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HUMANITARIAN STUDIES

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HUMANITAIRES GENÈVE

Executive Short Course Addressing Sexual Violence in Conflict and Emergency Settings

COURSE EVALUATION

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Acronyms —

AMERUVE	Association of Mothers of Children Refugee in Uganda born of sexual violence
CAR	Central African Republic
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CERAH	Geneva Centre for Education and Research in Humanitarian Action
CoP	Community of Practice
ESC	Executive Short Course
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCHS	Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
HI	Humanity and Inclusion
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IHEID	Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies
IIOO	International Organisations
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and other gender non-conforming individuals
LMIC	Low and Middle-Income Countries
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MOHRAUG	Men of Hope Refugee Association in Uganda
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PPT	Power Point Presentation
PSEAH	Preventing Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment
Q&A	Questions and Answers
RLP	Refugee Law Project
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
ToR	Terms of Reference
UK	United Kingdom
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency

Executive — Summary

This report is an evaluation of the Executive Short Course managed by the Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies “Addressing Sexual Violence in Conflict and Emergency Settings” (‘the Course’) and covers the eight years that the Course has operated since it was first developed in 2014. The Course was designed to provide mid-level and senior humanitarian managers with the knowledge, competencies and skills required to conceive multidisciplinary survivor-centred interventions in the field of sexual violence response and prevention, adapted to specific contexts and as an integral part of humanitarian operations.

The evaluation took place between December 2021 and February 2022 and is based on available literature related to the Course; 19 qualitative interviews with former or current Steering Committee members, current or former lecturers (including survivor leaders), Centre representatives, other key representatives of partner organisations, donors, selected former participants chosen to represent a cross-section of the Course; and a 23-question quantitative survey sent to all Course participants to date.

It presents a picture of a Course which, when measured both quantitatively and qualitatively against its stated objectives, has been highly successful. To date, the Course has trained 475 people, many of whom are in management and advisory positions in their organisations, and there are multiple metrics that demonstrate this has had a positive impact on attitude and practice towards better addressing sexual violence in humanitarian contexts. These metrics include increased projects to address survivors’ needs, enhanced access for survivors to essential services, improved coordinated responses on the ground, and increased capacity of local teams and local actors. The findings also show that the Course has been catalytic in generating significant change at individual, project and organisational levels, and that many of the changes are a result of the dynamic interaction between these different levels. The partnership between the Centre and core organisations involved in sexual violence prevention and response, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Refugee Law Project (RLP), alongside the operating model of co-creation and co-ownership, has been critical in initiating and maintaining the Course, and has become a hallmark of its approach.

The first two chapters of this report present an overview of the evaluation and methodology, and a brief overview of the evolution of the Course. The third and fourth chapters explore the learning that has taken place within the Course, and how the change that has been brought about by the Course. It considers how the Course has changed learners’ attitudes towards sexual violence, the impact it has had on the way in which participants work at both individual and institutional levels, and the wider impact it has had on survivors and local contexts. The findings point to a robust correlation between learning, attitude change and work practice, and in particular to changes that are highly significant for the ultimate target group, namely sexual violence survivors. They also demonstrate how survivor-centredness has gone from being a concept mainstreamed throughout the Course to an understanding of survivors as central to expertise and knowledge generation.

The fifth section looks at the broader ecosystem in which the Course is operating, including the importance of a genuine and continuous engagement with survivors and progressive centring of their agency, narratives and lived experiences; the current trajectory around institutional evolution and the move to greater localisation; the recognition of the need to create a community of alumni as practitioners who have a shared understanding and approach; and the place of the Course within a wider body of evidence on sexual violence in conflict and the importance of capturing practice-based knowledge and evidence created within the Course. This section points to something of a “new era” for the Course, that is aware of and continuously critiques the way in which knowledge is generated and continues developing as a space in which academic institutions and humanitarian organisations increasingly work with survivor leaders and groups as both experts and partners in ways that allow them to shape the narrative around sexual violence and to inform interventions. The final section makes a number of recommendations based on the findings of the evaluation.

