

**SDC Position Paper**

**SEXUAL VIOLENCE  
AGAINST  
MEN AND BOYS,  
INCLUDING AGAINST  
MEMBERS OF THE  
LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITY**



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA  
**Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC**

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## Why this position paper?

One in every 10 women and girls below age 20 has experienced some form of forced sexual contact, based on global estimates; and nearly one in three women or an estimated 736 million have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence at least once since the age of 15, usually by an intimate partner<sup>1</sup>. Notwithstanding the high prevalence among and focus on women and girls, there is a growing recognition of the need to address sexual violence directed against men and boys and non-binary individuals, in both development and humanitarian contexts.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a serious violation of human rights and several international instruments call for their prevention and redress. Combatting all forms of gender-based violence<sup>2</sup> is a priority for Switzerland's foreign policy. The *Gender Equality and Women's Rights Strategy* of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) (2017) defines prevention of and response to all forms of gender-based violence as one of six objectives to achieve gender equality. All four Swiss National Action Plans (NAP)<sup>3</sup> to implement the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, following UNSC Resolution 1325 from 2000, have set clear objectives related to prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence. For instance, the current NAP includes an entire objective (nr.3) dedicated exclusively to the protection against GBV. In line with the gender equality Sustainable Development Goal 5, recent Swiss International Cooperation Programs have emphasized the need to address SGBV. Swiss Humanitarian Aid has identified GBV as a priority theme since 2017<sup>4</sup>; as an active member of the global multi-stakeholder platform *Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies*, Switzerland engages in global advocacy against the chronic underfunding of GBV interventions<sup>5</sup> and for an adequate response in support of GBV survivors at each stage of every humanitarian crisis.

FDFA promotes an inclusive approach to GBV response, i.e. it acknowledges that all individuals, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation, can be victims of sexual violence and that survivors have a right to adequate

1 The UN Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021

2 SDC uses the IASC definition of GBV: "Gender-based violence is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e., gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in public or in private. The term 'GBV' is most commonly used to underscore how systemic inequality between males and females—which exists in every society in the world—acts as a unifying and foundational characteristic of most forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls". SDC also uses GBV to highlight the gendered dimensions of certain forms of violence, particularly sexual violence, against men and boys and against members of the LGBTIQ+ community, who may – or not – qualify as males or females, committed with the purpose of reinforcing gender inequitable norms of masculinities and femininities. This violence against males, as well as against members of the LGBTIQ+ community, is based on socially constructed ideas of what it means to be a man and exercise male power. From: IASC (Inter-agency Standing Committee), 2015a. *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery*, p. 3

3 In 2007, Switzerland adopted its first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP 1325 for the years 2007-2009), to implement UNSCR 1325. This was then followed by a 2nd NAP (2010-2012) and a 3rd (2013-2016). Switzerland currently has its 4th NAP in place (2018-2022)

4 *Operational Concept SGBV 2017-2020, SDC 2017; Operational Concept Protection 2021-2024, SDC 2021*

5 Resources available for SGBV in relation to requirements (less than 15% in 2020) is significantly lower than the overall funding coverage of the Global Humanitarian Overview (46% in 2020) according to OCHA, *Background Note on Tracking GBV Requirements and Funding; High-Level Roundtable on Addressing Funding Gaps in GBV Programming; Geneva 20.1.2021*

services. Since 2017, the Swiss Humanitarian Aid supports specific advocacy efforts to uphold the rights and access to services for male survivors.

While FDFA and particularly SDC have formulated policies, guidance and numerous statements on GBV against girls and women, no such documents exist regarding sexual violence against men and boys, including members of the LGBTIQ+<sup>6</sup> community. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to provide the background and rationale of the Swiss inclusive position on GBV, with a more nuanced understanding of sexual violence against men, boys including members of the LGBTIQ+ community.



## Official recognition of sexual violence against men

Rape and other forms of sexual violence against *any person* is prohibited under international law. Despite these clear legal prohibitions, rape and other forms of sexual violence have historically been marginalized in international criminal law proceedings. However, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in its judgement against a former mayor, Jean-Paul Akayesu, proclaimed that rape and sexual assault constituted acts of genocide (1998). Subsequently, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) included rape as a crime against humanity, alongside other crimes such as torture and extermination, when committed in armed conflict and directed against a civilian population. Many cases that dealt with sexual violence included male victims.

