



Refugee Services National Partnership for Community Training

Gulf Coast Jewish Family & Community Services

Overcoming
A Violent Past:

Understanding the Prevalence of Domestic
Violence in Post Conflict Communities

UPDATED CALL-IN INFO:

1-800-285-0680, ID: 89577909

NPCT is the technical assistance program of the Florida Center for Survivors of Torture

Learning Objectives

- 1) Gain a deeper understanding of the connection between community violence abroad and domestic violence in the United States;
- 2) Gather insight into how U.S. society challenges the structure of and strains immigrant families;
- 3) Learn ways to facilitate cross cultural conversations about domestic violence and associated symptoms such as depression and anxiety.

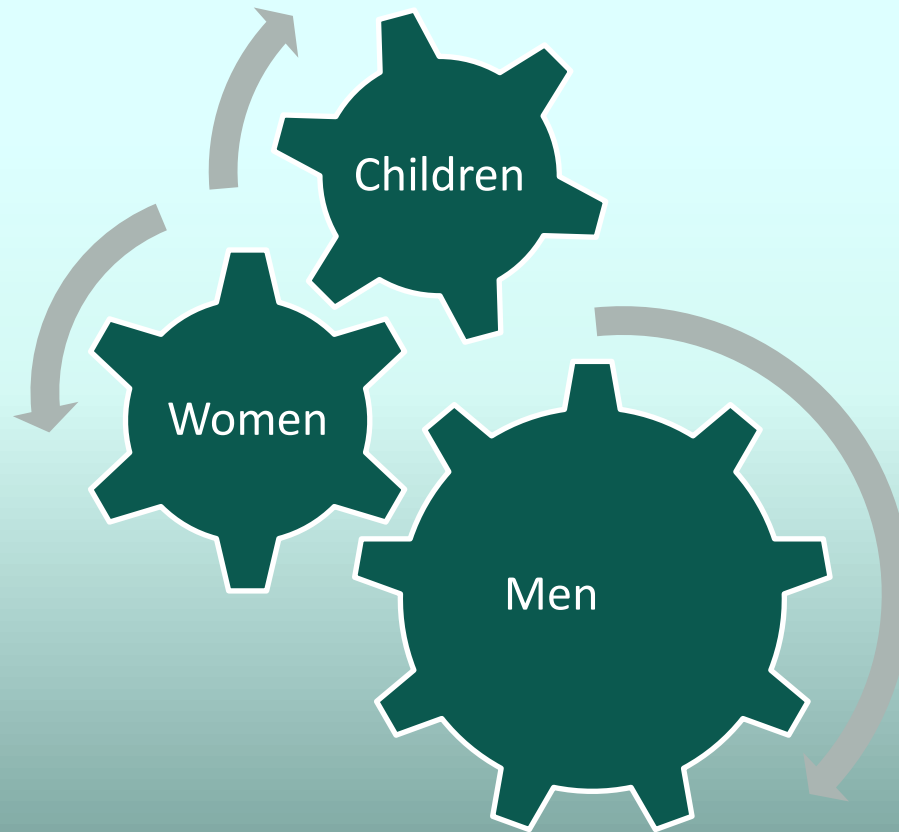
Gender-Based Violence in Conflict Zones

- Rape as an organized and systematic weapon of war
- Mass rape waged in; Cambodia, Liberia, Peru, Bosnia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Uganda and Southern Sudan
- Hurting and humiliating women and girls deeply harms men and ultimately erodes the fabric of a community

Gender-Based Violence in Conflict Zones

- Civil wars and regional conflicts are on the rise and replacing military combat
 - Between 1989 and 1997, an estimated 103 armed conflicts were launched in 69 countries across the world
 - Civilian casualties during these more recent conflicts are estimated to be as high as 75 percent (contrasted with 5 percent estimates from the start of the last century)

Violence: A Way of Life in the Context of War



Women and War

- Rape, sexual assault, forced prostitution, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and other forms of sexual violence are used as a method of warfare
- Some women submit to sexual abuse in order to obtain food and other basic life necessities
- An estimated 40 percent of child soldiers around the world are *girls*, the majority of whom are forcibly or coercively conscripted

