

Living Peace Institute Capacity Statement

Living Peace Institute

Living Peace institute (LPI) is a non-government organization founded in DRC with the support of the Kingdom of The Netherlands. The mission of LPI is to achieve sustainable, gender-equitable peace at all levels of society by engaging men to end SGBV and other forms of violence through an evidence-based psychosocial support program (Living Peace) for men, women, boys and girls with the aim to end violent behaviors and adopt norms and values that support gender equality at individual, family, community and societal levels.

Inspired by the lack of programming to support men and women who have been affected by violence, trauma, and displacement in post-conflict and high-violence settings, Living Peace was developed to assist participants in healing from their experiences of trauma by restoring social and partner relationships, and strengthening positive coping strategies that exclude all forms of violence. The groups use a combination of psychosocial support and group education to help men and their partners in post-conflict settings address the personal effects of trauma, while also bringing the community together in a process of social restoration. The group therapy process has been used with survivors of sexual violence, husbands of conflict-related rape survivors, and witnesses of genocide and other forms of violence.

LPI developed and adapted the Living Peace methodology for different target groups including men, women, youth affected by conflict and SGBV. Living Peace Institute builds capacity of other NGOs and government institutions including the police, military and the health sector by training their staff on how to implement the Living Peace methodology in different settings and contexts.

About the “Living Peace” program

The content of the program is based on several studies that were conducted between 2010-2015 in collaboration with Promundo-US, an international non-government organization specializing in action research and program development on masculinities and engagement of men in ending cycles of violence against women and promoting gender equality. Originally named “Kikundi Cha Uponyaji Ya Wa Baba” (“Healing Groups for Men” in Swahili) and subsequently renamed Living Peace, the program was developed and implemented by the Institut Supérieur du Lac (ISL) – a DRC-based institute for higher education in psychology and mental health – and Promundo-US, in collaboration with other local NGOs. Since 2015, the model has been further developed by the Living Peace Institute and adapted to different target groups.

The Living Peace program, developed within a human-rights and gender-equality framework, is based on a gender-specific and gender-transformative approach that combines group therapy and community outreach. The program has three key objectives:

- (i) to support men and boys in developing alternative strategies for coping with their traumatic experiences and in reconstructing their gendered identities in nonviolent, gender-transformative ways;
- (ii) to reduce stigma and exclusion of women/girls who were raped and increase familial support for them; and
- (iii) to build social cohesion in communities and restore social support systems that also serve as prevention for the development of mental health problems and severe traumatic disorders.

A qualitative impact evaluation of the Living Peace program found that three years after the intervention, positive changes among men, their families, and their communities continued, including reduction in alcohol abuse, improved conflict management among couples, adoption of more gender-equitable attitudes, reduction in violence against female partners, and improved household economic outcomes¹. The findings also show increased psychosocial wellbeing and improved health of children as well as the increase of the number of girls getting access to formal education.

The personal and family economic gains and psychosocial improvements have a multiplier effect, spurring positive behavior change among community members who have not participated in the Living Peace intervention, ultimately leading to a reduction of intimate partner violence within the community.

Community celebrations that take place upon a group's completion of the curriculum provide an opportunity for participants and their community members to share testimonies of positive change which are celebrated through songs, dance, speeches, and performances. Celebrations are usually covered and broadcast by local and national media, thus reaching thousands of people including outside the intervention area.

Context analysis and relevance for the Ministry of foreign affairs

Enduring Armed Conflicts and Wars in Eastern DRC and Its Implication on SGBV

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has experienced continued violence and civil conflict for more than two decades. In a context of war and armed conflict, women and girls are exposed to many protection risks including various forms of gender-based violence. Sexual violence has largely and consistently been used as a weapon of war in DRC. This has led to the discovery of the gender dimension of the armed conflict in DRC. Successive violent crises have resulted in millions of women and men, girls and boys, being subjected to human rights abuses, and in a special way, they have contributed to exacerbating the occurrence of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV).²

¹ Tankink, M. and Slegh, H. (2017). *Living Peace in Democratic Republic of the Congo: An Impact Evaluation of an Intervention with Male Partners of Women Survivors of Conflict-Related Rape and Intimate Partner Violence*. Washington, DC: Promundo-US.

