

# IDS

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Empowerment of Women and Girls

### Engaging Men and Boys to End Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Sierra Leone: A Stakeholder Mapping Report, June 2014

Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed, Elizabeth Mills and Jenny Diggins

February 2015

The IDS programme on Strengthening Evidence-based Policy works across seven key themes. Each theme works with partner institutions to co-construct policy-relevant knowledge and engage in policy-influencing processes. This material has been developed under the Empowerment of Women and Girls theme.

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## ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS TO END SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SIERRA LEONE: A STAKEHOLDER MAPPING REPORT, JUNE 2014

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# Abbreviations

ASJP	Access to Security and Justice Programme
AYCAH	African Youth Coalition Against Hunger
CESYMCO	Centre for Safe Motherhood Youth and Child Organisation
CSO	civil society organisation
DCI	Defence for Children International
DFID	Department for International Development
DRIM	Disability Rights Movement
ECFAN	Evangelical Church for All Nations and Goodness Foundation
FAWE	Forum for African Women Empowerment
FGM	female genital mutilation
FSU	Family Support Unit
FSU/SLP	Family Support Unit of Sierra Leone Police
GBV	gender-based violence
GCN	Girl Child Network
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IRC	Inter-Religious Council
MAGE–SL	Men’s Association for Gender Equality–Sierra Leone
MODWON	Moyamba District Women’s Network
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender & Children’s Affairs
NaMEP	National Movement for Emancipation and Progress
NGO	non-governmental organisation
RSLAF	Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces
SGBV	sexual and gender-based violence
SLBC	Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation
SOA	Sexual Offences Act
YMCA	Young Men’s Christian Association

# 1 Introduction

Increasingly, engaging with men and boys has emerged as a vital strategy adopted by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), national governments, women's organisations, and international agencies for ending sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and achieving gender equality, including in refugee and post-conflict settings (Barker and Ricardo 2005; Dworkin, Colvin, Hatcher and Peacock 2012). While SGBV is a global problem, recent research in West Africa suggests that this problem becomes particularly acute in post-conflict countries. In Sierra Leone, the focus of this report, it is widely estimated that during its civil war from 1991–2002, up to 250,000 women and girls were subjected to some form of SGBV (Amnesty International 2007: 4). Rape, largely but not solely by men against women, was used systematically by all factions and, although peace was declared in 2002, the trauma of war and its violent tactics has left scars that run through the fabric of households, families and communities.

In post-conflict Sierra Leone, domestic violence, sexual assault, including rape of adults and minors, rape in marriage and school-related sexual abuse, as well as harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), continue to occur. It is difficult to know how many cases of gender violence go unreported, but many in Sierra Leone agree that the country faces a serious problem (McKay 2004; Park 2006; Shaw 2007).

Sierra Leone's government has, on paper, worked to address sexual and gender violence. Policymakers have instituted 'a series of policies... to advance social relations especially gender relations' (Abdullah n.d.: 1). With regard to reducing SGBV at national level, a number of legislative and policy frameworks have been developed since the end of the conflict that establish a supportive and conducive environment for addressing SGBV. Most notably, in 2007, the Sierra Leone Government adopted three Gender Acts: the Domestic Violence Act, the Devolution of Estates Act, and the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act. In 2012, a new, more stringent, Sexual Offences Act was passed to help end the culture of impunity; Pillar 8 in the Agenda for Prosperity was proposed to mainstream gender across all government departments;<sup>1</sup> and the National Action Plan was also passed.

In a state as desperately under-resourced as Sierra Leone, still struggling with a war-ravaged infrastructure, there are serious limits to what legislation can achieve. In terms of law enforcement to implement this legislation, research shows that household violence is rarely considered as a matter for the police. In some rural regions, in particular where traditional patriarchal power structures remain strong, cases of SGBV are often mediated by respected relatives and community elders – typically men (Denov and Maclure 2006).

Thus, civil society organisations (CSOs) have played a crucial role, both during and after the war. Many women's organisations, in particular, have responded to the disruption of social services and community-based structures by developing networks and alternative coping strategies to deal with sexual violence and other problems such as food scarcity and shortfalls in health and education provision (see, for example, the list of women's organisations and representatives in the stakeholder lists in Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1 in Section 5). Women's networks have also been significant in decision-making, with organisations such as One Girl International, 50/50 and One Girl Network coming together to demand women's rights.

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<sup>1</sup> Pillar 8's goal is to empower women and girls through: (a) education, reducing socioeconomic barriers and supporting formal and non-formal education; (b) increasing their participation in decision-making in public, private and traditional institutions, and their access to justice and economic opportunities; (c) strengthening prevention and response mechanisms to violence against women and girls; and (d) improving the business environment for women, with access to finance and capacity development.

In the absence of formal law enforcement, particularly in rural regions, and in light of the persistence of patriarchy, this case study seeks to explore the value of engaging with men and boys in order to address the prevalence of SGBV in Sierra Leone. Recently, a number of organisations in the country have begun working with men and boys to encourage them to become more active participants in efforts to end the culture of tolerance and impunity surrounding SGBV in Sierra Leone.

## 2 Background

Our key partner in Sierra Leone is the Men's Association for Gender Equality–Sierra Leone (MAGE–SL), a network of organisations that work with men on promoting gender equality through advocacy, dialogue and raising awareness on gender policies and women's rights. MAGE–SL emphasises the importance of engaging with policymakers to influence the formulation of policies, and with communities in order to better ensure the implementation of these policies at grassroots level.

