of the men joined armed groups before age 20. Thus, most did

not yet have a partner before the conflict, but instead became partnered while they were combatants.

Respondents reported that the FDLR had very strict rules regarding sex with women. That was why, they said, commanders encouraged young men to “marry” a girl after they had sex with her, thereby legitimizing sexual violence in many cases. Since legal marriage was not possible in the bush, marriages were sometimes “authorized” by superiors in the armed groups. The men “married” the girl, but when they moved to another site, they could do the same thing with a girl close to the new base and have another “marriage.” As one ex-combatant described it:

*“What happened (is that) the majority of young men took women for marriage and our commanders encouraged this. That is why the majority of young men were married. If you did not do that you were beaten with 100 sticks.”*

The survey data suggest that most men have one (Rwandan) wife with whom they have a family, but the qualitative data show that family life was rare for most combatants. Marriage was necessarily a flexible concept for a combatant living in the bush. The need for female company and sexual relations seemed to be the driving factor for men to search for and marry a woman, sometimes only for the short-term. Only men in FARDC groups reported living with their wives and children in the same camp. Men in the FDLR and other armed groups were mostly separated from their wife and children. Married men were allowed to see their wives in times of peace, but most of the men, married and single, had sexual relations with other women. One 40-year-old married man observed:

*“It was tough to stay away from my family. For example, I spent two years away from my family. I had to find a friend – you understand this as a man. You know women cannot do this, but men can, it’s normal.”*

### 5.2.2 Sexuality and Partner Relations

Most men describe their sexual relationship with their partner as (very) satisfying (90 percent). Most men are also (very) satisfied about the frequency of sexual relations with their partner (91 percent). The question in the survey asked men about the level of

satisfaction with their partner and did not specify the type of relation with the partner, so the men could have answered the question with any partner in mind, and not specifically the partner they were married to at that time.

The qualitative data suggest that many men found it difficult to stay long periods of time without having sex with their partner when they were far away from their families. Many men had other sexual partners because they were not able to see their wives regularly. The qualitative interviews reveal the different strategies men used to cope with their sexual needs while away from their wives. Some men said that they did not need sex, because they were more occupied with their security and survival. As one man put it:

*“How can you focus on sex when you are always in wars? Our major issue was security rather than sex.”*

Some men reported that they masturbated, even though their Christian beliefs forbid this:

*“I cannot deny that we all did masturbation, but I have read a book that this can make us crazy.”*

Most men described how they negotiated sexual relations with women close to their bases or camps as a way to fulfill their needs and forget the war for a moment. (Clearly, some of these acts involved sexual violence, as will be further explored in the following chapter.)

### 5.2.3 Sexual and Reproductive Health

The survey included a number of questions related to sexual and reproductive health attitudes and practices, including contraceptive use. The majority of ex-combatants (almost 60 percent) stated that they use a family planning method with their partner. However, when asked how often they used a condom when having sex with their wife or partner in the past year, almost 77 percent responded that they do not use them. Only about two percent of men reported that they “always” used a condom, while 20 percent stated they “mostly” or “occasionally” used condoms.

When asked about having sex with a woman other than their wife or partner in the past year, only about

five percent ‘always’ used a condom, while 15 percent “mostly” or “occasionally” used condoms. In addition, 60 percent of men stated they did not use condoms at all in the past year in their sexual relations with a woman who was not their main partner. In the IMAGES study in DRC, 10 percent of men said they always used a condom in the last year and 22 percent of men said that they “mostly” or “occasionally” used condoms.<sup>19</sup> Data on condom use was not collected in the IMAGES Rwanda study. The findings suggest that ex-combatants have high levels of risky sexual behavior (multiple partners, low condom use) and a high risk of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

Table 12 captures men’s attitudes towards sexuality and reproductive health. The table shows the number of men who agreed or partially agreed with the statements. The findings illustrate some contradictions in men’s responses and attitudes about contraceptive use. While almost 94 percent of men believe a man and woman should make decisions about contraceptive use together, 58 percent of men believe it is a woman’s responsibility to avoid pregnancy. Another 45 percent report they would be outraged if their wife suggested contraceptive use.

The findings show a similar pattern of traditional power divisions between men and women: men have the decision-making power regarding sex and contraceptives, leaving women with little space to exercise their rights regarding sexual and reproductive health. When the frequencies are compared with the results from IMAGES DRC and IMAGES Rwanda, ex-combatants show slightly more support for sexual and reproductive health rights compared to men from the DRC sample. It is important here to note that, when the ex-combatants arrived in the Mutobo Center, they received trainings on gender equality and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), which may have influenced their answers.

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19 The questions in the IMAGES study in DRC did not distinguish between condom use with a regular partner and condom use with a woman other than a partner, as was done in the IMAGES Mutobo study, and thus is presented here to encompass condom use more generally.



**Table 12: Men's Attitudes About Sexual Relations and Reproductive Health – Mutobo Center, Rwanda and DRC<sup>20</sup> (Percent Agree or Partially Agree)**

Statement	Mutobo Center (N=145) Percent Agree or Partially Agree	Rwanda (N=2301) Percent Agree or Partially Agree	DRC (N=708) Percent Agree or Partially Agree
Men are always ready to have sex	50.7%	38.9%	65.3%
Men don't talk about sex, they just do it	53.5%	82.5%	73.5%
A man has the right to have sex, even when the woman refuses	17.3%	No data	48.0%
I would be outraged if my wife asked me to use a condom	45.1%	No data	66.1%
Men need sex more than women do	52.1%	No data	70.5%
It is a woman's responsibility to avoid getting pregnant	58.3%	31.6%	61.0%
A man and woman should decide together what type of contraceptive to use	93.8%	No data	53.7%

### 5.3 Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

#### 5.3.1 Perceptions and Practices of IPV

Findings on attitudes and opinions on gender relations showed that acceptance of violence against female partners was high among ex-combatants. More than half of respondents (54 percent) believed that women sometimes deserve to be beaten and 69 percent of respondents said that women should accept partner violence to keep the family together. These findings are similar to responses of men in the IMAGES studies in Rwanda and DRC. In all settings

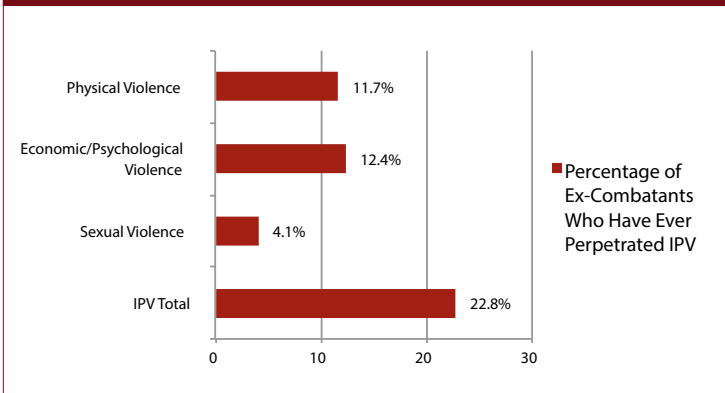
we found a discrepancy between opinion and practice: Half of all the men surveyed in Rwanda, DRC and the Mutobo Center supported statements that women sometimes deserve to be beaten, but men in all settings reported lower rates of actually using a form of partner violence, as shown in Table 13 and Figure 5.

<sup>20</sup> The N values presented for DRC and Rwanda represent the total number of men surveyed. It is important to note that the number of men who responded to each of the statements in the table varies and there are some missing values in the data.

**Table 13: Attitudes about Intimate Partner Violence (Percent Agree or Partially Agree)**

Statement	Mutobo Center (N=145) Percent Agree or Partially Agree	Rwanda (N=2301) Percent Agree or Partially Agree	DRC (N=708) Percent Agree or Partially Agree
Women should accept partner violence to keep the family together	69.4%	43.7%	61.9%
There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten	53.5%	59.4%	65.0%

**Figure 5: Ex-Combatants' Use of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)**



**Table 14: Men's Self-Reports of Use of Any Form of IPV: Ex-Combatants in Mutobo Center, Rwanda and DRC**

	Mutobo Center (N=145)	Rwanda (N=2301)	DRC (N=708)
Ever perpetrated any intimate partner violence	22.8%	57.2%	58%
Ever perpetrated sexual violence against a partner	4.1%	7.4%	12.4%

The results presented in Figure 5 show that almost 23 percent of ex-combatants reported ever having used a form of intimate violence against a partner or ex-partner. These findings are significantly lower than the results we found in the previous IMAGES studies in DRC and in Rwanda. As shown in Table 14, men in Rwanda and DRC reported two times the rate of having perpetrated any form of intimate partner violence than ex-combatants. In the Mutobo Center study, only 4 percent of ex-combatants reported having forced a partner to have sex; this was also lower than in Rwanda, and more than three times lower compared to the self-reporting percentage of the DRC study.

The differences between the findings in the three different IMAGES studies may suggest that respondents in the Mutobo Center study are underreporting the use of partner violence. This underreporting may also be considered in a context in which more than half of the ex-combatants agreed that there are

times when a woman deserves to be beaten or that women should accept violence to keep the family together. Concerning the use of sexual violence against a partner, Rwandan men and ex-combatants reported significantly lower levels than men in DRC, but ex-combatants reported the lowest rates. It may be that Rwandan men and ex-combatants both answered in “politically correct” ways, because they knew what was expected of them, whereas men in the DRC sample may not have felt this constraint.

In addition, most ex-combatants never lived for long periods of time with a partner, but only stayed together for a period of a few weeks. As described in Section 2, combatants are less focused on their family and their own role as provider of the family. The levels of economic stress were lower compared with men in DRC and Rwanda, who saw their responsibility and failure as providers of family as important. The “core life” of combatants was focused on survival in a combat/conflict con-

text, while interaction with the family and the focus on controlling and managing family life was less central to their daily life. For this reason, their levels of frustration in their family might have been lower. They were less likely to have opportunities to take their frustrations out on their partners or children, and less likely to interact and live with them.

Comparative analysis of IMAGES data in the Rwanda and DRC studies showed in all three settings that men who saw their father or male caretaker use violence against their mother or female caretaker tended to use physical violence towards a partner more often (as we have seen in all IMAGES settings). This study with ex-combatants in the Mutobo Center also found the relationship between witnessing violence against a mother in childhood and use of physical violence against a partner to be significant ( $p=0.018$ ). This is captured in Figure 6.

In contrast to some other IMAGES studies, no significant relationship was found in this study be-

tween men's childhood experiences of being beaten by their parents and their use of partner violence later in life. This finding may be related to the fact that the sample is very small and men reported relatively low levels of partner violence. Another explanation could be that almost a quarter of the respondents were already in armed groups before they were 15 years of age and almost 40 percent of young men were in armed groups before they were 20 years of age, indicating that many did not live with parents throughout their childhood.

