CULTURAL NORMS AS A DRIVER FOR GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

CASE STUDY IN PIBOR, BOMA STATE

FOR

NGOs IN SOUTH SUDAN

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BUDA PHILIP EMMANUEL

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ACRONYMS

EFSVL Emergency Food Security and Vulnerable Livelihoods

EMAP Engaging Men Through Accountable Practice

FGD Focus Group Discussion

GALS Gender Action Learning System

GBV Gender-Based Violence

HARISS Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience in South Sudan

MSF Médecins sans frontiers

NGO Non-governmental organization

UNICEF United Nations Children Emergency Fund

WASH Water Sanitation and Hygiene

1. **INTRODUCTION**

This research is to conduct a study into Cultural norms prevalent in Murle communities in Pibor. The overarching goal is to generate evidence for humanitarian programming in Pibor and identify entry points for gender-transformative humanitarian action.

Pibor is the capital of Boma state located east of South Sudan (formerly in Jonglei state) and is predominantly inhabited by the Murle ethnic group. In 2011, between February and mid-August, the impact of the inter-tribal conflict between the Lou Nuer from Uror and Murle in Pibor resulted in violent clashes with over 200-300 Murle killed, approximately 4,400 persons displaced and 91 people, mostly women and children, abducted (Ferrie, 2012). The ongoing cycle of inter-communal fights and ethnic clashes as a result of attacks and revenge attacks due to cattle raiding and abduction of boys, girls and women, is fuelled by the age set fighting practice among the Murle.

Pibor is also characterized as a highly patriarchal society, with older and richer men holding most of the decision-making power at household and community levels. Increasingly, male youth are resorting to violent means to compensate their lack of access to respect and power, fuelling insecurity in Murle communities. Other forms of harmful traditional practices relate to the ‘booking’ girls, which refers to the practice under which older men ’book’ young girls as future wives, by providing cattle to the girls’ families, hence perpetuating the dynamics of bride-wealth, cattle raiding and the dowry system (Saferworld and Conciliation Resources 2012).

To date, these tensions have heavily impacted on the Murle community, who feel marginalized and blame the government and the humanitarian community for lack of protection from the Lou Nuer.

This research aims to identify constructions of Cultural Norms among the Murle ethnic community located in Pibor, Boma state and harmful expressions thereof, to adapt humanitarian programming to enhance gender justice in Pibor. More specifically, the research aims to identify how harmful Cultural norms manifest themselves, how they are perpetuated and how it links to prevailing levels of GBV. Furthermore, this report explores the knowledge and attitudes of young women and men in communities towards GBV, sexual violence. The research was carried out in December 2018, with an eight-day field mission to Juba and Pibor.

The qualitative data collection process included FDGs in three rural payams around Pibor (Akillo, Manyeran, and Pibor North) and KIIs in Pibor Town (Gogolthin payam). In total, 200 people (103 females and 97 males) participated in the different FGDs that were conducted in separate female-only and male-only sessions. An age specific approach was used, dividing participants into youths (15-24 years-old), with 91 participants (51 female and 40 male), and adults (25 years-old and above), with 109 participants (52 female and 57 male). In addition, seven key informants (6 male and 1 female) interviews were conducted.

This research finds that constructions of Murle Cultural norms are intrinsically linked to violent attitudes, behaviours and practices. Harmful masculinities are manifested in the course of inter-ethnic conflicts (linked to cattle raiding and the accumulation of wealth), age set group fighting and inter-generational conflicts (fathers and sons, young men and older men). Fuelled by resource depletion, over the past years, the inter-communal tensions have been increasing, attacks and counter attacks are occurring in shorter cycles and are characterised by an increase in deadly violence due to readily available guns and weapons, remnants from the armed conflict. Consequently, a downward spiral of violence, loss of life, loss of property through looting and destruction has been identified by study participants across the four bomas visited. Age-set fights, particularly between the age-sets of Lango and Kurenen are a powerful underlying driver of community insecurity that contribute to a normalisation of violence. As a result of this largely male perpetrated violence, men and boys are killed and injured in the course of cattle raids, or otherwise harmed in the context of abduction and exploited for forced labour. Male and female study participants of different ages readily report about mental illness, psychosocial affectation and traumatisation.