In 2012, sexual violence against men and boys was officially noted for the first time by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV), Zainab Bangura.<sup>7</sup> At the Open Debate on CRSV of the Security Council in April 2021, Pramila Patten, the Special Representative of the Secretary General on CRSV said: "Reports of sexual violence against men and boys were recorded in almost all of the countries examined, with the majority occurring in detention settings".

In 2013, the UNSC Resolution 2106 formalized the inclusion of men and boys in the category of conflict-related sexual violence. In 2016, the Women, Peace and Security agenda also recognized sexual violence against men and boys, calling it a tactic of terrorism (UNSCR 2331). But it was the UNSC Resolution 2467 (2019) that marked a real paradigm shift. The resolution "urge[d] Members States to protect victims who are men and boys through the strengthening of policies that offer appropriate responses to male survivors and challenge cultural assumptions about male invulnerability to such

<sup>6</sup> People who have identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and others (+).

<sup>7</sup> Meger, Sara (2018), The political economy of sexual violence against men and boys in armed conflict; in: Zalewski, Marysia et al, pp102-116; <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/report/conflict-related-sexual-violence-report-of-the-united-nations-secretary-general/SG-Report-2020editedsmall.pdf>

violence.”<sup>8</sup> The UNSCR 2467 avoids reference to sexual violence as a tactic or weapon of war and, with this, it abstains from the limiting language of earlier resolutions. The resolution condemns sexual violence against men and boys and requests systematic monitoring of such crimes, as well as services to address their suffering while reaffirming that women and girls are disproportionately affected by sexual violence. It further maintains that prevention “requires the advancement of substantive gender equality before, during and after conflict, including by ensuring women’s full and effective participation in political, economic and social life”<sup>9</sup>.

Although systematic data collection and availability is still scarce regarding the magnitude of sexual violence experienced by men and boys, case studies suggest that its prevalence is significant. For instance, 23.6% men in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2010 and 32.6% former male combatants in Liberia in 2008, reported having experienced sexual violence. In Yei County of South Sudan, 47% men reported experiencing or witnessing sexual violence against a man (2008)<sup>10</sup>. In 2018, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic reported detailed evidence on sexual violence against men and boys in Syria.

Sexual violence against men, boys and members of the LGBTIQ+ community takes many forms. The following list is not exhaustive but describes the most common violations: anal and oral rape and sexual assault (including with objects); genital violence, including beatings, burning, cutting, electric shocks; forced circumcision and mutilation; amputation of testes and/or penis; forced rape of others, sexual humiliation such as forced nudity or forced witnessing of sexual violence.<sup>11</sup>

## Reasons for sexual violence against men and boys, including LGBTIQ+ persons

Sexual violence in conflict is often framed as “a tactic of war, torture and terror, and a tool of political repression, to dehumanize, destabilize, and forcibly displace populations”.<sup>12</sup> Among the most mediatized and well documented examples of sexual violence against men are: sexual violence by US forces

8 [Remarks of Under-Secretary-General Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for UK/Liechtenstein/All Survivors Project Event, Justice for All Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence – Accountability for Perpetrators - United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, NY July 2020](#)

9 [WPS-Commentary-Report-online.pdf \(lse.ac.uk\)](#)

10 Chynoweth S.K and Busher D. (2021). Addressing Sexual Violence against Men, Boys, and LGBTIQ+ Persons in Humanitarian Settings. A Field-friendly Guidance Note by Sector; Women’s Refugee Commission. New York

11 All Survivors Project (2019). Checklist on preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence against men and boys; ASP: London; Chynoweth S.K. and Busher D (2021)

12 [Statement of SRSB-SVC Pramila Patten Security Council Open Debate on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence “Turning Commitments into Compliance” Friday, 17 July 2020, 10 A.M. - United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict](#)



against Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib; the public displays of dismembered penises in the eastern DRC in the 1990s and sexual violence perpetrated against Muslim men during the Bosnian War.<sup>13</sup>

The purpose of such violence is to humiliate and dehumanize the men, to extinguish their reproductive capacity. The violation destroys the individual victim but its message is addressed to his whole population group and traumatizes families and communities – as is the case for sexual violence against women. As sexual violence is a symbol of control and subjugation of individual and entire communities, it can also be perpetrated as an act of revenge.