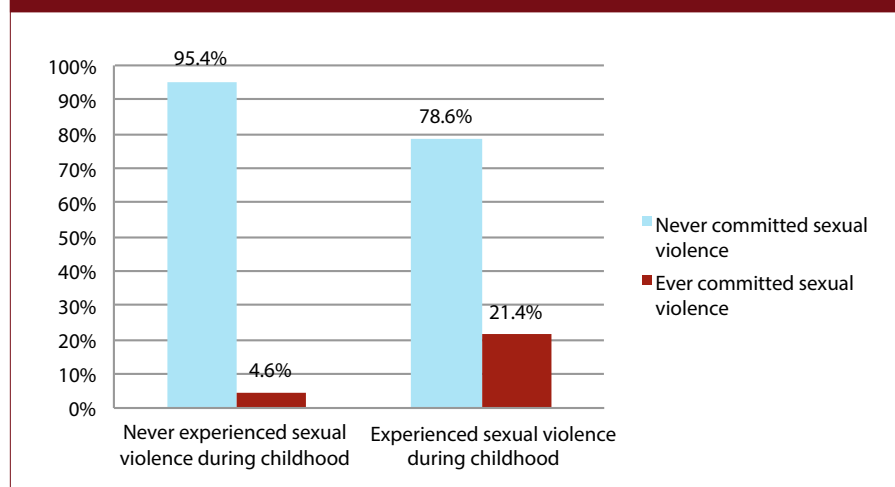
A significant relation was found between men's experiences of childhood sexual violence and perpetration of sexual violence later in life, as was also seen in some IMAGES studies in other settings. Among the ex-combatants who experienced sexual violence during childhood, over 21 percent reported perpetrating sexual violence (this value only includes men that perpetrated sexual violence against

**Table 15: Ex-Combatants' Perpetration of Physical Violence and Childhood Experiences of Witnessing Gender-Based Violence (Percent Report)**

(N=145; p=0.018)	Never witnessed GBV	Witnessed GBV
Has not committed physical violence	41.4%	58.6%
Has committed physical violence	11.8%	88.2%

a woman when they were not forced by others to do so). This is in contrast to men who never experienced sexual violence during childhood, less than seven percent of whom reported committing sexual violence. These findings are highlighted in Figure 6. More survey results regarding sexual violence will be presented in the next chapter.

**Figure 6: Ex-Combatants' Perpetration of Sexual Violence by Childhood Experience of Sexual Violence (N=145; p=.013)**



# 6. Sexual Violence

## 6.1 Rape and Negotiation of Sexual Relations

Armed groups in DRC are often associated with sexual abuse and rape in media coverage of DRC in the last decade. The respondents in this study are well aware of the association between armed groups and sexual violence in the region, and this awareness likely influenced their responses. In the beginning of the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interviews, most men strongly denied that their armed groups had had anything to do with rape. Further probing and analysis of the qualitative data showed a certain pattern in the arguments, but also revealed confusion and different understandings about consent and negotiation of sexual relations among the respondents.

The qualitative data show that men perceived relatively little difference between negotiated sex, forced sex and rape. Most men strongly denied that comrades in their armed groups would ever rape; they said that the superiors of the armed groups strictly forbade it. Many accounts included arguments why the ex-combatants would never rape: (1) Rape was forbidden within the professional FDLR; (2) it was “other groups” that raped; (3) rape is not needed because Congolese “girls” like Rwandan men; and (4) women accepted having sexual relations, so there was no need to force them.

**(1) Rape was forbidden:** In the FGDs with ex-combatants who had a higher military rank in the armed groups, all participants strongly denied that superiors ordered men to rape women or men. It was asserted that, “The FDLR is a professional army with a well functioning chain of command.” Interviews with lower ranked ex-combatants highlighted the fear of punishment since rape was severely punished in the FDLR. One interviewee said: “A woman came reporting that she was raped by one of our comrades

in FDLR. They called all my comrades and the woman was able to identify him. He was shot dead on the spot.”

**(2) Accusing other armed groups:** Several respondents reported that other armed groups and the Congolese army are the ones who rape women and girls. An ex-combatant in the Mutobo Center said: “Sure, the Congolese military are raping and they accuse the FDLR. It is well known among the women and victims of rape in Congo. The victims will be the only ones that may know the truth.”

The “blaming the other men” as rape perpetrators and accusing the enemies of using rape as a weapon of war was also found in the qualitative data obtained from FGDs and interviews with military men in the IMAGES study in DRC. Respondents perceived rape as wrong and unacceptable, or at least knew that the outside world believes it to be so. Blaming the others may also be seen as a coping strategy to cut off “evilness” from one’s own group. On the other hand, several ex-combatants seemed not to realize that using force is rape; they may have had another perception about what was meant by the word rape. In the IMAGES study in DRC, Congolese men (both ex-combatants, non-combatants and men in the FARDC) accused Rwandans of having introduced rape, saying it was not part of their culture before 1994.

**(3) and (4) Identity and culture:** Some respondents reported that Rwandan men will never rape, because it is not part of their culture (implying that it was part of Congolese culture), and that Rwandan men negotiate sexual relations and have sex only with the mutual consent of the woman. The “Rwandan identity” was also seen as one of the reasons that it was easy to get sexual access to Congolese girls. Rwandan ex-combatants believe that the Rwandan

traditional sexual practice “Ruganga”<sup>21</sup> is very much appreciated among Congolese women. As young ex-combatants said:

*“Congolese men don’t prepare their women to have sex, but we do and make them enjoy the sexual relations.”*

*“Congolese girls like Rwandans because we take care and we are respectful. When we arrived in a certain area, we negotiate to find one lady for the time being there. She gives us sex and we provide her with money to cook. We don’t need to rape.”*

### **Negotiating sexual relations without consent or rape with consent?**

Several accounts suggest a very broad interpretation of the meaning of “negotiating” sexual relations and mutual consent among respondents. Some respondents indicated that if it seems that a woman is refusing sexual relations, she will be forced to have sex anyway. This indicates that there is discrepancy in how men understand rape versus what happens in practice. A young ex-combatant said:

*“We went to the village where we could offer the girls some beers and negotiate to have sex, we could even give them money five dollars. But when they refused, we could take them by force. Having a gun made a very easy to get what you wanted – food and women.”*

The words of another young ex-combatant, quoted below, suggest that men viewed rape as consensual or not forced:

A key informant at the Mutobo Center (a staff member) confirmed that many negotiated sexual relations for the ex-combatants were, in fact, forced sexual relations, because the ex-combatants did not understand the meaning of mutual consent: “Those boys came at a very young age to the bush; they never learned to have relations with girls and women.” According to the key informant, rape is not strategically used as a weapon of war in the case of FDLR, but occurs due to lack of ethical military training in armed groups, weak leadership and misunderstanding-

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21 The term “kunyaza” is also commonly used to refer to the sexual practice of bringing a woman to orgasm, while “ruganga” is used to describe the actions a man uses.

### **Box 2: When There Is War, There Is Rape**

**Ex-combatant:** It was 10 in the morning; we were with a group of soldiers doing our Patrol in the forest. We saw two girls leaving their camps. We stopped them and one of us asked them to undress and lay down. The girls undressed themselves very kindly and we did not use any force.

**Interviewer:** But did you have weapons?

**Ex-combatant:** Sure, we were well armed.

ing and misinterpretation of sexual negotiation and mutual consent, as mentioned above.

This key informant also confirmed the strong punishment and taboo on rape and sexual violence in the FDLR. He explained that well trained and strong commanders with a well-functioning chain of command would not allow men to rape and would never order combatants to rape. However, according to him, some of the commanders are not well trained, the chain of command and communication channels are weak, and that is why, in some battalions, rape takes place and orders to rape by superiors also occur.

In contrast, some ex-combatants reported that commanders sometimes ordered them to bring women to them, and these superiors also sometimes rewarded combatants with girls. Other combatants reported that, although forbidden, men did force themselves sexually on women during looting. Below are the observations of some ex-combatants in their own words:

*“A military chief could order one or two military [combatants] to bring one woman for the night to him. We worked for them and had to oblige the orders. Sometimes we also received a girl when he was happy with us.”*

*“We were ordered to do the lootings and then we could take women if we wanted. Though forbidden, we could do it.”*

The survey found that four percent of ex-combatants reported having been ordered to have sex with women, while 11 percent reported hearing of com-

### Box 3: Interview with an Ex-Combatant About Rape

**Interviewer:** Do you know comrades who raped when they did “ravitaillement” [looting for food]?

**Ex-combatant:** Yes, but this was a highly kept secret to avoid problems, as our commanders did not want that.

**Interviewer:** Did your comrades use their guns to get sex?

**Ex-combatant:** You do not need to use it because when you have it people see it already they have to obey what you say.

**Interviewer:** So if you have a gun and you say, “I want sex” the person will just obey?

**Ex-combatant:** Yeah, but some women will still ask for some money.

**Interviewer:** What if you do not have money?

**Ex-combatant:** They can still accept.

**Interviewer:** Can they say no?

**Ex-combatant:** I do not think so.

**Interviewer:** Were there many of your comrades who did that?

**Ex-combatant:** Not very many but I know a significant number of them who did it.

rades being ordered by superiors to rape women. In addition, 17 percent reported hearing of comrades who were ordered to witness the rape of women and six percent reported hearing of comrades being ordered to witness the rape of men. These figures are summarized in Table 16 below. The findings indicate that rape did happen in the context of these armed groups. However, given the sensitivity of the questions for the ex-combatants and the broad interpretation of consent in sexual negotiation, the actual number of rapes is probably higher than reported. Many ex-combatants do not view rape as forced sex but rather see it as a form of transactional sex (e.g. sex for food or money).

The survey found that four percent of ex-combatants reported having committed sexual violence against their partners, and six percent reported having committed sexual violence against someone other than their partner. Another six percent reported having

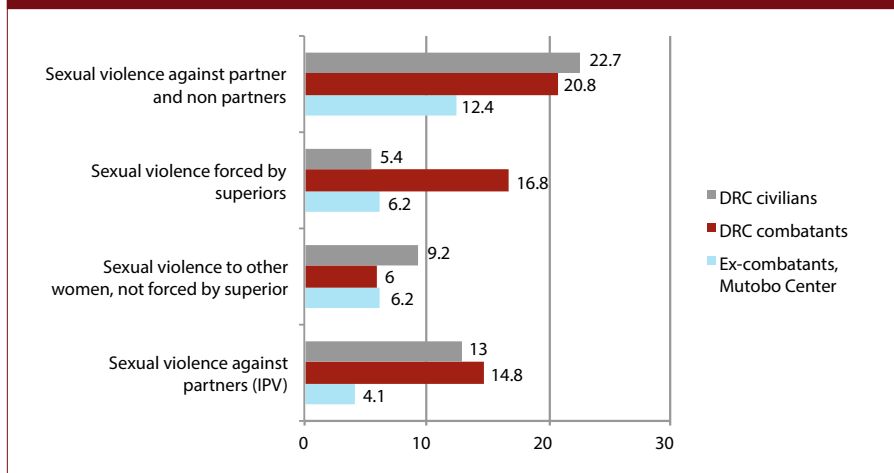
**Table 16: Sexual Experiences as Combatants (Percent Report “Yes”)**

Did you ever hear that ...	Percent Report “Yes”
Comrades were ordered by superiors to have sex with women?	11.1%
Comrades were ordered by superiors to do sexual acts with men?	4.8%
Comrades were ordered by superiors to witness other men having sex with women?	17.2%
Comrades were ordered by superiors to witness other men having sex with men?	5.5%
Have you ever...	Percent Report “Yes”
Been ordered to have sexual relations with girls or women?	4.1%
Been awarded by being given a girl/women to have sex with?	4.2%
Been ordered to witness other men having sex with a girl or women?	4.1%
Been ordered to have sexual relations with men?	2.1%
Been ordered to witness other men having sex with men?	2.8%

been forced by a superior to commit sexual violence against someone other than their partner.

