“...sexual violence is preventable”
If you are a programme manager or staff member working on the Communities Care: Transforming Lives and Preventing Violence Programme (CC Programme), then Part One: Building Knowledge and Awareness is for you. It aims to share information about sexual violence and social norms, and to inspire you to work with communities to take action to stop sexual violence.

**OBJECTIVES**

- Create shared understanding about sexual violence against women and girls, including in conflict-affected settings.
- Foster awareness of the harmful consequences of sexual violence and the rights and needs of survivors.
- Educate about the causes of sexual violence and explore the connections between gender inequality, power and sexual violence.
- Consider factors at the individual, family, community and societal levels that need to be addressed to make lasting change to norms, policies and practices that sustain sexual violence.
- Educate about social norms and how they contribute to sexual violence and how they can be used in programming to prevent it.
- Encourage reflection about personal values and beliefs.
Building Knowledge and Awareness has two sections:

**SECTION 1 INFO**

The first section introduces the topics of sexual violence, social norms and self-awareness. Each topic includes **reflection activities** to get you thinking about the topic and to draw on your knowledge and experience about it. Make sure you have plenty of blank paper and a pen ready to jot down your responses to the questions as you go through.

You will also find lots of **information** about sexual violence and social norms, and boxes with **helpful hints for programming** to get you thinking about how the information relates to programming.

**SECTION 2 CAPACITY BUILDING**

The second section contains training materials that can be used to train other people on sexual violence, social norms and self-awareness, including other CC Programme staff and stakeholders.

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<th>Length</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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<td>Sexual Violence</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>To foster knowledge and understanding of sexual violence and be able to apply knowledge to programme activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Norms</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>To build understanding of the role of social norms in fostering sexual violence, and learn about the process of norms change used in the programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Awareness</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>To foster awareness about personal values and beliefs and reflection on each person’s role as a change maker in preventing sexual violence.</td>
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TOPIC 1

ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE
PART 1
Building Knowledge and Awareness
1 ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence is a hidden problem often surrounded by secrecy and shame. To effectively prevent sexual violence, and respond to the needs and uphold the rights of survivors, it is important that everyone involved in the programme has a shared understanding of the problem and why it’s important to do something about it. This topic has information drawn from international research to foster learning and reflection and build a common understanding about sexual violence, its consequences and how we can do something to address it.

Before we start

Sexual violence is a sensitive subject that can bring up uncomfortable issues about power, about relationships between men and women and about personal experiences of violence.

Sexual violence is common and many people have been personally affected by it. For survivors, it can be a painful topic to discuss, even many years later. For those survivors who have never told anybody about their experiences, reading or talking about sexual violence might lead to them feeling distressed, wanting to talk about their experience, or not wanting to talk at all. Those who are experiencing ongoing sexual violence may want to speak about it for the first time, and we need to be ready to listen.

We need to be aware of and sensitive to the feelings and reaction that subjects of sex, gender and violence can provoke in ourselves and others. For ourselves, this means being aware of our own feelings and reactions as we read these materials and making sure there is someone trusted to talk to if needed. We also need to look out for colleagues and check in with them if we think they find the subject upsetting or want to talk about some of these issues.

When we start working with the community through the CC Programme, we need to make sure that there are resources available for those who want to get help for themselves or for someone they know. In fact, the programme cannot start without these resources in place.
1.1 What is sexual violence?

‘Sexual violence’ is a broad term that includes many different kinds of harmful behaviours and actions. The World Health Organization definition of sexual violence shows how it can include actual or even attempted acts of assault, abuse and exploitation.

The definition also highlights the different settings where sexual violence can take place. We know that sexual violence is common in the household and family, in intimate relationships, in schools and other institutions in the community.

**World Health Organization definition of sexual violence**

Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.

The list below has been developed by international researchers and includes examples that many people may not have previously considered as sexual violence. According to experts, sexual violence includes many different acts including the following:²

- Rape in marriage or dating relationships
- Rape by family members
- Rape by strangers
- Rape by soldiers or other armed actors during conflict or post-conflict situations
- Unwanted sexual advances, including demanding sex in return for favours
- Sexual abuse of mentally or physically disabled people
- Sexual abuse of children
- Forced marriage, including the marriage of children
- Denying someone the right to use contraception
- Forcing someone to have an abortion
- Violent acts against the sexual integrity of women; for example, female genital cutting and forced inspections for virginity
- Forcing someone into prostitution


2 Ibid.
This list is based on a broad definition of sexual violence agreed upon by international experts. It is important to remember that not all these types of sexual violence happen in all settings, and many of them may not be recognized as sexual violence within a community, particularly if they are cultural practices.

Sexual violence is about power and oppression. It is not about love or lust or being unable to control sexual urges. Those who perpetrate sexual violence do so out of a desire for domination and control over another person. No one ever deserves to be sexually violated; responsibility always lies with the perpetrator and never with the survivor. Social status, cultural background and other circumstances – like what the survivor was wearing or whether she was out alone – are irrelevant.

Some forms of sexual violence are forbidden across cultures; for example, sexual relations with close family members and sexual activity with young children. Other forms are tolerated because of beliefs and attitudes about gender and sex; for example, in many communities rape in marriage is not recognized as a form of violence because women are expected to submit to sex with their husbands whether they want to or not.

Some kinds of sexual violence in a community may be more obvious than others; sometimes it’s hard to know whether different kinds of sexual violence

Helpful hints for programming

Programme managers and staff need a sound understanding of different types of sexual violence in the community. It is a good idea to put together basic information and statistics to share with the programme team and with the community during training activities and community discussions.

Sources of information about sexual violence include the following:

- Reports from government, human rights organisations and NGOs
- Women’s groups
- Focus group discussions conducted as part of the baseline research for the programme
- Data from the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS). The GBVIMS will have information about trends in different types of sexual violence based on reports to service providers. It provides a simple system for gender-based violence (GBV) project managers to collect, store and analyse their data and to enable the safe and ethical sharing of reported GBV incident data. The intention of the system is both to assist service providers to better understand the GBV cases being reported and to enable actors to share data internally across project sites and externally with agencies for broader trends analysis and improved GBV coordination.
- The Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) also generates some information on different types of GBV, including sexual violence.
- GBVIMS and CPIMS are being used in Somalia and South Sudan, and it is important that staff be aware of the incident classification system used in the GBVIMS.

You can find more information about the GBVIMS, including definitions used, at <www.gbvims.org>.
are happening or not because they are hidden. For example, sexual violence experienced by girls in the family is often a hidden form of violence. This means you need to make sure that you don’t make assumptions about what kinds of sexual violence are happening or not happening in the community.