In general, gender norms in South Sudan can be characterised as quite rigid, based on a stark gender difference, with men claiming control over women in all spheres of life. However, Murle men increasingly struggle to live up to gendered expectations of masculinity, in particular to provide for and defend the household. Study participants indicate that a respected man in Murle communities has to be married, ideally to multiple wives, have many cattle and numerous children. This idealised trait also extends to being able to provide for the family and to contribute to kinship wealth, which is particularly challenging in contexts of resource depletion. Nonetheless, throughout their lives men strive to accumulate wealth to increase their status and the status of their households, often resorting to violent means such as cattle raiding. Wealth is also the key factor that allows for prestige, leadership and decision-making power. The means to accumulate wealth relates to being a brave, skilful fighter, that has a military mindset, capable of raiding and bringing cattle home. Another trait, that is likely to undermine the efforts of diffusing or preventing inter-communal and age-set fights, is the trait of ‘persistence’, linking celebrated masculinities to continued engagement, of not giving up, not stopping fights, but instead proactively engaging in revenge actions, as means of ‘defending’ the household and the community. Male leadership skills are linked to the extent to which men can keep ‘control’ of their household, and by extension depends on enforcing women’s submissiveness. Women’s subordination is intrinsically connected to men’s dignity and self-worth, which explains the high levels of VAW. This research further finds that prevalent Murle masculinities are fragile in the sense that self-worth and being respected can be put into question by their male peers at the community level, when their wives are perceived to be disobedient. The overreliance on the legitimisation of men by their peers constitutes an additional driver of VAW.

In this context, young men face significant challenges to getting married and to be acknowledged as an adult by other community members, let alone, being able to provide for their family or add to kinship wealth. The marginalisation of young men by older men based on their marriage status is not only manifested through undermining remarks, but also by restricting the access of younger men to decision-making spaces at the community level. The loss of purpose in young men’s life contributes to an increased disposition to use violent means to compensate for not being able to live up to the societal expectations of masculinity. Belonging to an age-set group is enforced through peer pressure often linked to violence and active participation in attacks and defence is a rite of passage and therefore expected from young men. The availability of weapons, remnants of the recent armed conflict constitute a way for young men to assert themselves, but their violent acts lead to a weakening of social cohesion at the community level.

Due to these multi-layered drivers of violence closely linked to constructions of cultural norms in Murle communities, this research finds very limited references to non-violent expressions of masculinities which are socially accepted. Attempts to depart from traditions around cattle raiding, age set-fights, bride wealth and VAW are perceived as threats and result in violent reprisals against those men attempting to do so. Enforcing compliance to violent Murle social norms is relentless and occurs among peers, at household and community level. Social sanctions are far-reaching and include lack of respect, being labelled as cowards, outcasts and seen as ‘useless’. Consequently, these men are not only marginalised from community affairs, but also suffer violent beatings, assaults on their extended family and are left defenceless in the case of an attack.

The expression of non-violent expressions of masculinity, includes young men preferring education over cattle raiding, those postponing their marriage, disabled young men who can’t partake in cattle raiding and practices identified largely among returning diaspora members, such as fathers refusing to engage in early marriage transaction (‘booking’ girls), or sending their daughters to school. Finally, the recurrent requests by male study participants for increased awareness raising and training in ending GBV needs to be acknowledged as a relevant entry point to enhance non-violent expressions of Murle masculinities.