01

— Evaluation
Objectives and
Methodology

1.2 Purpose of the evaluation

The Executive Short Course, 'Addressing sexual violence in conflict settings and emergencies' (hereby, 'the Course'), is managed by the Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies (hereby, 'the Centre').¹ The Course aims to provide mid-level and senior humanitarian managers with the knowledge, competencies and skills required to conceive multidisciplinary, survivor-centred interventions in the field of sexual violence response and prevention, adapted to specific contexts and as an integral part of humanitarian operations.

The Course, which was first developed in 2014-15, has never had a multi-year evaluation. Therefore, an evaluation was commissioned to assess its impact over the eight years since its inception, to analyse: (a) capacity built; (b) capacity used; (c) the impact of capacity used; and (d) training needs and interest. Based on an initial scoping of available material, four areas were developed into a framework for the evaluation:

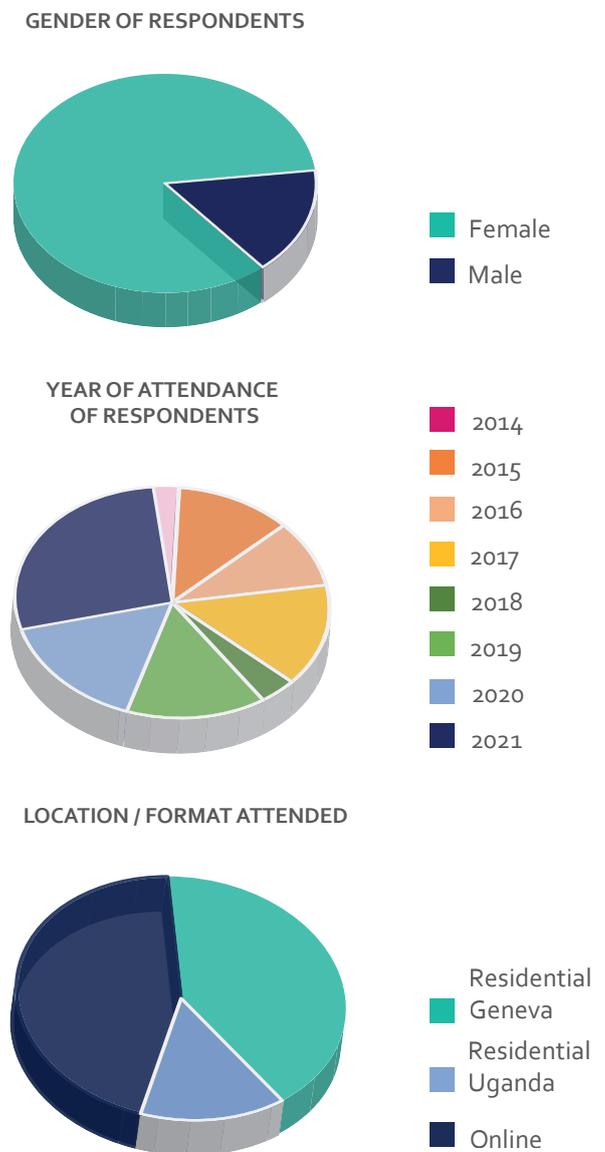
1. Foundations (including objectives, partnerships and structures);
2. Learning (including participants, content and delivery);
3. Outcomes (including capacities, practice and impact);
4. Knowledge generation and Course positionality.

1.3 Methodology of the evaluation

The evaluation draws on a review of existing documentation relating to the Course and **primary data** collected through a mixed methods approach. **Existing documentation** included Course programme documents and material, Course reports, evaluation reports carried out by the University of Geneva for each course, participants' feedback to training and modules, participant statistics, documents from Steering Committee meetings and data from a survey conducted with alumni in 2021.

Data collection included Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and an online Survey. A total of 19 KIIs were conducted with former or current Steering Committee members, current or former lecturers, including lecturers who are survivor leaders, Centre representatives, other key representatives of partner organisations, donors and in-depth interviews were conducted with selected former participants chosen to represent a cross-section of the Course. In-depth interviews were conducted with selected former participants chosen to represent a cross-section of the Course.