² Johnson K, Scott J, Rughita B, Asher J, Kisielewski M Ong R, Lawry L. "Association of Sexual Violence and Human Rights Violations with Physical and Mental Health in Territories of Democratic Republic of Congo". *JAMA*. 2010. 304(5):553-562; Lawry L, Rosa JC, Kisielewski M, Johnson K, Scott J, Wiczorek J. "The Use of Population-Based Surveys for Prosecutions at the International Criminal Court: A Case Study of Democratic Republic of Congo". *International Criminal Justice Review*. 2014; 24:1; and Lawry L, Johnson K, Asher J. Evidence-Based Documentation of Gender-Based Violence. In: Stephan Parmentier, Jeremy Sarkin and Elmar Weitekamp (Eds), *New Series on Transitional Justice, Prosecuting Sexual Violence as an International Crime: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Antwerp, Belgium: Intersentia Publishers 2013.

According to studies, of those who were exposed to sexual violence, 74.3% of women and 64.5% of men were exposed to conflict-associated sexual violence. Perpetrators of conflict-associated sexual violence were reported to include 41.1% women as perpetrators among female survivors vs. 10.0% among male survivors. The most common type of sexual violence reported by both women and men was rape. Using population data from that time, this study estimated 1.31 million women and 0.76 million men were survivors of sexual violence in North and South Kivu and Ituri provinces in the eastern DRC.³

From SGBV in Armed Conflicts to SGBV in Households

Several wars and conflicts over the past decades in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have caused tremendous damage to relationships between men and women and have greatly exacerbated partner violence, including sexual violence between partners. One evidence-based study conducted in the provinces of South-Kivu, North-Kivu and Ituri revealed that among the household-based population in the survey area, 39.7% of women and 23.6% of men were reported to have been exposed to sexual violence during their lifetime. Thirty-one percent of women were reported to have been exposed to intimate partner violence compared with 16.6% of men.⁴

The results of the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), carried out in North-Kivu, highlight numerous and complex factors that contribute to high levels of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in a context of post-conflict DRC⁵. The study found that support for traditional gender norms, including male dominance, is high among both men and women in North Kivu. Men who are less supportive of gender equality were more likely to have perpetrated physical or sexual violence against a partner. The study also found that nearly 24% of women reported being raped during the conflict; those women who experienced sexual violence in the conflict were often rejected by their husbands and families.

In addition, the findings show that men who were exposed to violence as children were more likely to use intimate partner violence as adults. Men who were forced to have sex or raped in conflict were also more likely to use physical or sexual violence against their partners. The construction of violent masculinities in men is strongly influenced by childhood exposure to violence and exposure to violence during armed conflict.

SGBV as an Expression of a “Failed” Masculinity

³ Scott J, Polak S, Kisielewski M, McGraw Gross M, Johnson K, Hendrickson M, and Lawry L. “A Mixed-Methods Assessment of Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo to Inform National and International Strategy Implementation”. *International Journal of Health Planning and Management*. 2012.

⁴ Johnson K, Scott J, Rughita B, Asher J, Kisielewski M, Ong R, Lawry L. “Association of Sexual Violence and Human Rights Violations with Physical and Mental Health in Territories of Democratic Republic of Congo”. *JAMA*. 2010. 304(5):553-562.

⁵ Slegh H., Barker G., Levkov R., Gender Relations, SGBV and the Effects of Conflict on Women and Men in North Kivu, DRC. Promundo & Sonke, 2014.

Rape and sexual violence has primarily been portrayed as a weapon of war to destroy others. Yet, several other studies confirm that rape and sexual violence should also be understood as an expression of failed masculinity in a failing state⁶.

Men's multiple identities in conflict and post-conflict settings —as perpetrators of violence, but also as witnesses to and victims of violence— must be appropriately addressed in any effort to end violence against women and girls, to promote gender equality, and to facilitate women's and men's access to sexual and reproductive health resources and services.

