

# Faithing masculinities in conflict

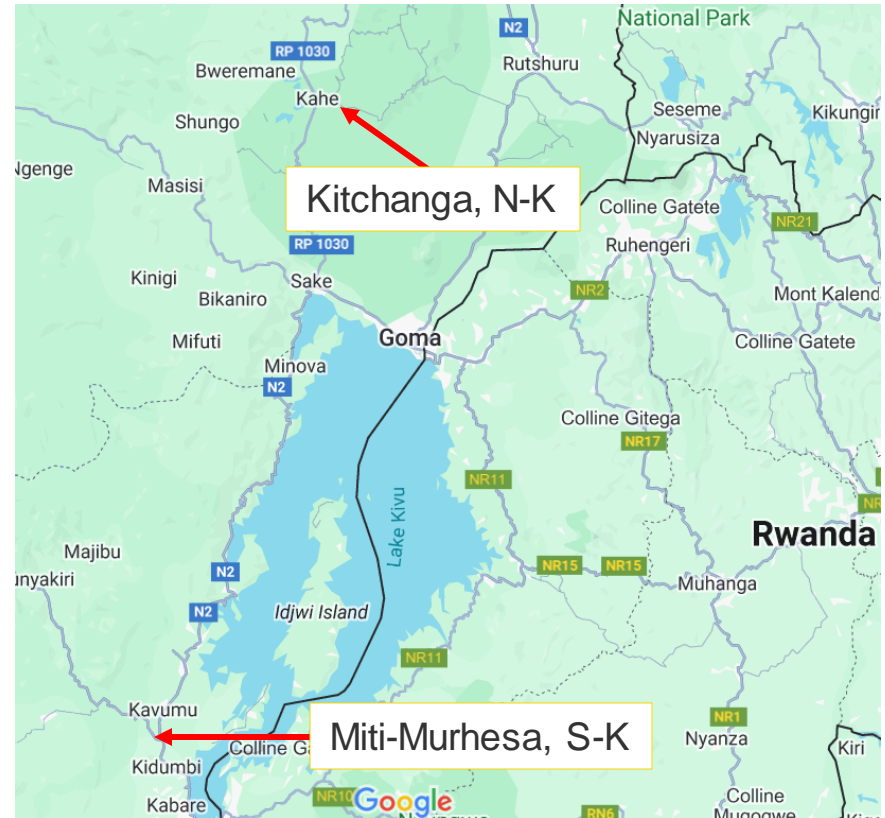
Lessons from the EFLC-pilot in DRC

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# Engaging Faith Leaders and Communities (EFLC)' pilot

*How to improve approaches to challenge harmful social and gender norms, and their underlying power structures, in humanitarian contexts?*

- Pilot 2019-2021 by DRA Innovation Fund, financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA).
- Consortium: Tearfund, HEAL Africa, Help a Child, BEATIL, and EyeOpenerWorks
- Implemented in 15 faith communities in Kitchanga, North Kivu, and Miti-Murhesa, South Kivu.



# Transforming Masculinities – engaging faith leaders

- What does it mean to be a man – in homes, relationships, communities and society in general?
- Create space for conversations, reflections, accountability and a shared journey with other men to break the cycle of violence because of harmful ideas on masculinity (toxic masculinity).
- Harmful interpretations of religious scripture allow gender inequality to continue, and are often even used to justify violence and to shame survivors of SGBV.
- Faith leaders and faith traditions can equally be powerful agents for change in addressing SGBV.

# Transforming Masculinities – engaging faith leaders



## FAITH LEADERS

National, provincial and community-level faith leaders are invited to workshops that engage them to provide leadership and support for the Transforming Masculinities process.



## GENDER CHAMPIONS

The community faith leaders then select key male and female members of the community to be trained as 'Gender Champions'. The Gender Champions are trained using the *Transforming Masculinities* manual.



## COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

The Gender Champions lead weekly discussion sessions for small groups of men and women in their communities for six weeks. Weeks 1–5 are conducted in single-sex groups and Week 6 in combined-sex groups. The Gender Champions use a manual called *Community Dialogues* to lead the discussions. The sessions are made up of both scriptural reflections and other tools to encourage honest dialogues. Scriptures are used to help address harmful ideas about gender inequality and SGBV.

# EFLC pilot

- **Target social and social-religious gender norms** as the root causes of violence against women&girls, through a faith-based, transformational, and community-driven model (Transforming Masculinities)
- Tailored to crisis-affected communities with significant internally displaced populations, fragmented community structures, and strained social cohesion.



# Key findings and implications for gender transformative programming (1)

## 1. Relationship between faith, gender, and violence

- Faith leaders significantly shape attitudes, beliefs, and practices around gender norms and intra-marital relations.
- 94% affirmed that religion is 'important' or 'very important' in their lives,
- 62% reported participating in couples counselling
- A core belief that men are the heads of the household whose wives should serve and support their husbands.

*75.1% of respondents in South Kivu and 63.9% of respondents in North Kivu affirmed that scripture commands that wives should submit to their husbands represent an act of love.*

# Key findings and implications for gender transformative programming (1)

## 1. Relationship between faith, gender, and violence

- 92% of endline respondents (women and men) disagreed with the statement: ‘the strength of a man is demonstrated through violence, severity, and intransigence’.

However:

- 72% of women at endline reporting experiencing or witnessing violence, including sexual violence, in the previous twelve months (89% at baseline).

***Findings show a striking schism between professed attitudes and beliefs, and women’s reported experiences of violence.***

# Key findings and implications for gender transformative programming (2)

## 2. Engaging men: relationship between masculinity and violence

- Physical violence **not** ascribed as a marker of a 'real' or 'good' man
- **Thresholds of acceptable violence**, when women disobeys husband or is unfaithful.
- Responsibility for unacceptable violence placed on **'other' 'non-religious', 'alcohol consuming'** men.
- Influence of **disrupted gender roles** in crisis and conflict, socio-economic challenges and men's experiences of violence,
- **90% of men** surveyed had themselves **experienced violence**.



# Key findings and implications for gender transformative programming (3)

## 3. Engaging women: The role of women in upholding unequal gender norms

- Women **expressed support for gender unequal** norms, often framed around religious scriptures,
  - Women expressed support for the idea that **men's violence against women is acceptable in certain circumstances**,
  - Women upheld the idea that **causes and solutions to intrahousehold conflict lie disproportionately, if not primarily, with women**.
- > **Important to adopt a relational perspective** when implementing and evaluating masculinities focused interventions.

# Recommendations for gender transformative programming, involving faith leaders:

1. **Significant and influential role of faith leaders and socio-religious norms** in shaping ideas and expectations of gender roles and relations, as well as of gender violence.
2. Always include a **contextual analysis of the relationship between masculinities and violence in conflict settings**, both including and beyond socio-religious gender norms.
3. Adopt a **relational perspective** when implementing and evaluating masculinities focused interventions. Be aware that the tendency for women to carry the disproportionate burden of responsibility for change is not reinforced.

## Questions or comments?

Reference to the research: Lewis, C. et al. (forthcoming 2024), "'Faithing' Masculinities in Conflict: Engaging Faith Leaders and Communities to Prevent Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo," in Myrttinen, H. et al. (eds.), The Routledge Handbook of Masculinities in Conflict and Peacebuilding, Abingdon: Routledge.



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