The role of African Christian churches in dealing with sexual violence against women: The case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Liberia

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Declaration

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ABSTRACT

Sexual violence against women (SVAW) has always been part of armed conflict. However, only recently has international law deemed it a crime against humanity and a genocidal crime, thus finally recognising that it is a strategy and weapon that is used extensively during conflict. SVAW and its consequences, however, also continue in the aftermath of conflict, with both ex-combatants and civilians perpetrating SVAW.

The effectiveness of SVAW as a weapon and strategy relies on the existence of gender identities and relations that subjugate women. This gender inequality is instated and perpetuated through hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy, and violence against women is one way in which the imbalance is enforced. Patriarchal beliefs and structures, combined with a form of militarised hypermasculinity, lead to SVAW being used during armed conflict, but also continuing in its aftermath. The consequences for survivors are that they are often stigmatised and discriminated against by their husbands, families and communities, and this contributes to their further marginalisation and exploitation.

As the state and international security and peacekeeping bodies fail to adequately address SVAW, civil society organisations (CSOs) tend to fill this void by providing mostly support to women affected. One sector of African civil society, namely African Christian churches, has a good record of effectively filling roles usually associated with the state. Furthermore, African Christian churches have increased tremendously in the last century, function at grassroots-level, and are of the few CSOs that continue functioning during armed conflict. As religious institutions they have authority and impact, for religion has the ability to influence behaviour, facilitate societal change, and provide societal solidarity and cohesion. Thus, for the marginalised in Africa, religion is a powerful resource. This leads one to assume that churches can be effective in addressing SVAW.

This supposition was tested by studying how churches address SVAW in three different areas affected by armed conflict, namely the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Liberia, by using a qualitative, multiple-case case study approach. In two sites in each country, one urban and one rural, structured interview questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and nominal groups were done, focusing on the causes and consequences of SVAW and how it is being addressed, specifically by churches.

The findings showed that SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict are due to patriarchal structures and beliefs, and the military hypermasculinity that has infused civilian masculinities. Patriarchy is also the indirect cause of the most severe consequences of SVAW. These are physical, psychological, social and economic, but the impact of the stigmatisation and discrimination that survivors experience is what they find most debilitating. Unfortunately, neither government nor civil society is addressing SVAW to any great extent and where they do, their actions are reactive not proactive in terms of prevention. This was no different in terms of the role and influence of the churches. While people believe in the ability of churches to be important actors in addressing SVAW, churches are not doing so, for they, too, are patriarchal institutions. Their ability to address injustice is limited when the cause of the injustice are practices and beliefs that lie at the heart of the religion and the churches, especially if these practices and beliefs are upholding the power of those currently in power. By perpetuating patriarchy, churches are actually contributing to SVAW being used as a weapon and strategy of warfare.

OPSOMMING

Seksuele geweld teen vroue (SGTV) was nog altyd deel van gewapende konflik. Dis egter eers onlangs wat internasionale wetgewing bepaal het dat dit ‘n misdaad teen die mensdom en van volksmoord is, en sodoende uiteindelik erken dat dit ‘n veelgebruikte konflikstrategie en -wapen is. SGTV en die gevolge daarvan hou egter aan ná konflik, met beide gewese vegters en burgerlikes wat SGTV pleeg.

Die doeltreffendheid van SGTV as 'n wapen en strategie berus op geslagsidentiteite en -verhoudings wat vroue onderwerp. Hierdie geslagsongelykheid word ingestel en voortgesit deur hegemoniese manlikheid en patriargie, en geweld teen vroue is een manier waarop die wanbalans afgedwing word. Patriargale oortuigings en strukture, gekombineer met 'n vorm van militêre hipermanlikheid, lei daartoe dat SGTV nie net tydens gewapende konflik plaasvind nie, maar ook daarna. Die oorlewendes word dikwels gestigmatiseer en teen gediskrimineer deur hulle mans, families en gemeenskappe, en dit dra by tot hulle verdere marginalisering en uitbuiting.

Aangesien die staat en internasionale veiligheids- en vredesliggame versuim om SGTV voldoende aan te spreek, is burgerlike organisasies (BOs) geneig om hierdie leemte te vul deur die verskaffing van meesal steun aan vroue wat deur SGTV geaffekteer word. Een sektor van Afrika se burgerlike samelewing, naamlik Afrika Christelike kerke, het 'n goeie rekord as dit kom by die vervulling van rolle wat gewoonlik geassosieer word met die staat. Verder het Afrika Christelike kerke geweldig toegeneem in die laaste eeu, funksioneer hulle op voetsoolvlak, en is hulle van die min BOs wat aanhou funksioneer tydens gewapende konflik. As godsdienstige instellings het hulle gesag en invloed, aangesien godsdiens die vermoë het om gedrag te beïnvloed, gemeenskapsverandering te fasiliteer, en solidariteit en samehorigheid aan ‘n gemeenskap te verskaf. Dus, vir gemarginaliseerdes in Afrika, is godsdiens 'n kragtige hulpbron. Dus neem ‘n mens aan dat kerke effektief kan wees in die aanspreek van SGTV.

Hierdie veronderstelling is getoets deur te kyk na hoe kerke SGTV aanspreek in drie areas wat geraak word deur gewapende konflik, naamlik die Demokratiese Republiek van die Kongo, Rwanda en Liberië, deur die gebruik van 'n kwalitatiewe, meervoudige-geval gevallestudie benadering. In twee gemeenskappe in elke land, een stedelike en een landelike, is gestruktureerde onderhoudvraelyste, semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude, en nominale groepe gedoen, met ‘n fokus op die oorsake en gevolge van SGTV en hoe dit aangespreek word, spesifiek deur kerke.

Die bevindinge het getoon dat SGTV in gebiede geraak deur gewapende konflik, te wyte is aan patriargale strukture en oortuigings, en die militêre hipermanlikheid wat verweef geraak het met burgerlike manlikheid. Patriargie is ook die indirekte oorsaak van die mees ernstige gevolge van SGTV. Hierdie gevolge is fisies, sielkundig, maatskaplik en ekonomies, maar die impak van die stigmatisering en diskriminasie wat oorlewendes ervaar affekteer hulle die ergste. Ongelukkig spreek nie die regering óf burgerlike samelewing werklik SGTV aan nie, en waar hulle dit doen is hulle optrede reaktief en nie proaktief in terme van voorkoming nie. Dit was dieselfde met die rol en invloed van kerke. Terwyl mense glo in die vermoë van kerke om ‘n kernrol te speel in die aanspreek van SGTV, doen kerke dit nie, want hulle is óók patriargale instellings. Hulle vermoë om onreg aan te spreek is beperk wanneer die oorsaak van die onreg praktyke en oortuigings is wat aan die hart lê van die godsdiens en die kerke, veral as hierdie praktyke en oortuigings verseker dat dié in beheer hulle mag behou. Deur hulle voortsetting van patriargie, dra kerke by daartoe dat SGTV gebruik word as 'n wapen en strategie van oorlogvoering.

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DEDICATION

This is for all the women who were willing to talk to me about their experiences. And for all of the women who cannot yet talk about it.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADECOP	Action des jeunes pour le Développement Communautaire et la Paix
AEE	African Evangelistic Enterprise
AEL	Association of Evangelicals of Liberia
AFDL	Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire
AFEJUCO	Association of Women Lawyers of Congo
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AFLL	Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia
AIC	African Independent Church
AIDS	Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome
AU	African Union
ASF-Congo	Avocats Sans Frontieres Congo
AVEGA	Association for Genocide Widows
CAFCO	Cadre Permanent de concertation de la Femme Congolaise
CEPAC	Pentecostal Church Organisation
CLHRE	Center for Law and Human Rights Education
CRD	Coalition for the Defence of the Republic
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECC	Église du Christ au Congo
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FAR	Forces Armés Rwandaises
FARG	Genocide Survivors Support and Assistance Fund
FAS	Femmes Afrique Solidarité
FBO	Faith-based Organisation
FDLR	Forces démocratiques de liberation du Rwanda
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender-based Violence
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
ICD	Inter-Congolese Dialogue
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
IDP	Internally-displaced Persons
IFMC	Interfaith Mediation Committee

INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
INPFL	Independent National Patriotic Front
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IVC	Ignation Volunteer Corps
JPC	Catholic Justice and Peace Commission
LCC	Liberia Council of Churches
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
LWI	Liberian Women's Initiative
MAROWOPNET	Mano River Union Women's Peace Network
MERLIN	Medical Emergency Relief International
MLC	Congo Liberation Movement
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
MONUC	Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo
MONUSCO	Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en République Démocratique du Congo
MRND	National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
MU	Mothers' Union
M23	March 23 Movement
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NMCL	National Muslim Council of Liberia
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
PEP	Post-exposure Prophylaxis
PK	Peacekeeper
PKO	Peacekeeping Operation
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
RAF	Women's Action Network
RCD	Congolese Rally for Democracy
RDIS	Rural Development Inter-Diocesan Service
REFAMP	Réseau des femmes ministers et parlementaires
RENADEF	National Network for the Defence of Women's Rights
RPA	Rwandan Patriotic Army
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SELF	Special Emergency Life Food Program

SGBV	Sex and Gender-based Violence
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
SVAM	Sexual Violence Against Men
SVAW	Sexual Violence Against Women
SV	Sexual Violence
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy
ULIMO-K	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy – Kromah faction
ULIMO-J	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy – Johnson faction
UN	United Nations
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNOL	United Nations Support Office in Liberia
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
VAW	Violence Against Women
WCC	World Council of Churches
WFP	World Food Programme
WIPNET	Women in Peacebuilding Network

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Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

June 2014 saw the first Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict being held in London, with 113 country delegations, 48 Foreign Ministers, over 600 country delegates, more than 100 NGOs and international partners, and film star Angelina Jolie as Summit Co-chair. It drew worldwide attention to one of the most horrific aspects of armed conflict – the sexual abuse of women (Gov.uk, 2014). Attention was focused on Syria, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic, where women are being systematically targeted to the extent that mass rape has become normalised, as it is an easily-deployable, cheap weapon of war. This is a world in which it is dangerous to be a woman (Sexual violence: where rape is the norm, 2014). Although sexual violence (SV) has always been part of armed conflict, at no time has this been as profound as now, with long-term consequences for women. While many will say this is nothing new – that sexual violence against women (SVAW) is an inevitable by-product of armed conflict – at no time has it been as extensive and brutal, or used so systematically as a planned and targeted strategy (Buss, 2009: 145-146). International law has now recognised SVAW as a crime against humanity and a genocidal crime, thereby acknowledging its seriousness (Buss, 2009:149-150). The pervasiveness of SVAW during armed conflict cannot be emphasised enough. For example, in a 2001 overview of armed conflicts of the (then) past 20 years, 51 countries from all over the world had conflict-related SV (Bastick, Grimm & Kunz, 2001:9). Focusing specifically on Africa, a 2009 study showed that, of the 27 countries in which extreme war rape during civil wars was found, 14 were African (Farr, 2009). If the world is a dangerous place in which to be female, Africa appears to be especially so.

While historically men have been the primary victims of armed conflict, the number of civilian deaths is increasing due to the predominance of civil conflicts in the modern world (Gardam & Jarvis, 2000:6). Apart from death, armed conflict affects the vulnerable and marginalised the most. Thus women, who are discriminated against and marginalised in almost every society, are disproportionately affected by armed conflict. Women are affected through the deliberate and accidental killing of civilian women, violence against women (VAW), displacement and detention, loss of family members, loss of status, negative economic effects, and little or no health care (Gardam & Jarvis, 2000: 5-43). What is arguably the most common and most destructive effect is what the recent Global Summit focused on: sexual violence.

However, it is important to realise that SVAW does not end once peace has been established. On the contrary, the post-conflict context is just as dangerous a place for women. For example, the Overseas Development Institute recently conducted research in post-conflict Liberia, focusing specifically on the effects that the SV perpetrated during war has on the country. The high levels of SV that they found were ascribed to a form of hypermasculinity that is aggressive, violent and demeaning to women (Jones, Cooper, Presler-Marshall & Walker, 2014). Horrific acts of SV are continuing, targeting younger and younger girls. Thus SV[1] is not only a problem affecting countries embroiled in conflict. It continues to thrive long after peace accords have been signed. So too does its consequences for women and girls affected by SV.

SVAW has extreme physical consequences for survivors, and can include debilitating injuries such as traumatic fistula, uterine prolapse and infertility (Vanwesenbeeck, 2008:34-35; Bartels, VanRooyen, Leaning, Scott & Kelly, 2010: 41). The psychological trauma is often far-reaching, and post-traumatic stress syndrome is just one of the many psychological disorders affecting survivors. Many survivors face stigma and discrimination from family and community members, as well as a loss in social and economic position and power, all of which means that their livelihood and well-being is compromised. Given such consequences, the next logical question is what support, if any, do these women receive, and from whom? One would expect that the state would be the main actor in attempting to curtail and deal with SVAW. However, often it is the state's own military forces responsible for such atrocities and the police often lack the capacity to deal with such crimes (Bastick *et al*., 2007:147; Farr, 2009:20). Similarly, the justice system is generally weak and unable to bring perpetrators to account. Besides this, there are considerable economic, educational and socio-cultural barriers obstructing SVAW survivors from accessing the justice system in many countries. In some countries, SV is not even recognised as a crime (Bastick *et al*., 2007:155).

All of this means that the state is rarely able to curb SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict. This has meant that the international community, particularly in the form of the United Nations (UN), has attempted to address SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict, especially through peacekeeping missions. However, while peacekeepers[2] can play a key role in preventing SVAW during armed conflict, this is a challenge that they have rarely been able to meet. On the contrary, they have often been accused (and convicted) of committing SVAW themselves. Therefore, as state security services and international security and peacekeeping bodies fail to adequately address SVAW and its consequences, it often falls on civil society organisations (CSOs) to fulfil the critical role of caring for survivors, ensuring that justice is served, and promoting prevention efforts (Bastick *et al*., 2007:169-191). This has been the case in Africa many times, where ineffective or failed states have forced civil society to perform functions that are traditionally associated with the state. If one looks at a particular sector of civil society, namely the churches, one sees that it has often stepped into the breach. For example, churches' involvement and effectiveness in development, service-delivery, peacebuilding, and promoting a democratic regime have been well-documented (Sabar-Friedman, 1997; Péclard, 1998; Pfeiffer, 2004; Ross, 2004; Taylor, 2005; Akoko & Oben, 2006; Gifford, 2008).

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[1] The term "sexual violence" or "SV" is used, as it highlights that sexual violence is also perpetrated against men and boys. However, the overwhelming majority of victims are female, and the focus of this study is on sexual violence as perpetrated against women.

[2] The term 'peacekeepers' refers to soldiers, military officers, police, development specialists, humanitarian workers and other civilians who are involved in maintaining or trying to establish peace (Bastick *et al*., 2007:169).

This leads one to assume that churches can be active agents in opposing SVAW and addressing its consequences in areas affected by armed conflict. Many African societies affected by armed conflicts are poor, agrarian societies where churches fulfil an important role in giving support, guidance and social structure to the community. Thus, churches are positioned in such a way that they are able to influence and take the lead in issues and problems with which they are not traditionally associated. It is a place where people can "work out the problems and challenges of life and society", thus benefitting not only the Christian community, but society in general (Sanneh, 2003:33).

Another reason why the churches can impact an entire society is because Christianity and Christian churches in Africa have grown tremendously in the last century (Jenkins, 2002; Sanneh, 2003). Between 1900 and 2000, the number of Christians in Africa grew from 10% to 46% of the continent's population, and it is expected that by 2025 the number of Christians in Africa will have grown to 640 million, up from an estimated 390 million in the year 2000 (Jenkins, 2006:9; Campbell, Skovdal & Gibbs, 2011:1204). This means that, in Africa, churches are a vibrant, widespread and growing sector of civil society. Added to this, in areas affected by armed conflict, churches are one of the few CSOs that keep on functioning at grassroots level. This is why Bastick *et al*. (2007:191) maintain that churches can assist in addressing security-related issues such as SVAW. Accordingly, the rationale for this study is to ascertain how African Christian churches as civil society agents deal with SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict, by looking at the causes and consequences of SVAW in such areas, the support available to women, the extent to which churches address

SVAW and those affected by it, and how effective they have been. In looking for answers to these questions, the study is interested in people's perceptions of churches.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Two key bodies of literature were consulted for this study, namely those explaining why SVAW occurs, based largely on feminist understanding thereof, and literature on the influence of religion and churches on society. This section serves merely to provide an overview of the field in which the study is situated and some of the key sources that were consulted. This is discussed in more detail in Chapters Two and Three.

The majority of feminist theorists maintain that sexual violence is not purely an act of *sexual* aggression, but rather an act that carries out the desire to prove and maintain the aggressor's power and control. In other words, satisfaction does not come from the sexual act, but from the power enacted and the abasement of the victim (Chasteen, 2001). This power relies on gender constructions of male/masculinity and female/femininity, and how power and dominance is asserted in these relations. Men and masculinity are per definition positioned as superior to and dominant in relation to women and femininity. This dominance is asserted through hegemonic masculinity, which forms the basis of a societal system – patriarchy – that supports and enforces the hegemonic ideal (Connell, 1995, 2002; Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 2002). Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices which serve to subjugate and oppress women, and thus results in gender inequality. One of the structures that uphold the patriarchal project is male violence against women, and SVAW is one form that it can take (Walby, 1986, 1990). The term 'sexual violence', rather than 'rape', is preferred, thus recognising the various forms of sexual debasement and violation that women experience. SVAW is used as a general term, denoting any kind of violence enacted through sexual means or targeting the sexuality of women (Salzman, 1998; Gardam & Jarvis, 2000).

Scholars point out that, where a woman's worth is derived from her relationships with men and her identity is constructed in relation to her sexual relationships with men, and where virginity, sexual purity, chastity and fertility are valued, sexual violence is more likely to be used as a weapon of war (Turshen, 2000; Milillo, 2006; Weitsman, 2008). When these constructs are undermined, it affects the community and culture as a whole. This creates a context in which SV is a successful tool of creating division and destroying communities and cultures. During armed conflict, SVAW can thus be used for the destruction, deconstruction and pollution of the enemy's culture; to intimidate, degrade, humiliate and torture the enemy;

to destroy community bonds; and to instil fear and quell resistance (Seifert, 1994, 1996; Meger, 2010). What the literature indicates is that SVAW is overwhelmingly used as a tool and strategy because of its social implications, and not so much because of combatants' need for sexual gratification. The social consequences of being sexually violated, which can include loss of property, rejection by husband, family and community, and even death (directly or indirectly), are used as powerful tools of coercion by enemy forces (Seifert, 1994, 1996; Ward & Marsh, 2006). Sexually violating women becomes an effective way of isolating individuals, destroying family structure, halting reproduction and humiliating men. Thus, the success of SVAW as a weapon and strategy of war depends upon the patriarchal myths of female sexual purity that paradoxically support its very practice.

Constructs of masculinity also play a role in SVAW in armed conflicts. Within the military, certain types of masculinity are expected from, and at times enforced on, all soldiers. The perpetration of SVAW can form part of this enactment of such a hegemonic masculinity, and be exacerbated where group identity is built and performed through the execution of SVAW. It can become a group custom which supports the national or group identity and cohesion, and SVAW is often used to prove heterosexuality and masculinity (Milillo, 2006; Alison, 2007; Meger, 2010). Furthermore, hegemonic masculinities within the military take on a hypermasculine form, which is characterised by violence, callous attitudes towards women, and engaging in dangerous situations. Not only is military masculinity thus conducive to SVAW, it influences civilian masculinities and patriarchy, leading to civilian societies – both during and after armed conflict – becoming hypermasculine and prone to SVAW (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984; Lwambo, 2013). Patriarchy furthermore facilitates various cultural, legal, economic and political causes for SVAW, which in turn contribute to a culture of SV in the aftermath of armed conflict (Walby, 1986, 1990; Bastick *et al*. 2007; Heinecken, 2013). Various physical, psychological, social and economic consequences affect SVAW survivors, with stigma and discrimination appearing to be particularly extreme (Hynes & Cardozo, 2000; Ward & Marsh, 2006; Bartels *et al.*, 2010).

Various interventions by national and international governments are launched in order to address SVAW. However, as state security services and international security and peacekeeping bodies fail to address SVAW and its consequences, CSOs often fulfil a critical role in caring for survivors, ensuring that justice is served, and promoting prevention efforts. One such important sector of civil society is the churches, as churches are religious institutions, and religion plays an important role in society. While Durkheim argues that religion is simply a symbolic representation of society, Weber allows religion more independence, arguing that it can be a driver of action and behaviour within society (Weber, 1930; Durkheim, 1995). This ability to drive action, Berger (1969) argues, is used to create order and stability. Added to this, Hervieu-Léger (2000) posits that religion is key to creating collectivity and cohesion. What these theorists show is that religion has several functions within society, all of which contribute to it being an important influence on people and society in general. People are aware of this, and thus see religion and religious institutions as a way to access power (Ellis & Ter Haar, 1998, 2004, 2007).

This is one of the reasons why churches in Africa are increasing. Contrary to the expectations of those who anticipated that Islam would take over on the continent, Christianity is growing in Africa, and the majority of Christians and Christian churches are now located in the global south (Jenkins, 2002, 2006; Sanneh, 2003). Defining a church as an institution of organised Christian religion with the main purpose of practicing religion allows for the broadest possible understanding of religious institutions, and avoids Eurocentric definitions and understanding. These churches have become powerful social actors in Africa (Gifford, 2004, 2008). This does not mean, however, that churches are the solution to all social ills. Civil society organisations have the tendency to duplicate the inequalities and tensions present in society (VonDoepp, 2002). Just like other institutions, churches run the risk of corruption and illegal practices. More specifically, in Africa the churches have a tendency to become ineffective in addressing injustice if they are too closely aligned with government (Hearn, 2001).

Nonetheless, in peace and reconciliation processes in various countries in Africa, churches have proven their ability to affect social transformation (Haynes, 2009). To what extent then are churches able to address the issue of sexual violence, given that they too are largely patriarchal institutions, and that certain interpretations of the Bible can in fact contribute to gender inequality (Millett, 1969; Walby, 1986, 1990; Nadar, 2004)?

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Accordingly, the research aim of this study is to establish: “What are the causes and consequences of SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict, and how are African Christian churches addressing these issues?”

In order to answer this question, the following three research objectives are set:

1. To determine the reasons for SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict, the consequences for women, and the support available to them.

2. To determine how churches as civil society agents address the issue of SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict.
3. To assess the ability of churches to address SVAW and its consequences in areas affected by armed conflict.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative approach[3], for the reason that this approach provides rich, deep data that gives contextual understanding, and allows for the investigation of complex issues (Snape & Spencer, 2003:5; Bryman, 2008: 393-394). A case study design using multiple cases was selected, for it allows for multiple perspectives and sources of evidence, and their integration, as well as for in-depth understanding of the issue that is being studied (Lewis, 2003:52; Yin, 2009:18). The three country case studies chosen were the DRC, Rwanda and Liberia, as they share many similar elements, but at the same time demonstrate decisive differences.

The research itself was conducted over a period of four months in 2010, and was done with the financial and infrastructural support of Tearfund and its partner organisations.[4] In each country, research was done at two different sites, one rural and one urban. In each community, 15 people were interviewed using a structured interview questionnaire, five semi-structured interviews were done with SV survivors, semi-structured interviews were done with between eight and 15 leaders, and one nominal group with between eight and 12 participants was conducted. Purposive sampling was used in the selection of the research participants. Various measures were implemented to compensate for the sample bias that inevitably resulted from the site locations and participant selection. While the researcher conducted all of the individual and group sessions, an interpreter was used in all three countries, although in Liberia this was only required in approximately a third of the sessions.

The analysis of the data was done in an inductive manner, as the key themes and issues were identified by doing a thematic analysis of the data itself. Partial transcription of all of the sessions was done, and imported into ATLAS.ti and coded. ATLAS.ti functionality was used to provide output that could be synthesised and coded as themes and subthemes.

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[3] The research methodology is described in detail in Chapter 4.

[4] Tearfund is a relief and development charity which is active across the world. It works in partnership with Christian agencies and churches, and has a strong belief in the ability of the local church to bring change and transform lives (Tearfund, 2011). Tearfund funded the original project, and a report was written based on the findings. However, it only reported on the findings, and did not analyse the data in-depth. Tearfund granted permission for the data to be used for this study.

Lastly, the research project applied for and received ethical clearance from the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee: Human (Non-Health) in South Africa. The stipulations of the clearance were strictly adhered to throughout the research process.

1.5 KEY CONCEPTS OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 Survivor

In this study, the term ‘survivor’ is used to refer to those who experienced SVAW, rather than the term ‘victim’. This is to recognise that those who experience SVAW retain their sense of agency, and are not defined by their positioning in a sexually violent act. The term ‘victim’ is only used to refer to those who experienced SVAW and did not physically survive the experience.

1.5.2 Sexual violence against women

Sexual violence against women is abbreviated with the acronym “SVAW”, and is defined as denoting any kind of violence enacted through sexual means or targeting the sexuality of women (Bassiouni & McCormick, in Salzman, 1998:348). This kind of violence includes the following acts (Gardam & Jarvis, 2000:12-13): penetration of the vagina or anus with any foreign object; forced vaginal, anal or oral sex; forced sexual intercourse or other sexual acts with family members; the cutting or mutilation of sexual parts; forced marriage/cohabitation; forced impregnation; forced abortion; forced sterilisation; sexual humiliation; medical experimentation on women’s sexual and reproductive organs; forced prostitution; coercive sex (such as sexual favours in return for essential services/items); trafficking in women; and pornography.

1.5.3 Church/churches

In this study, a church is defined as an institution of organised Christian religion with the main purpose of practising religion. This allows for the broadest possible understanding of religious institution, and avoids Eurocentric definitions and understanding. It should be noted, though, that the study consistently refers to “churches” instead of “church”. For example, “In Africa, churches are powerful institutions”, rather than “In Africa, the church is a powerful institution”. This is done as a way of recognising and emphasising the fact that that there are many different types of churches in Africa, with widely differing principles, practices and organisational structures.

1.5.4 Civil society

While recognising that the definition of civil society is a contested issue (Hearn, 2001:43), the definition of Gordon White (in Hassim & Gouws, 2000:125) is used in this study, as it is inclusive and allows for the diversity of organisations that are found within civil society. Civil society is:

> (*A*)*n intermediate associational realm between state and family populated by organisations which are separate from the state, enjoy autonomy in relation to the state and are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extend their interests or values.*

1.5.5 Husband

The term 'husband' is often used in this study. However, it denotes the male partner in any heterosexual, long-term relationship, irrespective of whether the two partners are in a legal or a customary marriage, or are officially married at all. Within the three countries studied, such a broad, fluid understanding of the term was necessary.

1.5.6 Soldier

In this study the term 'soldier' is used to denote any military fighter, and is used interchangeably with 'combatant' and 'fighter'. In the same way the term 'military' is used to refer to any form of fighting faction and not only the official army of a state.

1.6 CHAPTER PROFILE

The study is structured as follows. *Chapter One* gives the background to the study, and explains why sexual violence during armed conflict is discussed in relation to churches. The research questions of the study are defined, the methods employed in data collection are alluded to, and the limitations and contribution of the study are discussed.

Chapter Two focuses on SVAW. The way men and women are socially understood and constructed are discussed as a background to understanding how gender constructs are related to power, and benefit men at the expense of women. The important concepts of patriarchy and hypermasculinity are examined, and this leads towards VAW, especially SVAW, which is unpacked with a specific focus on the causes of SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict. Lastly, the effects and consequences of SVAW are discussed, with specific reference to the effect that stigma and discrimination has.

In *Chapter Three,* the focus is on churches as civil society agents. The role of religion in society is explored by using noted theories from the sociology of religion, after which the relationship between religion and power is explored by focusing on religion specifically in Africa. The way society and culture influences and reflects religion, and vice versa, is highlighted. Thereafter, the focus is on churches as CSOs, and the roles and limitations of these CSOs are unpacked. By focusing on two areas that are of specific relevance to the study – peace and reconciliation processes, and gender inequality – the ability and inability of churches to address SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict are explored, and a tentative hypothesis developed for why this is the case.

Chapter Four provides a detailed explanation of the research methodology used during the fieldwork. The use of a qualitative approach is justified, as is the use of a case study design using multiple cases. The reasons for using the DRC, Rwanda and Liberia as case studies are explained, after which an overview is given of the research conducted in 2010. The selection technique, data collection techniques, and the methods employed in data analyses are discussed. Lastly, the implications of using an interpreter are highlighted, followed by the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter Two and Three provide the theoretical framework for the study. *Chapters Five, Six and Seven* are country case studies of the DRC, Rwanda and Liberia. In each chapter, the background to the armed conflict is discussed, with a specific focus on the causes, nature and consequences of SVAW, as reflected in the literature. The findings of the empirical research are then unpacked: firstly, SVAW and its consequences for women; secondly, the contributing and facilitating factors; thirdly, the support available to survivors and women in general, and interventions to address SVAW; and lastly, the ways in which churches are addressing SVAW.

In *Chapter Eight,* the combined findings of the respective case studies are evaluated in-depth. The discussion within Chapter Eight is organised around the three research objectives identified in this chapter, with the literature and findings integrated in order to enable interpretation of the findings, as well as deductions.

1.7 LIMITATIONS

This study carries with it certain limitations. The main limitation with respect to the literature review is that very little research has been done on the role of churches in addressing SVAW, specifically within the African context. Most of the literature on the role of churches in addressing SVAW is written from a theological, and not from a sociological, perspective. This means that many of the texts theologically philosophise on churches and what their role in society and SVAW should be based on Biblical interpretations, and do not critically engage with the actual state-of-events on the ground.

Another possible limitation is that perpetrators did not participate in this study (as far as the researcher is aware). The question of why perpetrators commit sexually violent offences, and the perceptions, beliefs and motivations that drive such behaviour, is important in looking at the issue of SVAW. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to look at this issue in depth and it was therefore decided not to specifically interview perpetrators.

Furthermore, while some of the participants were church leaders, church leaders as a group did not have any special representation in this study. While this could be seen as a limitation, this was done on purpose, so as to ensure that *people's* perceptions of churches' involvement in addressing SVAW is focused on, and not church leaders' perceptions. .

In terms of the fieldwork, interpreters had to be used in each of the countries, although an interpreter was only necessary in a third of the sessions done in Liberia. Thus, it is possible that miscommunication or incorrect translation could have taken place. The researcher implemented measures to counter such possibilities, by training the interpreter before work in each country commenced. Thus, each interpreter was well-versed in the data collection tools, as well as the importance of accurate translation.

The problem of generalisability gives rise to a further possible limitation. The case study method is often criticised because of the fact that findings from case studies are not generalisable beyond the immediate context of the case study. This limitation is recognised here, although it is partly overcome in two ways. Firstly, a multiple-case study design is used in this study, which ensures that findings are more generalisable. Secondly, with case studies an investigator attempts to generalise a particular set of results to some broader theory (Yin, 2009:43-44). With case studies, support for theories is developed, and these theories are (more) generalisable. Thus, though the immediate findings of the case studies might not be generalisable, the underlying theories that they support can be.

This study does not differentiate between different Christian churches, but uses the term as a very general category. While acknowledging that the various African churches may approach and respond to SVAW differently, this study did not differentiate between the individual churches' responses and attitudes, but decided to rather focus on how churches, as institutionalised Christianity, respond to SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict as a whole. While conducting the fieldwork, differences between the churches' response to SVAW did not surface in any of the conversations. Hence, one can assume that the different churches are quite similar in the way they respond to SVAW.

Lastly, this study represents an act of double-interpretation. The researcher creates space for the participants to voice their views of SVAW and churches. These are the participants' interpretations of SVAW and its impact, and the role, attitude and actions of churches. The researcher then interpreted the participants' comments and opinions of SVAW and its impact, and the role, attitude and actions of churches. Interpretations are not always accurate portrayals of reality, and such an act of double interpretation increases the risk of inaccuracy. However, this was deemed a necessary risk, as it was seen as more important to give the research participants their own voice in the study.

1.8 VALUE OF THE STUDY

At the moment, no research exists that looks specifically at the role of African churches in addressing SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict. While there are plenty of studies focusing on SVAW and on SVAW in armed conflict, there is little research that focuses specifically and extensively on the role of *churches* in dealing with SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict in Africa. Thus, this study attempts to fill this void, by adding to the body of knowledge on this topic, which has largely been ignored by scholars, and is presently under-researched.

Chapter 2

Sexual violence against women

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Although not unique to Africa, SVAW is particularly endemic in African armed conflicts. For example, Bastick *et al.* (2007) identified 20 African countries where SVAW formed part of the armed conflict. Similarly, a more recent study by Farr (2009) on extreme war rape in modern civil wars showed that out of 27 civil wars in which this phenomenon occurs/occurred, 14 are in African countries. The abuse of women in areas affected by armed conflict is now evoking international concern due to the horrific number of rapes in countries like the DRC (SAPA, 2010). However, addressing this is a complex matter, as it differs in form and is not present to the same extent in all armed conflicts. In fact, the foundation is laid by society and how community members behave in everyday life during times of peace. Cultures and communities create the way men and women are understood, how power relations are defined, and how these constructions are used to justify SVAW during armed conflict.

In order to understand the role of African Christian churches in dealing with SVAW during and after armed conflict, it is important to have a thorough understanding of the phenomenon of SVAW, both during armed conflict and in times of peace. In the first section, the concepts that are central to a discussion of SVAW during and after armed conflict are identified. Secondly, the various feminist theories that inform the debates on VAW and SVAW are examined. The third section examines SVAW during and after armed conflict, and the various factors that contribute to the phenomenon and its consequences. In the last section of this chapter, the different existing SVAW interventions are discussed.

2.2 DEFINING GENDER RELATIONS

Theories on gender and SV are greatly indebted to feminism, and it is therefore deemed appropriate to start this discussion with a brief look at the three feminist positions that have dominated within the twentieth century, namely liberal feminism, radical feminism, and socialist feminism. While radical feminism provides much of the theoretical underpinning of this chapter's exploration of SVAW, all three contribute in establishing the theoretical background for understanding the phenomenon of SVAW. While they all recognise systematic gender inequality within society, they differ somewhat in explaining why this inequality exists and how it should be countered, and it is these different stances that are of value to this study.

Liberal feminism, relying on such authors as Mary Wollstonecraft (1989), John Stuart Mill (1978), and Betty Friedan (1963), tends to emphasise the importance and ability of the individual, by calling on women to establish and maintain their equality through their own behaviour and choices (Tong, 1998: 12, 32). In other words, individual women are expected to liberate themselves from the restrictive gender roles they are bound by, and to do so within the existing societal structures and systems (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013:106). While recognising that both men and women are limited by gender roles, liberal feminists nevertheless argue that the de facto discrimination that men face is much less systematic than what women are exposed to. Classical liberal feminists argue that eliminating discriminatory laws and policies is all that is needed to counter this phenomenon and establish gender equality, while welfare liberal feminists believe that practices such as preferential hiring or reverse discrimination should be used until women have actual equality with men. Both these approaches, however, emphasise the importance of legal remedies and liberal feminists are credited for most of the educational and legal reforms that have improved women's lives (Mill, 1978: 99-100; Tong, 1998:44).

Radical feminists, on the other hand, argue that such reforms are not enough to establish gender equality. Within existing gender roles men as a class benefit, and women as a class are marginalised, and the majority of radical feminists argue that the oppression of women is the most fundamental form of oppression existing within society (Firestone, 1970: 1-15; Bunch, 1978:137; Rowland & Klein, 1997:11). Consciousness-raising groups – a process where women are gathered in a group setting to share and analyse their experiences – are the key way through which radical feminism develops its theories and perspectives, for it is seen as the primary way in which women's condition can and should be understood, by allowing information and insight into women's oppression to unfold and in turn inform the women in the group (Willis, 1984:94). However, radical feminism has been accused of representing white and middle-class issues and perspectives, as it has an overwhelmingly white, middle-class support base (Willis, 1984:95).

Radical feminism argues that the gender roles that oppress women did not just happen to come into being, but were and are established in order to serve the patriarchal system, and therefore women cannot achieve equality within the existing patriarchal societal systems. Thus radical feminist authors such as Shulamith Firestone (1970), Jill Johnston (1973) and Ellen Willis (1984) argue that the abolishment of patriarchy is needed (Rowland & Klein, 1997:11,12). However, radical feminists differ on what they see as the key drivers behind patriarchy, and how it should be eliminated. For example, radical feminists such as Andrea

Dworkin (1974, 1981) argue that male violence is the root of patriarchy (and these theories on male violence is of much value to this study, as this chapter will show), while others, such as Firestone (1970), argue that the sex/gender system is the key problem. Different strands within radical feminism also differ on how patriarchy should be eliminated. Radical-libertarian feminists[5] argue that the sex/gender system must be abolished, thus allowing people to become more androgynous by embracing both masculine and feminine qualities and roles, and thus transforming society into one where men and women have no significant differences (Tong, 1998:47). To achieve this practically speaking, some radical-libertarian feminists, such as Firestone (1970), argue that a biological and social revolution is needed, where artificial reproduction then replaces natural reproduction. Freeing women from their gender roles at the level of biology will lead to women being able to resist the constructed gender roles of passivity, vulnerability, etc., and enable them to embrace whichever feminine and masculine traits and behaviours that they choose. Radical-cultural feminists, on the other hand, reject the idea of androgyny, instead choosing to affirm women's 'femaleness', for they believe that it is better to be female than male. Some radical-cultural feminists strive for separatism (women organising independently from male society), as is exemplified by Mary Daly (1973, 1978, 1984), who embraces a position of radical lesbian feminist separatism, based on the belief that women can only destroy the patriarchal stronghold by avoiding and separating themselves from men. Others, such as Dworkin (2000) and Phyllis Chesler (2005), have argued that women should govern societies of women and men (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013:105).

Socialist feminism, like radical feminism, recognises the key role that patriarchy plays in women's oppression, but argues that the role of capitalism should not be ignored. Alison Jaggar (1983:134) explains that socialist feminists believe that a woman's life is "shaped by her sex and gender assignment from birth to death. Equally, however, they believe that an individual's experiences are shaped by her class, race and nationality". Unlike Marxist feminism, socialist feminism does not argue that women's oppression is solely due to the capitalist system, for socialist feminists, including Juliet Mitchell (1978), Gayle Rubin (1978) and Sheila Rowbotham (1973), do not believe that gender equality will automatically result once class oppression has been abolished. Nevertheless, socialist feminists generally continue to argue that capitalism plays the definitive role in women's oppression. While sexism has existed throughout history, within a capitalist society "(c)apitalism determines the particular forms of sexism... The subjugation of women contributes to capitalists' domination of society" (C.P Gilman Chapter of the New American Movement, 1978: 140). Regardless of the primary importance attached to capitalism, most socialist feminists continue to focus extensively on the ways gender and class combine to ensure particular forms of privilege and oppression (Mitchell, 1978:142-143).

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[5] Rosemarie Putnam Tong's (1998) differentiation and terminology are used here.

As will become clear in the following sections, this study relies heavily on radical feminist explanations of gender, power, and violence. However, liberal and socialist feminism both introduce valuable ideas for this study. Liberal feminism's emphasis on the importance of legal and educational reform is important, for these reforms create spaces within which women can escape inequality and oppression. Socialist feminism highlights the interaction between class and gender, which serves to explain how oppression can take on different forms within different classes. However, the fact that all three perspectives argue that gender roles are social constructs arguably serves to emphasise the importance of this viewpoint, and it is thus discussed in detail in the next section.

2.2.1 Constructing gender identity

The term 'gender' was appropriated by feminists in the 1960s and is used to differentiate between biological and cultural (or social) constructs of 'man' and 'woman'. With the introduction of 'gender', 'sex' was then used to refer to men and women based on their biological features, such as genitalia, chromosomes and so forth; while 'gender' was used to refer to social factors, such as behaviour, social role, and position within society (Mikkola, 2009:10). Making such a distinction between sex and gender allows one to argue that a person's biological nature does not inherently presuppose a certain social position and standardised behaviour.

The sex/gender distinction highlights that gender is socially and culturally constructed, and influenced by larger socioeconomic, cultural, and religious processes. In addition, men and women also 'produce' gender through their ideas and actions, in response to these socioeconomic, cultural and religious processes and structures (Miescher & Lindsay, 2003:2; 7). However, there has been criticism of the sex/gender distinction, some claiming that one needs to look at both biological and social factors in the analysis of what makes a man or a woman (Mikkola, 2009). For the purposes of this study, it is necessary to establish how society determines the roles and positions of women. Thus, the distinction between sex and gender will be very useful.

A potential weakness in discussing the role and position of women is the risk of essentialism.[6] Women are not a homogenous group and those that treat women as such are often ridiculed for failing to acknowledge the different positions and experiences of different women (Alison, 2007:84). This study can therefore be criticised for being essentialist, as it refers to women, and specifically African women, as a category. However, it is argued that this category – African women – in the context of this study have enough in common in terms of their position in society, culture and experiences of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) to be discussed as a group. They are African, affected by armed conflict and SVAW, and situated in patriarchal societies, and are thus discussed as a homogenous group. However, particularities of culture, context and history are taken into consideration in the discussion of the various case studies.

The sex/gender distinction allows us to realise that the way women are positioned and perceived within society is a construct, and not an inherent, natural state of being. One sees that, historically, women have been viewed as key repositories, guardians and transmitters of the culture of the particular society in which they find themselves:

> Women represent reproduction of the community. Women usually are the primary caregivers in the family and therefore the earliest inculcators of culture in the child. Through their clothing and demeanor, women and girls become visible and vulnerable embodiments of cultural symbols and codes (Rao, 1995:169).

This leads to culture governing women's lives in symbolic as well as real ways (Rao, 1995:169). As changes in the status, role, and activities of women run the risk of destabilising a community's culture, there is often strong resistance to endeavours that may change the position of women in society. Attempts at addressing cultural practices that subjugate women therefore risk disturbing the community's culture, and are often vehemently resisted by men (and often women too), meaning that women's rights and empowerment are neglected 'for the benefit of society'. This is why Arati Rao (1995:169) states that "(n)o social group has suffered greater violation of its human rights in the name of culture than women". When culture and gender equality clash, it seems that gender equality often gives way, and in doing so allows cultural justification for women's rights abuses. Furthermore, the fight for gender equality tends to consistently take a back seat in contexts of multiple oppressions. Other struggles, such as racial discrimination or colonial oppression, are prioritised. In such a situation of compartmentalised struggles for freedom, women's rights are often left by the wayside (Rao, 1995:172).

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[6] Essentialism in relation to women refers to the belief that there are certain inherent properties common to all women and which all women share (Stone, 2004:135), and this belief contributes to the stereotyping of fixed identities (Willett, 2010:145). As such it potentially ignores "significant structural inequalities between [women], perpetuating the values and agenda of the most powerful against the least powerful" (Lloyd, in Alison, 2007:84).

The human rights of women can also be undermined by advocates of cultural relativism, who demand recognition for cultural particularism. Those in support of cultural universalism, on the other hand, claim that outsiders can legitimately judge the cultural practices and beliefs of other communities and demand that, where necessary, such practices and beliefs be reformed. The basis for this right to criticise is shared humanity, and the international community thus creates the standards by which all communities are judged. While cultural relativists are criticised for perpetuating beliefs and practices that undermine the rights of women, cultural universalism is criticised as being insensitive and ethnocentric, resulting in cultural imperialism (Mayer, 1995:176).

In studying the causes and consequences of gender violence, one has to take both positions into consideration. However, this study tends to adopt a cultural universalism position, as this enables one to engage with female oppression through culture and cultural constructs in a general way that allows for comparison, but does not necessarily mean that the particularities of an individual culture are ignored. On the contrary, within the context of investigating women's position and rights, the unique nature of a culture is focused on. Culture plays a critical role in the construction of both women and femininity *and* men and masculinity. Masculinity and femininity are created and evolve within social settings, as Mimi Schippers (2007:93) explains:

> …(M)asculinity and femininity are (not) static roles or a fixed set of behaviors that women and men adopt. Instead, the characteristics and practices defined as womanly and manly are constituted through the proliferation of a network of cross-cutting, sometimes contradicting discourses. The production, proliferation, and contestation of the quality of content of masculinity and femininity are ongoing, dynamic social processes…

Though masculinity and femininity take on evolving, changing forms, and different masculinities and femininities exist, certain general characteristics that are true of most cultures and societies can be identified (Walby, 1990:93). Femininity is generally understood to include physical vulnerability, the desire to be the object of masculine desire, the inability to use violent means effectively, and compliance (Schippers, 2007:91; 96). Traditionally, feminine traits include (for example) subservience, submissiveness, selflessness, being caring and being nurturing (Boonzaaier & De la Rey, 2004:454). Pumla Gqola calls these traditional notions a “cult of femininity”, that binds and restricts women to very limited notions of femininity and upholds male domination and power in virtually all societies (Gqola, 2007:116).

This highlights a key characteristic of masculinity and femininity: they exist relationally, with masculinity, per definition, inherently superior and dominant in relation to femininity. Masculinity exists within the structure of gender relations, and as a concept it cannot exist except by contrasting it with femininity (Connell, 1995:31, 2002:245). Masculinity is “simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture” (Connell, 1995: 33-34). Due to the relational nature of femininity and masculinity, they provide symbolic justification and legitimisation for social relations that ensure the ascendancy and dominance of men. Thus, it logically follows that masculinity is understood to be, and include traits that are, opposite to femininity. Masculinity calls for specific patterns of behaviour, through which power and dominance is asserted (Krienert, 2003). These include desire for the feminine object, physical strength, authority, and the ability to use violence effectively (Schippers, 2007:91-94).

As a result of masculinities coming into existence and developing at specific times and places, and changing and being changeable, there are multiple masculinities – multiple ways of being a man – even within one cultural and societal context (Connell, 2002:245). These masculinities, though, do not exist in isolation to each other. They are of a relational character and affect each other. How this happens, and its effects on women and understandings of femininity, are discussed in the next section on gender constructs and power.

2.2.2 Gender constructs and power

Men and women are constructed differently in relation to power, and power is a key feature of the relationship between men and women (Messerschmidt, 1993:71). Feminist theory argues that there is an inherent power imbalance present within society, favouring men at the cost of women, and this power is enacted at institutional and interpersonal level (Messerschmidt, 1993:72; Antai, 2011:2). While there are different types of masculinities, what all masculinities have in common is power. The most significant form of masculinity is what has been referred to by Connell (1995:38) as hegemonic masculinity.[7] Hegemonic masculinity is what allows and facilitates male dominance over women. When it is embodied over space and time by at least some of the men within a society, it legitimates men's domination over women as a group (Schippers, 2007:87). However, as hegemonic masculinity is the form of masculinity that all the other forms of masculinity are subordinate to, it is not only women that are oppressed by hegemonic masculinity, but also other men. Certain groups of men are oppressed due to hegemonic masculinity being based on acceptance of certain constructs, such as heterosexuality (Messerschmidt, 1993:72; Carrigan, *et al.*, 2002:110). For example, the most visible form of subordinated masculinity in the Western world is that of homosexual masculinity (Connell, 1995:39-40).

Within different societies, hegemonic masculinity can take on different forms. Any type of masculinity can lay a claim to hegemony, but a form of masculinity is most likely to establish itself as hegemonic within a society if it has some form of relation to institutional power (Connell, 1995:39). For example, the masculinity displayed within the military, government or the top levels of business will find it easier to launch a successful claim to authority, and in the process establish itself as hegemonic, thus permeating from the public to the private sphere. Furthermore, the majority of men within a society need not uphold the hegemonic model of masculinity. There need only be a few such visible 'masculine ideals', which can even be fictional figures such as film characters (Connell, 1995:39). Yet most men benefit from this hegemonic form, as it institutionalises and entrenches the subordination of all women, which benefits all men (Carrigan *et al.*, 2002:112-113). Hegemonic masculinity thus establishes and enforces the power that all men have over all women. Complicit and marginalised masculinities[8] might not embody the hegemonic ideal, but they still benefit from the hegemonic project (Connell, 1995:40-41).

Even though there may be cases of women in positions of authority, it does not negate the reality of the overall unequal relationship between men and women (Carrigan *et al.,* 2002:111). In the past few decades, there have been attempts to address this imbalance by mainstreaming gender in any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes in all areas and at all levels. In essence, gender mainstreaming refers to a process in which the experiences and concerns of both men and women are taken into account, to address the power imbalance between men and women.[9] The goal of gender mainstreaming is thus to achieve gender equality, but realising these goals is difficult, especially in patriarchal societies in Africa. While masculinity is something that is 'done' within social situations, in the process of constructing masculinity, men create and reproduce social structures (Messerschmidt, 1993:80). Hegemonic masculinity creates a social system – patriarchy – that supports and enforces the hegemonic ideal. This system supports, facilitates and enforces gender inequality, and has proven to be impossible to eradicate.

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[7] Connell originally defined hegemonic masculinity as "the form of masculinity in a given historical and society-wide setting that structures and legitimates hierarchical gender relations between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among men" (Messerschmidt, 2012:35). In response to legitimate critique of this definition, Connell and Messerschmidt have reformulated it in appropriate ways. Nevertheless, in these reformulations the idea of masculinity, femininity and non-hegemonic masculinity being in a hegemonic relationship (not a pattern of simple domination) has been retained (Messerschmidt, 2012: 35).

[8] Complicit masculinities are masculinities that are "constructed in ways that realize the patriarchal dividend, without the tensions or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy" (Connell, 1995:42). Marginalised masculinities are the masculinities of subordinate classes or ethnic groups (Connell, 1995:42).

Sylvia Walby (1990:20) defines patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women". It is present in both the private and public sphere. Walby identifies private patriarchy as being practised through exclusionary tactics within the household, while public patriarchy is in public sites such as the state and employment, and enforced through segregationist and subordinating practices (Walby, 1990: 24, 178). Addrienne Rich's definition (in Puechguirbal, 2010:172) draws attention to patriarchy's pervasiveness and the manner in which it functions on and is supported by all levels and activities of society:

> Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men – by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male.

While radical feminists argue that gender inequality is solely a result of patriarchy, Walby argues that gender inequality results from the intersection between patriarchy, capitalism and racism (Walby, 1986:69). Though appreciative of Walby's highlighting of the fact that gender inequality is the result of a combination and interaction of factors, one can still argue that, especially in traditional rural Africa, gender inequality is most greatly facilitated by and promoted through patriarchy. Walby in fact acknowledges this, by stating towards the end of *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990:177) that "…the different aspects of gender inequality are sufficiently interrelated to be understood in terms of a system of patriarchy". Patriarchy supports and facilitates gender inequality by limiting women's ability and opportunities to fully participate in all areas of society, using institutional, social, economic, psychological and historical means. In different societies, though, it does this in different ways as patriarchy takes on different forms within different societies, and at different times (Walby, 1990; Kandiyoti, 1988).

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[9] Gender mainstreaming can be defined as

> the process of assessing the implication for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes, in all area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (UN documentation, in Willett, 2010:148).

This means that it has different consequences for women within these different contexts, and also that ways of passive or active resistance and/or overthrowing of patriarchy can take on different forms. Nevertheless, what patriarchy has in common in all contexts is that it empowers men, subjugates women, and creates and reinforces female stereotypes that enforce and promote certain ways of behaviour as being appropriate for women. This impacts the occupations and social roles that women strive for and are allowed to inhabit (Buckley, 1986:4). This is why radical feminism has been so critical of patriarchy, calling for fundamental change in those structures of society that are embedded in patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. Its pervasiveness and its consequences for women are of such an alarming nature that it is seen as something that has to be dismantled, as women's insecurity and inequality cannot be addressed if the root cause (patriarchy) is not eliminated (Heinecken, 2013:131).

What is important to realise is that different factors, or substructures within society, interact to ensure the dominance and pervasiveness of patriarchy. For example, Walby (1990: 177) argues that there are six key patriarchal structures (paid employment, household production, culture, sexuality, violence and the state), while Kate Millett sees patriarchy as the result of ideological, biological, sociological, class, economic and educational, force, anthropological (myth and religion), and psychological factors (Millett, 1969:35-81). While the patriarchal nature of these structures are discussed in more detail later in this chapter, it is worthwhile noting the following now. Firstly, both Walby and Millett identify religion as a patriarchal structure (although Walby does not see it as one of the six key patriarchal structures). Secondly, both see violence as a key patriarchal structure, as expanded on below.

2.3 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

2.3.1. Explaining violence

The gendered constructs of men and women are inherently linked with power imbalances that have the potential to generate violence, as power is intimately linked to the potential for violence. By enacting masculinity, men are constantly asserting power and dominance. Male violence is one such way in which the status of the male group and identity can be asserted (Krienert, 2003). James Messerschmidt (1993:85) argues that criminal behaviour by men is a result of other ways of enacting masculinity not being available to them. Violence against women is such a form of criminal behaviour that serves to affirm masculinity, and it is resorted to also in the private sphere. Messerschmidt (1993:149) discusses, for example, how wife battering and rape is used as a way to assert masculinity in the face of unemployment or low occupational status. As the willingness and ability to use violence are related to some forms of masculinity, it is often resorted to when more acceptable, traditional displays of masculinity (such as steady employment and a good salary) are unavailable (Krienert, 2003).

It inevitably follows that patriarchy also shares this propensity for violence. Walby identifies male violence against women as a patriarchal structure, one that is facilitated by other patriarchal structures. For example, women's weak economic position (due the patriarchal structures of paid employment and household production) means that they are often unable to avoid and/or leave violent relationships (Walby, 1986:65). The effectiveness and effect of male violence is also interlinked with state refusal to properly intervene in the matter (Walby, 1990:143). This will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Nevertheless, violence remains "a form of power over women in its own right" and is thus a key way in which patriarchy is enacted and enforced (Walby, 1990: 143). As such, male violence against women serves to support and sustain other patriarchal structures such as culture.

According to many feminists, patriarchy is the principal cause of violent societal conflicts, and explains why it is so difficult to provide long-term solutions and resolutions to these violent conflicts (Enloe, in Puechguirbal, 2010:179). As patriarchy upholds the power of men, interventions and resolutions that challenge and change patriarchal institutions and societies are often not embraced. Where patriarchy dominates and where women are subordinate to men, VAW is more likely and prevalent, especially in contexts where women fear the use of violent means by men. Under such circumstances, men are able to control women's behaviour and maintain control of social institutions. Not all women have to experience violence for this process to continue, they need only fear violence. It is this "culture of fear that secures men's control over women" (Yodanis, 2004:656-658).

However, as Messerschmidt (1993) makes clear, one must not lose sight of the role that class can play in VAW. He discusses how different classes of male youth resort to different forms of crime as a way on enacting masculinity. While he identifies white working-class boys as enacting masculinity through physical aggression, it is lower working-class boys from minority ethnic groups that he typifies as resorting to violence, and particularly rape, as a way of asserting masculinity and control over women. While he can justly be accused of racial stereotyping, he nevertheless highlights that class has an impact on whether, and how, men use VAW. This resonates with Marxist feminist perspectives that see capitalism as the main source for women's oppression within society (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013:106). However, while recognising that class can impact the use of VAW, feminist theories of patriarchy arguably offer a more comprehensive explanation for the existence and use of VAW, and especially SVAW.

Sexual violence against women, as a particular form of VAW, is an enactment of power through violence. Feminist theory constructs SV as an act of violence, rather than sex (Chasteen, 2001:106). Originally, sociobiological arguments were used to suggest that all men innately use their dominant position and sexual power to dominate women. Susan Brownmiller (1975:15), in her seminal feminist text on rape, contextualized male genitalia as a weapon and the rape of women by men as a "conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear". The majority of feminist theorists, however, maintain that SV is not purely an act of *sexual* aggression, but an act that carries out the desire to prove and maintain the aggressor's power and control. Joshua Goldstein goes so far as to call it "a crime of domination" (Goldstein, 2001:363). In other words, satisfaction does not come from the sexual act, but from the power enacted, and the abasement of the victim (Seifert, 1994, 1996; Milillo, 2006). While these feminists focus on gender and power, other feminist perspectives focus on the cultural, contextual, developmental, personality and dyadic factors and their relation to SV. What all these feminist theories have in common, though, is recognition of the fact that SV is inherently multidimensional (Zeedyk, 2007:71).

