Enhancing Women's Rights and Capabilities: An Intersectional Approach to Gender-Based Violence Prevention

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ABSTRACT[1]

Drawing on post-colonial feminist theory, this paper provides a critical assessment of United Nations (UN) gender-based violence theory and practice. Chapter One provides epistemic critiques of UN agencies' current theoretical framework, paying particular attention to the concepts of gender, power, and culture. In order to help redress the problems identified in Chapter One, I argue in Chapter Two that we must look to the feminist theory of intersectionality. With its nuanced conceptions of oppression and privilege, intersectionality provides analytic depth to discussions of gender, power, and culture, which I argue can improve the practical effectiveness of gender-based violence prevention efforts. Chapter Three outlines the UN's shortcomings in practice and illustrates how intersectionality can help remedy the problems identified. Drawing on the case of refugee camps in Ngara and Kibondo Tanzania, I highlight how specific programs and policies informed by the UN's framework prove inadequate in both decreasing rates of violence and providing services to survivors. Finally, I discuss future implications of an intersectional approach to gender-based violence prevention and how it makes an invaluable contribution to established UN practice.

KEYWORDS: gender-based violence; United Nations; refugee camps; feminist theory.

RESUMEN

Este ensayo ofrece una evaluación crítica de la teoría y práctica de las Naciones Unidas (ONU) en cuestiones de violencia de género utilizando la teoría feminista post-colonial. El capítulo uno proporciona críticas epistémicas del actual marco teórico de las agencias de la Organizacion de Naciones Unidas (ONU), con un énfasis especial en los conceptos de género, poder y cultura. Con el fin de ayudar a corregir los problemas identificados en el capítulo uno, sostengo que es necesario analizar la teoría feminista de la interseccionalidad en el capítulo dos. La interseccionalidad proporciona profundidad analítica a las discusiones de género, poder y cultura con su conceptualización matizada de la opresión y el privilegio, que planteo que puede mejorar la efectividad práctica de los esfuerzos de prevención de la violencia de género. El capítulo tres describe las deficiencias de la ONU en la práctica y muestra cómo la interseccionalidad puede ayudar a solucionar los problemas identificados. Usando como referencia el caso de los campos de refugiados en Ngara y Kibondo (Tanzania), demuestro cómo las políticas y programas específicos en el marco de la ONU son inadecuadas para reducir la violencia y proporcionar servicios a los sobrevivientes. Al final, planteo las futuras implicaciones de un enfoque interseccional sobre la prevención de la violencia de género y cómo contribuye este modelo de manera incalculable a las tradicionales prácticas de la ONU.

PALABRAS-CLAVE: violencia de género; Naciones Unidas; campos de refugiados; teoría feminista

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In recent years gender-based violence has received an unprecedented rise in international visibility. Discussions of gender-based violence and the so-called global plight of women are now commonplace in international humanitarian, development, and human rights circles. This surge in international awareness has corresponded with a steady increase in the number of policies and programs responding to gender-based violence every year. While these provide essential services to communities impacted by violence, rates of violence still continue to increase. As existing policies and programs prove largely ineffective at decreasing rates of violence, development agencies are increasingly signaling a willingness to critically re-assess their approaches.

Drawing on post-colonial feminist insights, my thesis contributes to this critical self-reflection and provides a thorough assessment of current gender-based violence theory and practice. This critical assessment consists of three chapters. Chapter One provides epistemic critiques of UN agencies' current theoretical framework, paying particular attention to the concepts of gender, power, and culture. This chapter critically examines numerous policy reports, manuals, guidelines, and toolkits created and used by UN agencies to understand conceptions of gender-based violence. As some of the most powerful and direct forms of knowledge production on gender-based violence, these sources reveal assumptions and concepts widely accepted in international development and aid efforts.

My analysis focuses on United Nations (UN) agencies crafting gender-based violence policies and programs. As the largest, best funded, and most influential organizations doing violence prevention work, UN agencies, in many ways, represent established international gender-based violence practice. The policies, guidelines, and programs piloted and implemented by UN agencies often influence other smaller non-governmental organizations. For this reason, I believe it's important to go to the starting point of many international gender-based violence responses to understand the theories informing and motivating violence response and prevention world wide.

It is hardly groundbreaking to assert that there is room for improvement in development approaches to gender-based violence prevention. Many before me have outlined the power imbalances present in aid relationships, the problematic one-size-fits-all approaches that ignore local socio-economic, political, and historical contexts, or the inability of aid agencies to deliver on their promises. While feminist and post-colonial critiques provide important insights into emergent challenges in violence prevention, they rarely, if ever, seek to directly engage with policymakers and aid workers doing this work. Feminist critics also often fail to articulate alternatives to established practice. The unspoken assumption is that the problematic concepts, approaches, and lack of self-reflection among development agencies renders this work doomed to fail. This begs the question, however: Once we successfully deconstruct gender-based violence development practice, what should be constructed in its place?

In order to redress the problems identified in Chapter One, in Chapter Two I draw on the feminist theory of intersectionality. With its nuanced conceptions of oppression and privilege, intersectionality provides more analytic depth to discussions of gender, power, and culture. In many respects, this thesis explores the tension and potential for collaboration between feminist theory and gender-based violence development practice. I argue that until we explore the practical applications of feminist post-colonial thought on this work, gender-based violence programs will continue to fail to make a dent in the enormous rates of violence occurring every year. In other words, until feminists and social scientists begin critically engaging with the policy world, the nuanced highly specialized understandings and debates on concepts like gender,

culture, and power will be contained within academia while ineffective programs and policies continue to exist. I'm interested in how we can use existing policies and make them more effective and inclusive. I specifically ask: what are the redeeming aspects of existing approaches that can be used and expanded on? How can divergent post-colonial feminist and policy approaches to gender-based violence prevention find common ground? What is the broader power context in which knowledge about gender-based violence is produced, codified, and applied in policy settings?

Essentialized, inaccurate, or incomplete notions of gender-based violence, power, and culture employed by the UN limit the practical effectiveness of its programs and policies. Chapter Three outlines these shortcomings in practice and shows how intersectionality can help remedy the problems identified. How does this incomplete understanding of gender-based violence lead to ineffective or problematic interventions? Drawing on the case of refugee camps in Ngara and Kibondo Tanzania, I highlight how specific programs and policies informed by the UN's framework proved inadequate in both decreasing rates of violence and providing services to survivors. Below, I briefly outline major arguments within the existing literature on gender-based violence. After highlighting the important contributions of others, I move into my own argument, which seeks to make a new contribution to this existing critical development literature.

Literature Review

There is a large body of interdisciplinary literature that offers important critiques of development policies and practice. Most commonly these target the one-size-fits-all approach of development initiatives that ignore the complexities of local contexts and lead to ineffective outcomes (Easterly 2006). Some highlight the cases where aid and development agencies fuel unrest rather than prevent it (Uvin 1998; Baines 2004). Others challenge the notion that Western economic, political, and social systems are models to which developing countries can and should aspire (Moyo 2009). Development policies and programs are sometimes presented as mechanisms of control, tantamount to neo-colonial regimes that, in effect, create the "Third-world" (Escobar 1996). Still others illustrate the ways in which development practice is intimately wrapped up in self-definition and the way a "desire for development" creates a North/South binary that further marginalizes aid recipients (Heron 2008).

As a subset within this critical development literature, there are discussions on gender-based violence policy and practice by development agencies. Recent years have witnessed a sharp increase in both national and international awareness of gender-based violence within the development establishment (Morrison, et al. 2001). While community-based anti-violence movements have worked to counter this violence for many decades (Richie 2001; Incite 2008), more recently there has been a strong trend towards the "professionalization" of gender-based violence prevention. This has led to a rise in policies, programs, services, and institutional responses to violence, with three common areas of response: 1) access to justice for survivors, 2) services and support, whether legal, social, health, or emotional, to women, and 3) violence prevention (Morrison, et al 2001).

While these policy and programmatic responses provide important services to survivors, some critics are wary of this "professionalization" or "bureaucratization" process. Formulaic top-down approaches to gender-based violence have proven ineffective in the past, they claim, and are unlikely to prevent violence in the future (Campbell, 1999; Dasgupta, 1998; Gondolf, 1998;

Richie, 2000). Some persuasively argue that the focus of gender-based violence and development projects tend to be too narrowly focused, unable to adapt to changing regional contexts, and stay rooted in traditional gender assumptions about women's and men's roles (Baines 2004). Many development organizations, particularly those operating in post-conflict settings, promote women's "empowerment" by pushing women and men into prescribed roles (Baines 2004). Others deconstruct the discourse of development and empowerment programs and explore how gendered theories problematically present men and women in developing countries (Rai 2002). Still others explore the role of development agencies in controlling, de-politicizing, and making legible grassroots anti-violence initiatives. These critiques question how over reliance on external funding shapes and potentially sanitizes grassroots community organizing around violence (Incite! 2008). Keeping this elucidating body of critical development literature in mind, in the following chapter I provide epistemic critiques of the UN's theoretical approach to gender-based violence.

Chapter One: Unpacking the notions of Gender-Based Violence, Power, and Culture

United Nations (UN), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) policy reports generally begin with a section outlining relevant concepts. These include brief definitions of terms like gender, gender-based violence, power, and culture. The definitions are designed to give policymakers and practitioners a better understanding of issues surrounding gender-based violence. As I will show below, these definitions also reveal policymakers' problematic understandings of gender-based violence, power, and culture— understandings that, I believe, result in a diminished ability to respond to gender-based violence.

