

RWANDA

SUPPORTING WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN PEACE BUILDING AND PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE: COMMUNITY-LED APPROACHES



Women around the world face significant challenges to their participation in peace building processes; beyond this, national level legal frameworks around women's peace building or prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) often do not filter down to the community level.

In Rwanda, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) is undertaking a global program entitled "Supporting Women's Engagement in Peacebuilding and Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict: Community-Led Approaches."

The two-year initiative in Rwanda, which was launched in April 2007, is part of a global UNIFEM program funded through a US\$6.5 million grant from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). The following six conflict-affected countries are involved in the program: Afghanistan, Haiti, Liberia, Rwanda, Timor-Leste and Uganda.



Community of Abahuje

OBJECTIVES

With a budget of US\$1,064,000, the objectives of the UNIFEM program in Rwanda are:

- To support women's capacities to engage in peace building and prevent conflict at the community level;
- To support women at the community level in preventing SGBV and responding adequately to the needs of survivors.

ACTIVITIES

The program is being implemented in selected communities within Kigali and the districts of Rutsiro, Ngorero, and Kayanza.

Some of the key activities of this program in Rwanda include:

- Training for the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, *gacaca* judges and women's organizations to strengthen their capacity to respond to

- peace building priorities identified by communities.
- Facilitating dialogues on peace consolidation between the National Women's Council and local government.
- Organizing an annual forum for GBV service providers to harmonize community approaches and share experience on good practice.
- Training for police, including modules on SGBV survivor protection and psycho-social counseling for women victims of violence who seek support and services at police stations.
- Providing logistical and communication facilities in the form of motorcycles and telephones to police stations for rapid response to SGBV.
- Supporting sensitization campaigns for media, communities, and faith-based organizations and schools on preventing and responding to SGBV.

SGBV IN RWANDA

During the Rwandan genocide, mass sexual violence was perpetrated as a strategic political tool of shame and domination.

Types of SGBV perpetrated included: individual and gang rape; rape with sticks, guns, or other objects; sexual enslavement; forced labor; and sexual mutilation. Many victims of SGBV were murdered immediately after their assault.¹

While little information exists on the true extent and severity of SGBV, indicative studies suggest that:

- More than 250,000 women were raped during the genocide,² 80.9% of women survivors were HIV positive and 13% had broken vertebrae.³
- The Rwandan Police referred to prosecution the following rape cases:
 - 2005: 2380 children under 18 years of age; 619 for adults over 18 years of age;
 - 2006: 2033 children under 18 years of age; 403 rape cases for adults over 18 years of age.
- According to police only 10% of the police force are women.



Cover of the Police Bulletin N.1 on fighting GBV

PARTNERS

UNIFEM is working with the following partners to implement this program:

- Rwandan National Police
- Pro-femme
- Association of Genocide Widows-AGAHOZO (AVEGA)
- National Unity and Reconciliation Commission
- Rwanda Women's Network
- HAGURUKA
- FACT RWANDA
- RADIO SANA, Radio Rwanda
- Local government authorities
- Forum for Women Parliamentarians

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

- Improved social welfare of vulnerable women who have been sexually violated and infected with HIV/AIDS as well as reduced stigma associated with their experience;
- Improved investigations and appreciation of GBV as a human rights issue by police;
- Increased number of female police personnel as a result or support for recruitment, and awareness-raising on women's rights and role in preventing and responding to GBV.

For further information and access to baseline data, contact:
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¹ Human Rights Watch (2004) 'Struggling to Survive: Barriers to Justice for Rape Victims in Rwanda,' Human Rights Watch: New York.

² Human Rights Watch (1996) 'Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence During the Rwandan Genocide,' Human Rights Watch: New York.

³ AVEGA-Agahozo, (1999) Survey on Violence against Women in Rwanda, AVEGA: Kigali.