1.2 Understanding different terms

Terms like ‘rape’ and ‘sexual assault’ are often used interchangeably; however, terms can have different meanings in different contexts. Legal definitions can differ from medical terms and from terms used by people in the community. These definitions also vary from country to country. For example, the law may describe rape as ‘carnal knowledge’ or rape of a minor as ‘defilement’, whereas the medical term might be ‘sexual assault’.

Over the last few years, there has been a move within the gender-based violence (GBV) in emergencies community to standardize methods for collecting data about GBV incidents. Though reliable data are crucial for effectively addressing GBV, any attempt to gather this information raises serious ethical and safety concerns for both the survivor and the person collecting the data. The GBVIMS is a multi-agency tool designed to allow GBV service providers to collect and share reported GBV incident data in a standardized, safe and ethical way. Central to the GBVIMS are six core incident types, ensuring that service providers are using standardized definitions and methodology for classifying incidents. GBVIMS does not define sexual violence as one of the core types of GBV, but rather, as a category that encompasses rape and sexual assault. The GBVIMS definitions are not overlapping. Having definitions that do not overlap is important for data collection to make sure that an incident can be easily and systematically classified; however, in the course of service delivery many other terms are used.

The following table describes some common terms and descriptions used internationally for different types of sexual violence. It includes the GBVIMS definition of rape and sexual assault and other definitions that are widely used to describe sexual violence, including sexual coercion.

Although this list doesn’t include all types of sexual violence, it is good to be familiar with these general definitions as well as with the GBVIMS definitions, especially if this system is being used in your setting. The GBVIMS does not define other commonly used terms for sexual violence, rather grouping them under rape and sexual assault. However, it is important that you understand how people speak about sexual violence in the community where you work and how sexual violence is defined in local and national laws.

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3 These definitions are overlapping; for example, some forms of child sexual abuse may constitute rape.
GBVIMS incident type | Commonly used sexual violence terms
--- | ---
**Rape**<br>Non-consensual penetration (however slight) of the vagina, anus or mouth with a penis or other body part. Also includes penetration of the vagina or anus with an object. Rape includes marital rape and anal rape/sodomy. Forms of incest may also be categorized as rape. Rape can be perpetrated by someone known to the victim or by a stranger. Rape by two or more perpetrators is often referred to as gang rape. | **Sexual coercion (with penetration)**<br>Forcing or attempting to force another person through violence, threats, verbal insistence, deception, cultural expectations or economic circumstances to engage in sexual behaviours against her/his will. It includes a wide range of behaviours from forcible rape to unwanted sex in intimate relationships.4<br>**Sexual exploitation (with penetration)**<br>Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another person. Some types of forced prostitution can also fall under this category.5<br>**Child sexual abuse (with penetration)**<br>Contacts or interactions between a child and an older or more knowledgeable child or adult when the child is being used as an object of gratification for an older child’s or adult’s sexual needs. This could include penetration, which includes penile, digital, and object penetration of the vagina, mouth or anus.

**Sexual assault**<br>Any form of non-consensual sexual contact that does not result in or include penetration. Examples include: attempted rape, as well as unwanted kissing, fondling, or touching of genitalia and buttocks. This incident type does not include rape, i.e., where penetration has occurred. FGM/FGC is an act of sexual violence that impacts sexual organs, and as such will be classified is a sexualized act. This harmful traditional practice should be categorized under sexual assault. | **Sexual coercion (without penetration)**<br>Forcing or attempting to force another person through violence, threats, verbal insistence, deception, cultural expectations or economic circumstances to engage in sexual behaviours against her/his will.<br>**Sexual exploitation (without penetration)**<br>Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another person. Some types of forced prostitution can also fall under this category.5<br>**Child sexual abuse (without penetration)**<br>Contacts or interactions between a child and an older or more knowledgeable child or adult (a stranger, sibling or person in a position of authority, such as a parent or caretaker) when the child is being used as an object of gratification for an older child’s or adult’s sexual needs. Sexual abuse can be physical, verbal or emotional and includes touching and fondling of the sexual parts of the child’s body, and sexual kissing.

**Psychological/emotional abuse**<br>Infliction of mental or emotional pain or injury. Examples include: threats of physical or sexual violence, intimidation, humiliation, forced isolation, stalking, harassment, unwanted attention, remarks, gestures or written words of a sexual and/or menacing nature, destruction of cherished things, etc. | **Non-contact child sexual abuse**<br>This could include exposing children to adult sexual activity or pornographic movies and photographs; making sexual comments about the child’s body; having children pose, undress or perform in a sexual fashion on film or in person.7<br>**Sexual harassment**<br>Any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that treats the recipient as a sexual object and makes the person feel uncomfortable or unsafe. It includes sexual comments, or other unwanted sexual attention or intimidation.

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Who experiences sexual violence and who perpetrates it?

While anybody can be a survivor of sexual violence, women and girls are overwhelmingly affected, with girls up to three times more likely than boys to experience it. Most sexual violence is perpetrated by males, though of course most men aren’t perpetrators.

These facts suggest that we need to think about the relationship between sexual violence and gender, what it means to be a man or a woman, a boy or a girl in a community and how women and girls and men and boys use and experience violence.

We often think the biggest risk of sexual violence is from a stranger, but in fact most sexual violence is actually committed by someone known to the survivor: a family member, a peer or acquaintance, a neighbour or someone else in the family or community network. Of course in communities affected by conflict, sexual violence perpetrated by strangers, such as soldiers, might increase. We will take a closer look at this when we look at armed conflict and sexual violence.

What about boys and men?

Boys and men also experience sexual violence. Like sexual violence against girls and women, most sexual violence against boys and men is perpetrated by males. While the focus of the CC Programme is on women and girls, it is likely that as the community talks more about sexual violence against women and girls, information about sexual violence against boys and men will come up too. Hopefully by working with the community to take action to prevent sexual violence against women and girls, everyone in the community will be safer.
How common is sexual violence?

It is hard to get accurate statistics on how many people are survivors of sexual violence because it is such a hidden and private problem and many people never tell anyone. However, information that has been collected tells us that it is unfortunately very common and that it happens throughout life, across cultures and classes. Recent research by the World Health Organization found that globally, 35.6 per cent of women have ever experienced either non-partner sexual violence, or physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, or both.8

In recent research on men’s perpetration of rape in the Asia Pacific region, the prevalence of men’s perpetration of rape varied across study sites from 10 per cent of men reporting having perpetrated rape against a woman or girl in urban Bangladesh, to 62 per cent reporting perpetration in Papua New Guinea. In this study, half of the men who committed rape did so for the first time when they were teenagers.9

The following statistics give us some idea of how common different types of sexual violence are in different countries.

