

## PROJECT PROFILE

# Men, Peace and Security

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Photo Credit: Nicky Armstrong

### About the Project

This project investigates contemporary development, humanitarian and security efforts to change men and masculinities. There is a growing attention to men as the “other side” of gender justice efforts, whether as perpetrators, allies and agents of change, or survivors of violence themselves. Initiatives in national militaries, development programmes, civil society campaigns, humanitarian crisis responses and public health ministries seek to reform or abolish certain forms of masculinity and harmful masculine behaviour in favour of other values and identities – sometimes described as positive masculinity.

While attention from practitioners, policymakers, activists and scholars alike has grown in this area, more research is needed to critically examine these efforts and men’s numerous and sometimes overlapping roles in peace and security contexts. This is needed to understand both how these initiatives work, and the theoretical and practical problems that arise in the effort to govern masculinity. Through participant observation, interviews and discourse analysis, this project engages with key organisations, practitioners and activists working with men towards gender justice.

## Key Findings

- **Efforts to engage boys and men as allies in gender justice are increasing and diversifying.** Violence prevention programmes and interventions that seek to promote men's involvement in gender equality and prevent violence against women and girls continue to expand in conflict and security contexts globally. Within this growing field of 'engaging men' a diversity of approaches is being employed including those that focus on challenging and changing gendered social norms about masculinity; faith-based approaches; and programmes that use a trauma-informed lens to engage men as both potential allies and as victims-survivors.
- **Changing individual men and ideas of masculinity is important – but gender justice first and foremost requires addressing patriarchy and structural conditions.** There is a risk that too much attention is being paid to micro changes in transforming individual men and masculinities and not enough on structural level changes. Overarching structural forms of violence and inequality, as well as institutional mandates and operational constraints, hamper efforts to engage men.
- **Understanding the intersections between masculinity and conflict requires examining men as potential victim-survivors in conflict too.** While most violence in conflict contexts is committed by men, men are victims and survivors too. Engaging men as potential victim-survivors challenges gender binaries on who can be a 'victim-survivor,' which continue to frame many interventions. Doing so means that formats for engagement are cognisant of their experience and can provide a trauma-informed engagement approach.
- **There is increased attention to the experiences and needs of LGBTIQ+ populations in conflicts, including those who identify as men and those who are the victims or survivors of violence.** Increased focus on LGBTIQ+ populations is a needed and important development. However, work that focusses on men as victims of violence is often linked or subsumed within LGBTIQ+ work. While there can be overlaps between these two groups, always conflating them is problematic and warrants more critical engagement.
- **Male survivors of violence often have less access to support services.** Research in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) showed many men who experience sexual violence did not have access to support services or trauma-informed care – a trend also seen in other conflict

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I think there are important ethical and practical reasons as to why we need women's centered approaches and spaces. It just means that men, male survivors, have a more restricted range of support services. "

DR CHLOÉ LEWIS

settings. This care gap can leave men feeling silenced or marginalised and without support that this centred on male survivors and their differing needs.

- **Viewing men as perpetrators of violence remains the dominant lens through which men and masculinities in conflict and security spaces are understood.** In particular, programmes and research focus on militarised masculinities and armed men in uniform. While these are important, critical examinations of men's violence in conflict requires attention to both militarised masculinities and the underlying structural conditions and policies that support the mobilisation of men.



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## Recommendations

### Researchers and Academia

- **A critical masculinities lens is needed in peace and security work.** Those working in conflict-affected contexts need to be attentive to the role of masculinities, men's diverse experiences and needs, and engaging with the challenges and tensions in doing this work through a feminist approach.
- **There is a need for more collaboration across gender-based research and programming.** Masculinities in conflict work is too often done in parallel with broader gender justice, women, and LGBTIQ+-focused work. Although, there are valid critiques about work on masculinities, including that it takes away resources and attention from work focused on women, these challenges need to be addressed robustly and collaboratively, and more convergences across the different areas of gender research is needed.

### Development INGOs/NGOs

- **Programme development in response to conflict related sexual violence should avoid homogenising experiences of sexual violence.** The experiences and support needs of male survivors-victims differs from the needs of LGBTIQ+ folks and women. Whilst we push for context specific approaches to and understandings of sexual violence when looking at female victim-survivor programmes, this should be further extended to specific programmes framed around male victim-survivors.
- **Doing masculinities work can be personally traumatic and challenging.** In particular, women and people of all genders who have experienced men's violence may find doing work with men, masculinities, and conflict personally challenging. This work requires a feminist ethic of care as well as trauma-informed approaches and support.

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Getting to a more peaceful, gender equal, equitable world – I think more bridges need to be built, and there needs to be more willingness and openness to explore work with men and masculinities in a more open and potentially empathetic way, particularly in conflict settings and contexts. ”

DR CHLOÉ LEWIS

- **Multiple approaches to accountability for male perpetrated violence and justice are needed in conflict contexts – including ones that use trauma-informed approaches.** Many of the responses to men's sexual violence in conflict-affected contexts are judicial and corporal. This is needed and important. But judicial systems in conflict-affected contexts can be depleted, dangerous, and ineffective. More alternative, gender sensitive, context-specific and adaptable approaches to working with conflict-affected men, including through disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes that are trauma-informed, are needed.



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To learn more about this research project and read its publications visit:  
<https://thegenderhub.com/stories/men-peace-and-security/>

This Project Profile was first published in the Hub's final report, *Gender, Justice and Security: Structural Challenges, Feminist Innovations and Radical Futures*. Go to [www.TheGenderHub.com](http://www.TheGenderHub.com) to read the full report and to learn more about all 38 research projects in the Hub.



This research is part of the UKRI GCRF Gender, Justice and Security Hub. The Hub is an interdisciplinary, transnational research network working with local and global civil society, practitioners, governments and international organisations to advance the delivery of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality; SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions; and the implementation of the UN Security Council's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

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