Graph 1: Overall profile of respondents to the online survey



In addition, an **online 23-question questionnaire was sent to all Course participants to date** (475 people in total).

The evaluation was **intentionally survivor-centred throughout** and was designed to involve survivor facilitators as key informants. It gives relevance and precedence to survivor-centred and survivor-informed aspects of the Course, and views survivors' expertise and lived experience as not only valuable but lying at the very heart of the Course and its ultimate objectives. The evaluation process also seeks to draw out the voices of participants and key informants in order to acknowledge the role they have had in creating meaning and influencing the Course trajectory through the years.

¹ The Centre was formerly the Geneva Centre for Education and Research in Humanitarian Action (CERAH)

02



— History
and Governance
of the Course

2.1 History, objectives and approach of the Course

The Course was initiated in 2014 following discussions between the ICRC and the Centre. A Resolution on joint action on prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence was passed at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 2015,² which highlighted the need for more robust capacity building across the institution and put sexual violence response as a strategic priority of the ICRC. A mapping of available training conducted by the Centre found there were no post-secondary level Courses on sexual violence, and a decision was jointly taken to create one.

The intention from the beginning was to construct a Course that would build capacity to operationalise a multi sectoral approach to addressing sexual violence, and facilitate collaboration among actors to jointly respond to survivors' needs and demands.

A **Steering Committee** was created with representatives of ICRC, MSF, UNFPA, Handicap International, and UNHCR, all institutions deeply involved in sexual violence prevention and response in humanitarian settings and interested in scaling up the capacity building efforts for their respective staff. Under the leadership of the Centre Director and a health consultant from UNFPA, both medical doctors, the Steering Committee representatives co-created the curriculum, methodologies, and tools for a five-day intensive course targeted at mid and high-level managers primarily from partner organisations, although it remained open to external participants.

The theory of change underpinning the Course was that equipping managers with knowledge, skills and tools would enable them to make proactive and strategic decisions to increase and improve programmes that address sexual violence, and to better manage and supervise their teams. It was also envisaged that the multi-stakeholder set-up in the classroom, of both teachers and participants, would encourage better

coordination among responders and agencies on the ground.

Today, the face-to-face Course consists of 5 intensive days structured into 11 thematic modules, with slight variations between courses held in Geneva and courses held in Uganda. Each module incorporates expert presentations, plenary discussions, group work on specific scenarios, case studies, small group discussions, practical exercises, interactive workshops and panel discussions, and Question & Answer (Q&A) sessions. The online curriculum is organised into 8 thematic weeks, each focusing on a specific topic area³. There is less content in the online course, and it is spread over a longer period (8 weeks instead of one)⁴.

Survivor representatives have been involved in residential courses sessions in Uganda since 2016, and have taught in the online course live sessions since 2021. In addition, a new module on survivor leadership and networks was piloted in the curriculum with two survivor leaders in late 2021.

By the end of the Course, the objective was for participants to:

- Understand the phenomenon of sexual violence in conflict/emergencies.
- Identify and assess the extent and causes of sexual violence in a specific context.

In addition, participants should:

- Have a deepened understanding of sexual violence, its root causes and contributing factors, and its impacts on individuals and communities.
- Comprehend the core principles, challenges and promising practises of a survivor-centred approach to health, MHPSS, justice and other multi-sectoral responses.
- Conceive safe and ethical interventions centred on victims/survivors' rights, needs and wishes, and have the competence to prevent and mitigate risks of sexual violence.

² <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/32nd-international-conference-red-cross-and-red-crescent-sexual-and-gender-based-violence>

³ The thematic modules covered in face-to-face and online course include: Core concepts and survivor-centred approach; Collecting data on sexual violence: ethical and methodological considerations; Sexual violence against men and boys, Medical care for survivors of sexual violence, Policy and practical implementation: pregnancy as a result of rape, Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), Access to justice, Prevention and risk mitigation, Survivors' voices and networks, Monitoring and evaluation.