Figure 7 compares the perpetration of sexual violence by ex-combatants in the Mutobo Center with findings from the IMAGES study in DRC, which was conducted with non-combatants and military men. The Mutobo Center data were compared with DRC data on sexual violence committed against women, including against partners and non-partners. Questions on sexual violence from the IMAGES study in Rwanda only focused on intimate partners, and therefore those results are not included in this comparison. Levels of sexual violence perpetration were generally lower among ex-combatants in the Mutobo Center than among the men surveyed in the IMAGES study in DRC, and were significantly lower when compared with levels of sexual violence perpetration only among the military men in the IMAGES study in DRC. The findings from the IMAGES study in

**Figure 7: Men's Self-Reported Perpetration of Sexual Violence: Mutobo Center and DRC**



paring the results with the IMAGES study in DRC, the level of support for statements that justify the use of rape is lower among ex-combatants (see Table 17). This could be related to the fact that ex-combatants are well aware that rape is forbidden and, as illustrated in the previous section, most state that Rwandan men do not rape.

DRC also indicate that five percent of civilian men said they were forced to rape others when they were attacked in their villages by combatants.

## 6.2 Perceptions About Rape and Sexual Violence

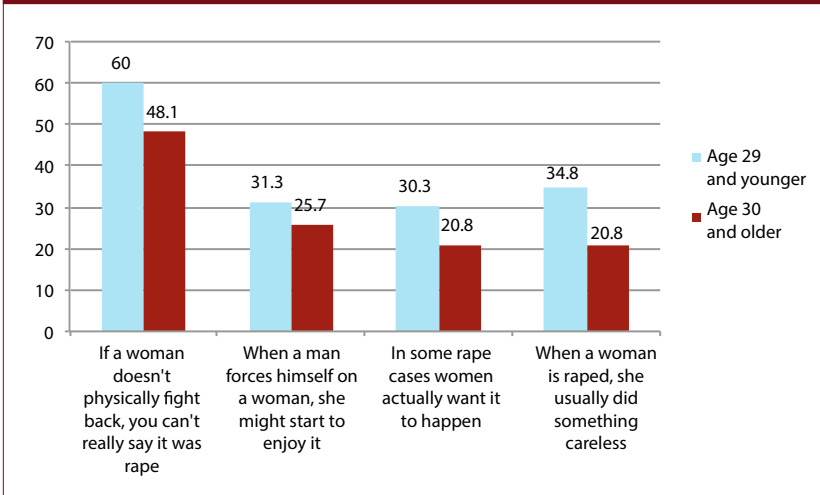
More than half of the men agreed with the statements, “Women who are not decently dressed want to be raped” and “If a woman does not fight back while being raped, it is not rape,” confirming the findings of qualitative data. These questions were not asked in the IMAGES study in Rwanda. Com-

Another significant difference is that 15 percent of ex-combatants in the Mutobo Center believe that a man should expel his wife from the home if she has been raped by another man, compared to 43 percent of men in the DRC sample. The finding that ex-combatants are more empathetic to women who were raped could suggest that, as combatants, they have seen that women are brutally raped (by others) and should not be blamed for such actions. The finding could also suggest that the social stigma toward female rape survivors is partly driven by extended family and community, who were less present for ex-combatants living in camps and the bush.

**Table 17: Attitudes About Rape: Men in the Mutobo Center and DRC (Percent Agree or Partially Agree)**

Statement	Mutobo Center Percent Agree or Partially Agree	Rwanda Percent Agree or Partially Agree
A husband should expel his wife from home when she has been raped by another man	15.3%	43.3%
A woman who does not dress herself decently asks to be raped	50.7%	74.8%
When a woman was raped, she usually did something careless to put herself in that situation	27.1%	35%
In some rape cases women actually want it to happen	25%	29.6%
When a man forces himself on a woman, she might start enjoying it	27.1%	29.9%
When a women is raped and she does not fight back, you cannot say it was rape	53.1%	45.9%

**Figure 8: Attitudes About Rape by Age Group (Totally Agree and Partially Agree)**



Further analysis shows that ex-combatants under the age of 30 years old are generally more condemning of women in their perceptions of rape than ex-combatants 30 years old and older, as seen in Figure 8. For example, 60 percent of ex-combatants under 30 agree that, if a woman does not fight back while being raped, you cannot call it rape, compared to 48 percent of ex-combatants aged 30 and older. In addition, 35 percent of those under age 30 agree that if a woman is raped, she usually did something to deserve it, compared to 21 percent of those aged 30 and above.

The more conservative attitudes of younger men

may be related to the fact that most young men were not yet married, and may not yet have been sexually active, when they became combatants. These young ex-combatants likely had their first sexual experiences in the context of war, and their perceptions of sexual relations and sexuality may be strongly influenced by those experiences. These men had to meet women and negotiate sexual relations within the context of an armed group. As several quotes in the previous section demonstrate, younger ex-combatants have less understanding of the concept of mutual consent and do not see the roles that use of force and exertion of superior power play in sexual relations.

Growing up in an armed group, their main experience of negotiating sex with women took place in a context where power and guns were used to get what they want. They have yet to learn to experiment with and to negotiate sexual relations outside of war. Thus, they may not question the role of power and weapons, and may blame girls and women for 'seducing them' and 'being responsible' when the women did not physically resist the forced sex or rape.

**Table 18: Ex-Combatants' Attitudes About Sexual Violence (Percent Agree or Partially Agree)**

Statement	Percent Agree or Partially Agree
When a man is ordered to rape women, he is also a victim of sexual violence	93.1%
Sexual violence is also committed by men against men and boys	55%
Sexual violence is only committed by men against women and girls	55.9%
Women can also commit sexual violence against men and boys	94.5%
There are also women who commit sexual violence against other women and girls	68.6%
Sexual violence does not exist within married couples	53.2%
When a father has sexual relations with his children, it is a form of sexual violence	97.8%
The problem of sexual violence in DRC is exaggerated by media and campaigns	50%



Additional questions asked men more directly to identify situations they view as sexual violence. These responses are summarized in Table 18. The findings suggest that more than half of all respondents acknowledge that sexual violence can be committed against both men and women, and that both men and women can be perpetrators of such violence. However, more than half of the respondents also agree that sexual violence does not exist within married couples.

### 6.3 Knowledge and Opinions About Laws and Policies on Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Ex-combatants' awareness and perceptions of laws and policies related to gender-based violence (GBV) also provide insight into their perceptions of power relations between men and women and acceptance of violence against women and girls. The questions in the survey did not measure understanding of the laws, but assessed general opinions and perceptions of the laws. Among the ex-combatants surveyed, 92 percent stated they know the laws regarding violence against women in Rwanda and 28 percent responded that they know the laws regarding violence against women (VAW) that are applicable in DRC. These findings are summarized in Tables 19 and 20.

More than 76 percent of the men think that the laws on GBV are too harsh in Rwanda. For example, 74 percent believe that the laws make it too easy for a woman to bring a charge of violence against a man. However, the men interviewed had just arrived in Rwanda, where they had been given information on the laws in the context of the D&R program. At the time of the interview, it was unlikely that they were yet informed about the impact of the laws on daily life. In contrast, 60 percent of men agree that the laws in DRC do not provide enough protection for victims of violence. In addition, 54 percent think the laws in DRC actually expose women to more stigmatization and pain, while only 14 percent believe the Rwandan laws provoke stigmatization.

**Table 19: Ex-Combatants' Perceptions of Rwandan Laws on Gender-Based Violence (Percent Agree or Partially Agree)**

About these laws in Rwanda, do you think that:	Percent Agree or Partially Agree (N=136)
They make it too easy for a woman to bring a violence charge against a man	73.5%
They are too harsh	76.5%
They do not provide enough protection for the victim of violence	26.9%
They expose the woman to even more stigmatization and pain	14%

**Table 20: Perceptions of DRC Laws on Gender-Based Violence (Percent Agree or Partially Agree)**

About these laws in DRC, do you think that:	Percent Agree or Partially Agree (N=48)
They make it too easy for a woman to bring a violence charge against a man	36.2%
They are too harsh	22.9%
They do not provide enough protection for the victim of violence	60.4%
They expose the woman to even more stigmatization and pain	54.2%

These figures indirectly illustrate the belief that the Rwandan laws are “over-protecting” the position of women in the society, while it is believed that women in DRC are not protected enough. Generally, the ex-combatants believe that women in Rwanda have a different position in society than women in DRC. Although ex-combatants are newly returned to Rwanda, they have received trainings on gender policies in Rwanda during their time in Mutobo Center, which may have informed this opinion.

# 7. Mental Health

Several earlier IMAGES studies carried out in conflict and post-conflict settings – including Croatia, Bosnia, Rwanda and DRC – have included questions concerning mental health issues specific to the conflict and the related displacement of interviewees in each of those contexts. We have followed the same process in this study but added additional questions specifically related to the context of combatants and ex-combatants. Some questions were added to assess the mental health condition of respondents and the presence of some severe indicators of mental health problems. Questions were used from self-reporting assessment scales, with simple questions about exposure to traumatic events and participant’s reports of presence of symptoms.

The aim was not to evaluate the mental health state of ex-combatants, but merely to explore if severe mental health problems may be identified, and if those problems could be associated with certain coping strategies that include the use of violence against women or partners. The results show the presence of symptoms of mental health and psychosocial problems. The term mental health disturbance is not used as a medical psychiatric classification, but refers to the presents of symptomatology that is disturbing mental and social functioning.

The survey included questions about symptoms in five clusters of mental functioning: cognitive, emotional, relational, depression symptoms and behavioral.<sup>22</sup> All men who scored high on symptoms in at least three clusters were categorized as possessing a high probability of having a severe mental health disturbance. This is a conservative calculation, as many people indicated suffering symptoms to a high

degree, but had less than three or four symptoms over the three clusters. It is likely that those respondents suffer from a mental health condition like depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other anxiety disorders, but, as stated above, clinical assessment is needed to make any diagnosis.

This chapter presents the analyzed data on the mental health conditions of respondents. Further analysis showed a significant relation between severe mental health disturbances, age group, time spent in armed groups and gender equality attitudes.

## 7.1 General Symptoms and Related Mental Health Conditions

The survey asked men a number of questions regarding their mental health state and experiences over the past year and over the past month. A summary of some of the findings is below:

- 72.9 percent are disturbed daily by images and experiences that happened in DRC.
- 11.2 percent attempted suicide in the last year.
- 19.4 percent often/sometimes think about committing suicide.
- 22.8 percent had auditory hallucinations in the past year; 13.8 percent heard voices in the past month.
- 22.2 percent had visual hallucinations past year; 14 percent in the past month.
- 22.8 percent had symptoms of dissociation in the past month (feeling cut off and not having any emotions).
- In total, 16.6 percent show a combination of symptoms in the past year that indicate a post-traumatic stress disorder.

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22 Adapted screening tools: SRQ 20 (WHO) questions to detect mental health disorder in low-income countries; post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptom checklists, adapted from Weis and Warner (1997).