Gender-Based Violence

Analyses of gender-based violence presume societal gender roles and expectations (UNHCR 2001, 11). The UNHCR contends, "the term sexual and gender-based violence signifies any harm perpetrated on a person against her/his will, the origins of which are based on power relationships determined by socially ascribed roles of gender" (WRC 2002, 1). Given that women are disproportionately affected by this violence the UN tends to use "gender-based violence" and "violence against women" interchangeably. The term gender-based violence encompasses a wide range of acts including rape, domestic violence, forced prostitution, sex trafficking, sexual harassment or exploitation, as well as "harmful traditional practices" which are said to include female genital mutilation (FGM), forced and/or early marriage, and female infanticide (Vann 2002).

Gender thus becomes the determinant of violence. The Reproductive Health Response in Conflict (RHRC) notes for example: "the roots of gender-based violence (GBV) lie in power inequities based on gender roles, which are marked by the domination of men and the subordination of women" (RHRC 2004c, 1). Gender-based violence "which at its core is the abuse of power, is rooted in gender inequality and discrimination" (Vann 2002, 9). Put differently, the UNHCR sees "gender inequality and discrimination [as] the root causes of sexual and gender-based violence" and uses the term sexual and gender-based violence to "distinguish common violence from violence that targets individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of their gender" (UNHCR 2003, 10 & 25). UN agencies favor this term because it "highlights the gender dimension of these types of acts; in other words, the relationship between females' subordinate status in society and their increased vulnerability to violence" (IASC 2005, 7). UNIFEM further states that gender-based violence occurs regardless of other forms of oppression: "Its primary targets are women and girls ─ *regardless* of their age, race, ethnicity, income, educational, marital or other socio-economic status ─ merely for being born female [emphasis mine]" (UNIFEM 2007, 4). According to the UNHCR "sexual and gender-based violence occurs in all classes, cultures, religions, races, gender and ages" (UNHCR 2003, 25).

Clearly gender factors heavily in acts of violence. However, this conception of gender-based violence is incomplete. It ignores a host of other issues that can affect the motivations and methods of violence, as well as the survivor's ability to find and receive support after the attack. This gender-only conception of gender-based violence results in: 1) an inability to account for other forms of oppression like racism and classism, 2) an inability to contextualize gender-based violence or explore the socio-economic, political, and historical contexts in which violence

occurs and is responded to, and 3) a tendency to see relations between women and men as adversarial, thereby limiting potential areas for cooperation.

While it is true that gender-based violence touches many women's lives, it cannot be said to affect all women in the same way. By focusing on gender as the sole or primary determinant of violence, this approach ignores the ways in which race, ethnicity, class, refugee status, nationality, ability, and/or sexuality are also intimately tied to acts of violence. Policymakers often treat racism and other forms of oppression as "stressors, rather than as key explanatory factors of the violence" (Bogard 1999, 277). This conception of violence ignores the diversity of women's experience and the disparities among women affecting their ability to seek legal redress, health services, and counseling. Moreover, this conception ignores contextual factors including the social, economic and political contexts in which the violence occurred.

This approach also fails to present men as anything more than perpetrators of violence. In this view, men are perpetrators in the context of patriarchy. But patriarchy cannot and should not be disaggregated from other major systems of oppression like racism and classism that occur simultaneously. This approach does not recognize that men and boys in developing countries are often people of color, poor, marginalized and can also experience oppression and violence. The term gender-based violence is supposed to encompass violence against women, men, boys, queer people, and transgender women and men (Letellier 1994). In practice, however, this term refers almost exclusively to violence against women. This renders violence against men and boys— particularly queer men, men from marginalized groups, and boys—invisible.

This gender-only conception also ignores the positive and potentially transformative role men and boys can play as agents of change. By presenting men exclusively in the context of abusive power relations, this view preempts potential areas of cooperation. Moving beyond simple victim-perpetrator relationships is essential in exploring men's roles as agents of change. Clearly, gender-based violence is not a problem women are solely responsible for solving on their own. Exploring areas for men's involvement in violence prevention work is important but will continue to be limited while men are solely seen as perpetrators.

The Instrumentality of Violence Prevention

While this gender-only conception of violence tends to obscure more than it illuminates, there is also a troubling tendency under the current framework to view violence prevention as instrumental. I believe these reports reveal a problematic trend in discourse on gender-based violence: preventing gender-based violence is often considered important to the extent it is instrumental in achieving other development goals. The primary audience of policy reports, manuals, and toolkits are humanitarian and aid workers, as well as government officials and those in positions of power to affect policy change. As such, most reports inevitably include a section on how organizations and governments can justify allocating time and resources towards gender-based violence. For instance, ending gender-based violence is seen as instrumental in advancing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):

> Violence and the fear of violence, severely limits survivors' contribution to social and economic development, thereby hindering achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other national and international development goals (Population Council 2008, 4).

Violence against women – though invisible and a missing target in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - puts a major break on the prospects of achieving them (UNIFEM 2007, 4).

Rebuilding the lives of survivors of gender-based violence is instrumental and tantamount to rebuilding the nation and sustaining peace:

Where women constitute the overwhelming majority of the population, rebuilding their lives is essential to rebuilding the nation. Equitable, respectful gender relations are increasingly understood as vital to replacing a climate of violence and impunity with an inclusive and sustainable peace (UNIFEM 2007, 17).

Most commonly, fighting gender-based violence is instrumental in the state's economic growth:

[Gender-based violence] has many manifestations and strips countries of priceless human capital in the struggle to end poverty, propel development and secure peace and stability. It thwarts female productivity and agency, with heavy costs to national prosperity: researchers and economists confirm that *female empowerment is a central engine of development* [emphasis mine] (UNIFEM 2007, 4).

Violence against women also has a negative impact on the economy as the work force is reduced, productivity shrinks, and earnings and investments are diminished. In addition, more public funds must be channeled into medical treatment, shelters, counseling and other services for battered women, and into improved law enforcement and justice systems (UNFPA 2004, 15).

GBV has significant costs for the economies of developing countries in terms of lower worker productivity and incomes and lower rates of accumulation of human and social capital and its strain on healthcare and judicial systems (USAID 2004, 15).

Measuring [the cost of gender-based violence] is a powerful refutation of governments' arguments that ending violence is not a pressing issue. As one advocate put it, 'the public costs of private pain make it everyone's business' (UNIFEM 2003, 67).

But what about the individual and societal impacts of violence? An instrumental view of gender-based violence depersonalizes violence and erases the personal and community effects of violence on survivors and their families. These reports include extensive discussions of the policy implications of gender-based violence but no sustained dialogue on how gender-based violence profoundly affects the individuals involved. Policymakers must recognize how gender-based violence not only affects countries' economic development and peace building, but touches communities and families on a daily basis. There are effects of gender-based violence that might have no impacts on the economic or political goals of a country, but profoundly affect individual survivors.

Some might argue that this instrumental conception of violence does not matter. Some might defend development agencies by citing the need to justify funding for gender-based violence prevention. As long as funds are put towards this work, what does it matter how the

work is framed? It is true that development agencies and governments must "make the case" for spending time and money on gender-based violence; however, our understanding of *why* a problem is important strongly impacts *how* the problem is conceived and addressed.

An instrumental conception of violence often does not deem women's lived experience important. In a review of over 25 UN policy reports there was not one personal story featuring a survivor's experience. This lack of personal narrative ensures that experiences of survivors' attacks, their positive or negative experiences navigating social service networks, or other ways in which development agencies helped or hindered their healing process never reach the policymakers or agencies creating programs. Survivors lived experience and personal stories can help us to understand the power imbalances present in a survivor's life, as well as the socio-political, economic, and cultural contexts in which the violence occurred. Stories of survivors also highlight that combating gender-based violence is not simply a means to an end, but an end in and of itself.

Power

Analysis of power within gender-based violence prevention reports primarily focuses on power relations within familial and/or societal structures in the developing country context. Discussions on the power wielded by western aid and development agencies and the role they can play in exacerbating violence remain largely absent from policy reports. The emphasis on family power dynamics and exclusion of development power dynamics highlights some interesting points. First, that operating without a clear understanding of power in development work can sometimes lead to abuse or obfuscate abuses of power by aid workers when they occur. Second, that where there is a willingness to explore sexual abuse by aid workers, incomplete notions of power are limiting the ability for self-reflection. Third, that until UN agencies critically engage with broader power asymmetries, gender-based violence policies and programs will continue to have a partial understanding of what's going on and decreased efficacy to affect lasting change.

UN reports devote significant space to examining the power relations within interpersonal relationships and families in developing countries. These discussions of familial power dynamics are done to the exclusion of discussions on broader power dynamics between aid agencies and individuals, as well as larger inequality in society. There is an unspoken assumption that the most relevant power disparities occur between men and women in the context of interpersonal relationships. Gender-based violence is seen as "ingrained in the structure of power relations between women and men and it is bound up in traditional gendered roles and expectations" (UNIFEM 2003, 12). As a result, these reports devote significant time and space towards understanding power imbalances present in the affected communities. By this view, in order "to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence effectively, the power relations between men and women, women and women, men and men, adults and children, and among children must be analyzed and understood" (UNHCR 2003, 13).

Analyzing power dynamics in families seemed sufficient until allegations surfaced of sexual exploitation by aid workers in refugee camps throughout Sub-Saharan Africa (UNHCR 2003). In these cases humanitarian workers used physical and psychological coercion to demand sexual favors from refugees in exchange for food rations and services. Many in and out of the UN found this sexual exploitation shocking and wondered how something like this could have gone on undetected. The absence of discussions on broader power dynamics may have obfuscated the potential for abuse by aid workers. While power imbalances were analyzed within

families, there was no discussion on the power wielded by aid workers or the potential for abuse of that power.