Sexual violence in intimate relationships

- 15 per cent of women in Japan and 71 per cent of women in Ethiopia reported physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.10
- In Bangladesh, 49.7 per cent of rural women reported sexual violence in intimate relationships.11
- In Brazil, the figure is 14.5 per cent and in the United States of America, 10–14 per cent.12

Sexual violence in childhood

- Globally, approximately 20 per cent of women report being victims of sexual violence as children.13

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8 World Health Organization, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and South African Medical Research Council, Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence, WHO, (Geneva, 2013).
11 Ibid.
• In Australia, 18 per cent of women report being sexually abused before the age of 16.  


• Estimated prevalence is as high as 28 per cent in parts of eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Asia-Pacific region and north Africa.  


Forced first sex

• The first sexual experience for many women is forced. In rural Tanzania, the figure is 17 per cent, 24 per cent in rural Peru, and 30 per cent in rural Bangladesh.


Some groups of women and girls are particularly vulnerable. For example, girls with disabilities are at much higher risk of sexual abuse, and women and girls in armed conflict situations are also at higher risk; sexual violence has been documented in more than fifty recent conflicts around the world including Somalia and South Sudan. Let’s take a closer look at sexual violence and armed conflict.

1.4 Sexual violence and armed conflict

We have learned quite a lot in recent years about sexual violence in conflict, thanks to the hard work and commitment of many individuals and groups, including researchers, women’s rights activists and organizations involved in preventing and responding to sexual violence.

We know that it is common and that it is used as a strategy of warfare. We know that dependency to meet basic needs leaves women and girls vulnerable to sexual exploitation, forced to trade sex for food, shelter, security or other necessities of life. And we know that the same types of sexual violence that were happening before conflict continue in the family and community during and after conflict.


17 These include Afghanistan, Burundi, Chad, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Myanmar, Peru, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Chechnya/Russian Federation, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Uganda, the former Yugoslavia, Zimbabwe. See M. Bastick, K. Grimm, and R. Kunz, *Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict: Global Overview and Implications for the Security Sector*, Democratic Centre for the Control of Armed Forces, (Geneva, 2007) for more information.
Sexual violence as a strategy of warfare

Armed State and non-State actors use rape and other sexual violence to spread terror; to degrade, intimidate and humiliate individuals, groups and communities; to drive people off their land; to destroy social relations; as a tool of ethnic cleansing and genocide; and as torture or punishment.18

During conflict, women and girls may also be forced to join military groups to become ‘wives’ of commanders and to work as sexual slaves.19 These women are exceptionally vulnerable and require additional care and services in the post-conflict period.

Sexual exploitation and abuse

Emergencies destroy economic and social ties, change living conditions and increase dependency for meeting basic needs. To survive and to keep family members safe, women and girls may have no other choice than to submit to sexual exploitation, such as being forced to trade sex with soldiers for safe passage, or trading sex for food with more powerful community members in displaced camps.20

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by humanitarian workers

While sexual exploitation and abuse can be perpetuated by anyone in a position of power, the term ‘SEA’ has been used in reference to sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by staff of humanitarian organizations, including both civilians and uniformed peacekeepers.

The UN Secretary-General’s Bulletin Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SG/2003/13) outlines six core principles for preventing sexual exploitation and abuse. These principles apply to all United Nations personnel and to staff of partner organizations.21

All CC Programme staff need an understanding of sexual exploitation and abuse, awareness of the United Nations and NGO zero tolerance policy towards sexual exploitation and abuse, and knowledge about what they are expected to do to prevent sexual exploitation and how to respond to suspected cases.

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21 See the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Website for NGO and UN staff for more information: <www.pseataskforce.org>.
Sexual violence in the family and community

During and after armed conflict, women and girls continue to suffer the same types of sexual violence that were happening in the family and community before conflict. Sexual violence in the family and community can even increase because of the breakdown in family and community supports and structures, including norms that once protected them. Further, there is often intense pressure from the family not to report incidences of sexual violence against other family or clan members.

In both Somalia and South Sudan, sexual violence has been a feature of conflict, and while there are limited studies that give concrete figures, in Somalia internally displaced women and girls have been particularly vulnerable to sexual violence. The extent of sexual violence against displaced women and girls is difficult to assess, but according to human rights organizations it is believed to be widespread throughout south-central Somalia.

1.5 Why do we need to do something about sexual violence?

We need to prevent and respond to sexual violence because it has serious harmful effects that can be lifelong and life threatening. It is also an unacceptable violation of a person’s basic human rights; every human has the right to a life free of sexual assault, abuse and exploitation and the right to good health, security and well-being.

Consequences of sexual violence

Understanding the consequences of sexual violence helps in planning how to improve care and support for survivors to support their recovery and healing.

There are many short and long-term negative consequences of sexual violence for the individual survivor and her family, as well as for the wider community; at its worst, sexual violence can result in death. A history of sexual abuse in childhood and adolescence has consistently been found to be associated with increased health risks and health-risk behaviours.

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24 World Health Organization/London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: taking action and generating evidence, WHO, (Geneva, 2010).
Below you can see some of the common physical, psychological, and social consequences of sexual violence on women and girls.25

The consequences for each girl or woman and how severe they are depend on the type of violence she experienced, her developmental level and stage, and the care and support that she receives. Physical outcomes of sexual violence have been well researched; however there are outcomes that cannot always be observed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acute physical</th>
<th>Chronic physical</th>
<th>Reproductive</th>
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<tr>
<td>Injury</td>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Miscarriage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shock</td>
<td>Somatic complaints</td>
<td>Unwanted pregnancy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disease</td>
<td>Chronic infection</td>
<td>Unsafe abortion</td>
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<td>Infection</td>
<td>Chronic pain</td>
<td>STI, including HIV</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gastrointestinal disorders</td>
<td>Menstrual disorders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Eating disorders</td>
<td>Pregnancy complications</td>
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<td>Chronic fatigue</td>
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<th>Psychological &amp; Emotional</th>
<th>Social</th>
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<td>Depression</td>
<td>Blaming and social stigma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anxiety and fearfulness</td>
<td>Rejection by family and community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Social isolation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shame, self-hate, self-blame</td>
<td>Withdrawal from social and community life, including education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>Reduced contribution to family and community life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suicidal thoughts and behaviour</td>
<td>Economic costs, including the costs of health and social services and the costs of losses in earning potential</td>
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<td>Low self-esteem</td>
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<td>Sexual disorders</td>
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<td>Traumatic stress</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Eating and sleeping disorders</td>
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<td>Substance abuse</td>
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human rights and sexual violence

A human rights perspective recognizes that living free of sexual violence is an entitlement of every human being. Human rights education is a key component of the CC Programme, so we need a good understanding of sexual violence as a human rights issue.