⁴ Each week students are requested to attend an online 2-hour live session with guest lecturers and do an additional 4 to 5 hours of self-directed study, including reading of key literature, watching video lectures, webinars and other audio-visual resources, and practising self-reflection via a written assignment and off-line small group discussions. Each module is structured around a learning journey designed to invite students to learn about the evidence base on each topic and the latest literature and tools; discover core concepts and terminology; learn about the role, work and good practises of various organisations; listen to the voices of survivor representatives and advocates and learn from the work of survivor groups; self-reflect on own knowledge, practice and work context; and engage in critical discussions with the experts lecturers and colleagues. The online webinars include a mix of short presentations, plenary discussions, polls, Q&A sessions, and breakout groups to discuss case studies and share experiences. The technological infrastructure for the on-line course includes Zoom for live sessions, and Moodle, an online course platform where training materials are uploaded, assignments are submitted, new events and publications on sexual violence are posted each day, and group discussions take place through an online chat forum.

2.2 The partnership model

From the outset, a defining feature of the Course has been the partnership model that was created to form the core structure around it.

2.2.1 The Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies

The Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies, formerly known as CERAH, is a joint academic and research centre of the University of Geneva and the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID). The Centre houses and organises the Course and provides the overall academic and administrative structure for it, playing a key leadership role in maintaining the Course, centralising and facilitating partners' and experts' teaching, inputs and interactions, and provides academic credibility. It has shown strong commitment in the form of supporting a Course Coordinator/Director who was brought on board, and it is clear that this role has been vital in maintaining and delivering the Course (see Annex 1 for details of the Course Directors from 2014 till 2021). The Coordinator/Director carries out multiple functions, including overseeing the overall coordination and organisation aspects, liaising and facilitating discussion with the Steering Committee, coordinating with expert facilitators in organising the programme and each module for every course and delivering course sessions. In particular, many of those interviewed referred to the importance of having in place one individual who is responsible.

2.2.2 Other Partners

The operating model of co-creation and co-ownership that was embedded in the Course from the outset has been critical in both initiating and maintaining the Course and has become a hallmark of its approach. **The Steering Committee**, which includes representatives from the core organisations involved in the Course, lies at the centre of this partnership model and plays an essential policy, operational and pedagogical advisory role. The majority of those on the Steering Committee are there both in their individual capacity and as representatives of their organisations. The synergy between institutional and personal investment in the Course, therefore, has

“

Our organisation was able to shape the Course from the beginning, [and this brought] a strong sense of ownership”

Steering Committee member

clearly been vital to the energy and ambition that underpins it, and there was a strong sense of co-ownership among Steering Committee members past and present. The Steering Committee and the teaching staff lead a process of ongoing review and updates of content and material, ensuring that the Course is adaptive and continually reflective of existing evidence and approaches. While the Steering Committee lies at the core of the partnership model, there are other individuals that are part of the teaching body and who are not on the Steering Committee who have been and are vital **interlocutors for the Course to partner with**.⁵ This points to the need to simultaneously balance the core group that is, in practice, driving the Course forward; yet at the same time ensure that the process remains collaborative and open to new partnerships with other actors operating in other sectors and spaces in order to strengthen the continuum of learning.

This section has traced the evolution of the Course – from an initial idea to create a form of training that would build capacity to operationalise a multi sectoral approach to addressing sexual violence and facilitate collaboration among actors to jointly respond to survivors' needs and demands, into a Course that is run both in-person and on-line in both Geneva and Uganda several times a year. It has emphasised how the structure around the Course is seen to be critical to its success. The Centre, which houses and organises the Course and provides the overall academic and administrative structure for it, has played a key leadership role in maintaining it. But there has also been a strong emphasis on partnership with other organisations and individuals. This operating model of co-creation and co-ownership has been critical in both initiating and maintaining the Course and has become a hallmark of its approach.

⁵ Organisations and entities that have significantly contributed to the development and delivery of the Course include: Association of Mothers of Children Refugee in Uganda Born of Rape (AMERUVE); Humanity and Inclusion (HI); International Rescue Committee (IRC); Men of Hope Refugee Association Uganda (MOHRAUG); Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); Physicians for Human Rights (PHR); UNAIDS; UNFPA; Women of Hope Association, Uganda. Other organisations that have taken part in teaching during the years include: All Survivors Project (ASP); Egerton University; and Geneva Call.