Children and War

- Decades of well funded conflicts during the cold war left countries awash with small arms and light weapons
- Children are more easily armed due to an increase in the trade of small arms
- Small children are motivated to please, natural "joiners," and willing to take risks

Men and War

- Men engage in military action as a means of keeping themselves and their family safe;
- Take up arms as a means of countering unemployment and making money;
- Travel great distances through porous borders to acquire money and achieve safety

Distinct Phases of Violence

- Flight
- Internal displacement
- Resettlement

Transplanting Violence

- Combatants return to their communities and bring trauma and violence and fighting into their homes
- Men bring weapons home with them and put the women and girls who live with them at risk
- Shifts in gender relations during the periods of conflict and post-conflict also put women and girls at risk

Transplanting Violence (cont.)

- Former militia are integrated into society as civilians and the norms of war are internalized into everyday male behavior

Liberian Civil War

- Liberia was founded by freed American slaves (Americo-Liberians) in 1820
- Americo-Liberians ruled Liberia and ethnic Liberians from statehood in 1847 until the onset of civil war
- First Liberian Civil: 1989-1996
- Second Liberian Civil War: 1999-2003

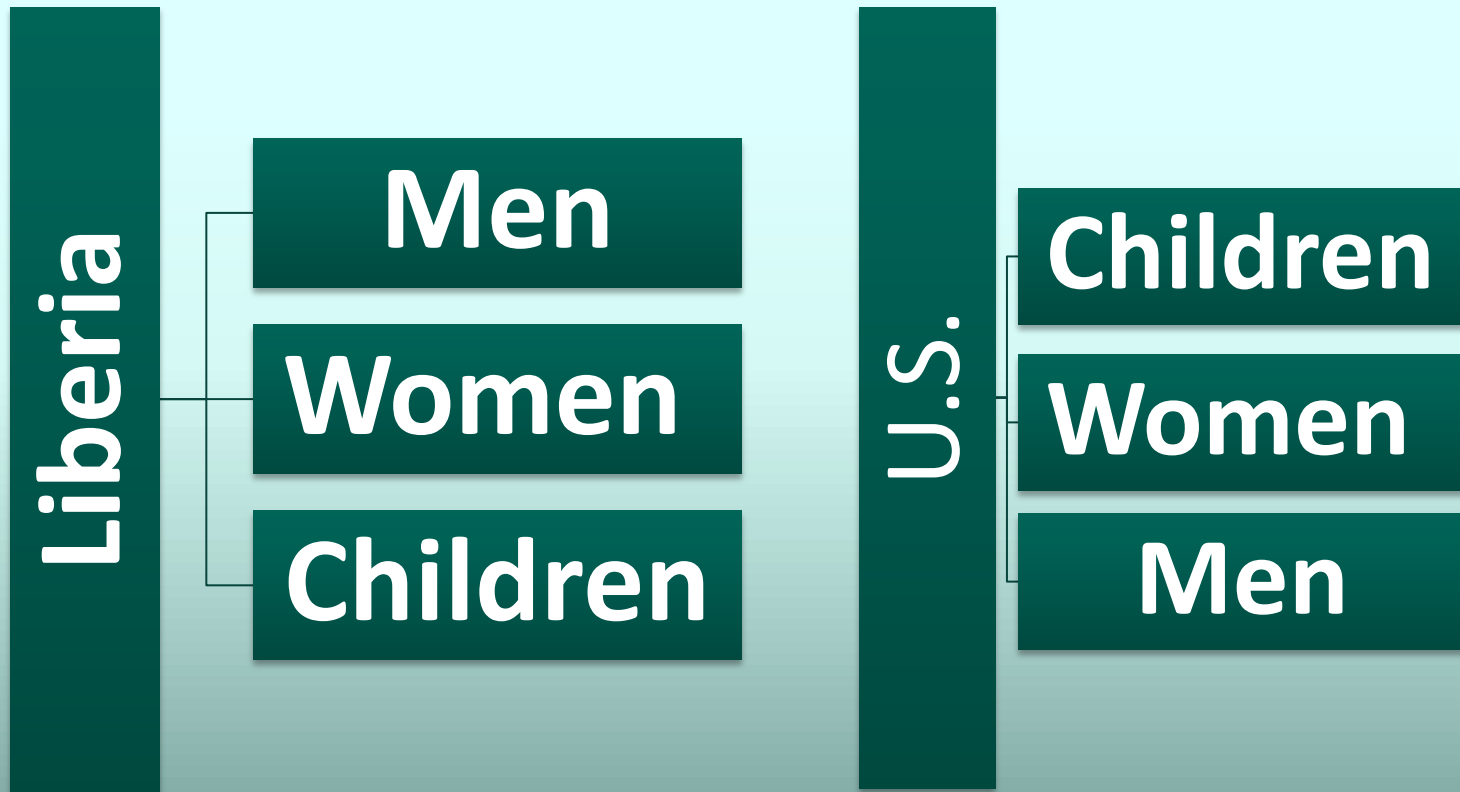
Case Study: Little Liberia

- Estimated 8,000 Liberians in Staten Island, New York
- Liberians primarily live in Park Hill, a mixed income housing complex with a history of drug related violence
- Tension between African and African American residents on Park Hill is high
- High concentration of former child soldiers

Understanding Liberia's History of Violence

- A Community based organization (CBO) implemented a needs assessment *in partnership with community members and torture survivors in Park Hill*
- The CBO organized a follow-up meeting with community members to discuss findings
- After the meeting, additional queries were made regarding signs of abuse at home, knowledge of laws protecting women

U.S. Society Exacerbates Post-Conflict Stress



Lessening the Strain

- Organize meetings to educate the mainstream community on findings
- Outreach to stakeholders and service providers
- Create safe spaces in the community
- Coordinate inter-community meetings on violence

Resilient Spirits at Work in Little Liberia

- Youth Soccer League
- African non-profits
- Under the Tree
- Adult literacy programs