**Table 21: Mental Health Indicators  
(Percent of Men Severely Affected)**

Clusters of Mental Health Problems	Percent Severely Affected
1. Cognitive disturbance (concentration problems, negative thoughts)	33.8%
2. Emotional arousal (thoughts and feelings like fear or panic)	30.7%
3. Affection and social relations with others	33.8%
4. Depression (suicide/suicidal thoughts, hallucinations)	18.6%
5. Behavior/coping strategies with problems	19.3%

The findings show that about one third of respondents scored high on indicators for having a severe mental health problem, as shown in Table 21. These problems demand further diagnosis and proper treatment. Given the fact that the men have been in a kind of shock since they left the armed groups and came to Rwanda, the presence of symptoms of a mental health condition should be examined with caution. The men came to Rwanda a few weeks before participating in the survey, and they have suddenly found themselves in a situation where they no longer need to fear for their physical security. They may feel they have left their “prisons” in the bush, but at the same time feel insecure about the future. The possibility of those symptoms disappearing over time without some mental health intervention is probably small; it is more likely that those severe

**Box 4: Mental Health Symptoms as Described by Ex-Combatants in the Mutobo Center**

**Thinking Too Much: Depression and Fear**

*“I always have a severe headache, also because of the sounds of gunshots that never leave my head. I also have periodical fear that disturbs my heart as if a bomb had exploded nearby.”*

*“I fear what may come, how to sustain my family; I don’t know where I come from, have no family, no land, no education.”*

**Nightmares and Insomnia**

*“Even yesterday I dreamed of the killings of my parents and little brother. I never could bury them properly.”*

*“Many nights I don’t sleep; I have dreams that I see dead people. I cry in my sleep. Most of the men in our dormitory are awake during the night.”*

**Hallucinations**

*“I hear the screaming of my family, before they were killed.”*

*“I always see the images of my comrades who were killed by Mai Mai by machetes.”*

*“I hear gunshots; I see things that are not really there. I see people that were killed, they are screaming at me. I see very often things that are not there and I hear voices that are only in my head.”*

**Agitation and Anger Outbursts**

*“It happens to me often that I become very angry with my friends, and my wife and children are afraid of me, for my anger.”*

*“I feel lot of anger, I am nervous, I keep the anger inside here. I have to control myself in the center. It makes me depressed. I isolate myself to control me.”*

**Flashbacks and Intrusive Thoughts**

*“For example, one night I took the gun and I nearly killed my wife thinking I was shooting at my enemy, and other times I kicked my wife when were in bed as I was remembering the kind of physical exercises we were doing during our refresh courses.”*

*“I see the death screaming to me; I cannot do anything. I see the many amputated bodies and I feel powerless. I see dead bodies everywhere, the dead are talking to me, but I cannot help them. I hear them crying.”*

symptoms will develop into further mental health disturbances.

The qualitative research confirmed the findings of the quantitative data. Most men who participated in the focus group discussions (FGDs) and individual interviews appear to be severely affected mentally and suffering from several symptoms. The effects of these symptoms on their daily life are disturbing for them, as explained by several ex-combatants. Many ex-combatants suffer from physical problems, such as headaches, general body pains and stomach-related problems that could be explained as psychosomatic symptoms related to the trauma. As one ex-combatant described it:

*“When I remember the bush, I feel pain in my head and stomach. It is something I fail to understand how this link to my head and stomach.”*

## 7.2 Relationship Between Age and Mental Health Problems

As explained earlier in the report, many of the ex-combatants are younger men (under 30 years old) and most respondents were exposed to multiple traumatic events before the age of 18 years old. The impact of a shattered childhood in refugee camps, military camps and conflict areas has had a clear impact on the mental health of these younger ex-combatants. One of the younger ex-combatants who joined an armed group as a child stated:

*“We saw terrible things, and I am sure that we are not safe in our hearts. Something must be wrong there.”*

In a focus group with young ex-combatants, some of the younger men were in a very bad state. Talking about mental health problems, one young man put his fingers in his ears, as if he wanted to stop the noise. Another young man, giving words to what we observed in the group, said:

*“Every person who is normal cannot forget the sufferings we went through. We see bad images of dead bodies, people agonizing, sounds of bombs and gunshots every day in our heads.”*

In the table 22, we also see that respondents who

**Table 22: Cognitive Disturbance by Age at which Men Arrived in DRC**

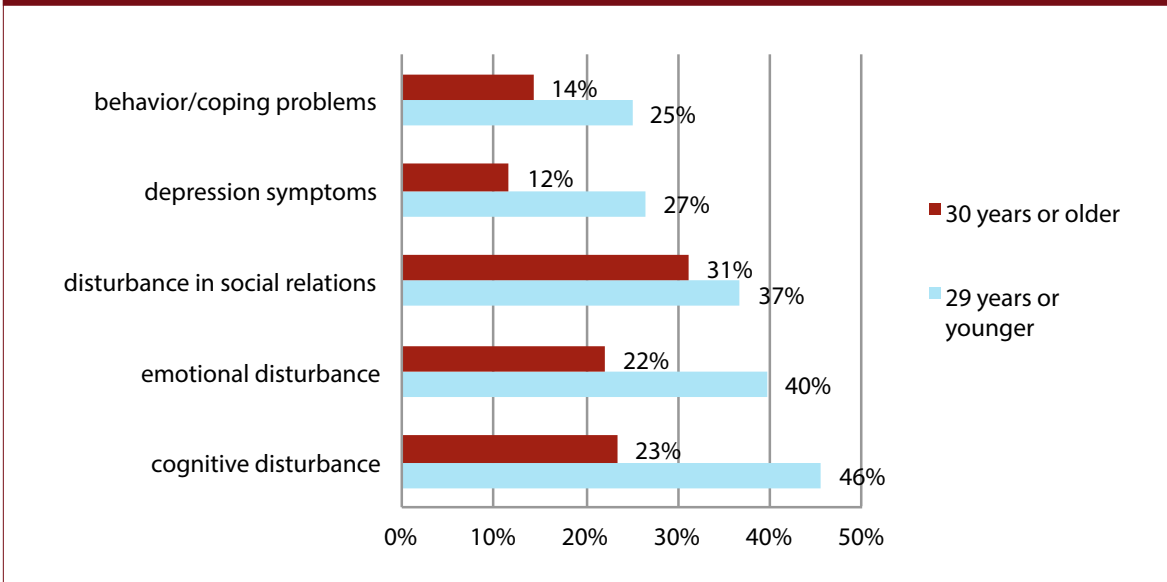
At what age did you start to serve as a combatant in DRC?	No cognitive disturbance & disturbance in social relations	Cognitive disturbance & disturbance in social relations
Age 15 or younger	60%	40%
Age 16 or older	68.2%	31.8%

were 16 years old or older when they started serving as combatants report experiencing cognitive disturbance or disturbance in social relations less often. This finding confirms the assumption that children who began to serve in armed groups at a very young age (at 15 years old or younger) are more affected than those who started (still at a young age) at 16 years old and older. However, this finding is not statistically significant. Almost 24 percent of respondents were younger than 15 years old when they joined the armed groups.

Figure 9 compares reports of mental health disturbances across all five clusters between men under 30 years old and those 30 years old and older. The findings indicate that men under 30 years old are more affected by mental health disturbances. These men were 10 years old or younger in 1994. Due to their young age, they are less able to cope adequately with stress and problems, and therefore more at risk of developing mental health problems.

One thought-provoking finding was that ex-combatants who lived only part of the time with their families during childhood had a greater likelihood of having a severe mental health disturbance, while ex-combatants who either always or never lived with their parents during childhood scored lower (Figure 10). This suggests that boys whose environment changed during childhood are probably less equipped, emotionally and mentally, to deal with multiple traumatic events, such as killing, facing the death of others and fearing being killed. Living in a more stable environment during childhood, either in a family or an armed group, may make men less vulnerable to mental health disturbances, compared to ex-combatants who had to leave their family envi-

**Figure 9: Reports of Mental Health Disturbance According to Age**

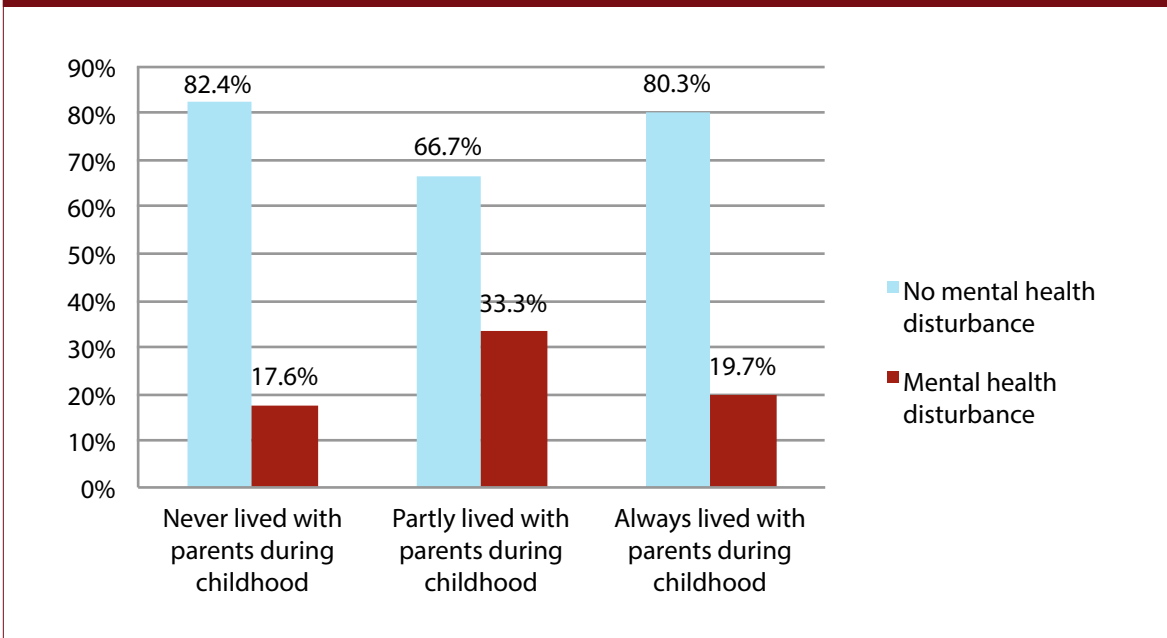


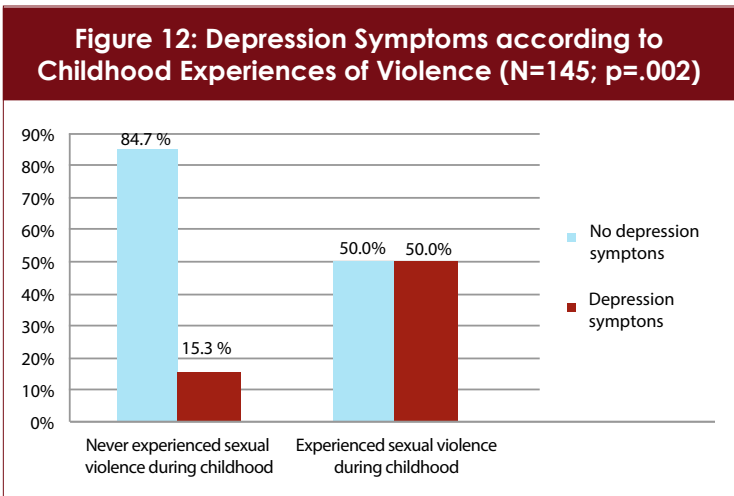
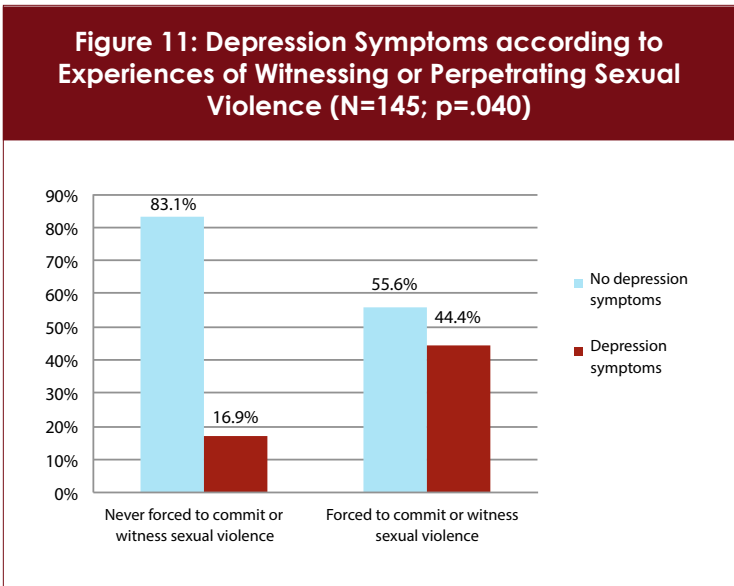
ronment during childhood. Nonetheless, caution is needed in speculating about this finding, as the relationship is not significant.