The strategies of organisations like MAGE–SL have included training programmes that incorporate sensitisation and awareness-raising about the importance of prosecuting perpetrators of sexual violence. Training by MAGE–SL in particular, the leading organisation working with men and boys in Sierra Leone, has been targeted at officials in the legal sector, as well as at local authorities, all of whom have the ability to help to ameliorate this problem at community level. It has also sought to consult with community leaders across the country, in order to identify how best to address SGBV. However, like many other civil society organisations (CSOs), MAGE–SL has very limited resources and capacity for sustaining the implementation of these projects in the long term, making government and donor support critical to their ongoing activities. This is crucial not only because gender violence affects both men and women, but because men's participation in SGBV interventions enables them to actively change community perceptions and values regarding SGBV.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the role of men and boys in addressing SGBV, in June 2014 IDS and MAGE–SL held two stakeholder workshops and a series of interviews in Sierra Leone. This report begins with a brief overview of the workshops, which form part of a larger research study on collective action and the role of men and boys in addressing SGBV in Sierra Leone. Section 4 details five of the key themes drawn from the workshops. These are: (1) the civil war as catalyst for critical awareness; (2) the economic basis of inequality in households; (3) law and policy reform; (4) inadequate support for those engaged in work to address SGBV; and (5) knowledge sharing. Section 5 maps the various stakeholders in Sierra Leone whose interests either overlap with, intersect with, or impede the work of those engaging with men and boys against SGBV; it also highlights the opportunities and challenges. Drawing from the workshop findings, Section 6 suggests why it is important to engage with men and boys to address SGBV, and Section 7 provides a concluding summary.

The next steps for this study include an in-depth report, which will elaborate on the aforementioned five key themes – along with any other issues/problems and questions – through a series of in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including MAGE–SL and other actors and/or organisations from the workshops identified in conjunction with MAGE–SL.



### 3 Workshop overview

In June 2014, MAGE–SL and IDS co-hosted two workshops which brought together those principle activist organisations, government ministries and development agencies working to address SGBV, albeit from different angles, in Sierra Leone. The first was in Freetown (23–24 June) and the second in Moyamba (26–27 June).

**Figure 3.1** Agenda for the workshops



Photographer: © Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed/IDS, 2014.

The aim of the workshops was to provide a space for meaningful dialogue and reflection on gender and gender inequality in Sierra Leone, and to examine what works and does not work in addressing SGBV in the country, the different sets of challenges faced and successful interventions to learn from (for example, cross-sectoral collaboration). Specifically, the workshops sought to:

- 1 **Understand** the dynamics that fuel sexual and gender-based violence in Sierra Leone;
- 2 **Explore** men's engagement in movements against sexual and gender-based violence;
- 3 **Identify** interventions that have been developed – at a global, national and local level – to transform these dynamics by engaging with men and boys; and
- 4 **Provide** policy-relevant evidence on collective action to end sexual and gender-based violence.

In total, there were 67 participants (30 in Freetown and 37 in Moyamba) from a range of organisations working on, or interested in, SGBV.

In Freetown this included the Girl Child Network, African Youth Coalition Against Hunger (AYCAH), YMCA Sierra Leone, Restless Development, the Sierra Leone Police and the

Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF), the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender & Children's Affairs (MSWGCA), World Vision, the media and academics.

In Moyamba, participants included the Forum for African Women Empowerment (FAWE), the Girl Child Network, AYCAH, YMCA Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation and the MSWGCA, as well as chiefs, religious leaders, representatives of the media, the police and teachers (see Annex 1 for full list of participants).

The first workshop, held in Freetown, explored the role of collective actors to address SGBV at national policy level. Members of a wide variety of organisations attended the workshop, and provided input into the key national policies that have been developed to address SGBV, alongside the main barriers to implementing policy. The second workshop, held in Moyamba (a rural area),<sup>2</sup> explored local-level responses to SGBV among community organisations, chieftaincies, the Family Support Unit (FSU), the police and local and district-level politicians. Here some of the social and economic causes of SGBV were highlighted, and a series of practical interventions – often involving a network of partners – were identified.

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<sup>2</sup> Moyamba is the capital and largest city of Moyamba District, in the Southern Province of Sierra Leone, with a population of 11,485 in the 2004 census.

## 4 Critical themes

From discussions in the two workshops, five critical themes in understanding the role of men and boys in addressing SGBV were identified. Before discussing these themes it is important to state that SGBV manifests itself differently based on the context in which it happens. For instance, when workshop participants were asked to draw the root causes and outcomes of SGBV in the form of a 'problem tree', those in Freetown agreed that the 'tree' would look different in rural areas (see Figure 4.2). They discussed whether there are higher incidences of rape in urban areas or just more cases of reporting than in rural areas where women resort to traditional beliefs and are more likely to follow the customs/practices as laid down by, for instance, chiefs and traditional rulers than those of the law/judicial system. There was also a discussion on the fact that different types of violence occur in rural and urban areas (for example, FGM and early marriage in rural areas versus teenage pregnancy in urban areas). Similarly, there was agreement among participants in Moyamba that the problem was bigger in rural areas, and that people in Freetown are not aware of the situation and challenges in more remote parts of the country.

In Moyamba, another difference was highlighted – between bigger rural towns and smaller villages. Due to the sensitisation and awareness-raising activities that are taking place in big towns/cities such as Moyamba, women are increasingly likely to talk about cases of violence, or report cases of SGBV to the police. By contrast, women living in smaller communities are less aware of their rights. They remain too ashamed or afraid to speak out when violence is perpetrated against them, fearing they will become stigmatised, or will risk losing their homes and husbands.

Bearing these important spatial differences in mind, this section discusses the key themes, namely: (1) the civil war as catalyst for critical awareness; (2) the economic basis of inequality in households; (3) law and policy reform; (4) inadequate government and donor support; and (5) knowledge sharing.