These disturbing reports of sexual coercion by humanitarian workers compelled the UNHCR, for the first time, to begin looking at its role in protracted refugee situations (Levin 2003). To its credit, in recent years the UNHCR has increasingly looked at dynamics between humanitarian workers and refugee communities (UNHCR 2003, 13). Although there is a willingness to explore sexual abuse by aid workers, incomplete notions of power continue to limit the ability for self-reflection. The UN's current theoretical framework stifles the ability for critical reflection and is unable to fully explore the power asymmetries present in development work. Even where there is a renewed desire to explore privilege and power wielded by development agencies, these discussions are usually relegated to a footnote or brief section in the introduction. Where reports include discussions on broader power imbalances between UN development agencies and people in developing countries, these discussions are still sometimes treated as tangential, or even a distraction from the more pressing power asymmetries present in family structures and local societal contexts. What remains clear is that until UN agencies engage with development power dynamics, they will continue to have a partial understanding of what's going on and decreased ability to create lasting change.

Culture

UN agencies reveal a deep ambivalence towards culture in gender-based violence. Like gender-based violence and power, culture receives problematic and inconsistent handling by UN agencies. Oftentimes UN organizations appear reluctant to impose "western" ideas of gender-based violence on the communities they work in. While being interviewed, for example "many international representatives of the humanitarian aid community express the opinion that acts of [gender-based violence are] the preserve of culture and therefore outside the scope of humanitarian intervention" (Ward 2002, 9). Relief staff "often point to cultural constraints in involving women in decision-making, particularly where women have had a limited role in the country of origin. Looking to women as decision-makers under these circumstances, they argue, amounts to tampering with the culture of the group" (UNHCR 1991, 3). There is a strong, largely unspoken, sense that aid agencies should not interfere with "culture," particularly among refugee communities where it is assumed displacement leads to a loss of identity and tradition (Palmary 2005, 130). This reflects a brand of hyper cultural relativism not uncommon to development and relief agencies. Aid staff assume that local communities possess little desire to end gender-based violence, that "cultural" values condoning violence exist and are uncontested, and that to intervene in acts of violence would therefore be inappropriate.

In discussions of culture, gender-based violence policymakers tend to ignore what anthropologists and post-colonial theorists have argued for some time: that culture is a highly contested and contingent phenomenon (Mohanty 1993; Spivak 1990). Culture is not static and immovable and tends to change and evolve over time. Constructing culture as something fixed or authentic belies the complexities of cultural norms and practices. It's no wonder, then, that UN agencies display a certain degree of ambivalence on the role of "culture" and "tradition" in gender-based violence. On the one hand, culture and tradition (which often get treated as analogous) are presented as obstacles to women's empowerment. On the other, culture and traditions are presented as potential solutions for women's healing process or adjudicating certain cases of gender-based violence. In the section that follows I outline a set of assumptions

development agencies often employ relating to culture, tradition, and gender-based violence. Namely 1) that gender-based violence is at once an expression and an aberration of culture in developing countries, 2) that gender-based violence is an inevitable cultural practice too deeply embedded to prevent, and 3) that western development staff and aid agencies are culture-neutral and, as such, culture only matters in a developing country context.

<u>Culture as Obstacle: Gender-Based Violence as an Expression of Culture</u>

Often within gender-based violence policy reports, there is a section outlining societal and cultural views on violence. We learn that in Sierra Leone "a man takes it upon himself to beat his wife at the slightest provocation since he thinks this shows that he loves her" (UNFPA 2007, 29) and that "wife beating and other forms of abuse are generally accepted as part of marriage, even by the women themselves" (Vann 2002, 108). We learn that, up until very recently, gender-based violence committed in African countries during armed conflict "has been either condoned or ignored [and that] this silence is a significant measure and function of deeply embedded cultural assumptions that acquiesce to the 'inevitability' of violence and exploitation of women and girls" (Ward 2002, 7).

In these reports, tradition and culture are presented as analogous. Reports use "harmful traditional practices," "cultural norms," or "traditional cultural practices" without differentiating between them (UNHCR 1995; UNHCR 2003; UNIFEM 2000). Causes and risk factors for gender-based violence are said to include "social norms and culture, discriminatory cultural and traditional beliefs and practices, [and] religious beliefs" (UNHCR 2003, 30). As such, practices like female genital mutilation "cannot be overlooked nor be justified on the grounds of tradition, culture or social conformity" (UNHCR 1995, 47). In these cases, tradition and culture become obstacles to both women's empowerment and to the prevention of gender-based violence.

UN agencies often refer to "violence against women, and its acceptance within society and cultures" without elaborating where, why, how and to what extent violence is accepted (UNHCR 2003, 12). Interestingly, while "cultures" in developing countries are often presented as accepting the inevitability of violence some UNHCR officials share this view: "the 1993 UNHCR-sponsored 'Review of the Implementation and Impact of UNHCR's Policy on Refugee Women' characterized the views of several UNHCR field officials as being, in effect, that sexual violence toward women was 'a regrettable but unavoidable feature of refugee life'" (WRC 2002, 16). Policy reports also usually treat the desire to prevent violence as originating externally rather than from within a community. There is a tendency to presume that violence is more accepted in developing countries, thereby reinforcing the myth that violence is limited to developing countries and isn't a pervasive problem in developed countries as well (Dasgupta 1998, 212-213).

<u>Culture as Solution: Gender-based Violence as an Aberration of Culture</u>

Interestingly, while gender-based violence is treated as an expression of cultural values and practices, it is also sometimes treated simultaneously as an aberration of culture. In this conception, culture is a potential solution for supporting survivors and occasionally adjudicating cases of violence. UNIFEM suggests incorporating "customary practices" into gender-based violence programming plans:

Any customary practices that are not harmful or dangerous should be incorporated into the GBV program's plan for psychosocial assistance. Ceremonies and rituals can have especially great value for survivors, and there may be ways to adapt existing practices to specifically address GBV issues (Vann 2002, 72).

UNFPA advocates winning support from the "custodians of culture" including "elders, kings, bishops, and imams (Muslim clergy) [who are] opinion leaders in [a] complex cultural environment" (UNFPA 2009, 11). This is seen as "a model for working within existing cultural constructs" (UNFPA 2009, 11). The UNHCR also attempts to incorporate culture and tradition into its strategies. Reports push staff officials to "encourage [the] resumption of religious and spiritual activities" (UNHCR 2003, 40). This means allocating land for religious spaces and encouraging refugees to "resume their religious and spiritual activities" (UNHCR 2003, 40). The UNHCR encourages its staff to "recognize the influence of community and religious leaders […] and enlist their cooperation in changing attitudes towards sexual violence" (UNHCR 1995, 19).

 To this end, UNHCR policy guidelines encourage staff to engage with the conflict resolution systems already in place, primarily in the form of community legal tribunals:

> When necessary and appropriate, use traditional methods, such as elder advice and local tribunals to assist in resolving certain limited types of gender violence problems. These traditional methods serve to support the community, resolve minor disputes, and promote respect for the rights of each individual (UNHCR 2000, 33).

In many cases, these tribunals are seen as useful and important alternatives for adjudicating disputes in refugee communities. Its assumed rules and decisions resulting from these community legal tribunals reflect "society's norms, believes, and attitudes" (UNHCR 2003, 48). Gender-based violence program staff work to "encourage participation by women and youth in these traditional structures" (UNHCR, 2003, 48). Development agencies target legal tribunals for awareness-raising campaigns in order to shape community opinions on gender-based violence.

 On the other hand, these tribunals are seen as ineffective or problematic for dealing with other, more serious types of gender-based violence. According to UNHCR "these traditional methods must *not* be used in cases of Attempted Rape, Rape, Forced Marriage, or any case with severe injury [emphasis original]" (UNHCR 2000, 33). Policy reports discuss the limited effectiveness of these types of tribunals in allowing the survivor to seek legal redress, particularly in cases where the survivor is encouraged to reconcile with an abusive partner.

> In situations where such tribunals or committees pass judgments that are offensive to international human rights standards relating to the rights of victims, you should take steps to educate the members of such bodies about existing international human rights standards […] Such committees should be encouraged to report cases of sexual and gender-based violence to the formal legal system, where such violence is considered to be criminal behavior (UNHCR, 2003, 48).

It is important to point out that these conflicting notions of culture as an obstacle and culture as a solution appear in the same reports and guidelines. Ultimately, UN agencies remain undecided about how to best work with existing local legal systems and whether or not these are appropriate methods to adjudicate conflicts. I believe this could relate back to the larger ambivalence on how

to discuss and work within existing cultural contexts. In many respects, development and gender-based violence prevention agencies seem to be oscillating between more universalistic and relativistic understandings of culture (Chalcraft, 2008). This ambivalence limits UN agencies' ability to effectively advocate for survivors or engage with existing social structures.

Western Development Agencies as Culture-Neutral

Discussions on how to effectively operate in a developing country context often appear in policy guidelines and toolkits for practitioners. While recommendations vary across agencies one recurring theme is the emphasis on remaining *neutral*. Agencies put enormous energy into presenting themselves in a seemingly neutral or objective way. Toolkits include tips like:

> Don't presume to have all the answers. Give up control and listen to others express their views, share their experiences and form their own ideas and plans. In an environment charged with ethnic or religious differences, assuming the role of facilitator sends a message of *neutrality* [emphasis mine] (UNFPA 2004, 15).

According to the UNFPA "avoiding value-laden language in programming discussions can help create neutral ground in which understanding and support for programme objectives become possible" (UNFPA 2004, 5). A stated requirement for UNHCR gender-based violence program staff is being "able to adopt an objective and neutral stance in dealing with cases" (UNHCR 1997, 5).