In terms of potential role models, this research also finds that it is dangerous to be publicly acknowledged as change-maker or non-violent role model, let alone to proactively participate in any public initiative for fear of reprisals. Engaging and raising the profile of potential role models needs significant preparatory work at community levels, engaging age-sets, elders and traditional leaders, as well as other community members working on acceptance of ‘difference’. In Pibor Town, for example, a traditional male leader strongly argued that both men and women should have the same rights and that women should be given opportunity to participate in community decision making. Recurrent references also stress the increased role of the Kavare women’s group in Pibor, which has been involved by traditional leaders in dealing with age-set fights, intra-partner violence, ‘booking’ of girls and participating in traditional court meetings. Any efforts to enhance potential role models needs to be accompanied by measures to reduce levels of violent stigmatisation, by those men clinging on to their power.

Finally, this research identifies seven entry points for ending VAW/G: 1) addressing structural gender inequality (ending construction of women and girls as men’s property, contribute to a more flexible gendered division of labour, creating a conscience on the impact of VAW/G); 2) disrupting the downward spiral of violence, including to revitalise positive aspects of age-set groupings, expanding dialogue capacity for prevention of inter-ethnic clashes, and disrupting the normalisation of violence; 3) unsettling harmful expressions of masculinities, including installing dialogue groups among men, mixed gendered guided dialogue groups and ways to engage adolescent boys; 4) tackling the everyday drivers of VAW, including to continue work around sustainable food security and diversify livelihood and income generation opportunities away from cattle; 5) working with community stakeholders, including proactive engagement with elders and traditional authorities, strengthening the role of positive influencers and role models; 6) strengthening the role of women, by enhancing women’s coping mechanisms (social cohesion), building support-networks among women, and enhancing women’s participation at the community level; 7) enhancing legal frameworks and law enforcement to enable safe reporting of abuses, equal and equitable participation in justice mechanisms and holding perpetrators accountable, as well as strengthening government services to mitigate VAW through strengthening referral pathways for survivors of sexual violence.

**1.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The research aims to identify constructions of cultural norms among the Murle ethnic group located in Pibor, Boma state, harmful expressions thereof, to adapt humanitarian programming to enhance gender-responsiveness.

The terms of reference lay out that the research should:

1. Analyze what ‘Cultural norms’ means, and how it is manifested and perpetuated in Pibor
2. Analyze how Cultural norms affects the types and prevalence of GBV in both the public and private sphere in Pibor
3. Explore the knowledge and attitudes of women and men in the communities towards GBV, including sexual violence.
4. **LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to 20th century feminist theory, gender is conceptualized as a social construct. While biological sex differences are not denied, it is argued that they undermine an in-depth understanding of how relations between women and men are organized and how they share power in a given community. The constructed social differences between women and men are deeply rooted in accordance to cultural contexts. They are learned and changeable over time. They determine our roles, responsibilities, opportunities, privileges and limitations, in accordance to gendered expectations of behavior.

The wider social construction around gender is explained as gender order (Connell 1987; 1995). It is an overarching system of practices, norms and institutions that is built on gender dominance. It is a term that can be used to explain the logic behind and ways of reproducing structural gender inequalities. Therefore, the concept of gender order is instrumental in unpacking structural gender inequalities and consequently deconstructing them.

Gender order rests on the unequal share of power between women and men in different private domains, comprising among others family decision making and access to assets and control over resources, and public domains of education, politics, economy and justice. The gender order not only shapes how femininities and masculinities are constructed in a given context, but how a humanitarian crisis affects women, girls, men and boys differently and shapes the ways in which they can live up to expectations of gendered behavior. Those women and men who do not conform to gendered expectations are often punished, excluded or marginalized. Although some would argue that “formal and open patriarchy has been weakened and dissolved over the last centuries” (Kimmel, Hearn and. Connell, 2005), the level of GBV violence proves that the effects of structural gendered inequalities are still prevalent

Historically, women have had less access than men to material resources, legal recognition, public knowledge and information, decision-making power, and economic power. In many countries in the world they also have little control over their fertility, sexuality and marital choices. Therefore, structural gender inequality is a form of power inequality and is greatly influenced by other factors of identity such as class, ethnicity, religion, disability, age and sexuality. Transforming gender and power relations, and the structures, norms and values that underpin them is critical to ending poverty and challenging inequality.