In addition, when men are unable to fulfill the culturally defined male roles as protectors and providers for their families due to war and poverty, self-perceptions of failure and loss of power and control lead many of them to use more violence at home, as affirmed in the IMAGES DRC study. Indeed, the study found that many men cope with shame and feelings of loss and failure with alcohol abuse and violence against women; for some, this sense of lost masculinity is also a motive for joining armed groups. Constructions of masculinity based on rigid and traditional notions of power, control, and honor also contribute to a perspective that fighting and violence are the only way to resolve interpersonal and inter communal conflicts.

LPI Contribution to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs policy objectives

The three-year program (Mar 2016-Feb 2019) implemented by Living Peace Institute (LPI) sought to reduce violence, with a special focus on gender-based violence, by providing large-scale psychosocial assistance to various groups of people affected by the conflict in order effect change by putting an end to violent attitudes and behaviors through a group psychosocial support approach fostering the concept of “positive masculinity”. Gender-based patriarchal structures and hyper masculine institutional cultures, societal, gender, political, cultural and religious norms and attitudes have been identified as the major root causes of stigma suffered by SGBV victims and survivors.⁷

Need for Gender-Specific Responses for Security and Stabilization in Eastern DRC

As noted in both MONUSCO's *International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy* (ISSSS) and the Dutch Multi-Annual Strategic Plan for the Great Lakes Region, the continued presence of SGBV and the traditional norms contributing to it also prevent healing and stabilization of communities, thus driving further conflict. Female survivors of sexual violence in conflict are frequently ostracized by men (including by other members of their own families) and children born of sexual violence in conflict also face rejection by the community. The above-mentioned survey (IMAGES) found that majority of men thought that a woman who had been raped should be expelled from her family and community. Subsequently, if fractures in the family and community are not mended, then security, social cohesion and reconciliation —both between men and women, and between men and other men— remain elusive.

⁶Baaz M., Stern M., *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War?* Nordic Africa Institute Sweden, 2013

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kingdom of the Netherlands), *Key Results of the Embassy in Great Lakes Region in 2016*, available at https://www.dutchdevelopmentresults.nl/country/great_lakes_region/pdf_english

Need to Engage Men as Women's Allies in Women Economic Empowerment

Men's reports of higher levels of economic stress (due to poverty, displacement and loss of property) and regular binge drinking were further associated with elevated levels of violence against their partners. This is unfortunately common, as communities affected by conflict in the region are often left in economic turmoil. In the case of DRC, conflict left many men and women without the ability to provide for their families, with IMAGES revealing that 71% of men reported (versus 39% before conflict) never having enough means to support their families. This, in turn, is likely to lead to further interpersonal conflict, stress and depression.

The crisis and conflicts in the region also changed gender relations in households when women became income providers and contribute to family income. Women's economic empowerment programs, supported by NGOs working for women's economic independence became popular and showed the importance of women's contribution to economic development.

However, IMAGES studies conducted in DRC as well as in Rwanda confirmed by evidence of our work in "living peace groups" showed that women with more income are exposed to higher levels of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). When traditional gender norms are not addressed in collaboration with men, the husband of a financially-independent woman may feel offended and may claim her income in his role as "the boss" of the family.

In addition, as the Dutch Multi-Annual Strategic Plan (MASP) for The Great Lakes Region has assessed, many men in the Great Lakes Region (like elsewhere) do not accept equal rights of women. For instance, despite the fact that the majority of agricultural workers are women, with a large percentage of female-headed households, very few men support women's right to access to or ownership of land.

Therefore, efforts to boost economic development that focus solely on the empowerment of women may aggravate men's sense of lost power and fragile sense of manhood. These arguments have led to the conclusion that women's economic empowerment initiatives can work better when men are engaged as partners or with efforts to promote men's attitude and behavior change.⁸

All the above has led to the conclusion that in order to achieve gender equality and put an end to all forms of violence against women and girls, there is a need to change male-dominated beliefs, attitudes and cultural norms, and to effect this long-desired change in a more-often-than-not highly patriarchal society, imperatively men and boys need to be part of the solution.⁹

⁸ Henny Slegh , Gary Barker , Augustin Kimonyo , Prudence Ndolimana & Matt Bannerman (2013): 'I can do women's work': reflections on engaging men as allies in women's economic empowerment in Rwanda, *Gender & Development*, 21:1, 15-30