Sexual violence violates a number of fundamental human rights:

- The right to life, liberty and security of the person
- The right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health
- The right to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment
- The right to freedom of opinion and expression
- The right to education and personal development
- The right to protection against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation

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A rights-based approach to preventing sexual violence views people as rights holders and as active participants in realizing their rights to live free from sexual violence. Seeing survivors as rights holders also suggests that providing care and support is about fulfilling basic rights to health, protection and well-being.

A rights-based approach recognizes that duty bearers have a particular responsibility to respect and fulfil women and girl’s human rights to care, support and protection from sexual violence.

Governments are duty bearers with obligations to translate human rights into legal rights and to ensure that laws are implemented and that policies, resources and programmes are in place to prevent and respond to sexual violence. However, it is not only State actors that are duty bearers; parents, institutions, organizations and non-state actors, including armed groups, can also be duty bearers under international law.

**Key international legal instruments**

The rights of women and girls to be protected from sexual violence are reflected in many international instruments. It is important to be familiar with the key conventions and treaties, in particular the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993)**

DEVAW was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993 in recognition that violence against women presents a major obstacle to equality, development and peace. DEVAW emphasizes that violence against women and girls is not only a grievous human-rights abuse in itself, but also a serious impediment to the realization of many other rights for women and girls.

DEVAW adopts a very broad definition of violence against women that includes physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the private sphere of the family and in the general community. It asks that States condemn and eliminate violence against women in all its forms, and urges them not to invoke any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations.

The importance of addressing violence against women as set out in DEVAW was recently reaffirmed at the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2013.27

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27 See the Commission on the Status of Women Agreed conclusions on the Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls, E/2013/11 (2013).

The convention highlights the following specific responsibilities of governments to protect children from sexual violence:

- States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child (Article 19).

- States Parties shall undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:
  
  (a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
  
  (b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
  
  (c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials. (Article 34)

Security Council Resolutions

**SCR 1325** (2001) recognizes the urgent need to protect women during conflict and to engage them in peacebuilding efforts. SCR 1325 builds on resolutions that address protection of civilians and children during armed conflict and highlights the impact of conflict on women and girls and their role in peacebuilding.

**SCR 1612** (2005) establishes the monitoring and reporting mechanism on six grave violations against children in armed conflict, including sexual violence.

**SCR 1820** (2008) recognizes sexual violence as a tactic of war and links it to international peace and security. SCR 1820 is a milestone because it recognizes that sexual violence can constitute a war crime or a crime against humanity, or contribute to genocide, while stressing the need to increase women’s role in decision-making in conflict prevention and resolution.


**SCR 1888** (2009) strengthens the efforts of the international community to combat sexual violence in armed conflict.

**SCR 1889** (2010) focuses on women’s participation and ensuring that women’s protection and empowerment are taken into account during post-conflict needs assessment and planning.

**SCR 1960** (2010) requests the UN Secretary-General to establish monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence. Resolution 1960 mandates the Secretary-General to list those parties suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of sexual violence.

**SCR 2106** (2013) recognizes the need for more consistent and rigorous investigation and prosecution of sexual violence crimes in conflict and calls on Member States to continue the fight against impunity. Resolution 2106 also reaffirms the importance of including women in all aspects of mediation and peacebuilding.
**International law and sexual violence in conflict**

The establishment of the International Criminal Court means that rape and other conflict-related sexual violence can now be prosecuted as crimes against humanity, as war crimes and as acts of genocide.

United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960 and 2106 all affirm the rights of women and girls in conflict to live free from sexual violence and spell out responsibilities for protecting these rights.

**Local laws and sexual violence**

While human rights provide an important framework for understanding sexual violence as a violation of a person’s fundamental dignity and rights and for empowering rights holders to know and claim their rights, local laws – including national, traditional and religious laws – incorporate important protections for the rights of women and girls, including protections against sexual violence.

An important aspect of the CC Programme is working at the local level to identify and strengthen protective national and local laws and rules, and to advocate for changes to laws and rules that do not promote women and girls’ dignity and safety from sexual violence. It is important therefore to be familiar with local legal frameworks – including national, customary and religious laws and rules – and to use this information in the CC Programme efforts to prevent sexual violence.

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**Helpful hints for programming**

Programme staff should have a good understanding of the consequences of sexual violence and of help-seeking behaviours in the community, particularly those staff who will be working to strengthen community-based care for survivors.

The training module on sexual violence has some basic information, but it’s good to include information from the local context as well. Sources of information about the consequences include health workers and other helpers, women’s groups and organizations and others working directly with survivors.

Programme staff need a good understanding of national and local laws and rules pertaining to protection of women and girls from sexual violence, including those found in traditional and religious rules and frameworks. Information about these laws should be included in training on sexual violence.
1.6 What can we do about sexual violence?

The good news is that sexual violence is preventable. To prevent it, we need to address the root causes and contributing factors, so let’s take a look at what these are.

**Gender inequality and gender norms**

DEVAW highlights that violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, is caused by gender inequality. Gender inequality refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of people based on whether they are men or women. Unequal power relations between men and women can have these results:

- Individually: Men have more freedom to make choices; they have better opportunities and higher social status than women.
- In relationships: Men have more power and control in marriage and the family and in their relationships with women.
- In society: Men hold more positions of political, economic, cultural and legal power.

Creating more equal relationships between men and women is a big part of the solution to the problem of sexual violence.

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**Gender inequality and violence against women and girls**

Violence against women and girls is related to their lack of power and control, as well as to social norms about men’s and women’s roles in society. Inequalities between men and women cut across public and private spheres of life, and across social, economic, cultural, and political rights. They are manifested in restrictions and limitations on women’s freedoms, choices and opportunities.

These inequalities can increase women’s and girls’ risks of abuse, violent relationships and exploitation. For example, women’s economic dependency on men combined with discriminatory marriage, divorce and child custody laws mean that women cannot escape violent relationships.

Violence against women and girls is not only a consequence of gender inequality, but also reinforces women’s low status in society and the multiple disparities between women and men.