Social and cultural norms are rules or expectations of behavior and thoughts based on shared beliefs within a specific cultural or social group. While often unspoken, norms offer social standards for appropriate and inappropriate behavior that govern what is (and is not) acceptable in interactions among people (WHO, 2009). Social and cultural norms are highly influential over individual behavior in a broad variety of contexts, including violence and its prevention, because norms can create an environment that can either foster or mitigate violence and its deleterious effects.

Different social and cultural norms influence how individuals react to violence. Researchers have hypothesized that the social and cultural norms that lead to the tolerance of violence are learned in childhood, wherein a child experiences corporal punishment or witness’s violence in the family, in the media, or in other settings (Abrahams and Jewkes, 2005; Brookmeyer et al., 2005; Lansford and Dodge, 2008; WHO, 2009). Witnessing violence in childhood creates norms that can lead to the acceptance or perpetration of a multitude of violent behaviors or acts, but it also may provide a potent point of intervention for violence prevention efforts. Although research in this area is limited, many preliminary studies show promise in actively influencing or altering existing social norms in order to reduce the occurrence of violence within a given population (WHO, 2009).

To better understand how social and cultural norms are related to violence and violence prevention, the Forum on Global Violence Prevention convened a workshop1 on October 29–30, 2015, to explore the social and cultural norms that underlie the acceptance of violence, with a focus on violence against women across the lifespan, violence against children, and youth violence. The workshop addressed causes, effects, characteristics, and contextual variations related to social and cultural norms related to violence; what is known about the effectiveness of efforts to alter those norms in order to prevent and mitigate such violence; and the role of multiple sectors and stakeholders in the prevention of this violence. Invited speakers and workshop discussions drew from a broad variety of disciplines and perspectives, including the public health, social sciences, technology, public safety, human rights, policy, and legal sectors. Sheldon Greenberg, the chair of the Forum on Global Violence Prevention, noted that the forum has adopted the definition of violence put forward by the World Health Organization: the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against one’s self, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation (Krug et al., 2002).

2.1 **DEFINING CULTURAL NORMS AND FEMININITIES**

Further unpacking the terms requires a deeper understanding of gender norms that ascribe types of behavior, or what a man or a woman ought to be in each context. In other words, what is considered ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ in certain contexts.

In the current gender order, men largely occupy and define their roles in the public sphere, while women’s roles continue to be largely connected to the domestic realm, particularly in the context of South Sudan, where a strict gendered difference is observed. For example, in South Sudan, it is believed that the military is a system built on traditional masculine values of courage, honour and physical strength. Consequently, women activists are excluded from key military and political power positions and marginalized within the formal structures of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (Republic of South Sudan). Although there has been progress made in developing more inclusive legal and policy frameworks, women are still greatly underrepresented in government, including in political and technical posts. Less than 20 percent of women occupy ministerial positions, and women have not overseen Finance, Defense, Interior and Foreign Affairs ministries yet (Republic of South Sudan). The ‘lessons’ about what is feminine or masculine ought to be is passed on directly, through upbringing and socialization in accordance to local traditions. However, they can also be legalized, through formal legal system or customary law.

In times of conflict or communal tensions, men come under pressure to support military action, to take up arms, fight, kill and be willing to die for their nation or community. This is in contrast with expectations of women during conflict, which often include pressure to support their sons or husbands joining the war effort or to have more children in order to further the survival of their community or ethnic group (Saferworld 2017).

**2.2 CULTURAL NORMS AS DRIVERS OF HARMFUL PRACTICES**

The gender order is often maintained through asserting power and violence, individually or collectively. During conflict and humanitarian crises, when violence and the use of weapons become a norm, and the ability to conform to ascribed gender roles is undermined, the social order is interrupted and as a result gender inequality are exacerbated.