There have been counters to feminist explanations of VAW and SVAW. Evolutionary theory, for example, argues that rape is a result of biological desire for sex and that it is a reproductive strategy that serves an evolutionary function (Zeedyk, 2007:69). However, the value of feminist theories on SV is supported by the fact that it has been largely due to the efforts of feminists and feminist theorists that SVAW is being addressed as a social problem (Chasteen, 2001:102). Feminists have not only brought this issue into the public and political domain, but have "challenged traditional assumptions about rape's prevalence, causes, and consequences and provided an alternative framework for defining and interpreting sexual violence" (Chasteen, 2001:102). For example, Peggy Reeves Sanday's 1981 study of tribal societies showed that rape-free societies have higher sexual equality (Zurbriggen, 2010:540). Even when men and women have different roles and rights, there is more gender equality within these rape-free societies (Yodanis, 2004:659). In contrast, where the status and power of women is low, SVAW is higher. For example, the educational and occupational status of women within a country is strongly related to the frequency of SVAW, as a study of Western industrialised nations has shown (Yodanis, 2004).

Thus VAW should be understood within the framework of patriarchy, the masculinities supported by patriarchy, and the gender inequality that is to a large extent a result of patriarchy. This is also the case with a particular form of VAW, namely sexual violence against women.

2.3.2 Defining sexual violence

This study focuses on SVAW within the context of armed conflict. The emphasis is on sexual violence, rather than (only) rape as "(r)ape denotes vaginal, oral, or anal sexual intercourse without the consent of one of the people involved" (Bassiouni & McCormick, in Salzman, 1998:348). To focus only on rape ignores and devalues the sexual debasement and violation that many women in areas affected by armed conflict experience. Hence the term 'sexual violence', rather than 'rape', is the preferred term. Sexual violence against women is defined as denoting any kind of violence enacted through sexual means or targeting the sexuality of women (Bassiouni & McCormick, in Salzman, 1998:348). This kind of violence includes the following acts (Gardam & Jarvis, 2000:12-13): penetration of the vagina or anus with any foreign object; forced vaginal, anal or oral sex; forced sexual intercourse or other sexual acts with family members; the cutting or mutilation of sexual parts; forced marriage/cohabitation; forced impregnation and/or pregnancy; forced abortion; forced sterilisation; sexual humiliation; medical experimentation on women's sexual and reproductive organs; forced prostitution; coercive sex (such as sexual favours in return for essential services/items); trafficking in women; and pornography.

Feminist theory posits that the identification of an act as sexually violent is based on the opinion of the target (survivor).[10] In cases of SVAW, it is thus the women's interpretation of the act, rather than the interpretation of the aggressor, that deems it as sexually violent or not. In seeing non-consent as the decisive element in SVAW, rather than violence, feminist theory allows for a wider variety of situations to be recognised as SV. Sexual violence within a marital relationship, for example, can now be recognised as such, as SV that does not contain overt forms of physical violence are also recognised (Chasteen, 2001:106). This focus on non-consent is partly a result of the wish to counter the almost universal practice of victim-blaming. It is common for victims of SV to be (at least partly) blamed for what happened, or to be disbelieved. A central element of feminist discourse is to counter this tendency (Chasteen, 2001:109).

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[10] In this study the term 'survivor' is used to refer to those who have experienced SVAW, rather than the term 'victim'. This is to recognise that those who experience SVAW retain their sense of agency and are not defined by their positioning in a sexually violent act. The term 'victim' is only used to refer to those who experienced SVAW and did not physically survive the event.

2.4 CAUSES OF SVAW IN AREAS AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT

Sexual violence during armed conflict is an age-old phenomenon. Already in the fourteenth century European leaders forbade soldiers to commit SV, although this was rarely enforced, and SV was often regarded as a major incentive for soldiers to enlist (Schott, 2011:6). In more recent times, SV, and SVAW in particular, were viewed as an inevitable by-product of war (Salzman, 1998; Meger, 2010). However, the recent atrocities committed in Bosnia, Rwanda, the DRC, Burundi, Liberia, and Bangladesh, to name but a few, have led to SVAW being recognised as an inherent part of armed conflict – as a strategy in warfare (Card, 1996; Salzman, 1998; Skjelsbæk, 2001; Short, 2002; Hynes, 2004; Milillo, 2006; Farr, 2009). Some ascribe this to the change in the nature of warfare, which is now mostly intrastate and asymmetric/irregular, where different fighting factions vie for control over the civilian population (Ward & Marsh, 2006:3). Here, SVAW is used as a weapon of war within a systematic political campaign with specific strategic military purposes (Skjelsbæk, 2001:213). SVAW is thus inherently part of armed conflict, and in the next section the different causes and contributing factors to SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict are discussed. These include factors applicable to contexts of armed conflict, namely patriarchy and gender inequality, military masculinity and other factors, as well as factors that play a role in SVAW continuing in the aftermath of armed conflict, such as social, legal, economic and political factors. However, with all of these factors patriarchy plays a direct or indirect role, as the discussion will highlight.

2.4.1 Patriarchy and gender inequality

The way patriarchy constructs women and femininity, men and masculinity, and the relationship between men and women, is what allows SVAW to become an effective weapon of war (Donovan, 2002:18; Henry, Ward & Hirshberg, 2004:535). Civilian patriarchal structures and associated cultural practices create the context for SVAW during armed conflict (Farr, 2009:5), as reflected in the following quote:

> …(H)umankind's level of tolerance for sexual violence is not established by international tribunals after war. That baseline is established by societies, in times of peace. The rules of war can never really change as long as violent aggression against women is tolerated in everyday life (Donovan, 2002:18).

Where inequality established by patriarchal societies exists and is enacted in beliefs and practices that construct women as property, as tools of communication and as culture keepers, it contributes to women being used as an effective weapon of war. This is because in patriarchal societies a woman's worth and standing within the society is determined by her relationship to the men in her family (father, brothers, husband and sons), as women are seen as the property of men. Her value to these men is closely linked to sexual purity and sexuality, fertility and virginity (Milillo, 2006:199; Weitsman, 2008:564; Du Toit, 2009: 33-35). Many cultural practices and traditions are related to the purity of women and emphasise the importance of good (sexual) behaviour by women if they are to be respected or have self-worth (Turshen, 2000:815). It not only reflects badly on a woman if she does not adhere to these constructs of sexuality but, more importantly to her community, it reflects badly on her male family members. This emphasis on virtue and family honour serves to objectify women, as their actions and experiences are evaluated based on how it affects the men in their lives, not themselves (Turshen, 2000:816). Louise du Toit (2009:33) comments on this by highlighting how the impact of SV on women is ignored by the patriarchal denial of women's sexual subjectivity:

> The 'impossibility of rape' is moreover a *structural* impossibility: rape understood as the violent erasure of women's sexual subjectivity cannot happen because it cannot feature or appear as what it truly is, within a patriarchal symbolic order which denies and undermines women's sexual subjectivity *systematically* (emphasis in the original).

In armed conflict contexts, the fact that women are viewed in this way, namely as men's property and denied sexual subjectivity, is abused, as women's bodies are used as objects and effective weapons by aggressors to target male enemies by devaluing their women. As such, it becomes an effective way of indirectly attacking the enemy, by striking on the sensitive issues of their (male) honour and dignity.

Using SVAW as a weapon of war serves to communicate a very clear message to the enemy in various ways. As men are generally seen as the protectors of women, sexually violating an enemy's women is a way of humiliating them, demonstrating that they are weak, incapable and incompetent, thereby wounding their masculinity (Seifert, 1994:59). Sexually violating the enemy’s women also serves to devalue women, especially in cultures that rely on constructs of the sexual purity of women. It tells the enemy that their women are no longer pure and are therefore valueless. In cases of forced impregnation, reproduction is hijacked, which serves as a means to pollute the other or deconstruct a specific ethnic group. This introduces a specific power dimension into the equation by sending a clear message of their dominance to the enemy. The fact that women’s bodies can be used in this manner underscores how women become objectified (Copelon, 1995:206).

Attacking women during armed conflict is a way of fighting what Seifert (1994:62) calls a ‘dirty war’. The goal is not to defeat the enemy by vanquishing their army, but rather to defeat them by deconstructing and destroying their culture and the social fabric of society. If this is the goal, then women become a primary target due to their cultural position, role and importance in the family, community and society (Seifert, 1994:64). Sexual violence then carries significant symbolic meaning, which at times can be even more offensive and strong than actual defeat (Carreiras, 2006:43). It is “women’s roles as biological reproducers of the collectivity, reproducers of the boundaries of the collectivity and transmitters of its culture, and signifiers of ethnonational difference, [that make them] likely to be targeted in attempts to destroy a collectivity or assert dominance over it” (Alison, 2007:80). Targeting women is thus an indirect way of targeting the enemy, as the social fabric of their community is destroyed.

As caregivers, women play a central role in the family structure. They are tasked with keeping family unity, and as a whole have the most responsibility for community cohesion. When women are killed or sexually violated during armed conflict, social cohesion is thus endangered. Even those that survive SVAW are unable to function as they used to. Survivors are physically and psychologically traumatised and few can perform all their expected tasks and roles. Their inability to fulfil their practical roles, as well as their physical and emotional destitution, contributes to the upheaval and even devaluation and dissolution of the entire community (Seifert, 1996:39). The ability of the community to function properly is curtailed, as SVAW erodes the economic and social foundations of communities. Thus, targeting the body of women is a symbolic attack on the group, leading to the sexual violation of the women of a community, culture or nation being regarded as a symbolic sexual violation of the body of the community, culture or nation (Seifert, 1996:39).

What is not explained is why these acts of SVAW during armed conflict are so extremely violent and cruel. Women are subjected to mutilation, the ablation of genital organs and to severe suffering where bayonets, knives, boiling water, acid and so forth are thrust into their genital organs (Forster-Towne, 2011:38). The extreme forms that SVAW takes in certain armed conflicts leads one to believe that hate and a furious determination to destroy women has to be present, which is an attitude that is possibly promoted by the emergence of a form of hypermasculinity that appears in violent and militarised societies.

2.4.2 Military and hypermasculinities

Acts of SV during armed conflict are performed predominately by the soldiers of fighting forces, militias and rebel groups. The way the military[11] constructs men and masculinity is arguably an enabling factor for SVAW. As discussed earlier, all masculinities share the propensity for violence to a greater or lesser extent. Within military masculinity, however, violence and the willingness and ability to use it are of extreme importance (Meger, 2010:122). A key part of military training is socialisation into and acceptance of military masculinity (Zurbriggen, 2010:542). Military masculinity is an extreme form of hegemonic masculinity, due to this process of socialisation. Recruits are socialised to become soldiers that blindly obey orders and can kill. This process is so effective that they become de-individualised and desensitised, and can disassociate themselves from their deeds, which arguably facilitates extreme acts of SVAW.

Of course, different military masculinities exist within different militaries, as each is influenced by the religions, cultures and contexts represented within the group (Meger, 2010:124). While one finds an intersection of different masculinities within the military, a dominant hierarchical distinction between masculine and feminine is present in all militaries (Enloe, in Hutchings, 2008:392). It is this distinction that sustains differentiation between men and women in military ideology and life, and enforces the idea of a dominant military masculinity. The fact that a certain form of masculinity dominates military life and that combatants are socialised into this masculinity is reflected in the way (some) female combatants become ‘masculinised’ (for example, the sexual torture of Iraqi prisoners by female American soldiers at Guantanamo Bay). Even though female, these women embrace the masculine constructs of being a soldier. The “extreme kind of masculinity” ascribed to in the military is one where violence is of central importance (Borer, 2009:1170; Meger, 2010:122).

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[11] The term “military” is used to refer to any form of fighting faction and not only the official army of a state. The term “soldier” is used in the same general way to denote any military fighter. It is used interchangeably with “combatant” and “fighter”.

In discussing the relationship between masculinity and war, Hutchings (2008) argues that the concept 'masculinity' is necessary in order for war to be legitimated. Certain principles and characteristics are needed in a fighter and these are facilitated and supported by constructs of masculinity. The military devalues women and typically feminine traits, while at the same time valuing men and typically manly traits (Meger, 2010:122; Willett, 2010:147), for it promotes the needed violent agenda. This leads to a misogynist emphasis being present in many (if not all) militaries. Meger, as well as Brownmiller (1975) and Jeffreys (2007), argues that because of this, it is inevitable that militaries have a history of SV. It is a product of the glorifying of men and the masculine, and the belittling of women and the feminine, as well as of the acceptance and normalising of aggression and violence (Meger, 2010:122). The emphasis on gender differentiation, as well as on violence, leads to SV becoming a normalised form of aggression (Goldstein, 2001:284, 355, 364). As such, sexualised violence is connected with military masculinity (Rayner, in Borer, 2009:1170).

Sexual violence against women is also a result of fighters' need to prove their heterosexuality and masculinity. Sexuality is integral to masculinity, and heterosexuality is integral to hegemonic masculinity, especially within the military. Alison (2007) argues that this emphasis on heterosexuality is in contrast to the actual military life, which is overwhelmingly *homo*social. Within the military, men are allowed more intimate relationships with other men than is accepted in a civilian context (Carreiras, 2006:42). Alison argues that SVAW by soldiers can at times be a result of the need to assert their heterosexuality within a homosocial grouping whose hegemonic masculinity emphasises hetero-normativity (Alison, 2007:77). Furthermore, soldiers at times commit SV in an attempt to prove their masculinity and the masculine ideals of being a soldier. Ashamed of the terror that they feel in the face of battle, some soldiers engage in SVAW in an attempt to reassert their masculinity. In the face of feelings of frustration and powerlessness that feminise, SVAW becomes a way of boosting masculinity (Meger, 2010:128).

Furthermore, the group identity and actions that the military requires from its soldiers can be conducive to acts of SVAW. An important aspect of military culture is obedience, loyalty and commitment. This enables soldiers to function in and as a cohesive team. The military emphasises the importance of group identity and cohesion, as this ensures that soldiers are better fighters. While a person has both a personal identity and a group identity (though these can of course be the same), it has been suggested that during wartime there is a great need amongst combatants to confirm their group identity (Milillo, 2006:201). A sense of commitment and loyalty to the unit a combatant is fighting with is important during armed conflict, thus group bonding is critical:

> … it is loyalty to the small unit, not the army or the nation, that enables men to fight under the terrifying conditions of war; the bonding among members of the unit is therefore essential and usually takes gendered forms, reinforcing the militaristic masculinity advanced by military training (Wood, 2006:326).

Social identity theory argues that individuals want a positive social group identity and that, in order to create and sustain such an identity, they will engage in beliefs and behaviours that enhance the in-group's status and prestige, while discriminating against the out-group(s). Sexual violence serves as a way of affirming the power and masculinity of the in-group, while disempowering the out-group (Milillo, 2006:201). Sexual violence can also actively promote group cohesion. Claudia Forster-Towne (2011:43) argues that gang rapes or acts of sexually deviant behaviour are used to create cohesion, as a form of initiation, to toughen combatants, to make them better fighters and as a tool for integrating new members into militia. Male bonding takes place when SV is executed by combatants in succession (Goldstein, 2001:365). Where the soldier does not engage in the practice, they face being an outcast or seen as unmanly. Cohesion is in turn promoted and sustained through the joint responsibility that they carry for the act and this binds the individual even more closely to the group (Alison, 2007:77).

Typically, under these conditions group identity and ethics replaces individual identity and ethics (Meger, 2010:122). The majority of those who commit rapes during armed conflict wear some kind of uniform, and/or disguise themselves with masks or scarves. In doing so, the individual is subsumed into the collective persona and identity, and the victim is sexually violated not by an individual, but a representative of a group. This process is called dissociation or de-individuation, where the individual becomes one with a group and is freed from the norms and values that govern him as individual. In such conditions self-awareness decreases, dis-inhibition increases, and there is an increase in aggressive behaviour, especially in bigger groups (Milillo, 2006:202).

Military leaders are aware that the constructs of military masculinity can result in SVAW. However, as the individual's acceptance of the hegemonic masculinity is what allows and motivates him to engage in violence, and as strong group identity and cohesion are the keys to effective fighting, the fact that it may result in SVAW is seen as a necessary evil. In post-conflict settings such military masculinities often give rise to what has been termed a form of hypermasculinity among both civilian and military men. Donald Mosher and Mark Sirkin (1984:151) explain that the hypermasculine male, or "macho personality constellation" ascribes to three key tenets, namely calloused sexual attitudes toward women, a conception of violence as manly, and an understanding of danger as exciting. These components are supportive of the hypermasculine ideal of appearing powerful and dominant over other men, women and the environment. When men are faced with a challenge or threat to their masculine identity, many respond by reverting to hypermasculine behaviours (risk-taking, exploitative sex, and/or violence) to ward off the threat and assert their masculinity (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984:152). Unfortunately, this is extremely detrimental to women, for it results in the dehumanisation and sexual objectification of women (Koeszegi, Zedlacher & Hudribusch, 2014: 228-230). This means that within post-conflict civilian life, hypermasculinity continues to be present and lead to SVAW. This is the case in Liberia, for example, with the continued high rate of SVAW in the aftermath of the civil war. Research done by the Overseas Development Institute shows that it is due to men having become aggressive and hypermasculine during the war, and unable to revert back to less aggressive or violent masculinities (Jones *et al.,* 2014:6). Thus, post-conflict societies are left with a culture of hypermasculinity due to the influence of the military, which in turn feeds a culture of SV. The effect of military masculinity and hypermasculinity on post-conflict societies is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

2.4.3 Other factors

Besides the abovementioned conditions that are considered conducive to SVAW, there are other factors that determine whether SVAW will be present in situations of armed conflict. These include the strategic considerations of the fighting factions; the nature of the fighting group; the presence of multiple identities; armed group, small group and individual attitudes; and soldiers' need for sex. What is evident is that the causes of SVAW during armed conflict are multiple and interrelated at various levels.

The strategic considerations of the fighting factions are decisive in determining the presence of SVAW, for if group leaders decide that SVAW will be effective in achieving the required ends, it may be used. SVAW can, for example, be effective in controlling a civilian population and in quelling or discouraging resistance (Turshen, 2000:810; Ward & Marsh, 2006:4; Farr, 2009:4). In Colombia, for example, paramilitary control of some areas often includes SV and the torture of women and girls (Ward & Marsh, 2006:4). SVAW can also be an effective genocidal strategy (Buss, 2009:150). An example of the latter is the acts of Jean-Paul Akayesu during the Rwandan genocide, where he (in his position as mayor) aided and abetted rapes that specifically targeted Tutsi women, and that led to the physical and psychological destruction of Tutsi women, their families and their communities. As SV was an integral part of the process of destruction of the Tutsi tribe, Akeyesu was convicted of aiding and abetting rapes committed as acts of genocide (Buss, 2009:150-151). Cynthia Enloe (2000:134) draws attention to how beliefs about women and gender relations are strategically targeted through SVAW during conflict:

> …if military strategists (and their civilian allies or superior) imagine that women provide the backbone of the enemy's culture, if they define women chiefly as breeders, if they define women as men's property and as the symbols of men's honor, if they imagine that residential communities rely on women's work – if any or all these beliefs about society's proper gendered division of labor are held by war-waging policy makers – they will be tempted to devise and overall military operation that includes their male soldiers' sexual assault of women.

Sexual violence against women can furthermore be used by fighting factions based on a practical economic decision, with SV being cheaper than guns, bullets and landmines. For example, the many different fighting groups within the DRC do not all have constant and reliable access to weapons and ammunition. In situations where these or the money to buy them are limited, SVAW becomes an attractive alternative method of controlling civilian groups and establishing dominance in an area. Thus, SVAW becomes a strategic choice based on the goals and situation of the fighting group.

The motivation of the fighting group also influences the use of SVAW. Within a group with a strong ideological base – that is a group that is fighting on behalf, or in defence, of a particular social group – it is more possible that SVAW will be absent (Wood, 2009:141). For example, nationalist and anti-colonial fighting groups may prohibit SV as part of their ideological commitment to being a modern state army, or Leninist fighting groups may prohibit SV as part of their emphasis on discipline and their commitment to gender equality (Wood, 2009:141). Such ideologically-motivated fighting groups usually have stronger discipline and this means that they are able to enforce their principles, in this case abhorrence of SV. Financially-motivated armed groups, on the other hand, are more likely to use SVAW as a strategy, as financial agendas are more likely to destroy (normative) objections to SV. Where the group is financially motivated, no common norms or ideological mission exist that prevent the use of SV as a weapon and strategy if the group decides that it will be effective (Meger, 2010:132).

The multiple and intersecting identities present in an individual and a group may also play a role in whether SVAW is present in an armed conflict. An individual is not only male or female. He/she also embodies and represents a certain religion, ethnicity, race, genetic code, nationality, etc., and assumptions about these and the relation to SV are often made. A fighting faction's assumptions about these different identity variables influence whether it uses SVAW and which women are targeted should it choose to use SVAW. For example, in Rwanda the intersection between gender and ethnicity played a key role. Prior to the genocide, many Rwandans believed Tutsi women to be more beautiful and sexually desirable than Hutu women, yet Hutu men (because of being Hutu) were usually unable to engage in relationships with Tutsi women (Taylor, 1999:46). During the genocide, many Tutsi women were raped by Hutu men, who saw it as an opportunity to finally have sexual relations with the desirable but unobtainable Tutsi women (Blizzard, 2006:48). This highlights that, when trying to understand the causes and extent of SV in the context of a particular armed conflict, all the identity variables that interact with gender need to be considered and evaluated (Alison, 2007:79).

The attitudes at armed group, small group and individual levels play a role in the prevalence of SVAW during armed conflict as well. The extent to which an 'armed group' (the military group as a whole) either condemns or condones SVAW within its ranks influences the extent to which it occurs (Wood, 2006:331; Meger, 2010:124).[12] However, the attitude of the armed group regarding SVAW is not necessarily upheld by the small group (the smaller group of soldiers within which the combatants have face-to-face relationships), who can choose to not act in accordance with it (Wood, 2006:331). Lastly, the individual can choose to act on his own. This is the case in contexts where individual variables or personality traits lead to SVAW, such as an individual that had not developed pro-social behaviour during childhood (which, arguably, is the case with many young combatants), has a sexual preference for sex occurring within a situation of VAW, or has an overtly hostile masculinity (Henry *et al*., 2004:539-543). The opposite can also be true, as at times an individual's norms and principles counter those of the armed group and/or small unit, and he/she may refuse to engage in SVAW.

Lastly, while feminist discourse and the international scholarly community tend to emphasise gender power imbalances in explaining SVAW during armed conflict, some scholars (such as Meger, 2010 and Ward & Marsh, 2006) argue that sex should not be ignored. Women are at times raped or sexually violated because combatants want sex (Ward & Marsh, 2006:5).

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[12] The UN, for example, has demonstrated that it (as an 'armed group') condemns SVAW within its ranks, by establishing the Conduct and Discipline Team. It is tasked with overseeing the state of discipline in peacekeeping operations and special political missions and it strongly focuses on monitoring sexual exploitation and abuse by UN staff (United Nations Conduct and Discipline Unit, 2010).

Combatants are generally young men with high testosterone levels who are typically sexually deprived. Such acts of course still occur within a context of power. Soldiers are able to sexually violate women because they are physically more powerful and have weapons. Nevertheless, SVAW at times occurs not (solely) for military or other strategic reasons, but because soldiers have a biological need for sex.

These various factors interact and go some way towards explaining the varied ways in which SVAW is present in different armed conflicts. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of analysing different armed conflicts based on the context of the specific armed conflict, and not solely based on general categories. However, women are not only affected by SVAW during armed conflict. The impact of SVAW during armed conflict continues after peace has been established.

2.4.4 Causes of SVAW in post-conflict settings

While SVAW is facilitated and exacerbated by armed conflict, it does not stop once conflict has ended. Sexual violence against women continues in the aftermath of conflict, once again with various factors contributing to this phenomenon. However, in all four factors discussed in this section – cultural, legal, economic and political – the indirect or direct role of patriarchy and the prevalence of hypermasculinities are clear.

Firstly, SVAW continues in the aftermath of conflict as a culture of SV tends to develop. This is due to a patriarchal backlash on women's empowerment gains during the conflict, the influence of military masculinity and how this has fuelled the emergence of hypermasculinities, and the normalisation of SV. Ironically, despite the many dangers faced by women in conflict settings, it also offers the possibility of transformation of gender roles, resulting in more freedom and personal agency for women. Due to the crisis context present during armed conflict, gender roles and restrictions are eased, with women engaging in new roles during the conflict (and being allowed to do so) in order to cope (Sideris, 2000:44). With men disappearing, dying, or leaving to go fighting, women take over their responsibilities (Gardam & Jarvis, 2000:30; Puechguirbal, 2010:180). In most societies, women are expected to take over the jobs of men who have left to join the fighting. While this includes home-bound activities, such as herding animals and building houses, it also includes running businesses and activities directly related to the war effort, such as providing support services to armies and nursing the wounded (Thompson, 1991:65).

While conflict allows for transformed gender roles, the establishment of peace also offers possibilities of women empowerment, as a new political dispensation is entered into. In a post-conflict context the patriarchal system is generally weakened, which allows women space to challenge it. With the drafting of new constitutions, legislation, political structures and institutions, there is an opportunity to focus attention on gender-equality issues (Heinecken, 2013:134). In this period women's organisations often push for reforms and the right to greater participation in public matters. An example of this is the widespread support by women and women's organisations of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's bid for presidency in Liberia's first post-conflict election. Women voters and women's organisations are widely credited with enabling Sirleaf to defeat the popular George Weak to become the first elected women head of an African country (Bauer, 2009:193).

Unfortunately, what one often sees is that the empowerment that women achieve during periods of armed conflict tends to be reversed once peace is established. This means that the end of violent conflict and the establishment of formal peace do not necessarily result in better circumstances for women, either economically or in terms of their security. Attempts by women's organisations to establish a more equal public gender dispensation are often resisted by men. The post-conflict setting is often hostile towards women, where they are targeted for having gained financial independence, assuming 'male' roles, and/or adopting urban or educated lifestyles. In many societies there are forceful attempts to redefine women's roles and rights, again positioning them as subordinate to men (Meger, 2010:121).

Walby discusses the same phenomenon within a Western, non-conflict setting, arguing that increased SVAW is a result of "a patriarchal backlash to women's gains in other spheres" (Walby, 1990:145). The reasons for this backlash are multifaceted, but many ascribe it to men experiencing a loss of power and feeling that their masculinity is threatened when women become less dependent upon them (Antai, 2011:2). This may explain why in post-conflict settings there is often a move to re-establish traditional gender roles, even where gender transformation was part of the revolutionary rhetoric and where women played an important role in political transformation (Borer, 2009:1171-1172). Under such circumstances, SVAW and the threat of SVAW continue to be a way through which the subordination of women can be (re)inforced and is often an effective threat to preclude women's participation in public life (Willett, 2010:154). It also serves as a means of regaining and retaining control over resources and women's productive and reproductive rights (Borer, 2009:1172).

A SV culture is also the result of the influence of military masculinity and the emergence of a form of hypermasculinity. This hypermasculinity leads to civilian men displaying the same militarised, hypermasculine attitudes of violent aggression (verbal or physical); sexual relations that establish male dominance and female submissiveness with no concern for the female's experience; and entering into dangerous situations (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984:152). Militarisation thus shapes not only the masculinity of soldiers, but also of civilian men in areas affected by armed conflict (Lwambo, 2013:59). This influence leads to civilian men turning to hypermasculine actions to assert their masculinity. Messerschmidt's stance on the relationship between masculinity and crime is relevant here. The socially constructed differences between men lead to different masculinities, which in turn explains why men engage in different forms of crime when traditional ways of asserting masculinity is unavailable to them (Messerschmidt, 1993:84). In such situations, if the form of masculinity that is being enacted is hypermasculine, SVAW would become a credible form of crime with which to assert masculinity. In light of perceived post-conflict threats to masculinity as discussed in the previous two paragraphs, hypermasculine responses to female empowerment thus carry the very real threat of SVAW. Seeing as it leads to both civilian and military men perpetrating SVAW, the influence of hypermasculinity on civilian masculinities offers an explanation for why post-conflict rates of SVAW are often so high.

This culture of SV, which allows the perpetration of SVAW with impunity and is a way of controlling women, is facilitated by the fact that, in a post-conflict setting, SVAW perpetrators are rarely caught or punished and justice for SVAW victims and survivors is seldom prioritised. One of the reasons for this is a dual legal system that recognises both customary and statutory law. Such dual legal systems are common within Africa. However, customary and statutory law tend to contradict one another in terms of women's rights, as women have certain rights according to statutory law which are not recognised in customary law (Heinecken, 2013:136). For example, statutory law may recognise conjugal SVAW as SVAW, while customary law does not recognise it as a crime. This is a good illustration of the patriarchal nature of customary law. However, the fact that such patriarchal customary laws are allowed and that governments do not prioritise the application of statutory laws that recognise the rights of women, reflect the patriarchal bias of governments and states. This is discussed in more detail later in this section.

Furthermore, survivors may find it difficult or impossible to access the statutory judicial system, as it is too expensive and corrupt. For example, many countries (such as Liberia) expect survivors to fund the entire judicial process, which is usually impossible for them. Not being able to afford it, they turn to customary judicial systems, which do not recognise the severity of the crime, or choose not to seek any legal redress due to fear of stigma and discrimination and/or a belief that legal redress will not be forthcoming. This means that survivors rarely receive adequate reparation for what they have to physically and psychologically endure due to SV and/or due to the trauma of being involved in the judicial process (Bastick *et al*., 2007: 155). All of these factors contribute to the continued perpetration of SVAW, as perpetrators are not punished and survivors not supported.

The economic marginalisation of women is another factor contributing to the continued perpetration of SVAW in the aftermath of conflict. Patriarchy enforces women's economic dependence upon men. Walby (1990: 25-60) draws attention to this by identifying paid employment as one of the six key structures supporting patriarchy. In terms of employment women are disadvantaged in various ways, such as being excluded from certain areas of work or being paid considerably less than men. Walby, writing from a Western (specifically British) perspective, argues that there have been some gains for women on this front, although discrimination continues. Unfortunately, within an African context many of the gains that Walby identifies (such as paid employment within the public sphere and less exploitation by husbands) have not been realised. Especially within rural African settings women continue to be economically dependent upon men, as they are not allowed the means to gain independence. For example, they find it difficult to own land or be employed in paid positions. Within a post-conflict setting, where the economy is weak and infrastructural collapse means that there is little employment available, women's economic marginalisation is extreme. This in turn means that women are forced to be dependent on men, which puts them at risk for SV as they are unable to negotiate sexual relations. Furthermore, many turn to prostitution as a way to survive economically, which puts them at an increased risk for SV.

Political factors also contribute to the continuation of SVAW. In a post-conflict setting the marginalisation of women is apparent in the public domain and peace processes, where women continue to be excluded. While women mobilise for peace, few women are allowed to be part of official peace negotiations and the formal activities of reconstructing society (Heinecken, 2013:134). In Liberia, for example, despite Liberian women's organisations' activities to mobilise for peace (such as daily gatherings in the Monrovia fish market to protest against the war), they were still formally excluded from the 2003 Accra Peace Talks (Ouellet, 2013:12). Due to the exclusion of women, peace negotiations remain gendered, reflecting a male and masculine bias. This results in the products of peace negotiations (such as transitional justice mechanisms) carrying the same gender bias. Bell and O'Rourke (in Borer, 2009:1172) see this gender bias of peace processes as the reason why it is so difficult to achieve equal gender relations in a post-conflict setting, which in turn contributes to the continuation of SVAW.[13] The state itself contributes to the continuation of SVAW through state patriarchy.

Walby argues that the state is inherently patriarchal. As such, it is strongly biased in favour of patriarchal interests in its policies and actions. In terms of SVAW, this is shown in its refusal and/or apathy in responding to male violence against women (Walby, 1990: 19-21; 160). The validity of Walby's argument is aptly illustrated in the above discussion on the ineffectiveness of judicial processes in SVAW cases. However, one can also see it in the state's refusal to allow women to be part of peace negotiations, in how long it takes to review laws that discriminate against women, and in its continued support of customary laws and practices that discriminate against women. From this it is clear that SVAW does not end once peace is established. On the contrary, patriarchy ensures that the discrimination against and marginalisation of women continues on various levels, which in turn contributes to their continued risk of being sexually violated. The consequences of such sexual violation are severe, regardless of whether it occurs during or after armed conflict.

2.5 CONSEQUENCES OF SVAW

The consequences of SVAW during and after armed conflict tend to be the same everywhere, though it is generally worse during armed conflict, due to both the extent and extreme nature of the SV that is perpetrated, and to the collapse of support services to deal with survivors. Focusing on the African context and drawing mainly on African studies and analyses, one can identify physical and psychological, social, and economic consequences of SVAW during armed conflict.

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[13] Concern with this state of events is indicated by the fact that gender mainstreaming was identified as a major global strategy for the promotion of gender equality in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women. Gender mainstreaming is essential for ensuring human rights and social justice for women and men. It should also be included in different areas of development, as gender equality ensures the achievement of social and economic goals. The UN has embraced gender mainstreaming as a key strategy in addressing gender inequality and its resultant evils, such as SVAW, and intergovernmental mandates for gender mainstreaming has been developed for all the areas in which the UN works (Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues, 2002: v-vi). This includes peace support operations. For example, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 calls for gender mainstreaming in all aspects of peacekeeping (Nduka-Agwu, 2009:180), thus recognising that the effect of war on women continues long after conflict has come to an end.

2.5.1 Physical and psychological consequences

It is obvious that SVAW carries with it certain physical risks and consequences, which are usually aggravated by armed conflict. Physically, the mutilation of genital organs caused by extreme forms of rape and torture leads to reproductive dysfunction and is so widespread in countries like the DRC that vaginal destruction is now classified as a crime of combat by DRC doctors (Ward & Marsh, 2006:10). Traumatic fistula, uterine prolapse, infertility, complications associated with miscarriage, perforated sexual organs, vaginal discharge and/or itching, menstrual abnormalities, premature labour/delivery, ante-partum haemorrhage, foetal injury, low birth-weight in babies, and still birth are common physical consequences of SVAW (Hynes & Cardozo, 2000:820; Ward & Marsh, 2006:10; Vanwesenbeeck, 2008:34; Bartels *et al.*, 2010:41). Sexual dysfunction often follows these physical injuries and can include sexual aversion, problems with desire, difficulties with arousal and/or orgasm, dysparenunia and vaginismus (Vanwesenbeeck, 2008:36; Jina, Jewkes, Munjanja, Mariscal, Dartnall & Gebrehiwot, 2010:86).

One of the most taxing physical consequences is dealing with unwanted pregnancy. Due to the injury done to the reproductive system, pregnancy and labour are often more dangerous to the woman than it would be under normal circumstances (Bartels *et al.*, 2010:41). This is exacerbated by the fact that medical assistance for pregnancy and delivery is usually limited during armed conflict, increasing the danger for mother and child. Added to this, survivors of SVAW during armed conflict have a real chance of contracting disease. Because of the brutal nature of SVAW, survivors are at a greater risk of contracting Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (Hynes & Cardozo, 2000:820; Ward & Marsh, 2006: 10; Vanwesenbeeck, 2008:35; Bartels *et al.*, 2010:42; ; Jina *et al.*, 2010:86). All of these issues have to be considered within the context of collapsed health services. During conflict there is usually a shortage in health services and those that do exist are often not free or are too far away for survivors to reach (Ward & Marsh, 2006:11; Bartels *et al.*, 2010:40).

For many survivors, the psychological consequences of SVAW are long-term and far-reaching. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and mental and anxiety disorders including phobias, psychosomatic symptoms, psychogenic pain, conversion-dissociative disorder, major depressive disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and eating disorders are commonly reported (Vanwesenbeeck, 2008:35; Jina *et al.*, 2010:86; Kinyanda, Musisi, Biryabarema, Ezati, Oboke, Ojiambo-Ochieng, Were-Oguttu, Levin, Grosskurth & Walugembe, 2010:2). Self-injurious behaviour includes suicide ideation, suicidality and substance abuse (Vanwesenbeeck, 2008:35; Jina *et al*., 2010:86; Kinyanda *et al*., 2010:2). Behavioural and emotional problems include self-loathing, aggression, anxiety, withdrawal, anger, fear, shame, memory loss, insomnia, and nightmares (Bartels *et al.*, 2010: 41; Meger, 2010:127). The psychological trauma is not limited to the survivors. Vera Folnegovic-Smalc draws attention to the existence of secondary victims of SVAW, namely those who have witnessed others being assaulted. The psychological and psychiatric symptoms of secondary victims can be very pronounced, and at times even greater than those of primary victims (Folnegovic-Smalc, 1994:174). It propels women into a state of constant fear and insecurity which affects their daily livelihoods.

These psychological consequences are one of the reasons why survivors are often at an increased risk for further sexual victimisation later in life. According to a number of studies, being sexually victimised, especially at a young age, is linked to repeated sexual victimisation (Heise, 1995:247; Sarkar & Sarkar, 2005:411). For example, in a study of undergraduate women in United States universities, sexual victimisation in early adolescence was strongly linked to collegiate re-victimisation, and the more severe the adolescent SV experience, the greater the risk of re-victimisation in adulthood (Sarkar & Sarkar, 2005:411). Experience of SV is also linked to sexual risk taking later on in life, such as early first sex, multiple partners, or unsafe sex (Heise, 1995:247; Vanwesenbeeck, 2008:35). Vanwesenbeeck (2008:35) argues that this may be because survivors lack ego-strength due to the trauma they suffered, and thus tend to engage in self-destructive sexually risky behaviour.

2.5.2 Social consequences: stigma and discrimination

Besides this, SVAW has a number of social consequences for survivors. As a rule, survivors of SVAW are heavily stigmatised by family and community. Many studies refer to the stigma and discrimination that SV survivors are forced to face (Turshen, 2000; Meger, 2010; Gardam & Jarvis, 2010), thus it is worthwhile exploring what stigma is and why it affects survivors so negatively. In his seminal text on stigma, Erving Goffman (1963:9) defined stigma as “the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance” and explained that people are stigmatised if their social identity is perceived to negatively deviate from societal norms and values (Goffman, 1963:9; Shin, Dovidio & Napier, 2013:98). Stigmatisation happens when power is enacted in order to identify, stereotype and label[14] the differentness of the socially deviant individual (Link & Phelan, 2001; Overstreet & Quinn, 2013:110). The key elements of stigma are thus that it relies on difference and devaluation and power, and that it happens in social contexts (Bos, Pryor, Reeder, & Stutterheim, 2013:1).

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[14] The stigmatisation of the individual happens through a process of labelling, where labels are socially attached to stigmatised identities. These labels are associated with negative, undesirable characteristics (Link & Phelan, 2001).

Relating this to SV victims, Folnegovic-Smalc (1994:176), show how these women are defiled and disgraced and are often blamed for what happened (Turshen, 2000:815). Survivors tend to internalise these constructs and are ashamed of themselves. The stigmatisation of survivors of SV usually leads to active discrimination and frequently results in them being rejected by their husbands/partners, family, and/or community (Turshen, 2000:815; Gardam & Jarvis, 2010:28; Bartels *et al.*, 2010:43; Meger, 2010:127;). Spousal abandonment is common (Bartels *et al.*, 2010:43), with marital discord often increasing amongst couples that do stay together. Sometimes a negative HIV test is taken as a prerequisite for a husband allowing a wife to stay on in their home (Bartels *et al.*, 2010:44). Even in cases where a husband does not fully abandon a sexually violated wife, there usually is a loss of support, both emotionally and financially (Bartels *et al.*, 2010:43).

However, according to Goffman (1963), stigmatised individuals have a choice in how the stigma affects them. They can rely on identity beliefs of their own, thus not accepting the stigmatising evaluation and not letting the stigma affect them (Goffman, 1963:17). This does not appear to be the case with SV survivors, who mostly tend to agree with their social devaluation and experience shame for having been sexually violated (Turshen, 2000; Bartels *et al.*, 2010; Ezard, 2011:7). Others try to avoid being stigmatised by attempting to pass as 'normal', but then constantly run the risk of being found out. Otherwise they can be open about their deviance, but are then exposed to others' possible stigmatisation and discrimination (Goffman, 1963:14). To deal with the constant uncertainty regarding others' response to them, the stigmatised employ coping strategies.[15] However, they remain consistently confronted with the issue of acceptance, and this struggle with acceptance and uncertainty regarding interaction with 'normals' can have a range of consequences for the stigmatised, including depression, anxiety, isolation, reduced social networks, limited social support, and refusal to seek help (Goffman, 1963:19; Bos *et al.,* 2013:3; Overstreet & Quinn, 2013).

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[15] Problem-focused coping strategies include selective disclosure, compensation, disengagement, activism, and affiliation. Emotion-focused strategies include downward social comparison, assigning external attributes for others' stigmatising behaviours, positive reappraisal of the stigma, and detaching (Bos *et al.,* 2013:3).

While stigmatisation and discrimination are related, the one does not necessarily follow on the other. Bos *et al* (2013:3) defines discrimination as enacted stigma, and it is the negative treatment of those possessing a stigmatised condition. Stigmatisation may lead to discrimination, should certain power relations and enabling contexts be present, but it does not necessarily do so (Deacon, Stephney & Prosalendis, 2005:23). In the case of SV survivors in Africa, stigma usually translates into discrimination, as they are shunned by their family and community (Turshen, 2000; Meger, 2010). The stigmatisation of SV survivors thus has decided consequences for the survivor. However, why people choose to stigmatise has not been answered. One possible answer is that it is done to protect the ingroup from perceived danger. The blaming model of stigma (Deacon *et al*., 2005; Joffe, 1999; Crawford, 1994) argues that stigmatisation is based on

> …a fundamental emotional response to danger that helps people feel safer by projecting controllable risk, and therefore blame, onto outgroups. Stigmatisation thus helps to create a sense of control and immunity from danger at an individual and a group level (Deacon et al., 2005:18).

This model relies on the human defence mechanism of splitting and projection. Splitting refers to the process of dividing everything (experiences, opinions, etc.) into ‘good’ or ‘bad’. In the process the ‘bad’ is projected onto the ‘other’ and in doing so anxiety and stress is relieved (Joffe, 1999:734-737). Thus, by stigmatising the SV survivor the community is able to reduce their own anxiety and gain a sense of control over the danger of SVAW (Dovidio, Major & Crocker, 2000:7).

However, sociological theories serve to emphasise that stigma is also a result of the need to assert power. Stigmatisation creates and reinforces ingroup power, for in order to be able to stigmatise, the ingroup must have power (Link & Phelan, 2001:375; Parker & Aggleton, 2003:16). Stigma thus becomes a tool through which differentiation and subordination can be asserted, which are mechanisms through which inequalities are established and hierarchies are asserted (Boesten, 2007:12). Furthermore, research by Shin *et al* (2013) shows that group-orientated cultures have a stronger tendency to stigmatise, compared to individual-orientated cultures. Such stigmatisation is used to create and keep social cohesion around traditional values (Shin *et al.,* 2013: 98). Stigmatisation of SVAW and SV survivors is thus also a result of the ingroup asserting its control over the community and enforcing its particular value-system and beliefs.

Unfortunately, stigma and discrimination is not limited to those who experience SV. One of the most tragic consequences of SVAW during armed conflict is the children born from rape and the way they are treated. Children born from rape during armed conflict, either as part of a policy of forced impregnation or as an unfortunate consequence of rape, tend to live marginalised lives. In most African cultures identity is paternally determined. Thus, children born from rape are inextricably linked with their birth fathers, who are rapists. Especially in cases where the biological mother and father do not belong to the same ethnic group, a child born from rape is viewed as 'other'. Such a child's identity is fully determined by one act of SV. Being branded a 'rape baby' affects its care and upbringing and its acceptance within its community, with communities usually being an active participant in the marginalisation experienced by the child (Weitsman, 2008:566-567; Schott, 2011:9). Marginalising 'the other' tends to be more common amongst persecuted groups that have a heightened sense of self. During armed conflict, identity of both the in-group and the enemy becomes a sensitive and contentious issue, and children born from rape suffer even more because of this (Weitsman, 2008:566). Long after an armed conflict has come to an end, the children born from rape continue to symbolise the trauma of the community and serve as reminders of a time, events and a people that are hateful to the community (Kuloglu, 2008:235). Given the traumatic experience and dire consequences such unwanted pregnancies hold for both mothers and their children, many attempt unsafe abortions, while others choose to abandon the babies once they are born. Mothers often feel guilt for the feelings of rejection and aversion they may feel towards their children (Schott, 2011:13-14).

2.5.3 Economic consequences

For survivors the implication of the social consequences of SVAW is that they are stripped of their social standing within their families and communities. When women are rejected by their families and communities, it has far-reaching implications in terms of the livelihoods of such women. Most (African) women's access to land and livestock is through men and this has a range of economic consequences for women affected by SV. Firstly, SVAW survivors may be economically affected by the loss of material possessions that occurred during the sexually violent attack, such as a house that was burnt down or food and/or money that was taken (Bartels *et al.*, 2010:43). A second level of economic consequences is due to the fact that many women depend on agriculture and/or other physical work for survival. Because of the extreme physical nature of SVAW during armed conflict, and the lack of medical care afterwards, survivors are often unable to engage in physical labour, at least for some time (Bartels *et al.*, 2010:44). Thirdly, relocation because of SVAW (either by choice or because the survivor has been forced to by her community/family) also has economic consequences for the survivor, as she has no access to land which she can use to support herself (Bartels *et al.*, 2010:44). Fourthly, survivors are often economically affected as they are abducted by soldiers. Such abductees are not only sexually violated, but also forced to engage in economic activities such as farming, cooking, tailoring, nursing, etc., on behalf of the soldiers (Turshen, 2000: 809;811). As they are abductees, none of their activities are for their own economic benefit. If they manage to escape or if the conflict comes to an end they have nothing to show for their labour. These economic consequences of SVAW are exacerbated by the economic realities of armed conflict, which is associated with high inflation and a collapsed economy.

2.6 SVAW INTERVENTIONS DURING AND AFTER ARMED CONFLICT

In recognition of the many and extreme consequences of SVAW during and after armed conflict, various interventions have been launched by governments, civil society and international organisations to assist and address SVAW. Reproductive health activists have been at the forefront of attempts to address and end SVAW during armed conflict (Ward & Marsh, 2006:13). Yet despite their work, and those of governments and organisations such as the UN, it still appears that very little is done about the SVAW on the ground during actual armed conflict and in its aftermath. Peacekeepers, the police, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes by states, and civil society are currently the main actors mandated to address SVAW during armed conflict. However, their interventions are often proving to be ineffective and/or inadequate.

Managing SV is a perpetual problem for many armed forces, as reflected in the emphasis placed on it by the UN. For example, peacekeepers (PKs) from formal peacekeeping operations (PKOs) are mandated to protect civilians during and after armed conflict, including protection against SV. The reality is, though, that few PKOs are able to effectively prevent and respond to conflict-related SV (Bastick *et al.,* 2007:169). In fact, they often contribute to the SV experienced by local women, as reflected in the numerous United Nations (UN) reports on sexual abuse by peacekeepers (Simić, 2010:190-191). Despite enacting several resolutions on women,[16] peace and security in an attempt to address SVAW in conflict-affected zones, the UN is also struggling with SV perpetrated by its own staff, particularly those on peacekeeping missions (UN Women, 2013). In an attempt to mitigate the abuse of local women by its staff and peacekeepers, the UN has implemented a zero-tolerance policy on SV and its UN Code of Conduct embraces this policy as one of its three key principles (United Nations Conduct and Discipline Unit, 2010). Furthermore, troop-contributing countries are deploying more female peacekeepers to mitigate the effects and to assist victims of SV, but to little avail.[17] State-sponsored attempts to address SVAW have also proven ineffective. On behalf of the state, the police[18] carry the responsibility to both prevent and detect SV and to ensure the prosecution and punishment of those that perpetrate SV. However, the police are often unwilling to investigate, are insensitive in their investigations, and/or are even party to the perpetration of SVAW (Bastick *et al.,* 2007:147). The ineffectiveness of the police is linked to the inability of the judicial process to hold SV perpetrators to account. The UN has recognised the fact that the ineffectiveness of judicial processes is a problem in many, if not most, conflict-affected countries and therefore passed Resolution 1888 in 2009. This resolution emphasised the need for judicial reform, so that impunity is addressed and SGBV survivors have equal access to justice (Heinecken, 2013:132). Nevertheless, at country-level SV survivors still rarely access the judicial system or receive justice.

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[16] This includes Resolutions 1325 and 1889, on Women's Leadership in Peace Making and Conflict Prevention, Resolutions 1820 and 1888 on Prevention of and Response to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, and Resolution 1960 that provides for an accountability system for Resolution 1820 and 1888 (UN Women, 2013).

Another way in which there is an attempt to indirectly address SVAW is through Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programmes. DDR programmes are an essential part of a post-conflict recovery strategy, as combatants need to be reintegrated into society, socially, politically and economically. These programmes tend to contribute to the continuation of SV, for a number of reasons. Firstly, they are characterised by very low participation of female combatants. This means that DDR programmes often do not address the issues and security threats that women face during the post-conflict period (Heinecken, 2013:134), which include SV. Secondly, the programmes are often run ineffectively and fail. In Liberia, for example, the DDR process led to a saturation of demand for the skills in which ex-combatants were being trained, meaning that ex-combatants continued to be unemployed despite receiving training (Podder, 2012:197). With the failure of DDR processes, civilians are often left at the mercy of violence-prone ex-combatants. The unemployed ex-combatants, who have been socialised into violence during the armed conflict, can form gangs that threaten communities and may engage in SVAW (Bastick *et al.,* 2007:187). Thus, while governments could be limiting SV through successful DDR programmes, at present this is not happening in most countries. Nevertheless, states continue to declare that they are committed to achieving gender-equal societies and ending SVAW. Most African heads of state have ratified various international gender-mainstreaming declarations. These include the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform of Action, UN Resolution 1325, the Maputo Protocol, and the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equity in Africa. Yet in practice these formal processes have brought little change in the signatory countries, potentially because enforceability and accountability are limited and the voices of local women were not included in the drafting of these documents (Heinecken, 2013:133).

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[17] Only 3% of the military personnel and 10% of police personnel that form part of UN peacekeeping forces are female. Furthermore, there is no direct evidence that the deployment of female peacekeepers has made male peacekeepers less prone to committing sexual abuse (Heinecken, 2013:136-138). Also, it is questionable whether one can expect female peacekeepers to police the acts of their male counterparts.

[18] The term 'police' refers to all law enforcement agencies, especially those that carry the power to arrest and detain.

With the vacuum left by the state in terms of their ability to prevent SVAW and support survivors, civil society has largely assumed this role. Civil society organisations include local, national and international, formal or informal institutions, organisations and associations that become involved in addressing chronic social, political and economic problems that beset society. Many, such as Tearfund and UNAIDS, focus on SVAW. Civil society organisations have attempted to address SVAW by utilising various methods. Through advocacy, lobbying and protesting they have attempted to break the silence and dominant cultural attitudes on the subject. Both nationally and internationally, various CSOs, such as the European Women's Lobby and Femmes Africa Solidarité, advocate and lobby states and state instruments to acknowledge, combat and address the consequences of SVAW (Bastick *et al.,* 2007:191). Especially women's civil society groups have taken on this role, both locally and internationally, and forced states to at least acknowledge SVAW, if not address it (Bastick *et al.,* 2007:191). These organisations also provide training and services to address SVAW. This includes counselling, financial assistance, and medical care. Through training, CSOs endeavour to prevent further re-occurrence of SVAW, by attempting to address the root causes of SVAW through challenging gender constructs and violent masculinities (Bastick *et al.,* 2007:192-195). However, the success of these organisations in addressing and preventing SVAW is often hampered by the conflict itself. Nevertheless, in post-conflict settings or settings where armed conflict has continued for an extended period of time, CSOs have arguably become the leaders in addressing the issue of SVAW.

Yet CSOs also face limitations in their ability to address SVAW. Firstly, the current development paradigm in Africa calls for civil society to work in partnership with states and consequently the critical distance and role of civil society is undervalued (Hearn, 2001:44). In many cases CSOs, especially local CSOs, are dependent on government funding. International NGOs, while economically independent, can only operate within a country with the approval of the country's government. For these reasons CSOs are limited in their ability to criticise government complicity in SVAW and/or government-condoned cultural practices that facilitate SV. Another limitation that many, if not most, CSOs face is that they launch SVAW interventions that focus on a single issue related to, or perspective on, SVAW. For example, an intervention might have a welfare approach, an anti-poverty approach, or an efficiency approach, which dictates whether it sees SVAW as (respectively) a health issue, a poverty issue, or a socio-economic issue (D'Odorico & Holvoet, 2009:51). Such approaches do not challenge existing gender structures, as their goals may be achieved within the context of these unequal, gendered structures. Their focus on gender is limited to focusing on the practical needs of a specific gender, namely women, and they focus on addressing the practical, immediate needs of women and SVAW survivors. On a fundamental level they do not address the causes of SVAW, but rather focus on the symptoms.

These are pragmatic choices, but as D'Odorico and Holvoet (2009) argue, in addressing SVAW one should not only focus on *practical* gender needs (i.e. the practical needs of women and SVAW survivors), but should also address the *strategic* gender needs. The first is merely a short-term approach that is essentially reactive, while the second encompasses a more proactive longer term approach that is able to empower women. By adopting an empowerment approach[19] one can be proactive in addressing SVAW, as it involves survivors of violence and beneficiaries of support programmes contributing to a gendered analysis of their society. As such they become active protagonists of change and interventions based on such an approach "may therefore offer an answer to victims' practical gender needs, while paving the way for longer-term change by calling into question the existing social order and moving towards a fairer and more equitable society" (D'Odorico & Holvoet, 2009:52). This also allows for other issues and questions linked to gender inequalities to be raised in the process of addressing SVAW (D'Odorico & Holvoet, 2009:61).

While all interventions should include strategic foci, arguably no intervention can address all of the practical-level needs that women and SV survivors have. This is why partnership between different sectors, each focusing on their own area of speciality, is arguably the best way to achieve full coverage of all the needed areas of SVAW intervention. The international community recognises the need for such partnership, with the multi-sectoral model being seen as part of best practice both in prevention of and response to SVAW (Ward & Marsh, 2006:14). One of the basic premises of the multi-sectoral approach to SVAW is that SVAW cannot be adequately addressed through the services of one sector. It is a holistic approach, calling for multiple actors within each of the different sectors, but also for partnership and cooperation between the sectors and actors (Ward & Marsh, 2006:16). The sectors include health, psychosocial, legal/justice, and security. The relevant actors include workers from hospitals and clinics, traditional birth attendants, traditional healers, social workers, religious leaders, teachers, judges, lawyers, advocacy groups, police, national and international military, peacekeepers, and state representatives at different levels (Ward & Marsh, 2006:16).

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[19] D'Odorico and Holvoet criticise existing approaches to addressing SVAW for not challenging existing gender structures and thus not addressing the true causes of SV. They propose an empowerment approach as one that can transform gender structures, as it adopts a gender perspective that requires asking questions about the relations between men and women within society. Women (including SV survivors) are not merely beneficiaries of support programmes, but are supported and mobilised into becoming active protagonists of change (D'Odorico & Holvoet, 2009:52).