This emphasis on neutrality maintains an illusion that gender-based violence is somehow objective and knowable, and that theories, practices, and agencies for gender-based violence prevention can exist in a neutral space (Palmary 2005, 126). This emphasis on neutrality also represents an unspoken assumption that western development agencies and gender-based violence prevention programs are somehow culture-neutral. While significant time is spent examining the role of culture in developing countries, western development agencies and the countries they come from present themselves as without cultural values and practices. This masks the policymakers' own underlying assumptions, biases, and perspectives—factors that undoubtedly play a role in the policies and programs created to address gender-based violence. Although perhaps not intentionally or overtly, policymakers and aid staff's own values and assumptions still shape the work they do. Agencies will continue struggling to work effectively in developing countries if they continue to overlook their own unexamined perspectives and the ways these impact program design and implementation, interactions with survivors, and their own reading of cultural contexts in developing countries.

Presenting development agencies as culture-neutral also reinforces myths that gender-based violence is limited to developing countries. As Sokoloff (2005) explains:

> The powerful are depicted as having no culture, other than the universal culture of civilization. The belief that non-White others are said to engage in oppressive and misogynistic cultural practices fits long-standing biases and serves to downplay the existence of culturally prescribed and equally horrendous acts of violence against women in White Western communities (Sokoloff 2005, 46-47).

There is a tension evident in these reports between wanting to stress the global scope of gender-based violence and wanting to emphasize the exceptional nature and scale of violence in developing countries. Many gender-based prevention policies and programs tend to highlight violence in developing countries while downplaying or neglecting to mention problems 'at home.' In international contexts, the gender-based violence occurring in western countries becomes invisible as policies and programs highlight the supposed inclination towards violence of people in developing countries. This does a disservice to survivors in both developing and developed countries, treating the former as wholly defined by their experiences with violence and the latter as non-existent or anomalous in discussions on gender-based violence. This also prevents policymakers from drawing on the wealth of information and lessons learned in developed countries on violence prevention and from potentially adapting policies and programs to be used in developed countries.

<u>Gender-based Violence, Power, and Culture: Unpacking the Conceptual Framework</u>

As discussed above, the current gender-based violence framework employed by UN agencies is lacking. A gender-only conception of violence ignores the role that race, ethnicity, nationality, and a host of other factors might have played in the motivation behind and methods of violence. This approach also ignores the other critically important contextual factors present in gender-based violence like societal inequality, colonial legacies, and political or economic instability. Relying on a simple perpetrator-victim relationship, this approach ignores the potentially transformative role men and boys can play in violence prevention. By treating the prevention of gender-based violence as a means rather than an end, policymakers fail to fully understand the individual, familial, and societal effects this violence can have. An absence of personal narratives and life experiences of survivors means that lessons on how existing programs and policies help or hinder women's rehabilitation process never reach the necessary audiences.

Current conceptions of power tend to focus on gender oppression in the home while failing to engage with larger power dynamics between development agencies and aid recipients. The ambivalence of UN agencies towards culture, which is seen as both an expression and aberration of culture in developing countries, leads to an uneven handling of issues related to cultural practices. It is not my contention that policymakers intentionally set out to reify essentialized notions of culture, gender-based violence, and power. Rather, I've discussed how current understandings of these concepts create a framework of gender-based violence that restricts how policymakers understand violence and create policies and programs to combat it.

Chapter Two: An Intersectional Approach to Gender-Based Violence Prevention

Chapter One outlined how current UN guidelines and reports provide an incomplete understanding of gender-based violence. Chapter Two argues that the UN must begin incorporating the feminist theory of intersectionality into its gender-based violence prevention policies and programs. Intersectionality will not only provide more analytic depth to understandings of violence, but also improve the effectiveness and relevance of UN policies. After providing an overview of intersectionality, I show how an intersectional approach to gender-based violence prevention remedies the problems outlined in Chapter One. What follows in Chapter Two is very deliberately *not* a new set of guidelines, toolkits, or other technocratic policy responses. Rather, I provide alternative *strategies* the UN could use to more effectively work with and on behalf of survivors of gender-based violence.

Overview of Intersectionality

The feminist theory of intersectionality emerged in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s from women of color feminists who began describing their experiences through lens of multiple forms of oppression. Pioneering black feminists like bell hooks, Kimberle Crenshaw, and Patricia Hill Collins began writing about the complex interplay between race and gender that affected women of colors' social locations. They argued that studying these intersections allowed for a more dynamic understanding of both individual and collective experience with oppression (hooks 1984; Collins and Anderson 1995; Crenshaw 1991).

Intersectionality pushes us all to "recognize that race, gender, and class are not distinct and isolated realms of experience. Instead they come into existence in and through contradictory and conflictual relations with one another" (Brah and Phoenix 2004, 80). Forms of oppression, rather than acting independently, overlap and co-constitute one another[2] (Young 1990; Ross-Sheriff 2008). Intersectionality was intended to be used as both a theoretical and methodological tool for research. It was viewed as a direct response to mainstream, predominantly white feminists who often generalized women into a single analytical category. Intersectionality sought to prevent essentializing "women" while calling for "the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking" (Combahee River Collective 1977, 272).

While the focus of intersectionality was initially the interplay between race and gender, more recently this concept has been expanded to include sexual orientation, ethnicity, ability, religion, caste, and nationality (Meyer 2002; Kennedy and Nowlan 2004; Lykke 2005). Intersectionality has proven relevant within and adaptable to a wide variety of international contexts (Ackerly and True 2008). Women in the Global South have increasingly begun using intersectionality to describe their experiences living within multiple oppressive systems. In the context of international struggles against neo-imperialism and economic liberalization, women in developing countries have used intersectionality to give voice to their unique experiences (Mohanty Russo and Torres 1991). Intersectionality is often seen as an academic theory, but

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[2] Kimberle Crenshaw aptly described this phenomenon with an analogy: "Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them" (Crenshaw 2000, page 44).

more recently discussions have expanded to show how these ideas can link theory and practice (Dill 2009). The selective use of the most effective and relevant ideas led to new resurgence of intersectionality in recent years.

While intersectionality has enjoyed relative popularity within gender and social science disciplines, critiques of intersectionality as both a theory and research methodology have emerged in recent years. These critics feel that intersectionality doesn't allow for a conception of oppression that is fluid and often situates women into rigid identity categories. By contrast, others argue that, as a theory and empirical approach, intersectionality is too ambiguous and open-ended. It requires us to unpack a seemingly endless list of social categories that blurs discussion and limits action (Ludvig, 2006). Yuval-Davis responds to this critique by arguing that one can examine fundamental oppressions that are widely applicable while leaving room for additional axes of difference depending on specific situations:

> In specific historical situations and in relation to specific people there are some social divisions that are more important than others in constructing specific positionings. At the same time, there are some social divisions, such as gender, stage in the life cycle, ethnicity, and class, that tend to shape most people's lives in most social locations, while other social divisions such as those relating to membership in particular castes or status as indigenous or refugee people tend to affect fewer people globally (Yuval-Davis 2006, 203).

Critics also argue that while intersectionality is a positive step towards understanding multiple oppressions, intersectionality has failed to deliver concrete ideas with which to better understand gender-based violence. Andrea Smith writes that pioneering intersectionality theorist Kimberle Crenshaw "falls short of describing how a politics of intersectionality might fundamentally shift how we analyze sexual/domestic violence" (Smith 2005, Page 7).

While the last ten years have produced numerous critiques of intersectionality, I think it's important to note that these debates on the uses and limits of intersectionality have largely occurred within gender studies and social science circles where understandings of major systems of oppression tend to inform a large majority of scholarship and research. In areas like development and humanitarian assistance where awareness of intersecting oppression is burgeoning, I believe intersectionality is, at the very least, a good starting point. Discussions on the strengths and limits of intersectionality vis-à-vis gender-based violence prevention will be important but can only be had after we test the theoretical and operational uses of these ideas in our field.

Policy Implications of Intersectionality

From a 'Gender Only' to an 'Intersectional' Conception of Violence

As discussed in Chapter One, a gender-only conception of violence limits our ability to see all of the causes and consequences of violence. Intersectionality can help address the three main problems identified with this approach: 1) an inability to account for other forms of oppression like racism and classism, 2) an inability to contextualize gender-based violence or explore the socio-economic, political, and historical contexts in which violence occurs and is responded to,

and 3) a tendency to see men as perpetrators only, instead of victims of violence and/or agents of change.

A gender-only approach constructs gender-based violence as a worldwide ill that affects women by virtue of their gender. However, intersectionality shows that:

> Violence is not a monolithic phenomenon. Intersectionalities color the meaning and nature of […] violence, how it is experienced by self and responded to by others, how personal and social consequences are represented and how and whether escape and safety can be obtained (Bograd 1999, 276).

Intersectionality provides policymakers and practitioners with a more holistic understanding of the ways multiple overlapping oppressions impact survivors of gender-based violence. Intersectionality sees gender as one important contributing factor among many, rather than the only determinant of violence (Collins 2000). Intersectionality does not simply see overlapping oppressions as increasing the burden shouldered by women. Instead, intersecting oppressions produce substantively *distinct* experiences that shape how women experience and heal from violence (Crenshaw 1995, McCall 2005). The goal of including intersectionality in policy and program formation would not simply be to describe women's experiences more accurately. Rather, it would be to improve the analytic power and practical effectiveness of efforts to combat gender-based violence by accounting for the full diversity of survivors' experiences (Ludvig 2006).

Intersectionality allows for a more nuanced conception of violence that takes into account various dimensions of social life and the ways oppression differently impacts women (hooks 1990, Gradham, et al. 2008). Through an intersectional lens it is not enough to see that some women are disproportionately affected by violence. Intersectionality would continue to ask which women are most affected, which policies and programs further marginalize them, what are the contexts in which the violence occurred, and how/whether agencies recognize and address these contexts and disparities (Ludvig 2006)?

