



Perspectives of husbands of female rape survivors in Eastern DRC

Henny Slegh, Gary Barker, Benoit Ruratotoye
Promundo

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil - Washington, DC, USA – Kigali, Rwanda

www.promundo.org.br



IMAGES-DRC results (n=708 women, 754 men)

International Men and Gender Equality Survey (Promundo, Sonke 2012)

- 22% of women and 9% of men **reported rape victimization** in conflict
- 16% of men and 26% of women reported **being forced to witness rape during conflict**
- Women who were raped reported **losing their reputation before their family** at higher rates than women who were not raped (“After the war, I lost my reputation before my family.”)
- 43% of men and 37% of women agreed that **“a man should reject his wife if she is raped.”**
- In qualitative interviews in IDP camp as part of IMAGES-DRC, **13 of 25 women had been raped and 9 of those 13 rejected by their husbands**

In light of these findings, this baseline study sought to understand husband’s perspectives toward female rape survivors and to use the results to develop a pilot intervention together with Heal Africa.

Methodology

- Women rape survivors at HEAL AFRICA asked if they could approach their husbands to participate in a group discussion
- Local resource persons asked to refer families that suffer from problems with violence in the home

Interviewers

6 mental health professionals and 6 HEAL AFRICA staff, trained in qualitative interviewing

Qualitative research: (16 couples, 12 divorced men & 1 divorced woman)

2 FGDs with men (28 men)

2 FGDs with women (18 women)

5 IDIs with women, 5 IDIs with men

Three categories of men: (1) husbands of rape survivors; (2) men known to have SGBV issues in home; (3) community leaders

Research Questions

- What impact has the conflict had on you?
- How does this affect your relationship with your partner?
- What kinds of violence happen in your home and community? How do men and women cope with problems at home?
- What is needed to create peace at home?

Participant Profile

Ages:

Men: 27-60

Women: 22-54

Education:

No schooling: 3 women/ 0 men

Primary 6 women

Some yrs sec school 7 women / 11 men

Secondary diploma: 1 woman/ 12 men

University 1 woman/ 5 men

- All have children
- Two men in polygamous relationships (having two wives)
- 16 couples, 12 divorced men, 1 divorced woman



Theme 1: Loss of Face: War Leading to Loss Sense of Manhood

- Displacement from home village and loss of property
- Loss of work and income
- Loss of children and other family members
- Rape of wife
- Health problems (injuries, HIV/AIDS)

All contributing to a sense of lost manhood and loss of respect

“The community makes it very difficult; my husband feels ashamed, and me too. People don’t respect him because he has no work and a wife that was raped.”(FGD women)



Theme 2: Consequences of rape of wife

(reported by men)

Family conflicts:

My brothers and sisters became my enemies after I forgive my wife that she was raped. They say that my wife killed me because I got HIV/ AIDS and they don't support me. (60 yrs/ 9 children)

Partner conflicts:

I tried to live with my wife, but she lost all value as a wife. It destroyed our relationship and family life. I beat her a lot. (40 yrs/1 child)

Rejection of child born after rape

The child born after rape is poisoning me and my family. Seeing the child reminds me of the rape. I hate the child, I hate my wife and the Rwandans who did this. (47 yrs/7 children)

Theme 3: Responses to Rape: Rejection

For men who **rejected** wives reasons were:

1. She may have contracted **HIV/AIDS**
2. She has **lost her value as a wife** and subsequently he has lost his honor
3. **Social stigma**: “all people talk about it”

“The day I told him that I was raped, he fell on the floor and got ill. He lost his self esteem and needs medicine.” (Woman)

“He feels weak and frustrated because he was not able to stop the rapist, or get him. He feels that he lost his power and fertility. He accuses his wife for this.” (Woman)

“He sees his wife as property, when you have a billet of 200 USD and you torn it, it has no value anymore. That is what happened with us.” (Woman)

Theme 4: Responses to Rape: Reluctant Acceptance

Most men stay with their wives after rape, but not in attitudes of support. Reasons reported for staying with wives:

1. **No money to pay dowry** of other wife
2. Mediation of **church** members
3. Wife accepting any **work** to support family (men cannot accept all jobs)

Result is a new cycle of violence and added burden on women.

“He is beating his children. He says, ‘I have problems because of your mother, that is why I beat you.’”

“He is saying: ‘I am a fool that I took you like this.’ He does not want to work for a child that is not his.”

“I found work, but he lives with his trauma and is frustrated.”

Theme 5: Relationship dynamics in aftermath of rape

- **Women become main providers:** men stay at home: “a man cannot accept all jobs”
- **Men feel powerless:** no control over money: *“The hand that provides is the hand that leads”*(men, FGD)

Loss of power and control: Partner violence

- Women control family income (“boss” in family)
 - Women become “arrogant” (not obliging to husband)
- “I prefer to escape the house, hang around and never ask my wife to support me.”*

Theme 6: Men's Coping Strategies and Reactions

Partner/family violence

"I wanted to kill the child, but the pastor stopped me."

"Once I was battering my wife till she was almost death, I was put in prison twice."

Praying

"The pastors help to pray, but it is hard to live like this. God for all, all alone. It does not help, I pray to be killed."