In literature and practice, there are a number of terms used to describe cultural norms during crises. Some of them are ‘violent’, ‘toxic’, or ‘militarised’ cultural norms referring to the harmful expressions required to maintain their assumed superior positions in a given context. Nevertheless, the norms ascribed to men in insecure contexts, are often also internalized by women. As different types of violence are practiced in both private and public spheres, far reaching consequences for survivors, their families and communities are devastating.

According to Safer world, “it has been noted in a range of contexts that dominant notions of cultural norms often look different during conflict than they do during peacetime, often closely linking being a man with being a combatant” (Saferworld 2014). Consequently, “militarised notions of masculinity which valorise domination and violence can: motivate men to participate in violence and women to support them or pressure them to do so; allow political and military actors to deliberately promote violent masculinities in order to recruit combatants and build support for war; allow, even where dominant conceptions of masculinity do not idealise it, violence to be seen as an acceptable means of attaining other symbols of manhood, such as wealth or access to women; render men who feel unable to live up to societal expectations of masculinity more susceptible to recruitment into armed groups as well as more likely to commit violence in the home” (Saferworld 2017).

**2.3 DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE AND RESULTING GENDERED IMPACTS**

Intercommunal conflict, bride wealth system and depletion

Inter-ethnic clashes have a long history in Murle communities, resulting from attack and revenge attacks among ethnic groups, which are exacerbated, as cattle raiding becomes the main source of wealth accumulation in a context of ongoing resource depletion in and around Pibor. Ethnic communities come into conflict when they migrate into rival groups’ territories in search of water, grazing land or cattle (Saferworld and Conciliation Resources, 2012). Traditional rivalries between the Murle and Lou Nuer have been largely influenced by the presence of small arms as a result of the mismanagement of the disarmament in these ethnic communities in 2009 by the government. These ethnic clashes are characterised by excessive violence, destruction of villages, theft of cattle, murder of populations and abduction of children and women. The 2011 attacks between the two rival ethnicities left devastating effects of widespread displacements, which resulted in revenge attacks. In August 2011, Murle youth from Pibor attacked Lou Nuer settlements across an area as large as 150 square kilometres affecting 10 villages in Uror and leading to the displacement of 31,096 Lou Nuer population and the theft of 38,000 cattle. Between April-June 2011, Lou Nuer attacked Murle in Pibor that left between 7,000–10,000 Murle displaced (Ferrie, 2012).

In addition, the prevalence of the bride price system continues to fuel recurrent cycles of violence and revenge violence. Since women available for marriage are in short supply, their abduction has become a driver of conflict (Saferworld and Conciliation Resources, 2012). Over the past few years the inter-communal tensions have been increasing, attacks and counter attacks are occurring in shorter cycles and are characterised by an increase in deadly violence due to readily available guns and weapons, remnants from the armed conflict. Consequently, a downward spiral of violence, loss of life, loss of property through looting and destruction has been identified by study participants across the four bomas visited.

Study participants further indicate that while men and boys are more likely to get killed during cattle raiding, abducted for the purpose of forced labour and undergo violent treatment by the contending ethnic group, women and girls are often sought out for counter attacks and sexually assaulted, beaten and abducted in such revenge fights. Sexual violence against women is not only perpetrated by enemy ethnic group, but also by men from their own communities, including their husbands: Men behave violently against women and girls when they come back from cattle raids, or grazing cattle, they feel like relaxing and take a rest, but most times women do not allow [having sex with their spouses] (KII, Male Traditional Leader, Pibor Town). In addition, adult women report living in a constant state of fear as their sons appear to be continuously planning attacks and revenge attacks to accumulate wealth to be able to marry. The qualitative data analysed further indicates an exacerbation of violence: [before] it was rare for women to be killed by Nuer during cattle raids and inter-tribal conflicts, but now, women and girls are killed (FGDs, adult women in Thangajon and Nyantholoch). Another indication on how inter-ethnic conflicts aim to inflict harm and suffering using gender specific means, a trader stresses that nowadays: when a woman is killed alongside her husband, they will be placed in a manner that shows they are having sex, which is a taboo (KII, Trader, PiborTown).