03

— Evaluation of Learning:
Participants, Content,
Delivery

This section explores the learning that goes on within the Course itself, organised around the three sub-areas of participants, content and delivery.

3.1 Participants

3.1.1 Who was trained?

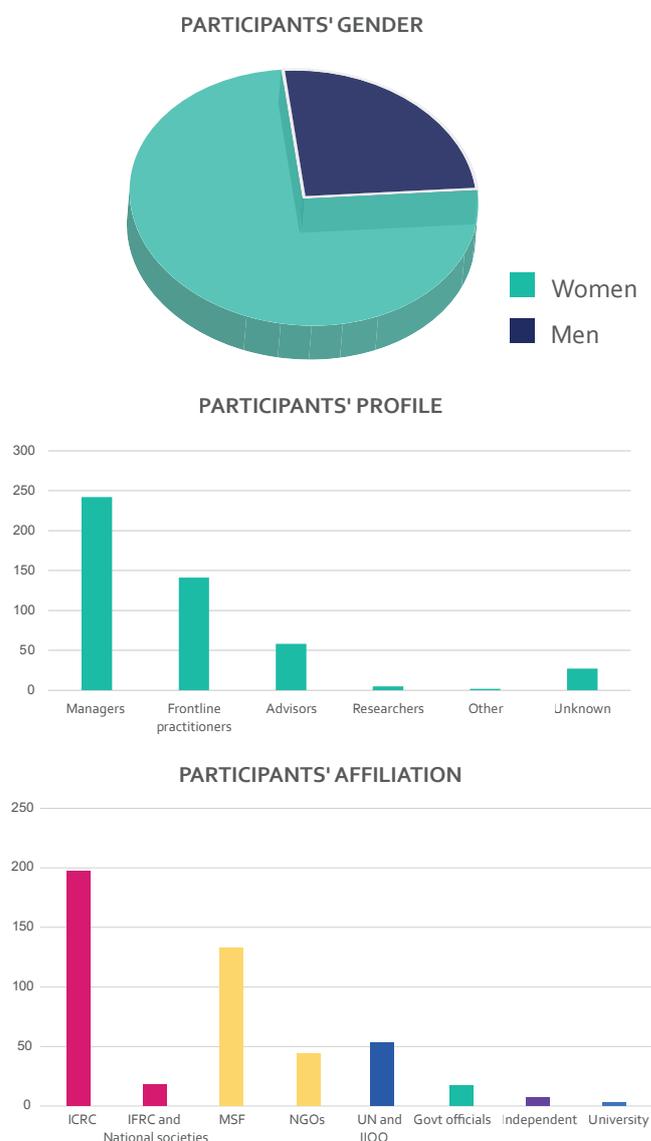
As stated above, the Course was designed to target **humanitarian managers in senior or mid-level positions or other high-level policy or technical advisory positions**, who are in a position to influence decision making and mainstream sexual violence prevention and response in humanitarian operations.

Between 2014 and 2021, the Course was delivered 15 times, of which 10 were courses were held face-to-face in Geneva and Kampala and 5 were online. A total of **475 participants** from all five continents and from **89 nationalities** have been trained, with a higher proportion of Swiss nationals (11%), followed by French (9%) and Italian (6%) nationals compared to other nationalities. The large majority of participants (75%) have been **women**⁶, and participants have been representative of **60 organisations and entities**, with the **ICRC** and **MSF** being the most represented (41% and 28% respectively). Other entities include the **International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC)**, **Red Cross/Red Crescent national societies** (from Australia, Burundi, Kenya, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Norway, Somalia, South Sudan, and the UK), international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), United Nations (UN) organisations (ILO, IOM, OCHA, OHCHR, UN Women, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, WFP, WHO, and one Peacekeeping mission), **other international entities** (EU, ICC), **national governments** (Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Haiti, Italy, Jordan, South Korea, Switzerland, and the UK) and various other participants working in public and private universities, hospitals, and consultancy firms.