The contextualization of violence is key. Given that patriarchy and systems of domination operate differently in various contexts, intersectionality calls for highly context-specific analyses of violence (Crenshaw 2000, McCall 2005). Contextualizing violence will allow policymakers to determine structural causes of violence and improve their initiatives and programs. Policies will never be able to address the structural root causes of violence if they cannot first identify them. Isolating structural causes and consequences of gender-based violence is integral to efforts to combat it (Collins 2000). Intersectionality can help isolate the causes of violence by understanding the socio-economic, political, and historical contexts in which violence occurs (Gradham, et al. 2008).

Intersectionality allows us to move beyond simple victim-perpetrator conceptions of women-male interactions by providing a more nuanced approach to privilege and oppression (Gradham, et al. 2008). The UN framework tends to look at gender-based violence as violence against women perpetrated by men. Intersectionality highlights that men are not simply beneficiaries of male privilege but often victims of racism and other oppressive systems (Flood 2001). Intersectionality opens up the discussion on forms of oppression experienced by both men and women. This is essential not only in remembering that men and boys experience forms of oppression (including gender-based violence), but also in exploring the role of men as agents of positive change (Flood 2001).

Gender-based violence is not just women's problem. This means both that women aren't the only victims and also that women are not the only ones responsible for preventing it. Gender-based violence affects men and boys who witness violence, fall victim to it, and/or perpetrate it (Murphy, 1996). A large proportion of violence in the world is gendered in some way and engaging with men is essential to creating lasting change. This engagement can take many forms. For instance, rehabilitation of past offenders, treatment for male survivors, and ensuring that men and boys from marginalized groups are not further excluded through gender-based violence prevention efforts (Flood 2001). Regardless of how men are engaged what remains clear is that gender-based violence policies will continue to only partially address the problem until men and boys play a larger role in violence prevention.

Lived Experience

Intersectionality, with its emphasis on bottom-up, inductive forms of theory formation, could also help shift policymakers' attention to the individual and community impacts of gender-based violence (Hull, Scott, & Smith 1982). This could mark a departure from the instrumental view that combating gender-based violence is important to the extent it achieves development objectives. Feminist intersectional theorists argue that lived experience must serve as the starting point for theory and policy formation (hooks 1990, Crenshaw 2000, Collins 2000). If gender-based violence prevention organizations consider women's experience as the starting point for policy formation, approaches will become more experiential, contextual, and inductive (Binion 1995, 512).

By focusing on lived experience, intersectionality highlights women's perspectives and sheds light on survivors' varied experiences and challenges (Crenshaw 1995). By improving awareness and understanding of survivor's lives, an intersectional framework would inform the treatment and services provided to them and help gauge the effects of policies and programs on the people they are intending to assist. Theory and policy stemming from inaccurate representations of women's experiences tend to lead to harmful or frequently ineffective outcomes (van der Hoogte and Kingma 2004). There is currently an enormous under-explored "need for studies that examine the effectiveness of [anti-violence] policy and practice interventions from the perspective of women utilizing these services" (Grauwiler 2007, 311). Intersectionality could be one step in the right direction, if policymakers allow women's experiences to shape their work.

Power

Current UN conceptions of power focus on family power dynamics and ignore or under explore other power imbalances. An intersectional approach not only highlights these broader power imbalances but also links violence experience in the domestic sphere with systemic forms of oppression (Collins 2000). Intersectionality helps to show that family is not a bounded domestic sphere and that family life faces frequent intrusions and interference from the state (Brah & Pheonix, 2004). Intersectionality transforms violence from a private family matter to something that exists within social systems of power and domination (Crenshaw, 1995). In order to do this, intersectionality situates gender-based violence in the context of racism, patriarchy, colonialism, economic exploitation and capitalism. Discussions of race and ethnicity, for instance, could be linked to broader discussions of colonial legacies and the ways colonial regimes employed and in

some cases created social categories where none had previously existed. Discussions of class, for instance, might be linked to broader discussions on capitalism and the role of neoliberal economic polices in the countries where violence is occurring (Ackerly & True, 2008).

Drawing on intersectionality in gender-based violence work creates space for policies and programs that look at the structural and root causes of violence (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005). By this view, "strategies designed to combat violence within communities (sexual/domestic violence) must be linked to strategies that combat violence directed against communities (i.e., police brutality, prisons, racism, economic exploitation, etc.)" (Incite! 2008). Intersectionality also helps highlight the fact that gender-based violence may not be the only type of violence shaping individuals lives. An intersectional approach not only questions the monolithic nature of gender-based violence, but also expands definitions of violence to include societal violence (Collins 2000, Incite 2006). Through an intersectional framework, violence experienced by women can also be situated in larger discussions on systemic violence and community violence also experienced by queer people and men of color (Jenkins, 2002).

Adopting intersectionality as an analytic framework could also be one, albeit small step towards looking at the power imbalances between western development agencies and communities in developing countries. Feminist writings push us to contextualize individual and collective experiences and to recognize the underlying power imbalances at play in the world. This is useful not only in understanding "other" people's oppression but in recognizing our own privileges as members of western development agencies. Feminist insights not only shed light on oppression but also explore the ways in which privilege manifests itself and shares a co-constitutive relationship with oppression. The positionality of gender-based violence practitioners is an important and often ignored component to gender-based violence prevention efforts. It is my hope that intersectionality could help replace the brief, obligatory, and largely symbolic references to western privilege, with a more sustained dialogue on privilege and intersecting oppression within the development field.

Culture

As seen in Chapter One, policymakers struggle to understand the role culture plays in gender-based violence. On the one hand, gender-based violence is seen as an expression of culture, on the other, its seen as an aberration of culture. Intersectionality marks an analytical shift away from these types of dichotomies and rejects simplistic conceptions of the role of culture in gender-based violence. Intersectional theorists treat culture as a contested phenomenon—one factor among many needed to understand the causes and consequences of gender-based violence.

Intersectionality rejects overly deterministic views of culture vis-à-vis gender-based violence. Feminist theorists note that when it comes to gender-based violence in developing countries, "culture is alleged to have a particularly influential explanatory power." (Sokoloff Dupont, 2005, 46). Sokoloff (2005) argues "the behavior of devalued groups is widely perceived as more culturally determined than that of the dominant culture" (46-47). However, culture cannot be confused with patriarchy. Almeida and Dolan-Delvecchio (1999) argue:

> Wife battering is not culture; dowries, wife burning, and female infanticide are not culture; the forced use of purdah or veiling for women are not culture, foot-binding and the practice of concubines among Chinese are not culture. These are traditional patriarchal customs that men have practiced, and women have accepted for generations.

(p. 667).

Intersectionality emphasizes getting to the structural roots of violence and exploring the role of culture in understanding both gender-based violence and our responses to it. Intersectional theorists balance looking at culture with looking at broader political, social, and economic structures. For Anderson and Collins (2001) analyzing oppression and privilege "means more than just knowing the cultures of an array of human groups. It means recognizing and analyzing the hierarchies and systems of domination that permeate society and that systematically exploit and control people" (Anderson and Collins 2001, 5-6). Sokoloff (2005) agrees and writes:

> Although culture is crucial to understanding and combating [gender-based] violence, we cannot rest on simplistic notions of culture. Rather, we must address how different communities' cultural experiences of violence are mediated through structural oppression, such as racism, colonialism, economic exploitation, heterosexism, and the like (Sokoloff 2005, 45).

Intersectionality links forms of oppression like sexism and racism to the broader social, political, and historical context that shapes survivors experiences of violence. "As Collins (1998) argues, the treatment of cultural differences must not erase [the need to look at] structural power" (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005, 45). Culture is part of the broader context in which violence occurs and intersectionality helps us see how culture operates in relation to other social forces. Intersectionality examines various institutions, policies, and norms that represent these interactions.

An Intersectional Approach to Gender-Based Violence Prevention

Intersectionality could be invaluable to gender-based violence policymakers and practitioners. In the chapter above, I outlined how intersectionality provides alternative analytical strategies for understanding violence. These include looking at the intersections of systems of oppression and how these differently shape women's lives. Intersectionality helps situate these personal experiences in the broader socio-political, economic, and historical contexts, providing more generative views of power, oppression, and both personal and societal violence. By treating culture as a contested and highly contingent phenomenon, intersectionality also helps complicate assumptions on the role of culture in gender-based violence. Chapter Three now examines the practical applications of these ideas.

Chapter Three: Flawed Understandings in Practice

In order to really gauge the strengths and weaknesses of current approaches we need to critically examine the real life applications of these reports, guidelines, toolkits, and manuals. Why, if the purpose of these programs is to decrease rates of violence, are they steadily increasing? Why does there continue to be a disconnect between what's intended and what actually occurs in programs? How can we critically engage with past failures to learn from past mistakes? By illustrating these conceptual shortcomings in practice we may better clarify what needs to be done to improve existing programs and approaches.

Drawing on case studies of UN gender-based violence prevention efforts in Tanzanian refugee camps, I outline how the policy reports and guidelines discussed in Chapter One inform actual gender-based violence prevention efforts. After discussing the problems, I discuss how intersectionality can improve current approaches to gender-based violence prevention. The case studies in this chapter focus primarily on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. While many UN agencies have gender-based violence prevention initiatives, the UNHCR has some of the longest running, best funded, and well-known gender-based violence prevention programs in the world. I hope to show that even well established programs are not immune to the problems with gender, power, and culture discussed in Chapter One.

In researching UN gender-based violence prevention efforts in Tanzanian refugee camps, I first analyzed UNCHR policy reports, guidelines, field manuals, and toolkits. UN policymakers produced these resources before, during, and after the pilot programs in Tanzanian refugee camps so that these programs could be replicated elsewhere. I then looked at commissioned reports and impact assessments by independent agencies including the International Rescue Committee and Women's Refugee Commission to better gauge the effects of the programs. I supplemented these assessments with Human Rights Watch reports and interview transcripts with survivors, as well as ethnographic fieldwork in the region. These sources provided a useful cross-section of information on what gender-based violence response and prevention programs looked like and where UNHCR programs and policies failed and succeeded in practice.

