



ENLISTING THE ARMED FORCES TO PROTECT REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS:

LESSONS LEARNED FROM NINE COUNTRIES

TECHNICAL REPORT

Technical Support Division
Culture, Gender and Human Rights Branch

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FOREWORD

UNFPA has been at the forefront of involving men in reproductive and sexual health for decades, and especially since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD, 1994). Over the years, we have learned a great deal about how to positively engage men to take charge of their own reproductive and sexual well-being and support that of their partners. One of the fundamental lessons is to reach out to men where they are rather than expect them to seek out reproductive and sexual health information and services.

Employment-based programmes have been one of the most successful ways of doing this. Drawing on pre-Cairo successes with employment-based population and family life education programmes, UNFPA has worked in several countries with a major employer – the military – to introduce, expand and enhance reproductive and sexual health information and services.

The enormous human, social and economic toll of HIV/AIDS and the increased awareness of women's vulnerability to gender-based violence, have given greater urgency to this approach. Many countries have planned or are now implementing projects targeting men in uniform as a way to promote HIV prevention, engage men as partners in gender equity and the reduction of gender-based violence and improve their own and their partners' reproductive health status and protect their rights.

To map out what can be done in future interventions related to reproductive health and gender equity within this key institution, this publication draws lessons from nine country case studies and a global review of emerging programming and policy issues for enlisting the armed forces in reproductive health, including preventing HIV/AIDS and promoting gender equity. It starts by summarizing key lessons from the nine countries. This is followed by an introduction, a synopsis of each case study, and a comparative analysis drawn from the country findings. The comparative analysis examines what works in successful programmes, what does not and what is left out. It also identifies remaining challenges and opportunities. Finally, we outline global changes in the military context relevant to future programming.

I trust that this review will stimulate debate, future programming and increased funding to enlist armed forces as critical partners in both peacetime and conflict situations in our national and international efforts to promote reproductive health and rights and gender equity.

Mari Simonen
Director, Technical Support Division
UNFPA

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It was carried out under the direction of:

- ❖ **Mari Simonen**, Director, Technical Support Division, UNFPA New York
- ❖ **Sylvie I. Cohen**, Acting Chief, Culture, Gender and Human Rights Branch, Technical Support Division, UNFPA New York, managed the project, conducted research and wrote the report

In close collaboration with:

Margaret Arilha, CST Advisor, Latin America and the Caribbean
Michèle Burger, International Consultant
Manuel Carballo, International Consultant, IMCH
Pedro Garzon Castaneda, Former CST Advisor, Latin America and the Caribbean
Jimona Cilloniz, International Consultant, ICMH
Dr. Akinyele Dairo, Project Officer, Africa Division
Colonel Alexander Gudkovsky, National Project Director, Ukraine
Helen Jackson, CST Advisor, Southern Africa
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Dr. Tumurbaatar Luvsansambu, National consultant, Mongolia
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Manuelita Escobar, National Programme Officer, Paraguay
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Dr. Soyoltoya, National Programme Officer, Mongolia
Dorcas Temane, Assistant Representative, Botswana
Borys Vornik, National Programme Officer, Ukraine

ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BCC	Behaviour Change Communications (Formerly IEC: Information, Education and Communication)
CST	Country Technical Services Team
GBV	Gender-based Violence
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
ICMH	International Centre for Migration and Health
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices
PLWA	People Living with AIDS
RH	Reproductive Health
RSH	Reproductive and Sexual Health
RR	Reproductive Rights
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
SWAps	Sector Wide Approaches
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDPKO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
VCCT	Voluntary and Confidential Counselling and Testing
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing
WHO	World Health Organization

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Acknowledgements

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND LESSONS

Background

This comparative study of country experiences across regions was undertaken as part of a UNFPA interregional project ‘Improving Gender Perspective, Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention through Stronger Partnership with the Military’ (project number INT/01/PM3). It was conducted by UNFPA’s Technical Support Division, with generous support from the Swedish International Development Agency and through collaboration with the UNFPA Technical Assistance Programme regional advisors, country offices and national consultants.

Its purpose is to inform future programming by identifying effective approaches for working with men in the uniformed services in reproductive and sexual health from a gender perspective. Although UNFPA has long cooperated with the military in the areas of family planning and family life education, its growing cooperation with an institution that operates in unique political and social contexts – in times of peace or conflict – has not been well documented. Experience sharing is needed to scale-up or sustain effective interventions and guide future programming. Cross-regional exchange of experiences is expected to enhance UNFPA’s practical knowledge and leadership role in an area where it clearly has a comparative advantage regarding gender issues, reproductive health/reproductive rights promotion, and the fight against HIV/AIDS. Equipped with practical insights into the implementation process, UNFPA offices and their national partners should be able to improve existing programmes or introduce new ones.

To compare implementation strategies in the military that integrate reproductive and sexual health and gender issues, we established a conceptual framework to review the nature of the partnership; the extent and quality of reproductive health services and information, including for HIV/AIDS prevention; and gender mainstreaming.

Country experiences are from: Benin, Botswana, Madagascar and Namibia in Africa; Ecuador, Nicaragua and Paraguay in Latin America; Mongolia in Asia; and Ukraine in Eastern Europe.

The case studies focused on institutional changes, rather than actual impact on

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