Additional findings on mental health relate to men's experiences with sexual violence or experiences witnessing sexual violence either as a combatant or dur-

ing childhood. Men who had been ordered to have sex or to witness others having sex during their time as a combatant score significantly ( $p=.040$ ) higher on having a mental health disorder, and significantly higher ( $p=.004$ ) on having a behavioral problem, than men who did not have these experiences (Figure 11). In addition, 50 percent of ex-combatants

**Figure 10: Mental Health Disturbance According to Childhood Caretakers (N=145;  $p=0.165$ )**





who experienced sexual violence during childhood are currently reporting symptoms of depression. The percentage of men reporting these symptoms is much lower among respondents who never experienced sexual violence during childhood (15.3 percent). These data are summarized in Figure 12.

**7.3 Relationship Between Coping Behaviors and Mental Health Conditions**

The survey also assessed the different styles of coping that men use in dealing with their experiences and problems. Coping strategies aim to deal with stressful and difficult situations in life, and the ways in which people cope with stress are determined by

several factors, including their psychosocial history as well as the context in which people live their lives. A distinction is made between positive coping styles and negative coping styles.

Negative coping styles can help men to forget in the short-term, but may create many other problems. Examples of negative coping styles include the following responses to the question of how men deal with their problems: to get drunk or use drugs to forget, or to avoid talking about their problems. Some of the men also start fights with others, or pay for sex, as a way to forget their problems. The survey found that almost 32 percent of all respondents have never talked to others about their experiences and almost 20 percent have had thoughts of committing suicide in the last year.

Men older than 30 years old more often demonstrate positive coping styles compared to younger men. In their attempt to deal with their problems and the experiences they had in the past, they engage in sports; they talk to other people, including family members; they play with their kids; and they pray. Men who report using

more negative coping strategies score higher on mental health problems compared with those who use positive coping strategies. The men who report using more negative coping strategies scored higher on cognitive, emotional and relation disturbance: They think negatively about themselves and life in general, start fights with others easily and are distrustful of other people.

**7.3.1 Alcohol Consumption as a Form of Self-Medication**

Many men reported using alcohol during their time in DRC, but almost 30 percent of men stated that they never drink alcohol. However, a large number of men (46 percent) were drinking at least two to four times a week, and five alcoholic drinks on one

**Table 23: Use of Alcohol by Existence of Depression Symptoms (N=145; p=.015)**

I drink alcohol alone to get drunk and forget	No depression symptoms	Depression symptoms
Yes	72.1%	27.9%
No	88.1%	11.9%

occasion was not exceptional. Of those drinking more than five drinks per occasion, over seven percent did this weekly and 10 percent did it almost daily. As it is hard to define when consumption of alcohol should be considered alcohol abuse, respondents were asked whether they worry about their use of alcohol. In total, 28 percent of all the men stated they were worried about the consequences of their alcohol use, indicating that they are aware of the problems caused by alcohol abuse.

Alcohol abuse often recognized as a form of self-medication used to forget the problems and disturbing images that are bothering a man's mind. This study also found alcohol abuse to be associated with using violence and with other behavioral problems. Comparative analysis showed a significant relationship between the use of alcohol to forget and having suicidal thoughts or trying to commit suicide. Not surprisingly, a significant relationship was also found between the use of alcohol to forget and symptoms of depression (Table 23).

#### 7.4 Coping Styles by Age Groups

A comparative analysis was done of different coping strategies and the age at which a man began to serve in an armed group. The analysis compared men who started to serve in an armed group at 15 years old or younger with those who started when they were 16 years old or older. For most coping strategies, no significant difference was found, except for having sex with sex workers and going to the bar to get drunk, which was more often done by ex-combatants that started serving when they were 16 years old and older.

Even more striking is the finding that twice as many ex-combatants who became combatants when they were 16 years old or older thought about committing

suicide (22 percent) compared with those who began at age 15 or younger (11 percent). An explanation for this finding might be related to the reasons why the ex-combatants originally joined the armed groups. It is known that after age 15, many young boys have been recruited by force in the region. While younger children were also recruited by force and taken away from their families, many of them lost their parents

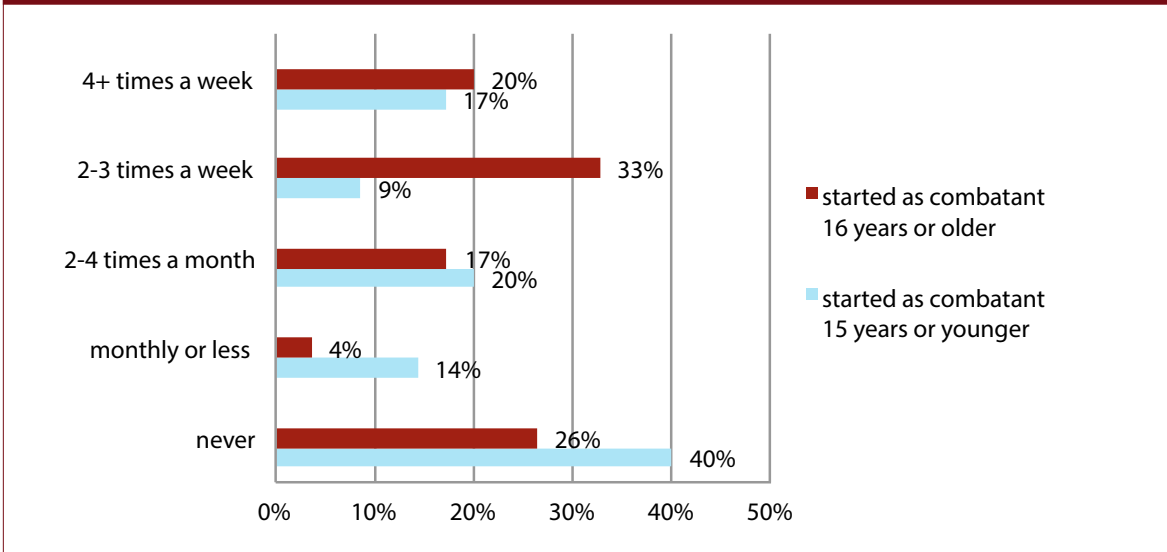
while they were in camps, or fleeing the conflict, and joined armed groups to find a shelter and safety.

The perspectives of those who were taken away by force and those who experienced their superiors in the armed group as their "protectors" are different. Also, the combatants who began at an older age (above 15 years old) were more aware of the violent acts they were committing, while for the ex-combatants who began as children (15 years old or younger), being part of an armed group became their "normal life," and they learned at a younger age to adapt to this life.

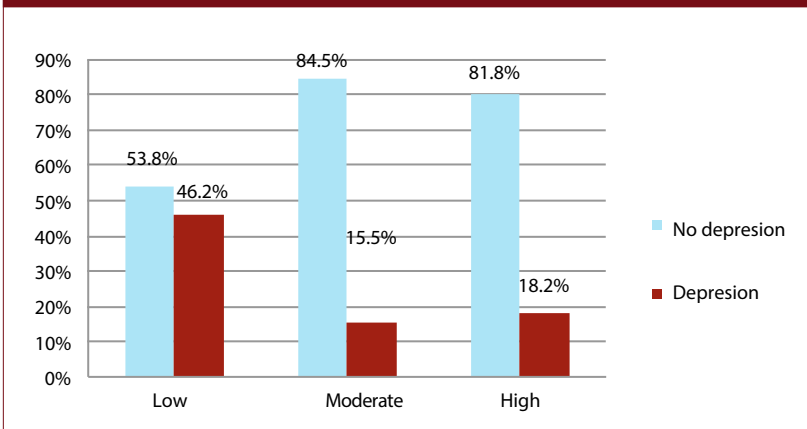
As illustrated in Table 22, ex-combatants who joined armed groups before 15 years old display more severe mental health disturbances. Being exposed to lack of care and multiple traumas at a young age often affects the development of capacities such as empathy, tolerance, moral reasoning and resilience, as well as affective attachment; this increases the likelihood that the men will use violence throughout their lives. This may also explain the "normalization of violence" demonstrated by these ex-combatants compared to other groups. Further research is needed to understand the different perspectives between these two groups and their different mental health needs.

The survey also found that alcohol use between the two groups differs, with respondents who began in the armed groups at 16 years old or older using significantly more alcohol than the others (p=.014). Figure 13 compares the difference in alcohol use between ex-combatants who began serving at 15 years old and younger and those who began at 16 years old and older.

**Figure 13: Alcohol Use According to Age at which Respondents Become Combatants (Percent Report)**



**Figure 14: GEM Score According to Presence of Depression Symptoms (N=143; p=.029)**



their feelings of being inferior in relation to their partners. Moreover, the higher stress levels due to depression may easily contribute to conflicts with a partner.

A significant trend was also found in the relationship between having committed sexual violence and experiencing severe mental disturbance. The findings indicate that 44 percent of the men who reported committing sexual violence face severe mental dis-

turbance, compared with 21 percent of men who did not report committing sexual violence (Table 24).

## 7.5 Relation Between Gender Relations and Mental Health

Survey results also show a significant relationship between mental health and gender perceptions and attitudes. Men with lower scores on the GEM Scale more frequently suffer depression symptoms. Out of the men who scored low on the GEM scale, 46 percent show symptoms of depression, as shown in Figure 14. Symptoms of depression include negative self-esteem, feeling inferior to others, not being able to enjoy life, not sleeping well and feeling pessimistic about the future. Men may try to compensate

**Table 24: Perpetration of Sexual Violence and Mental Disturbance (N=143; p=.025)**

	No mental disturbance	Mental disturbance
Did not commit sexual violence	79.5%	20.5%
Committed sexual violence	55.6%	44.4%



## 7.6 Risk and Protective Factors for Developing Mental Health Problems

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other trauma-related disorders generally manifest themselves over time when people return to “normal” life. An individual’s risk of developing mental health disorders, as well as ability to protect against or cope with mental health concerns, will depend on various factors like available social support systems, socio-economic opportunities and many specific personal factors, such as coping styles.