### 4.1 The civil war: catalyst for critical awareness

Sierra Leone's 11-year civil war played a significant role in motivating people to work on addressing issues related to SGBV in the country as the *violence during the civil war* had an impact on individuals, their families and people around them. In general, the war exposed people to heightened forms of violence, and had shifted their attitudes about the acceptability of SGBV. As a participant in Moyamba explained:

*The war was an eye-opener for all of us: there were a lot of violations and human rights violations. There were many women who were violated. They tell people, kill your father, kill your mother. And you had to do it.*

The level and amount of violence experienced during the war, according to participants, meant that after the war men and women realised the importance of making visible previously hidden forms of gender inequality, like SGBV, as part of a broader process of social transformation. In Moyamba, for instance, it was argued that prior to the war when a man abused a woman, public interest in the case would die down quickly. However, with the post-war proliferation of CSOs working to address SGBV in Moyamba, the issue of SGBV is less hidden. Discussions in Moyamba also revealed that while a number of the CSOs are headed by men who have become increasingly involved in sensitising the public and making them aware of the ways in which men are complicit in gender inequality and SGBV, there are also women-led organisations working to address the issues, as well as situations where both men and women work side by side.

**Figure 4.1 Participants in Freetown working on their lifelines to understand their motivations for working on addressing SGBV in Sierra Leone**



Photographer: © Alex A. Gborie/MAGE–SL, 2014.

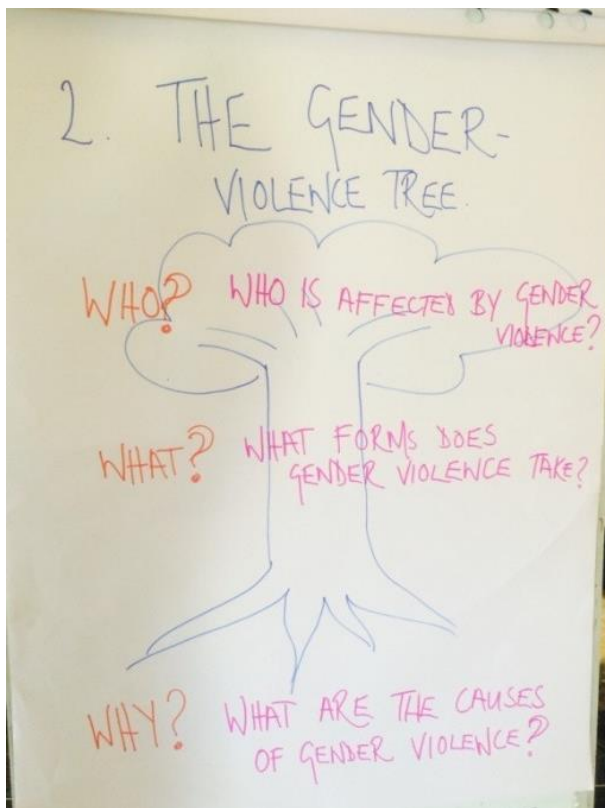
Yet, while the civil war played an important role in raising awareness of SGBV as an issue, the workshop revealed the important role that law and policy reforms have played for ongoing healing from and proactive prevention of violence in the country (see Section 4.3).

## **4.2 The economic basis of inequality in households**

The civil war may have exacerbated violence in the country and also motivated those who experienced it to take action to address it. However, in thinking through understandings of SGBV in Sierra Leone, it is important to also look at *violence beyond the war* and in everyday lives to understand its root causes in the country. Participants spoke about the underlying structural causes of SGBV in Sierra Leone, such as the expectation that men be the breadwinners in a highly stretched economic climate. This places pressure not only on men to bring money into the household but also on women, who may not have received the same levels of education as many of their male contemporaries or who are less able to access formal employment. In such a tightly stretched economy, with gendered expectations around women's work at household level and in the absence of a state-based welfare system, participants noted that many women may feel unable to leave their abusive partner because their own and their children's economic survival is contingent on financial support from him.

In Freetown, there were discussions around growing up in environments where physical abuse is seen daily, where minors are sexually abused (for example, young girls being impregnated by fathers or rural–urban female migrants using sex to pay back middle-men who find them jobs in urban areas) and where bullying takes place at school. While in Moyamba, the issue of violence in the community, as well as the increase in violations and the absence of a high court judge, was also expressed as a motivation.

**Figure 4.2 The gender violence tree**



Photographer: © Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed/IDS, 2014.

*Culture, tradition, power and who is powerful in the system* were also discussed. This includes the overall perception of women and the marginalisation they face in their homes and in wider society, for example, ‘girl children who do not have an education and are told that early marriage is their only option’ (participant in Group 1, Freetown), women’s inability to inherit property (participant in Group 4, Freetown), wife inheritance (participant in Group 2, Freetown) and women being seen as weaker than men, restricted to certain institutions and even in the media (participant in Group 5, Freetown).

The *prevalence of tradition and harmful traditional practices*, such as being forcefully initiated (most often marked by female genital cutting) and *polygamy*, was raised in Freetown. In particular, participants noted their experience of growing up in polygamous homes, which often leads to ‘divided loyalty and rivalry and jealousy in homes’ (participant in Group 3), as well as poverty – children become victims of the in-fighting or favouritism, which can, for example, impact on a child’s education.

Finally, particularly in Moyamba, issues of marginalisation and social exclusion as a result of disability and the challenges of being disabled in society were discussed. As raised by a participant in Moyamba, ‘... being a woman, and being disabled, is a double-burden’.