Certain settings pose particular risks for male-directed sexual violence: In detention and other situations of deprivation of liberty, sexual violence is more frequent and often consists of a form of torture. It is also prevalent in military settings, including during recruitment, in armed forces or armed groups or in any other association with fighting forces.<sup>14</sup>

Other drivers of sexual violence against men, boys and LGBTIQ+ include “group dynamics within combatant groups, economic reasons, sexual violence as a form of ‘entertainment’ or sexual violence against those seen as ‘undesirables’ by others in society. (...) Men and boys, like women and girls including members of the LGBTIQ+ community, may be forced into sexual slavery, trafficked for sexual purposes or sexually exploited. Sexual violence may also be used to extort money from the victim or from their family members.”<sup>15</sup> Sexual violence in the form of commercial sexual exploitation is also prevalent, sometimes combined with trafficking—for example, in Afghanistan, *bacha bazi* is the practice where boys as young as 11, young men and transgender youth are forced to dance and sexually serve their “keepers” who are usually powerful men associated with armed forces/groups or otherwise influential in their societies.<sup>16</sup>

Abuse of men and particularly boys and young adults is not restricted to conflict, war and prison settings, they are also committed by community members, by employers, by teachers or family members. It seems, however, this is even less often reported. For example, Rohingya refugees who were asked about sexual violence against men and boys, exclusively mentioned violence committed by the Myanmar military, although according to service providers, most men/boys who accessed care in Cox’s Bazaar were abused by members of their family and community.<sup>17</sup> The shame and self-blame of victims and their communities might be more pronounced if the violence is committed by civil actors, rather than when the assault is framed as politically motivated.

13 Chynoweth S.K. et al (2021)

14 ASP, Briefing on conflict-related sexual violence against men and boys prepared for Colombia’s Truth, Coexistence, and Non-Repatriation Commission, December 2020 ; [ASPCEV...Briefing.11.Dec...2020-1.pdf \(allsurvivorsproject.org\)](#)

15 Chynoweth S.K. et al (2021)

16 ASP & YHDO (2020). AFGHANISTAN - Briefing to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Conflict -Related Sexual Violence against Boys in Afghanistan, 85th session of CRC, September 2020; [ASP.submission.Afghanistan.CRC...85thSession.2020.pdf \(all-survivorsproject.org\)](#)

17 Chynoweth, S.K. (2018). ‘It’s Happening to Our Men as Well’: Sexual Violence against Rohingya Men and Boys, Women’s Refugee Commission, New York.



## Sexual violence against members of the LGBTIQ+ community

The United Nations recognizes violence against LGBTIQ+ individuals as a form of gender-based violence, driven by a desire to punish individuals whose appearance or behaviour appears to challenge gender stereotypes<sup>18</sup>. "LGBT and gender non-conforming youth are at risk of family and community violence. Lesbians and transgender women are at particular risk because of gender inequality and power relations within families and wider society. LGBT remain targets of organized abuse, including by religious extremists, paramilitary groups and extreme nationalists<sup>19</sup>.

In line with the general absolute prohibition on the use of torture, violence against, and torture of persons on the basis of their gender identity and sexual orientation are specifically prohibited under the Convention Against Torture<sup>20</sup>. In 2011, The UN Human Rights Council approved a resolution led by South Africa requesting that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights draft a report "documenting discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity". The report states that "homophobic and transphobic violence has been recorded in all regions. Such violence may be physical (including murder, beatings, kidnappings, rape and sexual assault) or psychological (including threats, coercion and arbitrary deprivations of liberty). These attacks constitute a form of gender-based violence, driven by a desire to punish those seen as defying gender norms"<sup>21</sup>. The UN recognizes that violence motivated by homophobia and transphobia is often particularly brutal, and in some instances characterized by levels of cruelty exceeding that of other hate crimes. Violent acts include deep knife cuts, anal rape and genital mutilation, as well as stoning and dismemberment.<sup>22</sup>

Members of the LGBTIQ+ community often face specific barriers, as well as broader cultural stigma and societal obstacles to obtaining justice and to access care services. These are multi-level and can include non-inclusive laws (see below), a failure to systematically include LGBTIQ+ populations in documentation, investigation or prosecution strategies; a lack of specialized expertise and capacity among rule of law, judicial and other officials and staff; and a lack of referral systems and access to competent medical and psychosocial support and protection measures to ensure their safe and respectful participation in justice processes and access to services.

