

## **SURVIVOR PROTOCOL**

### **Establishing 10 key principles when engaging CRSV survivors as trainers**

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## A. Background

SGBV in conflict in Ukraine is ongoing, yet lacks an adequate response. Police and military officials lack basic awareness about the issue of SGBV, nor have they an understanding of how to prevent or respond to it. Furthermore, survivors themselves may be best suited to provide sensitisation and awareness training, yet are currently absent from the existing educational initiatives aiming to sensitise those in need of such training.

According to the 2018 UN Strategy plan<sup>1</sup>, Ukraine has reportedly been struggling with the challenges around equal and fair justice. Sexual crimes committed in the context of armed conflict remain largely uninvestigated. The abusers remain unpunished and the likelihood of further exacerbation of the conflict remains extremely high. The Strategy Plan included in its recommendations the need to educate security personnel and build capacity of law enforcement and judges. There have been some recent efforts made in Ukraine to enhance gender-awareness and sensitivity in university programs for police and military personnel, and the Government Commissioner for Gender Policy has recognised this need, however, currently no comprehensive survivor-centred training exists for Ukrainian military and police officials. Our project aims to address this gap in training, and to enable survivors of sexual violence to take a leading role in addressing the shortcomings around access to justice in Ukraine, through the development and implementation of a survivor-led training for military and police.

There are several reasons for including survivors in trainings for military and police. Survivors are best suited to inform police and military about the shortcomings of current pathways to access justice, about the consequences of SGBV, and about survivor needs following violence. Furthermore, survivor-led trainings are an effective form of survivor participation, as called for by international bodies, in an effort to enhance peace and the rule of law. The chosen end-users may include perpetrators of SGBV, or individuals who are in contact with perpetrators within their own institutions. Restorative justice theory and practice points to the power of first-hand descriptions of the consequences of SGBV by victims themselves on (potential) perpetrators. Survivor-led training may contribute to the closing down of institutional behaviours and habits, which enable SGBV.

## B. Training aims

The aims of such trainings are twofold. First, there is a clear need to educate police and military cadets on the issues surrounding SGBV, namely its consequences, prevention and response. By bringing these trainings to schools, an environment that condemns sexual violence is more likely to arise. While it is important to integrate this issue and how deal with it at an early stage, there will always be a need for continued and refresher trainings on this topic throughout the careers of these professionals. Second, engaging in these trainings requires participants to question their own role. Not only are they presented with different ways of getting involved, but they will be able to decide the extent to which they will immerse themselves in the fight against sexual violence,

whether this is through adopting a role as supporters, as role models or as engaged as agents of change.

This protocol takes lessons learned from the first Mukwege Foundation training-of-trainers, held in Kiev in March 2020 and those trainings that were delivered. The training of trainers was held for nine members of the Ukrainian Survivor Network, with the aim of giving them the tools to deliver their own trainings to military and police cadets. These trainings took place in July and September 2020.

## **C. Main Principles**

### **1. *Establish ethical, survivor-centered ground rules from the beginning of the session***

The notion of a survivor-centered approach and the aim to “do no harm” are themes running throughout this protocol. From the beginning, it is important to establish rules that are valid throughout the duration of the training, and agreed upon by the entire target audience. The ground rules should be those that the survivors believe are necessary in order to feel safe and confident enough to carry out their work. While these rules will be context specific, examples include: No comments that suggest victim-blame; no use of cell phones for recording or texting; agreement by all to anonymity; treat one another with respect; openness; inclusivity of all student questions and opinions – no domination by a few. Allowing the session time in the beginning, and reminding students of these rules throughout the day can contribute to a more ethical and respectful environment during the training.

### **2. *Survivors develop the content (based on existing trainings)***

Many SGBV trainings already exist and can be accessed freely. The training-of-trainers was developed largely using the UNHCR resource: SGBV Prevention and Response Training Package<sup>1</sup>. The training package consists of 18 Modules, many which are relevant to the Ukrainian context. Those modules that were relevant were presented to the trainers, in order to provide them with possible sessions they could use to create their own training. It is important to allow sufficient time for reflection of how these different modules may apply to the context, and how comfortable survivors will feel when delivering different modules themselves. For example, with regard to content, the module on introducing SGBV is very relevant, but participants emphasized the need to first talk about what ‘sex’ is in the Ukrainian context before talking about sexual violence. Another example is related to politics, and primarily asks the extent to which this should be included in the training. For the survivors in the Ukrainian training-of-trainers, they

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR. (Developed by Esther Dingemans, October 2016). SGBV Prevention and Response Training Package. Accessible here: <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/manuals/583577ed4/sgbv-prevention-response-training-package.html>. More specifically, for the training-of-trainers in the Ukrainian context, the following (parts of) modules were presented: Introduction to SGBV in displacement settings; key approaches for addressing SGBV; Preventing SGBV; Engaging men and boys in SGBV prevention work; Multi-sectoral response to SGBV; and Access to Justice for SGBV survivors.

decided not to discuss this, as they all agreed on the main issues that affect them and the role of the government, and they believed this could raise tensions with the audience.