⁹ Cf. Office of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, USAID, "Working with Men and Boys to End Violence against Women and Girls: Approaches, Challenges, and Lessons", February 2015, available at https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/Men_VAW_report_Feb2015_Final.pdf

By way of a summary, as highlighted above, the 2016-2018 Dutch-funded Living Peace Program confirmed the positive impact of the methodology on ending violence between men and women. Women report significant change at home, men are less violent and are dedicated to use their new insights in personal but also professional life, as is observed in the security sector. Police officers and military became active agents to intervene in cases of SGBV. This impact is not yet systematically measured, but findings are based on personal accounts in closing sessions. Listed below are a few highlights:

- (1) The positive responses of participants involved in the pilot phase were also found in all groups that were implemented in 2016-2018. These include: reduction of sexual violence and economic violence; increased communication with partners and children; women's increased involvement in decision-making in the household; increased social support and reintegration of women and children born out of rape. These findings are key to the direction of the Living peace implementation in 2016-2018.
- (2) Participants as well as facilitators perceive the implementation of Living Peace with military and police as very positive. Some community leaders even expressed the desire to become Living Peace facilitators.
- (3) Military men and their spouses indicated the need for Living Peace groups to be held with spouses of military men to end cycles of violence, as both men and women suffer from the trauma associated with military participation
- (4) To ensure the sustainability of the impact of Living Peace groups, it is necessary to work with community activists as peace ambassadors to implement campaigns as a follow up to each group. (Due to a focus on implementation of groups in year one, this was not feasible but will be developed for subsequent years).
- (5) Experiences of violence at home by children can contribute to cycles of victimization and violence. This needs to be addressed by working not only with adults but also with youth who have experienced violence.
- (6) Sessions focused on sexuality must include information on contraception and family planning methods.
- (7) Living Peace facilitators expressed the need for continuous capacity building on gender equality, trauma and family planning methods.
- (8) Working with severely traumatized individuals in high-risk areas requires intensive clinical supervision of facilitators and security guidelines.
- (9) Economic empowerment activities could build on increased social cohesion. Trust and synergy with NGOs working in field income generation could help to sustain the positive changes, which LPI intends to pilot through grouping spouses of participants into Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs).

Key Achievements of the Living Peace Program

A qualitative impact evaluation was conducted to assess the long-term impact of the Living Peace program. The evaluation focused on the long-term impact of the program on former participants, their partners, family members and communities.¹⁰

¹⁰ Tankink, M. and Slegh, H. (2017). Living Peace in Democratic Republic of the Congo: An Impact Evaluation of an Intervention with Male Partners of Women Survivors of Conflict-Related Rape and Intimate Partner Violence. Washington, DC: Promundo-US.

The findings of the impact evaluation showed that the Living Peace intervention had a long term impact on behavior change of men, reduction of violence in general, and intimate partner violence in particular. The changes in men's behaviors and attitudes have positively affected the lives of women and children, extending to the broader community and this impact still endured three years on after the intervention when the evaluation was being conducted.

The targeted population

The Living Peace program mainly targeted men perceived as potential perpetrators but also at times victims of violence, including:

- Men who are husbands/partners of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence
- Men / women in uniform (FARDC)
- Men / women in uniform (PNC)
- Violent civilian men / women living in communities affected by conflict.
- Community and religious leaders living in communities identified by MONUSCO as high-risk zones
- Ex-combatants for reintegration into the community
- Young people (girls and boys) affected by conflict.

Achievements at the Individual Level

- Individual healing of men who experienced behavior change such as the reduction of alcohol and substance abuse in times of stress
- Reported reduction of violent attitudes among participants
- Men felt anew proud of their roles as responsible husbands and fathers and respected community members.

Achievements at the Family Level

- Violence at home has reduced or stopped;
- Men are more positively engaged in household tasks and child care;
- Women have become more involved in household decision-making;
- Families' socioeconomic situations have significantly improved as a result of men's participation in the intervention.