### **4.3 Law and policy reform**

As discussed earlier, following the end of the civil war a number of legislative and policy frameworks were developed to aid in addressing SGBV. In Freetown, discussions centred on the key role that certain policies have played in addressing gender inequality and reducing incidences of SGBV in the country. These include the Sexual Offences Act (SOA) 2012 and the three Gender Acts, as well as Pillar 8 in the Agenda for Prosperity (formulated in 2012 to mainstream gender across all government departments) and the National Action Plan, which

was also passed in 2012. Additionally, women and women's networks have been significant in decision-making, with organisations such as One Girl International, 50/50 and One Girl Network coming together to demand with one voice for women's rights.

One area where progress has been made, as noted by participants in the Freetown workshop in particular, is in breaking the silence of FGM: in Freetown in 2013, in one case offenders were taken to court and in another case parents were taken to the police station because they wanted to forcefully circumcise their children. The establishment of the FSU by the Sierra Leone Police in 2001 was also seen as a step in the right direction: since its introduction, the FSU has been investigating the perpetrators of SGBV with some success.

In spite of this progress resulting from the aforementioned reforms, it is evident that law and policy reform is not enough.

#### **4.4 Inadequate government and donor support**

All actors in the workshops raised the issue of inadequate support in terms of: (a) the need for more logistical backup; (b) provision of funding for small CSOs at community level in order to strengthen them; and (c) more education, training, sensitisation, capacity-building and involvement of men at local level. For example, members of the FSU in Freetown expressed the need for essential resources (like pens, paper, cameras for documenting crime scenes, desks, etc); without these resources, they noted that their ability to effectively apprehend criminals and provide support to men and women was seriously limited. There were also a number of main priorities for action explored at policy level in both Freetown and Moymaba.

In Moyamba, the call was for the popularisation at the grass-roots level of three Gender Acts and the Sexual Offences Act. Participants agreed that, if these Acts are to be effectively implemented, there is an urgent need for them to be simplified and translated into regional languages so that they can be accessed and understood by actors at all levels of society (not only urban professionals). Indeed, some NGOs are already experimenting with innovative means of disseminating this information – producing and disseminating audio-recordings of the Acts in both the Krio and Mende languages.

In Freetown, a number of specific law and policy priorities emerged. These included:

- Translation of the laws to make them reader friendly;
- Popularisation of the SOA at local level and, if possible, presented in the local dialect;
- The need for government to strengthen the justice system, especially the high court settings (if laws are made but not enforced, no one will follow them);
- The formulation of by-laws needs to be revisited, reviewed and amended to make adequate provision to protect women's rights; furthermore, there needs to be a review of the laws and implementation of by-laws, especially in areas such as marriage and SGBV, at community level;
- The Constitutional Review Committee is not currently working optimally to allow for engagement in the constitution.<sup>3</sup>

During our in-depth interviews, we hope to elicit more information on the available resources to support survivors, as well as on the existing organisations that are addressing SGBV.

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<sup>3</sup> The 1991 constitution is currently being reviewed by an 80-member committee, which was formed in 2014. Their task includes nationwide public consultations to source relevant and useful information that may greatly enrich their work, and this was referred to by participants representing organisations in the workshop. However, the Ebola outbreak has reduced the number of places committee members can go to.

## 4.5 Knowledge sharing

The civil war ignited concerns about women's issues (including SGBV), and exposure to information consolidated efforts to address them, but how is this information being shared and does it effectively move across key stakeholders, from national to local and community levels? The final theme drawn from the workshops is the role of education, training and programmes (for example, the Men's Dialogue Group), and packaging the information in order to get people to understand what the issues are.

Yet, while it is important for raising awareness, knowledge sharing as a practice is not uniform in the country. As revealed in an interview with the managing editor of a local newspaper, although SGBV is an issue that affects the entire country, awareness has not trickled down to all Sierra Leoneans:

*GBV [gender-based violence] cuts across; anywhere you travel in this country, you must see some semblance of GBV. We've gone through 11 years of sinful conflict, and people were exposed to violence during the war; they were gun-raped, brutalised, amputated. Some people went scot-free; there was no compensation to the victims. There are people who are crying in silence.*

*You go to remote communities in the country, you have people – as soon as you discuss with them, they start to cry. These are common issues. You look at them, and all seems to be around Freetown. Freetown is not Sierra Leone. The people in the rural communities are the most affected. They don't know their rights; they don't know their responsibilities. So in terms of information, they don't have access to information. So if you tell them this is their right, what do you say if they are gang raped, and you tell them to go to the police; but often there is no police. Or if they are forced to have sex, then the women goes to the chief, and they will say the wife must do what her husband wants in marriage, and you have to respect your husband.*

This interview suggests that while SGBV is being publicised in Freetown to make people aware, those in more remote areas are not being informed.

One way to ensure that information gets passed down, as indicated in Moyamba where this was very visible – especially for the men in the group in reorienting their thinking about SGBV – is in training workshops and meetings on SGBV. These workshops also raise the consciousness of participants regarding violence and enable them to speak to their friends and other men in their communities about SGBV.

## 5 Key actors, opportunities and challenges: stakeholder mapping

The workshops also introduced the key actors (organisations, institutions, groups and networks) who are working to address SGBV in Sierra Leone. These include MAGE–SL, FSU and the MSWGCA, as well as the media, religious leaders and chiefs (see Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1 Some of the actors in Sierra Leone working on SGBV**

MSWGCA	Sierra Leone Police	UNICEF
MAGE–SL	Family Support Unit	International Rescue Committee
Winners Foundation	Child Welfare Committee	UNFPA
Primary schools	Disability Rights Movement (DRIM) SL	Save the Children
Media	Women’s Forum	Plan International
Chiefs	ActionAid	Defence for Children International

Drawing on three examples under the headings of (1) collective action, (2) men’s groups and (3) the police, this section discusses actors who have specifically contributed to and/or blocked progress in addressing SGBV, as well as the opportunities and key challenges faced (see Figure 5.1).