18 United Nations General Assembly HRC. Discrimination and violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2015 4 May 2015. Report No.: Contract No.: A/HRC/29/23

19 Ibid

20 Committee Against Torture, 39th Session: Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Gender Comment No. 2. Implementation of article 2 by States Parties. 5-23 November 2007.

21 United Nations General Assembly HRC. Discrimination and violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2015 4 May 2015. Report No.: Contract No.: A/HRC/29/23

22 Ibid.



## Sexual violence has traumatic consequences

Social and cultural gender norms in patriarchal societies with strict binary gender structures – and related strong inequalities – define men as confident, protectors of their families and communities, as leaders, breadwinners and hardly in need of help or support. Such binary norms rule out weakness and victimization in association with the so-called ‘real man’.<sup>23</sup> In Northern Uganda, for example, people perceived men as inexistent, “because they had been—in the words of the community—‘turned into women’ as a result of having been raped by government soldiers.”<sup>24</sup> The survivors had lost their status of man because they were vulnerable, forced into submission and penetrated; they were assigned a new gender status, that of a woman. In literature, this process is often called feminization. Although this term does describe what is happening to the victims in the eyes of the community, it also uncritically reconfirms the gender norms of the society. A more precise description of what is happening to male victims of sexual violence is reflected by the term “*displacement from gendered personhood*”.<sup>25</sup> Rather than reconfirming the ascription of rigid binary gender norms and stereotypes to men and women, this term describes the process of male victims who are losing their familiar gendered identity because in the view of their societies they no longer conform with major attributes ascribed to men.

The overwhelming shame, humiliation, anger and fear can lead to heightened anxiety, self-harm, depression and drug abuse. Survivors may no longer be able to emotionally relate to and trust others. Male survivors sometimes become aggressive towards others, including their own family members. The ways in which the victims/survivors look at themselves and are looked at by others deeply affect the relationship with family and community members.

Trauma, however, is not a static condition. It is a dynamic process shaped over time by the interaction between the social and political environment with the physical and mental state of the victim/survivor<sup>26</sup>. This understanding of trauma is very well reflected in the term “*displacement from gendered personhood*”. It avoids static ascriptions and indicates that the loss of belonging, like the physical displacement into a refugee camp, can be temporary, it can be mitigated and the harmful experience can be transformed. With appropriate care and a politically and socially supportive environment, it is possible for victims of all genders and sexual orientations to become empowered survivors.

23 Leiby, Michele (2018). Uncovering men's narratives of conflict-related violence, in: Zalewski, Marysia et al (eds), *Sexual violence against men in global politics*; London: Routledge) pp. 137-151

24 Schulz, P. (2018). Displacement from gendered personhood: sexual violence and masculinities in northern Uganda, in: *International Affairs*, 2018, 94:5, 1101-19.

25 Schulz, P. (2018)

26 Becker D. and B. Weyermann (2006). *Gender, Conflict Transformation and the Psychosocial Approach*. SDC Bern.



## Survivor-centered response to GBV against men, boys and members of the LGBTIQ+ community

All survivors of GBV, regardless of their gender and sexual orientation, rarely report sexual violence incidents immediately, and frequently do so when the physical wounds require urgent intervention. All face physical, psychological and social consequences of the violence. And all require survivor-centered, multi-service response, consisting of medical, psychosocial, legal and economic support. A survivor-centered approach implies that services are tailored to the *specific* needs of the different survivors.

Services and strategies developed to respond to women GBV survivors are not always inclusive of or appropriate for other genders and different strategies may be required. Safe spaces for women and girls, for example, are an important entry point for women and girls survivors and a space of empowerment for women in general. These spaces must remain women only to serve the purpose as a refuge and a safe space. Likewise, One Stop Crisis Centers for women survivors are often located in the maternity section of a hospital. Men survivors neither would nor should be treated there. On the other hand, services for women and girls need to be made inclusive for *all* women, including trans women, regardless of their sexual orientation. The interventions for survivors of all genders should aim at overcoming the survivor's isolation and at building solidarity structures.

Specialized services for men and boys enable and encourage survivors to address their physical pain, to break through their isolation and to support "the renegotiation of gendered identities".<sup>27</sup> Detailed guidance on key issues of an adequate multi-sector response for survivors of male-directed sexual violence is increasingly available<sup>28</sup>. Men and boys are not a homogenous group. Strategies for empowerment have to adjust to people's gender identities and gender expressions and the differentiations along lines of class, race, ethnicity, caste, nationality and ability among others.<sup>29</sup>

Staff members of services that for survivors must deal with their often deeply ingrained gender stereotypes and negative attitudes to (male) victims of sexual violence. Critical examination of norms of heteronormativity must be an integral part of their training.