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Gender norms – how men and women are expected to behave and the roles they are expected to play – also contribute to violence. Men are not born violent; violence is a learned behaviour. It is learned through the ways in which different societies teach boys to ‘be a man’ and how they are expected to behave as men. Research shows that men’s violence is higher in societies in which being a man means showing dominance over other people, being tough and protecting male and female honour. Men’s sense of entitlement to sex – the belief that they have the right to sex even without consent – is commonly associated with sexual violence and is related to norms of being a man.

Just as violence is learned, so is non-violence. To stop violence, we need to change the beliefs and expectations about what it means to be a man or a boy or a woman or a girl that support violence and support men and boys to reject violence.

Circles of influence

Other factors also contribute to sexual violence. One way of showing all these factors is the Circles of Influence.

The Circles of Influence highlight different factors at the individual level, relationship level, community level and wider society that can increase the likelihood of sexual violence happening or act as a barrier against its happening. These factors are called risk and protective factors. Some risk factors for sexual violence include weak community and legal sanctions against sexual violence and social norms about sexual purity and male sexual entitlement.

This model suggests that we need to consider each of these levels to make lasting change to the norms that sustain sexual violence.

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Types of risk factors

**Individual** includes biological and personal factors that may increase the likelihood that an individual will become a victim or perpetrator of violence. Young age, low education level, isolation, and a history of being abused during childhood are examples of individual-level risk factors associated with victimization for sexual violence.

**Relationship** includes factors that increase risk as a result of relationships with peers, intimate partners and family members. These are a person’s closest social circle and shape their behaviour. Men’s having multiple sexual partners is a relationship level risk factor for perpetration of sexual violence. Forced marriage and women being considered as property of their fathers and husbands are others.

**Community** refers to the community contexts and institutions, such as schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods. Weak community sanctions against, and an unspoken acceptance of sexual violence and violent conflict are examples of community-level risk factors.

**Societal** includes the macro level factors that influence sexual violence, such as gender inequality, religious or cultural belief systems, societal norms and economic or social policies that create or sustain gaps and tensions between groups of people. Traditional gender norms and norms supportive of violence are examples of societal-level risk factors for sexual violence.

Helpful hints for programming

Because gender inequality and ideas about masculinity and femininity are at the heart of sexual violence, it is important that the programme staff keep from reinforcing gender inequality and harmful ideas about men and women in their professional and personal lives. You need to help the programme team reflect on and discuss their own opinions and behaviours related to gender equality and non-violence during training, in supervision and in team meetings.

Staff are role models, and it’s important that as individuals and as a team they show positive, healthy non-violent ways of being men and women. Some ways of showing gender-equitable norms in the team are: having female staff in positions of authority, making sure that female team members are comfortable expressing their opinions in front of male colleagues, making sure that male team members are comfortable with female staff expressing their opinions, and ensuring male and female staff are equally respected for the work they do.

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TOPIC 2
ABOUT SOCIAL NORMS
Social norms are a risk factor for sexual violence. Broadly speaking, social norms are unspoken standards of behaviour or rules governing what is and is not acceptable behaviour; they guide the way we interact with other people.

Social norms can encourage violent behaviour, and they can foster acceptance of violence. They can stop us from speaking out or taking action against sexual violence, even if we believe it’s wrong. They can also discourage sexual violence and help people take action against sexual violence.

Social norms can be very powerful influences on behaviour, even more so than our personal opinions, because humans are social animals and our need to belong is very strong. Understanding how these norms influence behaviour is an important development in sexual violence prevention. We know that changing personal opinions is just one part of prevention. To make real change in terms of sexual violence prevention, we also have to shift the unspoken group rules that perpetuate sexual violence or keep people from taking positive action to prevent it.32

Because changing harmful norms and building or strengthening healthy non-violent ones is at the heart of the CC Programme, you need to understand what they are, how they relate to sexual violence and how we can use these ideas to create change in the community.

2.1 What are social norms?

Norms are rules of behaviour. They tell people what is and is not acceptable behaviour and guide the way we interact with others. There are different kinds of norms, and although the CC Programme focuses on social norms, we also need to understand other rules we live by.

Different types of norms

Legal norms, moral norms, social norms and religious norms are different sets of rules that say how we should behave. The difference between religious norms and the other types is that religious norms come from a divine authority. But religious norms can also work like legal, moral or social norms.

Legal norms are formal rules that guide how we behave

- Legal norms are put in place by a formal authority. Laws are legal norms.
- Legal norms are usually written down in constitutions and laws. Institutions such as the police and justice system enforce them.

• People follow legal norms out of respect for authority and out of fear of what will happen if they break the law; for example, going to prison.

• Religious norms, rules based on how a divine being says we should behave, can also be legal norms if they are enforced by an authority; for example, rules set out in Islamic law.

• Legal norms often say what behaviour is not acceptable.

Examples of legal norms
• A law forbidding child beating.
• A law making raping a child a crime.
• A law automatically giving custody of children to husbands in cases of divorce.

What are some legal norms in your context related to sexual violence? Think about legal norms reflected in local laws in your community, including national or state laws, laws upheld by traditional authorities and religious laws. What are some legal norms that protect women and girls from sexual violence? What are some legal norms that do not protect women and girls from sexual violence?

Moral norms are personal rules that guide how we behave
• Moral norms are based on a person’s inner beliefs about right and wrong.
• What other people think does not affect a person’s moral beliefs.
• People follow moral norms because of their consciences.
• Religious norms about right and wrong can be moral norms.

Examples of moral norms
• One shouldn’t harm other people.
• Human life is sacred.

Social norms are informal rules that guide how we behave
• Social norms are rules that members of a group expect other members of the group to follow.
• People follow social norms because they see other people following them and believe other people think they should follow them.
• Social norms tell people what behaviour is expected of them or what behaviour is forbidden.
Social norms are the rules we live by in groups. Without them, a society could not function. Though unwritten and mostly unspoken, they are the expectations and obligations that guide how we think we should behave in our families, communities and society. They also influence how we react when we see violence in the community or experience it in our own lives.

Social norms have a powerful influence on the way we behave because humans need to fit in with and belong to a group. We don’t want the group to reject us so we do what the group considers the right thing. We follow these norms because there are social rewards for following them and social punishments for breaking with them. If the community expectation is that we do not talk about men beating their wives, our silence is rewarded with acceptance and respect from others in the group.

Pressure to conform to the social rules around us helps to explain the power social norms can have over how we act when faced with violence. If we would like to speak out, we may hesitate to break the social rule and fear that we may be punished by those around us. Punishment takes the form of disapproval from other group members or rejection from the group. Punishment can even escalate to physical violence.