Reflecting on the aforementioned discussion, the question then becomes: what interventions are necessary, and by whom? The next chapter examines the role of a particular sector of civil society, namely churches, in intervening on the issue of SVAW. If SVAW cannot be prevented, nor its consequences addressed, if the way women are constructed as inferior and subjugated to men is not changed, the role of churches in addressing SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict should be more comprehensive than many suspect. Religion can be very influential in changing values and behaviour, and churches are often the only institutions that survive armed conflict. Churches are arguably perfectly positioned for addressing SV, for they are widespread, have grassroots connections and credibility, and have the ability to decidedly influence people on the level of their beliefs and perceptions. In the next chapter it is explored whether churches are utilising these resources in order to address SVAW, its causes and consequences.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Until now there have been few effective SVAW prevention and/or care interventions in areas affected by armed conflict. During armed conflict few agencies are able to intervene and fighting factions are arguably not interested in doing so. After armed conflict it is easier to intervene, yet the scope of interventions remains limited. Furthermore, all the areas that need intervention, both in terms of prevention and care, are not receiving adequate attention. From the preceding chapter’s discussion one can see that, in order to address SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict, both long-term and short-term interventions are needed. However, in support of radical feminist thought, the key to all of these interventions is addressing patriarchy. Sexual violence against women cannot be prevented, nor its consequences addressed, if women are constructed as inferior and subjugated to men. Patriarchy upholds hegemonic masculinities, and in contexts where societies have become militarised or are in a state of militarised peace, these masculinities take on an aggressive, hypermasculine form that violently exploits and abuses women, and creates a culture of SV.

This means that, in post-conflict contexts, women remain at risk, with a sexually violent culture having developed and patriarchy ensuring that social, legal, economic and political structures contribute to women being at risk for being sexually violated.

To truly address the problem of SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict, patriarchy and all the levels on which it directly or indirectly contributes to the marginalisation of and discrimination against women have to be transformed. This has implications for all SV interventions, regardless of their practical focus. Sexual violence against women interventions cannot continue within the gender framework created by a sexually violent society, but have to challenge and recreate this framework in order to bring long-term, sustainable change in the occurrence of SVAW. In this regard it thus appears that a radical feminist approach is what is needed, rather than the liberal feminist approach that attempts to bring change within existing structures. While local women's organisations in Africa have arguably taken the lead in working to transform communities into receptive, non-discriminatory spaces for women and SV survivors, institutions that have more and wider power and influence, such as states, have not shown the same commitment. While nearly all African states are ratifying UN and African Union (AU) protocols on gender equality and gender-based violence, they do very little to implement these and change gender discriminatory practices and beliefs in their countries.

Civil society is attempting to fill the void left by the state. Different CSOs are launching various interventions to address the causes and consequences of SVAW, but they are having limited success. However, there is one sector of civil society, namely the churches, that has the grassroots credibility, authority and engagement, as well as the resources and capacity, to make a difference. African societies are very religious and churches are therefore widespread, popular and influential. Taking this into account, the next chapter examines the role of African Christian churches in addressing SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict. While SVAW needs a multi-sectoral response and churches cannot be expected to deliver on all of the required needs, their particular nature does lead to one to expect a comprehensive and important contribution from this sector of civil society. The next chapter will explore whether this is the case.

Chapter 3

Churches, religion and SVAW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Africa is a continent in turmoil. Unrest, *coups d'etat*, armed conflicts, election violence, and repressive regimes are the order of the day, and the stability and safety meant to be provided by governments are lacking. In many cases, even the most basic service delivery roles are left unfulfilled. In these difficult situations people often turn towards religion and religious institutions to help them face the practical and emotional challenges of their contexts. While there are many religions in Africa, Christianity is well-established and, contrary to the view of many, not a recent colonial import to Africa. Christian churches in Egypt and Ethiopia have been around since as early as the second century and the missionary movements in Africa started prior to the colonial African scramble of the 1800s and 1900s (Walls, 2002:94-95). The number of churches in Africa continues to grow and it is expected that by 2025 the number of Christians in Africa will have grown to 640 million, up from an estimated 390 million in the year 2000 (Campbell *et al.*, 2011:1204). This means that churches[20], as the form of institutionalised Christianity, as a group are the biggest and most wide-spread sector of civil society in Africa. As such it has the potential to be enormously influential.

As explained in the previous chapter, SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict is a serious and widespread problem in Africa. States, as well as many CSOs, have had little effect in preventing it, dealing with the consequences for women, or implementing effective interventions. The aim of this chapter is to explore the role and impact of churches in African society, particularly in relation to situations of instability (such as those found in armed conflict) and gender inequality, in order to assess whether churches can serve as agents of change. As background, contemporary theories on religion are provided to illustrate the power and influence of churches. This is followed by a discussion of the interwoven nature of society, culture and religion, before looking more specifically at churches' roles as CSOs, particularly in relation to peace and reconciliation processes and gender inequality.

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[20] The study consistently refers to "churches", instead of "church", as a way of recognising and emphasising the fact that that there are many different types of churches in Africa, with widely differing principles, practices and organisational structures.

3.2 RELIGION AND SOCIETY

As churches are such a widespread, growing and influential sector of civil society within Africa, one must turn to sociological theories that recognise the importance and enduring nature of religion in and to society. This section therefore focuses on four theorists (from different periods within the sociology of religion) whose theories have particular application to the focus of this study, namely Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Peter Berger and Danièle Hervieu-Léger. Karl Marx is left out of this discussion. While his views of religion, particularly as a means of escape from social reality, is of some relevance to this study, it is too limited and limiting, and does not serve to explain the reality that is confronted in Africa. As he discusses religion only in relation to economics and sees religion as something that will disappear once the need for it dissipates, he is not focused on in any great detail.
In the discussion of Durkheim, Weber, Berger and Hervieu-Léger, the focus is first on how they define religion, particularly in relation to society.

Durkheim, who analyses society from a structural functionalist perspective, differentiates between the sacred and profane, and this plays a key role in his definition of religion, which posits it as a human construct:

> When a certain number of sacred things have relations of coordination and subordination with one another, so as to form a system that has a certain coherence and does not belong to any other system of the same sort, then the beliefs and rites, taken together, constitute a religion (Durkheim, 1995:38).

Society is instrumental in the form that religion acquires, as religion is a system through which individuals represent and imagine their society. Religion is essentially a symbolic and metaphorical representation and interpretation of society, which means that religious force and religious deities (such as God) are simply people's experiences of society that they have objectified: "Religious force is none other than the feeling that the collectivity inspires in its members, but projected outside the minds that experience them, and objectified" (Durkheim, 1995:227). As religions are thus an expression of the conditions of social reality that produce them, it serves to explain why different religions exist and why the same religion takes on different forms in different contexts.

Weber, who views society from a symbolic interactionist perspective, has a different outlook on religion.[21] While it is one of the various interacting human activities in which people engage, it is more than merely a reflection of social reality. It is a driver of action and behaviour. Whereas Durkheim believes that religious actions and beliefs have non-religious causes, Weber was convinced that religious ideas, beliefs and motives should be recognised as independent drivers of human action (Pals, 2006:150-183). This means that religion is able to drive positive action, i.e. motivate and facilitate social change. One example of this, according to Weber, is how religion motivated the rise of economic capitalism and modern civilisation in Western Europe. Protestantism, particularly Calvinism, argued for frugality, hard work and discipline. This had a profound impact on economic growth, for it changed societal attitudes towards worldly effort and wealth acquisition, which was frowned upon by Catholicism. This new ethic, which Weber called an ‘inner-worldly asceticism’ or ‘the Protestant ethic’, is (according to Weber) the spirit behind the modern capitalistic enterprise (Weber, 1930:180). Therefore, Weber in fact argues that religion and society influence each other. Religion can determine the nature and direction that society takes, just as society at times determines the religious ideas and beliefs that individuals uphold.

Peter Berger partly agrees with Durkheim that religion is socially constructed, but tends to be more supportive of Weber’s position, which recognises that religion can act independently, and cause action. In *The Sacred Canopy* (1969:25), Berger describes religion as “the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established. Put differently, religion is cosmization in a sacred mode. By sacred is meant here a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience”.[22] This cosmos, or reality, posited by religion is one that provides man’s life with meaningful order, to a large extent by its ability to drive action (Berger, 1969:26). Religious tradition, though originally created by human activity, can attain a level of autonomy that influences actions in everyday life and can transform everyday reality (Berger, 1969:41). Berger supports the idea of the interdependence between religion and society, describing them as being in a dialectical relationship. In explaining this he differentiates between ‘everyday reality’ and ‘symbolic universes’. Everyday reality is the world which people live in, which is basically a world of their own design (Wuthnow, 1986:123). Symbolic universes supply broader meaning to human existence and religion is one of these symbolic universes.

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[21] Weber never truly defines religion, arguing that a definition can only come at the end of a study such as the one that he was conducting in *The Sociology of Religion* (Weber, 1965:1). He never proceeded to produce a definition.

[22] Nevertheless, Berger sees the bickering about definitions as a waste of time, and in Appendix 1 of *The Sacred Canopy* (1969) argues that the different definitions of religion all carry some value.

Religion, as a symbolic universe, provides legitimisation for the way people construct their everyday reality (Berger, 1969: 32; 42).

Danièle Hervieu-Léger defines religion as “an ideological, practical and symbolic system through which consciousness, both individual and collective, of belonging to a particular chain of belief is constituted, maintained, developed and controlled” (2000:82). In other words, through this system in which the individual becomes part of and belongs to the group (of believers), religion is strengthened and maintained. In traditional contexts, such as the ones examined in this study, this system (religion) is still strong and vibrant. The individual believer becomes part of the chain of past, present and future believers, and their collective memory becomes the basis of the community’s existence. Post-traditional societies have found other avenues of recreating the same system and collectivity via other experiences. Like Weber, Hervieu-Léger believes that religion is only one of many possible ways of behaviour and of creating collectivity and new ‘chains of belief’ (Keenan, 2002: 282-283). Beliefs in God or other transcendental beings are thus *not* what make a religion a religion. Rather, religion is beliefs that transmit and enforce the authority of tradition (Cox, 2003:7-8). In traditional societies, though, religion remains instrumental in creating belonging, unity and collectivity (Keenan, 2002: 282-283). This will be discussed in more detail later.

These four theorists have a lot in common in terms of what religion actually does within society. For Durkheim religion has three key functions in society. Firstly, it socialises the individual. The individual believer believes in the existence of a moral power on which he/she depends and which brings out ‘the best’ in him/her. As religion is a reflection of society, this moral power actually serves to socialise people into certain accepted behaviours, and to avoid certain forbidden actions. According to Durkheim “there is no religion in which prohibitions do not exist and play an important part” (Durkheim, 1995:304). In this way, religion creates the framework for what is considered moral principles and behaviour within society, which in turn regulates social relationships, as the individual cannot exist without society. Religious socialisation thus serves the purpose of integrating the individual into society (Thompson, 1982:138). This is the second key role of religion, which is that through binding people together through a common belief and value system, it creates social cohesion.

In this way, religion serves as a counter to individualism, which is inclined to weaken social cohesion. Durkheim sees the goal of religious rites and rituals as “arous(ing) certain ideas and feelings, to join the present to the past and the individual to the collectivity. In fact, not only are these ceremonies incapable of serving other ends, but the faithful themselves seek nothing more from them" (Durkheim, 1995:382). Through practising religious rites and rituals, social solidarity is strengthened. Especially in more traditional societies these rites and rituals serve to uphold collective ideals and are thus fundamental to maintaining the solidarity and continuity of the group (Giddens, 1978:93-94). Berger agrees with Durkheim, arguing that religion provides social solidarity which is vital to society, especially in the face of chaotic events and challenges that threaten group harmony and connection (Berger, 1969:51). Hervieu-Léger agrees with Durkheim that religion creates a sense of *belonging* by creating a community of believers. Religion is thus community-creating, bringing a sense of solidarity and unity to believers. In traditional societies, like the ones examined in this study, religion is of the utmost importance for a sense of solidarity and cohesion, as they do not have alternative systems of belief and memory which can create solidarity, unlike post-traditional societies (Keenan, 2002:282-283).

A third role of religion is that it makes life endurable. When individuals face challenging circumstances, religion provides support by offering the interpretative framework that enables them to cope with it. A believer is, according to Durkheim, "a man who is *stronger*. Within himself, he feels more strength to endure the trials of existence or to overcome them" (1995:419; emphasis part of original). Religion provides the believer with a confidence and ability to resist or overcome hardship. For a believer, religion makes action possible, even in extremely challenging circumstances (Nisbet, 1975:179). Of interest is that, on this point, both Weber and Berger agree with Durkheim. Weber sees religious ideas as having the ability to provide meaning to people's lives, by giving their life greater purpose or significance as they see it as part of a bigger whole. The religious ideas that thus best address and fit into their social context are embraced in order to provide meaning to life and enable action. This attachment to religion is very important for many, and their spiritual beliefs can be just as strong and important to them as their more 'primitive' needs, like for food and shelter (Hughes, Sharrock & Martin, 2003: 98, 118). That is why religious ideas, beliefs and motives can be independent drivers of human action.

Berger focuses even more on religion's ability to provide stability. For Durkheim society is characterised by social order and shared values, and should these values disintegrate, anarchy results. He uses the term 'anomie' to refer to the lawlessness, dislocation and aimlessness that is the result of disintegrated value systems (Pals, 2006:94). Thus, religion is of critical importance in upholding the value system, without which there will be a decline in the moral order in society. While Berger agrees with Durkheim in positioning religion as an aid in maintaining order, he sees life as unstable. Berger defines religion as something that maintains order in the "ever-present face of chaos" (Berger, 1969:51). For Berger the ability of religion to stabilise society is one of the most important characteristics and purposes of religion. With events such as illness, war and other human tragedies, people inevitably start to question their everyday reality and the legitimacy of that reality. Religion is most effective at providing stability by offering explanations and answers. In doing so it shelters the individual from the chaos of a reality that makes no sense, by providing sense (Wuthnow, 1986:126-127). Berger argues that with "events affecting entire societies or social groups that provide massive threats to the reality previously taken for granted… [such as] may occur as the result of natural catastrophe, war, or social upheaval… religious legitimations invariably come to the front" (1969:44). Thus, for Berger armed conflict is a natural context in which people will turn to religion to provide them with stability.

In their explanations of religion, the importance of churches as institutionalised religion are key. However, some questions and critiques remain. All of the four theorists emphasise the way religion creates social cohesion and solidarity in society. However, it can also have the opposite effect. While on the one hand religion can sustain group solidarity, on the other it can challenge group solidarity (Hamnett, 1984:207). A belief or value can unify through joint belief, but at the same time can create discord and separation due to the actual effects and consequences of that belief. Therefore, in some instances the consequences of religion might be unifying, while in others it can create discord. For example, religion can emphasise the importance of female sexual purity as a way of assuring enduring family units and a cohesive community. At the same time, this value can destroy cohesion due to the stigmatising and discriminatory practices that result should a woman be sexually violated and thus be seen as not upholding these practices.

Secondly, it remains unclear whether religion is a cause or effect of group solidarity. Does it express pre-existing group solidarity, or does it create this? One remains unsure of the causality of the relationship. The importance of religion for group solidarity is also unclear, since Hervieu-Legér convincingly argues that other "small surrogate memories" (Keenan, 2002: 282), such as politics and sport, have the same ability to create social cohesion. Irrespective, most concur that in unstable times, especially in traditional rural societies, religion is potentially unifying and generally fosters social solidarity. The strong and growing nature of Christianity and churches in Africa is arguably proof of the ability of religion to unify, although it does not negate the possibility of other potential unifiers.

Thirdly, especially according to the earlier theorists, society is indirectly or directly assumed to be homogeneous. Durkheim is particularly guilty of this assumption. However, society is rarely as simply structured as Durkheim supposed, and there are often deep cleavages in society that undermine social solidarity and which create tension. Particularly during armed conflict, when individuals are forced to flee to new areas, new communities are created by people from different backgrounds, ethnic groups and religions. It is unclear to what extent religion is able to create unity and cohesion in such contexts, especially in societies hosting antagonistic religions. At best it can be said that religion can unify a religious group, as it may not necessarily unify an entire society.

Fourthly, again predominantly associated with the views of Durkheim, there seems to be an implicit assumption that the natural state of society is peaceful. He positions religion as something that brings cohesion and that peace automatically follows. However, some religious groups' beliefs require the destruction of other religious groups. For example, Millenarian Christians call for an apocalyptic war to usher in the second coming of the Christ, while the Islamic 'jihad of the sword' is seen as the only way to bring about an Islamic state (Love, 2006:627). Religious unity and cohesion can thus directly lead to violence and destruction. Berger (1969:44) recognised this by arguing that religious legitimations are an important way in which society motivates its members to kill or risk their lives in conflict situations. Weber also acknowledged it by arguing that social life is inherently pervaded with conflict. Unlike Marx, he believed that not only economic factors cause these conflicts, but that social relations are inherently conflictual, and that this is due to a variety of sources (Hughes *et al*., 2003:106). Religion is one of these sources.

Fifthly, all four theorists recognise the key role that society plays in the creation of religion. While they differ on the nature of the interplay, they concur that a group's context and experiences play a decisive role in the nature of beliefs that they embrace. This draws attention to the interrelated nature of society, culture and religion. Within sociology the distinction between culture and society is hotly contested. The term 'society' can be understood as referring to the level of organisation of a relatively self-contained group (Holmwood, 2006). 'Culture' is not the same as society, and it refers to the symbolic element of social life, and encompasses objects and activities that are primarily or exclusively symbolic in their intent or social function (Reed & Alexander, 2006). Nonetheless, there is a reciprocal relationship between the two, where culture influences the make-up of society, and society affects the form that a culture takes. This reciprocity is also present in relation to religion and, by extension, to churches as religious practitioners. In the religion of a group there will be an inherent societal bias, as well as a cultural bias. If religion is a reflection of a group's social context and of its members' individual experiences (as Durkheim and Berger argue), then it cannot help but include socially- and culturally-based beliefs and values. This explains the different forms that the same religion takes in different groups. At the same time it can be argued that this means that religion will rarely, or with much difficulty, be critical of the society and culture that spawned it. This issue is looked at in more detail later in this chapter.

Lastly, it is worth noting that churches, as institutions or communities of believers, are accorded a certain value. For Durkheim the church is a key component of religion and religious practice. A church is the framework in which the individual experiences and accesses religion. All those that believe are united into a single moral community and, as such, a church is a regularised social organisation of believers (Giddens, 1978:86). Berger emphasises the importance of churches by arguing that religious rites are important in providing stability to everyday life. Churches, worship services and religious communities are important venues in which these religious rites take place. Furthermore, as religion is socially constructed, it is maintained through the social interaction of individuals, which is excellently facilitated by churches. For many believers, their participation in a religious institution (such as a church) serves as the plausibility structure, or vindication, for their religion (Wuthnow, 1986:128-129). It can thus be asked whether it is possible to experience many of the positive effects of religion, such as social cohesion, socialisation and meaning-making, without experiencing and practising religion within a community of believers, such as that provided by churches. It remains an open question whether individual belief, or an individual practising religion on his/her own, can reap the same benefits from believing and doing religion.

3.3 RELIGION IN AFRICA: RELIGION AND POWER

What the above discussion illustrates is the influential role and impact that religion has in society. The focus now shifts to religion within a specific context, namely Africa. Religion in Africa[23] has experienced remarkable growth in the past century (Gifford, 1994; Bediako, 2000). From the latter part of the twentieth century, different forms of religion have experienced what has been called a revival and adherence to Christianity and Islam, the two dominant religions in Africa, has increased dramatically (Uzodike & Whetho, 2008:198). The forms that these two religions take are also evolving. Christianity is characterised by an upsurge of charismatic and Pentecostal movements, while a particularly political form of Islam is growing, especially in Northern Africa (Ellis & Ter Haar, 2004:1; Uzodike & Whetho, 2008:198).

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[23] Referring to 'religion in Africa' and 'Africans' view of religion' runs the risk of homogenising a large and heterogeneous continent. However, it has to be recognised that the applicability and validity of the size of the object of analysis depend on the issue being studied. For example, entire continents or even the world are often an object of analysis. Identification of common elements allows comparison, without denying that there is difference and uniqueness (Ellis & Ter Haar, 2007:393). Thus, while this chapter discusses religion in Africa, what is identified as common elements and generally true at no time precludes the possibility of exceptions. Furthermore, while it will be referred to as 'Africa', as with Ellis and Ter Haar the focus is on Sub-Saharan Africa, except when specific reference is made to North Africa.

Different reasons for this religious revival have been offered. It has been argued that it is a natural consequence of the so-called ‘crisis of modernity’. In a time when modernity and secular philosophies have been unable to give convincing explanations on the origin and destiny of human life, religion has become more attractive, as it does offer explanations (Uzodike & Whetho, 2008:202). Others argue that modernisation inherently strengthens and promotes religion, as it creates a stronger and more necessary role for religion within the public sphere, particularly in the process of state-building or revolutionary transformation (Rubin, 1994:23-24). The fact that secularisation theories have failed to accurately predict the future of religion in society, particularly in Africa, supports this point of view.

Many have argued that the political and economic crises on the continent – such as poor governance, state failure, and conflict – causes Africans to resort to religion to assist them in overcoming the challenges they face. On this level religion exists as a spiritual and emotional support structure, but also provides hope (Uzodike & Whetho, 2008:198-200). Ellis and Ter Haar (1998, 2004, 2007), however, argue that religion is prominent in Africa not only because of what it does, but also because of what Africans believe religion inherently is, and is therefore able to do.

Ellis and Ter Haar propose that religion is endemic and inherently present in Africa because of African beliefs in the spiritual source of all power. Power is the ability to shape your own and others’ lives (Ellis & Ter Haar, 2004:154). As all power in all spheres comes originally from spiritual sources (and is thus spiritual power), religion can be uniquely empowering. Africans see power as having its ultimate origin in the invisible world, and “for those who believe in it, spiritual power constitutes real and effective power” (Ellis & Ter Haar, 2007:390). Engaging with religion and having religious affiliation is in itself a political act and also an act of empowerment, as through this religious affiliation the African hopes to access power. Many Africans have multiple religious alliances, belonging to different religious faiths and congregations at the same time, and even faiths/congregations with conflicting beliefs, in an attempt to garner as much power as possible (Ellis & Ter Haar, 1998:177-178).

If all power then comes from the spiritual, invisible world, this has implications for religious leaders, political leaders and everyday Africans. This can explain why religious leaders in Africa have power beyond the religious sphere, why political leaders access religious institutions, and why Africans turn to religion when political structures fail. Accordingly, religious leaders are able to wield considerable power over individuals and society for two reasons. Firstly, as they have a number of followers, they have popular support, and because they are seen to have access to power coming from the spiritual world, they are perceived as having influence that political leaders lack and cannot easily manipulate. Thus, they are treated carefully by all because of this inherent power (Ellis & Ter Haar, 1998:191-192):

> The leader of a secular organisation may be placated with gifts of patronage or intimidated with the threat of exclusion or the application of coercion, but a president finds it more difficult to identify techniques for dealing with, for example, an epidemic of possession by evil spirits (Ellis & Ter Haar, 1998:191).

This is then possibly one of the reasons why churches continue to survive in hostile circumstances. Leaders of repressive regimes are afraid to crack down on churches and religious leaders. Political leaders in Africa do not avoid or ignore these potential threats to power. Instead, they actively access and engage with religious leaders. Accessing the religious sector with the purpose of winning votes is common throughout the world. However, Ellis and Ter Haar argue that in Africa this happens not only to garner support, but also as political leaders often believe that access to the spiritual world, as provided by the religious sector, is an important resource which may provide the vital edge over their political rivals. For example, President Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire was renowned as a devote Catholic, but throughout his career privately used various traditional African methods to access and influence the spiritual world (such as sacrifices, protective objects and divination) in order to better his rivals (Ellis & Ter Haar, 1998:188). Political leaders thus often cultivate relationships with religious leaders, using them not only in a political sense (because of the followers that they have), but also as advisers with expert knowledge and resources. For example, President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia employed an Indian guru, Dr Ranganathan, with whom he consulted on various issues. This of course again increases the power of the religious leaders, as they become confidants and brokers of power, often for many different political leaders (Ellis & Ter Haar, 1998: 189-192).

Based on this one can see that Ellis and Ter Haar's views in fact coincide with those of Durkheim, Weber, and especially Berger. Religion becomes a field of action which believers can occupy and control. That all power is understood to come from spiritual, invisible sources can explain why disempowered Africans turn to religion when the political sphere fails them. Religion is not only a reflection of external forces, but in itself constitutes a form of self-fashioning through which the individual can bring change (Ellis & Ter Haar, 2004:15). This explains why religion and religious structures tend to survive and continue functioning even in times of great instability and upheaval, especially in the light of state dysfunction. Both religion and politics are systems of ordering the power inherently present in human society. Thus, when one fails, people turn to the other. Taking this into account, the recent revival in religious belief in Africa is not truly a revival, as there is no reason to believe that religious belief ever declined in Africa. Rather, there has been a revival of religion within the political space as many states fail, or crumble into political chaos, and many Africans resort to religion and churches to access political power and bring stability.

Thus, while Ellis and Ter Haar, like Durkheim, Weber and Berger, argue that religion has the ability to provide stability in unstable times, they add a new element to this by arguing that this is done and doable because religion provides access to real power. Religion thus becomes a tool of empowerment. Arguably, though, Ellis and Ter Haar do not give enough credit to how this empowerment can at times lie at only a very basic level. Recourse to religion is not always a way of empowerment that brings stability. Sometimes it is done merely for survival, which is a very basic form of empowerment. Many people have religious affiliations simply because of pragmatic considerations. Belonging to a religious group not only provides companionship and emotional support, but on a practical level can help to meet basic needs, such as finding food, shelter and security. In the African context, where fulfilling these basic needs is often a daily challenge, religious affiliation is arguably often a practical choice. Multiple religious affiliations offer a means of survival. There are, as Roy Love (2006:623) points out, profoundly pragmatic, economic motivations for this that serve to address economic insecurity at a household level.

3.4 CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE/SOCIETY IN AFRICA

In discussing religion in Africa, it is worthwhile noting the practice of inculturation, with its objective of creating religion that recognises local culture. The practice of inculturation draws attention to the interdependence of religion and society. Since the 1990s, Africans have taken ownership of a distinct theological project which focuses on incorporating African culture into theology (a ‘theology of culture’) within a globalised context (Gifford, 2008:278-279). Inculturation is a model whereby theology is contextualised and where a faith from one cultural context is transplanted into another in such a way that the faith takes root and flourishes (Ter Haar, 2009:31-32). This is a recently-created model and approach to evangelisation, although not unique in the history of Christianity (Bosch, 1991:447).

However, when focusing on Christianity as a form of religion, it is clear that different cultures have already influenced how Christianity has been received, interpreted and reacted to. In the process of Christian evangelisation, Christianity takes on many different forms, each reflecting the particular culture’s characteristics. In essence, though, all of these cultural manifestations of Christianity are (supposedly) fundamentally the same (Ter Haar, 2009:3). Consequently, what one sees is that Christianity in Africa takes on something of the cultures in which it finds itself. This can be due to the natural process of Christianity being present in a culture for a long time, or due to recent concerted efforts to inculcate culture into Christianity. However, the risk of culture playing such a determining role is that faith becomes simply a religious replica of a culture - a religious echo of a culture. This is, in essence, what Durkheim and Berger argue, namely that religion is an ‘otherworldly’ justification or legitimisation for a societal system that we have created ourselves.

Whether one views religion as an independent system of belief that should consciously be adapted to incorporate culture (as with the inculturation perspective), or as being inherently reflective of culture (as it is a reflection and product of society), it inevitably means that religion finds it difficult to challenge the culture and society within which it is encapsulated. This is especially true with cultural beliefs and practices that lie at the heart of the religion’s beliefs and practices. Thus, churches through their religious leaders, for example, cannot (or find it very difficult to) criticise and transform cultural and societal practices or beliefs that are unjust if these form part of their own belief system. This brings us to the following point, which is the role of churches as civil society organisations and their ability to address injustices in society.

3.5 CHURCHES AS CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

The ‘centre of gravity’ of the Christian church has shifted southward, from the Western world in the north, to Africa, Asia and Latin America (Hendriks, 2007:27; Oden, 2007:10). Research by Lamin Sanneh (2003) and Philip Jenkins (2002) on Christian churches in Africa since the start of the 20th century has shown that Christianity has grown (Sanneh, 2003:14-15). Whereas the West is becoming more post-Christian, churches in Africa are growing and this rate of change is accelerating (Jenkins, 2002:80), meaning that the sheer number of churches and their proliferation all over Africa is contributing to their reputation as a key sector of civil society. While recognising that the definition of civil society is a contested issue (Hearn, 2001:43), the definition of Gordon White (in Hassim & Gouws, 2000:125) is used here as it is inclusive and allows for the diversity of organisations that are found within civil society. Civil society is:

> (A)n intermediate associational realm between state and family populated by organisations which are separate from the state, enjoy autonomy in relation to the state and are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extend their interests or values.

While there are many Christians in Africa, the churches in which they group themselves take different forms and this needs to be taken into account in defining the term ‘church’ as it is used here. This study broadly agrees with Becker’s definition of a church as being “any group of Christians” (Becker, in Hill, 1973:60). This allows for the broadest possible understanding of religious institution, avoiding Eurocentric definitions and understandings. At the same time, two caveats are added. Firstly, this group of Christians should be organised within a formal organisational structure. This structure need not be at a national or even regional level, but the group itself must have certain structures in place that dictate the positions within and activities of the organisation. Secondly, this group of Christians are organised for the purpose of practising religion. This prevents faith-based organisations (FBOs), which are also groups of Christians organised within a relatively formal structure, from being classified as a church. A church is a FBO, but not all FBOs are churches. Taking the need for a broad definition into account, as well as the two caveats, a church is defined as an institution of organised Christian religion with the main purpose of practising religion.

Churches are arguably an important resource for poor and marginalised people. Robert Putnam argues that social capital is essential to economically deprived people, as they have little recourse to economic or human capital (Leonard, 2004:935). Social capital thus becomes a key way of ensuring their survival and welfare, and churches are important producers of social capital.[24] The distinction between bonding and bridging social capital[25] allows for a more nuanced understanding of why this is the case. Churches are a key producer of bonding social capital, which is constructed in situations of trust and solidarity (such as is found amongst church members) and creates tight bonds and supportive structures between members of the same group. At the same time, churches can also be the source of bridging social capital, by being able to create cooperative connections with others, such as outsiders and outside organisations. Thus, churches can provide connection and networks between their members (bonding social capital) to their benefit, but also connections and networks to individuals and groups who are not part of churches (bridging social capital). For poor people, especially those in conflict-stricken areas, the social capital that they have access to by being church members provides emotional, spiritual and physical resources that enable their survival.

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[24] Social capital is defined here as the “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Putnam, 2000:19).

[25] Bonding social capital can be defined as social capital that is formed amongst homogenous groups, and only benefits those with internal access. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, enables the forming of connections and networks with others in the wider society. As such, “bonding social capital is good for ‘getting by’, but bridging social capital is essential for ‘getting ahead’” (Leonard, 2004:929-930).

Important to note, however, is that not all churches produce the same type or extent of social capital. Some, either by choice or due to limited resources and networks, emphasise their exclusivity and thus the production of bonding social capital. Others are able to connect to other organisations and networks to the benefit of their members (either individual members or the congregation as a whole) and are thus able to produce bridging social capital as well. Mainline churches are arguably more able to produce bridging social capital, because of their more extensive networks and resources, while African Independent Churches (AICs) and charismatic churches tend to be more focused on creating bonding social capital. Nevertheless, churches' ability to produce social capital is intimately linked with the fact that they are practitioners of religion.

As previously indicated, religion has a unique ability to promote stability, cohesion and solidarity. In times of upheaval and drastic social change there is a greater need for social cohesion and institutions that can actively contribute to community solidarity (Ter Haar, 2009:23). The social ties formed within churches are an essential part of the community infrastructure and sense of belonging (Ammerman, 1997:361). Churches, particularly AICs, have proven to be highly effective in promoting social cohesion during times of instability (Ter Haar, 2009:23). Churches provide spiritual answers to issues such as poverty and marginalisation in contexts where governments and international initiatives fail. For example, Paul Gifford believes that charismatic churches' adherence to prosperity gospel and deliverance theology is the main reason why they are growing so fast on the African continent. The economic challenges experienced on the continent contribute to the appeal of charismatic churches, as they offer a reason and solution to these problems (Gifford, 2004:172).

Accordingly, some will argue that churches' practical roles as CSOs are where they are making the biggest difference. Nowadays there is a growing recognition of the fact that religion occupies a central place in the lives of many people, thus development (both as practice, and as field of research) is starting to engage with it. Secular development agencies are engaging with religious organisations and communities in order to achieve their development goals (Devine & Deneulin, 2011:59-61). This is true of civil society in general, as various CSOs consciously align themselves with churches in order to benefit from their resources. They realise that churches have certain assets, such as physical space and community access and credibility (Taylor, 2005:564). Thus, these CSOs choose to align themselves with churches in order to further their own goals, and churches become an important resource and support structure to the rest of civil society. One drawback of church involvement in development is that many development agencies have unrealistic expectations of how religion can be utilised for development goals. Religion is seen merely as a tool for doing development in a more effective way (Jones & Juul Petersen, 2011:1291).

Churches' supportive role, both in society in general and to civil society, is also due to the fact that churches tend to be able to survive repressive political regimes. Civil society often does not survive armed conflict or oppressive one-party regimes. Official violence and systematic torture, surveillance and censorship, abductions and detentions without trial, and deadly use of arms by police and army is not an environment conducive to civil society (Sabar-Friedman, 1997:27). Nevertheless, due to the centrality of churches in these societies, it seems as if churches are often able to withstand and survive such repressive forces. Churches can remain zones of freedom when civil society is repressed by the state, and the political activities of the repressed organisations are taken over by churches (Okuku, 2002:85). Due to the importance of religion and churches to people, churches survive despite harsh conditions such as wars and oppressive governments. Thus, in many cases, churches have been the only institutions left to challenge government in authoritarian states (Walls, 2002:100).

One area in which churches' supportive role is of critical importance is service delivery. Churches have been at the forefront of service delivery in many African countries, particularly in the areas of health and education. Gifford (2008:276) argues that these contributions may even be increasing. Mainline churches have been particularly active socially, arguably due to their international networks which bring financial independence, which in turn allows them greater immunity from governmental control (Sabar-Friedman, 1997:29). Some churches' ability to withstand challenging conditions and provide for the practical needs of people has proven to be so effective that it has created an understanding and expectation that all churches should and can do the same. Within the African context, though the spiritual provision by churches is seen as important, the practical, physical support is just as critical a service.

This is possibly due to the state often failing to provide for the needs of its people. Churches step into roles traditionally filled by the state, which means that the relationship between church and state can become troubled. Firstly, a church can abuse this power. It can manipulate its position, abuse the resources channelled through it, and manipulate government for its own purposes. This manipulation can also be on behalf of external governments. Many have commented on the current trend of relocating resources and working through civil society rather than through the state in Africa (Osaghae, 2002; Pfeiffer, 2004). Claims are being made that money is channelled through civil society, and not through governments, in order for Western countries to influence and have control within these countries.

Secondly, as churches' power grows, so does the risk of corruption or illegal practices. It is worth noting that the theories of Ellis and Ter Haar (1998, 2004, 2007) discussed earlier serve to explain something of the dynamics of the relationship between state and church in instances where churches are the ones engaging in unjust or politically incorrect practices. These can include, for example, physically harmful baptism practices, corrupt church leaders, or initiating violent action against other religious groups. In many instances states are hesitant to openly and publically confront such cases. With religious leaders having access to spiritual power, confronting and condemning these leaders and their practices might have negative consequences for the state and government leaders. At a practical level, government leaders often do not want to alienate a large section of their constituency by condemning a religious organisation or leader's behaviour. Thus, while church leaders' relative independence from state and government structures at times means that it is able to effectively and consistently address injustice, it can also effectively and consistently perpetuate injustice.

Furthermore, the relationship between church and state can become troubled due to state control over civil society. Within the current development agenda in Africa the need for partnership between CSOs and government is emphasised, which calls into question the critical role of all CSOs, including churches (Hearn, 2001:44). When CSOs become intertwined with government, CSOs lose their ability to be critical of government, seeing that their existence depends on government (Hearn, 2001:51). Chris Allen (1997) goes so far as to argue that civil society independence is a mere ideological construct. Some CSOs are close to authoritarian governments and civil society growth in many instances depends on material support from government. Furthermore, many CSOs that were at one stage critically engaged with and opposed to government, in time stop being so. As they reach the reforms and goals they set for themselves, their leaders often become incorporated into national and local leadership, and they fall victim to corruption and clientelism (Allen, 1997:336). In the case of churches, this then means that they do not engage with injustice as active agents of change, but rather only fulfil the traditional roles associated with churches, or engage with service delivery. Thus, while the history of churches in Africa shows that they can be revolutionary agents of change, currently many choose not to play such a role due to dominant civil society practices or governmental restrictions. In extreme cases churches can even be used by government as a repressive force.

While churches thus have the ability to be key actors in addressing injustice, there are a variety of factors which influence their ability to do so. This is most ably demonstrated by reflecting on their ability to address two forms of injustice that are critical to this study – namely peace and reconciliation, and gender inequality. These two issues are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

3.6 CHURCHES AND PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PROCESSES

Churches in Africa have a long history of involvement in politics. For example, Kenyan churches played a key role in ensuring the first multi-party elections in Kenya (Sabar-Friedman, 1997), Malawian churches vehemently opposed the amendment of the constitution by the Malawian president (Ross, 2004), Angolan churches were instrumental in bringing about Angolan nationalism (Péclard, 1998), and churches in Cameroon were active in promoting Cameroonian democracy (Akoko & Oben, 2006). As outlined earlier, some have argued that this is because of the widespread failure, or at least dysfunctionality, of African states. With economic instability and the failure of the state, religious leaders and organisations have stepped in to fill the gap (Ellis & Ter Haar, 2004:100). There seem to be two reasons for why churches do this. Firstly, many churches see it as their responsibility and purpose to represent, assist, serve and support 'the people', who are often not only their congregants, but people in general. Thus, they continue doing so during times of upheaval and opposition, and they do it in the ways that are required, which may at times be through political action. Many churches believe that they have a right to do so, as their institutional powerbase gives them the right to say that they are representing 'the people' (Sabar-Friedman, 1997:32). Secondly, religious texts such as the Bible lend themselves to political ends, being used as subversive codes when more direct opposition to the status quo will not be tolerated. Grounding an argument in scripture allows subversive messages to be spread without eliciting the direct confrontations that might arise from less indirect approaches (Jenkins, 2006:143-144).

Churches' particular characteristics also make them a unique vehicle to influence peace processes in conflict-stricken states. Firstly, churches have a unique structure, with grassroots engagement in all communities and denominational structures both regionally and nationally (although this differs from church to church and might be absent in some). Hence, it has an organisational structure with reach. Secondly, it creates a space where its members can meet on a regular basis, increasing its ability to influence them, and can offer emotional and spiritual support to communities affected by conflict. It can also be effective in mobilising communities for peace (Haynes, 2009:61). Thirdly, the majority of the churches' members expect their church to shape and influence their worldview and decisions. Fourthly, church leaders are the most trusted group of leaders within African society (Ferret, 2005). Having church leaders drive, or at least support, peace initiatives engenders trust in such initiatives, and many church leaders have the ability to mediate between conflicting parties. Churches and church leaders are thus a channel through which reconciliation, dialogue, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration can be facilitated (Haynes, 2009:61). Lastly, many churches have extensive international networks, which can assist the peace processes. Therefore churches, as grassroots-engaged CSOs, have access to and engagement with people and their worldview, with the result that they often have an effect far beyond their immediate resources (Sanneh, 2003:38).

Although this is generally the case, churches do not always oppose undemocratic or oppressive regimes, and churches are not always involved in peacebuilding. Churches tend to be hampered by their own ethnic and political affiliations. This may lead to churches basing their political affiliation or resistance on their own ethnic affiliation and not necessarily on an ethical and moral decision to oppose an oppressive regime (Okuku, 2002:86). Also, churches and church leaders often tend to base their decisions for support or resistance on political patronage; in other words, basing the nature of their involvement on what will be of most benefit to them (Okuku, 2002:86). Often, resistance to oppressive political regimes has tended to come from mainline churches, while AICs and charismatic churches have tended to support the status quo. For example, in Kenya in the 1980s, when President Moi banned all opposition political activity, the leaders of the active opposition were effectively all Anglican, Presbyterian and Catholic church leaders. Charismatic churches and AIC's, on the other hand, generally supported Moi. For example, media coverage was given to Moi attending the Gospel Redeemed Church, where the pastor's sermon equated Kenya with heaven, for "[t]here is [also] only one party [in heaven] – and God never makes a mistake" (Gifford, 1994:529).

Furthermore, there are certain drawbacks to church involvement in political matters. As discussed earlier, there is the risk that the relationship between church and state can be manipulated. A regime can co-opt churches into supporting it in order to legitimise its programmes, or a church (group) can manipulate government leaders in order to reach its own ends (Love, 2006:631). Church involvement in political matters is therefore not necessarily for the good of the people in general. For example, during apartheid the Dutch Reformed Church was instrumental in legitimising the South African government's repressive and discriminating activities (Love, 2006:631). Secondly, also as referred to earlier, there is the risk that external, international governments can influence the in-country status quo through churches (Sabar-Friedman, 1997:34-40). This compromises the integrity of the country and decision-making within the country, while it also means that it is not necessarily the will of the country's people that is being represented by churches. Thirdly, while churches differ in their motivation for political involvement, they all tend to lack effectiveness when it comes to reconstruction. While they are good at opposition, or crisis mobilisation, they have a lamentable track record in long-term reconstruction. For churches political engagement is easiest if there is an obvious and clear injustice to confront, and it should not be unequivocally accepted that all churches have the ability to mobilise their congregants for peace, or to address issues such as gender inequality (Kassimir, 1998: 57; Ross, 2004:106).

3.7 CHURCHES AND GENDER INEQUALITY

As referred to in the previous chapter, both Walby (1986:68) and Millett (1969: 64-75) identify religion as one of the structures through which patriarchy is perpetrated and consolidated. Millet (1969:72) states controversially that "(p)atriarchy has God on its side" when arguing that religion is one of the eight factors that explain the existence of patriarchy. Walby, does not identify religion as one of the six key patriarchal structures, but this is possibly due to the Western bias of her work – where religion has declined – and as such does not recognise the importance and prevalence of religion and religious institutions in Africa. The fact remains that the overwhelming majority of African religions and religious institutions do not accept the autonomy of women. On the contrary, women are marginalised within religious traditions that support and uphold patriarchal societal structures (Uzodike & Whetho, 2008:218). Christianity is no exception. Christian tradition in Africa is an entanglement of Christian and African patriarchy (Museka, Phiri & Madondo, 2013:111). While African cultures and traditional religions were and are patriarchal, colonial governments and missionary Christianity introduced new forms of patriarchy (Van Klinken, 2013:31). Isabel Apawo Phiri argues (in Van Klinken, 2013:31) that at best Christianity was a mixed blessing for African women. It did oppose some cultural practices that were harmful to women, but at the same time imposed other forms of oppression that undermined women's human rights. This patriarchy is reflected in the language, culture, theology and ecclesiastical practices of African Christianity (Kalu, 2008:148). The patriarchal nature of Christianity does not seem to be lessening. In fact, across the globe there is an increase in conservative Christian beliefs that enforce patriarchy (Lawless, 2003:61; Nadar, 2004:359, 2009:141).

Historically, churches have been run by men and have had very conservative views on and attitudes towards female empowerment (Walker, 1999:18; Campbell *et al.*, 2011:1205). Church leadership continues to be mainly in male hands (Walker, 1999:18). As such, churches reflect society in general, as women occupy less important positions (compared to men) and church practices are based on societal practices (Kalu, 2008: 148; Manda, 2012:481). This is true of basically all African churches. The mission-founded churches espouse a patriarchal gender ideology, while the 'newer' AICs, though allowing for female prophetesses and founders, still restrict the role of women in the church by basing their gender ideology on indigenous society (Kalu, 2008:148). The charismatic and Pentecostal churches provide more space for women, but many still debate or restrict women's full participation, and limit their access to power and responsibility (Mwauru, 2005: 438-444; Kalu, 2008:149). The spiritual empowerment that women receive through these movements also does not necessarily translate into social empowerment (Soothill, 2010:96). Church support for patriarchy and gender inequality is not necessarily always overt. Their reluctance to speak about gender equality and related issues is perceived as indicative of their support of traditional practices and values (Marshall & Taylor, 2006:366).

Probably the most influential and decisive way in which churches support and perpetuate patriarchy is through their reading and interpretation of the Bible. As all feminists recognise, the Bible is a patriarchal document, one that was produced from within patriarchal cultures, and is interpreted by church leaders who are also situated in patriarchal cultures (Sakenfeld, 1988:6; Nadar, 2004:366). The most troubling aspect of Biblical interpretation results if the Bible is uncritically seen as the word of God. In such cases there is no critical or contextual engagement with the text, which leads to discrimination against women on various issues (Nadar, 2004:359). Furthermore, church leaders' selection of text can also be done in such a way as to perpetuate patriarchy. In her research on Indian Christian churches in South Africa, Sarojini Nadar draws attention to the way Biblical scriptures are selected that support cultural views on women (Nadar, 2004:359). While African feminist theologies emphasise that there is a need to transform and reinterpret the Bible so as to oppose patriarchal interpretations and acknowledge the experiences and worth of women, church leaders continue to show much resistance to such reinterpretations and re-readings of the Bible (Kanyoro, 1996:7).[26]

Churches' direct and indirect support for and perpetuation of patriarchal beliefs and practices extends to VAW and SVAW, particularly in the way churches differentiate between the physical and the spiritual, and teach that the spiritual is more important than the physical. It means that the problems that many women face – such as abuse and poverty – are seen as 'physical' problems, and they are encouraged to rather focus on 'spiritual' matters (Nadar, 2004:362). This means that VAW is not recognised as a serious issue and women do not receive the support they need. For example, they are encouraged to persevere and pray for their abusive husbands, in the belief that the Spirit will eventually convict their husbands of their (the husbands') wrongdoings (Nadar, 2004:365-366). Aside from this, many Biblical beliefs (such as those on submissiveness) instruct women to stay in abusive relationships (Nadar, 2004:365). Other Christian beliefs, such as that women are morally inferior to men and cannot rely on their own judgement; that suffering is a Christian virtue and that especially women are supposed to suffer; and that Christians must forgive and reconcile, all contribute to a situation in which Christian men can perpetrate VAW without remorse, and Christian women continue to stay in abusive relationships (Phiri & Nadar, 2011:87-88).

As a consequence of this, Phiri and Nadar emphasise the need to engage rationally with religion, for otherwise "those who seek to promote violence or harm in the name of religion… [will] pursue such aims more vigorously, because they do not have to answer 'rationally' for such aims" (2011:87). Keeping in mind the previous chapter's discussion on the link between patriarchy and violence, one can then say that churches are in fact upholding beliefs and practices that contribute to SVAW. While the previous section discussed churches' effective involvement in peace processes, one wonders whether churches could be more influential, for example by being able to forestall conflict or by transforming society in such a way that it does not revert to conflict, if they were not patriarchal themselves. Furthermore, the patriarchal nature of the church means that the individuals belonging to these churches are not sensitised or mobilised around some of the most present and pressing problems within their communities – such as SV, gender-based violence (GBV) and HIV – as these issues are to a large extent a result of patriarchy.

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[26] Rereading 'texts of terror' is a key activity of feminist theology. An example of such a reinterpretation is the story of Hagar, the slave woman belonging to Sarah. Sarah is unable to conceive, so she has Abraham, her husband, conceive a child with Hagar. A feminist rereading of this text recognises the various forms of oppression that Hagar faces (nationality, class and sex) and she becomes a symbol of oppression that many different women can relate to (Trible, 1984:27-28). Other classic examples of 'texts of terror' is Tamar's rape in the book of Samuel, and the betrayal, rape, torture, murder and dismemberment of an unnamed women in Judges (Trible, 1984).

Those churches that do address SV tend to do so only in a pastoral fashion. David Tombs (1999) draws attention to the fact that SV should also be treated as a theological concern, and not only a pastoral one. If it is seen as only a pastoral issue, to be addressed as a form of Godly love, it focuses only on survivors and runs the risk of being just one of many social Christian concerns that can easily be replaced with an issue that churches are more comfortable with addressing. Tombs argues that a pastoral approach be linked to a theological approach, through which SV is seen, described and recognised as part of the Christian story. A theological approach can create understanding amongst those who have not been sexually violated and allow them to have insight into and solidarity with SV survivors (Tombs, 1999).

It is unfortunate that so few churches do engage with SVAW comprehensively, for churches, at least theoretically, have the ability to change beliefs and practices relating to gender inequality. As discussed earlier in this chapter, religion has the ability to influence people on the level of their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. All religions proscribe behaviour, deeming some behaviours as appropriate and desirable, while others are seen as inappropriate and undesirable (Devine & Deneulin, 2011:61). At the same time this does not mean that religious individuals blindly follow the dictates of their religious institution. Individuals are products of a larger context than just the religion to which they subscribe, thus the practical, everyday context in which they exist also guides their decision-making and behaviour (Devine & Deneulin, 2011:61). Furthermore, official religious doctrine does not linearly determine individual and social practice (Devine & Deneulin, 2011:63). This link is arguably the most linear and direct in closed religious societies, such as the Amish, where the majority of the influences on the individual are controlled and monitored by the religion. However, in most parts of the world, religion is lived and interpreted within a heterogeneous context. This introduces a further reason why churches may find it difficult to transform patriarchy.

Churches, as religious institutions, that do want to address and transform patriarchy may find it difficult to do so if the expected belief and behaviour change runs contrary to cultural or societal norms and expectations. Robert Garner (2000) did a study in South Africa on three types of churches – mainline, Pentecostal and AIC – and their ability to influence and affect the behaviour of members. The majority of churches proved to be woefully inept. Even though churches might want to influence and change behaviour, they are not equipped to do so because of their doctrines, practices and the way they are structured, despite their reach, influence and power base. This is especially the case if the expected behaviour runs contrary to the members' self-interest or cultural expectations. However, if churches in more closed communities are more effective at determining beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, then churches can arguably be fairly effective in the type of communities examined in this study. More traditional, rural communities face less diverse influences and churches are of the few authoritative institutions present. Thus, while churches are not necessarily always effective in influencing beliefs and behaviour, they will arguably be more influential in more traditional, rural African communities.

Unfortunately, few churches seem to even attempt to review and transform their patriarchal nature. Civil society organisations have generally been guilty of reproducing the social power locations, the inequalities and the exclusion present within the society within which they find themselves (VonDoepp, 2002:274). Churches are no exception. There have been attempts to address the patriarchal nature of churches, and African feminist theologians have been active in voicing their concerns and opposition to the current state of affairs. African theological scholarship is increasingly focusing on issues relating to women's issues, yet it appears to have little effect at grassroots-level. Some argue that this is due to the focus on women's issues being superficial. An in-depth engagement with patriarchy is what is needed in order to transform the position of both men and women and patriarchal gender systems (Van Klinken, 2013:29; 57). Currently only symptoms are being dealt with, while the root cause – patriarchy – remains unaddressed.

Thus, even the 'superficial' addressing of women's issues seems not to be effective in influencing actual churches and church leaders, arguably because the root cause is not being addressed. Ezra Chitando and Sophia Chirongama (2012) argue that this is a result of priorities. Churches are not prioritising issues such as SV. Nyambura Njoroge (2005:460) concurs with them, by drawing attention to the fact that there is an enduring silence in churches surrounding human sexuality and violence against women and children. Chitando and Chirongama (2012:10) question:

> For example, why do male church leaders seem to have limitless energy when it comes to debates on homosexuality, but they appear frozen when it comes to confronting SGBV? Why is it that many of them are eloquent when it comes to challenging colonialism, but are completely speechless when the issues of sexism comes up?

Therefore it is clear that churches are not only *not* addressing patriarchy, but are actively contributing to the perpetuation of patriarchy through their principles and practices, the way they are structured, an in their interpretations of the Bible. In doing so, churches are contributing to the continuation of gender inequality and the perpetration SVAW. This is even more unfortunate when one realises that churches are actually one of the few institutions that are able to influence people's beliefs and attitudes, and could thus be influential in transforming patriarchy and its resultant evils.

3.8 CONCLUSION

Churches are the largest and most wide-spread sector of civil society in Africa. This is due to the role and impact that religion has in and on communities and individuals. Durkheim, Weber, Berger and Hervieu-Léger all examine the nature and role of religion in society and the individual, and the emphasis that each theorist places in his/her definition of religion highlights an important aspect of religion. Durkheim points out the interrelatedness of culture/society and religion, while Weber shows that religion can be the motivation for certain behaviours. Berger emphasises that religion can bring stability in troubled times, while Hervieu-Léger illustrates the ability of religion to create and promote social cohesion. Durkheim, Weber, Berger and Hervieu-Léger have different understandings of religion, but all emphasise the importance of religion within society and its important functions within a community. Thus, it is no wonder that religious affiliation is so widespread and growing in Africa. Religion socialises individuals and creates social cohesion and solidarity, makes life endurable through its interpretative framework, and provides stability. In the face of the various forms of unrest and armed conflict ongoing on the continent, the fact that religion provides community and stability in troubled times is of much value. Ellis and Ter Haar (1998, 2004, 2007) support this point of view when focusing on the relationship between religion and power in Africa. In the context of the instability which is so common in Africa, religion is a tool of empowerment for Africans.

These abilities of religion are arguably why churches – as institutionalised religion – have grown and are growing so fast in an Africa filled with unrest and instability. If one looks at a situation such as armed conflict, religion and churches have unique tools to offer solace and support to people feeling disenfranchised, isolated and overwhelmed. Churches have also been active agents in addressing these wrongs and have proven their ability to influence people and provide support. Churches are an important sector of civil society and their ability to create social capital is valued by many poor, repressed, and marginalised people.

Furthermore, in many African countries churches play a key role in service delivery, so much so that development agencies are engaging with churches in order to reach their development goals.

However, despite their abilities to assist marginalised and needy people, churches are not unequivocally in opposition to all injustices that face humankind. Looking at gender inequality in Africa, it was shown how churches fairly consistently refuse to engage with the issue. This is largely due to the interrelatedness of religion and culture/society. As Durkheim emphasised, religion is a product of society and thus churches, as religious institutions, are products of a social environment. This is why churches' ability to address injustice is limited, or at least challenged. If the root cause of an injustice is a societal or cultural practice or belief that is also ascribed to by churches, it is difficult for churches to even recognise the injustice. Furthermore, addressing it will require introspection and transformation, and transformation inevitably means loss of power for (at least some of) those in power.

Gender inequality is one such contentious issue. Gender inequality and the practices related to it, such as GBV and SV, is consistently unrecognised, ignored or left unaddressed by African churches. The patriarchal societies in which churches find themselves have created a patriarchal religion, and thus a patriarchal church. With churches being patriarchal institutions, they do not address gender inequality and the practices related to it, for the root cause of these injustices is patriarchy. Men, who are the leaders in almost all churches, consciously or unconsciously resist transformation of a system that favours them. The previous chapter emphasised that addressing SVAW would require the strategic step of transforming hegemonic masculinity and dismantling patriarchy. Until churches are willing to do this they cannot be effective in addressing SVAW.

This statement will be explored in more detail in the three case study chapters. Sexual violence against women, one of the practices resulting from patriarchy, is explored within the context of areas affected by armed conflict. The extent to which churches engage with the issue is examined as a way of testing the hypothesis that churches' own patriarchal structures and beliefs are limiting their ability to address certain injustices.

Chapter 4
Research methodology

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to explore what the causes and consequences are of SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict, and how African Christian churches are responding to these. In the previous two chapters, a thorough theoretical grounding was provided for the two key issues under investigation, namely SVAW, and the role of churches in addressing this. Before reporting on the findings based on the empirical fieldwork, it is necessary to explain how this study was conducted and what approach was used. Given that the aim of this study was to establish the causes and consequences of sexual violence and how the church was responding to this, a qualitative approach was chosen. This approach was adopted due to the fact that little is known of the role that African churches are playing in addressing the scourge of SVAW, both during and after armed conflict, and what enables or limits their ability to do so.