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27 Touquet, H. et al (2021)

28 Chynoweth, S. and D. Busher, [Addressing Sexual Violence against Men, Boys, and LGBTIQ+ Persons in Humanitarian Settings. A Field-Friendly Guidance Note by Sector](#). WRC (2021); WRC, [Supporting Young Male Refugees and Migrants who are Survivors or at Risk of Sexual Violence. A Field Guide for Frontline Workers in Europe](#) (2021); UNHCR, [Need to Know Guidance: Working with Men and Boy Survivors of Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Forced Displacement](#), (2012)

29 Touquet, H. et al 2021



## Prevention of sexual violence

SDC promotes working with all members of communities on gender norms as part of its initiatives for more gender equality in all sectors, but specifically when working on GBV. Increased awareness about the harm caused by gender inequality for women and girls, but ultimately also for men and boys, may lead to changes in attitude towards people who do not conform with ascribed roles and may reduce stigma and violence.

Of particular relevance for the prevention of sexual violence against men and including members of the LGBTIQ+ community, is the regulation of police and military<sup>30</sup>. They must abide with international law standards, including through adopting policies to prohibit and sanction sexual violence and must put in place effective gender sensitive internal oversight and complaint mechanisms. To prevent sexual violence in detention facilities, it is essential to advocate for the criminalization of torture in national law, for mechanisms that allow safe reporting of incidents and for access to detention facilities by international and independent monitoring mechanisms.

Legal frameworks reflect the cultural norms of societies. In many countries including Switzerland<sup>31</sup>, legislative frameworks do not use gender-neutral language when describing rape, which is defined as affecting girls and women. Sixty-nine states still criminalize same-sex relations<sup>32</sup>, which can lead to survivors being punished for same-sex relations rather than protected and assisted. This, in turn, inhibits male survivors from speaking out and seeking redress.



## Male survivors in the humanitarian GBV debate

The issue of male survivors has created intensive debate and resistance in the global humanitarian GBV community. Feminist GBV actors point out that “violence against men and boys has different root causes from violence against women and girls. Although “violence against men and boys can have gendered dimensions, it does not stem from structural gender-based inequality, which is the root cause of gender-based violence (GBV)”<sup>33</sup>. Hence, they consider the categorization of violence against men as GBV to be problematic because it makes the central role of gender-based power inequalities and subordination in the global gender hierarchy, which is often

30 All Survivors Project (2019), Checklist on preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence against men and boys

31 In Switzerland, the Article 190 of the Penal Code still defines rape as coercing a female person to sex; in the ongoing revision process, the article will most probably be formulated in a gender-neutral manner

32 [http://internap.hrw.org/features/features/lgbt\\_laws/](http://internap.hrw.org/features/features/lgbt_laws/)

33 COFEM, Feminist Pocket Book, Tipsheet #7: <https://cofemsocialchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/TS7-Violence-against-men-and-boys.pdf>

experienced by women and girls through violence, invisible. In addition, the feminist actors also argue that GBV programming (safe spaces, response by reproductive health providers etc) is mostly inappropriate for male survivors and mixing women and men in existing services would do disservice to both groups. An additional reason for the strong rejection of male survivors by feminist GBV actors is the fear that the already extremely underfunded GBV prevention and response would be further diminished if some of these resources would have to be directed to men and boys.

The global coordination of the humanitarian GBV response, the GBV Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR), includes feminist GBV actors among its core members; it has recently acknowledged that it is "the IASC mandated body to lead the coordination of the humanitarian response to GBV, including sexual violence against men and boys"<sup>34</sup>. Subsequently the GBV AoR published a guidance, funded by SDC, to ensure that GBV response in humanitarian contexts "effectively takes into account the needs of male survivors of sexual violence, understands patterns of disclosures and aims to provide systems that enable safe and effective referrals to the most appropriate support"<sup>35</sup>. The GBV AoR further states that even where the services for male survivors are delivered by non GBV specific actors such as health providers, child protection organizations or mental health and psychosocial services (MHPSS), the GBV Coordination would be responsible that GBV actors know where men and boys can get support.