The process of change associated with the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) has involved years of education, awareness-raising and community-based work that have resulted in a higher proportion of the population being knowledgeable about the harms of the practice and holding personal attitudes that it was no longer necessary. Yet, women continued to cut their daughters. They did so out of a sense of obligation; the women believed that everyone else in the group was cutting their daughters and that they would be judged harshly if they didn’t cut their own daughters. Even women believed FGM/C should not continue, they continued to cut their daughters at only slightly lower rates than women who believed it should.
The shift away from the social norm of FGM/C came when programmes started to bring people together to communicate transparently that they no longer supported the practice and didn’t expect others to do it. The people who wanted to change were no longer alone. By creating the safe space and the sense that they were all in this together, it was possible for the women to act on their beliefs without incurring social punishment.

Social norms play a strong role in perpetuating behaviour related to sexual violence and make it extremely difficult for individuals to change a behaviour or practice on their own. To change a behaviour that is influenced by these social rules, we need to first find out whether people in our group agree with them. If many people actually disagree with them, finding ways to make that visible can be a good place start.

When harmful behaviours or practices are upheld by social rules that people agree with, we need to engage people in the group in a process of reflection about the harms of these practices and demonstrate the benefits of changing them. Changing people’s beliefs and knowledge about the practices is only half the challenge. As people continue in the process of reflection and discussion, they also need to be reassured that others in the group feel the same way and are changing the way they see the social rules. Without this transparency in the change process, attitudes may change away from supporting a practice such as sexual violence, but behaviours won’t change because not enough people know that other group members they trust also share similar ideas.

“Social norms are collective expectations of a group. Often a group is called a ‘reference group’. A group or reference group can be large or small...”

Who is ‘the group’?

Social norms are collective expectations of a group. Often a group is called a ‘reference group’. A group or reference group can be large or small; for example, it might be made up of a whole community, all married women in a village or all the young men in a town. It could be made up of everyone in the same workplace; for example, all the health workers in a community or all members of a sporting club. The group’s size does not matter – what matters is that its members believe that the opinions and behaviours of other people in the group matter to the way they themselves behave.33

Of course, we are all members of lots of different groups in our lives, but some are more important to us than others, and the norms that are most likely to influence our behaviour belong to the most important groups in our everyday lives.34

A bit of social norm theory35

Shared or collective beliefs about what is typical or normal behaviour for the group come from how we expect other people in the group to behave, and how we think others in the group expect us to behave.

Social norms work because the whole group follows them. They are the rules that influence or guide the group. Changing individual beliefs or opinions isn’t enough to create lasting change; we need to work with the whole group, including those members who are considered to be the most influential, to change the beliefs and opinions of enough members of the group so that they decide, together, to do things differently.

These beliefs are mostly based on what we see and hear happening around us. For instance, “In this community, women always do what their husbands say” is an example of an expectation based on what we see and hear happening; it is an observable behaviour. The technical term for these beliefs about what others in the group do is ‘empirical expectations’; ‘empirical’ means based on observation. These beliefs have the strongest influence over our own behaviour because they reflect what we can observe about other people’s behaviour and therefore what we think is desirable or expected of us.

Other beliefs that make up social norms are shared expectations about what we think other people in the group consider good or bad behaviour; for example, “In this community, people think sexual violence is a private family matter.” The technical name for such beliefs is ‘normative expectations’.

These two types of beliefs can seem a bit confusing at first, but it’s important to understand the difference because changing beliefs based on what we can see is more effective than changing beliefs based on what we think other people think. Observation is powerful; people believe what they see.

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2.2 What norms contribute to sexual violence?

Before we take a look at some norms that foster sexual violence, remember that social norms can also protect women and girls from violence. As well as identifying and changing harmful norms, we need to think about strengthening healthy norms that promote safety and non-violence.

Social norms about gender, sex, and violence can make sexual violence seem normal and OK. As mentioned in the last section, norms about what it means to be a man or a woman in a community and how men and women are expected to behave are linked to sexual violence.36

For example, social norms that tell men they should be dominant over women and children, show they are physically strong, and have a right to have sex when they want it are linked with higher levels of rape.\(^{37}\)

Let’s take a closer at some norms about gender, sex and violence that can make sexual violence more likely to happen.

**Gender norms**

Gender norms are norms about what it means to be a man or a boy or a woman or a girl in a particular community. These norms teach us from childhood what is considered appropriate for either a man or a woman. Gender norms that are rigid and promote dominance of men and submissiveness of women to men are linked to sexual violence.

To reduce sexual violence, we need to not just change the beliefs or opinions of a few men or a few women, but also to make changes in how the whole community expects men and women to behave.\(^{38}\)

In the box below are some examples from different countries of gender norms that contribute to sexual violence. While these norms might not be in place in the communities you work in, it is helpful to have some examples to reflect on.

**Gender norms that contribute to sexual violence**

- In Cambodia and Peru, gang rape is a sign of masculinity.\(^{39}\)
- In South Africa, using sexual violence is an acceptable way of ‘putting women in their place’ or punishing them.\(^{40}\)
- In Ethiopia, a woman should obey her husband in all things.\(^{41}\)
- In Somalia, a husband has the right to have sex with his wife when he wants to.
- In South Sudan, a woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together.\(^{42}\)

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38 Ibid Ricardo and Barker.
Norms about sex

Beliefs about sex tell us what is acceptable and desirable in sexual relationships. Common beliefs include: men have a right or entitlement to sex; men should be persistent and aggressive in getting sex; women should be reluctant about having sex; women are men’s sexual objects or possessions; it’s OK for men to have sex outside marriage, but women who have sex outside marriage are soiled or ruined.43

Norms that say people shouldn’t talk about sex can help keep the problem hidden and stop survivors from telling someone and getting help.

Here are some examples of norms about sex that contribute to sexual violence.

Sex-related norms that contribute to sexual violence

- In Pakistan, sex is a man’s right in marriage.44
- In Thailand, a wife does not have the right to refuse sex.45
- In Ethiopia, a woman doesn’t deserve respect if she has sex before marriage.46
- In India, women must not show an interest in sex and must resist even wanted sexual advances.47
- In South Africa, girls are responsible for controlling a man’s sexual urges.48
- In Nigeria, once a girl agrees to be a girlfriend she should be available for sex.49
- In Somalia and South Sudan, if a girl or woman is raped, it is better for her to keep it to herself.50

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44 Ibid.
46 Ibid Pulerwitz et al.
Norms and violence

Norms that support using violence have been strongly associated with sexual violence, especially rape.