The majority of participants (51%) were **high and mid-level managers**, including head and deputy heads of mission, delegation, sub-delegation and office, regional directors, field and project coordinators, medical coordinators, team leaders and other types of medical and non-medical managers. Thematic, policy and technical **advisors and specialists** are also well represented among participants (12%) both at

headquarters level, in regional delegations or at the field level. A significant number of participants were **frontline responders** (30%) such as nurses, midwives, medical doctors, psychologists, lawyers, case managers, protection and child protection officers and other profiles involved in the medical, psychosocial and protection response to survivors. Other profiles less represented in the cohort of participants include **academic researchers and graduate students** (1%), and other profiles such as interpreters and administrative personnel. Gaps in data do not allow to indicate in what countries or contexts participants were based when they attended the Course.

Graph 2: Overall profile of participants to the Course to date



⁶ In the initial years, the registration system did not include the possibility to offer a wider selection of options under gender, to include people who would have preferred to select "other" or "prefer not to say".

This deliberate focus on those individuals who are likely to be in a **position to foster change within their projects and organisations** has been vital to the objectives of the Course. This targeted approach to participants in management positions has been crucial to creating a 'critical mass' within organisations on sensitivity towards sexual violence. It recognises that the move from changing individuals to changing operations and organisations has to happen at multiple levels and, as outlined below, several of those interviewed talked of how they have seen this happen within their organisation.

The Course has also allowed for **peer exchange** between those working at similar levels within organisations, and between medical and non-medical experts. Many of the post-course evaluations indicate that this created a conversation on how different organisations do or do not deal with sexual violence.

3.1.2 Who was *not* trained?

The available data shows a number of gaps in the profile of participants who have been trained to date. This is not to suggest that any groups have been deliberately excluded from the Course. However, several of the interviewees raised concerns around these gaps and other barriers to access, some of which have been mitigated to a degree, and some of which remain unresolved:

- Despite its title – “Addressing sexual violence in conflict and emergency settings” – the Course has been more focused on conflict contexts compared to other emergency settings, potentially as a consequence of the mandate and role of the Steering Committee partners. This may in part explain the low representation of staff working in organisations responding to disasters as opposed to conflict.
- The absence of survivor and community leaders and advocates from low and middle-income countries (LMIC) among participants, linked to economic, linguistic or technology-related barriers among others. There were also concerns over whether the entry requirements established by the University of Geneva, including for recipients of scholarships aimed at employees of local NGOs and survivor networks, were excluding some individuals from participating who should have been included.

- Non anglophone participants and staff working in organisations working in non-anglophone contexts: The Course has been offered 12 times in English and three times in French, thus limiting access for non-English speakers from all world areas.
- Participants from organisations working specifically with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and other Gender non-conforming populations (LGBTIQ+), people living with disabilities, and other marginalised groups have been rarely present at the Course, which has reduced networking opportunities with these crucial stakeholders.
- The over representation of women participants raises questions over the possible reasons behind a much lower percentage of male participants.

While not suggesting that the Course should – or even could – meet all of these target groups, having an understanding of who is not in the room is helpful in understanding some of the current barriers to access, the implications of the current framing of the Course and the benefits of a more inclusive and diverse Course. These trends and gaps raise questions around the need to unpack and analyse how expertise is constructed, how decisions are made around experience and profiles that are more valued than others, how visible and invisible barriers operate to exclude certain groups, and what policy and operational implications for these decisions may be and how these impact on the needs and lives of sexual violence survivors. They also help identify potential gaps that could be filled moving forward and indicate the kind of pedagogic, administrative, and partnership efforts that might be needed in order to mitigate or eliminate some core obstacles to participation. These are questions that the Steering Committee are already grappling with, but that will demand ongoing scrutiny and critical discussion within the Centre and with the University management.

3.1.3 Participation beyond the Course: An alumninetwork

The online questionnaire results show that the majority (70%) of participants have not kept in touch with fellow Course participants, despite the fact that – as the survey also shows – networking and group dynamics are one of

⁷ Interview with a former facilitator.

the key aspects that participants most valued in face-to-face courses over online Courses. This suggests that there is demand for a structured alumni network to enable group interaction beyond the end of each Course.