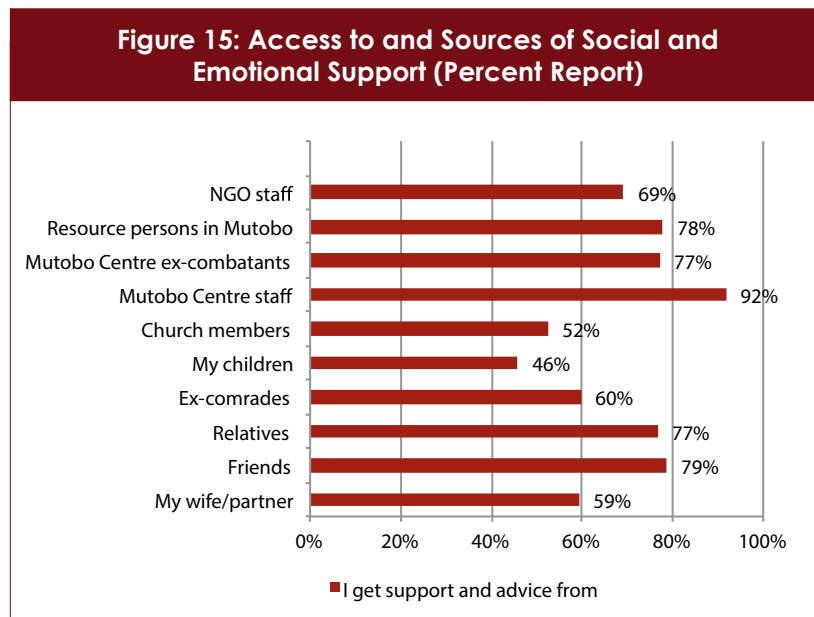
The likelihood that many of the ex-combatants surveyed will develop serious mental health disorders is high, given the fact that they were exposed to long-term and multiple traumatic events and extreme violence. They lack formal education and have limited job and income generation prospects. In addition, some men have no family in their “new” country. The intimacy of family life may protect some men, but for others, intimacy in family or personal relations can become a trigger for overwhelming fears and vulnerability that may be expressed in anger and behavioral problems. Many of the men were living in armed groups and the bush since childhood. They experienced a childhood that was characterized by trauma and were forced to grow into men fast. These former child soldiers may have little social and emotional skills in building healthy and affective relations. Vulnerability is a dangerous feeling for men that have survived because they were tough and omnipotent.

Reintegration into community and family life requires serious attention and guidance, for the sake of the health of the individual man, his current or future family, and the safety and security of the community. The internal mental and emotional insecurity of a “psychologically wounded”

fighter can become a threat to the security of people around him. The mental health problems men face should be taken very seriously in social reintegration programs. The programs should acknowledge the complexity of the trauma of ex-combatants, their families and communities. As one key informant in Mutobo Center stated: “An ex-combatant should first of all reintegrate his mind, before he can be reintegrated in society.”

### 7.6.1 Protective Factors: Social and Emotional Support

Social and emotional support in a person’s own environment is generally an important protective factor against the development of PTSD or other mental health problems after exposure to traumatic stress. As presented in Figure 15, 68 percent of the ex-combatants report having someone to ask advice and support, but almost 32 percent of men report having no one. Most of the men get advice from the Mutobo Center staff (92 percent), followed by friends (79 percent), ex-comrades (77 percent) and family (77 percent). Resource persons in the center and fellow ex-combatants are seen as important sources of support for most of the men. This finding suggests that family and friends are not currently the most important sources, but the ex-combatants may depend on them more fully after completing their three months in the D&R program.



Comparison analysis showed that respondents who were 29 years old or younger have less extensive social support systems within the family than older men. Men under 30 years old may have no family left, and as explained earlier, many of them have never lived in Rwanda before. Men older than 29 years have significantly more support from wives and children, compared with the younger men, who may not have yet wives and children.

When asked what type of support men need for their social and emotional problems, more than 90 percent say they need psychosocial support through religion and praying or family mediation (Table 25). There is obviously high demand for family mediation, indicating high levels of stress related to family reintegration. Nearly 80 percent say they need biomedical help to support to

them in dealing with their problems. As indicated in the previous section, men are aware of their needs to get help and support to cope with the challenges they face.

**Table 25: Men's Reports of Need for Help and Support**

Do you think that you would need any of the following to help deal with your social and emotional problems?	Percent Report "Yes"
Biomedical help	79.9%
Traditional healer	15.4%
Traditional family rituals	7.7%
Praying/religious rituals	94.4%
Psychological counseling	84.7%
Family mediation	94.4%
Discussions with other ex-combatant men and families	74.3%

# 8. Manhood: From Combatant to Civilian

## 8.1 Perceptions of Masculinity: Being a Combatant but not a “Real Man”

The previous chapters showed how men’s identities and personalities had been shaped by their experiences from early childhood onwards, and as combatants in armed groups. This chapter will explore the impact of the transition period from a combatant to a civilian on men’s perceptions of manhood.

Most of the respondents were motivated to join an armed group to simply survive. Most of the men came to DRC with their parents or others after the violence of 1994, and many joined an armed group after losing their family and basic means for survival. Some men explained that at first, their commanders promised them good positions upon returning to a liberated Rwanda. Over the years, however, they realized that they were trapped in the bush as combatants with little opportunity for advancement

Several accounts revealed how ex-combatants risked their life when they escaped the armed group and came to the Mutobo Center. When they heard about the reintegration program, men took the risk to escape because they wanted to become a “real man” – someone who is responsible for his family and able to protect his family. Combatant life did not allow them to build a family life, as they had no opportunity to obtain a piece of land to support and provide for the family, and they were always at risk of being killed.

The transition from combatant to ex-combatant occurs in several stages and is not the same for all ex-combatants. Qualitative data show that, as combatants, many men felt powerless and useless as a man for a variety of reasons. Most young men and men with a lower military rank said they felt like prisoners of the armed groups and not real men. Below are several observations:

*“There was nothing like becoming a man, because even other men in the armed groups could easily enslave you.”*

*“I suffered too much; we lost so many things. I have no education, our superiors made us suffer a lot and we were like their slaves. It hardened our hearts.”*

*“You know even if we were fighting, we were foreigners or refugees with such terrible living conditions and our properties did not really belong to us. This life was weakening us and that is why, actually, I personally decided to come.”*

When it comes to manhood, most of the men refer to having a family and being able to provide for them as the main factor that makes them feel like a “real man.” To most men, being part of an armed group or being in possession of arms did not seem to be important in being a real man. These responses are captured in Table 26 below. However, men did report that they liked being respected by other men. In addition, three quarters of the men said that it is important to have power over others in order to be a “real man.” The ex-combatants’ answers show the desire to be a family man, a father who prays with his wife and children in church, and a husband who collaborates with his wife in running the household. Such a “real man” also needs to own property.

Many factors in the men’s current situation seriously challenge this picture of what it means to be a “real man”: The men have no property, no work, no house, and no schooling. The hope and desire to have a family life and achieve a respected position as a man will be challenged in the often-difficult process of reintegration. Moreover, all ex-combatants lost some form of power and respect upon becoming civilians. They no longer have a uniform, gun and military control, and these will not be automatically replaced by equivalent advantages in civilian life. Those factors may contribute to increased stress and challenges during the process of reintegration.

**Table 26: Perceptions of Masculinity  
(Percent Who Believe Statement is  
Very or Moderately Important)**

What makes a man a “real man”?	Percent Who Believe Statement is Very or Moderately Important
Owning property	81.4%
Being respected by another man	87.6%
Having power over others	74.5%
Being in possession of arms	11.8%
Being part of an armed group	4.9%
Having wife and children	87.6%
Having control over other men	51.7%
Having control over women	51.7%
Being able to provide income for the family	91.0%
Having comrades and close friends	91.7%
Drinking beer in the bar with friends	42.1%
Ready to fight if needed to defend someone/ something	61.1%
Sharing experiences with other men	95.2%
Having sex whenever I want	20.8%
Having sex only in consent with partner	89.0%
Playing with my children	82.6%
Being the father of sons	53.8%
Being the father of daughters	54.9%
Praying with my wife and children in the church	92.3%
Collaborating with my wife to run our household	95.2%

The findings are an indication that the meaning of manhood shifts in relation to social context. In each context, different aspects of the perceived defining characteristics of a man’s identity come into play. In an armed group, the possession of arms and power is important in determining manhood, but in a new civilian context, other factors (such as having a family and owning land) determine ideas of manhood. In this specific transition period, the aspects that make someone feel like a man are not yet clearly defined or realized. The following sections explore the impact of the transition from combatant to civilian on men’s desires and expectations of becoming a provider for the family.

## 8.2 Transition to Civilian Life

### 8.2.1 Increase of Economic Stress

Both the qualitative and quantitative data show that the transition from combatant to civilian life has increased men’s stress levels. Ex-combatants realize that they cannot use the power of guns any more to get access to food and money, and that they need to find alternatives to generate income. In addition, their view of the future is not optimistic due to lack of education and work experience, and not having land to cultivate or a house to live in. This situation makes them feel insecure about the future and increases their level of stress. Table 27 compares men’s reported stress levels of life as a combatant and life as a civilian. Previous findings have confirmed that high levels of economic stress were a daily reality for civilian men in DRC and Rwanda.

Ex-combatants who are in process of transitioning to civilian life experience levels of economic stress similar to the stress levels of men in DRC and Rwanda. The findings suggest that providing for the family becomes a much bigger issue for ex-combatants once they are back in civilian life, compared with the time they were combatants. This certainly adds to the burden of reintegration for ex-combatants, and to their self-perception of failing their own manhood as a civilian man who has nothing to provide for his family and himself. In their own words:

*“We were used of getting food with the gun, we are likely not keeping this habit here, but how can we survive here when we have no house, no land, no education?”*

**Table 27: Economic Stress as Combatants and Ex-Combatants (Percent Report)**

Stress of not being able to provide for the family	While a Combatant in DRC (n=145)	Since Being an Ex-Combatant in Mutobo Center (n=145)
Yes	21.3%	49.6%
Sometimes	14.9%	18.4%
No	62.4%	29.1%

*“We have nothing: no money, no cow, no land, how are we going to start from?”*

### 8.2.2 Expectations of Manhood and Adaptations to Civilian Life

**A real man provides for his family:** While combatants were less occupied with providing for the basic needs of their family, ex-combatants identify strongly with expectations of manhood in Rwandan civilian society – a real Rwandan man has a house, land and income. Not being able to provide for the family is considered a failure of manhood. In qualitative data, too, most men see this as the biggest challenge for the future. As one man said:

*“What kind of man are you when you have no house, no land to cultivate. You are not a real Rwandan man: you are like a half man.”*

**A real man has power and properties:** All combatants had a certain level of power over others with their guns. Men with higher military ranks clearly had more power than privates, and several accounts show that the higher-ranked ex-combatants experience higher levels of stress when it comes to losing power. As the men themselves note:

*“The civilian has property and other material life, but the demobilized officer has nothing. It is like a parachutist falling from the plane without a parachute. In DRC, I was a decision-maker, but in Rwanda I am nothing.”*