In countries where there is violent conflict, all forms of violence increase.\(^{51}\) Conflict can reinforce an aggressive form of masculinity that can make sexual violence more acceptable; for example, in armed groups, new norms and practices might guide standards, behaviour and interactions of group members.\(^{52}\)

Violent conflict can also break down social norms that protect against sexual violence. For example, in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, rape is now perceived as a norm for many men who have grown up during conflict.\(^{53}\)

The following examples show how norms about violence can be linked to sexual violence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violence-related norms that contribute to sexual violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• In Nigeria, young men believe that rape is an acceptable way of teaching an unwilling female ‘a lesson’ or punishing a woman.(^{54})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In South Africa, a certain amount of violence and even rape is part of normal boyhood behaviour.(^{55})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In Somalia, a man can use physical violence to discipline his wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In South Sudan, it is acceptable for a man to hit his wife if she won’t have sex with him.(^{56})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.3 How can we use social norms to prevent sexual violence?

The good news is that norms can and do change. In some communities where FGM/C was a social norm, people have collectively decided to stop the practice. In some communities, people have collectively decided to intervene when men in their neighbourhood were beating their wives.

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54 Ibid Ajuwon.
56 Ibid Scott et al.
In other communities, people decided that protecting children from sexual abuse in the family is everyone’s responsibility, and people are now expected to speak out when they suspect it is happening.

**Ending female genital cutting**

In Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Senegal, and the Sudan, participatory deliberation drawing on human-rights principles has played a crucial role in bringing about collective change to end FGM/C. Participatory deliberation has encouraged people to describe their own values, come to agreement on their common objectives, and think about what obstacles are in the way of achieving their common goals, leading to a process of reflection and action to collectively abandon the practice.

These examples show us that although norms can be strongly held, we can work with communities to help change the shared beliefs and expectations that contribute to sexual violence. If we want men to behave non-violently, we need to demonstrate why non-violence is beneficial to them and build norms that support non-violence. If we want sexual relationships to be respectful and healthy, we need to build norms that support respectful and healthy relationships by addressing existing norms that see women as property rather than as individuals with their own rights. If we want survivors to come forward for help, we need to build norms that support them in coming forward for help. Changing social norms requires buy-in at the family, community and wider social levels.

**So what do we need to do to create new norms?**

Because social norms are held in place by shared beliefs about what is typical or desirable behaviour, changing these beliefs is at the heart of norm change. Because they are shared beliefs, people have to make this change together. The CC Programme uses a collective approach to enable people to make changes in their shared beliefs and expectations together.

Generating changes in shared beliefs and expectations can be achieved through facilitating participatory discussion and deliberation among key groups in the community. Using human-rights principles, participatory discussion and deliberation encourages individuals to describe and articulate their own values and experiences, such as the acceptance of abuse by victims of sexual violence. When people connect these real situations to human rights and discuss such subjects as the right of everyone to be free from all forms of violence, communities are encouraged to become proactive and find collective solutions. This may be in the form of setting up a mechanism that can protect at-risk girls and women and intervening to prevent violence.57

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Remember the six steps to change from the Introduction? They are included here because they are the building blocks of the norm change process and the CC Programme. Following these steps is the process of helping communities to make changes to harmful collective beliefs and behaviours.

Part Four of the Toolkit, Catalysing Change provides more detailed information on how you will follow these steps with the community.

**What do we need to know to create new norms?**

To change a norm that supports sexual violence to a norm that prevents sexual violence, we need to know what the norm is and the shared beliefs about it. We also need to know who the people in the community are that can influence these shared beliefs; who do people respect and who are they likely to listen to?

We can find out about shared beliefs and influential people by asking about them in surveys and in focus groups discussions. One important aspect of the CC Programme is the survey research undertaken by Johns Hopkins University. This survey measures social norms about sexual violence, confidence with service providers, and community actions in response to sexual violence. Community members’ responses to the survey will provide essential information about what people in the community believe about sexual violence and about harmful norms the community might choose to change.
As well as getting information about social norms and influential people from the survey research, we can find out a lot of information by simply listening to what people say in discussions. If someone in a community discussion says “Everyone in this community agrees that if a girl goes to a disco she is asking to be raped” or “All my friends believe that if a woman is raped she should keep it to herself,” it is possible that everyone in a group has shared beliefs about what is normal and expected behaviour around sexual violence. It is also necessary to understand what people consider to be sexual violence. For example, is sexual violence that happens in a family considered the same as other forms of sexual violence?

Finally, it helps to know whether or not people agree with a norm, because this can give us a clue about the best strategy for changing beliefs that support that norm. If many people privately disagree with a norm, it can be easier to change it; helping people openly share their opinions can show other people that many others in the community also disagree with the norm and encourage them to do something about it together. Identifying existing norms that could be strengthened to support change is another means to shift norms. If most people do agree with a norm, we need to get them to change their minds. This can happen though providing information about the harmful effects of the norm and encouraging discussion, debate and dialogue about how things could be different, and the benefits of change. Community leaders or other well-known individuals who share the same understanding about sexual violence as the CC Programme should be recruited to assist in opening the dialogue on changing norms.

**Helpful hints for programming**

You will need to carefully review the information about beliefs and norms in the community from the survey carried out by Johns Hopkins University because it will give you important information not only about what the norms are, but also about which ones may be amenable to change through community discussion. Because social norms are collective beliefs, the programme uses a collective approach to change through group discussion and dialogue and collective action; people need to know that the expectations of enough other people in the group are changing in order to change their own behaviour. People are more likely to respond to what they see than what they think other people think. Beliefs and expectations that reflect what people can observe about others’ actions (empirical expectations) have greater influence over behaviour than beliefs about what other people think (normative expectations).
TOPIC 3

SELF-AWARENESS
3 SELF-AWARENESS

To prevent sexual violence against women and girls, we need to transform shared beliefs in the community about women and girls; for example, beliefs that suggest they are less important than men and boys, that they are less deserving of dignity and rights, that sexual violence is a right of men and a source of shame for survivors and their families, and that it’s acceptable to use violent ways of exercising power over them. We need to transform these into shared beliefs that promote equality, respect and non-violence.

The CC Programme aims to reduce tolerance for sexual violence by creating positive social change in communities to increase fairness and equality between men and women. Creating social change involves introducing different ways of seeing issues to the community, for example, different ways of thinking about relationships between men and women and different ways of thinking about violence. The most important resource for introducing different ways of thinking and creating social change in communities is you – you and other CC staff who are committed to change. Staff are the promoters and facilitators of changing how the community thinks about gender roles and relationships between men and women. CC staff are the most precious resource for creating social change.