These findings are supported by the fact that in May 2021, a survey conducted among former students to explore the interest in the creation of an alumni group showed that the majority of the 97 responders had an interest in being part of a future alumni network – 73% said they would find it helpful, and 25% said they would, but depending on the utility/content. The majority of respondents said they would find an alumni network helpful to exchange advice and tools with colleagues, access latest research, join conversations and webinars, and discuss with practitioners in sub-areas of interest. The findings show a strong level of interest in joining a network despite the existence of other GBV networks - including the global GBV Community of Practice (CoP) and others that are internal to various organisations, which is an indicator of the high demand for further networking, exchange and learning, including the value of being in a diverse and multi-agency community.

While the demand is clearly there, however, it is important that the Centre articulates the formulation of any alumni network in such a way as to be complementary to other existing communities of practice and be clear how it would be distinctive from other networks.

What would make the Centre sexual violence alumni network unique and/or complementary to existing networks and communities of practice?

Questionnaire results

- An academic-based network where theory, research and practice are strictly intertwined and mutually reinforcing.
- A community where alumni could share their own knowledge.
- Over half of the respondents said they would be available to take up an active role such as being speakers in webinars, and authoring articles and blog posts.

3.2 Evaluating the content

The Course **has been dynamic**, and has evolved from what was constructed more as a series of guest lectures at the start, to more serious thinking around pedagogical aspects and a greater understanding of the interconnectedness of the different modules. This ongoing evolution has been largely shaped by **feedback collection and evaluations that were done following each course**, which have then helped to shape future content, creating an increasingly coherent and 'unified' multi-disciplinary Course.

From the start, **each course was evaluated immediately** after, using the following measures: percentage of those registered who successfully completed the course; result of final tests and quality of final essays and assignments; module by module feedback at the end of the course (for the face-to-face course) and rapid anonymous polls at the end of each session (for online courses) assessing quality of lecture, content and interaction and providing constructive feedback on how to improve each module; quantitative anonymous survey conducted by the University of Geneva at the end of the course with quantitative rankings. This ongoing feedback mechanism has been a vital tool for amending the Course and ensuring that it has constantly adapted to the learning environment.

3.2.1 Maintaining the right balance

It is clear that significant reflection has gone into balancing a number of key areas of focus within the Course in order to create and maintain a Course that is targeted at practitioners but embedded in a Centre that lies at the intersection of research and humanitarian practice. A number of key areas were highlighted during the evaluation:

- An exclusive **focus on sexual violence but positioned within the wider spectrum of GBV**: the Course has always remained focused on sexual violence as a specific form of GBV, in part due to the time constraints, but placed within a broader conceptual GBV context particularly when analysing an intersectional gendered understanding of sexual violence, power and abuse.

- The need for the Course to be **academically rigorous and strongly practical in orientation**: it is important to ensure that the Course content is evidence-based and focused on application of principles in practice.
- The need to **balance response, risk mitigation and prevention** both in terms of sequencing and in terms of the relative weight given to each in the Course; and demonstrating the links and interactions between the three.
- The need for content to not only be survivor-centred in principle, values and practice, but to draw directly on the experience of survivors and **incorporate survivor groups and leaders' voices, agency and expertise** substantially, including through teaching and direct interaction with participants. While this principle has been there from the beginning, the online pilot of the November 2021 course, in which three survivor leaders were facilitators in two course modules, took this principle further than any of the earlier courses.
- The **interaction between a facilitator's institutional positioning and the larger field**: it is important to ensure that any institutional positioning is placed within a broader and context-specific understanding of each thematic and focus areas addressed in the Course.
- The need to create dialogue and **build bridges between the humanitarian and human rights spheres**, while still focusing primarily on the former: the module on access to justice was seen as important in this regard, particularly in unpacking the concept of 'justice' from the perspective of survivors, and its focus on the important role that humanitarian actors play in facilitating survivors' access to justice.
- The need for sufficient geographic coverage and **context relevant content and approach**: while balance and diversity within participants' groups has always been a valued feature of the Course, interviewees and respondents highlighted the importance of ensuring that Course content, tools and approach capture the variety of global and emergency contexts.
- Ensuring **sufficient literature from global South authors** and making a deliberate choice to put research at the centre. In particular, ensuring that academic voices from the global South sufficiently feed into the training was flagged by some interviewees as an aspect where the Course needs to increase efforts.