- Increased participation in GED programs

Cross Cultural Conversations about Domestic Violence

- Understand roots of violence
- Query around cultural and religious norms
- Recognize traditional roles of men, women and children
- Explore different ways in which violence may have been transplanted from country of origin to the U.S.
- Identify symptoms of depression and anxiety commonly associated with domestic violence and the cultural norms that prohibit the sharing of those symptoms

Cross Cultural Conversations about Anxiety and Depression

- Acknowledge myths
- Address stigma
- Deconstruct shame

Legal Recourse in the U.S.

- **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA):**

As a battered spouse, child or parent, you may file an immigrant visa petition under the Violence against Women Act

- **Asylum:**

Rodi Alvarado was finally granted asylum in 2009, fourteen years after fleeing her home country of Guatemala, where she suffered a decade of brutal domestic violence

National Resources

- **U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrant's Family** Strengthening Project
- **Ethno Med** Domestic Violence Screening for Women who are Non-English Speaking or are from another Culture
- **Refugee Women's Alliance** Comprehensive support services in 11 languages. Bilingual/ bicultural domestic violence advocates work with victims to help them apply for protection orders, develop safety plans, access safe shelters, understand and navigate the legal system, as well as connect them to services providing basic needs

International Resources

- ***Refugee Settlement, Safety and Wellbeing: Exploring Domestic and Family Violence in Refugee Communities***
Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service
Melbourne, Victoria AUSTRALIA
- **Violence Against Migrant and Refugee Women in the Euromed Region Case Studies: France, Italy, Egypt & Morocco**
Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network
- **Sexual Violence Research Initiative** Pretoria, South Africa

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Refugee Services

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...Advancing Promising Practices in the Torture Treatment Field

**For more technical assistance information,
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In partnership with Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma (HPRT) and the Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture, National Partnership for Community Training (NPCT), is a program of Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services.