

# Can targeting men reduce intimate partner violence?

## LINKS BETWEEN VIOLENCE AND TRAUMA IN THE DRC

Violence against women is widespread in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): nearly one in four women has experienced conflict-related sexual violence and nearly two-thirds have experienced violence from a male partner.

Promundo conducted the International Men and Gender Equality Survey<sup>1</sup> in 2012 to understand the causes of gender inequality and violence against women in the country. The study revealed links between men's exposure to trauma and violence and their use of violence against their partners. Men reported coping with frustration, vulnerability and powerlessness (including financially or in response to a partner's rape) through alcohol use, sexual promiscuity, physical violence, or the rejection of their partners who have been raped.

## LIVING PEACE

In response to these findings, in 2013 Promundo piloted "Living Peace",<sup>2</sup> a 15-week intervention targeting 324 men and their partners. During the intervention, men discussed how war and conflict had influenced the way they define "being a man", explored their pain and trauma, and learnt how to cope with loss and anger. Through these discussions, they learnt to adopt non-violent coping strategies.



The programme has since expanded under the guidance of the Living Peace Institute to reach thousands of individuals in other communities, as well as members of the police and military in eastern DRC. Although there was a significant reduction in men's use of violence immediately after the pilot intervention, the question remained whether these results would last.

## MEASURING PROGRESS

Promundo aimed to evaluate the impact of the pilot phase of Living Peace three years after it was implemented. The study specifically focused on the changes in participants' behaviours, attitudes and use of violence, and its impact on their wives, children and family members. It also looked at whether change had diffused to community members who did not participate in the pilot intervention.

The research team conducted focus group discussions and individual interviews between February and April 2016. The first round of data collection involved 15 focus group discussions and seven family interviews with former participants of the Living Peace pilot groups, their wives, family members and community members living in Luvungi and Goma. The second round of data collection involved 32 individual in-depth interviews.

## GRANT DETAILS

**PROJECT:** Living Peace:  
Evaluating the impact of a violence prevention intervention involving male partners of female survivors of conflict-related rape in the Democratic Republic of Congo

**ORGANISATION:** Promundo

**PROJECT LOCATION:** Luvungi and Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo



## A LASTING REDUCTION IN VIOLENCE

The findings<sup>3,4</sup> reveal a lasting reduction in intimate partner violence because of the Living Peace intervention. About 10 out of 40 families reported (mostly temporarily) falling back into old habits of alcohol abuse, leading to conflicts about money at home. However, most men, women, and community and family members reported that:

- The violence at home has stopped altogether.
- The atmosphere at home has become more pleasant.
- Men are more positively engaged in household tasks and child care.
- Women have become more involved in household decision-making.
- Their families' socioeconomic situations have significantly improved as a result of men's participation in the intervention.

These positive results do not signify that gender equality has been achieved in the households, but rather that families and communities have become more equitable or moved in the direction of embracing more equitable relationships.

## WIDER IMPACT ON FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY

Men's changed behaviours and attitudes have positively affected women and

children, who report a more peaceful home environment as well as better physical health. Women reported that they feel safer since the intervention and empowered to refuse sex without fear of violence. Women reported that their husbands had apologised for the violence they had used. In addition, all women who disclosed having been raped revealed that their husbands had begun to fully accept them and the children born from the rape.

The intervention has had an impact beyond the participants. Some community members and relatives have begun to adopt non-violent and collaborative behaviours after witnessing their positive effects.

## FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUSTAINED CHANGE

The single strongest contributing factor to sustained change was that men perceived immediate and lasting rewards for making these changes, which motivated them not to revert to their old behaviours. Men felt proud of their new roles as responsible husbands and fathers and respected community members.

The visible improvement of their families' socioeconomic status and psychosocial well-being is another factor. Due to Living Peace, some men stopped or reduced their alcohol use,

which had the immediate benefit of increasing the family income, and thus reducing stress and violence at home.

Furthermore, the intervention was culturally relevant. The framework focused on peace and harmony rather than gender equality. This psychosocial approach improved men's self-knowledge and awareness of problematic behaviours towards women and others around them.

## KEY TAKEAWAY

The findings show that the Living Peace intervention was successful in facilitating behaviour change and reducing intimate partner violence. These changes in men's behaviours and attitudes have positively affected the lives of women and children, extending to the broader community. ■

## KEY FINDINGS



**Psychosocial interventions can facilitate behaviour change.**



**Both family economic gains and psychosocial improvements have multiplier effects and result in reducing intimate partner violence.**

<sup>1</sup> Sleg, H., Barker, G. & Levto, R. 2014. *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: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey*. Washington, D.C., and Cape Town, South Africa: Promundo-US & Sonke Gender Justice. Available: <http://promundoglobal.org/2014/06/06/images-drc/> [2017, May 30].

<sup>2</sup> Promundo-US. 2014. *Living Peace groups implementation manual and final project report: GBV prevention and social restoration in the DRC and Burundi. LOGiCA Study Series*. Available: <http://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Living-Peace-Groups-Implementation-Manual-and-Final-Project-Report.pdf> [2017, June 2].

<sup>3</sup> Tankink, M. & Sleg, H. 2017. *Living Peace in Democratic Republic of the Congo: An impact evaluation of an intervention with male partners of women survivors of conflict-related rape and intimate partner violence*. Washington, D.C.: Promundo-US. Available: <http://www.svri.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2017-05-15/SVRI%20Final%20April%202020.pdf> [2017, May 30].

<sup>4</sup> Sleg, H. & Tankink, M. 2016. *When no one is looking: 3 years of healing in Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Available: <http://www.svri.org/blog/when-no-one-looking-3-years-healing-democratic-republic-congo> [2017, May 30].