***Training Materials on the International Protocol***

**PART VII MODULE 17 – SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN & BOYS**

**Session objectives:**

By the end of the session, participants should be in a position to:

* Explain the forms, scope and specific impacts of CARSV against men and boys
* Recognise common myths and indicators of male-directed sexual violence
* Identify the legal and practical obstacles faced by male victims
* Identify helpful approaches to overcome challenges during documention

**Suggested duration of session:**  60 to 90 minutes

**Exercise:** Exploring personal assumptions about sexual violence against male victims (30-45 minutes)

**Relevant sections of International Protocol:**

Pages 264-281; Module 2 – Understanding Sexual Violence; Module 7 – Do No Harm; Module 8 – Safety and Security; Module 9 – Planning; Module 11 – Interviewing; Module 16 – Sexual Violence against Children; Annex 7 – Interviewing Checklist; Annex 8 – Template for Personal Data to be Collected from Victims/Witnesses

This module specifically deals with sexual violence against men and boys and key considerations for documentation processes intending to take male victims of CARSV into account. It is the last module of Part VII of the Protocol on cross-cutting issues and final module of these training materials. This module is closely linked to Module 7 (Do No Harm), Module 9 (Planning) and Module 11 (Interviewing). It highlights additional considerations throughout the documentation process when dealing with male victims of CARSV, and in relation to boys its content is subject to and must be read with Module 16 (Sexual Violence against Children). Most of the information contained in this module is not stand-alone and the trainer will need to link back to information contained in previous modules as necessary.

The trainer for this module must have professional experience planning documentation processes and conducting investigative interviews with male victims of sexual violence, particularly in a local context. They should ideally be an experienced trainer on interview techniques with specific experience to sensitively interview male victims of sexual violence.

The trainer should ask participants with experience approaching and interviewing male victims of sexual violence to share their experience with the group. They should in particular consider whether they found this different to interacting with female victims of sexual violence, and as the case may be how, as well as specific challenges they may have faced and useful approaches they may have used to overcome those challenges.

The general principles presented in Module 7 (Do No Harm), Module 9 (Planning) and Module 11 (Interviewing) are applicable to all CARSV victims/witnesses, regardless of gender and age, and the trainer may want to refer back to some of the associated slides as appropriate. As opposed to dealing with children – which requires truly specific age-appropriate professional training and skills - approaching, interviewing and referring male and female survivors of CARSV require essentially similar professional skills and attitudes. That said, those intending to identify, adequately document and address male-directed sexual violence must be mindful of any pre-conceived ideas and gender assumptions that they or their colleagues may have. In addition, there are some unique legal and practical obstacles to consider when dealing with male survivors which may require specific experience to effectively navigate and address, as discussed below.

As opposed to other modules where the suggested exercises take place at the end of the session, for this module it is proposed to start with a short exercise to debunk common myths and stereotypes about sexual violence against men.

**Exercise instructions**

For the “Exploring personal assumptions about sexual violence against male victims” exercise, the trainer can use as a basis or adapt the statements from Box 1 of Chapter 17 of the Protocol (some of which appear on slide 3), as well as use other relevant gender stereotypes for the context in which the participants are working.

The participants should be split into working groups and each group asked to consider a different set of statements. It is suggested to write or print each statement in big font on a piece of paper, which will later be stuck on a wall or otherwise be placed with “True” statements on one side and “False” statements on the other side. Participants should be asked to discuss in groups whether they find each statement to be true, mostly true, or false (about 10-15 minutes depending on the number of statements distributed). After that, the session should continue in plenary and each group should be asked to place their statements with the “True” or “False” statements, or somewhere in between.

The purpose of the exercise is to explore common myths and assumptions about sexual violence against men and boys and give participants insight about their own pre-conceived ideas on this topic and how this may impact on their ability to appropriately identify and document male-directed CARSV. Sexual violence against men and boys remains a controversial topic in many contexts. Cultural norms about masculinity and deeply rooted gendered assumptions in many societies can make it difficult for even highly educated individuals to contemplate men as victims of sexual violence. It is not unusual for people to assume that a man who was forcibly involved in same-sex acts is homosexual and must have “wanted it”, which is a way of blaming the victim. Competition over limited resources and funding, and other reasons, may also lead women’s advocates to underestimate and marginalise the issue. The trainer should be ready for a possible heated discussion and should aim to challenge participants’ possible misconceptions, which will require tact and patience. The trainer should ensure that participants understand that sexual violence – whether directed against male or female victims - is a crime of power, not sex. If they fail to recognise this key premise, participants are likely to overlook entire categories of possible victims (e.g. men, disabled individuals, old people), and possibly also perpetrators (e.g. heterosexual men).