The underlying drivers of violence relate to young men attempting to live up to the gendered expectations of protecting and defending their communities (also comprising taking revenge for harm caused), as well as trying to generate sufficient wealth to be able to get married in order to be acknowledged as an adult and have access to influence and leadership which continues to be intrinsically linked to wealth, including bride-wealth. These expectations are increasingly difficult to live up to, with harsh social sanctions such as marginalisation by excluding them from clan meetings affecting those men who cannot conform.

1. **CONCLUSION**

This research has shown that gender constructions in Murle communities in and around Pibor are based on a stark gender differentiation, based on male superiority and female submissiveness. The cattle and bride wealth and dowry system perpetuate the understanding of women and girls as men’s property. This results in male perpetrated violence at the inter-communal level (inter-ethnic attacks and revenge attacks over cattle), community level violence (age-set fights) and widespread domestic and intra-partner violence (including beatings, marital rape and deprivation of food). In the context of increasing resource depletion, the cycles of violence are getting shorter and deadlier, mostly likely due to the availability of weapons that are remnants of the recent armed conflict. This has led to a normalization of violence (insecurity as unavoidable) at the community and household levels linked to impunity for violent acts. As social cohesion at the community level increases and inter-generational conflicts lead to a disintegration of households (lack of respect for elders), a lost sense of purpose and high levels of psychosocial affectations among women, girls, men and boys can be observed.

Constructed male superiority is based on deeply rooted male entitlements that perpetuate the control over women in the public and private realm. Celebrated traits of being married (in a context of bride price and dowry system) for example being considered an adult, continuously striving to accumulate wealth, the idealization of military mindset and warrior skills and leadership traits rooted in the capacity to ‘control their households’ are intrinsically linked to harmful expressions of masculinities. Other respected traits such as being just, generous, honest and hardworking are increasingly side-lined. At the same time, the construction of Murle masculinity is also fragile, in the sense that men’s sense of self-worth can easily be undermined by women and girls that are perceived as dis-obedient (daughters refusing to marry, wives speaking up at community meetings). Consequently, men resort to violence to control women and maintain approval of their male peers in the community.

In this context, young men lack resources to marry to be acknowledged as an adult in Murle communities, resorting to violence and the support of age-set groups to access resources and to counter the marginalization of older men from community meetings and decision-making spaces. The availability of weapons shifts correlations of power among men of different ages (disrespecting the elders), resulting in more violence. To break this downward spiral of violence, the violent socialization of boys as warriors, learning from the very early ages to enforce their assumed superiority of women (for example, boys who do not beat their sisters are considered weak), needs to be replaced by new types of relations between boys and girls in future generations (ending the understanding of women and girls as property).

Non-violent expressions of masculinity are scarce and deviance from accepted forms of ‘being a man’ are violently resisted. In the current situation, it needs to be acknowledged that it is dangerous to be publicly acknowledged as a change-maker or non-violent role model, let alone to proactively participate in any public initiative for fear of reprisals. Potential influencer and role models identified are fathers refusing to ‘book’ their daughters as future wives, or those sending girls to schools, progressive elders that pressure others for women’s participation at community settings or women’s groups working to reduce violence during age-set fights.

Among the entry points for ending VAW/G, this research identified measures to address structural gender inequality (women as property and gendered division of labour and creating a conscience on the impact of VAW/G), disrupting the downward spiral of violence, by revitalizing positive aspects of age-set groupings, expanding dialogue capacity for prevention of inter-ethnic clashes and disrupting the normalization of violence. Furthermore, to unsettle harmful expressions of masculinities, tackling everyday drivers of VAW, working with community stakeholders and enhancing the role of women and girls (supporting women’s coping mechanisms against VAW, strengthening the networks among women and enhancing women’s participation at the community level). Finally, to enhance services to mitigate VAW, ending impunity and strengthening referral pathways for survivors of sexual violence.