A multi-case study design was used in order to capture the extent of SV, its causes and consequences, and how churches respond to this in different settings. The reason for this is that the three case studies indicate how SVAW is used in three different political, social and military contexts. In this chapter, the reasons for adopting a qualitative approach and case study design are discussed, along with how the various case studies were chosen, the approach to sample and data collection, the data collection methods, data analyses process, the research process, and the ethical considerations.

4.2 A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

A qualitative approach was considered more suited to this study as it allowed the researcher to investigate issues that require explanation or understanding of phenomena in specific contexts (Snape & Spencer, 2003:5). A quantitative approach would have not provided the kind of rich and in-depth data required to understand why churches have difficulties addressing SV. Also, this study deals with a variety of complex, interlinked issues – sexual violence, armed conflict, religion, and churches – which cannot be measured by a questionnaire. A more inductive and interpretivist approach is needed when it is not fully understood why certain events occur, or how these are being dealt with and understood (Bryman, 2008:366; Babbie & Mouton, 2010:270-274).

4.3 CASE STUDY DESIGN

A case study design using multiple cases was used for this study in order to establish how much context influences the extent of SV, and how this is addressed by churches. A case study approach also allows contemporary phenomenon to be investigated in depth and within a real-life context, and allows one to consider more variables and multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2009:18). The fact that so many perspectives and accounts can be collected and integrated allows for the development of a very detailed, in-depth understanding of the research issue, which, in a multi-case study approach, strengthens one's ability to generalise the findings. One can therefore say that a multiple case study approach provides a more holistic, comprehensive and contextualised understanding of the issue that is being studied (Lewis, 2003:52).

4.4 CASE STUDY SELECTION

The DRC, Rwanda and Liberia were selected as case studies for this study. These research sites were chosen as they have many similar elements, but are unique in other aspects. In the DRC, fighting started in 1996 and is ongoing. Fighting factions have included different African governments, as well as rebel groups and militias. Sexual violence against women is rampant in the DRC, being perpetrated by all of the fighting groups against all categories of women. Sexual violence is highly stigmatised in the DRC, and large-scale rejection of and discrimination against SV survivors almost always occurs (Bartels *et al.*, 2010:1-5). Rwanda, on the other hand, experienced a three-month genocide in 1994 that almost obliterated the Tutsi population, and included horrific acts of SVAW, usually by Hutu men against Tutsi women, and condoned by the Rwandan military and political authorities. A notable fact of the genocide in Rwanda is that churches, specifically the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church, were involved in the atrocities that were committed during the three months (Bastick *et al.*, 2007:55). The third case study country, Liberia, had a civil war that lasted for 14 years and ended in 2003. The government's armed forces, West African peacekeepers, and different rebel groups were all involved in the war and in the perpetration of SVAW. Ethnic identity is seen as having played a significant role in SVAW, with specific fighting factions targeting women of specific ethnic groups (Swiss, Jennings, Aryee, Brown, Jappah-Samukai, Kamara, Schaack, Turay-Kanneh, 1998:628). However, as there were so many different fighting groups, all women were at risk.

These research locations represent different types of armed conflict (war, genocide, civil war), different experiences with peace (ongoing fighting, peace for seven years, peace for 16 years), and differences in the duration of the conflict (ongoing, three months, 14 years). Ethnic allegiance also played/plays a differing role. In Rwanda, SVAW served the purposes of genocide, while in Liberia, although there was often ethnic motivation for the SVAW, it was not part of attempted genocide but rather to display control. In the DRC, ethnicity plays a rather insignificant role, with all women serving as targets through which power and control can be illustrated. Nevertheless, despite these differences there are significant similarities between the three cases. In all three, Christian churches are strong, important social institutions, widely spread throughout the country. All three countries are patriarchal, with significant gender stereotypes and power imbalances giving men control over women. Sexual violence against women is/was an effective weapon in each country, effective in dominating civilians, and seizing and maintaining control of a civilian community. Furthermore, in all three countries SVAW is/was very common, heavily stigmatised and rarely talked about.

4.5 FIELDWORK

From April to July 2010, the researcher conducted research for Tearfund in the DRC, Rwanda and Liberia, and this study is based on the data collected during the fieldwork for this initial project.[27] The research was done over a period of four months, of which one month was spent on site within the DRC, Rwanda and Liberia. In each country, the researcher was assisted by a partner organisation of Tearfund, in terms of setting up the interviews, providing counsellors and interpreters, and arranging venues for the sessions. In the DRC this was HEAL Africa, in Rwanda the Rural Development Inter-Diocesan Service (RDIS) and the African Evangelistic Enterprise (AEE), and in Liberia EQUIP Liberia.

A total of 244 people participated in the research and the researcher personally conducted all of the sessions. The table below gives the exact number of participants for each country.

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[27] The data is used in this study with the permission of Tearfund. However, the opinions and views expressed here are those of the author.

Table 4.1 Number of participants in each country

RESEARCH TECNIQUE	**DRC**		**RWANDA**		**LIBERIA**	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Structured interview questionnaire	8	22	7	23	8	23
Survivor interviews	-	9	-	9	-	11
Leader interviews	6	4	11	8	22	7
Nominal groups	6	13	2	19	11	15
Subtotal	*20*	*48*	*20*	*59*	*41*	*56*
TOTAL	**68**		**79**		**97**	

4.6 SAMPLE

The unit of analysis for this study is people, for the focus was on obtaining the views of community members on churches. These participants were selected from two sites, one urban and one rural, within each country. This was done in order to give a more representative reflection of the situation in the country. However, these sites were chosen based on the partner organisation's access to them and the logistical infrastructure available to facilitate the meetings. Hence, sites were chosen where the partner organisations were active and could source the required participants, as well as provide venues where the sessions could be conducted in privacy. In the DRC, and in Liberia to a lesser extent, safety was also an issue, thus two locations were chosen where the researcher could travel with relative safety and which were easily accessible by air and road travel. In the case of Rwanda, the sites were in two different provinces, thus making it more representative of the country in general. In both Liberia and the DRC, the two sites were fairly close together, but were representative as they were located in the part of the country where the most SVAW occurred (and is still occurring, in the case of the DRC).

With the structured interview questionnaire, 15 people per community participated. A purposive sample was chosen, so as to allow for the exploration and understanding of the issue being studied (Ritchie *et al*., 2003:78). In other words, participants were chosen that are relevant to the research questions (Bryman, 2008:458). It would be impossible to interview a representative sample of the community, due to money, time and safety constraints. Therefore, a sample was interviewed that represented the age groups, genders, ethnic groups and backgrounds of the community in general, but who could typically comment on the extent of SVAW and churches' reaction to this. Partner organisations were specifically instructed and trained to select participants that meet such criteria.

Five SV survivors were interviewed in each community. Because in all three countries women are hesitant to talk about their experiences of SV, the partner organisations were limited by only being able to select women survivors who were willing to talk to the researcher. This was the only qualifying criteria for survivors. The survivors that were identified and willing to be interviewed were all either involved in a programme of the partner organisation, or were part of a programme of one of their (the partner organisations') partner organisations. Furthermore, eight to 15 community leaders were interviewed in each community. These leaders were identified by the partner organisation, with the instruction to identify leaders from all sectors of the society (government, religious, traditional, health, civil society, etc.). The sample was thus also purposive based on these criteria, but in terms of demographics could be of any gender, age, or ethnic group. Lastly, one nominal group session was done within each community, with a purposive sample of eight to twelve participants in every session. People were invited who would be willing and able to give their opinions. They could be of any gender, age, or ethnic group, as long as there was variety that was representative of the community.

The result of the selection technique and reliance on partner organisations is that there is a decided sample bias. Those who participated were not randomly selected from the community, but were people that the researcher had access to and who (usually) had a relationship with Tearfund either directly or indirectly, but nonetheless were fairly representative of the broader society. While this has implications for the validity of the study, the researcher compensated for the sample bias in the following ways. Firstly, three case studies were done, and two different sites were used in each country. Findings that are present in both locations arguably increase the validity of the findings, as do findings that are the same in all three countries. Secondly, the partner organisations and the researcher put much effort into identifying participants that were representative of their community. For example, the interviewed survivors are representative of survivors in general, as they were of different ages, ethnic groups, had different experiences of SV, etc. The representativeness of the participants, as well as the validity and reliability of the findings, were attested to by the partner organisations' response to the findings. They affirmed that it accurately describes the situation in the communities that they serve, and in the countries in general.

4.7 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Individual interviews are particularly suited for such a sensitive and complex topic as SV. Thus, two types of interviews were done, namely structured interview questionnaires, and semi-structured in-depth key informant interviews. This allowed for flexibility to explore people's personal perspectives, provided opportunities for clarification, and gave an in-depth understanding of the person's views.

A structured interview questionnaire[28] consisting of twelve questions was administered by the researcher in one-on-one sessions with community members. The structured interview questionnaire was always the first form of data-collection in each community, as this method allowed one to gather information that could inform the rest of the data collection process within the community. While structured, participants were allowed to go off the topic and to discuss interesting and relevant issues. The reason for using a structured questionnaire during the interviews with the 15 community members, was to ensure that all the needed information was collected, and for the purpose of comparison, as all participants were asked the same questions. Thus, an overview could be provided of the general trends in the community regarding gender equality, SVAW during and after conflict, support offered to survivors, and churches' responses to SVAW. This also allowed comparison between country responses, as the same questions were asked to the same profile of respondents. Furthermore, it enabled the researcher to keep to a time schedule, which meant that more people could be interviewed, allowing a better overview of community opinions. The interviews were done at a venue identified by the partner organisation. Survivors came to the venue by themselves or were collected by car by representatives of the partner organisation. A session lasted between 25 and 60 minutes.

In-depth, one-on-one, semi-structured key informant interviews were done with two sectors of society, namely SVAW survivors, and community leaders.[29] The method of selecting these participants was stipulated in the previous section. Survivors were interviewed as they could give the most accurate description of the experiences and support available to SV survivors, particularly in relation to churches. With the survivors, the focus of the questions was not on the sexually violent event, but rather on the support survivors did (or did not) receive afterwards. Survivors were questioned on family, the community, and churches' reaction and interventions in relation to SVAW. This was to enable an understanding of how churches deal with survivors, as well as of the broader context in which churches respond to SVAW.

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[28] Included in Appendix A.

[29] The interview schedule for the survivor interviews is included in Appendix B. The interview schedule for the leader interviews is included in Appendix C.

The interviews with SV survivors were done at a venue identified by the partner organisation, one where survivors felt comfortable and safe talking about what happened to them. Survivors came to the venue by themselves or were collected by car by representatives of the partner organisation. The interviews lasted between 20 and 60 minutes each. As with all of the interviews and group sessions, a trained counsellor was available for survivors in case of need. However, they were never required.[30]

Leaders from different sectors of society were interviewed, as their leadership roles enabled them to comment on SVAW and churches' responses from their respective positions. With the leaders, the focus of the questions was to gather information regarding their institution's or sector of society's response to SVAW (for example, government leaders reported on government's response to SVAW), on the nature and extent of SVAW in the community, and how churches are responding to it. The interviews with community leaders were done at a venue chosen by the leader, usually his or her office. In rural areas, the partner organisations identified a central venue to which the leaders came to be interviewed, either by themselves or collected by car by representatives of the partner organisation. The interviews lasted between 20 and 60 minutes.

Focus groups were done in the form of nominal groups. Nominal groups are structured, using the following five steps: a) group members individually and silently generate ideas in response to a single, central question posed by the group facilitator; b) individual, round-robin feedback is given by the members, and their ideas recorded on a flip chart; c) clarification of each idea is given, where needed; d) group members individually and anonymously vote on and rank the priority of the ideas; and e) discussion of the results of the group's voting and the potential next steps (Sink, 1983:174). This differs from conventional focus groups that allow for a more fluid discussion of issues. With the standard focus groups, the emphasis is on the interaction between the group members, but this is not the case with nominal groups (Bryman, 2008:474).

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[30] The use of counsellors is discussed in more detail in "4.10 Ethical clearance".

The reasons for adopting this approach, rather than the standard focus group method, were as follows. The first, was the issue of language and interpretation. An interpreter had to be used with all group sessions,[31] although in Liberia usually only to elucidate when differences in accent made understanding difficult. This ensured that the same issues were dealt with in a uniform manner. Doing a standard focus group with an interpreter would have been extremely time consuming and disrupt the natural flow of conversation. With a nominal group, however, translation is not disruptive, as participants spend much time thinking and working on their own. A second reason for the use of nominal groups was to control, as much as possible, for power dynamics within the group. As mix-age and mix-gender groups were done, there was a real possibility that older and male participants could dominate the conversation and intimidate some participants into not sharing their ideas, especially with a topic as extremely sensitive as SVAW. With a nominal group, participants are not allowed to comment on each other's ideas, and voting is done anonymously. Thus, the results are more representative of what all of the group members think. Thirdly, as nominal groups allow for the generation of more ideas than traditional focus groups, more information could be gathered in a shorter amount of time. There was also no discussion of potential next steps based on the group's voting, as the aim of the group was to generate ideas which can inform the research, and not for the group to use for strategic planning, as is the case with many nominal groups.

The question the nominal groups focused on was "What should churches be doing about SVAW". This question was selected in order to have participants reflect on what the most important and suitable issues and activities are that churches should address. Some participants were illiterate, and could not write down their ideas or follow the list of ideas on the flip chart. This challenge was overcome by the interpreter assisting the participants in the writing of their ideas. The list on the flip chart was read aloud repeatedly. Each idea was given a number, and as all the participants, including those who were illiterate, could read and write numbers, they were able to vote on their own.

The group session was done at the time most suitable for the participants, which was usually in the morning, and at a venue identified by the partner organisation. In the groups there were always more women than men, which was arguably due to more women being self-employed or unemployed, because they were more willing to engage in such activities, and also because of the subject matter. Participants came to the venue themselves or were collected by car by representatives of the partner organisation. The nominal groups lasted between 90 minutes and two and a half hours.

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[31] This is discussed in more detail in "4.9 Using an interpreter".

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Inductive, thematic analysis was done of the data. During all sessions, extensive field notes were taken, as well as a digital recording of each of the interview and group sessions. At the close of each research day, the researcher reviewed the field notes, as well as listened to the recording of some of the sessions. A basic thematic analysis was done in order to identify the key issues and themes that emerged during the day. At the close of research in a country, the same process was conducted, and the dominant themes of the data gathered in the country identified.

When analysing the data for this study, these themes were reviewed. Together with the specific topics and issues introduced through the interview schedules, a basic conceptual framework was developed of the recurrent themes. The digital recordings of each session were then transcribed with this conceptual framework in mind.

These transcriptions were then imported into ATLAS.ti. The themes identified in the conceptual framework were used to code the transcriptions, as well as new ones that emerged during the coding process, with textual terms being used to indicate the essence of a theme or subtheme. Examples of such textual coding terms are “Church and survivors”, “Stigma and discrimination”, “SV and husbands” and “Physical”. The data from each country was coded separately. The codes for the different country case studies were mostly the same, but each country had between two and four unique codes. For example, with the Liberian data the researcher coded for “Dress”, but not with the Rwandan or Congolese data.

ATLAS.ti functionality was then employed to produce output for each individual code (in Word format). The synthesising of coded themes and subthemes was done in Word. For example, in reviewing the data for “Physical” and “Psychological”, these were grouped under the main theme of “Consequences for survivors”.

The reliability and validity of the collected data, and thus of the data analysis and subsequent findings, relied on a process of triangulation. Various steps were instituted with the specific aim of ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the data. Methodologically, the different data collection methods, the different types of participants, and the different communities and countries, all enabled triangulation of the gathered data. In other words, where the same things were found with different types of participants, communities, and countries, and via using different research tools, the reliability and accuracy of the findings are arguably strong. Another level of triangulation is provided by relying on the findings of other studies. For example, various other studies point to the stigma and discrimination that survivors face, thus supporting the findings from this study.

4.9 USING AN INTERPRETER

An interpreter was used with all of the data collection except in Liberia, where an interpreter was only needed in approximately a third of the sessions, usually only to help where differences in accent inhibited understanding between the researcher and participant. A different interpreter was used in each country, and the researcher trained each interpreter prior to the start of the fieldwork. As the researcher has advanced tertiary training in translation, there was an awareness of what issues should be stressed, and the interpreters were well-trained on the structured interview questionnaire, the two interview schedules, and the format and process of the nominal group. Furthermore, the researcher has extensive experience of doing interviews and groups with an interpreter. The researcher was able to build a good rapport with each interpreter, which greatly facilitated the effectiveness of the interview and group process.

4.10 ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Ethical clearance for the 2010 empirical research was applied for and received from the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee: Human (Non-Health) in South Africa. On application, the ethical clearance was extended to include the current academic study. The stipulations of the ethical clearance were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Key aspects were that all participants were 18 years and older, participated voluntarily, did so anonymously[32] and completed consent forms prior to participation. All of the partner organisations gave permission for the research to be conducted in their area of influence, and trained counsellors, who were able to speak all of the relevant local languages, were present at the venues where the researcher was conducting sessions. Furthermore, the researcher has advanced tertiary training in counselling, and thus was able to conduct interviews in a sensitive manner, which was especially important with the SV survivors. Aside from being able to see a counsellor during or immediately after a session, the participants were also informed of how they can contact a counsellor should they wish to speak to one at a later stage.

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[32] While first names were recorded on the researcher's field notes, this was done to assist the researcher in organising her notes and remembering names. These names were not captured electronically, nor formed part of any transcription or report. Field notes were, and still are, kept in a locked cupboard and office at all times.

4.11 REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

While one plans the fieldwork in the finest detail, unplanned and unforeseen factors also influence data collection and thus the nature and quality of the data. It is worthwhile reflecting on these factors, which include my positioning as stranger within the communities, the cultural and physical contexts in which the research was conducted, the influence of the interpreters, and the role of my own expectations and preconceived ideas.

While I was a stranger in all of the settings where the fieldwork was conducted, this arguably assisted the research process. Counter-intuitively, participants find it easier to talk to a stranger about such highly sensitive issues as SVAW, and this is especially the case with SV survivors. Participants did not know me, which made it easier for the participants to be honest, as they knew they did not run the risk of me disclosing the information to their community members. However, this insider/outsider dynamic also included the possibility that participants might perceive the outsider as ‘using’ them for their stories and opinions, thus gaining or even benefitting from their (tragic) experiences. The possibility of this misperception occurring was countered by fully explaining to each participant the nature of the research, how what is learnt can impact their lives, and informing them of how they can personally access the research results (which was organised via the partner organisations).

My personal characteristics as a stranger arguably also played a role in the research process, specifically my race, gender and age. Firstly, I am white. This can complicate the relationship with the participants, as within such war-torn and unstable contexts white people are associated with relief efforts and thus with the possibility of hand-outs. This complication was addressed – to the extent that it can be addressed – by the fact that I was always introduced by representatives of the partner organisations, who knew all of the participants. They would explain my position and the purpose of my being there, and were able to create a context in which I was – while still an outsider – perceived as a partner, both to the partner organisation but also to the community. In this way the partner organisations helped to counter the power dynamic and expectations that almost inevitably surface when a white outsider meets with an African local.

Another way in which this power dynamic was negotiated was by my age. I was 27 years old at the time of doing the research, and I arguably looked even younger than that. Within all of the cultural contexts experienced during the fieldwork, seniority brings authority. As most of the participants that I interviewed were older than me, the ‘power’ they had as being my elders acted as counter to the ‘power’ I had by being white. I furthermore put a lot of effort into being approachable and non-threatening, drawing on my training as counsellor, which I believe was effective. Using counselling techniques also assisted in creating a setting in which the interviews or groups could be conducted without the obvious power imbalances that are created when a researcher interacts with the research subject.

While being young thus worked in my favour, being female also did. With SVAW being such an extremely sensitive subject in all of the country contexts, survivors and women in general find it easier to talk to another woman. While some men may have found it difficult to talk to a woman about SV, this discomfort was arguably countered by the fact that their culture gives men elevated status. Thus they were able to approach the topic and discuss it with me from this elevated position, arguably making it easier for them.

Throughout the research process I was very aware of the cultural context in which I was functioning. Prior to commencing the fieldwork, background research was done on the different countries and cultural contexts that would be visited. Furthermore, within each country I had a local informant with whom I liaised prior to the fieldwork, and who provided me with an insider’s perspective on cultural issues that could impact the research process and data. For example, I was informed on the appropriate way to dress in each cultural context, thus ensuring that I did not offend even the most conservative of participants. These are issues that influence how I am perceived, which in turn influence people’s willingness to participate and be honest, thus influencing the nature and quality of the data.

Culture influenced the research process in other ways as well. In deciding on the research tools, what was learnt via literature and personal informants regarding the culture and cultural sensitivities was taken into account. For example, as I was aware that SV is so heavily stigmatised, I decided not to conduct focus groups with survivors, fearing that they would be unwilling to disclose and/or discuss what happened to them within a group context. Furthermore, I decided that willingness to participate was the only qualifying characteristic for selecting survivor participants. Furthermore, as I was aware of the cultural power dynamics based on gender and age, I decided to conduct nominal groups with community members, rather than standard focus groups, in order to counter these power dynamics. The actual questions and interview schedules were also influenced by the local contexts. The questions that were asked of participants were designed and discussed with experts in each country prior to the fieldwork. Thus, while Goma was the first site where the research tools were used and thus functioned as a pilot test for the structured interview questionnaire and interview schedules, very little revision was needed afterwards. Only the order of the questions in the structured interview questionnaire was changed (Question 9 was asked second). The designed tools thus worked surprisingly well from the start, arguably because they were designed with the cultural contexts in mind and with local input. Furthermore, the interview schedules for the key informant interviews were deliberately designed in such a way that the questions were general and broad, and the interviews approached in such a way that participants were allowed to largely dictate the nature of the conversation. This allowed the participants to help form the nature of the questions and the data that is gathered.

In these ways the cultural contexts influenced the research methodology and tools and thus the research process. However, the physical context also influenced the research process and forced me to adapt. For example, in Liberia most of the sessions were conducted outside under a tree, for the enclosed spaces that were provided were either not private, or too hot and humid for comfort. Furthermore, safety was a continuous concern, although not so much in Rwanda. In Liberia no travel was allowed during twilight or night-time. In the DRC I had to stay in a compound guarded by armed guards, and travel during the day with a male driver and escort (aside from the country representatives and interpreter). Furthermore, the last day of research in Sake had to be cancelled due to the renewed outbreak of violence. While safety was thus a concern, I had complete trust in the partner organisations with whom I worked. As they had the local knowledge I worked within the boundaries they set, meaning that they felt comfortable working with me, but also that I was able to conduct the research without constant fear for my safety. It also meant that safety concerns rarely influenced the research sessions, except in the case of Sake. As no leader interviews could thus be done in Sake, I adapted and did extra leader interviews in Goma.

Another major influence on the research process and the collected data was the interpreters, as I had to work through an interpreter in almost all of the sessions. As discussed in the previous section, the interpreters were trained prior to research commencing in the country. Furthermore, the interpreter was usually a stranger to the participant. As with the researcher as stranger, it is generally easier for participants to be open and honest with an interpreter that is a stranger. In the few cases where the interpreter was known to the participant, the interpreter was a trusted person, and thus the participant felt he/she could be open and honest. Nevertheless, despite the training and the good rapport with the interpreters, working through an interpreter does influence data. For example, one misses out on the nuances of language that gives an indication of unspoken feelings and opinions. When doing English-speaking sessions in Liberia I was reminded of this, as I could see how much easier it is to connect with a participant if you speak the same language. Nevertheless, it would have been impossible for me to conduct the research on this scale without an interpreter.

The final key influence on the research process was my own expectations and preconceived ideas. Prior to commencing the research I was expecting to find that churches are doing basically nothing to address the causes and consequences of SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict, and that participants will be very critical of churches. Previous work and research that I have done on churches have led me to believe this. However, I was aware that I had this expectation, thus I focused on not allowing it to influence my formulation of questions and conduct during interviews. The fact that the research showed that people are positive about churches and their abilities arguably show that I was able to create a space in which my expectations did not unduly influence the participants.

4.12 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter served to explain how the empirical research for this study was conducted. In implementing this qualitative approach, findings were generated that speak to the research objectives of this study. In the next three chapters, these findings are reported on case by case, starting with the DRC.

Chapter 5

SVAW and churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The DRC, a former Belgian colony, became independent in 1960, and was ruled by Mobuto Seso Seko from 1965-1997. His rule was authoritarian and characterised by corruption and ruined state institutions and infrastructure (Stearns, 2011:7). His increasing unpopularity arguably paved the way for regional coalitions to seek to overthrow him and resulted in the First Congo War starting in 1996. The country has been involved in two different wars, from the periods 1996 to 1997 and 1998 to 2003, with violence still continuing. Although fighting continues, the current fighting is often described as post-conflict violence,[33] with ongoing violence and regular violent outbreaks in eastern DRC. The ability to stem this conflict is complicated by the involvement of many different actors and countries, such as Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia, that have all (at different times) been active participants in the conflict, as have various rebel groups and militias, such as the infamous *Maï-Maï* and the *Interahamwe*.

The estimation is that over five million people have died in these violent conflicts and wars (CAFCO, 2010:71), millions of people have been displaced (US Department of State, 2012), and, according to the DRC government, more than a million women and girls have been sexually violated (Peterman, Palermo & Bredenkamp, 2011:1060). This is a very conservative estimate, as a nationally representative household survey study by Peterman *et al* (2011:1064) indicates that, in the age group 15-49 years, 1150 women were raped every day in only the preceding twelve months. Furthermore, the state appears unable to stem or address the consequences of this. This void has been filled by civil society, where many local and international CSOs are trying to address SV, to little avail, partly because they are unable to function in these security contexts. In this regard, churches are of the few remaining and functioning institutions that are in a position to address the issue. Within the DRC, it is present within even the most rural, hard-to-reach areas, and as the overwhelming majority of Congolese are Christian, it is a CSO with reach and scope. Religious networks in the DRC have considerable influence in the public sphere, and they organise particularly around issues such as peacebuilding and service delivery (Whetho & Uzodike, 2008:57).

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[33] The term is meant to indicate the continued existence of violence, despite peace being declared formally.

In this chapter, the role of churches in addressing SVAW is explored within the context of Northern Kivu, one of the provinces hardest-hit by the continued conflict and SVAW. The background to the research is sketched by briefly examining the nature and causes of the war in the DRC, its consequences, the contributing factors, and current interventions, with a specific focus on churches. Thereafter the findings of the empirical work are discussed, by looking at the nature and consequences of SVAW, the contributing and facilitating factors, available interventions and intervention agents, and churches' particular roles in addressing the causes and consequences of SVAW.

5.2 NATURE AND CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT IN THE DRC

The conflict in the DRC has been described as a civil and an international war, as both international and local fighting factions are involved. The First Congo War, which started in October 1996, was initiated by the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL), which included Rwandan, Ugandan, Burundian and Congolese troops (CAFCO, 2010:70). The war was arguably triggered by the influx of Hutus, including militias, fleeing after the Rwandan genocide, and it ended with the toppling of Mobutu Seso Seko (Stearns, 2011:8). The Second Congo War started when President Kabila fell out with his Rwandan and Ugandan allies. In this war, Rwandan and Ugandan troops marched on Kinshasa to oust Kabila, and Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia provided military support to Kabila, thwarting the attempt (US Department of State, 2012). Active participants in the ongoing conflict also included rebel groups, which are often supported by foreign governments. For example, the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) had Rwandese support, while the Congo Liberation Movement (MLC) was backed by Uganda (US Department of State, 2012). The war was brought to an end by the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement. Nevertheless, violence continues due the ongoing existence of rebel groups and private interests. *Interahamwe* – Rwandan Hutu militia – are active especially in the eastern parts of the DRC, as is the militia group the *Maï-Maï*, the FDLR (*Forces démocratiques de liberation du Rwanda*), and the newly-created March 23 Movement, commonly known as *M23*. The Ugandan rebel group The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is active in the Orientale Province of the DRC (CAFCO, 2010:71; US Department of State, 2012).

Explanations for the DRC conflict vary. Many argue that the primary reason for the fighting is the country's vast natural resources, especially the DRC's reserves of precious rare metals (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2004; CAFCO, 2010:71-72; Gilpin & Boor, 2012). Governments in the Great Lakes Region, as well as international governments, want access to these resources, adding to the conflict (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2004). Some argue that the conflict is solely due to international powers' involvement and manipulation of the situation in the DRC in order to further their own interests and access to natural resources (Turner, 2007:8-9). Local militias and rebel groups also strive to control mines and mining activities, as a way of ensuring wealth and power (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2004). While there is merit to the view that the fighting is over natural resources, the DRC government's inability to implement the rule of law facilitates the violence. The collapse of the Congolese state, lack of good governance, and high levels of corruption create a potent mix of greed and grievance which fuels the conflict (Turner, 2007:8-9). Added to this, the inability of government to exercise control of their borders and territory has meant that light weapons flow easily across borders from neighbouring countries into the DRC (Turner, 2007: 8-9; CAFCO, 2010:71-72). The influx of refugees due to other conflicts in the Great Lakes Region has also contributed to the violence (CAFCO, 2010:71-72), as ethnic and xenophobic tensions are heightened.

There have been many attempts to resolve the conflict. Different ceasefire agreements have been signed since 1999, all to be violated. A transitional government and constitution, a referendum, and elections have all been organised to facilitate peace and reconstruction. Various agreements with neighbouring countries have been signed, all in an attempt to establish permanent peace. The international community has also contributed to peace efforts, through the *Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo* (MONUC) and *Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en République Démocratique du Congo* (MONUSCO). MONUC was established in July 1999, with a mandate to observe the ceasefire and maintain liaison with all the parties involved. Later this mandate was expanded to include the supervision of the implementation of the ceasefire agreement, as well as many political, military, rule-of-law and capacity-building tasks (MONUSCO, 2012). In July 2010, the mission was altered, leading to the establishment of MONUSCO, with its goal of stabilising what MONUC's peacekeeping operations have accomplished. MONUSCO differs from MONUC in a number of ways. Of particular interest to this study, MONUSCO's mandate recognises the extreme human rights violations, specifically SV, occurring in the DRC. MONUSCO has been authorised to "use all necessary means to carry out its mandate relating, among other things, to the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel and human rights defenders under imminent threat of physical violence" (MONUSCO, 2012). It also has the responsibility of ensuring civilian protection from international human rights and humanitarian law violations, including all forms of sexual and gender-based violence (MONUSCO, 2012).

Nevertheless, conflict continues in the DRC, so much so that the *Cadre Permanent de concertation de la Femme Congolaise* (CAFCO) states that the DRC has not experienced true peace since it gained independence (CAFCO, 2010:72). A worrying element of this conflict is the prevalence and extreme nature of SVAW, especially in the two eastern provinces of Northern and Southern Kivu.

5.3 CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONFLICT FOR WOMEN

Internationally, the DRC is recognised as a failed state (Trefon, 2010:702), and its ongoing state reconstruction process seems to be failing too. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), 50% of the Congolese population is undernourished, and corruption is ingrained and institutionalised within state structures (Trefon, 2010:704). Despite the fact that the country is rich in resources, the international community has contributed between half and a third of the entire Congolese state budget. The failed justice system has also meant that the human rights abuses, for which the conflict is infamous, are continuing with impunity (Trefon, 2010:704-714). The high mortality rate is mostly due to disease, malnutrition and the collapse of the health system (Puechguirbal, 2003:1274; Whitman, 2006:30), and more than 1,7 million Congolese are internally displaced persons (IDPs) (UNHCR, 2012). Health services were neglected even during the Mobutu regime, and rates of access and utilisation of medical care continue to be low (GAVI, 2010). Local communities suffer under the ongoing conflict and there are few employment opportunities. Basic public infrastructure, such as schools, roads, market places and health facilities, have either deteriorated, or been destroyed due to the ongoing wars (Puechguirbal, 2003:1273; CAFCO, 2010:73).

Women continue to be the most affected by this violent conflict (Whitman, 2006:43). While some have been active participants in the conflict and associated with the various armies and militias in the position of porters, nurses, cooks, sexual slaves, spies, etc., they are in the minority, and have remained outside of the governmental DDR programmes (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010). The majority of women are not actively involved in fighting, but their livelihoods are destroyed in the process, especially where they are driven off their land. An estimated 75% of the displaced and refugee population are women (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010). Where women are able to eke out a subsistence living, they often fall victim to looting and robbery, and while unemployment has generally increased, women’s unemployment has risen the most (CAFCO, 2010:73). Furthermore, the lack of health facilities affects women disproportionately. The DRC has one of the highest rates in the world of maternal and infant mortality. In 2006, the maternal mortality rate was estimated at 1 289 per 100 000 live births, while infant mortality was 115 per 1000 births (GAVI, 2010). Moreover, women are the target of severe violence, which includes rape, forced amputations, decapitation, intentional HIV contamination and live burials (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010), but very little medical help is available to them.

However, the consequences of war for women have not been entirely negative. Women in the DRC have demonstrated self-empowerment by mobilising for peace (Whitman, 2006:30). Here they have been supported by international organisations such as the Office of Gender Affairs (OGA - founded in 2002 as part of MONUC), the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM – now operating under a new name, UN Women), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and *Femmes Afrique Solidarité* (FAS) (Agbalajobi, 2010:244). During the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD), women mobilised and lobbied for representation. Although woefully few – only 9% of the delegates were female – these women consulted and networked before, during and after the ICD process, in order to achieve a unified view of key issues at the dialogue, creating a declaration and plan of action for all women at the ICD (Whitman, 2006:39-40). Local and national women's organisations have also sprung up, mobilising around issues such as SV, poverty, orphans and peace (Kanengoni & Mukenge, 2008; Akina Mama wa Afrika, 2011:20; WANGO, 2012). At grassroots level women empowerment is also visible, as women embark on informal trading and in this way become independent and gain new skills in the process (Puechguirbal, 2003:1274).

Unfortunately, one of the most disheartening realities is that, when men return from war, they tend to re-establish patriarchy and often VAW then increases. While VAW arguably has always been a part of culture in the DRC, due to the persistent gender inequalities that characterise the society (Freedman, 2011:171), it has increased since the start of the armed conflicts (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010). Sexual violence is continuously used as a weapon of war and intimidation (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010; Casey, Gallagher, Makanda, Meyers, Vinas & Austin, 2011:1050) and is committed by all the armed groups, including UN peacekeepers (Meger, 2010:126). Furthermore, it has become 'normalised', with civilians also perpetrating SV with impunity (Freedman, 2011:171). While there have been national and international appeals to end SVAW, it continues unabated (CAFCO, 2010:72; Casey *et al*., 2011:1050; Peterman *et al*., 2011:1060). The sexually violent acts include gang rape, abduction as sex slaves, forced participation in sex with family members, and the mutilation of women's genitalia with guns, knives, sticks and hot plastic (Meger, 2010:126; Peterman *et al*., 2011:1060). The consequences of SV for women have already been discussed at length in Chapter Two.

5.4 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE MARGINALISED SITUATION OF WOMEN

While Congolese women suffer because of the ongoing conflict, the conflict is not the only reason for their marginalised and disempowered position. Gender inequality is an engrained part of Congolese society and facilitates the indignities suffered by women during the conflict. Women are socially disadvantaged within their communities, with men considered superior to women (Meger, 2010:127), and traditional customs continue to place women in a subordinate position. This means that the opportunities available to men and women differ. For example, literacy and education is much less common amongst Congolese women, with 41,1% of women being illiterate, compared to 14,2% of men. Girls consistently have less access to education than boys, with 42% of girls not finishing primary education (Freedman, 2011:172). Social stereotypes and norms emphasise the importance and superiority of masculinity. Men are expected to have a high sex drive, have multiple sexual partners, be able to pay for sex, have the financial means to afford one or more wives, and be able to protect their wives from other men (Meger, 2010:129). Polygamy is common amongst men and practised with impunity, as is adultery and the practice of *deuxième bureau.*[34] Yet the same acts committed by a woman have severe repercussions. For example, married women who commit adultery are legally punished more severely than married men who do the same (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010). Being married is an important indicator of social status for women (Meger, 2010:129-130), and thus any act that can threaten this status is avoided by most women.

What is important to remember is that, prior to the wars, VAW was not an uncommon occurrence. Traditional laws provided for it. For example, the rape of a girl is resolved by the victim's family and the perpetrator's family agreeing on the form of restitution that should be paid to the girl's family (Meger, 2010:129). Nevertheless, the continuous SV committed with impunity has contributed to the development of a culture of SV. Both civilians and soldiers do so with the belief that they can perpetrate these crimes without any retribution whatsoever (Meger, 2010:128; Freedman, 2011:171). This impunity is mainly a result of the judicial system not functioning, despite the fact that the government has ratified numerous conventions that call for the ending of all forms of discrimination against women. These include the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women,* the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and the *Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa* (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010). Furthermore, in 2006 the DRC Constitution recognised the principle of equality of men and women, by stating that the state has a duty to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, including (specifically) VAW (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010; Freedman, 2011:173). Despite the country being signatories to these treaties and making constitutional provision for gender equality, Congolese women are still legally disempowered and discriminated against. For example, although by law land and concessions can be given to both men and women without distinction, traditional attitudes prevail and women rarely own land (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010).

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[34] This is when a married man has extramarital relationships with several women at the same time.

This gap between law and reality is most aptly illustrated when it comes to SVAW. Recognising the high rates of SVAW, the government in 2006 passed two laws specifically to address the problem. The one provided a definition of rape that includes both sexes and all forms of penetration, and established penalties for rape. The second law defined the criminal procedure that must be followed with rape cases. In 2009 the government also adopted a National Strategy on Combating Gender-Based Violence, with a detailed Action Plan for its implementation. Nevertheless, the laws are rarely implemented and there are few prosecutions of SV perpetrators (Freedman, 2011:173). Laws are ignored or misinterpreted by magistrates and cases brought to the police are usually not investigated. For example, in 2010 less than one out of every three SGBV cases reported to the police were followed up (IRIN, 2011). The fact that the cost of bringing such cases to court is very high and are to be paid by the survivor herself, contributes to the fact that SV laws are rarely enforced (Freedman, 2011:173; IRIN, 2011).

Furthermore, Congolese laws exist that contradict the principle of gender equality. The Family Code, Labour Code and Penal Code make discriminatory provisions that treat women and men differently. The DRC Family Code, for example, states its aim as adapting rules to suit the “Congolese mentality” (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010). The Code legally positions the husband as head of the household, declares that the woman must obey him, states that married women must have their husbands’ authorisation for any legal act, establishes the primacy of the father when there are disputes regarding children, and states that should the husband die the wife must share the running of the household with a male relative of her deceased husband (Puechguirbal, 2003: 1273; Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010). The Family Code also contradicts SV laws. While SV laws define sexual contact with someone younger than 18 years as rape, the Family Code permits women to marry at 15 (IRIN, 2011). The fact that customary law is still abided by is another way that gender inequality is promoted. Customary law remains powerful, especially in rural and conflict-ridden areas, and is used especially to settle inheritance-related issues. Customary law even at times directly contradicts statutory law, for example allowing for transactional fines for sexual abuses (Akina Mama wa Afrika, 2011:21-22). Thus the DRC's official and legal stance on gender equality does little to change traditional views of and laws regarding women and their position, and at times even supports it. While the DRC is theoretically progressive regarding SV legislature, the fact that the laws are not implemented or enforced reinforces the unequal and disempowered position of women. This discrimination extends to the economic sphere.

Within the DRC poverty is feminised, with 61,2% of female-headed households living below the poverty line, compared to 54,3% of male-headed households (Freedman, 2011:171). Women are consistently economically marginalised due to factors such as a lack of access to land and property and appropriate technologies, as well as general insecurity (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010). Women can rarely find work in the formal sector – in part because they need their husband's permission to do so – and are mostly active in traditional agriculture and the informal sector (Puechguirbal, 2003:1273; Freedman, 2011:172). Those that are active in the formal sector generally earn less than men in the same position, and only 2,8% of Congolese women are employed or engaged in state-paid activities, in comparison to 12% of Congolese men (Mpoumou, 2004:120; Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010). While active in the informal sector, with an estimated 90% of market traders being women, they rarely have positions of power on the committees that run these markets (Puechguirbal, 2003:1273).

The economic marginalisation of women is exacerbated by women often illegally being denied pensions and rights of inheritance. Married women are even more vulnerable than unmarried ones, as they are unable to open a bank account, obtain credit, travel or start a business without their husbands' permission. Nevertheless, despite all these challenges women remain largely responsible for the survival of their families. Through their mostly informal small income-generating activities, they support themselves and their children (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010). An estimated 73% of those active in agriculture are women and they produce 80% of food crops in the DRC (Bartels *et al.*, 2010:44). Women are responsible for such a large share of the agriculture that it can be argued that they are the backbone of the DRC's subsistence economy, despite being economically marginalised. However, the ability to be productive citizens is not only curtailed by the legal and economic disadvantages they face, but also by their lack of voice and participation in the public and political sphere.

While the DRC has ratified international agreements that provide for women filling political positions, Congolese legislature adopts contradictory provisions. While the constitution demands gender parity in elected institutions, this provision need not be adhered to in the compilation of parties' lists of candidates. As there are no incentives or coercive measures to ensure female representation, gender inequality within politics remains (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010; Freedman, 2011: 172). This inequality extends to the National Assembly and the Senate. Following the 2006 elections, only 8,4% of the National Assembly, 4,6% of the Senate, and 6,8% of representatives in provincial assemblies were women (Freedman, 2011:172). There are Congolese groups lobbying for greater female representation in political decision making, such as *Réseau des femmes ministers et parlementaires* (REFAMP)[35], but it remains difficult for women to enter and be heard in the formal political arena (Freedman, 2011:172). This is true also at a local level, with women often being excluded from village meetings and councils that determine local policy (Puechguirbal, 2003:1273). Women are hindered from entering the political arena, as they generally lack the economic resources needed to run an election campaign. However, the societal stereotypes regarding women is arguably the strongest hindrance, with women not being seen as having any place in politics (Freedman, 2011:172). Cultural factors, such as their familial responsibilities, their fear of competing with men, general low level of education, high levels of ignorance, and physical security-related fears contribute to women not entering politics (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010).

Within the judiciary the same gender imbalance exists. Most of the senior positions in the judiciary are filled by men, no women are judge presidents within the different courts in the DRC, and there is only one woman Supreme Court judge (Vyas-Doorgapersad & Lukamba, 2011:103). The gender inequality continues during peace negotiations. With the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, for example, women demanded 30% representation, in line with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) standards. As stated earlier, despite international lobbying and pressure, only 9% of the delegates were women (Freedman, 2011:39). The Congolese government strongly opposes the participation of women in peace negotiations and women's organisations face challenges such as violent opposition and lack of funds (Mpoumou, 2004:121-122).

5.5 ADDRESSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Based on the preceding discussion, it is clear that achieving gender equality, which is often considered necessary to reduce the vulnerability of women, is extremely difficult in the DRC. This has meant that most interventions aimed at addressing SVAW have tended to focus on care as well as prevention. As indicated earlier, the DRC constitution makes provision for the elimination of any form of SV, and in 2006 new SV laws were adopted that have a wider understanding and recognition of SV (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010). These laws are unfortunately rarely implemented and SV remains widespread. Mbambi and Faray-Kele (2010) blame the DRC government for this, arguing that it does not truly prioritise the issue:

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[35] REFAMP is a group of women parliamentarians and ministers.

> The government has not demonstrated political will to effectively enforce these laws. Therefore the DRC national institutions have failed in their responsibility for bringing perpetrators of sexual violence… to justice, mainly due to amnestied crimes, weak judicial system and poor infrastructure.

The government is therefore not playing any real role in addressing SV, as it does not provide the needed infrastructure, nor any real political will, to address gender inequality in general and SVAW specifically (Freedman, 2011:173). Furthermore, it does not address the fact that the legal system is ineffective, corrupt and slow (D'Odorico & Holvoet, 2009:56) and that widespread impunity results. This, survivors and experts argue, is the main cause of the continued SV (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010).

The state's failure to provide basic functions such as security and rule of law causes a vacuum within society, one often filled by CSOs. Non-governmental organisations are an active sector of civil society, and the government makes allowance for them in its constitution and laws and requires registration.[36] Many international NGOs (INGOs) are present in the DRC, including Oxfam GB, Save the Children, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Red Cross, International Rescue Committee, ActionAid, and Medical Emergency Relief International (MERLIN). Different UN bodies, such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the FAO all operate in the DRC (UNHCR, 2013). With SV such a prevailing problem, many of these have some form of intervention aimed at SV prevention and/or care. *Action des jeunes pour le Développement Communautaire et la Paix* (ADECOP), *Avocats Sans Frontieres Congo* (ASF – Congo), and the Congo Reform Network are examples of just a few of the local organisations also actively engaging on the issue of SV (WANGO, 2012). Unified interventions exist as well, such as the Congo Advocacy Coalition, which was established in 2008 to address SV and consists of over 100 aid agencies and human rights groups, including Congolese NGOs. This coalition lobbies, amongst other things, for the protection of civilians in North and South Kivu (Mowjee, 2009:16).

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[36] Nevertheless, there is no complete database and it is thus unclear how many NGOs are active in the DRC. A 2004 survey by the Ministry of Planning found more than 4000 (NGO Regulation Network, 2012).

Various women's NGOs, women's organisations and networks of women are present in the DRC, all actively involved in promoting the rights of women, with the result that there are approximately 4000 registered women's organisations in the country (Puechguirbal, 2003:1275; Akina Mama wa Afrika, 2011:34; Vyas-Doorgapersad & Lukamba, 2011:100). Women's organisations and networks such as Common Cause, the Women's Action Network (RAF), the Association of Women Lawyers of Congo (AFEJUCO), the Women Caucus, the Permanent Framework for Consultation of Congolese Women (CAFCO), and the National Network for the Defence of Women's Rights (RENADEF) actively mobilise and lobby around women's issues. SVAW is an issue addressed by most, though in different ways. Lobbying by women's organisations has had results, such as the adoption of new laws on SV (Akina Mama wa Afrika, 2011:24-25). Nevertheless, the women's movement in the DRC is still very patriarchal. Women continue to be included in key government positions at the whim of men, while women's NGOs are sometimes created and run by men. The women's movement is also not a unified movement, with ethnic, class, and intellectual differences causing division. Power struggles, lack of professionalism, experience and infrastructure, the primarily reactive nature of interventions, and division amongst women's organisations all combine to hamper the development of women's organisations, and the movement in general (Akina Mama wa Afrika, 2011:31-32,36).

Thus, while civil society in the DRC has grown, it is arguably not yet a genuine political force. It is challenged and undermined by issues such as the politicisation of many CSOs, groups and networks, civil society's lack of resources and capacity, and continued repression and abuse by the government, specifically of human rights defenders (Akina Mama wa Afrika, 2011:18-19). Civil society mobilisation around SVAW is also not as effective as hoped for. While the civil society services offered in relation to SV varies, it is primarily short-term and focused around a single issue. Furthermore, interventions are often very limited and not sustainable (D'Odorico & Holvoet, 2009:55-56). Thus, civil society seems to be focused more on short-term care interventions and lack long-term interventions that can facilitate SV prevention. A manager of a local organisation explains their situation, which aptly illustrates the dilemma that civil society faces in terms of SV:

> …once the international funds [were] finished, we were not able to go on with the income-generating activities. Therefore, the victims were again alone, without any support to survive and feed their children. There do not exist specific and long-term programmes to address poverty, in particular of these women who are extremely vulnerable (D'Odorico & Holvoet, 2009:56).

Therefore SV remains a serious issue that is not addressed comprehensively enough. Both government and civil society are failing to address the various causes and consequences of it, which directly or indirectly contributes to the continued perpetration of sexually violent acts.

5.6 CHURCHES AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

One sector of civil society that does seem to have some influence are churches. They “wield enormous influence in the public space as providers of social services in a polity that has been characterised by years of misrule, declining state capacity and protracted conflict” (Whetho & Uzodike, 2008:57). Religious networks are the biggest sector of Congolese civil society (Whetho & Uzodike, 2008:73) and an estimated 79% of the Congolese population are Christians. The Roman Catholic Church is the most popular, with 50% of Congolese belonging to it. Protestant denominations[37] are supported by 20% of the population, while Kimbanguists (who are also classified as a Christian denomination) represent 9%. Other religions include Islam (9%), Animism/Traditional religions (0,7%) and Baha’I (0,4%) (Adogla, 2010:17). Conflicting religious figures exist – some sources put Christianity at 90% - but this is arguably due to a Congolese tendency to affiliate with not only one religious grouping, and basing their religious identity and identification on situational and pragmatic choices (Whetho & Uzodike, 2008:61). Religion is part of the social fabric of society and is regarded as so important that atheism and agnosticism are considered non-existent (Adogla, 2010:17).

One can thus conclude that the church as an entity is an influential part of society. The Catholic Church, for example, has considerable power and influence in a variety of spheres. During the Mobutu regime it opposed the state’s excesses and was seen to represent the ‘voiceless’ Congolese, and in the early 1990s it played a key role in democratising the DRC. Now, with the ongoing conflict, it strives to offer moral guidance to society, and provides many health, education and communication services to their members and the broader community (Prunier, 2001: 139, 142-143, 156). Particularly in relation to the conflict in the Kivu provinces, “…the [Catholic] Church is more than ever seen as a social guarantor of the last resort as well as the only moral and intellectual authority remaining in this society which has been ripped apart by war” (Prunier, 2001:1600). Other religious organisations, such as the *Église du Christ au Congo* (ECC)[38] and the Kimbanguist Church also have significant membership, great resources, and strong international ties. Thus, these religious organisations are autonomous structures that rival, or arguably even surpass, those of the state (Whetho & Uzodike, 2008:63).

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[37] These include the New Apostolic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Seventh-Day Adventist, Pentecostal, Baptist, Anglican, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Evangelical, Mennonite, Church of God, Mormon, and Copts.

[38] The ECC is the *Church of Christ in the Congo*, a group of Protestant denominations.

Given the vacuum left by the state, churches are influential and autonomous organisations that offer not only spiritual support and voice, but are actively delivering services. Churches often work closely with NGOs, especially NGOs propagating a Christian agenda, through which they provide basic services such as medical care, education and training. In fact, some churches and denominations establish NGOs to source funding and manage intervention activities. For example, Panzi hospital in Bukavu (renowned for its care for SV survivors) was founded with assistance from the national Pentecostal Church Organisation (CEPAC) (Hôpital Gr De Panzi, 2013), while HEAL Africa in Goma is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that provides medical, legal and social care for all Congolese (and especially SV survivors), but also has its own church based at its headquarters in Goma. Faith-based health care is common in the developing world, with 30-70% of its health care being provided by faith-based organisations (IMA World Health, 2010). Churches are also politically involved, mobilising Congolese to vote and educating them on the election process. They support peacebuilding initiatives, for example being part of the ICD, and pressurising political leaders to seek peaceful solutions to their political differences. The international community recognises the importance of the religious sector of civil society in the DRC, as is illustrated by the 2006 UN Security Council delegation scheduling a meeting with the heads of various Congolese religious organisations (Whetho & Uzodike, 2008:63-70). Churches mobilise around SV as well. For example, the Anglican Church of Congo has piloted an integrated HIV and SGBV programme, through which religious and community leaders are trained on gender and SGBV-related issues (Albert, 2012). With the recent outbreak of violence due to the M23, the Anglican Church of Congo, together with the Congo Church Association, has called for prayer from all, including the international community, specifically for an end to SV (Maule, 2012).

Unfortunately, many (if not most) churches in the DRC remain uninvolved in addressing SV, or even actively oppose mobilisation around women’s issues (Akina Mama wa Afrika, 2011:37). Churches tend to not address SVAW and in many cases condone or facilitate sexually violent practices (Akina Mama wa Afrika, 2011:36) as they uphold a male-dominated patriarchal system that does not promote the advancement of women (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010). Fortunately, some churches do recognise that this system should change and that churches should actively address SV. In 2009, the World Council of Churches (WCC), an international ecumenical fellowship of 349 churches to whom many Congolese churches belong, issued a formal statement on SVAW in the DRC, recognising this injustice and calling on all churches to address the issue. The statement acknowledges churches' refusal to address the issue and their complicit role in SVAW:

> …it is deplorable that churches are not coming forward to condemn these evil atrocities. The churches seem to relegate sexual violence to the private sphere, and still understand violence as exclusively physical, disregarding the psychological, sociological and spiritual effects entirely, as well as the breakdown of community. "Open secrets" of religio-cultural, social and even church practices which put women's lives at risk continue unabated, while sexual violence and the risks of HIV infection increase at an alarming rate every day… Instead of continuing with the unjust trend of blaming the victim or accusing the survivor, as if she is the one who is the sinner, the perpetrators of violence should be addressed for transformative justice (WCC, 2009).

Thus, churches in the DRC are institutions with influence and power in society, and use this influence in other spheres than merely the 'religious'. Nevertheless, despite mobilising for issues such as peace, they appear to be hesitant to address SVAW and its consequences. This will be explored in the next section, when the empirical research done in Northern Kivu is unpacked to determine churches' involvement in addressing the issue of SV.

5.7 FINDINGS

Against this background the empirical research is presented. The research was done in two communities in Northern Kivu, namely Goma (the capital city of North Kivu) and Sake (a rural town). The research infrastructure was organised by HEAL Africa, a local NGO that began as a hospital specialising in orthopaedics and fistula repair, but now has many programmes aimed at addressing SV within Northern Kivu and the DRC (HEAL Africa, 2010). An interpreter was used for almost all of the interviews and sessions, and was called on to use his knowledge of French, Swahili, Lingala and Tshiluba in order to assist the researcher in conducting the different sessions.

In total, 30 people (22 women and eight men) were interviewed with the questionnaire. Nine SVAW survivors were interviewed. Two nominal groups were conducted, which had 19 participants in total (13 women and six men). Ten leader interviewed were done, four with women and six with men. Unfortunately, all of these were with Goma leaders, as interviews with Sake leaders could not be conducted due to renewed violence breaking out in Sake during the research visit.

While the nature and focus of the different sessions were varied, it all focused on gathering information on the nature of SVAW and its consequences, the factors contributing to and facilitating SVAW, the available interventions and intervention agents, and the particular role that churches are playing in addressing SVAW.

5.7.1 SVAW and its consequences for women

While nine survivor interviews were done in the DRC, a further twelve women voluntarily indicated during the questionnaire interviews that they had been sexually violated, some sharing their stories and experiences. Of the 31 people who partook in the questionnaire interviews, only four indicated that they do not personally know someone who had been sexually violated during the war.[39] Participants defined SV in one (or both) of two ways, namely as *sex without consent* or *sex by force*. The 'force' indicated actual physical force or threat of physical force. Three participants included acts that are generally described as VAW or GBV, for example refusing a woman her basic human rights or a right to property. Only five participants referred to sexual violence against men (SVAM), explaining that it is not very common and where it did occur, male survivors were even less likely to disclose this than female survivors.

Generally, participants described SVAW as vaginal sex, while some described acts such as gang rape and sexual torture (such as forcing objects into the vagina or having family members engage in sexual acts). One Goma survivor told a particularly horrific story of how she was gang raped:

> *So, they took me in hostage with my two kids. And I came with them and they did nothing to them, but they were abusing me sexually while my children are watching. And all the vaginal liquids, they would just take it and give it to my children to drink.*

There appeared to be no safe spaces for women from the threat of SV. They were sexually violated whilst working in their fields, when hiding in the forests, while in their own houses and even when walking along the road. There was no particular location or behaviour related to being sexually violated, and the participants implied that being sexually violated is almost inevitable – implying that there were no specific measures or practices that could prevent this from happening. All those interviewed indicated that the consequences are far-reaching.

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[39] These four, of whom three were men, were all from Sake.