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After this introductory activity, the module is split into three main sections, namely the scale and forms of sexual violence against men and boys, its impacts on victims and how to respond to it (slides 5-13), legal obstacles to accessing justice faced by male victims (slides 14-15) and key considerations to document male-directed sexual violence (slides 16-22).

In the first section, the main message to convey is that despite the lack of comprehensive statistical data regarding male-directed CARSV, some available studies indicate that the disparity in number between male and female victims is not as large as many people would assume. The UN Security Council explicitly recognised men and boys as victims of sexual violence in conflict for the first time in UNSCR 2106 of June 2013.

The trainer should emphasise the following key points: (i) the international community is only just starting to pay attention to this phenomenon; (ii) sexual violence against men and boys is likely to take place in most, if not all, conflict situations where sexual violence is taking place but documenters are unlikely to find evidence of it unless they actively look for it; (iii) male-directed sexual violence is seriously under-reported - most victims do not come forward as they, for example, fear being disbelieved, labelled as homosexuals and/or arrested in countries where same-sex acts are criminalised; (iv) lack of appropriate support services and safe spaces for male victims act as a further deterrent to reporting; (v) like women and girls, men and boys are vulnerable to sexual violence in any situation where power can be exercised with impunity, and male victims are mainly found in detainee, combatant and refugee populations; (vi) perpetrators mostly belong to armed groups and forces (e.g. prison staff, police, army, militia groups, peacekeepers); (vii) sexual violence against men and boys is not limited to anal rape and can take many other forms (e.g. forced oral sex or intercourse between detainees or with relatives, forced nudity, sexual torture and mutilation, forced sterilization, sexual slavery, forced marriages).

When talking about the impact of CARSV on male victims (slides 11-12), the trainer may want to refer back to some of the slides in Module 2 (Understanding Sexual Violence). In addition to the physical, psychological and socio-economic consequences faced by victims regardless of gender, specific impacts for males may include: chronic back and rectum pain as a result of anal rape; malnutrition when victims avoid eating to minimise further rectal damage or pain; confusion about their sexual identity, especially where a man was penetrated; and challenge to their masculinity for those who, because of the sexual violence, cannot do physical work and fulfil their (socially-assigned) traditional roles as providers and protectors for women and children. The trainer should ask participants if they are familiar with physiological responses and, as the case may be, how they reacted to evidence of reflexive erections and ejaculations by male victims (similar to physiological responses displayed by women who may lubricate when they are being raped). Male victims are unlikely to be aware that these reactions are involuntary and perfectly normal and this may contribute to additional feelings of guilt and confusion about their sexual identity. Participants will need to provide particular reassurance to the victim in that respect and be able to explain the normality of this type of reaction to their family, community and service providers.

The trainer should also stress that the stigmatisation of the victim by his community is likely to be experienced by his family as well, and that victim-centred responses should aim to work not only with male victims, but also with their partners, families and communities. Finding appropriate referral avenues for male victims is often challenging and where advisable victims should be encouraged to join or establish self-help associations to get support from peers and break their isolation. Those willing to document and address male-directed sexual violence should be ready to face not only practical obstacles (e.g. lack of medical facilities equipped to cater for male specific injuries, services providers supporting homophobic views that male victims are gay) but also resistance from individual or community levels up to the institutional levels.

Slides 14-15 deal with legal obstacles to accessing justice for male survivors. The trainer should research in advance of the training the applicable legal framework in the countries relevant to the participants’ work and establish, for example: (i) whether domestic definitions of rape or other forms of sexual violence are gender neutral and recognise men and boys as potential victims (and/or women as potential perpetrators), and (ii) whether homosexual activity is criminalised regardless of whether the conduct was consensual or not (meaning that men who report sexual abuse may themselves be prosecuted) and the consequences of a guilty verdict (e.g. fine, imprisonment, death penalty). In countries where definitions of rape or other forms of sexual violence recognise males as potential victims, the trainer should encourage participants to document acts falling within these categories as rape or other sexual offences (potentially in additional to other relevant offences) in order to reflect the sexual nature of the violence. When this is not the case, participants may still document relevant acts as torture or other serious offences of a non-sexual nature.