Refugees at the Tanzania Burundi Border

The border between Tanzania and Burundi holds some of the largest and longest-running refugee camps in the world. Certain camps have been particularly prone to gender-based violence over the last 15 years and the UNHCR has focused its energy on those areas (WRC 2002). The area along the Burundi border near Lake Tanganyika, which includes four districts Kigoma, Kasulu, Kibondo, and Ngara, is one such area (UNHCR 2000). In the mid-nineties, these camps held more than 450,000 Burundian, Congolese, and Rwandan refugees (WRC 2002).

The Case of Ngara: Community Intervention Teams (CITs)

Refugee camps in the remote Ngara district of Tanzania formed after the 1993 conflict in Burundi and the 1994 Rwandan genocide and housed more than 200,000 women and 120,000 children (WRC 2002). The Tanzanian government granted temporary asylum for this influx of refugees but did not permit farming or trade outside camps. This large influx strained local water and fuel resources prompting the Tanzanian government to restrict refugees to a 4-kilometer zone around each camp. Resources surrounding the camps quickly depleted and refugee women

regularly walked more than 15 kilometers to collect firewood.

In 1994 a report by an agency outside the UNHCR found a high incidence of gender-based violence in the refugee camps in Ngara (WRC 2002). UNHCR discussions and interviews with individuals in the refugee community confirmed these findings. Most of the attacks occurred while women gathered firewood at the camp perimeters and collected water in the early morning or at night. In some cases, individuals at water collection taps exchanged access to water for coerced sexual favors (UNHCR 1997). Perpetrators included local Tanzanian civilians, police, and refugees who were members of the *interahamwe*, the militia that played a pivotal role in the Rwandan genocide (Mabuwa 2000).

In order to address the problem of coercion at water collection sites, the UNHCR organized a series of meetings and discussions between various NGOs, field officers, and the community services and water unit staff (UNHCR 1997). UNHCR guidelines stress the importance of community participation in all areas of program design and implementation to make efforts more effective and sustainable (UNHCR 1995). In theory this involves refugee participation in all steps of problem solving and program formation. However, in practice, most members of the refugee communities in Ngara did not participate in discussions on what would be done to address the problem.

Those discussions stayed among the UNHCR, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like CARE, the International Rescue Committee, Norwegian People Aid, and the Tanzanian Red Cross Society, local Tanzanian government authorities, the police, and the Ministry of Home Affairs, as well as local medical and legal officials (UNHCR 1997). Where refugees participated, it was often limited to local NGO staff members who happened to also be refugees. As a result of these discussions water collection site hours became restricted. The opening times became limited to daylight hours. In some camps refugee groups created timetables for water tap usage. The UNHCR also introduced a water policy stating that any "security guardians at the water points caught bribing refugees were summarily dismissed from their jobs" (UNHCR 1997, 24).

The problem with firewood collection was addressed initially through short-lived plans to hire a truck to collect and distribute firewood. This never got off the ground, due in large part to the lack of money and institutional commitment needed to sustain the program. In the beginning of 1995, after the firewood distribution plans failed, the UNHCR shifted its approach. UNHCR community services and protection staff in partnership with NGOs met to brainstorm various program and policy ideas. They decided that UNHCR would form crisis intervention teams (CITs) to respond to the problem of gender-based violence in Ngara (UNHCR 1997). Made up of NGO workers (some of whom were refugees), the CITs formed to respond to reports of gender-based violence. Refugees were members of the teams, so the CITs were seen as allowing the refugee community to "lead the efforts to respond to and prevent SGV [sexual and gender-based violence] in their community" while other agencies would take on a supporting role (UNHCR 2000, 50). As the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women at the time said, "motivating the implementation of CITs was the belief that victims would be more willing to report an assault on a refugee who shared the same language and culture and understood the social ramifications and significance of the event" (UNHCR 1995, 16). The members of the CITs were intended to be intermediaries between the survivor and health, counseling, and police agencies, and between the survivor's own family and community.

According to the UNHCR the crisis intervention teams met the criteria of a participatory project because refugees comprised the team members. In the planning period, however, refugee communities had little to no direct say in deciding whether crisis response teams were the most

favorable response, how the teams would operate, or who could become a crisis intervention team member. Those that did participate from the refugee community already worked at local NGOs and enjoyed relatively stable income and social status. The most marginalized members of the refugee communities in Ngara were still just recipients and not active participants in the process.

After adopting this plan, the UNHCR began recruiting crisis intervention team members from local NGOs. The criteria for team member selection included the ability "to adopt an objective and neutral stance in dealing with cases, to respect the need for strict confidentiality, to have the respect and trust of the community" (UNHCR 1997, 62). Unfortunately, many members of the CIT possessed no background or knowledge of gender-based violence. There was no existing curriculum with which to train the new CIT members, so the UNHCR drew heavily on some of the guidelines, reports, and manuals discussed in Chapter One.

The first teams started in March 1995 and began by organizing groups to gather wood. Although the crisis intervention teams did provide some very important support to survivors, they lacked a systematic approach to gender-based violence response. Almost immediately after the CITs formed, problems began to arise. Some of these problems were logistical while others related to the problematic and incomplete understandings of gender-based violence discussed above. In the section that follows, I will be drawing on examples from this case to illustrate the issues identified in Chapter One. Outlining when and where gender-based violence programming is ineffective is a necessary and useful first step in trying to figure out how to make future programs more effective.

A Gender-Only Concept of Gender-Based Violence

The curriculum used to train crisis intervention team members as well as the UNHCR guidelines for dealing with cases of sexual assault and domestic violence in Ngara both tended to have a gender-only conception of violence in the camps. There was no discussion of how nationality, ethnicity, and/or refugee status of women affected who was targeted and how their respective communities reacted to this violence. The UNHCR failed to take into account the ways in which xenophobia and ethnocentrism, in addition to gender oppression, could be a contributing factor to the violence.

This became a glaring omission in Ngara given the socio-political contexts in which these refugee camps emerged in the mid-nineties. Ngara housed refugees from the 1993 Burundian conflict and the Rwandan genocide, some of who fought on opposing sides in these respective conflicts. Additionally, within the Tanzanian region of Ngara, some local Tanzanians began resenting refugee communities for depleting natural resources. It was not uncommon to have retributive attacks by Tanzanian civilians against refugee women, as well as refugee men, while collecting firewood (WRC 2002). The CITs failed to take these various factors into account in their response efforts, in large part, because CIT protocols directly informed by UNHCR policy guidelines tended to take a gender-only approach.

A survivor's nationality, ethnicity, and refugee status in some cases contributed to the motivation of violence in Ngara. These factors also affected certain survivor's access to social services and legal redress. There were no safeguards in place to ensure that available resources for survivors were accessible and non-discriminatory. The crisis intervention teams' interventions were not designed to be sensitive to survivors' multiple identities or appreciate the ways in which women might be experiencing gender oppression and other forms of oppression

simultaneously. As a result, the CITs ability to advocate for women experiencing multiple forms of oppression and assist them in navigating social service networks proved inadequate for many women (WRC 2002).

The UNHCR could have used intersectionality to assess whether their current protocols were appropriate for many different groups of women. The UN commonly assesses the effectiveness of past programs and policies. This process allows organizations to determine best practices, revise existing approaches, and critically examine whether current policies are working. Survivors of gender-based violence often get caught in a complex interplay between different policies, programs, laws, and agencies. An understanding of intersecting oppression would have allowed the UNHCR and CITs to pose important questions about their work:

- Are gender-based violence interventions sensitive to the multiple overlapping identities of women?
- How did the survivor's gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, and/or refugee status play a role in her/his sexual assault and persecution as a refugee?
- Does the survivor come from a post-colonial context where gender-based violence against ethnic minorities was historically met with indifference and impunity?
- Do the policies designed to provide more rights and opportunities to one group of refugee women actually simultaneously disadvantage another group?
- Do these policies and programs take into account the fact that interlocking oppressions can impact women's access to social services and their treatment within a variety of institutional settings?
- Are initiatives taking a holistic approach to gender-based violence prevention and empowering women socially, economically, politically, and legally?
- How do language barriers, social stigma, and inexperience navigating social service or legal networks affect a survivor's ability to speak out?
- Are the voices of women who have survived gender-based violence directly informing policy and program initiatives?

An intersectional approach to gender-based violence prevention would have allowed the UNHCR to critically assess their policies and services. Asking these types of questions would have allowed the UNHCR to better assess their programs and serve survivors. Shedding light on Tanzanian refugees lived experience in Ngara, this approach could situate individual instances of violence in the context of the broader social-political, and economic forces at play.

Additionally, intersectionality would have allowed the UNHCR and CITs to recognize the role of men as agents of change. In practice men were almost entirely left out of the CITs' work. The UNHCR failed to implement programs that engaged refugee men in the process of gender-based violence prevention. While the CITs were supposed to conduct community outreach and awareness raising, in practice team members targeted women and excluded men in their work (WRC 2002). Community outreach to men on the problems of gender-based violence never happened, and information on how men could positively contribute to the solution was never distributed. While the CITs provided services to women survivors, programs excluded male survivors and failed to provide services sensitive to men's situations. Expanding men's role in both the CITs and their programs would have improved the impact and reach of the gender-based violence prevention.

The Perils of Objectivity and Neutrality

In setting out to find and train members of the crisis intervention teams, the UNHCR stressed the need for objectivity and neutrality. These were seen as essential traits for CIT members who were instructed to avoid value judgments and to attempt to see all sides of the case they were dealing with (UNHCR 1997). Interestingly, while the crisis response team members were instructed to remain neutral, they were also simultaneously instructed to draw on their cultural and language background as refugees to more effectively relate to and assist survivors in the refugee community. In practice, the line between this required neutrality and substantive community engagement proved difficult for many crisis response teams to navigate.