1. **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NGOs PROGRAMMING**

This section aims to provide practical recommendations to adapt humanitarian and development programming to be more gender-responsive by enhancing the understanding of harmful expressions of cultural norms. The TI research team would like to note that this section should have largely been built on inputs by Oxfam staff and humanitarian partners operating in Pibor. Unfortunately, only one response to the staff survey was received, which is not considered enough to triangulate fieldwork data.

Comprehensive, accurate and timely information provision on humanitarian assistance: As part of safe programming, humanitarian Programme interventions need to be accompanied with thorough information provision for Programme beneficiaries and their spouses when targeting women. In a context where women are considered property and their freedom of movement is controlled, humanitarian and development actors need to ensure expectations of access to benefits and distributions are accurate. When women return without money or assets from meetings with humanitarian actors, they are accused of adultery and beaten. Consequently, preparatory measures need to include comprehensive, accurate and timely information ahead of the implementation.

Awareness raising on the shared impact of violence: community engagement and social cohesion components should address the impact of violence on inter-communal, community and household levels, including the psychosocial effects from the normalization of violence. Humanitarian actors need to take a decided human rights approach to help contribute to ‘humanize’ women and girls, creating consciousness about the multiple affectation women and girls experience. Undermining the ‘objectification’ of women will be required to advance NGO’s gender justice goals especially those carrying Protection Projects.

Implementing dialogue groups with men: Dialogue groups amongst men, targeted in accordance to age-sets, should engage with the harmful effects of violence endured and committed at the inter-communal, community and household levels. The roles men play at the community level through peer pressure, should include the extent to which the same peer pressure could be used to stop other men in engaging in VAW (highlighting the positive traits of being just, honest and generous). The NGOs carrying out gender needs activities to consistently document and disseminate advances and lessons learned from the implementation of GALS and EMAP programming in other parts of the country. A budget also needs to be set aside to allow for meetings and exchanges between the team of gender officers and coordinators.

Awareness raising sessions on GBV: Step up awareness raising sessions on GBV, including in mixed gendered and separate male-only and female-only settings. In addition to the harmful impacts of different types of violence, it would be important to build on the positive norms of ‘being respectful to all women in the community and household’, particularly stressed by young women. Drama sessions and video could be used to make this activity livelier and thus more engaging.

Conduct explorations into the ending of the practice of ‘booking’: The practice of ‘booking’ underlies the assumption that girls are men’s property, and due to its negative effects around early marriage has been discontinued in other parts of South Sudan. The NGOs gender programming could explore together with women’s rights organizations and other partners how changes came about in other regions of the country and devise a plan on how to advocate for the end of this practice in Pibor.

Engaging with adolescents: An age sensitive approach to ending VAW/G is required. The socialization of young boys to a military mindset, alongside violent attitudes regarding their sisters and other girls in the community needs to be disrupted. Concrete activities should Centre around creating relations between boys and girls that are not mediated by male ownership over women. Activities could target male and female siblings, as well as other creative activities such as drama, music and joint community projects.

Fostering a disposition to send boys and girls to school: Age-set affiliation and the peer pressure associated with participating in cattle raids often forces boys to drop out of school. It is ultimately related to enhancing the acceptance of ‘difference’, including different life choices. Similarly, the preference of sending boys rather than girls to school needs to be addressed. Information provision to parents and community members, disrupting the attitudes that associated girls who attend school as being ‘spoiled’ needs to be revisited.

Contributing to more collaborative gendered division of labour: In a context of resource depletion, women are increasingly interested to participate in livelihoods and income generation activities. At times, husbands do not allow women to participate. In this case, additional awareness-raising sessions would need to be conducted, including types of activities envisaged, ways of working and benefits attached to the activity. From the outset discussions on access and control over resources by women need to take place.