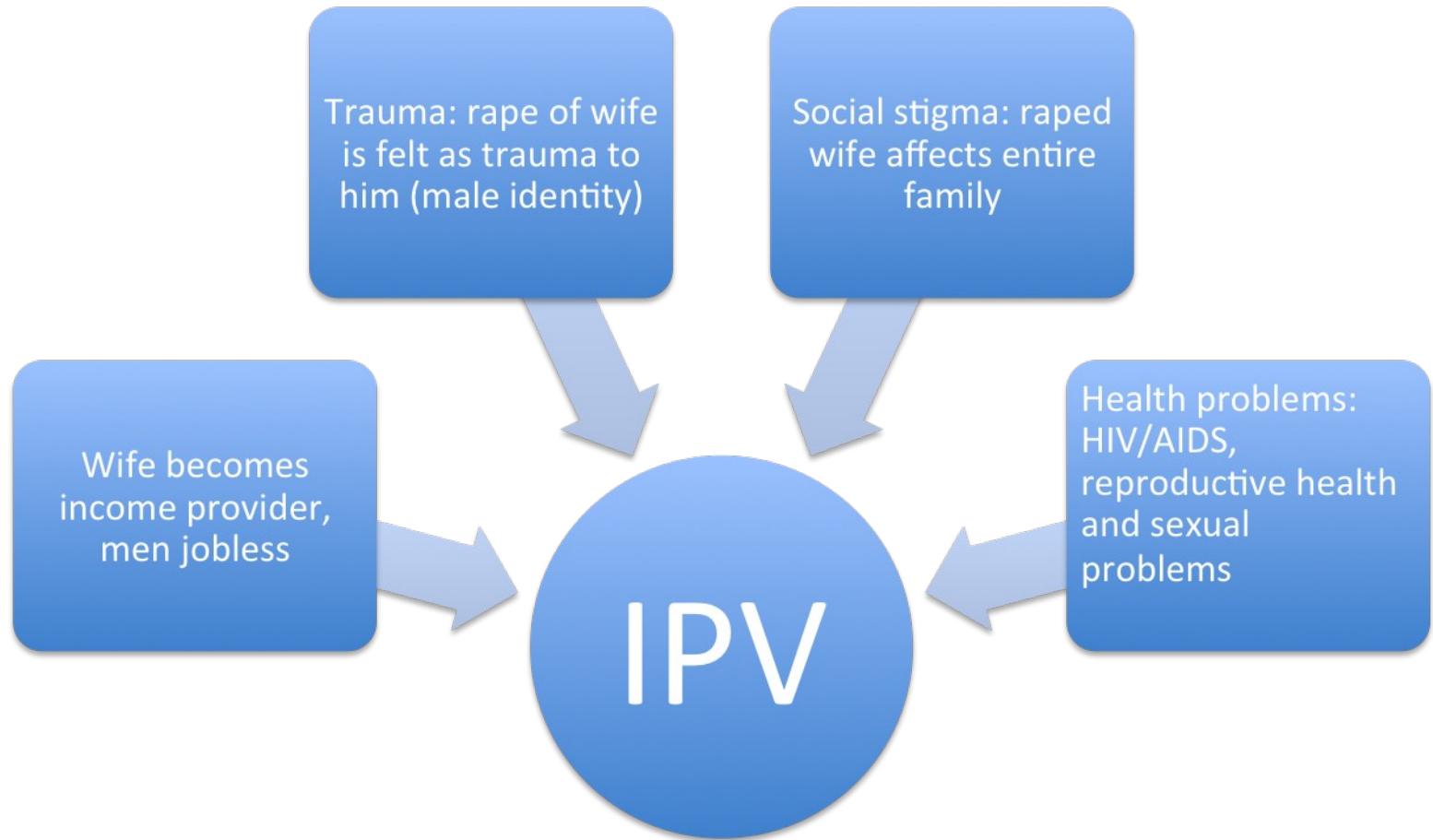
Drinking

"I take many beers to prevent myself to commit suicide. Beers help to fall asleep."

Leaving the house

"I prefer to stay away of the house all day. I will not communicate with my wife, when you negotiate with a wife, you lose all authority."

Rape of wife associated with IPV



Opportunities for change and resistance to change: men

- **Work:** “if we would have work, we could take back our positions”
- **Couple communication:** “we need to learn how to communicate with partner to resolve the problems”
- **Wife has to change:** “we cannot accept gender equality”(most men)
- **Cultural traditions:** “we need to change those habits that encourage violence” (some men)

Conclusions

- Rape as “weapon of war” **has hit men in their sense of identity**, exacerbated by economic stress
- Resistance to women’s empowerment by men is in some way a **fight against lost sense of male privilege**
- **Family has become the battlefield** where men try to regain control and power that is lost elsewhere in life
- Partner violence and family violence in context of war is **related to trauma of war violence including rape**
- **Poor or negative coping strategies by men**

Even if men have not rejected partner who experienced rape, this does not necessarily mean support for her

Using the Results to Develop an Intervention to Prevent SGBV and Promote Positive Coping Skills

Male group therapy (Kundi Ya Wababa Waponyaji), includes:

- **Trauma healing**
- **Restoring social relations** and partner relations
- Promoting **positive coping** strategies and alternative strategies that exclude all forms of violence, including self-directed violence and SGBV
- **Testing pilot process** with men-focused session, and 2 with wives