### 5.1 Collective action

To look at **the role of collective action in addressing SGBV**, the first example centres on an initiative by a women’s CSO in Moyamba to track cases of gender violence as they move through the criminal justice system – from the moment they are first reported, and as far as the high court. The discussion started around how common it is for girls to get pregnant by their school teachers; participants described one tragic case where a girl got pregnant by her school teacher and died as a result of an illegal abortion. This prompted a CSO movement, led by women but also supported by men, to take action. They staged a huge march through Moyamba and started to raise awareness among other community members and leaders. Now, the women track all cases of SGBV, from registration through to prosecution. An effective strategy raised by this example relates to peaceful demonstrations, and the value of using placards. The radio station was also a powerful advocacy tool used by this group, as perpetrators normally fear being shamed on the radio. Journalists working at Moyamba’s radio station work collectively through this CSO movement to follow up these cases and report on SGBV issues.

This women’s CSO is part of a larger CSO network of 15 organisations called the Justice and Governance Network. It was formed in 2013 as a result of the Access to Security and Justice Programme (ASJP).<sup>4</sup> Organisations include the Disability Rights Movement (DRIM) SL, MODCAR (a local radio station), St George Foundation (engaged in SGBV with support from UNDP) and Defence for Children International (DCI).

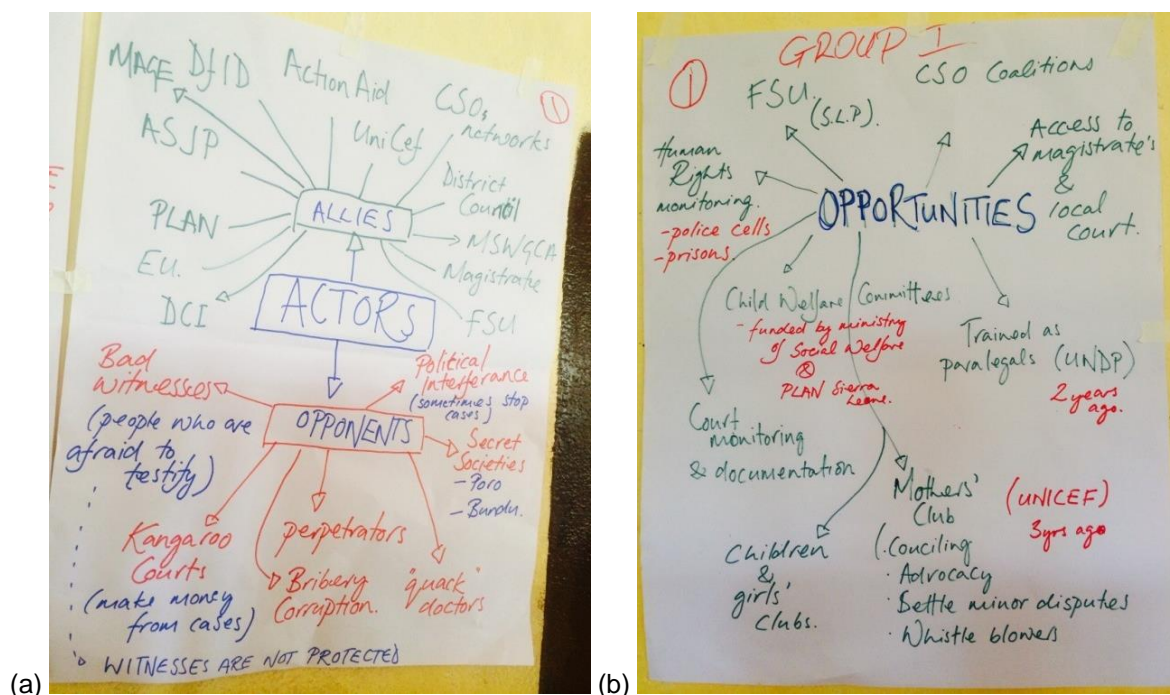
<sup>4</sup> The ASJP focuses on local ownership, on ensuring sustainability of the reform process, and on enhancing security and justice service provision outside of the capital, Freetown, especially in remote areas. The project is designed to align with the Government of Sierra Leone’s Justice Sector Reform Strategy and Investment Plan and to pay particular attention to the needs of women. It builds the capacity of national institutions through the training of Police Prosecutors, the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police and members of the Judiciary on human rights abuses in the country.



**Allies** included CSO coalitions, international organisations (ActionAid, UNICEF, Plan International, DCI), MAGE–SL, the ASJP, the FSU, the magistrates’ court, the district council, and the media.<sup>5</sup>

**Opposition** came in the form of political interference (including secret societies) which sometimes stops cases; kangaroo courts (chieftaincy courts, which are not legal courts – where the chief needs to be paid in order to summon a person to court and there is no accountability); witnesses who are too afraid to come to court because they are threatened by the perpetrators or their families, perpetrators and quack doctors who carry out the dangerous illegal abortions.

**Figure 5.1 (a) Allies, actors and opponents of addressing SGBV and (b) Opportunities for addressing SGBV at community level**



Photographer: © Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed/IDS, 2014.

**Opportunities** identified include the fact that the women are trained paralegals (they were trained by UNDP in 2012) with access to the magistrates’ courts and local courts, and have cordial relations with the magistrates and the FSU. They also work alongside the child welfare committees (funded by the Sierra Leone Government) and the mothers’ clubs (members were trained by UNICEF in 2011), which work in communities across the entire district and are concerned primarily with child protection. Finally, the women provide counselling, advocacy, settle minor disputes, and act as whistle-blowers in cases of SGBV.