Awareness raising by the crisis intervention teams was seen as a "vital element in preventing sexual violence" (UNHCR 1997, 38). However, after the CITs formed, very little time or resources were put towards discussing gender-based violence within communities. While the UNHCR designed CITs to respond to cases of violence but not prevent future attacks, many teams became *de facto* protection response groups. In some cases, the CITs created schedules to patrol the refugee camps at night. Given the nature of the large teams, occasionally large groups of men and women would go to speak directly to a survivor. When this happened it jeopardized the survivor's confidentiality and compelled her to tell her story to large groups of strangers. In some instances the identity of perpetrators and/or survivors accidentally went public, leading to violent retribution against perpetrators and social stigma and isolation for survivors. Most notably, there were cases of CITs directly intervening in homes where domestic violence was happening. This posed dangers to both the teams and the individuals they attempted to assist. Several crisis intervention team members reported being physically threatened by members of the refugee community for their roles in this work.

All of these instances underscore the fact that neutrality, although seen as desirable by the UNHCR, simply is not possible in practice. There was no understanding or discussion by the UNHCR, or the crisis intervention teams they deployed, of the broader power dynamics between the CITs and the community they were presumably trying to serve. Many individuals within the refugee community in Ngara saw CITs as a threat to their power. Most of the groups disbanded after members felt too physically threatened to continue the work. Despite the altruistic motivations of CIT members, the lack of discussion on the role CITs would play and how they could effectively interact with refugee communities led to unintended negative consequences for some involved. These issues with objectivity and neutrality also appeared in the case of Kibondo, Tanzania. After outlining the Kibondo case below, I discuss how intersectionality could have improved UNHCR understandings of power in both Ngara and Kibondo.

The Case of Kibondo: Forced Idleness and Domestic Violence

Kibondo in western Tanzania is a remote region close to the Tanzanian Burundian border that has regularly hosted refugee camps over the last 15 years. Kibondo, which includes the Kanembwa, Mkugwa, Mtendeli, and Nduta refugee camps, primarily held Burundians refugees. Most of these refugees were ethnically Hutu and fled during the civil war from Burundi to Tanzania between 1993 and 1996. The UNHCR in partnership with the Tanzanian Ministry of Home Affairs and several local and national NGOs ran the refugee camps. Like Ngara, these Kibondo refugee camps saw a high incidence of gender-based violence.

After a 1996 needs assessment within the Kibondo Kanewbwa camp, the UNHCR found

that 27% of women experienced one or more case of gender-based violence (WRC 2002). Not uncommon among refugee women, many survivors experienced attacks both while fleeing to the camp and once settled. A wide range of actors including soldiers, male refugees, and Tanzanian citizens living around the camps perpetrated these attacks. This spurred the UNHCR in partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Africa Extension Unit to create pilot programs for Burundian survivors of sexual assault. These programs sought to create a space where survivors could more easily access social services. This resulted in confidential drop-in centers that were located in close proximity to maternity areas of local medical facilities. This program continued for many years and the drop-in centers provided large numbers of survivors of sexual assault with relatively easy, confidential access to support services (WRC 2002).

The Prioritization of Sexual Violence over Domestic Violence

While the UNHCR's response to sexual assault in the mid to late nineties was relatively timely, well coordinated, and successful, the response to domestic violence in Kibondo was non-existent. In 2000 the reported rates of domestic violence were six times the rate of sexual assault and rape; however, the UNHCR continued to be reluctant to address domestic violence (Sattopima 2004). Based on several community interviews and focus groups in Kibondo, refugee women saw domestic violence as a big priority, and by some as an even bigger priority than sexual assault (Sattopima 2004). In Kibondo there were minimal to non-existent efforts to train officials, camp staff, police, and others working with domestic abuse survivors.

UNHCR policy reports place a much stronger emphasis on sexual violence than domestic violence. Guidelines give practical advice on sexual violence but rarely engage with issues surrounding domestic violence response and prevention. Reports generally view domestic violence as less serious than rape or sexual assault. It's often seen as a "personal" or "family" issue in which outside involvement could be inappropriate (Fouere 2007). UNHCR sometimes avoids putting resources towards domestic violence because survivors of domestic violence are less likely to take legal action. In a 2000 investigation in Kibondo by Human Rights Watch they

> Found that some UNHCR staff were defensive or dismissive about the problem of [domestic] violence against women refugees. Some even tended to blame the victim, while others saw such violence as unfortunate, but 'normal,' or attributed sexual violence to Burundian culture. At that time, UNHCR lacked both community services staff with relevant training, and dedicated programs to assist refugee women (Mabuwa 2000, 6).

This same investigation also found that staff rarely made the effort to obtain the evidence necessary for domestic violence prosecutions, because of a reluctance to intervene in "private" domestic disputes. Tanzanian police officers agreed and many "did not regard domestic violence as a crime, though they were concerned about sexual violence" (Mabuwa 2000, 7).

Forced Idleness: Dependency and Disputes over Food Rations

Only around 2% of refugees in the Kibondo camps are permitted to work (Sattopima 2004). Almost all of these individuals work for NGOs as social workers or teachers, or occasionally assist in distributing food. Because the official prohibition of employment for refugees, these

positions are "voluntary" with the workers not receiving formal salaries but rather receiving incentives every month. Employment allows these select refugees to bolster supplies they receive from UNHCR and to meet their needs not met by aid agencies.

In Kibondo some men expressed feeling threatened that they could no longer provide for their families. In one ethnography of the region, one male leader said "women here in the refugee camps have lost respect for their husbands simply because we are no longer providing for them. We are all equally depending on assistance. Therefore they have to be reminded [through domestic violence] that a man is a man no matter where he is or what he does for the woman" (Sattopima 2004, 35). Or as another Burundian refugee man said "UNHCR now provides housing for my family, food for my kids, and clothing for my wife. What use am I any more?" (Mabuwa 2000, 26). Forced idleness, and the tension and violence that can result from it, relates to broader power dynamics between aid donors and recipients. The perceived threat to men's social or economic authority posed by UNHCR sometimes acted to increase tension within the home.

The role of UNHCR in some cases can be seen as a contributing factor to high rates of domestic violence in refugee camps (Fouere 2007). There are documented disputes between husbands and wives over rations, food cards, and the allocation of aid (Sattopima 2004). While there is no official policy on who receives food ration cards, most often the male head of household get issued the cards rather than a woman. Usually, only single or unaccompanied women were issued ration cards. There were cases of men selling food and rations to spend money on alcohol or other non-essential items. This led to disputes within refugee families and leading to increased rates of domestic violence (Fouere 2007).

In 2000, the UNHCR attempted to address these problems through improved food distribution systems that put women in key positions in the camps. After hearing stories of abuse the UNHCR also separated ration cards so that women could receive food for themselves and their family; however, these did not solve the problem. This was unable to prevent some refugee men from selling rations for money. Men not only maintained access to food and supplies at home, but also often became angry that they were being denied access to aid supplies. This sometimes resulted in continued or worsening violence, as men felt undermined and disrespected by their wives. "Some women actually stated that they did not prefer separation of ration cards, especially if they continue living together, because men are likely to react violently to such measures" (Sattopima 2004, 34). A UNHCR staff person in Kibondo described their work by saying the UNHCR tries "to follow up cases in which women report that their husbands sell or mismanage the food, and we give the ration food directly to the woman in such cases. In some of the cases our strategy works while in others, the problem persists" (Mabuwa 2000, 34).

<u>"UNHCR is my everything, without it there is no life"[3] The Power of the UNHCR</u>

The UNHCR and aid agencies wield a great degree of power in displaced settings. The social organization and daily routines within families are partially or completely disrupted in protracted refugee settings (Fouere 2007). UN agencies and government officials in Tanzania organize and control many aspects of daily life relating to decision-making, food, housing, etc. As such, every person in the refugee camp, both men and women, depend on UNHCR assistance.

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[3] This was quote by a female refugee in Kibondo talking about the role of the UNHCR in her daily life (Sattopima 2004, 30)

The UNHCR tends to focus on internal familial power dynamics when trying to understand the causes and consequences of gender-based violence; however, as shown in the case of domestic violence in Kibondo this is not the only power asymmetry at play. There is currently an absence of critical reflection on the positionality of aid workers. This prevents UNHCR staff from exploring their own role in unintentionally exacerbating gender-based violence within refugee camps. In many respects it is no surprise that UNHCR interventions in response to these domestic violence cases remain largely ineffective—by operating with an incomplete view of the power dynamics involved in aid relationships, the UNHCR holds a limited view of potential responses.

The incomplete understanding of power limited the UNHCR's ability to respond to violence, but also made it difficult to shed light on abuses of power by aid staff when they occurred. In 2002 a UNHCR and Save the Children UK report brought to light sexual exploitation in refugee camps throughout West African camps (Save the Children UK 2002). The Kibondo camps came under international scrutiny when allegations of aid workers sexually exploiting women and girls in exchange for services became public. To its credit, the UNHCR did sit up and take notice of these charges, and took some measures to prevent future exploitation (Levin 2003). The High Commissioner for Refugees publically stated: "I am thoroughly committed to taking all steps necessary to prevent further sexual exploitation, be it by humanitarian workers or others. As the Secretary General (of the UN) has stated, there must be a 'zero tolerance'" (Levine 2003). After this statement, UNHCR's Inspector General's Office deployed a fact-finding mission to Kibondo, Tanzania to investigate the allegations of abuse by aid workers. While this mission yielded recommendations to reduce this violence, unfortunately it yielded minimal follow up and sexual exploitation by aid workers continued to be a problem (Levin 2003).