The Goma survivors of SV, for example, had all suffered extreme physical consequences. All have had multiple operations and still need more. One of the Goma survivors told her story:

> *I was just hiding myself where others were hiding...Now people just came and raped most of us…Some women escaped, because they were strong enough to escape. But I was pregnant. As I could not run, now those armed groups just came to me and they raped me and they left me like half-dead. And now, as the dawn break, I could not walk, I could not do anything. And then I was just lying on the road. People were just passing by to come and see who died, who was still alive. And they found me, I'm still alive… Although I went through five medical surgeries and I haven't yet recovered, there are many things that improved with my health. Because I was walking for a long time with a colostomy bag, to drain, but it is removed. Although I'm still leaking, my bladder hasn't yet been fixed...*

The inability to heal physically is one of the biggest challenges facing survivors. A Goma survivor, who was raped six years previously, explained that despite multiple operations she has still not recovered: "For me, I can never be comfortable. I came here for medical help, but I have never been healed. That is the main concern in my heart… as I cannot recover." Physical debilitation includes diseases, such as HIV and Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Many survivors expressed a sense of helplessness and despair, which is exacerbated by the fact that they often do not understand the disease that they contracted, as reflected in the following remark of a Goma survivor: "You have treatment, a lot of medications that you have to take forever and you do not know why you have to".

The psychological condition of SVAW survivors was repeatedly referred to by both survivors and other participants, usually as "mental instability" or "losing my/her mind". Survivors told of the ongoing psychological consequences that they are faced with. Many continue to have bad dreams and flashbacks to the attacks(s), even though it had been many years since it happened, while some suffer from panic attacks and insomnia. Mention was made of symptoms that indicate PTSD, as is depicted in this statement of a Goma participant:

> *Once a woman is sexually violated it is not easy to have peace of mind, because you always think about the bad things that happened. She herself feels she must be tested, she wonders if she might have gotten a lot of bad diseases. Because she has all these bad thoughts she loses her mind.*

Besides the psychological and physical torture this inflicted upon the survivors, it also affected the livelihoods of these women in other ways. Survivors are usually rejected by their family, friends and community. The standard response of a husband is to abandon his wife, by forcing her to leave their home, if she is sexually violated by another man. The words of a Sake survivor was echoed by almost all of the survivors: “Yes, I was married. But I was kicked out by my husband because of what happened”. It was indicated that this happens everywhere and is the accepted social response to a sexually violated wife. This is why women prefer not to disclose SV, although this is not easy to do, as one Sake survivor explained: “I did not tell my husband, he just knew. He knew, because no-one can hide it, it is very easy to discover that”. This is arguably because SV is often so violent, leaving tell-tale physical signs and damage. Nevertheless, some female participants indicated that they sought medical help in secret, so as to try and prevent their husband from discovering what happened. A Goma leader explained what survivors usually do:

> *Once a woman was sexually violated… if there were not many injuries, if it was not so severe, then the woman will just keep quiet, she will not break the silence. She will not dare tell it to the husband, otherwise she will be rejected and kicked out. If it was not severe, she will hide herself, and maybe go secretly to [NGO offering health care to SV survivors].*

A Sake male participant’s explanation for his attitude towards SVAW survivors illustrates the extreme stigma and rejection that survivors face from their husbands or potential husbands. Even though the participant was aware of the possible treatment available to survivors, he believed that they should still be rejected:

> *For me, I do not think I can consider a woman who has been sexually violated. For me, she is no longer a perfect woman, because she has now been violated, she just lost her value. From my point of view I can no longer even go to her family, to look for a wife, because I know that family is already cursed, she is no longer valuable once sexually violated. I know she can be treated, but that is just in terms of letting her forget what happened to her, but she is no longer valuable in the society.*

Out of all of those interviewed, only two husbands had an encouraging attitude towards violated women, and their own wives specifically, arguing that survivors did not choose to be violated and need support, even if infected with HIV. An interview with a Sake male participant revealed that husbands might be rejecting their sexually violated wives because of their own sexual insecurities. The participant suspects that his wife has been sexually violated, although she has never disclosed it to him. He finds this very challenging, as he believes that she can no longer be sexually satisfied by him, “as the rape-experience was so good”. He explained it as follows:

> *Other women, once they have been sexually violated, they cannot be satisfied any more by their husbands in sexual intercourse. Because it takes them maybe to the highest level, to be with another man outside [the marriage]. When a woman had sex with another man it is a big problem, because she will compare with what she is normally experiencing in her own household…*

Not only the husbands, but the women’s families also tend to reject survivors, arguing that she is no longer valuable. Families-in-law tend to be the most judgemental of a sexually violated daughter-in-law, and are known to set her house and personal effects on fire, and incite their son against his wife. Even a survivor’s blood relatives are usually unsupportive. While survivors are not necessarily rejected from the family home, they are mocked and mistreated by their family members. This was the experience of all the SVAW survivors that were interviewed. One participant indicated that even sexually violated children are condemned by their parents. While they may not necessarily be ousted from the homestead, they are blamed for what happened.

A survivor experiences the same rejection from the community, which is generally a hostile environment for a SVAW survivor. Even though there may be individuals who are supportive, usually by referring the survivor for medical care, they are the exception rather than the rule. The community rejects, mocks, marginalises and stigmatises SVAW survivors, as a Sake survivor explained: “So, they just say that… a sexually violated woman is not valuable. Whenever she passes by they have to point fingers and discriminate and marginalise”. This community attitude appears to be a result of the belief that the survivor intentionally invited the sexually violent act. Therefore, they blame the survivor and thus justify their stigmatisation and discrimination. Survivors who contract HIV due to the sexually violent act face even more extreme discrimination and marginalisation. However, one Goma leader argued that some people are becoming more supportive of survivors, understanding that they did not invite or want it to happen. According to the leader, this change in the attitudes of some is a result of SVAW becoming so common that it is no longer just an ‘individual’ violation, but a violation of women in general which is affecting the social fabric of societies.

The stigmatisation and marginalisation of survivors, applies not only to those affected, but extends to their children. Three of the four Sake survivors became pregnant because of rape. All three chose to keep the baby, although they offered different reasons for doing so. One survivor fatalistically stated that she “ha(d) no choice”, while another stated that she chose to care for the child. In all three cases, both the mother and the child born from rape were taunted and stigmatised by the community. Even the survivors’ own families stigmatised them for having such a child. Children born from rape are seen as fatherless, which concerned the mothers, who worried about what they would tell their children if they asked who their father is. A Goma youth leader stated that older children born from rape are coming to their organisation, complaining that they do not know who their father is and asking for help in finding him. Naturally, survivors face severe challenges in terms of providing for these children, as they (the survivors) are usually abandoned by their husband and family, and left alone to care for the child, as well as the other children they have. A Sake survivor told of the severe challenges she faces in caring for her ‘rape baby’: “I live with the child, because the child belongs to me and I have to take care of him, although I don’t have enough money to do it, I always have financial problems...” Survivors are constantly worried about how they will be able to feed, clothe and house their children.

Thus, it is obvious that the physical and psychological consequences that survivors have to face, as well as people’s treatment of them and their children, have economic consequences. Participants repeatedly stated that SVAW survivors are left economically destitute, as they are rejected by family and community, and weakened physically. Whereas medical care seems to be available, economic support and care is scarce. A Goma government leader explained: “Once the woman is sexually violated… during that time from when she was violated, economically she will lose whatever she had”. Due to the extent of survivors’ injuries or diseases, many can no longer engage in productive physical labour. Furthermore, many have to leave their villages to seek medical care in the city, where they have to stay for extended periods. Far from their farms and support structure, they struggle to provide for themselves and their children. Those who have contracted HIV have an added burden, worrying about what will become of their children when they die. A woman from Goma explained:

> *I’m now HIV-positive. I have social problems. I was looted… everything was looted from me, and apart from that... I have to feed my kids, I have no strength to do whatever I can do for them to live… For me it is difficult, my HIV cannot be cured, other women’s diseases can be cured. I will die and my kids will be orphans.*

The need for economic support was reiterated by the Sake survivors. They identified their primary need as being for socio-economic support. Economic support could take the form of income-generation grants, loans, or any form of support that could help them provide for themselves and their children. Goma survivors identified their primary need as being for physical healing. This difference between Goma and Sake survivors is arguably because all of the Goma survivors are cared for by a local NGO that provides food, clothing, shelter and medical care for them and their children. The Sake survivors, on the other hand, were living on their own within the (generally hostile) community.

It is clear that SVAW is very common, and participants illustrated that it is basically inevitable that Congolese women will experience SVAW. The isolation and marginalisation that she experiences due to being sexually violated, even more than the physical and psychological consequences, make it such a horrific experience for a woman. It is people's reaction to SV, rather than (only) the actual SV, that means that the effects are often long-lasting and life-changing. Dealing with the consequences of this is difficult, as there are numerous factors that contribute and facilitate such responses.

5.7.2 Contributing and facilitating factors

Participants described the culture and society in the DRC as valuing and respecting men more than women. During the questionnaire interviews, the participants were specifically asked whether there is gender equality within their society, and only six of the 31 participants indicated that there is, of whom two stated that this equality disappears once a woman is sexually violated. The issue of gender inequality and how it contributes to sexual violence was also raised by participants during leader, survivor and group interviews.

Culture is the main reason and justification for men being seen as superior to women. Congolese are raised to see men as more important than women, so much so that a Sake woman stated rhetorically: "Is it possible for a man and a woman to be equal? It is a cultural thing… It is not possible for men and women to be equal". Culturally, women are considered as weak and helpless, in contrast to men. They perceived the physical weakness of women as contributing towards the perception of women as easy targets of SV. This is exacerbated by a cultural conception of women as mere sexual tools, as the Goma nominal group illustrated by explaining that society views women as a something that "anything can be done with". A behavioural double standard exists, especially in relation to sex. While women are expected to be sexually chaste, faithful and able to produce (many) babies, men can have multiple wives and relationships. This sexual double standard contributes to men devaluing women, as a female Sake participant explained:

> *Men and women are not equal... because the worst thing in our Sake area is that men are polygamists… and they always crush women… Men do not consider the value of the woman. They consider women an instrument of giving babies.*

Furthermore, a culture of SV has developed due to the longevity of the war and the preponderance of SV. A male provincial governmental leader explained it as follows: "Obviously if you are a civilian you can still imitate. Civilians imitate the examples of armed groups to violate women." Thus, while SVAW used to mainly be perpetrated by fighters and used as a weapon of war, it has now become part of the local culture. The fact that SV can be committed without legal redress contributes to this culture of SV. As previously indicated, despite the existence of laws that criminalise various forms of SV, the Congolese judicial system fails to curb SVAW. This is at least partly due to the government not prioritising the application of these laws. As leaders from a women's NGO in Goma explained:

> *Even when perpetrators are caught, they are easily released, for the government does not see any gain in locking them up… The problem is that there are laws, but they are not being applied, so perpetrators are not punished. The government always releases perpetrators suddenly, saying it is temporary, but it is permanent.*

Corruption of the legal system is another problem. Lawyers and government staff involved in the legal process are easily bribed and apprehended perpetrators therefore go unpunished. Yet another challenge is that, due to corruption and the ineffectiveness of the legal system, many Congolese prefer not to use the formal legal system to seek compensation for SV. The family of the victim/survivor tends to seek traditional justice, by getting compensation from the perpetrator or the perpetrator's family. Once that compensation is received, the matter is considered resolved and the perpetrator goes free. As explained by a woman NGO leader in Goma:

> *Many victims prefer to arrange things on their own, to do conflict management on their own instead of referring it to the justices. Families transform sexual violence into marriage dowry. They tell [the] perpetrator to pay the dowry. He must just pay, and then it is seen as resolved. This is very common in rural areas.*

Based on the comments by participants, it is clear that this traditional way of resolving the issue does not recognise the enormity of the violation, and does not adequately offer compensation to the survivor, nor the support and resources that she needs. Furthermore, if the survivor/victim was violated by a stranger, as is often the case in war, traditional justice is not an option. In either case, the infrastructural and cultural challenges to seeking formal legal justice often remains too immense for survivors to overcome, which further contributes to perpetrators going unpunished. Legally pursuing the issue means that it becomes public knowledge, which most survivors prefer to avoid, due to the stigma and discrimination they face. Moreover, with courts located in big cities, the cost of travel, accommodation and legal fees are usually too high for the survivor. As explained by a female lawyer in Goma, who works specifically on cases involving SV:

> *It is difficult for the victim to reach that level of justice. And the judicial system is very slow. If the victim herself could just go, she'll face challenges and problems… In a city where she will wait for a long time until justice is being done for her. And she does not have enough means to go and pay for the justice.*

The employment situation in the DRC is another issue that is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality, and thus of SV. A female Sake participant declared that the main reason for gender inequality is the fact that men are the only ones that can find jobs and provide money. This means that it is the husband that provides the household with money, entrenching women's dependence on men. Women (especially married women) find it difficult to gain employment and are thus economically dependent on men. Married women cannot be employed without their husbands' permission, and society tends to view employed women as morally suspect. A male Goma participant explained: "[Y]our wife, maybe she wants to work somewhere, maybe you will say no, arguing that she will become a prostitute there, so you just keep her at home".

This perception of women as being unable to provide is ironic, for women work very hard in caring for the family and it is in actual fact not necessarily the men who ensure the family's survival. "Women are like slaves", one Sake female participant stated, explaining that men live "easy lives" and that it is the women who work the land and thus provide the household with food. Nevertheless, as the participants indicated, this does not increase the power and position of women. Moreover, women also usually only have access to land through a male, be it husband, father or brother. Even though women are the ones working on the land, they still do not own it. This means, for example, that a newly-widowed women can be forced to leave her farm (and thus her livelihood) when her husband dies, as the land then belongs to her in-laws.

Furthermore, unemployment amongst Congolese men also directly contributes to SV. Participants stated that unemployed individuals who have no money, and also employed individuals who receive no pay (such as soldiers), are the ones who commit SVAW. A man from Goma explained that "(t)he lower class has no salary… they are the ones who rape women, because they have no salary". The government is blamed for the high unemployment, and because they do not pay those they employ. The Congolese people no longer trust the government, but this can be rectified if jobs and salaries are provided, a female Goma leader explained:

> *The government also should be doing maybe some works with civilians… Civilians can no longer trust the government… due to war and the unfinished war and all the things that happened… (T)o strengthen that relationship the government should [ensure] more employment and also that they [the employed] may have the salary.*

The government is contributing to and facilitating SV in various other ways as well. The government and political leaders' ineptitude and inability to address the war are seen as a root cause of SVAW. Firstly, the government is the key actor in establishing peace everywhere in the DRC. Participants argued that only the government is in the position to end the war. As a strong general opinion exists that SVAW will end if the conflict ends (based on an assumption that SV was and is caused by the war), the fact that the government is failing to establish peace means that it is contributing to SV. Some participants directly accused the government and political leaders of only striving for personal gain, particularly the power gained from fulfilling key governmental posts, and thus not prioritising peace. Political leaders' inability to control fighting groups, and the division amongst governmental leaders, create an environment in which SVAW thrives. The SV is used with purpose. Seven participants, six of whom were from Goma, identified SVAW as a weapon and strategy of war. They described SV as a weapon of and tool for fighting, which is used with the aim of intimidating, weakening and humiliating the enemy. It is used with intent, as a male provincial governmental leader from Goma explained: "Fighters and armed groups use SV as weapon. It is a kind of intimidation methodology". Sexually violating both men and women can serve this purpose, a Goma female explained:

> *They would say if we rape these men then they are weakened. And if we rape their wives, now they will be weakened, they will be more weakened, because they love their wives, now if we do that, now they will be weakened in all aspects and we will rule over them.*

The government is contributing to the continuation of SV in other ways as well. Some participants blamed the government for promoting gender inequality by not prioritising women’s issues. Leaders of a women’s NGO in Goma highlighted the way in which the government does not prioritise women and women’s issues, and how this contributes to communities likewise neglecting the issue:

> *The government does not really consider that sexual violence against women is a big problem. Because most of times you will find that many of the reported cases, even when perpetrators are caught, they are easily released… The courts, the legal system is corrupted. [SVAW] is considered filthy, as not important… How will people see women as important if the government does not?*

As stated earlier, some participants accused the government of wilfully not implementing SV laws, due to being corrupted and corrupt. They see the impunity with which SV continues to be perpetrated as an indication of the corruption of government and government officials, particularly the police. The police were also accused of being unable to apprehend or prosecute perpetrators, either wilfully or due to ignorance. The fact that the government is not applying and enforcing SV laws (and laws in general) is viewed as a key contribution to the continuation of SV. Participants believe that the identification, apprehension, prosecution and punishment of SVAW perpetrators will automatically lead to a decrease in SVAW, and thus the government’s failure to do so is actively contributing to the continuation of SV. Lastly, the government is seen as contributing to SV by not supporting SVAW survivors. During the interviews, participants were specifically asked what support was offered to SV survivors after the (official) war, and who provided it. The government was never mentioned.

Lastly, the presence of Rwandese, especially in the eastern parts of the DRC, is resented by most Congolese, and the war and its resultant problems (such as SVAW) are blamed on them. The following statement by a woman interviewed in Goma is representative of the opinion of most participants: “Rwandese [are] coming from their own country, when they pass by they target us… All these things happened because war came, because Rwandese came to the Congo”. These xenophobic attitudes threaten peace within the Kivu region, as many Rwandese have settled there.

The above findings resonate with those of other scholars discussed in the introduction to this chapter, namely that many factors contribute to the continued perpetration of SV in the DRC. The two main contributors appear to be culture in the DRC, and the inability of government to address SVAW through the needed interventions or support for intervention agents.

5.7.3 Interventions and intervention agents

As indicated, in the DRC the government, churches, NGOs and INGOs have all called for and supported policies and practices to stop SV. However, according to the participants, they were and are powerless to prevent it as the nature of war is such that SVAW cannot be stopped. Nevertheless, various individuals and institutions were identified as having a role to play in preventing SV and addressing its consequences. In general, a multisectoral approach was promoted by most, based on the view that one organisation, person or entity cannot address the problem single-handedly. They mentioned three key sectors, namely the government, civil society and churches, as key in the attempt to address SV.

As discussed in the previous section, the government is seen as failing to address SV. While participants felt it should play a key role, it was not doing so. This was because government was not addressing unemployment, not establishing peace, not promoting gender equality, not ensuring that SV legislation is implemented, and not supporting SV survivors. In contrast, CSOs were portrayed as playing a key role, not in prevention, but in helping survivors. Participants explained that support for SVAW survivors after the war was focused around three main areas, namely medical care, counselling, and food. Civil society, particularly one local NGO (HEAL Africa) and several INGOs (WFP, MSF, the UN and Red Cross were mentioned specifically) were key in providing this support in urban areas, though less so in rural areas. Goma participants, who often came from smaller villages, indicated that support for survivors was not available in villages, but only in bigger cities like Goma. For example, the Goma survivors that were interviewed have had various experiences of support from the prominent local NGO, HEAL Africa. All of them were housed in a HEAL Africa long-term compound, have had various operations, and come mainly from various villages in North Kivu. HEAL Africa has also provided them with food and clothing. Sake survivors, on the other hand, had not had many experiences of support. Two mentioned free medical care from HEAL Africa, but the other two stated that they never received any support from anyone.

Civil society in Goma also appears to be organising around women’s issues. HEAL Africa has a strong focus on addressing SVAW, with (amongst other things) a hospital, counselling, compounds for recovering survivors, and skills-training for survivors. They also initiated the Nehemiah committees, which are local networks of local leaders from different spheres (government, religion – Christian and Islam –, local authorities, opinion leaders, etc.). These committees run different community projects, but all have a strong focus on caring for and reintegrating SV survivors, as well as addressing community stigma aimed against survivors. Furthermore, a prominent women's organisation in Goma, which represents 27 member organisations, focuses on lobbying and advocacy at local, national and international level around women's issues, particularly SVAW. The organisations' leadership team explained that they see lobbying and advocacy, particularly for peace, as an important role of civil society. None of the organisation's goals can be met if peace is not established. Thus, they do peacebuilding, such as lobbying for the implementation of recommendations made at peace agreements. As a women's organisation, they argue that they are fulfilling a vital role which cannot be filled by men or other CSOs:

> *It is a particular thing for [us] and it is something churches cannot do… Because the church is limited to maybe mobilising people locally for only people who attend that particular church. But they cannot go somewhere beyond and outside the church. And maybe they can do it if there is a particular way of preparation, maybe, but it is not to say that I want to be proud, but it is to say that [we are] really making an advocacy… We are doing something that men cannot do.*

Still, civil society was criticised for not addressing the socio-economic consequences and circumstances of SV survivors. Sake survivors repeatedly stated their need for socio-economic support, to enable them to provide for themselves and their children. Participants generally emphasised the need for interventions such as micro-credit, income-generation grants, provision of seeds, animals and land, etc. as ways of meeting the economic needs that develop due to the rejection and discrimination survivors face. One women's organisation stated that they focus on socio-economic support, as survivors are currently receiving medical care, but nothing else:

> *[A survivor] can get an opportunity to be treated medically, but the worst thing is that she is abandoned by her husband, because the husband can no longer keep on living with her in that condition. She becomes stigmatised and marginalised and also discriminated against in the society…*

While the government is failing to address SV, its causative factors, and its consequences, civil society generally appears to be more active and effective. In this regard, churches are particularly well placed to provide support, but it appears as if this has not been the case, despite their widespread reach and support.

5.7.4 Churches addressing sexual violence

All of the participants who partook in the research belonged to a church denomination or faith group. Participants' views of the church represented various denominations, as participants belonged to the Baptist, Catholic, Protestant, Revival, Pentecostal, New Apostolic, Seventh-day Adventist, Assemblies of God, Jehovah's Witness, and Methodist churches. Only seven participants indicated that they are Muslim. During the various sessions, the participants explained that churches have the ability to address SVAW, but that they are currently not doing so due to their own patriarchal structures, which causes them to see SV as not an important issue, or not an issue to be addressed by churches. Furthermore, those churches that are engaging with the issue are not doing enough.

The vast majority of the research participants were convinced that churches have the ability to address SVAW and assist survivors, as the majority of Congolese belong to a church, and accept the leadership and guidance of the church. Churches thus have the influence and reach to bring change, as so many people attend church and believe and place their trust in this institution. A male Goma youth leader explained that "(t)he church is a key tool for the entire community and people are aware that everything the church says they must follow". This view was supported by other leaders, who stated that churches have power. A female Goma NGO leader argued that "(c)hurch leaders have power over people. And that power, by using that power it is easy to let the community know. And they can also know how they can eradicate this new kind of sin that is SV". Thus, churches are seen as (potentially) very influential institutions regarding SVAW. This is why some NGOs have chosen to work specifically with churches in their bid to address SVAW, as a male NGO leader from Goma explained:

> *Like us, we used to go through some churches, because we know that there is a good place where the people trust, among those in the church. When we decided to go through the churches, we said that if the pastor is changed and he is really involved in fighting all kind of SV, he is an example of the church. It means that all the church members, those who are around the pastor, if he is engaged, it can make change, a big change in the community*.

Churches are thus viewed as powerful, influential institutions that have the ability to change attitudes and bring profound social change, including regarding SV. Unfortunately, very few churches choose to actively address SVAW. A male NGO leader from Goma, who constantly works with churches on the issue of SVAW, explained:

> *We can't say that the church is not engaged in it… [But] there is a lethargy. You are engaged but you don't really go so far. It looks like someone is pushing you to do this, but you don't want to do it.*

The community leaders that were interviewed were particularly scathing in condemning churches' non-involvement. They believe that church leaders do not see SV as 'their' problem and therefore do not address it. The reason for this appears to be the power dynamic between men and women. Church leaders are mostly men, and have a vested interest in keeping the traditional roles and positions of men and women. Addressing SV would require investigation and transformation of gender relations, and church leaders do not want to risk this, as it threatens their own power. Furthermore, it appears as if religious men do not truly believe in and accept the importance of women. Thus, it is not only a struggle for power, but an inherent belief in the inferiority and weakness of women that cause religious leaders and men to subjugate women. A male Goma NGO leader argued that this is one of the biggest reasons why churches do not address gender inequality and SV:

> *This is a big issue, how to balance the power. We succeed when those who are church leaders accept power sharing… It is like an inheritance culture of dominant masculinity, where both Christians and those who don't believe… It is inheritance and a lack of knowledge… Those who are ruling some churches or those who are local authorities are not informed correctly about the human rights, especially the rights of women and men, and they are themselves in the frontline to oppress women.*

Religious institutions were accused of even undermining efforts to empower women, and actively promoting SVAW. For example, church leaders would argue that domestic violence is a private issue, as a Goma man explained: "For example, if someone is victim of domestic violence and she wants a pastor to help, the pastor would say no, you don't talk about your domestic violence. Because it is a household secret". This opinion was supported by a male NGO leader from Goma, himself a Christian and very involved with various churches, who argued that "(t)he church is one of the main organisations that are suppressing women." Thus, churches continue to uphold cultural views regarding women. A group interview with a women's NGO in Goma explained it as follows:

> *Religious institutions are still undermining women. They have to work together with associations, with women like us, like us [name of the NGO], they have to consider us. They (are) still considering… they still see women as something like a custom, women are not considered in the church.*

Based on the views of respondents, it appears that churches are also fully complicit in the cultural taboo on sex and SV. As a male Goma leader explained, resistance in talking about sex is common: “In Africa talking about sex is a taboo, it is very difficult. Even in households and churches, to talk about sex and sexual intercourse is still a taboo”. In the DRC this taboo extends to SV, as the community knows that the problem exists, but they refuse to discuss or address it. Part of it might be due to fear of retaliation, one participant explained, as identification of an assailant might lead to the assailant seeking revenge. In any case, churches appear to fully support the taboo, and church spaces are therefore spaces where sex-related matters (including SV) cannot be talked about.

However, some churches do offer (limited) practical support to SVAW survivors. The most common support that churches provide for survivors is counselling, while they also offer comfort, prayer and general encouragement. Family mediation, specifically between husband and sexually-violated wife, is an important service offered by some churches and NGOs. The express purpose of this mediation is to prevent the husband from rejecting his wife. Churches tend to also refer SVAW survivors for medical care. A few churches offer socio-economic support, such as food, clothing and income-generation grants, although this appears to be limited. Despite some support being available, one of the main challenges to survivors getting the support they need is their own unwillingness to disclose what happened to them. This is due to the stigma and discrimination that they face if it becomes public knowledge. Survivors appear to be willing to disclose this only if the support they receive is ‘worthwhile’. Usually only medical support is seen as ‘worthwhile’, as so many survivors have very severe physical injuries due to SV. In an interview with church leaders from a Baptist church, they stated that this is why no survivors disclose to their church: “People will not disclose to us if we cannot offer medical help. If we had such a (medical) centre, then people will come and disclose to us. So people do not disclose here at the church, and to the church”.

Although there is some support offered to survivors, it is not much and it is not accessed, mainly due to fears of stigma and discrimination. Nevertheless, participants continue to believe in the ability of churches to address SV. They discussed various ways in which churches can and should contribute to SV prevention and care for survivors. The key role assigned to churches is that of assisting and supporting SVAW survivors through counselling, medical care, economic support, and practical support such as food and housing. The Sake survivors and nominal group emphasised the importance of socio-economic support much more than the Goma survivors and nominal group, arguably because HEAL Africa and other NGOs already offer such support to the Goma participants. The emotional support that churches can and should provide was emphasised by many participants, including a male youth leader from Goma:

> *The church can play a major role to help women and girls who have been sexually violated to recover from their internal wounds, because once rejected, once abandoned, once marginalised, so they just found a place where they can find refuge from all the trauma, from all the bad things that happened to them. So they can get comfort. This is what I would like to see.*

The importance of churches breaking the silence around sex and SV was reiterated. Many felt that churches should play a more proactive role in talking about sex and SV in various situations, such as sermons, Bible Study groups and public meetings. This they felt was a key way in which churches could bring awareness of SV into the community, and contribute to changing societal attitudes towards SV survivors. In this way churches could start to mobilise around this issue more effectively. Given that a large number of people attend church, many felt that churches provide an opportunity to mobilise people for SV awareness and prevention, and for changing attitudes regarding SV and survivors. One of the ways in which this could be done is by educating the general population on sex, SV, the consequences of SV, and the laws regarding SV. Ignorance is blamed for much of the SVAW, and in this regard churches can intervene by educating members and the community, as a male NGO leader from Goma explained:

> *The church should enforce the level of information of… church members, starting by targeting families. Because if the child is well-educated… maybe most of men and women will live together in peace without any form of violence… They have to enforce the education about women.*

The participants also assigned churches a role in identifying, apprehending and prosecuting SV perpetrators. Not only are churches expected to identify, denounce, rebuke and ensure the prosecution of perpetrators, they should engage in consistent lobbying of the government in order to ensure the government's application of the laws, and thus the prosecution and punishment of SVAW perpetrators. In this regard, the nominal group in

Goma thought that churches should put pressure on government to enforce the laws that lead to the apprehension and sentencing of perpetrators. The nominal group in Sake listed this as one of the ways in which churches should address SVAW. Generally, churches should be popularising the laws regarding SV. Other roles and responsibilities that participants identified were that churches should engage in a multi-sectoral response to SVAW, by working with other denominations, faith groups, government and civil society. Furthermore, it should denounce alcohol use.

The only ‘traditional’ role that the research participants assigned to churches is that of prayer. Participants felt that churches should be praying for the war to end, for the government to implement laws, for perpetrators to be caught and prosecuted, and for survivors. This links with calls for the God of the churches to end SVAW. Sake participants particularly assigned God the responsibility for addressing and ending SVAW. Those that identified God usually did so in a somewhat fatalistic manner, stating that no-one else would be able to end SVAW but God, as this statement by a Sake woman exemplifies:

> *The government is trying to prosecute those who are perpetrators, but others are still doing the same thing. So we don’t know what we will be the end. That is the reason why I say God alone (can end SVAW).*

From this it is clear that churches as CSOs are wide-spread, popular and trusted. People believe in their ability to influence individuals and the community and bring about social change, including change in people’s attitudes towards SV survivors, and in the lessening of SV in general. However, it generally refuses to engage with the issue of SV due to its own beliefs and practices that condone gender inequality and undermine women. While some support is offered to SV survivors, not enough churches are doing so, and the support is not comprehensive. Despite the fact that churches appear to be failing to address SV and its consequences, participants still believe in its ability to do so.

5.8 CONCLUSION

In Goma and Sake the existing unrest is not perceived as post-conflict violence, but as part of an ongoing war. SVAW is extremely common, and committed by soldiers and civilians alike, as a culture of SV has permeated through society. Many Congolese have embraced a fatalistic attitude to this, seeing SV as unavoidable and unstoppable in their conflict-ridden context. The government cannot be relied on to resolve the issue. On the contrary, the corruption of and in-fighting amongst government officials is seen as facilitating violence and SVAW.

Many more SVAW interventions and support for SVAW survivors are available in Goma than in Sake. Most of the Goma participants were within the sphere of influence of an NGO that is focused on addressing SV and assisting survivors medically, socially, economically and spiritually. This is arguably why Goma participants did not indicate such a great need for support, especially socio-economic support. The churches in Sake also appear to be less involved in addressing SVAW than the Goma churches, potentially because an influential NGO with a strong focus on addressing SVAW, as well as a hospital equipped to deal with SVAW injuries such as fistula, is based and more active in Goma. Sake can be seen as a more representative picture of Congo, as the interventions and infrastructure of the Goma NGOs are rarely as present within other areas in the DRC.

Two key issues underlie the prevalence of SVAW. Firstly, gender inequality is engrained within culture in the DRC. Women are disempowered and dependent, and construed as sexual objects for men’s consumption, with a strong emphasis on sexual purity. This enables SVAW through the sexualised construction of women, and contributes to the negative consequences of SVAW, with survivors rejected as they are considered sexually impure, and find it challenging to provide for themselves without a man. Men dominate, being physically stronger, as owners of land and wealth, and due to their access to jobs. This construction of male dominance also contributes to SVAW, for unemployed or unpaid men find it difficult to find a partner, and they then turn to SVAW to find sexual satisfaction or to prove their masculinity.

The second key issue is the cultural taboo on sex and sex-related matters. Congolese do not talk about sex. This makes it difficult to challenge cultural constructions of women and their position, as these have decided sexual components. Also, it inhibits SVAW disclosure, not only because survivors find it difficult to talk about it or find an audience, but because of the stigma and discrimination they then face for doing so. This is even evident in churches, which play a central role in society. Churches are upholding the same cultural constructs of gender, sex and sex-related matters.

Despite the ongoing conflict, the churches thrive and Congolese continue to attend them, making churches important CSOs with extensive grassroots presence. The fact that they continue to exist despite the ongoing conflict possibly give them added stature within society, as they are among the few CSOs that do not forsake the local population, arguably because they are institutions with power and influence and a mandate to assist people. There is a strong belief in the ability and responsibility of churches to address and resolve the causes and consequences of SVAW. Its indigenous knowledge and grassroots presence even in far-off rural areas, as well as the authority of its leaders, gives it the ability to disseminate information and influence people on a large scale. Yet it rarely involves itself with the issue, due to the same reasons identified above. Cultural gender constructs dominate churches, as does the sexual taboo. Thus, churches tend to avoid addressing SVAW, as doing so would mean investigating and challenging cultural perceptions and constructs that many church leaders and members support. Church leaders even actively discourage disclosure, and the fact that most leaders are men makes it more difficult for women survivors to disclose. Interestingly, while recognising that gender inequality plays a key role in churches' unwillingness or inability to address SVAW, participants rarely proposed that churches should engage in interventions that address and transform practices and beliefs that promote gender inequality.

Examples are given of specific churches that are involved in addressing SVAW and its consequences. But if one takes into consideration the number of churches and the great amount of Christians in the DRC, one realises that there remain thousands of churches, arguably the majority, that do nothing. Furthermore, even though a denomination professes commitment to addressing SVAW, it does not necessarily mean that the individual churches belonging to the denomination actively do so. Moreover, individual churches often say they condemn SVAW, but in practice do nothing to eradicate the practice or its consequences.

According to the participants, churches' strength lies in addressing the consequences of SVAW, particularly through assisting survivors. The emphasis is thus on care, rather than prevention. However, survivors are hesitant to disclose to churches if there is no incentive to do so. Survivors will disclose more easily to churches, and churches can thus play a bigger role in changing attitudes and addressing SV by incentivising disclosure, for example through providing socio-economic support to survivors. Some prevention responsibility is given to churches, such as apprehension and prosecution of perpetrators, and education, but their main role is seen as 'caring' and not as using religion as an agent for change. For example, churches are not asked to vehemently and firmly condemn SVAW and speak out against it by quoting the Bible, and advocating that SVAW is a devilish crime punishable by God. It thus seems that, though participants believe in churches' ability to influence opinion and behaviour, in practice they do not instinctively call on churches to use these abilities to bring about a change in behaviour or attitude.

Furthermore, in looking at all of the different roles identified for churches, it appears that what is expected of churches does not differ markedly from what is expected from civil society in general, such as NGOs and INGOs, or from the government. This appears to be due to the desperate need for SVAW and its consequences to be resolved. Thus, any party willing to be involved is tasked with all of the causative factors that need to be addressed, without consideration of the particular abilities of the party. Nevertheless, in (for example) identifying support for survivors as the key responsibility of churches, it does arguably indicate that there was some consideration of what churches are most equipped to do. It seems as if churches' particular abilities are recognised by participants, but when it comes to assigning responsibilities to churches, these abilities are not fully utilised. Churches are basically designated the role of 'care centre', with some added responsibilities that other CSOs can also fill. The particular roles that churches can fill, as moral leaders that can influence people's behaviour and as a strong political voice, are recognised but not truly utilised when proscribing roles for churches. Furthermore, tasking churches with apprehending, prosecuting and punishing perpetrators, or with at least lobbying the government to do so, is indicative of a desperate need for rule of law. With the government not fulfilling this function, any organisation will be begged to do so. From this one can conclude that, although churches are very powerful social agents and have reach and influence, they have been ineffective in dealing with and eradicating SVAW.

Chapter 6
SVAW and churches in Rwanda

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Rwanda is a former German and Belgian colony that became independent in 1962 when the Hutu majority came into power. For centuries, Rwandan society had been deeply divided along ethnic lines, and this was exacerbated when the colonial powers favoured the Tutsi minority, for example by ruling indirectly through the existing Tutsi structures (Magnarella, 2005: 802, 806). This caused much resentment and with independence violence along ethnic divisions became increasingly common, resulting in thousands of deaths and Tutsi refugees (Magnarella, 2005:809). These continuous conflicts culminated in 100 days of genocide in early 1994, a planned, systematic endeavour by the Hutu-led government to destroy not only all Tutsis, but all opposition to the regime (Reyntjens, 2004:178).

Between 6 April and July 1994 more than a million Rwandans, the overwhelming majority Tutsi, were killed, and the country's infrastructure was basically destroyed. Banks and businesses were plundered and the economy collapsed, along with the civil, judicial, education and health care systems (Reyntjens, 2004:178). During this time, hundreds of thousands of (predominantly Tutsi) women were sexually violated and assaulted in acts including rape, sexual mutilation, gang rape, sexual torture and forced prostitution. The genocide was finally brought to an end by the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), the military arm of the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).[40] While the new government endeavoured to address the consequences of the SV perpetrated during the genocide, they are hampered by the fact that members of the RPF, like many others, also perpetrated SV during the genocide, and in some instances continued to do so after the genocide ended.

Civil society is also limited in its ability to address SV, as the government sees civil society not only as an extension of itself, but has passed a number of laws to ensure that it controls CSOs (Gready, 2010:641). Civil society therefore cannot act independently from the government, which limits its ability to denounce all instances of SV and address the possible causes, such as governmental policy or activities that at times lead directly or indirectly to SV. Civil society's lack of independence from government extends to the religious sector as well. In Rwanda, the churches played a complicit role in the genocide, both through active participation by church members and leaders, and indirectly, through supporting the regime and not speaking out against the genocide. While attempts have been made to redress this, churches continue to be hampered by the involvement of the state in their affairs (Cantrell, 2009:328). Both before and after the genocide no true church/state separation exists, and the government exerts control and influence over churches, their leadership and decision-making.

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[40] The RPF is a political party that was started by exiled Rwandan Tutsis living in Uganda.

Against this brief background, this chapter explores the role of churches in addressing SVAW within the context of a rural area (the area surrounding Gitarama) in the Southern Province, and an urban area (Rwamagana, the capital city of the Eastern Province) in the Eastern Province. To place the findings in context, the first part of this chapter outlines the nature and causes of the war, followed by a discussion on the consequences of this conflict for women, and why they remain marginalised. Thereafter, the causes of sexual violence within the Rwandan context are examined, followed by an overview of the role of churches in attempting to address SVAW. The second part reports on the findings of the empirical work by looking at the nature and consequences of SVAW, the contributing and facilitating factors, available interventions and intervention agents, and churches' particular role in addressing the causes and consequences of SVAW.

6.2 NATURE AND CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT IN RWANDA

The official start to the genocide was the death of the Rwandan (Hutu) President Habyarimana, when his plane was shot done near Kigali airport. While the government blamed the RPA, many foreign observers believe that it was done by Hutu extremists from the *Forces Armés Rwandaises* (FAR), the government's own military (Newbury & Baldwin, 2000:1; Magnarella, 2005:815), who were dissatisfied with the reforms being proposed by the President. His death sparked 100 days of genocide, in which the government publically motivated and ordered Hutus to kill all Tutsis (Van Hoyweghen 1996:393). According to Magnarella,

> …(t)he organizers of the massacres wanted to create a new Rwanda – a community of murderers, who shared a collective sense of accomplishment or guilt… (T)hey would take on a new identity… What would have been crimes under ordinary circumstances became expected and common behaviour (2005:816).

This points to what is seen by many as the major cause of the genocide, namely ethnic divisions. Pre-colonial Rwanda was inhabited by three groups, namely the Hutu, Tutsi and

Twa. The Tutsi were the small elite (approximately 14% of the population), the Hutu the peasant majority (85%), and the Twa, traditional hunters and gatherers[41] (1%), were discriminated against by both Tutsi and Hutu (Brounéus, 2008:56). Ideas of Tutsi superiority and Hutu inferiority were promulgated by colonisers and Western missionaries, who sided either with the 'privileged' Tutsi or 'downtrodden' Hutu, and have been a source of violent conflict in Rwanda for decades (Cijleveld, Morssinkhof & Smeulers, 2009:212; Brannigan & Jones, 2009:193-194). The 1994 Tutsi pogrom was by no means the first. From 1959-1962 an estimated 20 000 Tutsis were killed by Hutus. Similarly, the civil war that erupted between Hutus and Tutsis from 1990-1992 led to the death of thousands of Hutus and Tutsis. This civil war was brought to an end by the Arusha Peace Accords, but this in fact contributed to the 1994 genocide. The Accords called for power-sharing, a threat to the then-ruling National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development (MRND), the Hutu elite dominating Rwanda. As such, the 1994 genocide can be seen as the ultimate attempt to negate this threat. Helen Hintjens (1999) argues that the ethnic conflicts in the run-up to the genocide were deliberately manufactured by a government whose goal was regime survival. In order to eliminate the threat, they had to eliminate the Tutsi, and in order to justify doing so, they had to recreate the Tutsi as the racial enemy (Hintjens, 1999:248-249).

There were other causes for the Rwandan genocide. Rwanda faced a severe economic crisis, largely brought on by a dramatic drop in the coffee prices on which the Rwandan economy heavily depended, and the forced implementation of a World Bank/ International Monetary Fund package of structural adjustment measures, which devalued the Rwandan currency by two-thirds (Hintjens, 1999:256-257; Magnarella, 2005:818). Due to budget cuts, health services deteriorated, which led to a dramatic increase in maternal and child mortality. Famine in the south of Rwanda led to severe food shortages throughout the country (Hintjens, 1999:257; Magnarella, 2005:817). Food shortages were to a large extent the result of land shortages, as Rwanda had become increasingly overpopulated. The returning refugees, brought on by the stipulations of the Arusha Accords, made the already crowded conditions even worse. Paul Magnarella (2005) argues that it was actually the land and food shortages, and their cumulative effects, that were the main cause of the genocide.

Another possible cause of, or at least a contributing factor to, the genocide is the fact that the culture of Rwandans emphasises the importance of obedience to authority. This culture of obedience is seen by many as the reason why the Hutu government's genocidal strategy was so effective, for it relied on Rwandans' blind obedience to any instructions from authority figures. Pre-colonial Rwanda had a strong tradition of absolute obedience to authority, and this was reinforced by both the Germans and the Belgians. In post-colonial times, Rwanda also had a tightly-controlled state. This culture of obedience, Gérard Prunier argues, is why the Rwandan people killed when ordered to do so by authority figures (Prunier, 1995:245). While cultural traits will arguably not be as effective if not combined with certain contextual factors, Rwandan obedience to authority can nevertheless be seen as one of the great contributing factors to the genocide (Paluck & Green, 2009:622). One also sees it reflected in Rwandan obedience to the increasingly authoritarian rule of the current RPF-led government.

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[41] The Twa are an indigenous, minority pygmy group in Rwanda. They are traditionally hunter-gatherers and potters (Beswick, 2011:492).

Nevertheless, in discussing the causes of the genocide it is clear that ethnic tensions were deliberately used and abused to orchestrate the genocide. In the prelude to the genocide, the government made extensive use of anti-Tutsi propaganda in order to garner public support for Tutsi annihilation. This propaganda extended to women. Rwanda's genocide has been called a gendered genocide because of how women were systematically targeted (Taylor, 1999:42; Mzvondiwa, 2007:101; Hogg, 2009:38). While in earlier Hutu-Tutsi conflicts women were not killed in numbers comparable to men, during the genocide female deaths equalled, if not exceeded, male deaths. This will be expanded on in due course.

Tragically, although the international community was aware of what was occurring in Rwanda, it did nothing to stop it. The UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), whose mission started in October 1993 to aid the peace processes in the aftermath of the civil war, had been almost totally withdrawn when the genocide started, and the UN took weeks before it officially recognised the violence as genocide (Reyntjens, 2004:177). The fact that the international community never intervened has for many countries been a source of great guilt ever since (Mzvondiwa, 2007:101). The genocide ended in July 1994, when the RPA defeated the Hutu government's FAR, and militias such as the MRND's *Interahamwe*[42] and the *Impuzamugambi* of the Coalition for the Defence of the Republic (CRD) captured Kigali (Brannigan & Jones, 2009:196). Immediately after the genocide, Rwanda was in chaos. Approximately one million were dead, two million refugees had fled to other countries, over one million IDPs were spread out in Rwanda itself, and more than 500 000 (Tutsi) refugees were returning from neighbouring countries (Reyntjens, 2004:178). On the 19th of July 1994, the RPF instituted a new government, one which had to deal with a devastated country, both in terms of human and material losses. While the RPF originally respected the idea of power-sharing, through including multiple parties and a Hutu president in the interim government, laws that were subsequently passed have imposed the RPF (and Tutsi) dominance of the government and political power (Reyntjens, 2004:178).

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[42] At the end of the genocide, many members of the Interahamwe fled to the DRC and Uganda, where they are now functioning as a terrorist group.

6.3 CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONFLICT FOR WOMEN

Christopher Taylor argues that the genocide had a dual purpose. Not only was it to eradicate the hated ethnic enemy (Tutsis), but also to re-establish male dominance and patriarchy.[43] This theory is supported by the fact that Hutu women were also victims of government soldiers and militias, and that educated, elite women, regardless of their ethnicity, were attacked (Blizzard, 2006:26; Mzvondiwa, 2007:101). The political decisions of the Hutu government decidedly influenced the way (predominantly Tutsi) women and girls were treated during the genocide, as the government gave direct orders to kill and sexually violate Tutsi women. An epidemiological survey of Rwandan women living in Rwanda, done in 1994, found that 49,4% of all women had been raped (Fabri *et al.*, in Burnet, 2012:98). Any Tutsi woman who survived the genocide was likely to have been raped (Layika, in Sharlach, 1999:393). SVAW was systematically used during the genocide to terrorise and control civilians, and included forced marriage, rape, gang rape, rape with objects, forced incest, sexual torture and mutilation (Burnet, 2012:108). A gendered genocide, with the aim of establishing male Hutu rule, portrayed Tutsi women and girls as hypersexual and wanton, indirectly justifying SV:

> The pre-existing stereotypes and ethnic jealousies, exacerbated by the government propaganda campaign denigrating and sexualising Tutsi women, created a climate in which the mass rape of Tutsi women appeared to be an appropriate form of retribution for their purported arrogance, immorality, hyper-sexuality, and espionage (Sharlach, 1999:394).

At the same time women were also targeted by a Tutsi army bent on revenge. Some Hutu women were beaten, sexually violated and humiliated by (Tutsi) RPA soldiers, in retaliation for what Hutu men did to Tutsi women. After the genocide some Tutsi women, especially those in IDP camps, were pressurised into relationships by RPA soldiers, in supposed recognition of their soldierly activities during the genocide (Sharlach, 1999:395; Newbury & Baldwin, 2000:3, 5; Burnet, 2012:98). The RPF continued its excesses after the genocide, and reports of extrajudicial executions, ‘disappearances’, and several civilian massacres continued throughout 1994 and 1995 (Burnet, 2008:365). The physical and psychological consequences of SV are multiple. These were discussed in Chapter Two and concur with what is found in Rwanda.

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[43] Taylor also argues that Hutu extremists were psycho-socially ambivalent about Tutsi women. Hutu men harboured feelings of attraction towards Tutsi women, a legacy of colonial representations of Tutsi women as more intelligent and beautiful than Hutu women (Taylor, 1999:50). This ambivalence could be one of the reasons why SV took such extreme and torturous forms during the genocide. Through SV, the complex realities of intermarriage and coexistence between Hutu and Tutsi could be ignored and subsumed in the simple categories of Hutu/male and Tutsi/female (Crawley & Simic, 2012:88).

The effects of the genocide continue to this day. Sexual violence and prostitution have become a common occurrence in Rwanda and many forms of GBV, such as wife-beating, are now seen as normal (Newbury & Baldwin, 2000:5; Burnet, 2012:107). Post-genocide, many women were left without the traditional protection of fathers, brothers and/or husbands (Burnet, 2008:383-284). Women-headed households increased dramatically, as did the number of widows who headed such households (Newbury & Baldwin, 2000:6). Women also took on the burden of caring for orphans and elderly relatives. All of this has meant extra financial burdens on women, which has left many women vulnerable to abuse in their attempts to provide for themselves and their dependents. Nevertheless, one cannot only position women as victims of the genocide. Some women were also instigators.[44] Loyalty to one’s ethnic group was almost always seen as more important than supporting other women, thus most Hutu women did not oppose genocidal acts (Sharlach, 1999:388). Such women’s complicity in the genocide complicates both the ‘easy’ positioning of women as victims, and their participation in post-genocide reconstruction.

Furthermore, the genocide led to the empowerment of women on some levels. According to Rwandan tradition, women depend on men for survival. With so many men dead or fled, these traditional gender relations were disrupted, giving women the freedom to pursue careers or commercial endeavours without opposition from male relatives or the community. Women undertook traditional male roles, such as roofing houses and milking cows, and started to take up positions in government administration and running businesses (Newbury & Baldwin, 2000:6; Mzvondiwa, 2007:102; Burnet, 2008:384). Individual women and women’s organisations demonstrated their ability to address the consequences of genocide and to rebuild their communities. They became more active in politics, and many have been co-opted into government positions (which has, unfortunately, weakened civil society). Furthermore, the genocide indirectly benefited women as it established a government that champions the rights of women. While in other settings women's empowerment tends to be reversed once peace is established, the new Rwandan government acknowledges and supports women's empowerment (Mzvondiwa, 2007:103). The RPF-led government instituted various measures to promote the rights of women, including creating a Ministry of Gender, organising women's councils at all governmental levels, and establishing an electoral system with gender quotas (Burnet, 2008:363). Nevertheless, there remain various factors that contribute to the marginalisation of women in Rwanda in both the public and private sphere.

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[44] Lisa Sharlach (1999) draws attention to the fact that women were active participants and promoters of the genocide. For example, (a) two of the ‘littlehouse’ (the small group who plotted the genocide) were women, namely the President’s wife Agathe Habyarimana and (ironically) the Minister of Family and Promotion of Women, Pauline Nyiramasuhuko; (b) many Tutsi mothers left their children with Hutu women for safekeeping, yet the women would then turn the children over to the *genocidiares* to be killed; (c) some of the most racist radio broadcasters were women; and (d) many women ordered and watched how Tutsi women were first raped, then killed (Sharlach, 1999:392).

6.4 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE MARGINALISED SITUATION OF WOMEN

Women continue to suffer after the genocide, not only directly because of genocidal deeds, but because there are many discriminatory practices that disempower and perpetuate SV and gender inequality. The following section discusses the social and cultural, legal, economic and political factors that have facilitated the genocidal practices against women, as well as those that contribute towards their continued marginalisation.

In many respects, the traditional cultural views of women in Rwanda are similar to those outlined in Chapter Two. Women are culturally constructed as the property of men and expected to be reserved and hard-working (Blizzard, 2006:23; Crawley & Simic, 2012:193). Men and boys are seen as more important than women and girls, and this is reflected in the education system. Women were only allowed into formal education 40 years after men and the unequal educational opportunities continue till today (Kantengwa, 2010:73). Most families still choose to educate sons rather than daughters, and literacy remains lower for women than men (Burnet, 2012:102; Hamilton, in Blizzard, 2006:77).

These patriarchal views extend to sex and sexuality, again supporting what was discussed in Chapter Two, with women not having any sexual agency, and not being allowed to talk about sex-related matters (Burnet, 2012:100-105).[45] This means that SV is often not acknowledged as such, or SV survivors feel unable to talk about it. Sexual violence carries huge social stigma and SV survivors are stigmatised and marginalised within society, which inhibits disclosure (Wells, 2005:189; Cijleveld *et al.*, 2009:215). Women who were sexually violated by RPA soldiers are even less likely to disclose it than other Rwandan SV survivors. Their experiences do not fit the dominant Hutu/aggressor- Tutsi/victim mould, and they fear reprisals from the (RPF-led) government (Burnet, 2012:111). Furthermore, patriarchal beliefs have left SV survivors generally unlikely to marry and have children, as women are expected to be sexually pure in order to find a partner (Wells, 2005:195). This influences their quality of life, as married women have higher status than unmarried ones, and fertility is highly rated.

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[45] For example, according to Rwandan culture, a woman never gives verbal or explicit consent to sex. The feminine ideal is that of a chaste, modest virgin, thus even long-married women have to signal their sexual consent in nonverbal ways as well as through situational consent, such as the willingness to be in a certain place at a certain time with a certain person. Thus, defining rape as non-consensual sex is problematic, for consensual sex is a cultural impossibility (as women do not give explicit consent). Therefore, certain forms of SV, such as date rape, are not recognised as such. SV within a marriage is considered impossible, for women's sexual consent becomes fact when she weds (Burnet, 201210-105)

Besides the cultural beliefs and practices that contribute to the marginalised status of women and especially SV survivors, Rwandan legislation (both prior to and after the genocide) has contributed to impunity for violent crimes, and thus to the continued perpetration of SV. The violence that broke out periodically since Rwandan independence led to the development of a culture of impunity, one that was legally recognised. The first amnesty laws, passed in May 1963, absolved all Hutus from being prosecuted for political violence. These amnesty laws continued to be part of the Criminal Code of Rwanda until 1994, and were only repealed when the RPF came into power. Thus, the legal environment created a context in which violence against men and women could be done with impunity (Brannigan & Jones, 2009:195). While these laws were repealed after the genocide, post-genocide international courts (specifically, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda – ICTR) and criminal courts (such as the local *Gacaca* courts) have been criticised for not delivering justice either (Wells, 2005:168; BBC, 2012).

Furthermore, sexually violent crimes were not properly recognised or punished. While Article 360 of the 1977 Rwandan Penal Code made rape punishable by five to ten years imprisonment, it did not define the different behaviours that constituted rape. Nor did customary law take the Penal Code’s provisions seriously, and it therefore set a double standard which exacerbated gender inequality. The contradiction between statutory and customary law practices have continued. Although new statutory SV laws have been passed, Rwandan cultural standards for coping with sexual transgressions (as enacted in customary law), including situations of non-consensual sex or rape, continue to be followed. These customary law practices rob women of their agency and lead to SV not only going unpunished, but not even being recognised as SV (Burnet, 2012:107). Furthermore, while current statutory legislation recognises the seriousness of GBV, the legislation was only passed 14 years after the genocide.

While past and current laws have made it difficult for women to get justice for the SV they have suffered, other past and current laws contribute to gender inequality. The 1992 Family Code officially proclaimed men as head of the household, and women could not inherit land or property. A woman needed her husband's consent to open a bank account, do business, or enter into agreements. A Rwandan woman marrying a foreigner would lose her citizenship, as would her children (Sharlach, 1999:391). This was despite the fact that the 1991 Constitution guaranteed gender equality. In the aftermath of the genocide, these laws had a considerable impact on women, as women were unable to inherit their dead husband's/relative's land. Various other legal codes also subjugated women (Burnet, 2012:101). For example, pregnant women were not given the right to choice, as the 1977 Penal Code determined that abortion was illegal except in cases of medical emergencies. Genocide rape survivors who fell pregnant were thus unable to get an abortion in public hospitals. The abortion legislation was only changed in 2012, when the revised Penal Code (in Article 165) decriminalised abortion under four circumstances (Bumwe, 2012).[46] These changes unfortunately came much too late to aid genocide rape survivors and still do not give women complete freedom of choice.

As stated earlier, the current government is championing gender equality, and the genocide indirectly led to reforms that legally address the plight of women. Nevertheless, some argue that Rwandan society continues to operate according to traditional beliefs, namely that men should maintain control of resources (Blizzard, 2006:29). One such resource is land. In Rwanda, land is very important[47] and owning land is of the utmost importance for cultural and actual survival. Nevertheless, as stated in the previous paragraph, until 1999 women were denied the right to inherit land. In the aftermath of the genocide, this left many women without land and housing. With female agricultural labour being a mainstay of family survival and most women being active in agricultural work, this challenges women's survival (Burnet, 2012:101). Even though these discriminatory inheritance laws have since been amended, women continue to be the worst affected by poverty in Rwanda. More than 68% of women lived below the poverty line immediately after the genocide, while the 2006 Household Survey showed that, of the 56,9% of the population that lived below the poverty line, 58,4% of them are women (Kantengwa, 2010:73).