*“Physically and biologically, I am a man, but socially I am “rien et a nulle” [nothing]. A man is somebody who has power to do something – he will help his family. But now, I cannot do anything to support my family – I have become like all civilians.”*

One reason for men’s increased stress levels as ex-combatants is related to the expectations these men had when coming to Rwanda. Other qualitative data illustrated that a major reason for the ex-combatants to leave the armed groups was the fact that in DRC they were not able to own their own piece of land and, therefore, did not have the opportunity to become responsible men to their family. The desire to have physical security and no longer fear being killed was also a reason for many to come back to Rwanda. As one ex-combatant put it:

*“Coming back home is good for all of us because it is more secure even if we may face poverty. I have a family in DRC, which I have to sustain and when I remember my comrades who died at the front it gave me motivation for me to survive because I even survived where things were tougher.”*

Now back in Rwanda, the men are somewhat safe in terms of physical security, but they have to start from scratch to build their lives and have access to property, which is completely different from the life to which they were accustomed as combatants. Their own words testify to their struggles between hope and fears for the future as civilians:

*“In the bush, if you were good at using a gun you were qualified as a combatant. But civil life is a different thing; it requires a lot that I do not have.”*

*“I will be able to get some jobs requiring just use of physical strength, and on top of that I have my military discipline, which I think are assets for me to fit in this society. But now I am less of a man. In Rwanda a man who does not have his house is almost nothing.”*

*“The toughness I gained from the bush can assist me when I reintegrate into civil life. The bush did not give me what the civil life requires in Rwanda. Now I am 30 years old but I have no education. So, what shall I do? How will I be able to build my house and sustain my family?”*

### 8.3 From Fighter to Psychological Disarmament: Manhood, Identity Construction and Coping

As described earlier, ex-combatants have passed through many traumatic periods and events in their lives that have shaped their manhood, their identity and themselves. This adds to their levels of stress, because they need to adapt to a new situation and learn to cope in different ways. The means they previously used to cope were intertwined with their masculine identities, based on toughness and control. The transition to civilian life requires them to redefine these coping strategies.

Men explained that they became “a man” in the bush. The transition from childhood to manhood was often a brutal process in which they were forced to develop the tough characteristics of masculine identities. They had to cope with traumatic events, and they learned to do that by insulating themselves against vulnerability – becoming and remaining omnipotent, tough and powerful. Some of the coping mechanisms they adopted include:

- 1) Become tough: It hardened their hearts; men had to become tough; the suffering made them become mature. As one man put it: “I can survive everywhere: this is what I learned.”
- 2) Fighting instead of crying: The consequences of trauma (e.g. feeling weak, crying all the time) disappeared after becoming a combatant (e.g. by taking revenge for the killing of parents).
- 3) Power and control with guns: Fear (e.g. of being killed or having no food) was controlled by the possession of guns. Guns

provided protection and control, created security and gave access to food and means for family (often through looting).

Several accounts refer to the way men learned to cope with the traumatic events by becoming “mature,” “able to do all you want” and “able to survive everywhere.” Their omnipotence became a psychological shield. This should be understood as a necessary coping strategy to survive the horrible and dangerous circumstances in which they lived. This feeling of omnipotence helped them not to feel their weakness, their fears and stress in ways that could endanger their survival.

However, in the transition to civilian life, this coping strategy is no longer relevant: the men have no guns, no power and no access to food through abuse of power or violence. The lack of power and control works as a kind of psychological disarmament and creates feelings of lack of protection, weakness and vulnerability. The symptoms described in the section on mental health (Section 7) may become worse because their former armament against vulnerability is no longer intact and this may cause feelings of overwhelming panic, anger, and fear, among many other symptoms.

The ex-combatants have left the war zones, but memories and experiences may begin to bother them at night and during the day. Their psychological defense mechanisms are dismantled in an environment where their life is not in immediate danger, where they have neither guns nor control but do have a lot of time to think about an uncertain future. However, no other coping strategy has been established for feelings and images that were always under control earlier. The transition to civilian life demands that ex-combatants adapt to life in ways that may affect their identities as men.

# 9. Perspectives for the Future

## 9.1 Between Hope and Fear

More than half of all men responded that they are relatively hopeful and optimistic about the future, as seen in Table 28 below. Qualitative data also reveal their fears and insecurity about the future.

How do you feel about:	Percent Report "Very Optimistic"
Starting a new life as a civilian	62.7%
Having a safe family life with wife and children	67.1%
Getting accepted and reunited into the community	80%
Finding a job and means to provide for the family	52%
Making new friends in Rwanda	72%
Rejoining family	80%
Rejoining old friends	70.7%

Comparative analysis shows that younger men (29 years and younger) are less optimistic about rejoining their families than men 30 years and older, as shown in Table 29. As explained earlier, most of the

How do you feel about:	29 years old or younger (Percent Report "Very Optimistic")	30 years old or older (Percent Report "Very Optimistic")
Finding a job and means to provide for the family	58.8%	45.5%
Rejoining family	83.8%	92.2%

respondents were very young when they left Rwanda; about half of them were younger than 10 years old, so their social network in Rwandan society is very limited. However, young men are more optimistic about finding jobs and the means to provide for their family than older men.

In the qualitative research, the respondents seem less optimistic than is indicated by the survey results. The narratives reveal how men struggle with the loss of status and control over their lives and the accompanying changes in their self-identities. Many feel that they have moved from being somebody, to becoming nobody. In the words of the men themselves:

*"Our life as a combatant has given us powers, but those became useless."*

*"In the bush we did not worry about material life, because we knew we would get there when we win the war. But now things are different; as I said, I have nothing while my peers who stayed are stable, educationally and materially. I cannot pretend to be a man, when I don't fulfill the requirements of being a man."*

*"It is fact that I was powerful in the bush, because I had a team of militaries I was heading as a Sergeant, but that is history now."*

As explained earlier, ex-combatants with higher military ranks in the armed groups find it especially hard to cope with their loss of status. In the focus group discussion (FGD) with higher-ranking ex-combatants, they shared their frustration about the lack of acknowledgement of their status in the reintegration process. Some respondents suggested those with higher ranks should get special treatment and higher reintegration allowances:

*“Integration should take into account the different ranks and categories to help them have a say in their society. Actually integration should create a kind of balanced life for the demobilized. I wish an effective integration that takes into account the individual differences.”*

*“I did not do military academy but I went through various military trainings, and now that I am back to my country, my background is not recognized. I am always considered as a Senior Six Leaver/A’level.<sup>23</sup> This is frustrating. We are like a president of a poor country who may need to lead the life of ordinary person from a rich country.”*

## 9.2 Insecurity and Fear for the Future

The uncertainty about the future and fear of how they will be treated in Rwanda creates a lot of stress for ex-combatants. The fear of being killed has been replaced by the fear of a life spent in extreme poverty, a life in which they feel powerless. As noted earlier, most of these men have little or no education, and they realize that Rwanda has developed and many people have higher levels of education in the years they have been away fighting. They realize that they cannot compete with the Rwandans who stayed in the country, and they fear a marginalized life as a poor man without a piece of land or a house. As one ex-combatant expresses it:

*“Rwanda became a developed country, with intellectuals and educated people. How can we compete with those men to find jobs? I have nothing to offer.”*

### 9.2.1. Fear of Social Rejection Instead of Receiving Respect

Several men expressed their fears of being accused of having participated in the genocide, and they fear rejection by community members and family members after leaving the Mutobo Center. Though they claim to have done nothing wrong during the genocide; they fear that others may use accusations to reject and punish them. Some described their experiences as follows:

*“The first week my family received me well, but they divided the land already and don’t want to share the family property with me. I have many problems with my brothers now.”*

*“Some community members received me well the first day, but many are seeing me as interahamwe [the Hutu militias who played a main role in carrying out the Rwandan genocide], looking down on me.”*

## 9.3 Opportunities

Despite all their fears and problems, most ex-combatants that participated in this study are motivated to build a new and positive life in Rwanda. They imagine how they can become useful in Rwanda, and how they can use the qualities and skills they learned as combatants to succeed.

In the interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), men assessed the hardship and tough life they experienced as combatants in the bush as both positive and negative, experiences which shaped their sense of what it means to be a man. They gained skills, learned to survive and enjoyed the power of being independent and in control over others. They also regret the horrible things they have experienced, and the time lost to obtain a good education, build a house and have their own piece of land in Rwanda. Nevertheless, they see their Rwandan identity,

### Box 5: Opportunities for Ex-Combatants to Build a New Life

#### Discipline:

*“As a military I can easily adjust to civil life and can even succeed even more than civilians.”*

#### From God:

*“I would love to have a job but as I have no required skills I think it will be difficult for me to adjust but God willing I am sure I will make it.”*

#### From the government:

*“I want to be a barber. So, if I can get support I think this job can help me become a real man.”*

#### Life Can Only Become Better:

*“I suffered a lot to reach Rwanda and no matter how much I suffered I remain optimistic. I believe I will become a man now that I am back to my home country.”*

23 meone who finished secondary school.



Christianity, and discipline as positive contributions to building a new life. Ex-combatants in this study see a future and opportunities for different reasons. Their narratives show entry points for programming and improvement of the reintegration process.

All the ex-combatants interviewed realize that they have lost opportunities. Some highlight the losses from the war (they were never able to return as heroes who liberated “their” Rwanda), as well as the fact that they lost time to develop (never got education), lost the chance to get access to family property and land and lost the chance to become “real” Rwandan men. The transition to current life has had a huge impact on the perspectives of ex-combatants in this stage of reintegration. The uncertain future, the need to adapt to the new situation, the urge to reunite with family and the imperative to find work and income are stress factors that add to their traumatic stress and mental health problems..

The ex-combatants left behind their uniforms and guns, so they are left with only the psychological weapons (e.g. being tough, acting powerful and feeling omnipotent) they developed to survive war and the bush. Their identity is shaped by the past, including their skills to cope and adapt to new circumstances.

To deconstruct their militarized masculinities and create alternatives that lead to new versions of manhood, ex-combatants will have to pass a “field full with landmines,” as one of them said. These landmines are hidden in social relations, in intimate partner relations, in finding a job and in being recognized in society. Any of these can be a trigger for emotional explosions, without knowing where in the psyche these mental health issues are hidden. Reintegration programs should include activities and programs to help men to identify their hidden psychological mines, to disarm them and create new ways to walk through the field.

## 10. Conclusions

This study focuses on perceptions of masculinity, gender norms and practices relating to gender equality and gender relations among ex-combatants who have spent four weeks or longer in the Demobilization and Reintegration program at the Mutobo Center. The outcomes show that men's perceptions of masculinities have been in a process of change since leaving the armed groups. The ex-combatants at the Mutobo Center are in a process of transition, which gives rise to uncertainty about the future, but also about their roles as men and their gendered identities. The uncertainty is related to the question of where they will fit in society after they leave the Mutobo Center. Their aspiration is to become a new kind of "real man," which they generally define as a father taking care of his family, being a breadwinner, and having power over others – this last characteristic being troubling because it implies and underlines their still inequitable attitudes about gender.

During the ex-combatants' time as combatants, power hierarchies played an important role in shaping their militarized male identities. Higher-ranking ex-combatants were used to having power over other combatants, and lower-ranking combatants were used to having power over civilians, via the use of guns and violence. Many men were dominated by their superiors and had to follow orders and sometimes endure abuses of power at the hands of their superiors. Abuse of power, violence and survival at all costs became strongly connected imperatives for these men while they served in armed groups.