Review participation level in NGOs programming: In conversations with some staff members, male beneficiaries predominate in distribution centred activities, while women are more targeted for conversation and dialogue centred activities, which often implies an important time commitment, overburdening women. At the same time, it is advised to also enhance the participation level of women in distribution centred activities, while also increasing the participation level of men in dialogue centred activities.

Consistent post-distribution monitoring: In a context where men control women, the levels of women’s access and control over resources generated through NGOs income generating measures need to be consistently tracked. This includes to what extent women can dispose of the money they earn independently, to what extent husband and wive(s) take decisions on expenditure jointly. A female headcount of participants is not a good enough indicator of effectiveness. Humanitarian livelihoods programmes need to enhance monitoring to what extent cash-based interventions and income generation is directly linked to marriage related disputes.

Enabling sustainable food security: Food insecurity is cited as key everyday driver of GBV with deprivation of food being used to punish women and girls. Consequently, concerted efforts to ensure sustainable solutions to reduce this driver of violence are needed.

Diversifying livelihood and means of income: Given the ongoing depletion of resources, it calls into question the persistence on cattle as a means of livelihood, especially in the rural communities. The challenge for livelihood programmes lies on diversifying the means of income, in contexts with very low levels of education and men being increasingly idle.

Working with elders and traditional leaders: This research has identified the need to engage with elders and traditional leaders, even though their influence has been undermined through the recurrent cycles of violence perpetrated mostly by young men. The logic of intervention would not be around restoring their lost influence, but to make them accountable allies to women and girls engaged in prevention and mitigation of GBV, when diffusing age-set fights, stepping in to solve cases of adultery between spouses and domestic violence.

Creating safe spaces for women and girls: As measure to strengthen women’s coping mechanisms and women’s emotional support network, relations between women of different generations need to be enhanced. The feelings of isolation and weakened bonds of women contribute to their feelings of isolation. A safe space would be particularly important given the restriction of movement that was noted during the discussions with women also faced with accusations of adultery, which prompts them to stay inside. While ensuring that women have a safe space to discuss matters such as reproductive health, awareness-raising around GBV and on women’s rights more generally, it is important to raise awareness amongst the men on the importance and rationale for the women’s safe spaces to prevent violent backlashes against women.

Collaborating with state authorities and other partners to expand dialogue capacity for the prevention of inter-ethnic clashes: Even though the ultimate responsibility for diffusing inter-ethnic clashes should lie with government authorities and traditional leaders, NGOs should explore options to contribute to these effects through the dialogue initiatives and groups. The ‘dehumanizing’ aspects of the humiliation of enemies and desecrating of dead bodies result in important psychological harm accompanying cattle raiding. The positive effects of negotiated returns of abducted adults and children and cattle can contribute to reducing revenge attacks, which eventually can counter the downward spiral of violence.

Advocate for the implementation of a legal framework that allows women and girls to divorce: Advocate with government authorities as well as traditional courts on how women living in abusive relationships can reach a divorce-settlement in an effective and safe way.

Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse need to be in place: A woman leader stressed that NGO workers have a status in communities due to perceived access to wealth: NGO workers are powerful, because they have access to things needed in our community. Some families can force their daughters to marry the NGO workers and they do bring us things in exchange of our daughters. (KII, Woman Leader, Pibor Town). While this quote refers to a marriage arrangement, it is a powerful call to ensure compliance to Oxfam’s code of conduct and recurrent training and refresher sessions on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

In long term, ending impunity against perpetrators for sexual violence: An advocacy component would need to generate awareness for women and girls to report abuses safely and to be able to access traditional courts. The law enforcement agencies need to ensure that the context of impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence comes to an end, including sexual violence occurring in the context of inter-ethnic clashes, age-set fights and at the household level. Concerted measures to raise awareness and end marital rape are needed.

**ANNEX**

Focus Group Discussion Guidelines



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