The GBV AoR has stated in its new strategy (2021-2025) that while it will make sure that male survivors have access to support, the main focus and orientation is the empowerment of female survivors: "A feminist perspective is essential for understanding and dismantling the underpinning systems of power, especially gender inequality, that produce, reinforce and perpetuate GBV"<sup>36</sup>.

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34 IASC acknowledges that GBV includes "some forms of sexual violence against males and/or targeted violence against LGBTI populations, in these cases when referencing violence related to gender-inequitable norms of masculinity and/or norms of gender identity." IASC, 2015a. Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery, p. 3

35 GBV AoR, [Guidance to Gender-Based Violence Coordinators Addressing the Needs of Male Survivors of Sexual Violence in GBV Coordination](#), (2021)

36 GBV AoR Strategy 2021-2025



## **SDC's position on violence against men and boys, including members of the LGBTIQ+ community**

Gender-based violence against women and girls is, according to the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) Committee, "one of the fundamental social, political and economic means by which the subordinate position of women with respect to men and their stereotyped roles are perpetuated"<sup>37</sup>. The Committee has identified such violence<sup>38</sup> as a critical obstacle to achieve substantive equality between women and men.

Gender inequality is anchored in strict definitions of what it means to be a man or a woman, accompanied by an often rigid heteronormativity. Many of the reasons for sexual violence against men and boys are rooted in these binary gender norms, such as conflict-related sexual violence aiming to defeat and subjugate the men of the enemy groups or the sexual violence to discipline or punish individuals with diverse sexual orientations, sexual identities and expressions, and sex characteristics.

Hence, SDC includes sexual violence directed against men, boys including members of the LGBTIQ+ community in its understanding of GBV and advocates for the rights of men and boys to be protected from sexual violence and to receive gender-adequate care.



## **Conclusions on sexual violence against men, boys including against members of the LGBTIQ+ community**

- Sexual violence can be committed against individuals of all genders. Women and girls are predominantly affected by GBV; but in most settings of conflict and displacement, sexual violence is also prevalent against men and boys, including against members of the LGBTIQ+ community.
- Sexual violence against any person is a violation of international law and sexual violence may amount to a war crime or a crime against humanity.

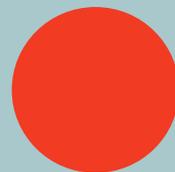
<sup>37</sup> CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation 35, New York 2017

<sup>38</sup> CEDAW defines gender-based violence against women as a form of discrimination includes violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty.- Recommendation 19, para 6.

- Sexual and gender-based violence against individuals of all genders is deeply rooted in gender inequality and strictly binary societal norms that disempower and discriminate against women and girls; sexual and gender-based violence is exacerbated in conflict and displacement situations, and is a continuum of the violence against girls and women that is prevalent beyond the time of the crisis.
- Sexual violence against men and boys and against members of the LGBTIQ+ community is a form of GBV and is rooted in patriarchal norms of masculinity and heteronormativity. In conflicts, it is often used to attack the gender identities of the victims and their community.
- Framing sexual violence in conflict and displacement only as a weapon or tactic of war should be avoided as it reflects a limited understanding of forms, causes, contributing factors, and of the adequate responses.
- Sexual violence against all genders has severe impacts on the physical and mental health, while oftentimes also impacting the livelihood of victims/survivors. The trauma deeply affects the relationship to others, including close family members and friends. Families and communities can be severely destabilized by sexual violence against any of its members.
- The survivor-centered response to sexual violence must be multi-sectoral and include medical treatment, psychosocial counseling, legal and livelihood support for the survivor and if required for their families. The services must be specifically tailored to the different needs of individuals from all genders; the interventions should aim at overcoming the survivor's isolation and at building solidarity structures. The work against sexual violence must be combined with sincere efforts to critically examine heteronormativity and transform patriarchal gender norms at local, national and global levels.
- Combatting sexual violence against all genders must include reform of policies and laws to prohibit sexual violence. Particularly relevant is the de-criminalization of same-sex relations and the description of sexual violence in a gender-inclusive manner in laws and policies. Police and military must prohibit and sanction sexual violence and put effective oversight in place.
- Switzerland must advocate for an increase of funding for GBV prevention and response services for individuals of all genders and sexual orientations. While the services for women are severely underfunded, services for men hardly exist at all. Funding for GBV prevention and response services addressing women/girls must increase. At the same time, more attention must be paid to men/boys survivors, as well as the LGBTIQ+ community as a particularly vulnerable population at risk of sexual violence.

## **Imprint**

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