**Challenges** discussed in relation to addressing SGBV include:

- **Weak laws and policies/lack of political will:** even if laws have been passed at national level, there has been insufficient action or resources at local level to enforce them.
- **Lack of high court sittings:** over a year has passed since there was a high court hearing in Moyamba – despite there being over 40 cases to be adjudicated.

<sup>5</sup> Discussions at the workshop in Moyamba acknowledged the importance of confidentiality when dealing with the media about cases related to child safety or issues of SGBV; having received training, the media no longer mentions victims’ names.

- *Silence*: Especially in hard-to-reach villages, silence is an issue as there is too much shame. Girls do not have access to education, empowerment or knowledge about their rights. They are ashamed to speak out, or afraid that if they do, they will be targeted by the perpetrator and his family.
- *Lack of confidentiality*: When cases are taken to court, the survivors may be afraid of being held to blame by the friends/family/neighbours of the man sentenced to prison.
- *Lack of survivor protection*: There are no safe houses for survivors where they can have access to counselling and no funds to support survivors. When a case of SGBV is reported, whoever took the woman to the police has to assume responsibility for the care of that woman – since, in many cases, she is unable to return home.
- *Logistical constraints for the FSU*: The unit lacks adequate resources, including not enough trained staff and no vehicle (only one motorbike). The FSU is unable to carry out any forensic tests.
- *Geographical constraints*: Many of the small communities in Moyamba chiefdom are extremely difficult to get to and cannot be reached by road – only by foot/canoe – and in the rainy season they become even more inaccessible. Many have no telephone coverage. It is therefore very hard for the police to know what is happening in those communities.
- *Family compromise*: Very often, cases of SGBV are settled outside of court amongst family members. Elders of the family and of the community are called to discuss the matter. Often, families cannot afford the court fees. Women do not want to report their husbands because they are afraid of losing their homes. Rural communities are often very small and extremely close-knit. Elders are reluctant to see anyone sent to prison, because they do not want to cause major rupture within communities.
- *High unemployment among young men* (particularly in larger towns): As one participant put it: ‘An idle mind is the devil’s workshop.’

## 5.2 Men’s groups

In looking at the **role of men’s groups in addressing SGBV**, the second example comes from the Men’s Dialogue Group in Kenema.<sup>6</sup> In the case of a young girl (around 14 years old) married to a man (38 years old), the group identified the problem (forced sex in marriage, child marriage) and took the matter to the chief and the police station. The result was that the man was charged, appeared in court and was then sent to prison.

The key **actors and allies** were MAGE–SL, the chief and traditional leaders in the local community, as well as the police, while the main **opponents** were the perpetrator and his family.

For **opportunities**, in 2012 MAGE–SL trained the 30 men in the group on masculinities and how to engage with SGBV issues in their community. The men were selected based on criteria including being aged 18 or over, time consciousness (i.e. being on time for meetings and training sessions and attending them regularly), their willingness, and their commitment to not being violent themselves and acting against violence. The group’s strength is a combination of being united and having one voice, and being motivated by the training they received. Furthermore, a major opportunity identified is that the group has been recognised by stakeholders.

**Challenges** included the difficulty of bringing the men in the group together as they all live in different communities. Transportation was an issue, as was the rainy season and working during this period. Other challenges were limited funding, the work being time consuming, there being no magistrate or high court judge and parents compromising with perpetrators.

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<sup>6</sup> A city in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone.

### 5.3 The police

The third example regards the role of the **police and particularly the FSU** in the case of successfully convicting the perpetrator of a sexual penetration case (i.e. sex with anyone under the age of 18). An FSU police officer investigated the rape of a 15-year-old girl by a 22-year-old man; his narrative is set out below:

*As you know, I am a police officer working for the Family Support Unit... I was investigating a case of sexual penetration: means any child below 18 years involving sexual violence. Fifteen-year-old girl, with a suspect who was 22 years old. Happened three years back. This 15-year-old girl was sexually violated by a man. The case was reported to us. The matter was assigned to me for further investigation. The suspect's father is a millionaire. A well-known man in this town, most government officials know this man.*

*When the case came up, the senior government officials knew about this case. What they did, they started intercepting the investigation. Even the senior officials, from other ministries, all were in favour of the suspect. But we are here to address these issues, because they are minimising this case as the investigation was going on and on.*

*Seeing no one was in favour of the victim. As the investigator, and as a trained FSU person, I called them in secret and I referred them to some NGOs, some lawyers and human rights organisation. Upon intervention of these NGOs, there was a change in the investigation. Frankly enough, before this time, after the investigation, we charted the matter to court. Now there is a procedure, we send the file for advice to the CCPD [Community Child Protection Division]. This was the only case when we were asked to send for legal advice.*

*I did my best as an investigator; I sent the file for legal advice. When the advice came, we were told we should take the perpetrator to court. No sooner we charged the matter to court, the ministry of social welfare [MSWGCA] came in favour of the victim. We won the matter. Presently the man is in jail. The victim was given a scholarship.*

In terms of **opportunities**, the survivor and her family were made aware of the support that was available. In addition, because the FSU officer had received proper training it enabled evidence to be gathered in the right way and the investigation to be conducted properly. Here, an example of the survivor describing the room in which the incident occurred and the FSU officer being able to corroborate it with the description the suspect provided was used to illustrate how proper training enabled the investigation.

**Challenges** include the police officer visiting the crime scene without the knowledge of his superiors (because he wanted to gather evidence without their knowledge). In doing this, he put his job on the line ('Looking at all these explanation, most of my supervisors were in favour of the suspect, but not withstanding this I still continued my investigation').

**Opponents** may have a negative view of the FSU officer once 'they came to know I was the one who directed the survivor to the services'.

Positive **actors** were the partners (i.e. organisations that supported his efforts, such as those that provided legal advice) who cooperated; the investigators, the policeman narrating the story and the MSWGCA. Negative actors were senior officials in the police force and in the ministries.