The last section of the session (slides 16-22) discusses the impact that these issues are likely to have throughout the documentation process. The trainer should reiterate that the lack of reference to sexual violence against male victims in reports, discussions or other information gathered during the *preliminary research and analysis phase* of investigation planning does not mean that such type of violence did not happen. Evidence of the existence, nature and scale of such type of violence is unlikely to emerge unless trained professionals actively look for it and integrate it in all aspects and stages of the documentation process. This will imply in particular to: look for specific indicators (e.g. detention or other situations of particular vulnerability, clinic records showing spikes in men complaining from sexual dysfunction or chronic back pain); research community attitudes towards male victims and applicable domestic laws; and map and vet formal and informal support services to refer male survivors. Practitioners may have to refrain from or postpone approaching male victims until suitable referral avenues are in place.

In terms of *planning*, integrating male-directed sexual violence in a documentation process will require documenters to consider the following: (i) possible extra time spent in the field as it may take longer to properly identify and document, and as multiple interviews may be required to establish the necessary trust of male victims so that they would disclose such type of violence, (ii) careful selection of members of the documentation team to ensure they have the necessary skills and attitudes, and endeavour to have a sufficiently diverse team to accommodate victims’ preference in terms of investigators’ and interpreters’ gender, age, ethnic background or other relevant factor, and (iii) whether different or additional resources may be required and their associated cost. While the inclusion of CARSV against men and boys may sometimes result in longer, more challenging and expensive documentation processes requiring extra caution in terms of privacy and confidentiality issues, this is not always the case. Practice also shows that well-trained and sensitive investigators who are not perceived as judgemental by victims do not find more difficult to elicit evidence of sexual violence from male victims, compared to female victims, once rapport and trust have been established.

The trainer should ask participants to share any experience they may have *interviewing* male victims of sexual violence, including specific challenges they may have faced and useful approaches used. As previously mentioned, general guidance presented in Module 11 (Interviewing) remains applicable regardless of the gender and age of the victim, and specific guidance mentioned in Module 16 (Sexual Violence against Children) should be applied as appropriate when interviewing boy victims of CARSV.

The trainer should encourage participants to think about and recognise verbal and non-verbal signs and clues that an interviewee may have been a victim of sexual violence (slides 21-22), such as taking frequent toilet breaks, making statements emphasising the gender of perpetrators (e.g. saying “*I was tortured by men*” rather than identifying them as “soldiers”), expressing a strong preference for the gender of the interviewer/interpreter, or complaining of back pain, while making sure that they recognise that they may also deal with a male victim even if he does not exhibit any of these signs. The main message to convey is that interviewing male victims is not fundamentally different from interviewing female victims. As with any other victim, building rapport and trust will be key and interviewers should be ready to spend as much time as necessary to ensure victims feel comfortable enough to open up. They should provide plenty of reassurances that the victim is not to blame, especially if the victim was forced into sexual acts with others (e.g. father forced to rape his daughter, or detainee forced to sexually abuse another detainee) and fears to be perceived by third parties or the law as a perpetrator. When dealing with men and boys having spent time in detention or other vulnerable settings, interviewers should let the victim know that it is safe to talk with the interviewer and may specifically ask them at a later stage of the interview if they have experienced or witnessed sexual violence if this topic has not yet come up.

**Wrap-up and conclusion session**

As this is the last of the modules, the trainer should schedule a final session to go back over what the participants have learned and discussed during the training. If the participants have any remaining questions about any of the modules or exercises, they can have them answered during this session. The trainer should ask the participants whether they feel they have a better understanding of how to investigate or document conflict and atrocity-related sexual violence than they did at the beginning of the training, and whether they will be able to use the International Protocol and the training materials as a guide in their work in future. If the trainer is going to conduct more trainings with these materials, they should also ask the participants for feedback about which modules or exercises were most useful to them and whether they would have liked more or less time for the training or for specific sessions. That will help the trainer to adjust their approach and timings for future trainings.

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