Achievements at the Community Level

- Reduction of stigma towards women who have been raped by their husbands, family and community members. Acceptance of many children born from the rape;
- Multiplier effect: community members and relatives who did not participate have adopted non-violent and collaborative behaviors after witnessing positive change among participants;

- Living Peace participants are called-upon to play the role of arbitrators in solving small-scale family and community conflicts.

Achievements at Society Level

In order to guarantee the sustainability of Living Peace initiatives, each year LPI trains as “Living Peace facilitators” members of public and civil society organizations including:

- Local organizations working with religious and community leaders (Caritas, etc.) (North Kivu)
- Members of the Forces Armées Congolaises (FARDC) (North Kivu)
- Members of the Police Nationale du Congo (PNC) (South Kivu)
- Healthcare Professionals dealing with victims of gender-based violence (North Kivu)

Cooperation, harmonization and added value

Collaboration with National and International Organisations

Collaboration networks with national and international NGOs –including Dutch-funded NGOs and UN Agencies working in field of SGBV in DRC) have characterized the current phase. The current partnership landscape in DRC include MONUSCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, World Bank, CARE International, Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), among others.

Currently, LPI is a full member of following working thematic groups in DRC and participate at monthly meetings:

- Sub-Group SGBV which meets every quarter and chaired by Provincial Ministry in Charge of Gender
- Prevention and Protection Cluster which meets every month and chaired by UNHCR. In this TWG, LPI coordinates a sub-working group on positive masculinity
- Sub-Cluster GBV TWG which meets every quarter and chaired by UNFPA.
- Multi Sectorial Assistance (AMS) Technical Working Group on SGBV which meets every month and chaired by UNICEF.

LPI intends to strengthen and expand the current partnership during the proposed second phase of Living Peace program in DRC.

Collaboration with the Government of DRC (GoDRC)

LPI enjoys cordial partnership with Gender ministries at the provincial and national levels as well as Ministry of Defense (FARDC) and the police (PNC). This resulted in full support for implementation of the current program in communities as well as with FARDC and Police institutions. The acknowledgement of the program by FARDC and PNC is considered as crucial and a huge success since this collaboration has received support from the highest ranked authorities in the security sector, committed to ending SGBV by changing violent behaviors among police and military staff. This commitment includes support to end SGBV and promote gender equality. Their visibility at several celebrations functioned as a role model

for the population as well as role models for men working in the police and the army. LPI proposes to maintain and strengthen the partnership with local, provincial and national administrative institution during the implementation of the proposed second phase of the Living Peace program in DRC.

Collaboration with Promundo-US

Promundo-Us remains a strategic partner of the Living Peace Institute, providing technical assistance in research and communications, internationally but also locally, in the form of social marketing strategies. Living Peace Institute is part of Promundo's global coalition of independently registered NGOs sharing a global vision of engaging men in the promotion of gender equality.

Collaboration with the Mobile Cinema Foundation

LPI will collaborate with a Dutch-based group who have a record of producing peace building and gender-equality promoting documentary films in DRC.

The initiative, also known as the “the Mobile Cinema project” was financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. It is a cinema that travels from village to village in eastern Congo and showed a film about sexual violence to thousands of people to make the subject discussible and to overcome injustice.

In collaboration with LPI and Mobile Cinema Foundation, the existing film materials will be adjusted and used for education materials in the villages where LPI is implementing the Living Peace program to include the wider community in the process of change.

Film materials will also be used for training of facilitators and participants in LPI groups and new film materials will be developed about LPI messages with the military and policemen for national and international dissemination of LPI work.

Collaboration with CARITAS Networks

LPI collaborates with Caritas Goma, Caritas Australia, Caritas Congo to support the institutions to conduct gender audit, gender baseline and gender policy as crosscutting to Caritas programs. The study aimed at auditing the status of gender, child protecting and the protection of people living with disability (PLWD) at the level of Caritas Goma as an institution and in communities where Caritas Goma has been implementing two of its programs funded by Caritas Australia, namely, AFIA (Health and Wellness program – for the prevention and support of victims of HIV-AIDS) and AMANI Program (for the prevention and support of victims of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence – SGBV). Both interventions are implemented in the province of North-Kivu, specifically in the City of Goma and its neighboring administrative territories of Rutshuru and Masisi.