## 6 Why is it important for men to be involved?

Through these workshops, we were able to begin exploring the role men and men's organisations have played in addressing SGBV. MAGE–SL, for instance, has not only helped to popularise the three Gender Acts, but has also helped by providing training and raising awareness. MAGE–SL recognises that immediately after the war the focus was on SGBV and violence related to the war and gender was often conflated with 'women's issues'. There was therefore a gap, because most of the warring factions were led by men, and the majority of custodians of the law were men. Now, one way to make progress is to talk to perpetrators, as MAGE–SL's director, David Mackie, argues:

*We need to have mental disarmament, to work with men to redirect their attention. So we need to think about working with women and girls and addressing SGBV as a human security issue.*

So why is it important for men to be involved? Reasons given by workshop participants ranged from it being necessary for peace and stability in communities and peaceful coexistence, to the assertion that men are the problem and so should also be the solution. In addition, it was suggested that involving men in talking about gender issues and enabling them to give their own contributions could be a way to minimise violence. There was consensus that men needed to 'develop the willingness to really see that no violence should be perpetrated by us against women' and 'demonstrate it [this willingness] at all levels, at the home, in our different institutions, and in the community'. Men were also portrayed as protectors who need to protect the women in their lives. As a participant explained, 'If you realise the effect you have on your wife, anybody, you will avoid being violent.'

Revisiting the culture and particularly the norms that are against women was also seen as a way to end violence against women. Learning to love and respect women and seeing them as human beings were also seen as key. In the discussions it was said that men should learn to 'leave [their] coat as a pastor, a council chairman' when they get home, and instead be a husband, a father, an uncle, a provider, a carer and also learn to be accommodating. Furthermore, it was felt that the majority of men still needed to realise that SGBV is not just a SGBV issue, but a human security issue affecting men and women, boys and girls. The idea of self-discipline – for ourselves as individuals and our children and the next generation – was raised by a number of participants, with one explaining how stopping violence 'must start in the home'.

The workshops and symposiums that the participants have been attending were seen as 'contributing factors to help us stop perpetrating violence against women and children'. Yet, it was felt that there was also a need to engage in a 'rethinking process', that men should sit together and share ideas and try to identify role models.

### 6.1 What works?

Through the group discussions the following points were raised:

- The formation of networks: Individual groups talking in isolation is not enough; but when networks come together, CSOs dealing with problems of justice are able to confer when matters of justice are at play to make sure the correct measures are taken, and support is given to police and to civil society. Forming big networks (for example, the Justice and Governance Network that comprises 15 CSOs) will impact on SGBV.

- To have more training of men to engage with issues of SGBV and how to address it, such as through the men's dialogue groups.

Participants identified the following solutions:

- Having organisations that give a voice to the voiceless.
- Ensuring that when policies are established, they are community-led.
- Establishing a further role for international donors to find a way of making the government enforce the laws, and have more collaboration between the different types of organisations (e.g. men's, feminist and faith-based) working on SGBV.
- Establishing pre-professional training that lasts three or six months at most, where women can build skills and competencies.
- Providing protection for vulnerable people, for example a safe house to relocate women escaping abusive partners so they are not forced to go back because they are dependent on them. The YWCA and Don Bosco, a faith-based NGO in Sierra Leone that rehabilitates street children and provides them with shelter, are also providing shelter for women who have experienced SGBV.

## 7 Concluding summary

Through the two workshops, IDS and MAGE–SL were able to create a space for meaningful dialogue and reflection. As a result, we are able to better understand the dynamics of gender and gender inequality in Sierra Leone, what works and does not work in addressing SGBV, the different sets of challenges faced and the key strategies that have informed and could continue to inform successful interventions.

The initial findings from the workshops reveal the complexity of SGBV in Sierra Leone as it is influenced by multiple factors, including traditional gender norms pre-conflict, the civil war and weak implementation of laws. As such, addressing SGBV requires multiple strategies – from awareness raising and sensitisation to policy enforcement and implementation, alliance building and training at community level.

The two stakeholder workshops enabled us to begin to explore the role of engaging men and boys to address SGBV in Sierra Leone, in order to inform wider discussions on useful strategies to effectively involve men and boys to address these issues.

Further analysis and elaboration of the five themes discussed in this report are currently under way, including in-depth interviews conducted by MAGE–SL with key stakeholders in Sierra Leone, with support from IDS. This information will be collated, analysed and presented in a case study report in 2015.

## Annex 1 List of participants (Freetown)

No.	Name	Organisation(s)
1	Victoria Renner	Girl Child Network (GCN)
2	Aminata F. Kande	African Youth Coalition Against Hunger (AYCAH)
3	Timothy Sowa Jr.	Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF)
4	Abdulai Kamara	Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Sierra Leone
5	Ann Marie F. Caulker	National Movement for Emancipation and Progress (NaMEP)
6	Rev. Charles O. King	Evangelical Church for All Nations and Goodness Foundation (ECFAN)
7	Alfred Davies	Center for Safe Motherhood Youth and Child Organization (CESYMCO)
8	Marion R.E. Koroma	Family Support Unit of Sierra Leone Police (FSU/SLP)
9	John Henry	Family Support Unit of Sierra Leone Police (FSU/SLP)
10	Edward Marah	Informant Media
11	Jebbeh S. Bangura	Restless Development Sierra Leone
12	Harry Mahoi	MSWGCA
13	Daniel Kettor	Restless Development
14	Aminata F. Massaquoi	Culture Radio (104.5 FM)
15	Rosi Aryon	Girl Child Network (GCN) Sierra Leone
16	Ambrose F. Kobi	Men's Association for Gender Equality–Sierra Leone (MAGE–SL)
17	Alex M.S. Vandi	Men's Association for Gender Equality–Sierra Leone (MAGE–SL)
18	Tamba David Mackieu	Men's Association for Gender Equality–Sierra Leone (MAGE–SL)
19	Abdul Martin	Men's Association for Gender Equality–Sierra Leone (MAGE–SL)
20	Abdul Yayah Kamara	Men's Association for Gender Equality–Sierra Leone (MAGE–SL)
21	Antonious L. Lansana	Men's Association for Gender Equality–Sierra Leone (MAGE–SL)
22	Kelvin Sidikie	MAGE–SL, trainee
23	Alex A. Gborie	Photographer
24	Momoh Juanah	World Vision International (WV)
25	Sylvia Kamara	Girl Child Network (GCN) Sierra Leone
26	Richard Carter	DFID Sierra Leone
27	Abu-Bakarr Tarawally	Daily Express Media
28	Elizabeth Mills	Institute of Development Studies (IDS)
29	Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed	Institute of Development Studies (IDS)
30	Augustine A. Garmoh	Lecturer, Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone

## Annex 2 List of participants (Moyamba)

No	Name	Organisation(s)
1	Andrew Yavana	Inter-Religious Council (IRC)
2	Tamba David Mackieu	MAGE–SL
3	Mohamed A. Thorley	MAGE–SL Southern Region Representative
4	Samuel Allieu	MAGE–SL Eastern Region Representative
5	Patrick H. Ngaojia	Activist
6	Jeremiah Sonnie	Pastor
7	Sahr Mangar	MAGE–SL, trainee
8	Tamba E. Makieu	MAGE–SL, trainee
9	Abdul Yayah Kamara	MAGE–SL
10	Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed	Institute of Development Studies (IDS)
11	Jennifer Diggins	Institute of Development Studies (IDS)
12	Antonious L. Lansana	MAGE–SL
13	Mabinty Jongawai	FAWE
14	Choteh T. Gbetuwa	Activist
15	Andul Mboyawa	Chief Kayamba Chiefdom
16	Samuel K. Senesie	MP representative – Constituency 81
17	Abraham K. Kamara	PRO Sierra Leone Muslim League – Moyamba district
18	Tamba G. Gbetuwa	CSO
19	Margret Mboyawa	CSO
20	Regina T. Kamara	Mokpanaboum-Senge
21	Steven J.K. Mammah	Mokpanaboum-Senge
22	Sylvanus V. Fannah	Disability Rights Movement (DRIM) SL
23	Emmanuel Freeman	Mustard Seed Foundation
24	Christiana A. Vandy	Forum for African Women Empowerment (FAWE)
25	Elizabeth Mills	Institute of Development Studies (IDS)
26	Marie Mustapha	Women’s Forum
27	Serah Jalloh	Moyamba District Women’s Network (MODWON)
28	Alpha Lalugba	MOCDA Radio
29	Hannah Nyumah	MSWGCA
30	Michael Kalloh	Culture Radio
31	Francis Ndanema	Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) Radio correspondent Moyamba
32	Susan M. Musa	Ministry of Health & Sanitation
33	Esther Harding	Social Worker – Red Cross Center
34	Idriss M. Kamara	Family Support Unit of Sierra Leone Police (FSU/SLP)
35	Eleanor M. Genbeh	Family Support Unit of Sierra Leone Police (FSU/SLP)
36	Abdul Martin	MAGE–SL
37	Doris W. Campbell	Defence for Children International (DCI)



## Annex 3 Workshop agenda

**Overview:** The vision for these two workshops was to learn about the dynamics of sexual and gender-based violence in Sierra Leone. They bring together the principle activist organisations, government ministries and development agencies that work with men and boys to address sexual and gender-based violence in Sierra Leone. The first workshop took place in Freetown and the second in Moyamba, in June 2014, and they formed part of a larger study undertaken by IDS with MAGE–SL to:

- **Understand the dynamics** that fuel sexual and gender-based violence in Sierra Leone;
- **Explore men’s engagement** in movements against gender-based violence;
- **Identify interventions** that have been developed – at global, national and local levels – to transform these dynamics by engaging with men and boys; and
- **Provide policy-relevant evidence** on collective action to end sexual and gender-based violence.

In bringing together a wide range of people and organisations working to address sexual and gender-based violence, albeit from different angles, the workshops aimed to provide a space for meaningful dialogue and reflection. Preliminary findings from the overall study will be collated for feedback from our key stakeholders in Sierra Leone in January 2015, and shared with development practitioners, policymakers and academics in a full-length report in 2015.

### Agenda

#### Day one

Intended outcomes:

- Understand dynamics that fuel sexual and gender-based violence
- Explore men’s engagement in movements against sexual and gender-based violence

9.00–9.30 Welcome and overview  
9.30–11.00 Mapping motivations for engaging in gender justice  
11.15–13.00 Situating men in SGBV and case study identification  
*Lunch break*  
14.00–16.00 Mapping SGBV and strategic avenues of influence

#### Day two

Intended outcomes:

- Identify interventions that have been developed to address SGBV
- Understand key factors that account for the successful implementation of interventions

9.00–9.30 Reconvene and warm-up  
9.30–10.30 Collective action and identification of successful interventions  
11.00–12.00 Power analysis of allies, strategies and actions  
*Lunch break*  
13.00–15.00 Identify main policy and research priorities  
15.00–16.00 Information sharing and agreement for next steps

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Brighton BN1 9RE

T +44 (0)1273 606261

F +44 (0)1273 621202

E [ids@ids.ac.uk](mailto:ids@ids.ac.uk)

[www.ids.ac.uk](http://www.ids.ac.uk)



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