An intersectional approach to gender-based violence would have allowed the UNCHR to include essential questions into its evaluation process:

- What institutional, historical, or social power asymmetries might be exacerbating domestic violence in Kibondo?
- What is the role of the UNHCR and other aid agencies in increasing or decreasing rates of violence?
- How have the causes and consequences of violence changed in the protracted refugee situation?
- Which social attitudes, historical legacies, or power dynamics influence who comes forward to seek assistance and receives it?
- What are the socio-economic, political, and historical contexts in which the abuse is occurring and how do these contexts shape the experience of different families?

Intersectionality would have allowed the UNHCR to more fully explore its own power. By emphasizing broader power imbalances, intersectionality would help UNHCR not only examine internal family dynamics but its own impact the lives of refugees. Analyzing both micro and macro causes and effects, would have allowed the UNHCR a more nuanced understanding of the violence. Instead of seeing domestic violence as a private family matter affecting individual families, domestic violence could also be understood in relation to the international and local aid agencies operating in Kibondo, and the larger political tensions throughout the region.

While incomplete conceptions of power limited the UNHCR's effectiveness, in the case of domestic violence in Kibondo, the ambivalence towards culture also became a problem. In Kibondo many cases of domestic violence during this time went before customary Burundi mediation councils. In the Burundian language _Kirundi_ these mediation councils are called _abashingatahe_. Most often _abashingatahe_ are groups of well-respected older men appointed by the community to mediate conflicts. For an individual to become a _mushingatache_, or a member of the _abashingatahe,_ he or she must be appointed by the community. The disputes that appear before the _abashingatahe_ can range from petty theft, disagreements between neighbors, to serious cases of violence. Typically domestic disputes that occurred in Burundi before displacement get referred to the _abashingantahe_ before or in place of the police.

These community mediation councils continued to meet in Kibondo refugee camps where Burundian refugees lived. In Kibondo refugees regularly used the _abashingatahe_ to mediate various conflicts. Although not intended for cases of murder or rape, regularly _abashingatahe_ oversaw cases of domestic violence. Many refugees saw _abashingatahe_ as an alternative to Tanzanian criminal courts, commonly viewed as unreliable and biased against Burundians. Other women who did not wish to see their husbands prosecuted by Tanzanian authorities, opted for _abashingatahe_ mediation to help reconcile with the partner.

In Burundi, the _abashingatahe_ typically could not enact fines as punishment; however, in refugee settings fines regularly came against those held responsible in disputes. In Kibondo "_abashingatahe_ often imposed small fines of around one thousand Tanzanian shillings (approximately U.S.$2.00) on alleged perpetrators of domestic violence, who then received no further sanction" (Mabuwa 2000, 78). Although the _abashingatahe_ were well respected by some within the Burundi community in Kibondo, its ability to impose punishments was seen as limited. There were cases of partners refusing to pay fines and continuing to abuse their spouses even after the _abashingatahe_ intervened.

The UNHCR lacked a clear view on how best to engage with _abashingatahe._ The UNHCR did not fully discuss with the _abashingatahe_ what their jurisdiction involved. While the "UNHCR had instructed the _abashingatahe_ not to deal with cases of rape, no similar restrictions were communicated to the _abashingatahe_ forbidding them from dealing with cases of domestic violence" (Mabuwa 2000, 7). While seen as an obstacle to prosecuting cases of rape, these mediation councils also simultaneously were seen as default solutions to domestic violence cases.

The UNHCR seemed to believe the _abashingatahe_ were the preferred method of mediation for refugee women; however, many women themselves did not find these mediation councils effective or agree with their judgments. In Kibondo, the refugees' "frustration stems from the _abashingatahe's_ lack of enforcement powers and the low priority they attach to protecting women victims of domestic violence, which is invariably treated as a 'lesser crime'" (Mabuwa 2000, 79). The power of the _abashingatahe_ was contested within the Burundian community and there was far from a consensus in Kibondo as to the best means for resolving domestic violence cases.

The _abashingatahe_ often proved unable to secure rights for survivors. Often reconciliatory in nature, these mediation councils pushed the parties involved to work out their problems. This meant that the _abashingatahe_ often adjudicated cases of domestic violence by encouraging the survivor to return to the partner. The rulings often disadvantaged the survivors by downplaying

the severity of their claims. There were many documented cases "in which Burundian women refugees were subjected to further beatings by their husbands or partners, after receiving counseling from the *abashingatahe* in the camps" (Mabuwa 2000, 21). Often the *abashingatahe* lacked the ability to ensure that perpetrators did not re-victimize their partners.

As the *abashingatahe* continued adjudicated cases of domestic violence, the UNHCR failed to introduce preventative programs on domestic violence, and assist survivors when abuse occurred. The UNHCR made no consistent attempts to ensure cases of domestic violence were referred to social service networks to provide survivors with desired health and counseling services. The UNHCR did not follow up or monitor whether survivors received the services they needed. There was also an absence of safe spaces for survivors in the camps and no efforts made to ensure the Tanzanian legal process became more accessible. These negative outcomes for survivors stemmed, at least in part, from the UNHCR's ambivalence on how to best engage with the *abashingatahe*. Because the UNHCR viewed cultural practices as either an obstacle or a solution, the possibility that these mediation councils could be both or neither or the fact Burundian communities themselves contested the *abashingatahe* did not enter the discussion.

An intersectional understanding of culture would have provided a more useful analysis of the way culture and cultural practices were impacting survivors. Rather than simply a solution or obstacle, in an intersectional view culture is one highly contested and relevant factor that needs to be accounted for. Culture is not spatially and temporally linear (Almeida & Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999). Especially in the context of displacement, these tribunals were changing, often in ways that disadvantaged women. Given that culture and cultural practices operate differently in various contexts, intersectionality would provide a highly context-specific analysis of gender-based violence in the region drawn from the lived experience of survivors.

To gauge community opinions of the *abashingatahe* the UNHCR should have gone directly to survivors and asked what their experiences were. The UNHCR relied on their own team's assessments of the *abashingatahe* tribunals without also asking refugees their perspectives. Intersectionality stresses the need to listen to those individuals most impacted by violence. Intersectionality with its emphasis on bottom up forms of theory and program formation would argue in favor of increased participation by refugee communities. Participation would help the UNHCR see how culture functions in different survivor's lives and how best to operate in different cultural contexts. In the following section, I explore the idea of participation in gender-based violence prevention and look at ways to make that participation a substantive component of development agencies work.

Substantive vs. Tokenistic Participation

One of the most visible and significant shifts in international gender-based practice is the strong emphasis now being put on community participation in program development and implementation. Community engagement strategies have long been shown to increase relevancy and sustainability of efforts to combat gender-based violence (Macdonald, et al 1997). As part of the shift towards recognizing power imbalances in aid relationships that an intersectional analysis could help precipitate, it is my hope that UN agencies will also critically examine the role of participation in gender-based violence response. Based on the case studies above, it appears that increased emphasis on "community participation" remains more of a rhetorical shift than a substantive shift in UN agencies' policy and practice. This begs the question: how can we

make community participation a more meaningful process that actually enhances autonomy and empowerment among women and men in developing countries?

While many have argued in favor of empowering communities through community-based participatory forms of research and policy formation (UNHCR 1997, MacDonald 1997, de Negri, et al. 1998), many have simply outlined the difficulties organizations have encountered actually making this participation a central feature of their work (Crenshaw 2000, Cole 2008). Agency and whether participatory development can actually promote empowerment has been called into question (Nzegwu 2002). As it stands now, women facing gender-based violence "are 'heard', but rarely included as voices essential to planning or implementing any project aimed at strengthening resistance to inequality, pain, deprivation, and powerlessness" (Bennett 2001, 89). Who is chosen to participate and how their voices are integrated into the policy formation process is always fraught with complexities and power imbalances (Holland and Blackburn 1998, Mohan and Stokke 2000). Local or indigenous knowledge is sometimes essentialized and taken out of context by development practitioners (Briggs and Sharp 2004)

Despite these common pitfalls, women can and should play a role in the decision-making process on what services and support would be most useful (Grauwiler 2000). The UN should begin delivering on promises of substantive community engagement. Without participation of local groups, development initiatives will continue to be under or ineffective (Cornwall and Gaveta 2001). Community participation needs to be better integrated into the procedural and methodological approaches of organizations (Pretty, Thompson, and Scoones, 1995), although this is obviously easier said than done.

Creating space for women facing multiple forms of oppression to shape policy allows issues of interlocking oppression will come to the forefront. Community level needs assessments in the form of small group discussions, workshops, and personal interviews would help integrate the voices of women more directly into the process (O'Malley, et al 1996). As people with the largest stake in the outcomes of the policy, it is natural that they should play a role in the process. The UN should also include men as individuals who also experience classism, racism, and other forms of oppression, and those with a responsibility to help end gender-based violence (Cole 2008). The UN will inevitably face obstacles in implementing participatory approaches; however, practical barriers cannot be seen as an excuse for inaction.

Conclusion

In the chapters above, I have attempted to offer critiques and alternative strategies to current gender-based violence policy and practice. Exploring the current UN framework used to understand the nature of gender-based violence brought to light unexplored assumptions and biases of the UN. By deconstructing current notions of gender-based violence, power, and culture, I attempted to illustrate the theoretical shortcomings of current approaches while also showing how these affect actual practice. Through the case study of Ngara and Kibondo refugee camps in Tanzania, I hoped to show how an incomplete understanding of gender-based violence limits effectiveness of well-intentioned policies and programs. Throughout the chapters, I argued that UN agencies should adopt an intersectional approach to gender-based violence prevention. The use and limits of intersectionality in gender-based violence work is something that can only be determined once we begin to test the theoretical and practical implications of these ideas in actual gender-based violence prevention and response—work that I hope to see increase in the coming years.

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