But change starts with ourselves. Before we can work with others to address harmful beliefs and attitudes about sexual violence, we need to reflect on our own and be sure that they reflect the beliefs and behaviours we are trying to foster in the community. Change starts with self-awareness. Self-awareness is a lifelong journey and requires us to continuously reflect on questions like these:

- Who am I?
- Do I consider myself a role model? For who?
- Do I consider myself an agent of social change?
- What are my strengths? Weaknesses?
- What do I need from other people?
- What do I have to give other people?
- What do I believe is right for others?
3.1 Values, beliefs and attitudes

Our personal values, beliefs and attitudes reflect our perceptions of life. They are initially learned from our family and are, in turn, shaped by our culture and society. Over time, and throughout our lifespans, personal experiences cause us to question and sometimes to change our values and beliefs.

Beliefs about sexual violence

It’s all very well to talk about other people’s beliefs about sexual violence – but what about our own? Do they reflect harmful beliefs and expectations that contribute to fostering sexual violence?

Following are some of the common beliefs about sexual violence identified through the research carried out by Johns Hopkins University in communities where the CC Programme is being piloted in Somalia and South Sudan:

- Sexual violence should be handled within the family and not reported to authorities.
- To protect her family’s dignity, a girl should not report sexual violence to authorities.
- Women and girls are to blame if they are raped.
- A man has a right to force his wife to have sex even if she doesn’t want to.

What do you think about these beliefs? Do you agree with them or disagree? If you have different beliefs from those commonly held in the community, what has led you to hold your beliefs?

Community beliefs and attitudes towards sexual violence are often reflected in common myths about it. Myths reinforce harmful beliefs and attitudes about sexual violence and help keep sexual violence hidden and survivors powerless. Below are some common myths about sexual violence from different parts of the world. As you read through them, think about some of the myths about sexual violence that exist in your community. Where do they come from? What are the beliefs that support them?

**Myth:** Men who commit rape are mentally ill.

**Fact:** Perpetrators of rape are generally normal men from all sorts of backgrounds. Most appear to be no different from other men in the community. Research has shown that only 5 per cent of rapists can be classified as mentally ill.

**Myth:** Men abuse girls when their wives are not satisfying them sexually.

**Fact:** Men who have unsatisfactory sexual relationships with their wives do not usually assault or abuse children.
Myth: Some girls are seductive or sexually provocative and cause men to be sexually aroused.
Fact: The victim is not responsible for the perpetrator’s actions. This myth takes responsibility for abuse away from the adult and places it on the child. Children are relatively powerless, and adults always retain a choice in how they will respond to a child’s behaviour.

Myth: Women ‘ask’ to be raped by wearing provocative clothes.
Fact: Rape is a violent and terrifying crime. Nobody wants to be raped or asks to be raped. Appearance and clothing have absolutely nothing to do with who is violated. Victims may be raped regardless of what they are wearing at the time, be it jeans and a T-shirt, a sari, a skirt, or a nun’s habit. Although a man might become aroused when seeing a woman dressed in revealing clothing, most men do not choose to sexually assault. When one does, the responsibility for the incident lies with the attacker.

Myth: Rape is an act of lust or passion.
Fact: Sexual violence is an aggressive act. The underlying factors in many sexually violent acts are power and control, not a craving for sex. It is a violent, aggressive and hostile act used to degrade, dominate, humiliate, and control. Sexual violence violates a victim’s sense of privacy, safety and well-being.

3.2 Power
Power is central to sexual violence. Violence is both an act of and an abuse of power. Violence involves using power over another. To understand sexual violence we need to reflect on power, how it is distributed in the community and how it is used over other people, but we also need to reflect on other dimensions of power.

Power is not a bad thing, and in your work with the community to end sexual violence, you need awareness about other expressions of power. The following box gives an overview of one approach to understanding other expressions of power. When you have read through it, think about the different expressions of power in your own life. How do you exercise power over other people? Who do you have power with? How can we build power to? How might the concept of power within be relevant to sexual violence?

**Reflection Activity**

- Who do you have power over in your family and community? Why do you have power over these people?
- Are there times when you have felt powerless in your personal or work life?
- What factors contribute to your being powerful or powerless in different situations and relationships?
- What does being empowered mean?
- Do you think that empowering women means disempowering men?
Expressions of power

**Power: over, to, with, and within**

**Power over:** This is the most commonly recognized form of power. It has many negative associations for people, such as repression, force, coercion, discrimination, corruption and abuse. Power is seen as a win-lose relationship. Having power involves taking it from someone else, and then using it to dominate and prevent others from gaining power. This power perpetuates inequality and injustice.

There are three alternative, more collaborative ways of exercising and using power: **power to, power with, and power within**. These offer positive ways of expressing power that create the possibility of forming more equitable relationships. By affirming people’s capacity to act creatively, they provide some basic principles for constructing empowering strategies.

**Power to:** This power is the unique potential of every person to shape his or her life and world. When based on mutual support, it opens up the possibilities of joint action, or power with. It is closely associated with women’s, men’s, girls’ and boys’ intimate realm of power. Citizen education or leadership development for advocacy is based on the belief that each individual has the power to make a difference.

**Power with:** This power depends on finding the common ground among different interests and building collective strength. Based on mutual support, solidarity and collaboration, it multiplies individual talents and knowledge. It can help build bridges across different interests to transform or reduce social conflict and promote equitable relations between women and men. Advocacy groups seek allies and build coalitions drawing on this form of power.

**Power within:** This form of power relates to a person’s sense of self-worth and self-knowledge; it includes the ability to recognize individual differences while respecting others. It is based on self-acceptance and self-respect. It is the capacity to imagine and have hope; it affirms the common human search for dignity and fulfilment. Many grassroots efforts use individual storytelling and reflection to help people affirm their personal worth and recognize their power to and power with.

Both these forms of power – power with and power within - are referred to as agency: the ability to act and change the world. Power within is closely related to women’s, men’s, girls’ and boys’ intimate realm of power.

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Helpful hints for programming

Providing staff with the time and space to reflect on their own values, beliefs and attitudes and inspiring them as agents of social change is a fundamental first step in the CC Programme.

Harnessing the power of people to make change with others is the essence of the CC Programme and starts with the programme team.

The programme team needs to reflect on how they can use power collectively to catalyse social change through enabling the community’s ‘power to’ and ‘power with’ to transform harmful beliefs and norms into healthy, non-violent norms that support equality and justice for all members of the community.
INFORMATION about sexual violence