While there is no one-size-fits-all model, having a basis that survivors can then prioritize allows them to mold the training to their own vision, context and expertise. Though the survivor-trainers will develop the curriculum, since teaching is not their always their expertise, sufficient guidance should be offered – both the training-of-trainers and additional material and handouts that they can use when delivering the trainings themselves.

### ***3. Add the personal survivor perspective***

Telling about one's personal experience can have consequences on the audience. There are two points to keep in mind when integrating the personal perspective into the training: That (1) survivor-trainers must find a balance between their personal input and appearing authoritative and legitimate as teachers, and (2) discussing a personal experience of sexual violence can be re-traumatizing or difficult, particularly when faced with a large audience.

First, there is a clear benefit of involving survivors as trainers, one key advantage being the opportunity to deliver an impactful story, requiring the engagement of the audience. At the same time, survivors should not be perceived as survivors, but rather as advocates demanding their rights and serving as agents of change. Therefore, establishing legitimacy with the audience is crucial, namely by communicating their own knowledge, expertise and experience on the topic.

Second, there is undoubtedly a risk of re-traumatization when sharing one's personal experience when talking an array of audiences, including NGOs, courts, the media, family and community members and a range of other individuals. The same is equally, if not more, true when speaking to police and military cadets, who may not understand the seriousness of the consequences on the survivor. This point is further explored in Principle 6: Survivor well-being comes first, but it is important to already note that such a risk must be mitigated, and survivors should be prepared for the challenges when telling their own story.

### ***4. Each trainer has their own expertise and skills – find it!***

In many countries, survivors may be lacking or have lacked educational opportunities. This might be due to higher rates of poverty and few opportunities in post-war societies, or the rampant gender inequality that characterizes so many conflict and post-conflict settings. Despite this, it is important to emphasize the strengths and experience that potential trainers do have. For example, they may already have (co-) led trainings or other types of workshops. Simply by attending past workshops and capacity-building sessions they also may have learned different ways to use their teaching skills. Others may have spoken publicly in their role as victim-advocate, and many may have taught their own children in home schooling. Whatever the form of training experience they possess, it is important to spend time exploring these past endeavors and skills. Skills may range from those around communication to patience to enthusiasm to creativity to confidence. Furthermore, survivors may have experience in certain content topics

that are relevant to the training, for example prevention activities, mental and physical health, reparations or other legal remedies. By working in groups, survivors are able to complement one another and understanding their advantages is the first step to forming the most effective teams.

### **5. Survivor well-being comes first**

As has already been noted, conducting such a training does make survivors vulnerable to different forms of re-traumatization. Particularly where the survivor is suffering severe mental health issues a risk assessment can help to ensure that these women do not participate in such a training, at least not as trainers themselves (they may contribute to the preparation of trainings or take up other roles). Other factors also will play a role, for example if they survivor currently has other stressors (e.g., an ongoing court case), it may not be the right time to engage in such an activity. While no individual should be excluded, they will first need to be assessed on their efficacy and mental well-being. The following table provides basic guidelines for assessing this risk or adopting mitigation strategies.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Measure</b>
<b>Re-traumatization of victims/activists</b>	Where possible and shown to be needed, a preparatory training should be provided that includes stress/trauma awareness information and good self-care practices; Stress-management, trauma-informed practices & critical incident protocols are shared; Availability of de-briefing sessions led by a suitable psycho-social volunteer, plus follow-up as needed.
<b>Survivor-activists are not ready to engage in trainings but still do participate</b>	Strict assessment protocol in place for each survivor. This does not need to necessarily entail a checklist, but may ask question to the survivor such as, Why do you want to participate as a trainer? How would you rate you own psychological state? Do you have a support network around you? Would you have access to psychological support if needed? What risks for yourself might you face?
<b>Harassment of survivors due to their role as trainers</b>	Working in alliances/teams; Always having psycho-social support available; Presence of an NGO representative or technical expert (see Principle 10) who can intervene/stop the training when needed; Establishment of ethical principles/values of respectful behaviour at the beginning of the training.