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[46] Abortion is now legal when pregnancy is a result of rape, forced marriage, sexual intercourse with a close family relative, or if pregnancy jeopardises the health of the unborn baby or mother (Bumwe, 2012).

[47] This is arguably because there is so little land available. The Rwandan economy is predominantly agricultural, but it has a large and rapidly growing population, and a small cultivatable land area. Almost 90% of the population live in rural areas, where there is little non-agricultural activity (Howe & MacKay, 2007:200).

The political climate before the genocide also supported gender inequality. Prior to the genocide, women were extremely underrepresented in the government and politics in general (Mzvondiwa, 2007:103). For example, there were no women in the executive branch until 1990, and women never constituted more than 17% of the parliament (Sharlach, 1999:391). The current government, fortunately, tends to be supportive of women. Though it continues to mainly deny the SV committed by its own soldiers, it has generally created a political climate that embraces women and their issues. While some argue that this was done to promote its own authoritarian rule (Burnet, 2008:378-381), it nevertheless has benefited women to some extent, as will be explained in the following section.

6.5 ADDRESSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Prior to the genocide, the government did not institute any real measures to address SV. In the conflicts and civil war leading up to 1994, Rwandan soldiers and militias sexually violated women, but were never punished for doing so, which in turn inhibited women from reporting such crimes (Burnet, 2012:108). With a new government instated after the genocide, there have been definite attempts to address the SV perpetrated during the genocide, and to address gender inequality in general. However, the RPF government's refusal to address, or at times even acknowledge, the SV perpetrated by their own soldiers during the genocide (Burnet, 2012:111), as well as the government's increasingly totalitarian rule, belies its attempts to address SV. Filip Reyntjens (2004:194) goes so far as to state that the RPF's human rights record has been "dismal from day one". This includes massacres, executions, forced deportations, and SV which continued long after the genocide had ended. Yet, one does see attempts by government to address SV.

Firstly, in the aftermath of the genocide sexual torture was recognised as a category one offence, with the highest punishment. This included rape and other acts of SV during the genocide, but some judgements only deemed sexual mutilation or gang rape as sexual torture (Wells, 2005:172). This has meant that the application of the law has been inconsistent. Furthermore, the courts in which sexual crimes were prosecuted were not always survivor-friendly. Added to this, the number of persons arrested in the aftermath of the genocide meant that Rwandan prisons, with a capacity of 18 000, were filled with 90 000 people. In an attempt to speed up the judicial process, mass trails were held, which also involved the traditional *Gacaca* courts, which presided over SV cases on the proviso that they were held *in camera* (Gready, 2010:650). This was not ideal, as the judges presiding over *Gacaca* courts have usually had little legal training (Brannigan & Jones, 2009:201). Furthermore, *Gacaca* courts are public community forums, presided over by community members (Kohen, Zanchelli & Drake, 2011:92-93). While survivors' identities were meant to be protected, it was not an inviting situation for SV survivors. Consequently, the *Gacaca* system was closed down in 2012, amid national and international concern about its standards, and its failure to hold RPF members to account for their actions (BBC, 2012).

The government has also amended legislation to recognise SV and other forms of GBV in post-genocide Rwanda. In 2008, the Law on the Prevention and Punishment of Gender-based Violence was passed in order to prevent and suppress GBV (Republic of Rwanda, 2009:89). The Act recognises the various forms that GBV takes,[48] and addresses the issues that were raised by the genocide (such as sexual torture and slavery, intentional transmission of HIV, and rape) by detailing specific punishments for each. Forms of GBV facilitated and supported by culture in Rwanda (such as conjugal rape, and discrimination against a child due to their gender) are also addressed. In addition, this Act recognises GBV within marriage, punishes conjugal rape, and recognises GBV as grounds for divorce. Nevertheless, conjugal rape is not as serious as 'general' rape, as the latter is punished with a minimum of ten years imprisonment, while conjugal rape has a minimum punishment of only six months and a maximum of two years (Republic of Rwanda, 2009; 81-105). Furthermore, the fact remains that traditional cultural ways of responding to these violations do not recognise the severity of the violations.

Besides instituting measures to address GBV, the post-genocide government has instigated several measures to address gender inequality. One of these is the contentious issue of land rights. Under customary law women had access to land mainly through their affiliations with men (Lankhorst & Veldman, 2011:10). The 1999 Law on Matrimonial Regimes, Liberalities and Successions (more commonly known as the Inheritance Law) made it legal for women to inherit property, gave women full legal rights to enter into contracts, open bank accounts, and seek paid employment, all without the consent or authorisation of their fathers or husbands. This law made a dramatic change to the customary inheritance practices and empowered women (Burnet, 2008:376). However, as with the laws that are meant to address GBV, its implementation is not entirely successful. For example, the Inheritance Law only provides for women who are formally married. Thus, women in customary or religious unions, or in polygamous marriages, are not protected by the law. The biggest challenge to its implementation is that customary law continues to dominate. The majority of land disputes are handled at local level, where customary law prevails, and customary law discriminates against women and their land rights (Lankhorst & Veldman, 2011:11).

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[48] The law includes articles that determine the penalties for GBV offences, adultery, rape, abduction, child neglect based on gender, conjugal rape, harassment of a spouse, concubinage, polygamy, sexual slavery, sexual harassment, killing of a spouse, distorting the tranquillity of a spouse on sexual grounds, sexual torture, human trafficking, intentionally transmitting a terminal disease, sexually indecent acts, violence against elderly or handicapped persons, defaming a person or their job, depriving someone of their rights, refusing to assist a violence victim or to testify to that violence, and lying about GBV (Republic of Rwanda, 2009; 81-105).

Another measure to address gender inequality has been the attempt by government to integrate gender equality into post-genocide peacebuilding measures (Kantengwa, 2010:74). The government has taken various steps to increase women's participation in public life and governance. For example, the 2003 Constitution states that 30% of all seats in the Parliament and all other decision-making bodies have to be filled by women (Burnet, 2008:369).[49] In doing so, the government has contributed to creating a new societal impression of and place for women and placed VAW centre stage as an issue of national concern (Kantengwa, 2010:74). These efforts to empower women, while noble, are flawed in some ways. Burnet (2008) argues that the patriarchal and authoritarian nature of government has undermined women's ability to influence policy and has also weakened civil society. The most dynamic women take up government positions, instead of working within civil society, and once in government rarely take on an activist stance on behalf of women. The exodus of women to government has in turn weakened women's organisations. Furthermore, female RPF party members, or women aligned with the RPF, are given seats in decision-making bodies as women, which leaves other RPF party members to take the positions allocated to RPF members, thus ensuring RPF dominance. Thus, the female-friendly policies are being used to enable the ruling party to further its own agenda (Burnet, 2008:378-381). Increasingly, Rwanda is becoming a one-party state (Reyntjens, 2004:186), ruled by a Tutsi elite, while 85% of the population is Hutu (Hogg, 2009:48). All of this has lessened the effect that women have on policy, despite their increased governmental representation.

This authoritarianism of the state extends to and affects civil society. Prior to the genocide, civil society had no record of truly influencing policy or politics (Gready, 2010:641). Danielle Beswick (2011:499) argues that this has not changed, and that government sees civil society as assisting in service delivery, rather than as a counterbalance to the state or as agents of democracy (Reyntjens, 2004:185; Burnet, 2008:375; Gready, 2010:641). Those CSOs not co-opted, but confronting or opposing government policies, have been openly targeted and taken over by the RPF. Various laws have been passed that enable government to directly or indirectly control NGOs.[50] Independent CSOs, particularly human rights organisations, have systematically been suppressed (Burnet, 2008:366). Due to this complex relationship between government and civil society, civil society tends to achieve its outcomes through relationships and trust with key persons within departments of the government. Thus, it is behind the scenes engagement, rather than political activism, which achieves results (Gready, 2010:652).

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[49] It has also created a Ministry of Gender and a gender policy, organised women's councils at all levels of government, instituted gender quotas in the electoral system, distributed women's development funds for income-generating projects, and instituted programmes to combat the feminisation of poverty (Burnet, 2008:363; Kantengwa, 2010:74-75).

Nevertheless, civil society has to some extent been able to pressurise government into addressing SV and its consequences. Civil society was instrumental in having genocidal SV recognised as a crime and in ensuring that sexual torture and rape were classified as a Category 1 offence under the Rwandan Genocide Law. Originally, neither was included, but national and international women's rights organisations campaigned for their inclusion and were successful (Wells, 2005:184). Civil society was also instrumental in ensuring that the ICTR recognises rape as a genocidal strategy and that it punishes SV as an act of genocide and a crime against humanity. Furthermore, in the prosecution of certain *genocidaires,* it has also been civil society advocacy that ensured that the individual's list of crimes included SV (Wood, 2004:277; Blizzard, 2006:44-47).[51] International organisations, often partnering with local organisations, have played a key role in assisting genocide survivors, particularly orphans, widows and SV survivors (Crawley & Simic, 2012:88). This has included help for those who had been infected with HIV due to rape (Gard, Hoover, Shi, Cohen, Mutimura, Adedimeji & Anastos, 2012:2). For example, Rwandan women's organisations have utilised international partnerships to get those sick and dying from HIV the treatment, counselling and support they need (Cohen, D'Adesky & Anastos, 2005:613). Other Rwandan women's organisations, such as *ProFemmes* and the Association of the Genocide Widows of Rwanda (AVEGA), are active in assisting Rwandan women through various programmes.[52] However, this all fits into the service-delivery role the government proscribes for civil society (Cohen *et al*., 2005:614). The perpetration of SV by government representatives is not addressed by civil society, and neither are the ways in which government is enforcing legislation meant to empower women. Even influential civil society institutions, namely churches, have been relatively ineffectual in addressing SV and its various causes and consequences.

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[50] These laws include the 2008 Organic Law 55/2008 on Governing Non-Governmental Organizations, three subsequent laws passed in 2012 - one for national NGOs, one for international NGOs, and one for Religious-based organisations - and the Public Benefit Organisations Bill, passed in December 2012 (International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, 2012).

[51] For example, when Jean-Paul Akayesu's prosecution by the ICTR originally began, charges did not include SV. However, due to extensive lobbying by international organisations, the indictment was changed to include it (Wood, 2004:302).

[52] AVEGA is active across Rwanda and have psychological and medical programmes, capacity-building programmes, provide micro-credit, and have advocacy, information and justice programmes (Blizzard, 2006:30). *ProFemmes* is forum for women's organisations, which helps organisations to support and mobilise to assist Rwandan women. They have various programmes, including the Peace Action Campaign, and were instrumental in having rape recognised as a serious form of genocide (Blizzard, 2006:31).

6.6 CHURCHES AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Rwanda is one of Africa’s most Christian countries, with more than 90% of the population belonging to the Catholic or Protestant church (Longman, 2001:164). Despite this, more Rwandans died during the genocide in churches and parishes than anywhere else (African Rights, in Longman, 2001:163-164). Many massacres were carried out in church buildings, most of the killers and rapists were Christians, and some church leaders participated in the killings. Churches are blamed more for their inaction in not denouncing the genocide than for their action in participating in it. Many feel churches should have done more to stop the violence, given their central role in society. However, in reality they inadvertently lent legitimacy to a government that instigated the genocide, and became directly involved in the ethnic politics (Longman, 2001:164, 166). This has impacted severely on the legitimacy of churches and the ability of its leaders to address SV and its consequences.

The Catholic Church, in particular, has been implicated in the genocide. Prior to the genocide, the Catholic Church was the second-biggest economic force and the biggest CSO in Rwanda, exerting wide influence over society (Van Hoyweghen, 1996:379). Saskia van Hoyweghen (1996:379) argues that, because of this, it was too rooted in Rwandan society, which caused it to copy the ruling regime’s characteristics. Thus, at times it favoured Tutsis, at other times it favoured Hutus, in keeping with governmental policy and attitudes. During the genocide, key people within the Catholic Church were aligned with the Hutu extremists and the Church never questioned the political structures and decisions of the Hutu regime (Van Hoyweghen, 1996:385; Blizzard, 2006:40). For example, it never queried the appointment of the interim military government after the death of President Habyarimana. In fact, the Catholic Church was directly implicated in the genocide. For example, two Catholic nuns were prosecuted and sentenced (in Belgium) for aiding the slaughter of approximately 7000 refugees. Other Catholic Church leaders have been directly accused and implicated in other genocidal crimes. Not surprisingly then, the Catholic Church failed to assist SV survivors at mission hospitals by refusing to perform abortions (Mzvondiwa, 2007:101). The Catholic Church has not assumed responsibility for these acts, and claims that accusations against its clergy are merely part of an international attempt to defame and discredit the Catholic Church (Van Hoyweghen, 1996:396).

Even now, Rwandan churches have not acknowledged their genocide history. This is arguably one of the key reasons why they have been unable to address the consequences of the genocide, such as SV. Churches tend to emphasise forgiveness, meaning that survivors must forgive perpetrators at the expense of justice. In doing so it has isolated many survivors, including clergy (African Rights & REDRESS, 2008: 109-111). Furthermore, churches tend to keep their close ties with government, and many are in fact agents of the state, rather than independent civil society actors able to effect reform (Cantrell, 2009:328). For example, the Anglican Church is very supportive of the RPF-led government, and there is even some evidence that the government has input into the promotion of certain church leaders (Cantrell, 2009:323). It therefore comes as no surprise that it has not challenged the human rights violations that the RPF committed (Cantrell, 2007:342). This is unfortunate, given that churches continue to be the most prominent CSOs in Rwanda, that almost all Rwandans belong to a church, and that God, faith and churches continue to be an important source of support to Rwandans. For example, many genocide survivors say that they would not be able to continue living without God, nor be able to face their perpetrators (Brounéus, 2008:66).

6.7 FINDINGS

Against this background, the empirical research sought to establish what the context and consequences of SV were for women. The research was done in two communities in Rwanda, namely Rwamagana, the capital city of the Eastern province, and the rural area surrounding Gitarama, in the Southern Province. In Rwamagana the research infrastructure was arranged by AEE, an international, Christian, interdenominational organisation. In the Southern Province it was organised by RDIS, a partner of the Anglican Church of Rwanda that has a particular focus on socio-economic development. An interpreter was used for almost all of the interviews and sessions, and was called on to use her knowledge of Kinyarwanda and French in order to assist the researcher in conducting the different sessions.

In total, 30 people (23 women and seven men) were interviewed with the questionnaire, and nine SVAW survivors were interviewed. Two nominal groups were conducted, which had 21 participants in total (19 women and two men). 19 leader interviews were carried out, eight with women and eleven with men.

While the nature and focus of the different sessions varied, it all focused on gathering information on the nature of SVAW and its consequences, the factors contributing to and facilitating SVAW, the available interventions and intervention agents, and the particular role that churches are playing in addressing SVAW.[53]

6.7.1 SVAW and its consequences for women

Nine SVAW survivor interviews were done in Rwanda. Six of these survivors were assaulted during the genocide, while the other three were violated in the past two years. During the questionnaire interviews, 24 of the 31 participants stated that they personally knew someone who was sexually violated during the genocide, while 22 of the 31 participants indicated that they personally knew someone who was sexually violated after the genocide. Furthermore, many participants described SVAW as becoming more and more common, and that the number of SV cases are increasing steadily, although some argued that this was due to increased disclosure and not an increase in incidence. During the interviews it became clear that there is a difference between genocide SV and the experiences of genocide SV survivors, versus post-genocide SV and the experiences of post-genocide SV survivors.

Participants defined SV as *sexual relations done by force*, described in more detail as *sex without the consent of the woman*. Most of the participants discussed SV within the post-genocide context, which is possibly due to the amount of time that has passed since the genocide. The majority described SV as occurring between husbands and wives. Gender-based violence, particularly husbands/fathers beating wives/daughters or abusing their position as property owners, was also defined as SV. According to the participants, it was mostly during the genocide that SV was perpetrated by strangers.

In describing where SV occurs, a differentiation between genocide SVAW and post-genocide SVAW was obvious. All three of the post-genocide SV survivors had been sexually violated by a neighbour. This differed from the genocide experiences, where participants indicated that women were primarily sexually violated in two settings, namely when travelling or hiding in the bushes, and in refugee camps. Genocide SV survivors furthermore reported being sexually violated by both strangers and people known to them. For some, the SV continued even after the genocide had come to an end, as was the case with one Gitarama survivor:

> *Even after the genocide, that [sexual] violence continued… until I bore a child without a father. Now I have a child but no father… Many times women are taken as the people [who do not have hope], so because of that, immediately after genocide, that*

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[53] It should be noted that the empirical work was done in 2010, thus some of the changes to Rwandan law (notably on abortion) were not in effect at that time, and the *Gacaca* courts were still active.

> *rule of stopping sexual violence was not put into practice. So it was in that time when the people continued, I was [sexually violated], I did not have a husband, so I was taken as a person who does not have power, so [men took me] by force until I get that child.*

For those who did not die, the physical consequences of being sexually violated were usually very severe, and few received adequate medical treatment in time. Only two of the nine survivors that were interviewed went to a hospital immediately after being sexually violated, and in both these cases the abuse was recent - within the last two years (i.e. they were post-genocide SV survivors). Despite going to hospital directly after the event, one survivor contracted HIV and also became pregnant. The other SV survivors waited years before they went to hospital, despite all of them suffering from serious gynaecological and other physical problems:

> *After 12 years I went to the hospital. Then they found out that I have a problem. I have pains here in the back because of that. I was given some treatments, but {it is not cured}. I live with that problem.*

Participants often described SV survivors as being affected with HIV, and it was clear that many assume that all survivors have HIV. While HIV Post-exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) is now available, a health care worker in Rwamagana stated that survivors usually come too late to use it (i.e. more than 72 hours after being violated) and that medication that can be taken immediately after rape to prevent pregnancy remains unavailable. Genocide SV survivors that became pregnant were forced to carry to full-term or do home abortions, as at the time of the genocide abortion was still illegal.

SV survivors carry both physical and psychological scars. Participants often discussed SV survivors by stating that they are mentally unstable. This sentiment was echoed by the survivors themselves. They all told stories about the extreme trauma that they struggled with, which affected them physically and psychologically. For example, a Gitarama survivor explained that every time she remembers the incident, she falls sick and has to go to hospital, while a Rwamagana survivor said that she used to constantly get severe headaches, which only disappeared when she disclosed the incident and started receiving counselling and joined a support group. The yearly genocide memorial is a traumatic event for most of the survivors, as during the three memorial months they are constantly reminded of what happened to them.

Experiencing SV also has consequences for survivors' relationships. Firstly, survivors' relationships with their intimate partners are affected. The majority of participants stated that in Rwanda a sexually violated wife is not rejected by her husband, since she did not instigate the sexual act. Nevertheless, quite a few participants countered this, stating that some sexually violated women are rejected by their husbands, or find it impossible to get a husband once it becomes known that they have been sexually violated. A Gitarama woman argued that this is why many women choose not to disclose SV:

> *The reason is that [sexually violated] girls would not speak out, would not say that, because they fear that when I say it people will know that I'm not [a virgin], that I've been abused, I will not have a fiancé, I will not have a husband. Also some women thought that, if I say that, my husband will say that 'please will you go back to your family'.*

While a husband may not necessarily reject his sexually violated wife, the fact that she was violated by another man can cause problems in their relationship. A Rwamagana male leader stated that after such an act relationships usually deteriorate, especially if the woman contracts HIV. While a couple may continue to live together, the relationship is not the same, as reflected in the following story:

> *[I know of] a woman who [was] violated during genocide, she is affected by HIV/AIDS. When she got married with a man, but that man did not have that problem. Both of them were not aware of that problem. Then now, after realising that they have that problem, [they realised] that the husband has got it from the wife. Now in these days… a man and a woman live together before they sign before the government that they [will be married]. Now that man, because of what happened, he refused to sign… They are still [living together], but he doesn't want to sign the papers.*

A possible reason why people have such contrasting views on how SV affects intimate relationships is because so many men died during the genocide. Most genocide SV survivors who were married before the genocide were widows after the genocide. The demographics of the survivors and women interviewed in Rwanda illustrate this. Six of the survivors interviewed in Rwanda were genocide SV survivors, and five of them were widowed due to the genocide (the sixth one was only eight years old in 1994). Of the questionnaire participants, twelve of the 19 married women were widows. Thus it might be that how husbands treat a sexually violated wife has not become such an issue in Rwanda, as very few husbands survived the genocide. Most genocide SV survivors were also widows in the aftermath of the genocide, so they never had to disclose the SV to their husbands. Therefore, sexually violated wives were not rejected or mistreated simply because they did not have husbands anymore. However, it might also just be ignorance of the realities that SV survivors face that leads participants to state that sexually violated wives are not rejected by their husbands, for the participants that argued that survivors are rejected are ones that work with SV survivors, and are therefore arguably more informed regarding the actual state of affairs.

Sexual violence also has consequences for a survivor’s relationship with her family. Participants generally indicated that survivors’ families are supportive. However, survivors themselves give a different account, and once again there appears to be a difference between the experiences of genocide survivors and post-genocide survivors. Most post-genocide SV survivors actually have family left who can (choose to) support them, while many genocide SV survivors lost all of their family members during the genocide. All but one of the genocide SV survivors that were interviewed had almost no or no family members left, so they do not receive any support from family. Those that did have family chose not to disclose to them, as the family members they had left were either too old or too young and could not be trusted to keep the information confidential. The one genocide SV survivor that did have family of an appropriate age said that she was rejected by her family. She explained:

> *They don’t care for [me]. And especially even that child [a child she had due to being raped during the genocide], is the child of the people who killed [Tutsis]. So my family does not care for him… They don’t care for [me] because of that child and because of what happened to [me].*

A male church leader from Gitarama explained that other factors also play a role in whether genocide SV survivors are supported or rejected by their families. Contracting HIV is often a reason for rejection and the survivor is rejected for having HIV, not for being sexually violated. A further complication for a genocide SV survivor’s relationship with her family is ethnicity. For example, one Rwamagana genocide SV survivor explained that she disclosed to one of her sisters, but not to the sister who has a Hutu father. Thus, perceptions of ethnicity influence whether a survivor will seek support from her family, and whether she will receive it. Furthermore, while lack of family is a consequence of genocide that affects genocide SV survivors’ access to support, it is also a cause of SVAW. A male NGO leader based in Kigali explained that, due to the genocide, family structures that once provided safety to women and girls had collapsed. He sees this as one of the reasons why SVAW is still continuing.

Post-genocide survivors' experiences of support are usually different. All three of the post-genocide SV survivors described their families as mostly supportive. Nevertheless, it seems that the treatment a post-genocide survivor receives from her family depends on her behaviour prior to the assault. Two leaders in Rwamagana emphasised this point, and the one explained this as follows:

> *It depends how someone was raped. When you have been badly behaved, then they don't care, they can think you are the one who caused you to be raped… But they can't chase you away. But when you are really good in your behaviours, really they try to care for you. And also, within the family, they try to help the victims who were really well-behaved. Those who were raped who were well-behaved before, those families do not treat them differently. But those who had bad behaviours, who behaved badly before, sometimes they are treated differently [by their families].*

Bad behaviour is typically understood as dressing immodestly, visiting bars and clubs, drinking alcohol, etc. Behaving well is dressing traditionally, obeying one's parents in all things, avoiding unsupervised contact with males, etc.

Outside the family, being a survivor of SV has repercussions for a survivor's relationship with her community as well. According to participants who are not survivors, there has been a change in community attitudes towards SV survivors, but this is not the experience of those who have experienced SV, which is a more accurate reflection of reality, and is context-specific. Again, there is a clear difference between the experiences of genocide SV survivors and post-genocide SV survivors, with the latter experiencing the community as supportive, while the former have not. Accordingly, the six genocide SV survivors have chosen either not to disclose their experience of SV, due to fear of the community's reaction, or where they have disclosed, stated that they have been stigmatised and discriminated against. The one genocide SV survivor that has had positive community experiences has chosen to live in a special community, consisting of genocide widows and women whose husbands are in prison for genocide crimes, and this is the community she experiences as positive. But the wish of another genocide SV survivor, living in the 'normal' community, poignantly displays how alone and isolated many genocide SV survivors are: "If really it is possible, I would want to live in harmony with other people, loving each other, working together, caring [for] each other".

The situation for SV survivors in Rwanda is further complicated by the fact that SV survivors often live in the same community as the perpetrator or the perpetrator's family. Rwanda is very small and people live in close proximity, and survivors therefore find it difficult to avoid contact with perpetrators and their families. Because of this, relationships between survivors and their families and the family of the perpetrator are often strained, especially if the survivor's disclosure of the SV caused the perpetrator to be jailed or forced him to flee the country. Especially in the case of genocide SV, the strained relationships between families can be passed on, as a Rwamagana participant explained:

> *The families of victims and those [perpetrators], they hate each other… They are enemies. To the extent that that can be a consequence, [that can be passed on to]… their descendants, because all of those young children, elders, all of them they hate each other*.

Many SV survivors' relationships with their community are further challenged by them having a child due to rape. Once again there appears to be a difference between how children conceived during genocide rape and children conceived during post-genocide rape are treated. Three of the nine interviewed SV survivors fell pregnant because of rape. Family members and the community discriminate against babies conceived during genocidal rape, as well as their mothers. Even the baby's half-siblings may discriminate against him/her, and their own mother. A Gitarama genocide SV survivor said: "Even my own children do not care for me and that child, because of what happened, the way it happened". Consequently, some chose rather to lie about their children, as one Rwamagana genocide SV survivor explained. She told everyone that her daughter is the child of her husband who died during the genocide, and will continue to conceal the truth as she knows her daughter will be unhappy if she learnt the truth. However, it seems that (at least some) post-genocide rape babies and their mothers receive more support from the community, and could give practical examples of how they were helped. One post-genocide SV survivor explained that her community continuously help her and her child by providing food, clothing and necessities such as soap.

A further consequence of SVAW is economic deprivation. Those suffering from serious physical debilitations due to the SV, which is more the case with genocide SV survivors than with the post-genocide SV survivors, display a great need for economic assistance. Many stated that, after their experiences, SV survivors are physically weak, which inhibits their ability to function and provide for their families. Survivors themselves explained their difficulty in doing physical labour and cultivating their fields, and the burden of often having to raise children on their own, without support. In the case of genocide SV, even the government does not assist the mother. According to one genocide SV survivor, only Tutsi survivors' children receive government support, and as the rape baby is part-Hutu, he does not qualify. A genocide SV survivor from Gitarama's story poignantly shows how difficult it is to have and care for a child conceived through rape during the genocide:

> *When I see that child I remember what happened… At first the child was not loved by me. But because I started to go to the church, I got saved, now I love him. I love him oh so much and I care for him… When I see my child, especially when he makes some mistakes, I remember that that child was born, that he was unwanted. And when he falls sick and I do not have a husband to help me to take him to the hospital, then I remember… [My family] don't care for me. And especially even that child, is the child of the people who killed [Tutsis]. So my family does not care for him… I am not happy [with the community] because I am not well-treated. Even the child, they sometimes tell him the words that can really break his heart. [For example] 'you are a child from the grasses', 'you don't know your father, maybe he is the one who killed my father/my people'. Sometimes they are asking 'who is your father, tell us his name'.*

From this it is clear that there is quite a difference between the treatment and experiences of genocide and post-genocide SV survivors, with the latter being treated better by family and community, and facing less stigma and discrimination. On the one hand this is a good sign, as it shows that people's attitudes towards SV and SV survivors are changing. On the other hand it is a very worrying sign, as it shows that these changing attitudes do not apply to those involved in and affected by the genocide. This could be an indication that the ethnic divides and perceptions remain strong despite the many years that have passed since the genocide. Sexual violence survivors and their children born from rape continue to be branded for being part-Hutu or being sexually violated by Hutus. These children continue to be a constant reminder of an event for which many Rwandans carry great feelings of guilt. Besides this, there are other factors that facilitate and contribute towards SVAW in Rwanda.

6.7.2 Contributing and facilitating factors

As indicated earlier, Rwandan society values men more than women. In discussing culture in Rwanda, most participants described it as positioning men as superior to women. Culture in Rwanda constructs men as leaders, and as inherently more important and powerful than women. Despite government attempts to remedy the situation by implementing gender reforms, some men simply do not believe that men and women can be equal. Because of this conception of superiority, a man from Gitarama claimed that men carry the responsibility to end SVAW, as it is their mind-sets regarding the subjugated position of women that is causing SVAW: “They have to start by changing their behaviour, changing their thinking, making sure that they are equal, ladies and gentleman are equal”. Others felt that government’s attempt at creating gender equality fuels SV, as reflected in the comment by a woman from Gitarama:

> *Nowadays there is a specific reason which push[es] a man to abuse their wives, because they say ‘ah, there is a gender sensitive issue in this country and I… You say that we are all equal, I want to show you how we are not equal…’ It is done by the men to show, ‘even though you are attending the training session, I want to show you that we are not equal.’*

Men are physically more powerful, and where they see gender equality as undermining their status, this appears to have led to a culture of abuse which seems to have become the norm. A woman from Gitarama explained it as follows:

> *From the cases of families/households where women are abused and they don’t know because the culture, our culture, they think it is normal. Either women, they don’t know they are abused, either men don’t know they are abusing their wife… When you talk to a lady who has been abused, she thinks she is not concerned, it is the culture… Due to ignorance most of the people who are abused, most of the people who are abusing others, they don’t know they are abused, they don’t know they are abusing.*

Thus, the way culture positions men and women, and generates beliefs about their relative importance, leads to gender inequality in the private sphere, which is accepted. Culture in Rwanda also contributes to the occurrence of SVAW, by deeming sex and SV taboo topics. Disclosure of SV is frowned upon and very hard to do, and this means that wives often stay in abusive relationships as they are unable to seek help. Disclosure is made even more difficult for those who have been sexually violated by others as they are afraid that, should they disclose, their husbands will reject them. Unmarried women in turn fear that they will not find a husband should it be known that they have been violated. A female NGO leader and psychologist explained it as follows:

> *It depends on the area. But in general, if you are raped by a man, your husband cannot really accept that. Because men, they are very selfish… They don't want to share their wives with others... That is why they decide to chase you away… or go somewhere.*

Given that women are afraid of disclosing such incidents, perpetrators are free to sexually violate again, and many survivors stay trapped in abusive situations. Another factor contributing to non-disclosure and impunity is the Rwandan legal system. While many participants commented on the government's harsh punishments for SV perpetrators, none of the nine SV survivors interviewed had received justice. The six genocide SV survivors' perpetrators have never been arrested or jailed, not even those that are known and living in the community. The post-genocide SV survivors have also not received justice. The one survivor's attacker fled from Rwanda, another was briefly jailed but is now back living in the community, and the third is still living next to the survivor and has never been arrested. From this it appears as if the legal system is not that effective in addressing SVAW, leaving perpetrators free, and tempting others to commit SV with impunity. Some ascribe this to the dual law system, which recognises both customary and statutory law.

Lesser offences are handled in traditional courts through customary law by local leaders. Certain forms of SV are seen as 'lesser' issues. For example, conjugal SV is viewed as an issue that can be resolved through local traditional structures, as a male church leader from Gitarama who also serves as a local leader explained:

> *Because those cases [of SV within marriage] are not really strong ones. Because when they are strong, where you find a husband kills a wife, that is strong. But where you find a case of where a husband beats a wife, that is not strong, they [local leaders] know how to punish them… They help them with different punishments… they give them advices, show them the new steps [that they must do]…*

According to a woman local leader from Rwamagana, SV should not be handled by the traditional courts, but referred 'higher up'. This is because customary law does not recognise the severity of some SV offenses and, as reflected in the above statement, does not offer the needed justice or compensation. Furthermore, it appears that people are uninformed about statutory legislation regarding SV and GBV. As a result, they do not appeal to higher courts. Even some government leaders are unaware of statutory SV legislation. For example, a male government leader interviewed in Rwamagana was unaware of the 2008 GBV legislation that punishes conjugal SV, and stated that one of the glaring limitations to current SV legislature is the fact that SV within marriage is not recognised. From this, it appears as if formal legal ways of addressing SV are ineffective, partly due to the fact that people are not informed about the relevant laws. Traditional ways of addressing SV remain and are arguably the most popular, as supported by the remark of a male health leader from Rwamagana:

> *Sometime they decide to handle it within the families, don't tell the police or anyone else. They then sit down together; the victim's family is given money and the perpetrators don't have to go to jail. To a big extent survivors won't disclose, except if they want something from the perpetrator or if a third party had seen it.*

Another factor negatively contributing to the situation of SV survivors is the financial position of Rwandan women in general. Many participants explained and emphasised that Rwandan women are much poorer than Rwandan men. While inheritance laws have changed, it is still mostly men that own the land and properties, and women who are dependent. Accordingly, Rwandan women mostly rely on men to provide for them financially. This puts them at a disadvantage, since many men abuse the power that they have due to women's dependence. The feminisation of poverty within Rwanda was highlighted by the number of participants that emphasised the importance of educating and empowering women so they can provide for themselves financially, and thus not be at such a high risk for GBV. A woman government leader from Rwamagana passionately argued for the importance of developing women:

> *We have to sensitise women, in order to develop [them], through different activities that can bring income into their homes. Because if women have some income that they can bring into the home their husband cannot take it. He see[s] you as a person who is able to do something whether he is there or not.*

Gender inequality and the poverty of Rwandan women put them at higher risk for SV, since they are forced to engage in risky situations in order to provide for themselves and their dependents. Many women exchange sexual favours for material possessions and money.

This was very common after the genocide, when women lost all material possessions, and many were without men to provide for them financially. A Rwamagana NGO leader explained this as follows:

> *Those women without men, to survive they turned to prostitution. That is how they survive, many have small children. [Name of woman] is one woman that I know well. She did not flee to the refugee camps. To survive, she hid herself and her children under all the dead bodies that were lying in this church, for five or six days. She used to come to church. And then I saw that she was not coming anymore. And I know that that [prostitution] is what she is doing now with rich visitors.*

The feminisation of poverty in Rwanda contributed to and exacerbated the vulnerable position of women, especially SV survivors. However, this is not the only cause. The government itself has been key in perpetuating SV. The SVAW during the genocide was planned and orchestrated by the government, a male Rwamagana NGO leader explained, as a "war strategy, a tool for suffering… [an act] that was not about sex, it was to dehumanise the individual". Many Gitarama participants echoed this sentiment: "[The SVAW] was planned at high level, not by the community members at grassroots level, it was a plan at national level… it was a government plan from the top down to the community". This was what made it impossible to counter:

> *No one, individual or organisation, was able to stop or fight against gender violence. Because the gender violence and the violence itself, that was the government wish, the government achievement, the government itself was encouraging the people to do it. It was not possible for anyone to speak out.*

Government policy during the genocide thus directly contributed to the SV experienced by women. In the aftermath of the genocide, the new government tried to prevent and punish SVAW, and institute reforms to support gender quality. But some believe that the campaigns that emphasise gender equality and counter SVAW have in some cases led to SVAW, with men abusing women with the express purpose of 'proving' that men and women are not equal. Interventions have also been largely ineffectual.

6.7.3 Interventions and intervention agents

Consequently, SV was rife during the genocide, and has remained so, even though the consequences for survivors differ to some extent. Government is seen as a key intervening agent, often not to the advantage of victims of SV. For example, eleven of the questionnaire participants stated that, during the genocide, it was the government who orchestrated the SV, making it impossible for anyone to stop it. In the post-genocide period, government is seen to be actively trying to stop SV. 14 of the participants stated that the RPF did attempt to curb the SVAW. By far the majority of participants assigned the government the responsibility for addressing and ending SV in the post-genocide context. Churches were identified second-most often as agents that are addressing this. Interestingly, only two participants identified a CSO that was not a church.

As discussed in the previous section, according to participants the SVAW during the genocide was caused by the government. Part of a strategy of annihilation, SV was supported and condoned by leadership from government level to local level. The current government, on the other hand, is recognised as opposing SVAW. This started during the genocide, when the RPA stopped SV in the areas over which it attained control. However, one of the nine survivors that were interviewed was sexually violated while in one of the RPA-controlled refugee camps, thus these camps were not necessarily as SV-free as some report or think. Nonetheless, the current government is credited with addressing SVAW in two key ways, firstly by providing the legal mechanisms to apprehend, prosecute and punish perpetrators, and secondly by enforcing harsh punishments for perpetrators. By providing this, it is believed that it will encourage survivors to disclose, as they know that justice will be done. However, none of the survivors interviewed had received justice. Their experiences are supported by the opinions of leaders that work on GBV or with SV survivors, who all claim that the judicial system is not working, and that survivors do not receive justice or get the necessary support and follow-up. Participants were very concerned about the apprehension and punishment of perpetrators, which leaves one wondering whether the government is truly effective in apprehending and prosecuting SV perpetrators.

The second main way in which government is attempting to address SVAW is through campaigns and policy. This includes interventions and policy decisions that promote the rights of women and gender equality. A Gitarama man explained that, since the genocide, the government has been running a more or less constant campaign against sexual abuse. The fact that government is emphasising that men and women are equal was praised by all. A Rwamagana woman echoed this sentiment:

> *Before genocide, men were important and they could mistreat their women. But after genocide the government become a supporter of women. Now women are also leaders, members of parliament. So [because both men and women are leaders]*

> *they are equal.*

These efforts by the government have influenced how communities treat SV survivors, and how SV survivors see themselves. A Gitarama woman health leader described it as follows: “Now they are welcomed in the community, because if they are rejected they can be traumatised. So now they are welcomed, they approach them, they comfort them…”. Whereas SV survivors used to be stigmatised and isolated, they are now supported and treated like everyone else. The campaign against SV and gender inequality has included holding meetings and providing training at grassroots level, and this is lauded as having changed communities’ attitudes and beliefs towards victims of SV. However, participants felt that the efforts are not comprehensive enough. The participants repeatedly stated that the government should be creating meeting places and discussion groups, so that SV and SV-related matters can be more effectively addressed. Thus, it seems that participants require the government to continue doing what it is doing, possibly just with more focus and to greater effect. Many of the survivors of SV still felt that they are stigmatised and discriminated against. Based on the experiences of the SV survivors interviewed, at best it can be said that government efforts have influenced how post-genocide SV survivors are treated, but that genocide SV survivors continue to be marginalised.

In many countries, CSOs play a crucial role in addressing SVAW. However, in this study participants claimed that they know of no CSO that addressed SVAW *before* the genocide. After the genocide, specific CSOs were mentioned as providing help to genocide survivors or SV survivors, namely AVEGA, Care International, Ignation Volunteer Corps (IVC), IBUKA, AEE, and the Genocide Survivors Support and Assistance Fund (FARG). Most of these focus on assisting all genocide survivors, not specifically SV survivors, and get their funding from international partners. The organisation mentioned most often by far was AVEGA. However, everyone that mentioned AVEGA was from Rwamagana, where AVEGA has one of its five centres.

The organisations were mainly described as providing practical support, such as building houses and providing food, clothes, livestock, medical care, school fees, counselling, health insurance, and general economic support. The organisations were also credited with improving the quality of life of SV survivors by changing how the community sees and treats them. They do this particularly through their advocacy and training sessions with community members, which have lessened the stigma and discrimination that SV survivors face from the community. Furthermore, their work has also influenced disclosure rates. A woman government leader from Rwamagana explained:

> *Now these days they speak it out. But before it wasn't easy to speak it out, sometimes it creates some conflicts between families, especially before genocide. But now they speak it out, if conflict comes or not, that do not be a problem to them, they have to speak it out. Because also they have different organisations who tell people 'please, you have to be open if it happen to you, so we can solve your problems while it is still early'.*

As is the case with opinions on government interventions, one is left wondering about the accuracy of participants' perceptions when faced with the experiences of the SV survivors that were interviewed. Survivors experience harsh stigma and discrimination, and prefer not to disclose. Once again one feels that, at best, the situation is better for post-genocide SV survivors.

6.7.4 Churches addressing sexual violence

Churches were frequently mentioned as intervening actors. Despite their history of partaking in the genocide, Rwandans tend not to blame churches for the atrocities, but rather the actual church leaders that committed the acts. As those leaders are no longer in charge, people are willing to be part of a church. This view was supported by a female Rwamagana psychologist who works with SV survivors. She was very positive about the supportive role that churches play in survivors' lives:

> *Really churches are supportive. Because many many members who have problems, they go to different churches. Because they say that when they approach pastors, he can listen to me and comfort me. When they approach one of church leaders, who can help them in different ways and give them counselling. So many members who are here who have that problem, they go to different churches, because the church has help for them.*

Participants identified different ways in which churches assist SV survivors. They meet with them, counsel them, pray with them, teach them forgiveness and reconciliation, evangelise and comfort them. On a socio-economic level, they help cultivate their crops, they fix/build houses for survivors, and they give them stipends. However, not all churches do these activities to assist survivors. The majority (26 participants) indicated that their churches merely condemn SV and sometimes preach or teach about it, but offer little practical intervention or support. It does at least appear as if SV within marriage is being recognised by churches. The female head of the Mothers' Union (MU) of an entire denomination in Gitarama explained how they assist women in dealing with SV within their marriages:

> *What we teach, there are some men who want to do sexual relations by force. Even though they are married, but they do it by force. We teach the women, how to care and to handle those men… They teach this in order to help women, especially those members of the Mother's Union, to know how to handle the husbands. Because when your husband comes in that way, you can get problems. Maybe when he is a drunkard and he comes in the night, you know how to welcome him. When you tell him [off] in a good way, he can be humble, when you treat him badly, problems… [Women can refuse sex, but] the way we teach, it is a process. The way you treat him when he comes home, the way you share a meal, until you go to sleep… So that, when you reach that point [that you refuse sex] it will be OK.*

What this shows is that the Mother's Union does not oppose the disempowerment of women, but chooses to rather teach women how to deal with it. Thus, they do not counter gender inequality, but teach women how to survive it. Financial independence is an important strategy, she explained: "[We teach women] to be humble before [their husbands], to obey them, to work hard in order to get your own means, so that you need not ask him 'give me, give me, give me'".

Some churches are currently addressing SVAW by preaching, teaching and providing training about the issue. For many churches it is challenging to preach about SV, as congregations are mixed, and sex is a culturally taboo topic. This means that they have to separate men and women, as well as children, youth, adults and elders, before they can raise the issue. A Rwamagana church leader explained that, while people are interested in hearing about SV, it is difficult to find the time to do so, as people are busy and only come to church on Sundays and then they expect a sermon. It therefore appears as if some church leaders find it difficult to incorporate SV into their sermons, due to cultural views of sex-related matters. Another issue that churches are uncomfortable with is SVAM. Most church leaders did not know of any cases and smiled or laughed when it was mentioned. While the government is starting to talk about it, this is not something churches have started to address, according to a male church leader from Gitarama.

The ability of churches to support SV survivors appears to be seriously hampered by their inability to identify SV survivors. Of the seven church leaders interviewed in Rwanda, only two said that they have SV survivors in their congregation, while one did not disclose this information. However, it is questionable that the other four really have no sexually violated members, especially since SV survivors from some of their congregations were interviewed. The difficulty in identifying survivors was also highlighted by the number of participants that stated that churches should approach and meet with survivors. This is an indication that churches are not connecting with survivors. The responses of the nine survivors confirm this. Three of the (Gitarama) survivors did disclose to their churches, but have not received any support. The other two, who also disclosed, have received minimal support and condemn churches for doing so little. For example, one Gitarama survivor said that church members come to pray for her whenever she goes to hospital, but that is all. She stated poignantly: “What the church does is good, but if it adds more, it can be more than good”. None of the four Rwamagana survivors have disclosed to their respective churches, as they do not trust members to respect confidentiality, and do not see any benefit in disclosure. Clearly churches are not necessarily always safe spaces for SV survivors. Firstly, unpunished perpetrators may also be church members. Furthermore, some churches discourage disclosure and punishment of perpetrators, as the Rwamagana psychologist explained:

> *Sometime [SV survivors] are joining those churches because they have trauma. When you are at Catholic Church, for instance, and you find that someone who raped you is in Catholic Church, you leave that church, you go to the Pentecostal Church or the Restoration Church or the African Church, or all those churches. And… there are some churches who don’t accept that [survivors testify]. They force them to forgive those who raped them, which is not good. That forgiveness should come from the heart, not by force. So when they tell them ‘don’t speak out, don’t give testimony on what happened to you’, those churches can keep as many [members] as possible… [They tell them that] if they keep quiet, those [perpetrators] will be saved.*

Thus, while participants are able to identify ways in which churches are currently addressing SVAW, these activities are few and not comprehensive, nor being implemented in a systematic way. This was echoed by the male leader of a Christian NGO working throughout Rwanda. While churches do speak about adultery, and try to create a culture of abstinence, this has no real effect on SV, as churches have no real influence on people’s actions. Also, many people do not attend church, as they feel that the churches are simply not doing enough: “I don’t see a strategy for dealing with SV in churches. Government is doing much more than the church, the church is an observer. We pray, that is all”. He states that it is possibly because the government is seen be so active and efficient that churches are not: “Possibly the church is so ineffective because the government is so effective. So the church is feeling ‘what is our role, then?’”

While this NGO leader condemned churches for only praying, it is interesting that both the Gitarama and Rwamagana nominal groups identified prayer as the most important way in which churches can address SVAW. Other roles were also envisioned for churches. Churches' unique positions within the community give them a specific role and opportunities. A young woman from Gitarama explained it as follows:

> *I think that the church is the most, the best institution to fight and prevent the gender violence, but it needs to work in hand with the government… The church is able to reach the grassroots community and is well understood in the community.*

Interestingly, though, almost no participants described roles for churches that would directly address the issue of SV within a marriage, even though so many participants identified it as a very common and worrying issue. Only the Gitarama nominal group identified ways of intervention in this issue. They voted that two of the five most important ways in which churches can address SVAW are by training husbands and wives on the consequences of SV, and by having pastors counsel and reconcile households where husbands abuse wives.

In light of this, many felt that the churches have an important role in educating the populace about SV and related issues, although this role was by no means ascribed to only churches. Churches should be training and teaching on SV, its consequences, human rights, gender equality, the importance of not stigmatising and discriminating, etc. Participants clearly felt that being informed would bring a change in behaviour. Furthermore, many ways in which churches should be assisting survivors were suggested. The two main ways were through counselling and financial support. A Rwamagana survivor stated that survivors need counselling as they have no family to support them. Churches can fill this void by becoming the family and being the support structure that they lack. Counselling also helps survivors to come to terms with what has happened to them. This was affirmed by the interactions with the nine survivors. Of interest is that the four Rwamagana survivors, who had received extensive counselling, could easily and fluently talk about what had happened to them. The five Gitarama survivors, of whom none had received any counselling, found it very difficult and often lapsed into silence.

A second great need is for financial support. This does not have to be in the form of an allowance or stipend, but can be through offering or facilitating income-generating activities. Financial support would not only assist survivors, but be a way of preventing SVAW, as many women (especially wives) are at the mercy of men because they are poor and not making any financial contribution to the household. Other supportive roles that participants felt that churches could fill included medical care, payment of school fees and/or health insurance, providing food and clothes, cultivating land for those unable to, facilitating reconciliation with perpetrator/s, as well as approaching survivors to make them part of the community. Other general responsibilities assigned to churches were teaching perpetrators to change their behaviour, having campaigns and activities opposing GBV, and advocating for abused women. So from these, one can see that participants were of the opinion that churches can provide a wide range of support, extending to the provision of services, and not just to those associated with religion.

In general then, participants were positive about churches' ability to address the causes and consequences of SVAW, to provide support and certain services. This is somewhat surprising, given that few felt that the churches were actively engaging in addressing SV, and that what is being done is little and unsystematic. They identified the key roles of churches as being agents of change through education, and providing support to women and SV survivors, but it appears as if there are very few churches that are fulfilling these specific roles.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The Rwandan situation is unique. Almost two decades ago the country experienced a conflict so intense and extreme that its memory and consequences have become part of the Rwandan identity. Rwandans continue to commemorate it and deal with its consequences. Although enough time has passed for a new generation to grow up, the effects are still felt by the women SV survivors and their children. Even though the country is relatively stable, one sees that genocide SV survivors continue to face severe physical and psychological consequences, and it appears as if the community tends to stigmatise and discriminate more against them than against post-genocide SV survivors. It remains difficult for them to disclose, even to family, and to access the necessary support. This stigma and discrimination extends to the children born from genocidal rape. In the post-genocide phase, conjugal SV appears to be a very serious and wide-spread issue, although it is possible that it was just as prevalent prior to the genocide, but just not as talked-about. Most Rwandans discussed SV within this context. The fact that recent Rwandan legislation contains penalties for conjugal GBV and rape shows that the government is also aware of the issue. The stigma and discrimination connected to HIV is another serious matter that was highlighted, with the stigma and discrimination experienced by HIV-positive individuals being quite extreme. With so many genocide SV survivors contracting HIV due to the SV, this makes their situation even more difficult. While participants differ on whether SV or HIV is stigmatised the most, it is clear that HIV stigmatisation and discrimination remains a problem in Rwanda.

The government has played a key role in addressing SV. Through changes in legislation and policy, through practical interventions to assist SV survivors, and trainings and education sessions, the government was repeatedly described as by far the most active agent in addressing SV, its causes and consequences. However, one is left wondering if the government is truly so effective. The literature, as well as the experiences of actual SV survivors and those working with SV survivors, show that many perpetrators are not caught or punished, that SV survivors do not get the help they need, and that SV continues to be a great, if not growing, problem. Statutory law pertaining to SV is not being applied rigorously enough, and government's implementation of its gender equality policy is at times for its own benefit, rather than for the benefit of women. In terms of evaluating government and government intervention, based on the responses of participants there is a disconnect between the experiences and opinions of SV survivors, and the opinions of other participants, just as there is a disparity in terms of the literature on this and the research findings of this study. There are many possible explanations for this, one of which is the dominant culture of obedience within Rwanda.

The Rwandan people find it difficult to contradict, criticise or oppose authority figures and institutions. The participants in this study are aware of the government's official stance on SV, and in their responses were not overtly critical of government, even though the evidence on the ground showed that survivors have not received the needed support or redress. So while government and some participants claim that government is doing a lot to address SV and gender inequality, the accounts of the survivors' experiences and opinions are perhaps a more accurate indication of the true state of affairs. Participants also indirectly indicated areas in which the government is failing. For example, the fact that participants identified the primary need as being for the government to identify and harshly punish perpetrators, arguably shows that the government is not very effective in doing so.

While the apprehension and punishment of perpetrators can arguably only be done by the government, civil society can play an important role in SV education and other such ways of addressing SV. What is clear is that civil society is marginalised within Rwanda. Both the literature and the empirical work reveal a country where the state is the most powerful actor, controlling civil society and CSOs, and leaving them with only service-delivery and gap-filling roles. This is a precarious state of affairs, since the government is becoming increasingly authoritarian. The fact that the government uses its power to leave its own genocide and post-genocide SV offences and human rights abuses uninvestigated and unpunished, has meant that many perpetrators are not pursued, and that people affected lose faith in the system.

Compared to the government, participants apportioned civil society and churches a marginal role in dealing with SV. One is left wondering about causality. Is civil society doing so little and expected to do so little because of the government doing so much, or is the government doing so much because civil society is doing so little? Secondly, is the government's central role a result of its authoritarian rule, or something contributing to it? Similarly, is incorporating women who were active and influential in civil society into government a means to address gender equality, or to curtail it?

What was particularly interesting in terms of the interviews is that nobody voluntarily discussed the role of the churches in the genocide, and when this was raised, nobody vilified or condemned the churches. Furthermore, everyone saw the churches as important institutions with reach, scope and a role to play in addressing SV, even though in reality the churches do very little to address SV. This may be because the churches and church leaders are seen as intrinsically important, ideologically and officially, in terms of their relationship with the state and community. Accordingly, the genocidal history of churches are ignored, and even though churches were not doing much to address SV, participants continued to suggest many different practical ways churches could assist SV survivors.

In this regard, they thought that the church could play an important role in educating and training members about SV and how to assist those affected by SV, and by offering a range of support, from psychological to financial services. In reality though, the churches are not really engaging in any of the roles that the participants identified, and are not actively addressing the causes or consequences of SV. There are numerous reasons for this. In providing care, it appears that churches have difficulty in identifying SV survivors in order to assist them. This is arguably due to how SV survivors, specifically genocide SV survivors, are stigmatised within culture in Rwanda. The culture remains heavily patriarchal, and sex and SV are seen as taboo topics. Churches have adopted this attitude, as they mostly avoid speaking about sex or SV, and in the process are reinforcing the patriarchal attitude. SV survivors are also hesitant to disclose, as many have not found churches a safe and caring place, where their identity will remain confidential and they will be supported. It therefore seems that the cultural taboo of not talking about sex and sex-related matters extends to churches as well. This limits its ability and drive to address SV, its causes and its consequences. Churches seemingly do nothing to address the underlying gender inequality that causes SV, but merely tend to assist women in coping with this.

One can therefore conclude that, in Rwanda, the government is a strong actor in addressing gender inequality, SV and its consequences, while civil society, including churches, which are under the direct or indirect control of the government, play a marginal role. Many participants, however, felt that churches are well placed at grassroots level to confront SV, but do not do this, as this role is seemingly left to government, which is actually ineffective. CSOs, including churches, appear unable to condemn government policies and actions that directly or indirectly lead to SV, or even to just expose government inaction or ineffectiveness, given their relationship with the state. What one in actual fact observes is an identical situation to the one prior to the genocide, where churches were closely allied with the government, and civil society did not have a critical voice. One thus worries about the absence of a clear church/state divide in Rwanda, and the absence of a body of churches that actively strives to address the causes of gender inequality and SV, regardless of its origin. Hence, women continue to be victims of SV, with churches merely attempting to address some of the consequences in a very limited way.

Chapter 7
SVAW and churches in Liberia

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The sovereign state of Liberia was established in 1847 by former American slaves of African origin. These American-Liberians dominated Liberia for 130 years, and their oppression and misuse of native Liberians ultimately lead to a military coup in 1980, after which Liberia had its first indigenous ruler. However, corruption and injustice continued, and finally erupted into a civil war in 1989. This war, characterised by two phases, continued for 14 years, in which an estimated 150 000 – 300 000 people died and at least one million Liberians were displaced (Fuest, 2008:205; Heaner, 2008:463; Bauer, 2009:196). During these 14 years, women were not only killed, but endured horrific experiences, such as mutilation of body parts, cannibalism and torture (Ouellet, 2013:13), and SV was used as a tool of terror by all of the fighting factions (Cummings, 2011). The war was finally brought to an end in 2003 by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (Zounmenou, 2008:1).

At this time, Liberia was classified as a failed state (McGovern, 2005). Unemployment was estimated at 80-85%, with 63,8% of Liberians living below the poverty line and 48% of these living in extreme poverty (Heaner, 2008:463). The country had and still has huge external debt. It lacked functional infrastructure and the judicial system was corrupt and ineffective (Fuest, 2008:222). This meant that the perpetrators of SV during the war were rarely arrested or punished. The most-quoted statistics state that 75% of all Liberian women were sexually violated during the war, although some have questioned the validity of these statistics (Cohen & Green, 2012). Even to this day, SV continues to be committed with impunity, even though the post-war government has denounced SV, GBV and gender inequality through the passing of several laws and policies. These have not translated into justice for SV survivors, largely due to the fact that the judicial system is so weak and corrupt.

Civil society has attempted, and continues to attempt, to remedy the situation and has been instrumental in lobbying for key legislation regarding gender equality and SV and the enforcement of these laws. Unfortunately, civil society, including the churches, has been less active or effective in addressing SV in the post- war context. During the war, the churches, and particularly the Interfaith Mediation Committee (IFMC), which consisted of the Liberia Council of Churches (LCC) and the National Muslim Council of Liberia (NMCL), reacted early to address fighting and, indirectly, SV. From the beginning of the war, the IFMC tried to broker a peace agreement with the different rebel leaders and facilitated negotiations between these leaders. This lobbying and advocacy for peace by churches continued throughout the war, but unfortunately this drive and initiative seemed to wane in the post-war period (Toure, 2002:10). At national and local level, fairly little is being done to address the causes or consequences of SV.