However, besides being combatants, these men were also sons, brothers, partners of women, and fathers. Living in an environment of conflict and war has deeply affected the way they have been able to be sons, brothers, lovers, partners, husbands and fathers. These multiple experiences have created a gap between their aspirational versions of manhood and

their personal abilities and possibilities in present-day Rwanda. Most of the ex-combatants have spent a large part of their childhood and adolescence in armed groups, and they lack exposure to examples of family life in a safe environment, and to the common rites of passage from childhood to becoming partners and fathers.

Upon return to Rwanda, the power dynamics in these men's lives have changed. Higher-ranking ex-combatants are no longer in power over other combatants, and lower-ranking combatants no longer have power over civilians. On the other hand, they no longer suffer from their "enslaved" positions in the armed groups, but they still do not know what will replace these former roles.

Many combatants came back to Rwanda to become a "real" man – a man able to support his family members and to live with them together in his own house on his own property. Among the multiple challenges faced by these men are their lack of education and job experience, social stigma against ex-combatants, and reluctance of family members to share property. These compounded factors create an enormous challenge for ex-combatants to deal with the high levels of stress and mental health problems related to a very violent past.

The study highlights the need for continued psychosocial assistance for ex-combatants and their families, because mental health conditions are one of the main factors that may inhibit a process of peaceful reintegration into family and society in the short- and long-term. In addition, economic opportunities and security are essential for strengthening and empowering ex-combatants for successful reintegration.

Reintegration should be approached as an interactive process between the ex-combatant and his social environment, and programs need to include active

participation of family and community. Given the many challenges these men may still face, the reintegration of ex-combatants in society cannot be separated from the reintegration of their minds. While they have left the war zones, many ex-combatants carry the memories of their time as combatants with them. These memories can become like psychological mines, ready to explode when danger and stress increase.

## 10.1 Key Recommendations by Programmatic Areas

### 10.1.1. Mental Health

- ▶ Continue to provide tailored mental health support for individual cases based on the conflict experience. Support should also ensure that (a) particular attention is paid to both the distinction between children and adults at time of treatment and age at recruitment, and (b) the project's existing psychosocial support includes psychosocial education – that is, how to deal with different emotions and situations in a constructive way, including learning to cope with internal psychological responses and responses from the social environment.
- ▶ Ensure psychosocial support adopts an integrated model for mental illness prevention and treatment, developed specifically for ex-combatants, their family members and the community, complementing individual treatment with culturally appropriate group-oriented approaches. Such a program could be based upon existing sociotherapy approaches successfully tested in Rwanda.<sup>24</sup>

### 10.1.2 Socialization of Manhood, Gender and Family Relations

- ▶ Life skills training, serving to mitigate negative coping mechanisms and tailored to the specific needs of male ex-combatants, including: interpersonal communications and relationships, promoting positive male role models, sexual-

ity, conflict management, social skills and life planning. The Rwandan Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC) partner, the Rwanda Men's Resource Center (RWAMREC), already provides relevant training to this end during the Pre-Discharge Orientation Program (PDOP), and there is great potential to build upon this introductory training to develop more comprehensive support throughout the reintegration process.<sup>25</sup>

- ▶ Programming considerations around masculinity in the D&R trajectory should be extended after the three-month program in the Mutobo Center. Deconstruction of militarized masculinities is a process that should include process-oriented training and guidance for the ex-combatant. Offering alternative role models that include non-violent versions of manhood may help these men shape new perspectives about their male identity. Perceptions, opinions and practices regarding masculinity and gender relations should become mainstreamed issues in all activities throughout the existing reintegration process. The RDRC's sensitization workshops and the existing plans for more comprehensive work with ex-combatants and their dependents can serve as an entry point to upscale this work based upon the existing RDRC partnership with RWAMREC. This process can also expand involvement of community members, including civilian returnees from DRC.
- ▶ Existing gender-based violence (GBV) prevention activities in Rwanda could be expanded or enhanced in those communities where ex-combatants return or settle. The Rwandan government already implements important GBV prevention programming that could be en-

24 To learn more about existing sociotherapy approaches successfully tested in Rwanda, visit [www.sociotherapy.org](http://www.sociotherapy.org)

25 In addition to raising awareness about masculinity and gender roles, process-oriented training and counseling methods could be introduced with a focus on men's coping strategies and traumatic backgrounds, in order to provide men and their families with a guided process for behavior change. The "Living Peace Groups" model tested by the World Bank/LOGiCA has consistently shown results of positive coping strategies and improved relationships; adapting existing curricula for ex-combatants in Rwanda could yield significant results. For more information, visit: [www.menbeyondwar.org](http://www.menbeyondwar.org)

hanced by considering the realities of returning ex-combatants. D&R programming provides a useful entry point to address GBV, as is currently the case in the PDOP. D&R programming provides the opportunity to build on this throughout the reintegration process through

the above-mentioned life-skills interventions and by making linkages to existing community-based GBV programs coordinated through the Rwandan Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) and encouraging ex-combatant participation accordingly.

### **Box 6: Examples of Community-Based Programs for Psychosocial Support and Gender-Based Violence Prevention**

#### **Community-Based Sociotherapy<sup>26</sup>**

A community-based group therapy approach was developed in Rwanda as a model for psycho-social support after the genocide. Groups of community members, with different histories (e.g. victims and/or perpetrators of the war and genocide), share daily problems (e.g. family conflicts, fear, mistrust, gender-based violence, stigma, poverty) in a weekly group during 15 weeks. In this process, the group functions as a therapeutic medium and facilitates the development of peer support structures. The groups are guided by two trained facilitators who aim to create a safe environment, where broken social relations can be restored and problems related to the aftermath of political violence can be shared, acknowledged and managed by the group working together.

#### **Living Peace Groups**

Living Peace Groups aim to help men and their partners in post-conflict settings to heal from their experiences of trauma, to restore their social and partner relations and to strengthen and develop positive coping strategies that exclude all forms of violence, including self-directed violence and sexual and gender-based violence.

Since 2012, Promundo, supported by the World Bank's LOGiCA (Learning on Gender & Conflict in Africa) Program, has worked with local partners in Burundi and DRC on the development of Living Peace Groups since 2012. Three curricula were developed, implemented and tested in Goma, DRC, in Luvungi, DRC, and in Burundi. These curricula were based on group-therapy best practices that have emerged from men and gender transformative group-educational programs developed by Promundo, which have been assessed in numerous impact evaluations around the world.

The group-therapy process has been used with survivors of sexual violence, husbands of conflict-related rape survivors and witnesses of genocide and other violence. It has been shown to consistently lead to improvements in couple relationships and more positive coping strategies. End-line results from the pilot phase confirm that, nearly universally, men and women participants report significant, positive changes, including reduced alcohol abuse and drinking; controlled frustration and aggression; income-sharing with wife and family; peace at home and happier children; and improved health.

#### **Good Neighbors Model**

The Good Neighbors Model is a community-based approach, developed and implemented since 2004 in Mozambique in a suburban area of Maputo, where many ex-combatants and families settled after the end of the civil war in Mozambique. A local non-governmental organization, CAPAZ, trained teams of good neighbors (both men and women) in communities to help families identify their problems and, if needed, to intervene in cases of violence and/or refer the families to public services (e.g. health, psychosocial and legal services).

These good neighbors, all volunteers, stay in close contact with local authorities and local public services. In the communities, they are highly respected for their knowledge; their connections with local authorities, police and health personnel; and their assistance to community members. Men, women and children come to the good neighbors' homes, asking for advice on resolving problems. The model shows the importance of shared responsibility, solidarity and ownership of problem solving in a community to create a safe community. The model is a viable and low-cost intervention that provides guidance and psychosocial support to families.

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26 For more information on sociotherapy in Rwanda, visit: [www.sociotherapy.org](http://www.sociotherapy.org).

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# ANNEX 1

## IMAGES Questionnaire

### GEM Scale

Promundo uses the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) Scale as part of the questionnaire to measure ex-combatants' gender-related attitudes. The GEM Scale is a collection of attitude questions that has been widely used in diverse settings and has consistently shown a high rate of internal reliability in all IMAGES study countries. The GEM Scale, originally developed by the Population Council and Promundo, was first used with young men, ages 15 to 24 (Pulerwitz & Barker, 2008). The original scale includes 17 attitudinal statements about different dimensions of men's gender attitudes. The scale has since been validated in household research in more than 20 countries, with both men and women. For IMAGES, the GEM Scale was slightly adapted with additional questions appropriate for adult men and adult women. The GEM scale is adapted to the context of the ex-combatants in this study.

The GEM Scale results are trichotomized by the total score. That is, the range of possible scores for that country is divided into equal thirds. Thereafter, the men and women scoring in the lowest third (of the possible score, not of the entire pool of responses) were placed in the "low equity" category, those in the middle third in the "moderate equity" category and those in the highest third in the "high equity" category. "High equity" refers to the group of men and women that supported more equitable views (e.g. the view that men and women are equal), whereas "low equity" means the respondent holds more rigid or inequitable views about gender norms (i.e. that men should have more privileges than women). As such, the scale provides a ranking of individuals in terms of the degree to which they believe in more equitable or less equitable views of gender relations.

### Questions on Experiencing and Using Violence

In addition to the GEM Scale, the IMAGES questionnaire contains a large number of questions that are related to an individual's socialization regarding violence, during childhood and in adult life. In recent years, the amount of research on violence against women has increased tremendously, accompanied by the development of more sophisticated research instruments and more appropriate ethical guidelines, which IMAGES has followed. The IMAGES studies follow a methodology in questioning the use of violence similar to the methodology used in the World Health Organization (WHO) multi-country study on violence against women with household data on women's reports of numerous forms of violence from male partners and the factors associated with that violence (García-Moreno, et al., 2005).

The items on intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual violence follow the now-standard WHO practice of asking about specific acts carried out or experienced by the respondent, rather than asking more general questions about IPV using the word "violence." Thus, rather than asking men if they ever used violence against their partners or children, the questionnaire asks if they have ever slapped, hit or pushed their partners. The same approach is used in asking men about their childhood experiences of witnessing or experiencing violence.

The IMAGES survey in the Mutobo Center was only carried out among men, and the questions took into account that men may not have lived within partner relationships in the preceding few years. Questions ad-

dressed different experiences with violence that took place in family and or peer group environments like school and community.

***Specific items on IPV or sexual violence in the IMAGES questionnaire included:***

- ▶ Witnessing physical (non-sexual) IPV by adults in family of origin (e.g. the respondents saw their fathers or other men use physical violence against their mothers when they were children);
- ▶ Experiences of physical (non-sexual) IPV, sexual violence, psychological violence ever and in the last year (e.g. they were victims of one of these forms of violence);
- ▶ Use of physical (non-sexual) IPV, sexual violence, psychological or economic violence against a current or past female intimate partner ever and in the last year;
- ▶ Childhood experiences of sexual violence (e.g. they personally experienced unwanted touching of genitals, attempted forced sex or actual forced sex);
- ▶ Personally were victims of physical violence from teachers, parents or peers during childhood; and
- ▶ Experiences (as victims and/or perpetrators) with war-related violence including sexual and gender-based violence.



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