Exercises in any training setting are key to engaging the audience. At the same time, it is important to be cautious, as such engagement could become difficult to handle or lead to distress when faced with this issue, especially when it entails the personal story of the survivor. For example – for both the trainers and the audience – role plays could lead to heightened emotions

or re-living of the event. In the Ukrainian context, it was noted that involving the audience or the trainer in the exercise in the victim role could lead to distress.

### **6. *Emphasizing the survivor centered approach in teachings***

While there are several modules that are crucial to the training, and some that will be included based on how they are prioritized in a given context, understanding the survivor-centered approach is vital. The approach must be integrated, regardless of the topic, be it prevention, response, involvement of men and boys or access to justice. This approach places survivors at the center of the support system, recognizing that each person is unique and therefore will have distinct needs. The approach values four principles when dealing with survivors: Confidentiality, safety, respect and non-discrimination, values that also are prominent in the training itself. In addition to emphasizing this approach throughout the training, it is vital that survivor-trainers themselves understand the significance of such a perspective. Indeed, the training is in itself adopting the survivor-centered approach as it aims to build the capacities of law enforcement and military officials to increase gender sensitivity, proper treatment and ensure actors are well-informed of victim rights.

### **7. *Remuneration is desirable, where possible***

Where program funding allows, survivor-trainers should be considered as professionals, and therefore receive some type of remuneration, whether in the form of a stipend or day rate. This money will also serve as a mean of motivation and is likely to enhance feelings of responsibility in delivering a professional training.

### **8. *Involve a technical expert***

In the Ukrainian trainings, a legal expert has been included in the curriculum. This addition is due to the fact that the information is too technical for lay people to address, and the legal scope and the topic of access to justice are very relevant in the current situation. Involving a technical expert also provides more legitimacy to the training, as it is based on his or her expertise in a given capacity. The technical expert will also be able to support in answering questions, facilitating the discussion if it is needed, and can act as the mediator if the training becomes too tense at any point. While the Ukrainian training made use of a legal expert, other professions can be considered (e.g., medical professional, psychological, social worker, employee at an International Organization). Such an expert also provides the survivor trainers with more confidence in delivering their own modules.

### **9. *It remains laymen teaching – use teaching aides!***

While there are clear benefits of including survivors as the center of the curriculum, it is important to address their limits in teaching (unless they had prior experience). The training-of-trainers can address these shortcomings through the introduction of various teaching aides. For example, pre-identified exercises with print-outs and PowerPoint presentations can be encouraging tools, the latter which might need support of creating such presentations. Working on the agenda itself

will help to structure the lesson, and trainers should focus on what they know well – another reason working in teams is preferred. During the initial training-of-trainers, it is a good idea to already have the survivor-participants brainstorm how they already have been engaged in teaching activities, both formal and informal. Such an exercise can also boost confidence when actually carrying out the training.

### ***10. No judgement of the audience is acceptable***

This particular audience – police and military cadets – was chosen for a strategic purpose; namely, they are or will be in a position to make change in the future around the issue of CRSV. One of the modules focuses on how to engage men and boys as role models and agents of change. By including this module, the audience (at least the male students) will be required to ask themselves how they can play a role in ending CRSV. At the same time as recognizing the potential benefits of training this group, it is important to emphasize they can be supporters in the cause, and should not be perceived as the group causing problems. By framing them as problem-solvers and supporters instead of offenders or as part of the problem, they are furthermore more likely to want to engage in this struggle, joining the survivors side-by-side, rather than viewing them as opponents. For this reason, it is vital the survivors attending the training-of-trainers are informed and understand the role of men and the importance of leaving any judgments outside of the classroom.

### **D. Concluding remarks**

The theoretical underpinning of this initiative of survivor-led trainings is ground in the notion that survivors will not only participate more meaningfully as agents of change, but they are also best suited to deliver trainings on a topic they know too well. While this innovative approach has undeniable positive impact within the fight against conflict-related sexual violence, survivor-trainers and those training survivors must be fully aware of the unique experience of this group, and the ways in which to manage any risks or challenges, as outlined above. The first pilots indicate that there was a lot to gain for participants in hearing and learning from survivors themselves, and through proper implementation, such work can be carried out in other contexts where survivors are given a safe platform or classroom to conduct such trainings and meet the criterion outlined in Principle 5: Survivor well-being is a priority.