As with the preceding chapters, this chapter examines the nature of sexual violence in Liberia, ending with how the churches are addressing this crisis. As background, the causes and nature of the civil war, its general consequences and contributing factors, and current interventions are discussed. Thereafter, the findings of the empirical work are unpacked, by looking at the nature and consequences of SVAW, the contributing and facilitating factors, available interventions and intervention agents, and the churches' particular role in addressing the causes and consequences of SVAW.

7.2 NATURE AND CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT

Repatriated American slaves started settling on the West Africa Pepper Coast from the 1820s onwards. These American-Liberians, while never more than an estimated 6% of the Liberian population, regarded themselves as culturally superior to the original inhabitants of the area, and dominated the political, social and economic system of the country for more than 130 years (Ellis, 1995:174-175; Fuest, 2008:205). The exploitation and suppression of the majority of Liberians ultimately led to a military coup by Master-Sergeant Samuel Doe in 1980, which can be seen as a prelude to the Liberian civil war. While he was originally welcomed as the first indigenous ruler, his rule was mostly for personal gain, and increasingly characterised by violent and oppressive tactics and the privileging of his own ethnic group, the Krahn (Bauer, 2009:195; Heaner, 2008:461). Resistance to Doe's regime ultimately grew, and culminated in an invasion by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor and other Liberians who had fled the country. The NPFL entered Liberia on 24 December 1989, and this was the start of the first phase of the Liberian civil war.

The NPFL controlled 90% of Liberia by April 1990, but with international support for the governmental forces in the form of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and their Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the NPFL was unable to capture Monrovia. Taylor became increasingly unpopular due to his autocratic rule of the NPFL, and more rebel groups started appearing, such as the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), which split into ULIMO-K (Kromah faction) and ULIMO-J (Johnson faction), and the Independent National Patriotic Front (INPFL) (Bǿås, 2005:82; Hegre, Østby & Raleigh, 2009: 607-608).

Fighting in the first phase of the war continued until 1997, when peace negotiations and an election established Charles Taylor as president, a victory that can be ascribed to the fact that he had the resources to continue the war if he lost the election, but also because he had the most ethnically diverse support base (Bǿås, 2005:83). Unfortunately, as with Doe, Taylor's rule was characterised by violence, corruption and abuse of power, and plummeted the country into a second phase of the war in 2000, when two rebel groups emerged dedicated to toppling Taylor. The efforts of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) succeeded, and Taylor resigned in 2003, with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Accra in August 2003 (Hegre *et al*., 2009:607-608). A transitional government was put in place and in the 2005 elections Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected as the first woman president in Liberia, and Africa (Bauer, 2009: 196-197).

The majority of scholars are of the opinion that the main cause of the war was the ethnic divisions and antagonisms caused by Americo-Liberian rule, followed by Doe's Krahn ethnic group dominance (Kieh, 2004:60). The fact that specific ethnic groups tended to side with specific rebel groups supports this theory (Hegre *et al*., 2009:605). Greed for political power and economic wealth is seen as another contributing factor to the war. The different anti-government rebel groups used the war as a means through which they could gain control of state power, in order to use it to better their own economic position. Rebel groups thus actually had no real political agenda, but rather wanted to exploit opportunities for private wealth accumulation (Kieh, 2004:67; Munive, 2010:326). A third contributing factor is the role of youth and youth resentment. Culture and society in Liberia, through practices such as land tenure, suppress and marginalise youth, and their participation in the war was seen as an attempt by the youth to achieve liberation and empowerment (Munive, 2010:326).

The Liberian civil war was similar in nature to those in other countries, in that it targeted civilians of different ethnic origins (Ellis, 1995:185-186). For example, Doe's Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) consisted mainly of Krahn and Mandingos, and they targeted the Gio and Mano communities. In retaliation, the NPFL would then target Krahn and Mandingo communities (Hegre *et al*., 2009:608). The rebel groups would also base themselves in areas where they could exploit the local resources, such as diamonds or village crops. They would defend these areas against other armed groups, but at the same time loot, pillage and exploit both the people and the land (Ellis, 1995:185-186).

Another feature is that most of the combatants were very young. For example, an estimated 15 000 – 20 000 child soldiers took part in the first phase of the conflict, which constituted 10-40% of all fighting forces (Maclay & Özerdem, 2010:355; Cummings, 2011). While some children and youth were forced to become soldiers, many volunteered to join a rebel group, as this meant they received some protection from the abuses of other fighting factions (Bǿås, 2005:85). Besides the youth, a large number of female combatants took part in the fighting. Amnesty International estimates that 30-40% of all fighting forces were female, while other sources place the number of female combatants at 2-20 % of all fighting persons (Fuest, 2008:210; Liebling-Kalifani, Mwaka, Ojiambo-Ochieng, Were-Oguttu, Kinyanda, Kwekwe, Howard & Danuweli, 2011:13-14).

Lastly, extreme ritualistic behaviours formed part of the civil war. Painting of fingernails, bizarre costumes, fighting naked, and carrying teddy bears or dolls were all rituals believed to protect the fighter, and were widely used during the war (Ellis, 1999:18). The fact that most of the fighting factions engaged in cannibalism received much international attention. Stephen Ellis (2001:223) states that “so many fighters consumed human blood or body-parts that it may be said to have been a standard part of the armoury of Liberian fighters”. SVAM also appears to have been a regular feature of the war, especially amongst male combatants. In a study by Johnson, Asher, Rosborough, Raja, Panjabi, Beadling & Lawry (2008), approximately a third of all adult male former combatants experienced SV, compared to only 7% of non-combatant adult males (Johnson *et al*., 2008:683).

Throughout the civil war, the international community was involved. ECOWAS launched various initiatives to broker peace, amongst others through ECOMOG, which not only held and defended Monrovia against rebel attacks, but also launched offensives. The UN supported ECOWAS’ efforts, and in 1993 the United Nations Observer Mission (UNOMIL) arrived in Liberia to monitor the peace process and support ECOMOG in implementing the Cotonou peace agreement. With the completion of UNOMIL’s mandate, the UN established the UN peacebuilding Support Office in Liberia (UNOL), to support the Liberian government in consolidating peace. The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was established with the signing of the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and involved sending a peacekeeping force of approximately 15 000 to Liberia (UNMIL Fact Sheet, 2013). This force is still in the country to assist in maintaining the fragile peace in the country.

7.3 CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONFLICT FOR WOMEN

During the civil war, many different rebel groups traversed Liberia, preying on civilians. Women and girls were victimised by these fighters in various ways, including sexually. SVAW included rape, gang rape, torture of pregnant women, sexual torture, and forced marriage (Liebling-Kalifani *et al*., 2011:9). The consequences of SV are multiple, and resonate with those outlined in Chapter Two. As a result of the excesses of rebel groups, many women were forced to flee to new or undesirable destinations, living as refugees or internally displaced persons, with the resultant lack of health, water, sanitation and shelter. In these new locations, they lack the traditional protection and support of family and community, which increases their vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation (Liebling-Kalifani *et al*., 2011:6). This situation continues even today, as many women find it difficult to return to their original homes for various reasons. One of the reasons is that many are left with children born from SV, and ‘marriages’ they were forced into during the war. At the end of the war, being either abandoned by the fighter or finally able to escape, these women are hesitant to return home, as they run the risk of being stigmatised and rejected for being sexually violated and having the children of fighters (Liebling-Kalifani *et al*., 2011:6).

The war also meant that women found it difficult to obtain employment or engage in activities that generate money. In 2003, almost 60% of all Liberian women had never been to school, compared to 40% of men. This has affected women’s ability to gain employment or engage in money-generating activities (Maclay & Özerdem, 2010:347). Furthermore, the war generally affected women’s economic activities, which are mostly within the informal sector, such as markets. During conflict these locations and activities tend to disintegrate, leaving women without the ability to provide for themselves and their children (Liebling-Kalifani *et al*., 2011:7). Now, in the aftermath of the war, often left without the traditional protection of men and without the ability to provide for themselves, many turn to prostitution as a means for survival. Transactional sex was a means of survival during the war, and continues to be a means of coping with scarce resources and limited economic opportunities in the post-conflict era (Atwood, Kennedy, Barbu, Nagbe, Seekey, Sirleaf, Perry, Martin & Sosu, 2011:113). Unfortunately it also increases a woman’s risk of experiencing SV.

As stated earlier, many women participated as combatants in the war, and these women were subjected to SV at even higher rates than civilian women. In a study by Johnson *et al*. (2008), 42,3% of female ex-combatants experienced SV during the war, compared to only 9,2% of female non-ex-combatants. Furthermore, female ex-combatants more commonly reported the SV as being perpetrated by a fighter than female SV survivors who were not combatants (Johnson *et al*., 2008:683). When the war ended, these female combatants were sidelined in the DDR process, as it generally did not include or address their needs. Thousands of female combatants did not participate in the DDR because of misinformation, lack of understanding or knowledge of the process, lack of funds, lack of political will for a gender-based approach, manipulation by those in charge, shame and fear. Furthermore, some of those who did participate are reported to have been ridiculed or harassed, or forced to have sex in order to benefit (Liebling-Kalifani *et al*., 2011:14). Women ex-combatants are generally reported to be marginalised in their communities, and struggle more with reintegration than their male counterparts (Fuest, 2008:210).

On some levels, however, the civil war empowered women. With the absence of men during the war, many women became heads of households, and as a result have been able to provide for themselves and their dependents (Liebling-Kalifani *et al*., 2011:16). In the post-conflict era, girls' enrolment in school has increased dramatically in comparison to pre-war levels, in recognition of women's ability to provide for their families. During the war women have proven themselves to be more reliable providers than men, and parents are thus starting to see educated girls as equally, if not more, valuable than educated boys (Fuest, 2008:217). This is partly due to the fact that women have come to take on key leadership roles in civil, political and religious spheres. Women's roles in peacebuilding have been particularly lauded.

Through organisations such as the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), the Liberian Women's Initiative (LWI), and the Mano River Union Women's Peace Network (MAROWOPNET), women have facilitated peacebuilding, even though not being allowed access to the formal peace negotiation tables. Through behind-the scenes engagement, as well as high-profile initiatives, women drew attention to the plight of civilians and the importance of peace (Press, 2010:23-26). With the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the ability of women to network and influence politics was arguably proven and improved (Bauer, 2009:194). This has to some extent entrenched women's empowerment, and somewhat countered the post-war tendency to revert to patriarchal systems, beliefs and gender roles after war has ended. Nevertheless, there remain various factors that contribute to the continuation of women's marginalisation in Liberia.

7.4 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE MARGINALISED SITUATION OF WOMEN

Women suffered both during and after the civil war, not only due to war atrocities. Despite the attempts to empower women, certain characteristics of Liberian society continue to affect women and perpetuate SV and gender inequality. Women are characterised as a ‘labour force’ working for and dominated by men. They are responsible for food crop production, domestic work and child rearing, are considered inferior to men, and as male property through bridal wealth and levirate marriage. Their identities as sexual beings also belong to men, who can choose to barter, exchange or redistribute a woman’s sexual and reproductive services (Fuest, 2008:206).

This positioning of women as property has meant that SV has a profound impact on a woman’s status and value within her family and community. A woman who is raped will often be rejected by the man she ‘belongs’ to, and will be stigmatised by the entire community (Schia & De Carvalho, 2009:5). This has meant that many survivors choose not to disclose being a victim of SV out of shame and fear of rejection, and this has been the case before, during and after the war (Liebling-Kalifani *et al*., 2011:3, 16). In fact, SV and domestic violence have escalated since the end of the war (Liebling-Kalifani *et al*., 2011:3). While during the war sexual assault by soldiers and rebels were common, SV is now often perpetrated by a civilian living close to the survivor. This increases the risk of repeated assault, and inhibits disclosure and help-seeking behaviours (Tayler-Smith, Zachariah, Hinderaker, Manzi, De Plecker, Van Wolvelaer, Gil, Goetghebuer, Ritter, Bawo & Davis-Worzi, 2012:1359).

Given this, in the post-conflict context the government passed laws and policies that recognise the independence and value of women.[54] SV legislation was particularly improved, but unfortunately these laws are not being implemented, and the Liberian judicial system is one of the least-trusted institutions in Liberia. Currently, it is run as a dual system, with both statutory and customary law being recognised. While all SV cases are supposed to be handled by statutory law and statutory law institutions, this is perceived and experienced as being expensive, inaccessible, corrupt, and unjust (Isser, Lubkemann & N’Tow, 2009:3). Customary law is experienced as more accessible, and many SV survivors therefore prefer to turn (illegally) to these courts, or to monetary settlements with the perpetrator (Heaner, 2008:466; Schia & De Carvalho, 2009:16).

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[54] These are discussed in the next section.

However, customary law does not treat SV as a very serious issue. For example, despite the new Rape Law stating the opposite, customary law still considers conjugal SV as a family matter that should not be aired or judged in court (Schia & De Carvalho, 2009:17). What this means, in essence, is that the judicial system in Liberia is not working, and even where it is, women tend not to have the money or connections to access the statutory system and receive justice (Schia & De Carvalho, 2009:21). Furthermore, many women are also ignorant of new laws, such as the Inheritance Law, and thus do not take advantage of their newly-recognised rights (Heaner, 2008:472). This not only has implications for their ability to receive legal justice, but also influences their economic situation, which in turn facilitates SV.

Liberian women's limited access to financial stability is a result of gender inequality and a cause of SV. Liberia's formal unemployment rate is 85%, and is highest amongst women (Atwood *et al*., 2011:113). Women are even more threatened by poverty than men, as they have less access to resources and employment. Due to traditional patriarchal structures, their access to land and capital are limited, and they remain dependent on men for access to capital and for jobs in the civil service sector. Even though women produce 60% of all agricultural products and 77% of women report to be self-employed, they have little representation in the sectors that are most profitable, such as infrastructure, mining, and cash crop farming. Furthermore, there is general resistance to interventions meant to facilitate women's economic independence, as men and society in general rely on women's (free) labour for their wellbeing (Fuest, 2008:220-222).

Given the limited employment opportunities for women, many engage in transactional sex as a way of economic survival, both during and after the war (Atwood *et al*., 2011:113). The 'loving business', as it is called, has long been a feature of Liberian women's income and networking strategies, as women have always had limited access to income-generating activities. Thus, the profitable engagement in relationships with multiple men has for decades been a (hidden) feature of many women's lives, and has put them at risk of SV (Fuest, 2008:210-211). Their relative absence from public life combined with the political climate has added to their vulnerability to SV.

While the current government professes a commitment to gender equality and combatting VAW, leaders' political ambitions can arguably stand in the way of achieving these goals. Leaders are hesitant to oppose cultural practices or institutions that directly or indirectly facilitate gender inequality or VAW, if these practices or institutions are supported by a large sector of the electoral base. For example, female genital mutilation (FGM) is recognised by the international community as a grave violation of women's rights. However, neither statutory nor customary law in Liberia prohibits FGM, and this continues to be a common culturally-supported practice. In 2006, the Minister of Internal Affairs even promised not to discourage FGM, as it is part of Liberia's traditional culture and opposing it would alienate a large part of the electorate (Heaner, 2008;473). Thus, while the government has instituted measures to combat gender inequality and SV, as will be discussed in more detail in the next section, the fact remains that there are situations in which government leaders prioritise their own political agendas, to the detriment of women's rights.

7.5 ADDRESSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Before the war, gang rape was the only sexually violent act that was deemed illegal by Liberian statutory law (Cummings, 2011). This is reflective of how past governments condoned women's cultural and legal inferiority, and how little they did to prioritise SV. The Taylor administration did nothing to change this legislation, although it did allow for the 2001 formation of the Ministry for Gender and Development, in response to activists' appeals for action, institutions and legislation that prioritise women's rights.[55] Some argue, however, that Taylor only did this because of the growing crisis in his regime's legitimacy, and that he instituted the Ministry as a way of gaining local and international recognition and acceptance (Fuest, 2008:219).

The transitional government was the first to crack down on SV. In 2005, it passed the Amended Rape Law which, amongst other things, instituted sentences of up to ten years for second-degree rape, and lifetime imprisonment for first-degree rape. The age of legal consent for sex was raised to 18 years and, importantly, it expanded the definition of rape to include penetration with any object, including anal penetration with any object, and oral penetration by the penis. In doing this, the Liberian law recognised that sexually violent acts can also be committed against men and boys (Cummings, 2011). In amending the SV legislation in such ways, and doing it only two years after the war had ended, the government clearly signalled that it recognised the pervasiveness as well as severity of SV, and would not condone it.

The current government's seriousness about SV, and gender inequality in general, is best reflected in its leader's commitment to it. President Sirleaf has repeatedly stated her commitment to addressing gender inequality and combating SV through enforcing SV legislation (Schia & De Carvalho, 2009:4; Cummings, 2011). In 2009, her government launched its National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 (making it the first country in the world to do so), established a National GBV Task Force to implement this Plan (Liebling-Kalifani *et al*., 2011:4), instituted the Women and Children Protection Section of the national police force which specifically deals with SV and other crimes against women, and created a new sex-crimes court, dedicated specifically to rape and other forms of GBV (Cummings, 2011). In addition, the government instituted measures to address the indirect causes of SV and gender inequality. For example, the Inheritance Law was passed in 2003, which regulates women's marriage rights, right to property, and access to children in the case of divorce or widowhood (Fuest, 2008:219; Heaner, 2008:472).

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[55] The Ministry still exists today. It is mandated with practically implementing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its related instruments, and must advise the Liberian government on all issues affecting the development and welfare of women and children (Ministry of Gender & Development, 2013).

Unfortunately, legislation and policy does not necessarily translate into an actual improvement for women and SV survivors. Despite these laws, plans and institutions, SV continues to be committed with impunity, and gender inequality remains, especially in rural areas. The main reason for this is that the government is unable to enforce the implementation of legislation that protects women and ensures justice for SV survivors. As discussed earlier, the judicial system is weak, corrupt and ineffective, and thus SV survivors and women in general are not finding justice. Secondly, the government still refuses to address certain forms of SV, due to their being labelled ‘cultural practices’. As already mentioned, the government still does not oppose FGM, and often even condones this publically. This is despite that fact that women hold a large number of important governmental posts. In 2012, 31% of the top ministerial posts, 29% of the Deputy Minister posts, and 25% of the Assistant Minister posts were filled by women, and women head 28% of the 25 most important governmental agencies (allAfrica, 2012). Arguably, there are therefore enough women in important positions within government to force and enforce women's empowerment, yet it is not happening. Civil society has been more vocal in addressing SV and gender equality.

Liberian civil society originally focused on challenging the Americo-Liberian rule of Liberia. While Doe's regime was quite repressive of civil society, with the outbreak of the civil war civil society again became more active (Toure, 2002:10), by opposing the war and promoting peace. Civil society organisations like the IFMC, the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC), the Center for Law and Human Rights Education (CLHRE), the LWI, Susukuu, and the Special Emergency Life Food Program (SELF) were founded with the aim of ending the war (Toure, 2002:10). During the first phase of the war, these organisations were allowed to be quite active, but from 1997 the Taylor regime began to bear down on civil society. Taylor saw civil society as part of the political opposition, and repressed civil society through intimidation, arrests and unlawful detention (Toure, 2002:12-13).

Nevertheless, specific women's organisations continued to be very active in peacebuilding, and in the process drew attention to SV as one of the key consequences of the war. Two such organisations are the LWI and WIPNET.[56] Through initiatives, such as rallies, mass demonstrations and sex bans (where women refused to have sex with their husbands until the fighting stopped), they promoted peace. This arguably reached a climax when members attended the 2003 Accra peace talks. While not being part of the formal peace negotiations, they lobbied with participants during breaks in formal negotiations. When negotiations were at the point of failing, they staged a sit-in, where they refused to allow the participants to leave the negotiation room until meaningful agreements were reached. Two weeks later the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed (Ouellet, 2013: 14-15).

After the war, a more concerted effort has been made by some CSOs to specially address SV or certain aspects of SV. For example, the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFLL) has been instrumental in having key legislation regarding gender equality and SV passed. It was their lobbying that finally led to the Rape Law being amended, the Inheritance Law being passed, and also to the 2008 government decision to create a special sex-crimes court. Another example is the successful lobbying of the Liberian government by MSF, which led to courts accepting medical-legal rape certificates signed by any medical practitioner, not only doctors (Cummings, 2011).[57]

Nevertheless, Liberian civil society faces challenges that limit its ability to address SV. It arguably remains too dependent on foreign aid (Toure, 2002:14), and this inhibits its capacity and ability to act independently. Secondly, civil society is not active enough in rural communities. While strong and active within Monrovia, CSOs are less present at the local level in more rural areas, but it is in this context that much of the women's rights abuses take place (Toure, 2002:24). Thirdly, post-war civil society is mainly concerned with advocacy. There is no meaningful interaction and cooperation with state and government structures. This means that, while civil society is creating awareness regarding areas of need, these are not being addressed, as state and government institutions are not responding adequately (Maclay & Özerdem, 2010:350-351). It appears as if it is mostly women's CSOs that focus on these issues, and that civil society as a whole is not putting all of its weight behind it, except perhaps for the churches.

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[56] WIPNET and the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace Campaign received much international press and recognition when their founder, Leymah Gbowee, received the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize.

[57] This had been a problem, as Liberia has so few doctors, especially in rural areas, and SV survivors were finding it difficult to obtain the needed medical-legal documentation to make a case against their perpetrator (Cummings, 2011).

7.6 CHURCHES AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Liberia is considered a predominantly Christian country. The 2008 National Population and Housing Census indicated that 85,6% of Liberians are Christian, 12,2% Muslim, 1,5% Atheist, 0,6% follow indigenous African religions, and less than 1% are members of other religious groups (US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2012). However, religious statistics are not necessarily accurate, as many Liberians have multiple religious identities (Ellis, 1999:245). For example, many practice both Christianity and a traditional religion, and many AICs merge Christianity with indigenous religion. Furthermore, Christianity takes on different forms, with Liberia having many different types of churches.[58] Nevertheless, churches are amongst the oldest and most influential sectors of civil society in Liberia, and have moral authority within society (Toure, 2002:15-16). Prior to the war, churches and Christian organisations were part of human rights monitoring, and churches have been involved in peacebuilding since the start of the war (Heaner, 2008:465).

Through ecumenical endeavours such as the IFMC, church leaders facilitated consultations between rival factions, organised conferences, and managed the agenda for meetings between rival groups (Toure, 2002:10). Some church leaders took on an activist role, actively speaking out against government and rebel leader abuses, and ecumenical bodies and faith-based CSOs played a key role in peacebuilding (Press, 2010:25). Much has been written on the religious drive behind CSOs', and particularly women's organisations', peacebuilding interventions (Bauer, 2009; Ouellet, 2013). Churches have also practically assisted Liberians, both during and after the war. These services included general relief services, health care and education (Toure, 2002:16).

While there is plenty of literature on churches' activity and mobilisation for peace in Liberia, there is less to be found on churches' mobilisation against SV. It seems that during the war, churches focused their energy on advocating against the war, and not against SV and SV-facilitating beliefs and practices. After the war, there appears to be a bit more effort in directly addressing SV causes and the consequences, although it generally started only fairly recently. For example, 20 November 2013 was declared the Day of Prayer and Action for Children, with a specific focus on the SV perpetrated against children.[59] Furthermore, faith-based organisations (such as Equip Liberia) and Christian ecumenical bodies (such as the Association of Evangelicals of Liberia – AEL) have launched initiatives to specifically address SV through working with churches. These initiatives include trainings, Bible studies, and resources for church leaders on SV, with the aim of empowering church leaders to talk about SV in their congregations, and bring about change in how church and community members understand SV and treat SV survivors (Tearfund, 2013). There is evidence for some churches assisting SV survivors through Bible Studies and counselling, including them in group activities (such as choirs and camps), and practical provisions such as food and clothing (Lekskes, Van Hooren & De Beus, 2007:20; Bryant-Davis, Cooper, Marks, Smith & Tillman, 2011:324-325).

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[58] Paul Gifford (1993) classifies them in four general categories, namely mainline churches, evangelical churches, faith gospel of health and wealth churches, and independent churches.

It therefore appears from the literature that the churches in Liberia have a reputation for effective advocacy and lobbying, based on their involvement in peacebuilding in Liberia. Unfortunately, it seems as if the churches are not as active on the issue of SV. While there are some attempts by some churches and ecumenical bodies to address the causes and consequences of SV, these are piecemeal and unsystematic, and it appears as if there has been no consistent prioritising of SV within churches in Liberia.

7.7 FINDINGS

Against this background, the findings of the study on sexual violence and the ability of the church to address this are presented. The research was done in two communities in Nimba County, namely Ganta (the commercial capital of the county), and Saclepea, a smaller town south-east of Ganta. The research infrastructure was organised by EQUIP Liberia, a local NGO that has a strong focus on health interventions, and is involved in addressing GBV on various levels. Approximately 70% of the sessions were conducted in English by the researcher alone. An interpreter was used when the difference in accent caused difficulties, and with the few participants who preferred speaking Mano.

In total, 31 people (23 women and eight men) were interviewed with the questionnaire. Eleven SVAW survivors were interviewed. Two nominal groups were conducted, which had 26 participants in total (15 women and eleven men). 29 leader interviews were done, seven with women and 22 with men. While the nature and focus of the different sessions varied, they all focused on gathering information on the nature of SVAW and its consequences, the factors contributing to and facilitating SVAW, the available interventions and intervention agents, and the particular role that churches are playing in addressing SVAW.

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[59] Both Christians and Muslims commemorated the day, observing a minute of silence and prayer, and a key aim of the Day was to create awareness of the SV perpetrated against children (UNICEF, 2013).

7.7.1 SVAW and its consequences for women

In Liberia, eleven SVAW survivors were interviewed, of whom only one was sexually violated after the war. More than half of the 30 questionnaire participants personally knew someone who had been sexually violated during the war. Most indicated that SV is still endemic, although less so than during the war. The reasons cited for this decrease include that peace had been established, that the government is addressing SV, and that international opinions and condemnation of SV is influencing Liberians' opinion of SV. Participants defined SV as *sex done by a man by force and without the consent of the woman*. Participants easily switched between discussing SV in a war context and in the post-war context, although there appeared to be more concern about the ongoing post-war SV, as it is seen as specifically targeting youth and children.

Sexual violence during the war happened everywhere, and was perpetrated by both strangers and people known to the victim. For example, of the survivors that were interviewed, two were sexually violated while travelling, three were sexually violated while fleeing, and six were sexually violated while in their own home or village. Seven of the survivors were sexually violated by strangers, while four were sexually violated by someone they knew. It seems that many men took advantage of the general disorder and permissibility of SV during the war, and proceeded to abduct women. Long-term SV was common during the Liberian war. Five of the eleven survivors were kept as 'wives' by their aggressors, the shortest term being four months and the longest 15 years.

Most participants felt that there was no specific reason why certain women become victims of SV during the war, and claim that it was simply bad luck. Nonetheless, a few specific reasons for falling victim to SV during the war were identified, namely poverty, lack of education, and cultural/religious rituals. Interestingly, these reasons coincide with the reasons identified for post-war SV. Due to the war, a culture of SV developed, where SV is perpetrated by civilians with impunity. In the post-war era, young women and children are considered most at risk of SV. Firstly, youth and children are actively seeking out situations where they can exchange sex for money, material goods or good grades. With extreme poverty throughout the country, parents cannot provide for their children, and sex becomes a saleable commodity. A male Ganta church leader explained the situation as follows:

> *In the villages, girls will leave their parents and come here… [You see a] self-supportive child and you ask 'how do you get money'? … Most of the girls I see in the streets… When they come, they use themselves to get money. If you do not have money for school fees, for daily bread, you have to use yourself to get money… That is sexual violence.*

Some claim that the youth have become rebellious, refuse to respect and obey their parents, and tend to engage in activities that put them at direct risk for SV, such as alcohol abuse and inappropriate dress. The assumption is that children and youth who respect and obey their parents are less likely to fall victim to SV. Thirdly, certain cultural or traditional rituals and ceremonies call for the rape of virgins or children. For example, a man consulting a medicine man to find a remedy for his continuous poverty will be instructed to have sex with a child, and children therefore become targets of SV because of cultural beliefs and practices.

Interestingly, Liberian participants did not make many references to the physical consequences of either war or post-war SV. The possibility of falling pregnant was referred to by some, and two participants made reference to the possibility of contracting HIV. Even the survivors that were interviewed made little reference to physical consequences even when prompted, although four of them had one or more children due to rape. In terms of medical treatment, only the post-war SV survivor received medical treatment immediately after she was assaulted. Of the others, four never received any medical treatment, while the other six had received some form of treatment years after the incident.

It was the same in terms of discussing the psychological consequences. Participants made few references to the mental consequences of SV, and the psychological condition of SV survivors. Again, even the survivors themselves rarely discussed their psychological condition, even when prompted. Only four made reference to emotions or feelings they had due to being sexually violated, and only one of the survivors discussed it in any detail. The one circumstance in which survivors would discuss their feelings was when they were asked how they felt about their children that were conceived through rape. All stated that they feel bad for their child/ren who grow up without a father. A Ganta survivor's response is fairly representative: "I feel bad, because the child is growing up and don't have a father. When the child grows up and asks 'where is my father', I'm not sure what I will say. I love my child".

While participants and survivors rarely discussed the physical and psychological consequences of SV, they spent much time discussing the treatment that SV survivors receive at the hands of others. In terms of their intimate relationships, it appears that husbands in Liberia generally do not shun their wives who have been sexually violated. Nevertheless, participants stated that it does cause tension and shame within the relationship and family, which might lead to the couple separating or divorcing. Also, there are some husbands who cannot accept that their wives have been sexually violated by another, and reject her as a result. Furthermore, unmarried survivors find it difficult to find husbands. This is illustrated by the fact that none of the eleven survivors were married at the time of being sexually violated, nor were they married at the time of the interview.

How SV affects a survivor's intimate relationships is made even more complex by the fact that long-term, forced abduction was very common during the war. Women were abducted and kept for long periods of time, and repeatedly sexually assaulted by the same man. In Liberia, people commonly refer to this situation as being 'taken as a wife'. This happened with five of the survivors that were interviewed. All except one spent several years with their assailants, two survivors only left their assailants when the men died, and three of the five had one or more children with their assailant. While these survivors identify themselves as having experienced SV, they also refer to themselves as wives. This complicates the relationship with the assailant, as he is arguably one of the reasons why survivors lived through the war, as they were kept safe, fed and sheltered. This ambiguity regarding their perpetrators was apparent with three of the wife-survivors, who expressed no condemnation of the men who were their 'husbands'. On the contrary, one survivor displayed disbelief and hurt when she explained that he deserted her at the end of the war. A Ganta survivor's story illustrates the complexity of the situation:

> *It happened in 1990, when I was 22. He was a stranger, he took me… I became his wife. And I had four of his children. There was nothing I could do, I could not go to anyone. I lived with him and his bodyguards protected me when he was gone. Then, in 2005, just after the last election, then he left. He was gone… Now I live in a community far away from where it happened, from where I lived with him, so the people here do not know. They know about him, but they do not know the situation. They think he is a husband who left me.*

Survivors who were in such long-term 'relationships' with their assailants often find it difficult to know how to think and feel about their assailants and the treatment they suffered at their hands, which slows and complicates the psychological healing process. It can also complicate the survivor's relationship with her family, as they do not understand the ambiguity she feels towards the man. In any case, even if a survivor was not kept long-term, SV impacts and affects her family and her relationship with her family. What is interesting is that this impact appears to differ in war SV versus post-war SV. Ten of the eleven interviewed survivors were sexually violated during the war. Six of them have experienced tremendous support from their families, many stating that their mother or father has been their most supportive ally. Only two were rejected, while the final two survivors had no family left due to the war. This, combined with the opinions of other participants, leads one to believe that families tend to support family members that were sexually violated during the war, realising that they had no part in what happened to them. War SV is seen as a tragic consequence of the war, one which the survivor was unfortunate enough to fall victim to. While the support war SV survivors receive from their families is mainly emotional, this seems to be better than the treatment experienced by post-war SV survivors at the hands of their family members.

In contrast to the situation in Rwanda, post-war SV survivors in Liberia are treated fairly poorly by their families, as they are usually seen as being willing, or at least facilitating, partners in the act, and are blamed for this. This does depend on the context in which the SV occurred, as a Saclepea male youth governmental leader explained: “There will be some form of rape where maybe the girl is the cause. Where she didn’t listen to her parents, she didn’t [stay at] home. So then the parent will be angry and reject her”. While a survivor’s family might still allow her board and food, there is a sense of disappointment and resentment that the she has brought shame upon the family. This is especially the case when children are sexually violated. The mother of a 13-year-old survivor who was gang raped earlier in the year, expressed her fury with her daughter as follows:

> *I am so angry with her. How could she do this to us? How could she behave so? Kids her age should do better things, like sing in the choir. Why did she go out, why did she be with such boys, why did she let herself be drugged?*

The fact that families blame and resent SV survivors might also be due to the fact that they bring an added financial burden. Due to the nature of the Liberian health and judicial systems, the survivor has to pay for transport to and from hospital, police and court, and medical costs. The judicial process depends on the ability to pay, and ensure that due process is followed. Thus, aside from the stigma that the survivor brings upon the family, the financial burden can be considerable and add to feelings of resentment. Nevertheless, they are rarely rejected and chased from the home.

From participants' responses, it appears that communities tend to treat all survivors (war or post-war) the same, although this treatment is not necessarily good. Communities were described as being at times supportive, and at other times stigmatising. While some community members will help, counsel and assist SV survivors, others mock, gossip about and discriminate against them. Most of the participants described these stigmatising and discriminating acts as being limited to gossip and mockery, and not as being physically abusive. However, one must keep in mind that the abuse is of such a nature that five of the eleven survivors stated that they have moved simply to avoid the community's stigmatising and discriminating treatment, and to live somewhere where no-one knows that they have been sexually violated. All these survivors claimed that they would not disclose being sexually violated in their new communities. The experiences of a Saclepea survivor reflect the views of many:

> *Almost everyone in that community knew what happened to me, but there was nothing they could do, because it was wartime. They remind us of it, saying 'that person getting raped, that person getting raped'. So I moved away. I moved because of the reproach, every time they see me. I could not bear the pain anymore. So I moved to Saclepea. The community wasn't blaming me, but they were making me feel bad. Every time they said 'she be raped', that make me feel pain. The only people in Saclepea who know are people from my old community who come here for market. So generally the people here don't know about it.*

What this indicates is that such ridicule acts as a constant reminder of the event, and limits the ability of the survivors to put the events behind them. Such stigmatisation is even more damaging when communities tend to mock the children born from rape, teasing them for not having fathers. This is another reason why survivors move away from their own communities, and refuse to disclose and seek support in a new community. They are attempting to shield their children born from rape from the harsh treatment and ridicule of the community.

Sadly, the treatment at the hands of community members is not the only challenge they face. Often, these women have lost their means of survival and ability to generate an income. In discussing their primary needs, all of the interviewed SV survivors stated a need for financial support to start their own businesses, thus becoming self-supportive, and enabling them to pay their children's school fees and medical costs. Those who have children due to rape find it especially hard to provide for themselves and their children, as there is no father to assist financially.

As in the other countries, SVAW survivors face harsh and challenging consequences. In the Liberian context there are a few unexpected issues. Firstly, in Liberia SV in the post-war context is discussed and seen as something happening predominantly to young women and children, who are blamed for this. This leads to post-war SV survivors being treated worse by their families than war SV survivors, while this was the other way around in Rwanda. Secondly, the fact that women were often abducted as 'wives' and kept as sexual slaves for extended periods of time complicates the perpetrator/victim dichotomy, for many of these women would not have survived the war if not kept in such a way. This affects survivors' ability to disclose and find support. Nonetheless, there are other factors that contribute to and facilitate SV, and survivors' inability to find support.

7.7.2 Contributing and facilitating factors

A very narrow majority of the questionnaire participants described Liberian society as valuing men more than women. Some even stated that women are valued more highly than men, as they are now fulfilling all of the tasks that men used to do, while others felt there was gender equality in Liberian society. Where they did feel that men and women are different is in terms of men's superior physical strength, which makes them more powerful and able to do manual labour, as well as physically beat women. As a Saclepea woman warned: "If you have argument with your husband or a man, don't ever fight a man, he is stronger than you". Based on the information gleaned from participants, it seems as if it is acceptable for men to beat women, despite GBV training in many communities. A male teacher and civil society leader from Ganta described a situation he recently experienced:

> *GBV is being talked about, but girls are still being beaten, it is normal. GBV is being talked about, but in the Beer Garden, in the main street, this guy was beating this girl, she was well-dressed, and no-one was doing anything about it. It was looking as a normal thing. Many of the girls with whom [my youth organisation] works, they accept it, that a man can grab them and force them to do things, it is seen as OK. So they won't do anything about it.*

A second reason why men are seen as superior to women is because men are seen as the head of the household, and are expected to wield power over women and children. This, combined with the fact that they are physically stronger, means that many husbands force their wives to have sex. Participants rarely raised the issue of conjugal SV themselves, but when leaders were asked whether it is occurring, they all agreed that it is an issue.

Nevertheless, wives do not report it as they do not want to bring shame upon themselves or their husbands, as a female church leader from Saclepea explained:

> *Some men really, when it comes to sex, they really love that. And they don't really give chance for women to rest. You cannot disclose it, except maybe to your best friend. A victim does not want to expose her husband, the community will look down upon your husband. For your husband to still have the rapport in the community, you just close your mouth on it, you just keep it to yourself.*

This belief in the superiority of men has led some Liberians to see women as weak, as reflected in the comment by a male church leader from Saclepea: "Most of our women, I'm sorry to say, are weak-minded. They don't develop themselves to be self-reliant". In this way, the subjugation and denigration of women are not seen as a result of cultural constructs, but rather as natural due to the lesser abilities of women.

An issue that was repeatedly identified as a major contributor to SV is the way women dress. Here there is a clash between youth culture and traditional culture regarding the appropriate ways to dress, which many of the participants felt contribute to the current culture of SV. The way young women leave their midriff exposed and part of their underwear showing is seen as particularly improper and conducive to SV. One participant stated that, "some men cannot control the way they react to such dress and they proceed to sexually violate women, especially if the man and/or woman is under the influence of alcohol or drugs". Even some young female children (of six years and younger) and their parents were being blamed for the way the little girls dress, as little girls who have been playing outside naked have been sexually violated. The 'modern' ways of dress were understood as enticing young women into prostitution, as they turn to prostitution in order to have the money to buy the clothes, a Saclepea male leader explained: "They see their friends, wearing fancy fancy things. Then the friends says, this is my boyfriend, this is my fiancé, he buys me things. That definitely encourages them to join in that life. To do the prostitution". Some participants felt that the government should implement laws governing the way women dress, which was quite ironic, seeing that they felt that the judicial system was ineffective.

The main reason for the judicial system being ineffective and failing to address SV is because the victim has to carry the cost of the legal process, along with other costs, such as transport to the relevant courts, and legal assistance. Few can afford these costs, and thus are forced to drop charges. The perception also exists that the judicial system is corrupt, and that lawyers, police officers and judges can easily be bribed to lose the necessary evidence, dismiss cases, or find in favour of the accused. As a male teacher and civil society leader from Ganta explained: “In Liberia money can buy anything… The [perpetrator] can buy someone, like the victim’s lawyer. The seriousness evaporates, can be caused to evaporate”. Justice serves only those who have the money and political clout to ensure that all legal processes are followed, and that none of the key figures are bribed.

In addition, in most cases SV survivors are reluctant to report attacks, due to societal pressures. The community often pressurises a survivor to not report a case, to abandon a case, or to handle it ‘in the family way’. The latter refers to customary law practices, where the perpetrator or family of the perpetrator is punished by the community elders in a certain manner, after which the issue is seen as resolved. For example, a perpetrator might be ordered to cook a meal for all of the elders, after which the issue is considered dealt with. Furthermore, in situations where the perpetrator is someone with status in the community, or young, the community might pressure the survivor to abandon the case. A mother of a 13-year-old SV survivor gang raped five months before the interview explains:

> *So her father found her in the end, at the house. She was all drugged up, so he slapped her. He phoned the police, but they did not come. So they went to the police station, where they questioned her. Then they took her to hospital. The police called [the NGO]. It was [the NGO] who organised and paid for the trip to Saclepea, because they have good health care facilities there. So they did drugs and rape tests there. DNA tests. She got a certificate that she was raped, for evidence… So the police went to arrest the three boys. But only two came and she identified one of them. She can only remember one of them, because she was so drugged. They denied everything and the third one was never found. That one, the one she identified, his parents said that he is only 14, we must compromise. But her father said no. Then the police also said, leave it, compromise. There was lots of pressure… So we did. We left it.*

Thus, what one sees is that, although good statutory laws are in place in Liberia, SV survivors rarely receive justice. The cost of the process, corruption, and community practices and pressure all conspire to deter a survivor from even trying. This in turn means that a culture of impunity has developed which perpetuates SV, as perpetrators feel they can commit SV without any fear of retribution.

Another contributing factor is poverty. Many participants stated that young women were prostituting themselves in order to get money for school fees, food, and other material goods. During the war, many women purposefully engaged in sexually risky situations as a way of survival. Having sex with fighters was a strategic choice for them, as it was a way of getting food, shelter and safety, even if this made them vulnerable to sexual abuse. It was a choice, as a male youth leader from Ganta explained: “During the war, to have sex with fighters was a way to get food. So women did it to survive. So sexual violence was a way of survival for many women”. When discussing SV, most participants discussed SV within this context, namely in relation to the youth who actively seek out risky situations as a means of survival. A male youth leader from Ganta explained:

> *SV is happening mostly to young girls of 16 to 21 years. It happens to them because of poverty. They have to go to school and they have no other way of getting finances. Their parents cannot afford school fees, so the girls will do anything to find the finances to be able to go to school.*

Poverty means that a woman cannot negotiate for safe sex, or arguably even consensual sex, if she is selling sex to survive. But men, too, engage in risky sexual practices due to poverty, as they cannot get sex in any other way due to the fact that they cannot provide financially for a female partner. This is potentially why so many participants stated the importance of vocational training and job creation programmes as a way to counter SV. A young Ganta woman, for example, argued strongly for a job centre: “If people have a trade and a job, then they won’t do sexual violence. They won’t let it happen to them and they won’t go do it”.

Interestingly, in Liberia participants did not consider SV as a weapon of war, but merely an unfortunate by-product of the fighting. As men had guns they had absolute power, which many of them abused, as explained by a Ganta male teacher and civil society leader: “But rape was also just an accidental part [of the war], because soldiers could just do anything, because they have a gun. A soldier could choose any women, because he had a gun”. Participants thus usually stated that SV during the war was something regrettable and unfortunate, but not something planned by those in authority. Nevertheless, when some participants proceeded to explain why SV happened during the war, it became clear that SV did serve strategic purposes, as explained by a male youth leader from Saclepea:

> *There were times that the sexual violence was planned. For example, if rebel group took over an area. Then they rape the women to punish the people for hosting the previous group, even though the people didn’t have a choice.*

Therefore SV was used to further the strategic purposes of the fighting groups, and to exercise control over the civilian population.

Thus various factors have contributed to SV occurring during the war, but also in its aftermath. During the war, women in general were considered targets, and they were not blamed or rejected by their family or community for this. In the post-war period, SV continues but affects mainly young women and girls, who are blamed and shamed for this due to the way they dress and behave. Participants constantly described the youth as wilful and disobedient, and SV was almost always described as something young women (and some young men) fall prey to mostly because of their own bad behaviour. However, it is clear that this behaviour is provoked by poverty, failures in the judicial system to punish perpetrators, and the culture of seeking more ‘forgiving’ ways to address SV by the families themselves. In Liberia, there have been many active attempts to change the culture of SV that has emerged, but the effectiveness of these interventions is limited.

7.7.3 Interventions and intervention agents

During the war, the majority of the participants indicated that no-one tried to stop the SV. The government was never condemned for SV excesses during the war, as there is an understanding that the current government has got nothing to do with the previous one(s). A few participants, however, specifically stated that, before the war, the government did not even consider sexually violent acts as SV. A male Saclepea church leader explained: “Before the war, the government did not have insight - they did not see sexual violence as a crime. There was no great penalties”. The only institutions to oppose SV or address its consequences were INGOs and some local NGOs. This was generally in the form of medical care and counselling, as well as general training on SV for the community.

In the post-war period, participants assigned the main responsibility for addressing SV to government. Research participants were generally quite positive about the Liberian government’s methods of addressing SV, which were seen as having changed greatly, mainly due to the attitude and efforts of President Sirleaf. President Sirleaf was described as a driving force behind the new legislation and harsher punishments for SV, as well as new institutions and units that address crimes against women and children, such as the new Women and Children Protection section of the police force. A male teacher and civil society leader from Ganta explained the President’s fervour for SV as follows: “The president we have now, she is greatly interested in SV and GBV, for she has been the victim of abuse a great number of times in her career”. Having such a key leader openly talk about and address the issue has possibly influenced traditional Liberian attitudes towards sex and talking about sex. For example, only two of the participants stated that sex is a taboo topic in their culture.

Although participants were positive towards the government, they displayed an almost paternalistic, patronising attitude towards its attempts to address SV. For example, a male church leader from Saclepea explained that “the government is trying its best. But it is still recovering from the war, so it is hard. But it is trying its best”. The challenges that the government has to overcome were usually stated as an (indirect) explanation for why government attempts were not always very effective. These include the challenge of financing the judicial system, and the cost of post-war reconstruction. They did, however, feel that the government must do more to ensure that laws are applied and enforced. A young man from Ganta argued as follows: “We look up to our government… They must immediately punish perpetrators. Government should arrest a person and get certain punishment for that person, throw you in jail”. Most of the participants were of the opinion that, should the Liberian people see that SV perpetrators are being harshly punished, it will inhibit SV and SV rates will come down. They also felt that government needs to do more to create awareness about SV and the laws and punishments that apply to SV. Interestingly, government was assigned almost no role in providing support and care for survivors. Only three participants stated that the government should assist SV survivors. This they seem to shift onto the shoulders of civil society.

Many stated that it is the NGOs that are active in creating SV awareness and offering support, and identified specific NGOs who did this both during and after the war. Those mentioned included EQUIP, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Save the Children, and SEARCH. These NGOs provided and continue to provide services such as counselling, SV and GBV trainings, medical care, and assistance with the Liberian legal system. NGOs are seen as an invaluable resource for SV survivors and even the police refer survivors to NGOs, as survivors are assisted with medical care and in negotiating the tricky legal processes. The fact that NGOs are focusing attention on SV is also forcing the issue onto the church agenda. A male government leader from Saclepea explained that, “as many NGOs come to talk about sexual violence, therefore many pastors now have it on their agenda too”. NGOs are seen as the driving force behind the progressive attitudes condemning SV that are now becoming more dominant in Liberia. A female leader from Saclepea explained it as follows:

> *Before there was no control. But with the UN and other NGOs coming in, they are*

> *strict on sexual violence. It used to not be seen as a problem, sexual violence was not seen as wrong. But the NGOs taught us that it is. Now we have laws in place.*

One therefore sees a dichotomy here, where civil society is seen as the actor giving the support to survivors, while the government is viewed as having the responsibility of holding perpetrators to account, but is failing to do so due to the ineffectiveness of the judicial system. This led many participants to conclude that, if the judicial system was more effective, this would serve as the most effective way to curb SV, and hence they assigned lesser importance to civil society and the churches in dealing with this problem.

7.7.4 Churches addressing sexual violence

What is quite remarkable, given the religious nature of Liberian society, is that no mention was made of churches directly addressing SV during the war. In the aftermath of the war, it appears as if few churches have changed their stance, as only a handful of participants stated that their churches intervene on the issue of SV in any practical way, although they do at times preach on the topic or issues related to SV. Based on the experiences and opinions of the participants, it appears as though churches mostly pay lip-service to the issue of SV. They publically say they are against it, preach occasional sermons on the issue, offer some counselling and pray for SV survivors, but little more than this. Little active, practical, concerted effort is made to prevent SV, change attitudes and behaviour, or assist survivors. A male church leader from Saclepea confirmed this, stating that:

> *Survivors do not get any material support from any church. Churches are maybe saying sexual violence is wrong. But churches are not doing any marches, or taking any stand against it. There is nothing big, no great effort, no seriousness.*

Various reasons were offered why churches are not active in addressing SV. Firstly, churches are limited by a lack of funds, as they do not have the resources to launch the needed interventions. Secondly, churches tend to be divided on the matter. They have different opinions on issues related to SV, such as dress codes, marital relationships, and appropriate punishments. For example, while some churches state that SV survivors should report the incident to the police and seek legal justice, other churches advocate that survivors should follow customary law and allow the village elders to handle the matter. Due to these differences churches do not approach and address the issue in any unified, constructive manner, which limits churches' general effectiveness. Thirdly, there are church leaders who themselves commit SV. For example, a young man from Ganta shared that, in the previous month, pastors from a well-known church were accused of raping girls from their congregation. The churches of such leaders either do not address SV in any way, or their interventions have little impact and credibility because of the actions of the leaders.

Participants emphasised the importance of churches in assisting SV survivors. Looking at the experiences of the survivors interviewed in Liberia, all of whom belonged to a church, little is currently being done to assist survivors. Of the six Ganta survivors, five stated that their churches do not assist survivors psychologically, spiritually or practically. Four of them have thus not disclosed to anyone at church, as they felt that there was no benefit in disclosure because no support is offered, and felt that they face the very real risk of stigma and rejection. Furthermore, the survivors themselves prefer not to disclose, as they feel ashamed about what happened to them, as reflected in the following statement by a young Ganta SV survivor: “I have not told anyone at my church. I do not like to talk about it, to talk about what happened. It brings shame. I do not want to talk to people about it”. In Saclepea, all except one of the survivors’ churches are aware that they experienced SV, although some of the churches learnt about this from other people and not from the survivor herself. While one survivor was helped with food and school fees for a limited period of time, the rest have not received any practical support. Disturbingly, the survivors are seemingly just thankful that they are not rejected by the other church members, as is reflected in the statement of one Saclepea survivor: “The people in the church know. I did not tell them, they just know. But they don’t talk about me before me. And in my presence they treat me well. So that is okay”. Thus, there is little expectation of any real support and survivors are just thankful if they are not stigmatised to their faces.

Despite the lack of church involvement in addressing SV, participants felt strongly that churches have a key role to play in addressing SV. A male youth Muslim leader argued for the importance of all religious institutions:

> *Religious institutions have much influence in the community. So we should preach that sexual violence should not be kept quiet. For example, if the victim and man who did it is part of the same family, it should be disclosed. It shouldn’t be kept quiet. We must preach this. Because people listen to their religious institution.*

Various roles were assigned to churches. First and foremost they felt that the churches were in a good position to assist and support SV survivors. They felt that this support should include financial assistance (including paying school fees and providing micro-loans so survivors can start their own businesses), educational assistance (schooling and/or skills training), practical assistance (such as food and housing), medical care and support, counselling, and help in raising children born from rape. Secondly, the churches, being close to the communities, could do more to actively create SV awareness, and provide SV education. In doing so, church and community members will also learn how to treat and support survivors. Two key issues were identified that should be kept in mind when doing such awareness and education sessions. Firstly, churches should not only target church members, but the community in general. The Saclepea nominal group found this so important that they voted it jointly first as the most important way in which churches should address SVAW. Secondly, such SV awareness-raising and trainings should have a specific focus on youth. Participants were all very worried about the activities youth engage in and the risks they put themselves at. Thus, they felt that the churches must focus on youth and children especially, as explained by a Ganta teacher and civil society leader:

> *Churches should be more involved in educating youth on sexual violence and how to prevent it. People must understand all of the dimensions of sexual violence. But churches have the human resources, especially youth, so educate them! The church must talk to young girls, also about how they should dress more modestly. Churches should really be more concerned about the moral situation of youth, especially girls. They must help women to see their own value, especially through vocational training. Sex has become a way for girls to provide for themselves. This is how they fall victim to sexual violence. They must realise that sex is not the only way to get money. They must see that they can be somebody.*

Thirdly, churches should assist survivors with the judicial process, in order to ensure that perpetrators are apprehended and punished, and justice is served. Lastly, churches should be praying for SV to end. Both the Ganta and Saclepea nominal groups identified prayer as being one of the most important five ways through which churches should address SVAW (in Ganta it was voted jointly second and in Saclepea it was jointly first). A large number of participants also felt that churches should generally be evangelising more actively, based on the belief that, if more people believe in God and live a life of faith, there will be less SV.

Once again, as with the other case studies, it is interesting that, despite churches' lamentable track record in addressing SVAW both during and after the war, participants felt that the churches can and should be an instrumental actor. The focus is once again on the importance of churches assisting SV survivors, arguably because churches are present at grassroots level in all communities, and can therefore reach and assist survivors more easily. Unfortunately, due to the fact that churches currently do so little, survivors remain hesitant to disclose or turn to the churches for assistance.

7.8 CONCLUSION

At the time of the research, seven years had passed since peace had been established in Liberia. Enough time had passed for retrospective reflection, as well as for interrogation and analysis of post-conflict conditions. In these seven years there has been a shift in how SV has been handled by individuals, communities, civil society and government. Prior to the war SV was a non-issue. Women were culturally and legally perceived as the property of men, and this meant that SV was rarely addressed. SV was very common during the war and while there was no legislation or institutions in place to punish it, people nonetheless condemned it. There was, however, no expectation among the survivors of SV that the perpetrators would be caught or punished. While these SV survivors are gossiped about, people generally see them as the unfortunate victims of war circumstances.

In the post-conflict period, a culture of SV has developed, with civilians perpetrating SV with impunity. Women continue to be subjugated, although perceptions of SV have changed somewhat, as people become more aware of women's human rights, and that SV is wrong. New legislation that punishes SV has contributed to this change, and awareness has grown as CSO's and governmental efforts in awareness-raising increased. Despite this, perpetrators are mostly still not punished, due to the ineffectiveness of the judicial system and patriarchal attitudes towards women and SV. In fact, the extent of SV and the treatment of SV survivors has in some cases worsened, with a tendency to blame post-war SV survivors for the SV more than is the case with war SV survivors.

One of the reasons for this is the tension between the youth and adults. The youth are breaking free from their traditional cultural roles, which results in conflict and resentment among adults, who perceive the youth as wilful, disrespectful and disobedient. A practical example of this is the modern way of dressing, which is seen as provocative, and condemned by adults and conservative youth. Adults see youth as contributing to SV – both as perpetrators and victims – because of the way they behave and their attitude in general. This means that young victims of SV are usually at least partly blamed, as they are seen to have engaged in behaviour that put themselves at risk. This has influenced how SV and SV survivors are generally perceived, regardless of their age.

Nevertheless, there is growing concern about the fact that the youth and children fall victim to SV. Poverty is seen as the main cause, both during and after the war, as many engage in transactional sex in return for financial gain, which limits their ability to ensure their own sexual and physical safety. It is a good sign that many participants see such prostitution as a form of SV. Engaging in transactional sex is not limited to the youth. Even women in stable relationships are at risk if they are economically dependent on their partner, as they are often unable to negotiate safe sex. This situation is worsened by the high levels of poverty and unemployment in Liberia.

Besides the economic factors, contributing to SV and the vulnerability of women is the failed judicial system. Although the required statutory laws are in place, they are not enforceable, and many do not have the financial resources to utilise the system. In essence, this means that people simply cannot afford justice. Thus, while there is growing social awareness of SV, and recognition that it is wrong, the judicial system offers little retribution. However, there is a high level of trust and faith in government's seeming commitment to addressing SV. This faith is grounded in the persona of President Sirleaf, a woman who experienced abuse and attempted rape. Therefore, while SV is mostly left unaddressed by the judiciary, people still believe that the government can, should and will address it. Thus, participants emphasised the importance of government, rather than civil society, despite the fact that civil society has proven fairly effective in providing services and education to address SV and its consequences. INGOs are seen as particularly effective in addressing SV on various levels.

Churches have a good track record in peacebuilding in Liberia. Their civic engagement for justice does not, however, extend to addressing the causes and consequences of SVAW. While there are some churches that are engaging with the issue, it appears as if churches have generally done little to lobby for change or to address the scourge of SV. Churches do recognise SV as a problem, but not as theirs to address, and thus it is not prioritised. Nevertheless, all of the participants believe in the churches' ability to address SV and assist SV survivors. Generally, participants felt that churches should offer some form of support – economic, emotional, and in provision of basic services – but this was and is not really forthcoming. As churches are located at grassroots level within virtually every community, it is unfortunate that they have not done so. Why this is the case in Liberia, DRC and Rwanda, is analysed in more detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 8

Discussion Chapter

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Various reasons have been offered to explain the existence of male violence against women. Some theorists tend to argue that such violence is due to the psychological imbalance of a few, isolated males, while feminist theory tends towards explaining VAW in terms of male power in a patriarchal society (Walby, 1990:142). The theories used to explain SVAW in this study are mostly within the latter category. Feminist theory generally tends to focus on gender and power, positing SVAW as an act of violence, rather than sex, through which men aim to prove their dominance and control over women. For example, Connell (1995, 2002) and others have argued that hegemonic masculinity ensures male dominance over women and that this dominance can take the form of SVAW; Mosher & Sirkin (1984) have highlighted a form of hypermasculinity that is particularly sexually violent; Walby sees violence (and SVAW) as one of the structures upholding patriarchy; and Messerschmidt (1993) argues that SVAW is a way that men can assert their masculinity when more traditional ways of doing it are unavailable. What all of these different theories have in common is the premise that SVAW is a result of a male/female power imbalance within society.

Addressing this imbalance, and by extension SVAW, in society is difficult. One possible avenue through which this can be done is religion and religious institutions. Durkheim (1995) argues that religion is able to influence behaviour, particularly through forbidding certain actions, based on the moral power that people invest in their religions. He is supported by Berger (1969) and Hervieu-Léger (2000) in arguing that religion is community-creating, bringing social solidarity and cohesion, which in turn serves to uphold prescribed beliefs and behaviours. Religion is also able to motivate and facilitate social change, according to Weber (1930), as it is an independent driver of action and behaviour. Both Durkheim and Berger offer religion as a solution for those who are oppressed and marginalised, as it gives strength and the ability to overcome hardship, as well as explanations and answers that assist in meaning-making. Furthermore, they argue that churches are the institutions in which religion should be experienced and practised, and these benefits facilitated.

Churches fulfil a key role in giving support, guidance and social structure, especially in African societies affected by armed conflicts. In these poor, agrarian societies, churches are an important sector of civil society in Africa, and one of the few sectors that keep on functioning at grassroots level during armed conflicts. They are therefore well positioned to deal with SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict. Accordingly, the central focus of this study is to determine what the causes and consequences are of SVAW and how African Christian churches as civil society organisations address SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict. To do so, the following three research objectives were identified as critical to finding answers to this question:

1. To determine the reasons for SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict, the consequences for women, and the support available to them.
2. To determine how churches as civil society agents address the issue of SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict.
3. To assess the ability of churches to address SVAW and its consequences in areas affected by armed conflict.

This study went about reaching these objectives in the following way. Firstly, Chapter Two was used to explore the phenomenon of SVAW. Starting with an examination of how gender identity is socially constructed, the relationship between gender and power was discussed as an explanation for why patriarchy and violence are intimately linked. Sexual violence against women was identified as primarily an act of power, rather than a sexual act. When examining the reasons for SVAW during armed conflict, the main causes were identified as patriarchy and gender inequality, and masculinities. The factors contributing to SVAW occurring in the aftermath of conflict were all directly or indirectly related to patriarchy. Aside from the physical, psychological, social and economic consequences of SV during armed conflict, the post-conflict setting also reveals an alarming tendency for the continuation of SVAW, and thus also of the continuation of these negative consequences for women. While various interventions are launched by different parties to address SV in areas affected by armed conflict, these continue to have limited success, mainly because of the pervasiveness of patriarchy and hypermasculinity.

Chapter Three then proceeded to focus on a particular sector of civil society in Africa, namely churches. To understand the importance and impact of churches, the chapter started with an examination of the role of religion in society in general. This was followed by focusing specifically on religion in Africa, by looking at the way that religion and power are intimately linked in most African contexts. Inculturation was examined as another way of understanding and explaining the interrelatedness of religion, culture and society. Through being religious practitioners in society, churches as CSOs were identified as important institutions of support and producers of social capital, with the ability to significantly influence society and challenge injustice. In studying churches' engagement with peace and reconciliation processes, and comparing it to their engagement with gender inequality, it became clear that there are limits to churches' willingness and ability to address injustice, largely due to the patriarchal nature of these institutions.

The purpose of this chapter is to now reflect on the theory and findings in order to gain a deeper insight into the causes and consequences of SVAW, and the role of churches as institutions of civil society to address these. The discussion is arranged around the main themes identified during the research, while the final conclusions are structured in such a way as to directly relate to the three research objectives.

8.2 THE CAUSES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN AREAS AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT

In discussing the causes of SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict, distinguishing between sex and gender is helpful, as it allows one to appreciate that gender is constructed, and that the way men and women construct themselves is constantly changing, affected by cultural, socioeconomic and religious processes. Feminist theory, however, argues that the male and masculinity is consistently constructed as superior to the female and femininity, for while there are different masculinities and femininities, all masculinities are empowered in relation to women, and feed into a culture of patriarchy, a social system through which men dominate and suppress women (Walby 1986, 1990; Antai, 2011). As violence is one of the ways in which masculinity is enacted and asserted, patriarchy shares the same propensity for violence and specifically SVAW. Various studies have shown that patriarchy is a key cause of SVAW (Yodanis, 2004; Baaz & Stern, 2009; Borer, 2009). This violence is especially prone to taking a sexual form within militarised contexts, as military masculinity takes on what is most commonly referred to as a form of hypermasculinity. Hypermasculinity is characterised by violence, callous sexual attitudes towards women, and enjoyment of danger (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984). This means that hypermasculinity is especially conducive to SVAW. Unfortunately, military masculinity influences civilian masculinities; thus, civilian masculinities and patriarchy in conflict-affected areas start to increasingly condone and be conducive to SVAW (Lwambo, 2013).

Studies of patriarchy show that different factors, or structures, within society support and perpetuate the patriarchal system (Millett, 1969; Walby, 1986, 1990). The findings from the present study support those of Walby (1986, 1990), which state that one of these structures is culture. Within the DRC, Rwanda and Liberia, all cultures are patriarchal and these patriarchal cultural beliefs are a key influence in how men and women are perceived and valued. In all three countries, gender inequality was described as due to culture, with many fatalistically believing that gender equality is a far-fetched notion, as cultural beliefs that posit men as superior to women are simply too strong. The majority of the participants declared that there is no gender equality in their country, and that men dominate, with women seen as subjugated male property. Even in Rwanda, where participants were quick to state that the government has been promoting gender equality, the majority of the participants still felt that gender inequality was the norm. Feminist theory argues that VAW results from gender inequality at a societal level (Yodanis, 2004), which serves to explain why VAW, and especially SVAW, is rife in all three countries. Focusing specifically on the sexual nature of the violence, it appears that the cultural constructs of women are conducive to sexual abuse. Women are valued as sexual property meant for the pleasure of men, but at the same time expected to be sexually chaste, faithful and pure. Sexually violated women thus have no value. As Turshen (2000) points out, gender inequality and sexualised constructions of women lend themselves to sexual violence, as they justify male sexual abuse of women based on the idea of ownership.

Seifert (1994, 1996), Turshen (2000) and Weitsman (2008) have argued and illustrated that, in contexts of armed conflict, these gender identities and conceptions about women result in sexual violence being an effective way of attacking and humiliating an enemy male and community, because a sexually violated woman is devalued male property and shunned by the community. A Congolese woman’s explanation for SVAW during armed conflict affirmed this: “[The combatant knows that] if we rape their wives, now they will be weakened, they will be more weakened, because they love their wives, now if we do that, now they will be weakened in all aspects and we will rule over them”. This was the case in all three countries, where sexually violated women were rejected by their husbands, families and communities. A Rwandan SV survivor’s experience of genocide and post-genocide SV illustrates how these cultural constructions of men and women lend themselves to sexual abuse during, but also after, armed conflict:

> *Even after the genocide, that [sexual] violence continued… Many times women are taken as the people who do not have hope, so because of that, immediately after genocide, that rule of stopping sexual violence was not put into practice. I did not have a husband, so I was taken as a person who does not have power, so [men took me] by force…*

Thus, these same cultural gender constructions continue to facilitate SVAW in the aftermath of armed conflict. Borer (2009) and Meger (2010) argue that there is a patriarchal backlash to women's empowerment gains once peace is established, in an attempt to reassert male dominance and (re)subordinate women. This helps to explain why SVAW has continued in Rwanda and Liberia, even though the conflict has ended. Rwandan participants indicated that men react against the official, peace-time emphasis on gender equality and women's rights by committing SVAW in order to counter state and civil society attempts to cultivate recognition of women's rights. Sexual violence is then used as a way to show to women that they are not equal to men. However, it is worth reflecting on why the backlash has taken a sexualised form.

The fact that SV becomes normalised and that patriarchal backlash takes on sexual forms can be explained by Mosher and Sirkin's (1984) concept of hypermasculinity. Studies show that the hypermasculine masculinity present in the military during armed conflict infuses civilian masculinities, both during and after armed conflict (Jones *et al.*, 2011). The result is that a sexually violent response – which is typical of hypermasculinity – becomes part of the civilian masculinities' repertoire. This is why SVAW became so common in the DRC, Rwanda and Liberia, for the influence of hypermasculinity has meant that it has become a normalised and natural response for men. A Liberian male teacher and civil society leader's story highlights the commonness of violent behaviour towards women in the aftermath of conflict:

> *GBV is being talked about, but girls are still being beaten, it is normal. GBV is being talked about, but in the Beer Garden, in the main street, this guy was beating this girl, she was well-dressed, and no-one was doing anything about it. It was looking as a normal thing. Many of the girls with whom [my youth organisation] works, they accept it, that a man can grab them and force them to do things, it is seen as OK. So they won't do anything about it.*

This violent culture is exacerbated by the absence of a reliable judicial system that punishes SVAW offenders. In all three countries, the dual legal system was identified as a major cause of the ongoing SVAW. This supports what other studies have found on how dual legal systems discriminate against women (Heaner, 2008; Lankhorst & Veldman, 2011; Heinecken, 2013). In the DRC, Rwanda and Liberia, there have been statutory legislative changes that have benefited women by recognising gender equality, the existence and severity of SVAW, and women's land rights. However, these laws have had limited effect, due to the continued existence and dominance of customary law, and the inaccessibility and corruptness of the statutory legal system. This illustrates how the liberal feminist emphasis on legislative transformation is ineffective in comprehensively addressing gender inequality and its resultant evils, for in such unstable and resource-poor settings legislative renewal has little effect on women's actual lives. Liberia is an apt example. In 2005 it passed the Amended Rape Law, which severely punishes SV, and it has a National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Resolution 1325, a GBV Task Force, a Women and Children Protection Section within the police force, and a sex-crimes court. However, as studies have shown (Bruthus, 2007; Cummings, 2011; Liebling-Kalifani *et al.*, 2011) these are having little effect in curbing SVAW as the statutory judicial system is weak, expensive, inaccessible and corrupt. Thus, people turn to customary law (if they choose to take a legal route), which does not recognise the severity, nor the many forms of SVAW. This situation is replicated in Rwanda and the DRC. As the findings of this study shows, Congolese, Rwandan and Liberian survivors' inability to get justice in turn contributes to non-disclosure, which then supports the SV culture, as perpetrators see they can commit SV with impunity.

As stated earlier, Walby (1986, 1990) calls attention to the various structures that uphold and enforce the patriarchal system, and the state is an example. This serves to explain continued existence of the dual legal system, the ineffectual application of laws recognising women's rights, and the weak judicial system in the three countries under examination. All three countries have patriarchal state structures that do not prioritise women's issues. Various other findings from the study also support Walby's theory that the state is a patriarchal structure. While the Congolese, Rwandan and Liberian governments now give more recognition to the rights of women, it is still quite superficial. For example, while the Liberian government professes to support the rights of women, it also supports female genital mutilation. The Rwandan government, while enforcing many policies that promote gender equality, still continues to deny that SVAW was committed by its own troops during and after the genocide. The Congolese participants also particularly blamed the government for not taking SVAW seriously. Thus, as confirmed by authors and by those interviewed for this study, there is the widespread view that none of the governments prioritise gender equality, which in turn facilitates SVAW (Brannigan & Jones, 2009; Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010; Freedman, 2011).

Another societal structure that serves to subjugate and marginalise women is employment. "(Y)our wife, maybe she wants to work somewhere, maybe you will say no, arguing that she will become a prostitute there, so you just keep her at home". This statement by a Congolese man illustrates dominant African cultural attitudes towards employed women. Women are economically marginalised by having limited access to paid employment, confirming Walby's (1986, 1990) claim that paid employment is a patriarchal structure. Furthermore, most of the land continues to belong to men, despite all three countries passing laws that give women the right to inherit and own land. This is particularly true in rural areas, where women survive and provide for their families through farming. The result is that poverty is feminised and women are forced to depend on men for economic survival. Millett's (1969) theory that economic dependency is a key factor in ensuring male dominance serves to explain this status quo, and it is confirmed by various studies done in Africa, which have shown that patriarchy puts women in an economically marginalised position (Fuest, 2003; Puechguirbal, 2003; Blizzard, 2006; Freedman, 2011).

When women are dependent on men financially, this increases their risk of being sexually violated, because they have little sexual negotiation power within relationships. The reality of this was illustrated by a Rwandan Mother's Union, who tell their members to earn their own money as a way to avoid SVAW. Ironically, sex is one of the few ways women can become economically independent, and that is why many turn to prostitution. Similar to the findings of other studies (for example Fuest, 2008), in all three countries transactional sex was discussed as a means of earning money that puts women at increased risk for SV. Mosher & Sirkin's (1984) concept of hypermasculinity also serves to indicate how another form of poverty, namely male poverty, contributes to SVAW. In post-conflict settings, men find it hard to find employment and provide for their families, which is a typical affirmation of masculinity. SVAW then becomes an alternative method of asserting their masculinity in the private sphere. As a Congolese man explained, "(t)he lower class has no salary… they are the ones who rape women, because they have no salary". This shows that, as socialist feminism argues, there is a class dimension to SVAW within areas affected by armed conflict. However, not too much should arguably be made of this, for in the overwhelming majority of interviews both women and men explained SVAW in terms of culture that perpetuates patriarchy and gender inequality.

In general, the findings from this study support the broader literature on causes of SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict. However, by looking at these causes within the context of the DRC, Rwanda and Liberia, certain issues come to the fore. Patriarchy is completely pervasive and it is striking how this marginalises and denigrates women. The causes of SVAW might seem to be various and varied, but patriarchy is at the centre of it all, and this is exacerbated by a culture of hypermasculinity which is particularly violent. What is evident is that various patriarchal structures exist, feed into and reinforce one another, which perpetuates gender inequality and SVAW. What this shows is that not enough is made of how, within areas affected by armed conflict, different patriarchal structures exist that ensure the dominance of men over women. With studies focusing on one structure, for example military masculinities or the breakdown of the judicial system, one loses sight of the multiple levels of oppression and marginalisation of women. As the findings of this study so aptly point out, it is the interaction and continuous reinforcement from different patriarchal structures, as radical feminists emphasise, that ensures the patriarchal hold on society. This in turn facilitates SVAW, which continues even after the armed conflict has ended, with severe consequences for women physically, psychologically, socially and economically.

8.3 CONSEQUENCES OF SVAW IN AREAS AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT

Numerous studies point out the long-term consequences SVAW has for women in terms of their health, such as HIV & AIDS, sexual dysfunction, and infertility (for example, Hynes & Cardozo, 2000; Vanwesenbeeck, 2008). In terms of psychological consequences, post-traumatic stress syndrome is very common and often not dealt with, given the stigma attached to reporting SV (see Vanwesenbeeck, 2008; Jina *et al.*, 2010; Kinyanda *et al.*, 2010). But for many women, as found so frequently in this study, it is this stigma and the social isolation they experience when they are shunned by their husband, family and community that is the worst (see also Turshen, 2000; Gardam & Jarvis, 2010; Meger, 2010). Especially within rural communities, this has far-reaching implications, as women are usually forced to depend on men for land and for their survival. Stripped of their access to land, and/or unable to farm due to physical debilitation or relocation, survivors are at a great risk of falling into abject poverty (see Turshen 2000; Bartels *et al.*, 2010).

In all three countries, women reported the same consequences in terms of the effect SV had on their well-being and livelihoods. However, the extent was not the same. In the DRC, the forms of SVAW were and are especially torturous, which has led to some hospitals focusing almost exclusively on treating SV-related injuries. This confirms other reports on the extent of SVAW, especially in the eastern parts of the DRC (AWDF, 2008; Johnson *et al.*, 2010; Peterman *et al.*, 2011). In Liberia, on the other hand, participants created the impression that, although SVAW was common during the war, it did not often take on such extreme and physically debilitating forms. Irrespective of the extent, in all of the countries conflict SV survivors rarely received medical care, and most only received treatment years after being assaulted, if at all. All of those interviewed stated that, although their physical wounds may have healed, they still suffer psychologically.

This was not only due to the trauma of the actual event, but also to how they are treated by their husbands, family and the community. Goffman's theory on stigma (1963) serves to explain this treatment. The SV survivor is judged to negatively deviate from social norms and values, as she has been sexually violated. Through the process of labelling (Link & Phelan, 2001), negative characteristics are attached to survivors, which explains why survivors were repeatedly described as being valueless, cursed, useless and defiled. There does appear to be some difference, however, in the motivation for stigmatising survivors. Husbands choose to treat sexually violated wives in this way as they see such a wife as devalued property that reflects badly on them (Turshen, 2000; Milillo, 2006). However, in some cases it is because they perceive the sexual act that she had with another man as a threat. Some male participants revealed the belief that SV is a positive sexual experience for a woman, one that their husbands cannot compete with. Thus, these husbands stigmatise and reject their wives, threatened by how the sexually violent act she was exposed to might reflect on them.

One would expect female family members, and women in general, to be supportive of SV survivors, but this is generally not the case. The blaming model of stigma serves to explain this behaviour (Crawford, 1994; Joffe, 1999; Deacon *et al.*, 2005). By blaming the survivor for the SV, the stigmatisers create for themselves a sense of immunity and control over the threat of being sexually violated themselves. This can also be why the larger community stigmatises survivors, although Shin *et al.*'s (2013) theory on group-orientated cultures also offers a good explanation. All three countries have group-orientated cultures, where stigmatisation can be used to create and maintain social cohesion and support, and enforce traditional values. Sexually violated women are therefore stigmatised by the community in order to ensure that community values, such as those relating to the purity and chastity of women, survive and are strengthened. Their theory also explains the particularly strong stigmatisation that Liberian post-conflict survivors face. These survivors were repeatedly described as disobedient, disrespectful, wilful and rebellious youth, especially due to the way they dress. Shin *et al.*'s (2013) theory shows that these survivors are stigmatised in such a way because their actions are seen as a threat to the traditional community principles and actions, and they are thus stigmatised in order to enable conservation of the traditional.

However, the negative treatment of survivors is not limited to stigma. Active discrimination against SV survivors was prevalent in all three countries, and especially husbands are guilty of discriminating against their sexually violated wives. As, in all three countries, patriarchy and gender inequality ensures the empowered position of men, husbands are, for example, able to force a sexually violated wife from the home, refuse her access to her children, or burn her belongings.

The findings show that the majority of survivors respond to stigma and discrimination by self-stigmatising. Survivors from all three countries described themselves as ashamed of what happened, and none of them have voluntarily disclosed to their community the fact that they have been sexually violated. Some have even moved to new villages in an attempt to live amongst people who do not know that they have been sexually violated. In their dealings with the community they prefer to hide the fact that they have been sexually violated, but are usually forced to be open about it as it is public knowledge. Looking at these reactions, it becomes clear that the majority of survivors' response to stigma is to internalise it, thus agreeing with their devaluation and seeing the labels attached to them as accurate.

In all three countries, stigma and discrimination continue to affect women both during and after conflict. It does seem to be worst in the DRC, which is still caught up in an ongoing war. In the post-conflict societies of Rwanda and Liberia, some claim that people's attitudes towards survivors seem to be improving, although this was belied by survivors' actual experiences. In general, regardless of the context, the stigma and discrimination attached to being a SV survivor remains and has far-reaching implications for women, usually resulting in their social and economic marginalisation within society. As women are mostly dependent on men for access to land and other means of economic survival, rejection by husband, family and community results in women becoming impoverished. As a Congolese governmental leader explained, "during that time from when she is violated, she will lose whatever she had". To have the trauma exacerbated by stigmatisation and discrimination, which is then compounded by economic challenges, is devastating for these women.

While the above confirms what other studies have found on the effects of SV on women in these countries (Puechguirbal, 2003; Burnet, 2008; Bartels *et al.*, 2010; Maclay & Özerdem, 2010; Meger, 2010; Freedman, 2011;Liebling-Kalifani *et al.*, 2011), this study also shows that SVAW is context-specific. For example, in the DRC the form of SVAW was extreme and mutilating, while in Liberia SVAW during the war was generally less so, and typically involved women being taken as a 'wife' by a fighter. When looking at post-conflict settings, in post-conflict Liberia SVAW is now most prevalent among the youth and not women in general, while in post-conflict Rwanda conjugal SV is most common. While the forms of sexual violence differ, what is interesting is that HIV and AIDS is connected to SV in all three research settings, with survivors being judged by others as possibly being infected with HIV.

Another important finding that emerged from this study, is the different experiences that conflict SV survivors and post-conflict SV survivors have. Even when living in the same communities, conflict SV survivors are treated differently from post-conflict SV survivors.

This treatment is furthermore not consistent in different contexts, as experiences of stigma and discrimination illustrate. While stigma and discrimination is a continuous reality that all SV survivors face, there is a difference in how they are treated. This is aptly illustrated in Rwanda and Liberia. In Rwanda, the difference between genocide SV survivors and post-genocide SV survivors in terms of stigma and discrimination were quite marked. Almost two decades after the genocide, genocide SV survivors were still shamed and rejected by their families and communities, while post-genocide SV survivors usually received at least some support. In Liberia, however, it is the other way around, with post-war survivors generally being more stigmatised and discriminated against than wartime survivors. The context in which SVAW happened thus plays a role in how a survivor is treated, as a Rwandan leader's statement shows: "It depends on how someone was raped".

Studies have argued that SVAW affects community and cultural cohesion and stability (Seifert, 1994, 1996; Alison, 2007). The participants in this study did not seem to be aware that SVAW had such an effect. Although survivors everywhere are marginalised and isolated, and family structures usually ripped apart, only one (Congolese) participant stated that SVAW affects the social fabric of the community. This does not mean, however, that it does not affect the community and culture. Survivors arguably cannot be treated in such a way without it having an effect on community and cultural cohesion and stability. It is striking that participants do not note such an effect, but this can be explained by the blaming model of stigma (Crawford, 1994; Joffe, 1999; Deacon *et al.*, 2005). All the effects of SVAW are perceived as only affecting survivors, because in doing so anxiety about it and the danger of SVAW is reduced. Survivors are reminders of something that people wish to forget. For example, in Rwanda the genocide carries with it much unresolved guilt and resentment, of which genocide SV survivors are a constant reminder, and they are therefore constantly marginalised. Therefore, it appears that stigma and discrimination can be a result of what a survivor reminds a community of, and not just due to reactions to patriarchal constructs of femininity and sexuality.

While most of what other research has shown in terms of the consequences of SVAW was affirmed, the fact that the three case studies have such different experiences of conflict and peace has enabled one to realise that SVAW takes on different 'common' forms, and that conflict SV survivors are treated differently from post-conflict survivors. Furthermore, by reflecting on the consequences of SVAW in these different areas, one realises that it is exacerbated by patriarchy. For example, infertile or sexually dysfunctional women are deemed valueless and rejected in a patriarchal culture; women do not seek the physical and psychological treatment they need because they fear the patriarchal social consequences of disclosure; stigma and discrimination against survivors is a result of patriarchal beliefs regarding the sexual purity of women; and patriarchy causes women to be dependent on men for economic survival.

It is these consequences due to patriarchy that make SVAW an effective weapon and strategy of war. If people accepted and supported SV survivors, it would not be such an effective strategy or weapon. This treatment of survivors in turn contributes to the SV culture that develops in the aftermath of conflict. In none of the three countries were perpetrators brought to justice, and people learnt that SVAW can be perpetrated with impunity. SV survivors continued to be vilified, marginalised and disbelieved. In all three cases, patriarchy influences how SVAW is dealt with, and how it is addressed by civil society and the state.

8.4 ADDRESSING SVAW IN AREAS AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT

Various studies have illustrated that states ratify international policies and treaties on gender equality, SVAW, and gender mainstreaming, and include measures to address these issues in their constitutions. But, even where these policies, treaties and constitutional provisions are implemented, little has changed (Mbambi & Faray-Kele, 2010; Freedman, 2011). Within areas affected by armed conflict, this is largely due to the fact that women are excluded from and consistently marginalised in formal peace negotiations (Whitman, 2006; Press, 2010; Ouellet, 2013). Furthermore, both government and civil society tend to replicate patriarchy. For example, the UN is revealed as patriarchal in nature (Nduka-Agwu, 2009; Puechguirbal, 2010), and SVAW interventions by CSOs tend to have a short-term focus that avoids confronting patriarchy (D'Odorico & Holvoet, 2009). Thus, at best, state and civil society address the practical needs of those affected by SVAW, such as medical care, economic support, and shelter, but not the root causes of SVAW - dismantling patriarchy and its resultant gender inequality.

Focusing on government interventions, the findings from this study show that all three countries' governments are unable to curb the rate of SVAW. This concurs with what other studies have found (Reyntjens, 2004; Heaner, 2008; Schia & De Carvalho, 2009; Freedman, 2011; Jones *et al.*, 2014). Affirming Walby's (1986, 1990) theory that the state is a patriarchal structure, participants made it clear that SVAW is continuing at an alarming rate, despite new laws that recognise the rights of women, the different forms of SV, and set out harsh punishments for SV perpetrators. Unexpectedly, though, the three countries' participants had different opinions on why this was the case. In the DRC, the participants were harshly critical of government, arguing that it does not prioritise women and that this is why SVAW continues. In Rwanda, on the other hand, government was lauded by participants for implementing gender equality measures and addressing SVAW, even though they were not effective, as the experiences of SV attested to. In Liberia, the participants described their government as not effective in addressing and resolving SVAW, but were nevertheless quite positive and supportive of it, seeing President Sirleaf as proof of the government's seriousness about gender equality and SVAW.

Reflecting on these three different interpretations of a similar situation (i.e. a government that is unable to curb SVAW), the following can be said. States display a patriarchal bias, just as Walby claims, for in none of the countries has the plight of women been changed at grassroots level. However, it appears that citizens' perception of their government's commitment to gender equality and addressing SVAW is not based on actual change, but rather on governmental attitude as publically displayed through policies, public statements and especially political personas. That is why, for example, Liberian participants do not condemn their governments' inability to bring about change. Focusing on President Sirleaf and her public commitment to eradicating SVAW, they do not take into account that there has been little change.

Turning to civil society, interventions in all three countries tend to focus on the same issues. As studies have shown (Cohen *et al.*, 2005; D'Odorico & Holvoet, 2009), the majority of CSOs focus on providing practical, short-term assistance to those affected by SVAW, for example food, shelter and medical care. However, participants stated that there are some interventions that focus on the causes of SVAW, by doing community-level training on gender equality and women's rights. Unfortunately, the impact of these appear to be limited if one looks at survivors' experiences of stigma and discrimination, and women's experiences of gender inequality. Interestingly, as was the case with government, while civil society appears to generally play the same role in all three countries, participants' perception of civil society in their country differed. The Congolese were positive and emphasised the importance of civil society's influential role, the Rwandans rarely mentioned CSOs, and the Liberians were positive but did not ascribe civil society an important role in the overall struggle against SVAW.

These different reactions are arguably the result of the different roles of the government in each country. The Congolese government is doing little to address SVAW, thus Congolese participants are forced to rely on civil society. The Rwandan and Liberian governments are doing more, or at least appear to do so, thus participants from those countries do not 'need' CSOs to play such a central role. These attitudes indicate that people tend to see government as being one of the most important and influential actors in addressing SVAW. This is remarkable, since in all three countries government has consistently been unable to do so. This prioritising of government intervention could be a result of it being the only actor that can ensure that SV laws are implemented and that SV perpetrators caught and properly punished. In all three countries the adoption of a liberal feminist approach that emphasises legislative change was identified as one of the most important steps towards creating a SV-free society, and only the government can provide this.

Reflecting on the ways government and civil society are responding to SVAW in these areas affected by armed conflict, SVAW interventions are shown to be practical and short-term focused. However, the Rwandan situation raises some questions. Rwandan participants credit the Rwandan government with implementing many gender equality reforms and launching interventions to address SVAW, but this seems to have little effect at grassroots-level. Why is this? It may be that these interventions are not being properly implemented, or are not able to bring about change in the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of men. What is clear is that patriarchy is embedded in societal culture, its institutions and governance. The fact that state and civil society interventions in these different country contexts have had little effect on the rate at which SVAW is occurring, challenges the liberal feminist claim that gender equality can be achieved, and the evils of gender inequality eradicated, within existing patriarchal societal structures. This patriarchal hold includes the churches and affects their ability to address SVAW.

8.5 CHURCHES ADDRESSING SVAW IN AREAS AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT

Noted theorists Durkheim (1995), Weber (1930), Berger (1969), Hervieu-Léger (2000) and Ellis & Ter Haar (1998, 2004, 2007) all recognise the interlinked nature of religion and society, as do theories of inculturation. While Durkheim argues that religion is simply a symbolic representation of society, Weber allows religion more independence, arguing that it can be a driver of action and social change within society. This ability to drive action, Berger argues, is used to create order and stability, while Hervieu-Léger posits that religion is key to creating collectivity and cohesion. What this means is that religion, and churches as religious practitioners, cannot be separated from society. The result is that society is instrumental in the form that religion takes, but also that religion can be very influential in ordering and transforming society, through enabling and promoting certain behaviours, creating social cohesion, enabling believers to overcome challenging circumstances, and by providing stability. Therefore churches, as institutions where religion is practised, can have a profound effect on the society in which they find themselves. According to Ellis & Ter Haar (1998, 2004, 2007) this is particularly the case in Africa, where people believe in the spiritual source of all power.

In addition, churches can facilitate and strengthen the social capital of the poor and marginalised by binding people together, fostering bonds of trust, and providing support at various levels. But churches are not always all good. While they have often been effective in opposing various injustices and human rights violations, there have also been occasions where they have supported unjust actions and regimes (Longman, 2001; Prunier, 2001; Walls, 2002). Sexual violence against women is one such injustice. This is unfortunate, as people allow and expect churches to influence them on the level of their beliefs and behaviour. Churches are thus perfectly positioned to address SVAW and its consequences, but they very rarely do. Various studies have shown that churches refuse to engage in the causes or consequences of SVAW, and at times are even active contributors to SVAW (Nadar, 2004; Phiri & Nadar, 2011; Chitando & Chirongama, 2012).

The findings from this study affirm Durkheim (1995) and Berger's (1969) claims that churches have an important and authoritative role within communities. All three countries are predominantly Christian and almost everyone interviewed belonged to at least one church. In all three countries, churches are institutions with power and authority and, as a Congolese male youth leader stated, "(t)he church is a key tool for the entire community and people are aware that everything the church says they must follow". Church leaders are therefore important persons within the community, especially in rural areas. The influential role of churches, both positive and negative, within these three countries is illustrated when looking at their responses to armed conflict, which have been different in each country. In the DRC, where the conflict is ongoing despite peace accords, churches counter political injustice to some extent, but play a stronger role in service delivery, especially health care. Rwandan churches, on the other hand, carry the burden of being complicit in the genocide, as few churches and church leaders opposed the government and its genocidal decrees, and more people died in churches and parishes than anywhere else. Liberian churches opposed the conflict from the beginning and were actively involved in peacebuilding interventions and in assisting Liberians through general relief services, health care and education. These examples affirm Weber's claim that religion can be an independent driver of action, although the Rwandan case shows that it is not necessarily always positive change.

When looking at churches in relation to SVAW, in all three countries the participants, including SV survivors, strongly believe in the ability of churches to address SVAW and its consequences. Churches are seen as supportive structures that inspire trust, are able to assist those in need, can influence beliefs and behaviour, and, in addressing SVAW, can provide both care and prevention. Furthermore, participants confirmed their belief in the ability of churches to influence people by arguing that churches should work with the entire community, not just church members, because in doing so they can impact and change the whole community. These beliefs support and are reflected in the theories of Weber (1930) and Berger (1969) on how religion can influence and shape society. Weber explains that religion can determine behaviour and motivate and facilitate social change, while Berger argues that religion can influence actions and transform everyday reality. The fact that the participants believe that churches are able to change communities to such an extent that SVAW and its consequences are addressed shows that they do see religion as having such a role and influence in the community.

Due to this faith and belief in the churches' ability to address SVAW, it was thus surprising to find that the churches are in fact doing very little. The participants from all three countries were very critical of churches' actual responses to SVAW. While in each country there are some churches responding to SVAW, these churches are very few and their responses tend to be one-dimensional and limited. In the words of a male Congolese NGO leader: "We can't say that the church is not engaged in it… [But] there is a lethargy. [They] are engaged but [they] don't really go so far". Furthermore, churches vary from non-involvement to active promotion of SVAW. Many, if not most, churches are promoting SVAW through their teachings, practices and response to SV survivors, for example by admonishing those who disclose and ordering them to keep it secret. Unfortunately, those churches that choose non-involvement actually also contribute to the continuation of SVAW, as by not condemning it they are implicitly condoning the beliefs, perceptions and activities that facilitate SVAW. In this regard, churches rarely differ from the community in general, reflecting community attitudes, beliefs and practices in their opinions and treatment of SV survivors. Thus, the findings agree with the theories of Millett (1969) and Walby (1986, 1990) that religion, and by extension churches as religious institutions, are patriarchal structures, that perpetuate gender inequality and, by implication, gender violence (Nadar, 2004; Phiri & Nadar, 2011; Chitando & Chirongama, 2012).

Churches, along with the rest of civil society, tend to engage with SVAW in only a practical, short-term manner. In all three countries, churches were said to mainly provide counselling and socio-economic support, such as food and clothing. This type of engagement arguably comes naturally to churches. As Tombs (1999) explains, it is the type of pastoral engagement which most churches see as their Christian duty to provide. It does not require any engagement with the root causes of SVAW, but only fairly superficial engagement with the consequences.

It should also be noted that many participants stated that churches must pray for SVAW to end. Participants' belief in the importance of prayer is explained by Ellis & Ter Haar's (1998, 2004, 2007) theory on religion as a means to access alternative sources of power. Some fatalistically stated that this must be done, as only God can end a scourge of such magnitude. This attitude shows that people see churches as having access to a power source – God – that is not available through other channels, and that this power source can have great effect. Thus, churches are not only seen as service-delivering CSOs, they also offer unique access to solutions that are otherwise not available. They are also seen to have influence and authority. Despite this, what this study has shown is that, when it comes to SVAW, churches consistently refuse to properly engage with the issue. Given this, it is striking that participants in all three research locations continue to believe in and argue that churches can comprehensively address SVAW. Even survivors who have been treated abysmally by churches state that churches are key institutions for resolving this issue and its consequences. It was argued earlier that Weber and Berger's theories on the ability of religion to drive action serves as an explanation. However, one would think that, in the face of such continuous non-engagement with SVAW, and in some cases active promotion of SVAW and non-support of SV survivors, people's belief in religion and churches would waiver. But it does not. Yet *everyone* interviewed in all three countries agreed that churches are doing nothing or too little to address SVAW and its consequences. Even church leaders stated that they are not doing enough. How can one explain this?

8.6 THE ABILITY OF CHURCHES TO ADDRESS SVAW AND ITS CONSEQUENCES IN AREAS AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT

Churches have the ability to influence beliefs, attitudes and behaviour due to being practitioners of religion, and it is one of the few organisations that have this potential. However, as Walby (1986, 1990) and Millett (1969) theorise, and as multiple studies have shown, churches are patriarchal institutions (Nadar, 2004; Uzodike & Whetho, 2008; Phiri & Nadar, 2011; Museka *et al.*, 2013). Through their beliefs, practices, structure, and reading and interpretation of the Bible, churches promote male interests and do not address pressing women's issues such as gender inequality, GBV, SV and HIV&AIDS (Kanyoro, 1996; Franz, 2002; Nadar, 2004). Furthermore, as religion, culture and society are intimately linked (Durkheim, 1995; Weber, 1930; Berger, 1969; Hervieu-Léger, 2000; Ellis & Ter Haar, 1998, 2004, 2007), churches find it difficult to challenge the beliefs and practices of the culture/society in which they are located. Various studies have shown that churches are to a large extent a reflection of the culture and society in which they are situated, and as such replicate societal and cultural injustices (Van Hoyweghen, 1996; Kassimir, 1998).

The findings from this study fully support the contention that churches are patriarchal institutions. In all three countries, churches clearly distinguish between male and female, and men are empowered and glorified at the expense of women, to the extent that a male Congolese NGO leader stated that "(t)he church is one of the main organisations that are suppressing women". Churches also have patriarchal views on sex and SVAW. For example, they see sex as a taboo topic that cannot be discussed in mix-gender and mix-age services; it is seen as a private matter that should at best be handled by village elders using customary law; and conjugal SV is deemed a private matter. Many churches force those who do disclose SV to keep the matter quiet. Churches' patriarchal attitudes on sex and the sexuality of women are most tellingly revealed in the way churches stigmatise SV survivors.

Church leaders and members in all three countries argued that they cannot support SV survivors because they cannot identify them. However, many survivors explained that disclosure would be a futile exercise, for churches stigmatise survivors and offer little or no assistance. One would expect churches to be supportive of SV survivors, based on their religious mandate. However, this is not the case, and the reasons for this can be explained when one engages with the theory of stigmatisation (Link & Phelan, 2001; Parker & Aggleton, 2003; Shin *et al.*, 2013). By stigmatising SV survivors, churches enforce their beliefs and values – such as the importance of virginity, chastity, purity, monogamy, etc. Furthermore, by stigmatising survivors they reinforce their own power as ingroup and create greater social cohesion amongst church members, for church members experience collectivity and cohesion in the act of othering survivors. Thus, it appears that churches stigmatise SV survivors as a way to ensure that patriarchal constructions of women, men and sex continue to thrive within the churches' circles of influence, thus ensuring the continuation of the status quo and the dominance of men.

A further indication of the patriarchal nature of churches is the fact that almost all churches' leadership is male. While some churches have some women leaders, such positions tend to be marginal (for example, within the Mother's Union) and the top leadership structure remains predominantly male. The churches do not confront patriarchy, and male church leaders appear to actively resist a more equitable power distribution. However, it is not only men that support the patriarchal project. An issue that this study has highlighted is that many women within churches support it. An example is a Rwandan Mother's Union, where the (female) leader explained that they teach women “to be humble before [their husbands], to obey them”. Reflecting on this, it could be that many women church leaders support patriarchy as they have succeeded in finding power within the alternative spaces allotted to them (such as the Mother’s Union) and thus do not want transformation that might endanger the space in which they are empowered.

Churches’ patriarchal avoidance of women’s issues extends to SVAW. The overwhelming majority of churches do nothing about the issue, while those who do, do so in a fairly superficial manner. They may say that SVAW is wrong, but are not taking a stand against it or making a big effort to address it. What was surprising is how participants from all three countries, while recognising that churches are doing little or nothing to address SVAW and lamenting it, were quick to offer justifications for this state of events. This included, for example, the inability to identify survivors, lack of funding with which to launch interventions, and the importance of not alienating church members by preaching on topics that make them uncomfortable. Participants displayed the belief that, should these matters be resolved, churches could be more effective in addressing and resolving SVAW and its consequences.

Some participants maintained that another reason why the churches are not as effective, is because they do not work together with other sectors of society. Although many of the participants were from rural areas and quite uneducated, they were aware of the importance of a multi-sectoral approach to SVAW, particularly through churches working with government. Participants appear to be aware of the multi-faceted nature of SVAW, and that intervening on the issue requires intervention from various actors. However, Hearn (2001) warns that working with government runs the risk of churches becoming too intertwined and dependent on government, which inhibits their ability to address governmental actions that contribute to or facilitate SVAW. This has been illustrated in Rwanda, where few churches speak out or demand retribution for SVAW perpetrated by governmental forces during and after the genocide.

Within the churches themselves, women working in this space have to embrace patriarchy to empower women. For example, a Rwandan Mother’s Union teaches women with sexually violent husbands how to treat their husbands so that they (the men) do not sexually violate them (the women): “The way we teach, it is a process. The way you treat him when he comes home, the way you share a meal, until you go to sleep… So that, when you reach that point [that you refuse sex] it will be OK”. No attempt, however, is made to change the way men see themselves and their wives. This example shows how churches are assisting women and SV survivors, but not to the extent of actually addressing the causes of SVAW.

Tombs' (1999) differentiation between pastoral and theological engagement with SV serves to explain this. A pastoral approach fits into the general activities of churches and does not require engagement with patriarchy within households, society and churches, as it focuses on assisting survivors. Churches avoid a theological engagement with SV, for they do not wish to see SV as part of the Christian story, as this type of engagement requires transformation of the patriarchal status quo.

Most of the churches that are intervening in SVAW do so only from a pastoral perspective, by offering counselling, prayer, food or clothing. Few participants could see that such theological disengagement ensures the continuation of patriarchy within churches. Only one participant stated that addressing SVAW would require the elimination of patriarchy, and that this would require radical transformation from churches. What is clear, is that churches have the potential to address SVAW, but their ability is curtailed by the patriarchal order that shape them

8.7 CONCLUSIONS

Churches are a large and influential sector of civil society in Africa and, as religious practitioners, are supposed to support, guide and assist believers in negotiating the challenges of life. With the continent being embroiled in ongoing conflict, one would expect African churches to be key role-players in assisting civilians, and this has been the case in some countries. This study has focused on how churches address a particularly hideous aspect of armed conflict, namely sexual violence against women, by looking at how churches address SVAW in the DRC, Rwanda and Liberia. To answer this firstly required a close look at why SVAW is so prevalent and violent.

Two main reasons can be identified as to **why** SVAW is so prevalent. The first of these, and arguably the most critical, is patriarchy. Patriarchy is what allows men to dominate, oppress and exploit women, and various structures within society – such as culture, sexuality, and the state – are patriarchal and in turn uphold the patriarchal project. The DRC, Rwanda and Liberia are all patriarchal countries and the patriarchal beliefs and practices which dominate in these countries make SVAW an effective strategy and weapon during conflict, due to the way it positions men versus women. Thus, the reason why SVAW is present in areas affected by armed conflict is not because of armed conflict, but *because of patriarchy*. Where the patriarchal structure comes under threat, and where masculinities are shaped by militarisation, masculinities and patriarchy tend to take on a form commonly referred to in the literature as hypermasculine.

Hypermasculinity is characterised by violent and callous attitudes towards women, and situates SVAW as an acceptable male action and response. Hypermasculinity infuses civilian patriarchy because it influences civilian masculinities and, in the aftermath of armed conflict, patriarchy becomes supportive of a more sexually violent masculinity. This is illustrated in the way a sexually violent culture has developed in each of the three countries. To the extent that *armed conflict activates this sexually violent hypermasculinity* in both combatants and civilians, armed conflict is complicit in the scourge that is SVAW. The hold of hypermasculinity on society is proving to be tenacious. In a recent study done in Liberia eleven years after the war, the fact that Liberia has one of the highest rates of sex crimes in the world is ascribed to the persistence of hypermasculinity within the country (Jones *et al.*, 2014:6).

In looking at **how** women are affected by SVAW in these three countries, it is clear that there are physical, psychological, social and economic components to the consequences that they face, and these tend to be the same regardless of location. However, the forms that SVAW take are context-specific, and conflict and post-conflict SV survivors do not face all of the same consequences. Nevertheless, for everyone *the worst consequence of SVAW is the stigma and discrimination* that they have to face. Survivors are identified and labelled as deviant from the social norm. Being labelled and othered in such a way is in itself a negative experience, and stigma often leads to active discrimination against survivors. Survivors therefore attempt to escape from stigmatisation and discrimination, either by trying to hide that they have been sexually violated or by isolating themselves. The result is that they rarely seek help and do not receive the support they need. The majority of both conflict and post-conflict SV survivors that do disclose, or are unable to hide that they have been sexually violated, are marginalised or rejected by their husbands, families and communities, and it dramatically impacts on their physical, psychological, social and economic well-being. This highlights the way in which *the consequences of SVAW also in turn function as causes of SVAW*. In looking at the consequences of SVAW, it also becomes clear why SVAW is an effective weapon and strategy of conflict, as the impact on the survivor is so far-reaching and extreme, and in turn affects her entire community. At the same time, the consequences also highlight the role of patriarchy, for the majority of these consequences would not have existed if it was not for patriarchy.

The interventions that have been launched in **support** of those affected by SVAW tend to be the same despite the differences in the three countries' conflict and peace experiences. Support has a short-term focus and rarely addresses the general or root causes of SVAW.

However, the interventions that do exist are too few, and few survivors have received the multi-dimensional assistance they need. The reason why SVAW interventions are so limited is because *government and civil society do not take SVAW seriously*. While they intervene to some extent, this is shaped and restricted by the patriarchal structure of society. Neither government, civil society, nor churches prioritise SVAW interventions or attempt to comprehensively address the stigma and discrimination that affect women.

Focusing specifically on **how churches address SVAW** in areas affected by armed conflict, there does not seem to be any great difference from the rest of civil society. While recognising that churches are CSOs with a unique ability to influence people because they have recourse to religion and God, they nevertheless *fail to play a decisive role* in addressing SVAW in areas affected by armed conflict. With those churches that do engage with it, the interventions are short-term and practical, and rarely address the causes of SVAW. Yet *people believe in the ability of churches to be key actors*, as churches are religious practitioners and religion has the ability to drive action and behaviour, and bring about social transformation. People expect their churches to influence their beliefs and behaviour, and this is why people believe churches have the potential to address SVAW Unfortunately, this potential is not being realised.

The reason **why churches fail to engage with SVAW** is because *churches are patriarchal institutions*. While religion and churches are important and influential in Africa, this study has shown how the influence of churches has limitations. These limits are due to patriarchy, as supported by societal, cultural and church beliefs and practices. Churches have a fairly good track record of addressing some human rights violations, corrupt regimes, election corruption, and armed conflict, and of democracy building and peacebuilding. This shows that it is able to challenge injustice. In the situations where it has been most effective, it entered the arena as an ‘outsider’ to the injustice or conflict.

In addressing SVAW churches are not objective outsiders. Addressing SVAW and its consequences would require churches to engage with cultural constructs that lie at the heart of the churches themselves. Therefore, most churches refuse to do this, for these same constructs play a key role in the structures and leadership of churches. Churches, as they are currently structured and empowered, depend on patriarchy for their survival. Truly engaging with SVAW would mean that the patriarchal structure of society, culture and church will have to be dismantled, and this would mean a loss of power for men. With most church leaders being men and the current system benefiting men in general, it is obvious why there is an avoidance of the issue. Therefore, it appears as if *the ability of churches to* *address issues that cause instability is limited when the causes are practices and beliefs that lie at the heart of the religion and the institution, especially if these practices and beliefs are upholding the power of those currently in power.*

Churches do have the ability to influence people's beliefs, attitudes and practices. This has been proven in various settings in Africa, including the three case study countries. However, this does not mean that this ability is necessarily used for good purposes. Churches in Rwanda, for example, supported the genocide and as such provided religious validation for the genocidal project. The same is the case with patriarchy, as churches are not merely engaging in a few patriarchal practices borrowed from a patriarchal society, but are a key structure supporting and perpetuating patriarchy. If one takes into account the influence and power that a religious leader and institutions have – as attested to both in the theory and the findings from this study – this means that *churches are important patriarchal structures* within society. There is reciprocity in the relationship, with churches becoming increasingly important to the patriarchal project as their numbers increase and they grow more powerful.

Focusing on the research objectives of this study leads one to realise that patriarchy is the main driver behind SVAW both during conflict and after conflict. Patriarchy is the reason why SVAW is used as a weapon and strategy during armed conflict, it is the reason why survivors and women find little support, and it is why churches are not addressing an issue that they are perfectly positioned to do. However, it appears as if people are fairly blind to the pervasiveness of patriarchy. While they can identify certain consequences of patriarchy, they do not realise that patriarchy is systemic and that various structures uphold it. Furthermore, they do not realise that institutions such as government and churches can be patriarchal, which indicates ignorance of the comprehensiveness of the patriarchal project. This, in turn, ensures its continued existence.

At this point it may be worthwhile reflecting on the three main feminist positions discussed in Chapter Two. The findings from all three countries have shown that legislative reforms are seen as an important step in addressing SVAW and gender inequality in general. However, the limitations of this liberal feminist approach to eradicating SVAW and gender inequality is illustrated by the fact that legislative reforms have not led to justice for survivors, nor to gender equality in general. Furthermore, while there is a class dimension to SVAW, this was rarely mentioned or emphasised by participants as most were typically poor and lower class, and even though economic marginalisation was discussed extensively, this was not in relation to capitalist exploitation but rather in terms of women's subservience to men within society. Thus, while liberal and socialist feminism serve to elucidate some of the findings of this study, it is radical feminism's emphasis on the comprehensiveness of the patriarchal system that assists us in explaining why SVAW happens during and after armed conflict, its consequences, and why the state and civil society (including churches) are so ineffective in addressing it.

However, this does not necessarily mean that radical feminist solutions to patriarchal subjugation is valid and applicable in these African, conflict-ridden contexts. In proposing solutions such as androgyny, artificial reproduction, lesbianism, and/or separatism as a way of overthrowing patriarchy and ensuring gender equality, radical feminism is arguably unable to connect with the African reality. These are options that are practically speaking not available – such as artificial reproduction – or due to cultural beliefs simply unthinkable – such as lesbian separatism. In this regard a liberal feminist perspective on men and the relationship between men and women is arguably more suited and realistic. Liberal feminism does not vilify men (at least not to the same extent as radical feminism), sees gender equality as a situation which is best for and benefits both women and men, and respects the existing social structures. However, will such an approach be able to bring the needed change? Liberal feminism strives to establish gender equality within the existing societal system, but if the existing societal systems are the ones establishing and facilitating gender equality, how can this work?

Therefore it is proposed that a radical feminist process – consciousness-raising groups – can and should be employed in order to develop and inform the theory, agenda and activism that can counter patriarchy in African contexts. Just as consciousness-raising groups presented white, middle-class issues and solutions when those who formed part of the groups were white and middle-class, such groups can represent African women's issues and solutions if African women are part of the groups. These same group sessions can be used to inform a process of consciousness-raising that is realistic and respectful of the African context, and can develop strategies that can counter and transform patriarchy in ways that are realistic and practical in these contexts.

How does this influence one's answer to the question of whether churches have the potential and ability to effectively address SVAW and its consequences during and after armed conflict? It is clear that churches will be required to engage in the transformation of the patriarchal beliefs, attitudes and practices of their institutions, as well as their congregation and community members. They will only be able to affect change in terms of SVAW if they first transform their own patriarchal structure. In order to bring about such radical change, it is recommended that church leadership, and men in the church in general, should be a particular focus of interventions. The study showed that church leadership have tremendous influence, both in the congregation and the community in general. If one is able to bring change in how the church leadership view men and women, one arguably has a good chance of changing the patriarchal structure of the church, as well as the patriarchal beliefs of church members. Currently, most SVAW interventions focus on care, which inevitably means that they focus on women. While this is much needed, structural change can only be achieved if the mind-sets of those in power – men – are transformed so that they allow change to occur. Therefore it is recommended that prevention efforts focus on (male) church leaders, and that it emphasises the transformation of gender beliefs that promote gender inequality and facilitate gender violence.

Such a recommendation is contrary to radical feminist approaches to patriarchy, as radical feminism call on women to instigate and establish change. However, this study has shown that the reality within these African conflict-stricken contexts is such that men cannot be side-lined. Within churches, and in communities in general, men's power and dominance is of such an overwhelming and all-encompassing nature that they have to be part of the process of change. Therefore it is argued that, while consciousness-raising groups with women is an important strategy in countering patriarchy and its resultant evils of gender inequality and SVAW, men are also a very strategic and key part of a process of transformation and should therefore be targeted.

It is possible that some churches' male leaders will be more receptive than others to such change. This highlights an area that needs more research, namely how different churches in different contexts respond to SVAW. This study approached churches as a homogenous category. Therefore research that focuses on determining how different churches respond differently to SVAW, and how they differ in terms of their gender constructs and beliefs, will be of much value, as it could highlight what kind of belief systems, organisational structures, and leadership styles promote or hinder positive engagement with SVAW. It would be of particular interest to see whether religious leaders from different churches approach the key issues relating to SVAW – such as gender constructs, stigma and discrimination, and support – differently. Another area of future research is studying perpetrators of SVAW, in order to create a better understanding of the complexities of why people commit SVAW. This in turn can inform prevention efforts, particularly through assisting churches in knowing how to work with perpetrators, but also men in general.

This study has shown that churches can be powerful instruments of change. The current service delivery approach that most churches are engaging in, while much-needed, is not enough. The literature explains that churches are able to effect transformation because they are religious practitioners, and the participants in this study professed their belief in the ability of churches to address SVAW. If one looks at the churches' impact on other injustices, such as election corruption, democracy building and peace processes, there is evidence that churches can and do influence beliefs and attitudes to the extent of causing radical transformation in a society. The inhibitor in the case of SVAW thus appears to be churches' own willingness to engage with the issue. This is ironic as well as sad, for not only do churches not address SVAW, but appear to perpetuate and support practices that actually contribute to SVAW being an effective conflict strategy and weapon. This is the message that should go out to all churches. As powerful instruments with the potential to bring about social change, they have the moral responsibility to eliminate, and not perpetuate, SVAW.

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Appendix A

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Country:________________ Community:___________________ Quest.#___________

Interpreter? Y/N

Name: ____

Gender:________ Age:_________ Married?___________ Children:___________

Job:____

Context:____

____

____

____

1. What kinds of things happened to your people during the war/genocide?

____

____

____

____

2. How would you define sexual violence?

____

____

____

____

3. Do you know personally know people who experienced sexual violence during the war/genocide?

____

____

____

____

4. Why do you think did it happen to specifically them?

5. During the war/genocide: did anyone do anything to stop the sexual violence? Government/NGO’s/churches?

6. What happened to the victims of sexual violence after the war/genocide? Were there any programmes/medical care/ food/psychological support/etc.?

7. What do you think about women who have been sexually violated?

8. What does your community think about women who have been sexually violated?

9. Are men and women equal in your community? Why do you say so?

10. How does your church treat survivors of sexual violence?

____

____

____

____

11. Whose job do you think it is to stop SVAW?

____

____

____

____

12. What do you personally think should be done about SVAW?

____

____

____

____

Appendix B

SURVIVOR INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Background:

- Name
- Age
- Marital status
- Church

Possible questions:

- How long ago did it happen?
- Where did it happen and who did it?
- What did you do afterwards?
- Any medical treatment?
- How does your family treat you?
- How does your community treat you?
- How does your church treat you?
- Who has been most supportive of you?
- What support do you wish you had?
- What should churches do for survivors?

Appendix C

LEADER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Background:

- Name
- Gender
- Leadership position
- Church

Possible questions:

- Where are you a leader and what are your responsibilities?
- What is the situation in your community like regarding SVAW? (conflict vs post-conflict)
- What is being done about it and who is doing it?
- What is government doing?
- What are the churches doing?
- Is the judicial process effective?
- How do families treat a sexually violated family member?
- How do husbands treat a sexually violated wife?
- Do people disclose being sexually violated?
- How should SVAW be addressed?
- What should churches be doing about SVAW?