3.2.2 Expanding the curriculum?

In addition, participants raised a number of areas that they thought could be added to the curriculum or **better or differently covered** within the respective topics in the Course:

- **Responding to the needs of specific groups of survivors**: There is strong consensus that participants would like the Course to equip them with technical knowledge, skills and guidance on better responding to the needs of survivors belonging to specific groups including child and adolescent survivors, survivors living with disabilities, elderly survivors, survivors in displacement settings, survivors involved in commercial sex work, and LGBTIQ+ survivors among others.
- **Addressing sexual violence in detention settings**: Linked to the point above, several respondents and interviewees flagged the need to be trained on how to address sexual violence in detention settings.
- **Pregnancy as result of rape**: Multiple participants and stakeholders interviewed expressed an interest in broadening the existing focus on providing safe abortion care to advance a more holistic approach to the topic, including adding a focus on how to better support children born of rape and their parents and communities.
- **Juridical and medico-legal aspects**: Several participants, both managers and practitioners, flagged the need for the Course to address juridical aspects of sexual violence care provision in more detail, as that are considered highly complex to implement. Specific aspects include addressing mandatory reporting requirements, medico-legal documentation of sexual violence, and how to conduct an assessment of the sexual violence legal and policy framework.

- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Participants, particularly managers, expressed interest in better understanding the role of monitoring and evaluation, which is not included as a topic area in the online course and which often received lower evaluation scores from participants in the face-to-face course.
- **Preventing Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH):** Participants expressed an interest in this area, flagging up the need for organisations to be coherent in the way they address sexual violence both internally and externally.
- Many participants also suggested a **more advanced course** for practitioners with significant knowledge and experience on the topic, in order to give them the opportunity to go more in-depth.
- When asked about the areas of the course they would like to see further developed, survivor leaders interviewed highlighted that the Course should include the **voices of survivors from various geographical areas**, and that the Centre should find ways to engage with the lived experience of survivors and their communities in an ongoing and practical way. This suggests, among others, that the Course should consider including the topic of economic empowerment of survivors, which is currently not covered in the curriculum after being dropped.
- **Pre-course reading and resource list:** Participants valued being provided with pre-reading materials and an updated list of academic and practitioners resources for each module and thematic area, including academic journal articles, medical, MHPSS, protection and multisectoral guidelines which address sexual and gender-based violence authored by the UN and inter-agency coordination bodies, international and national non-governmental organisations. These resources help situate the Course learning and resources within the wider landscape and literature.
- **Group discussions:** Discussions in plenaries, small groups and pairs were valued by participants and teachers as a means of drawing out participants' experience and encouraging debate, peer learning and self-reflection. The use of online fora has proved important to stimulate discussions among participants in online courses.
- **Peer learning:** Discussions and exercises in small groups or pairs are valued greatly by participants, for whom learning from peers from a variety of backgrounds has been an essential complement to course contents. For online courses, small group discussions have been organised both during online courses (via the breakout room option of Zoom) and offline (between online sessions), which participants have valued as moments for socialisation.

Not all these areas necessarily could or should be covered by the Course. There are clearly going to be positives and negatives in adding more topics or focus areas to the Course, and any additions would need to be carefully balanced against other factors such as length of time, level of input and scope.

3.3 Delivery

The diversity of course methods, approach and tools were overall appreciated by the majority of participants in both the course-specific evaluations and the survey for this assessment.

3.3.1 Methods

Multiple approaches are used to deliver the different modules, which have been developed and evolved over the eight years that the Course has been operating. The Survey, as well as participants feedback, points to a number of key aspects around these methods of teaching that were seen as particularly relevant and effective:

- **Value clarification and attitude transformation:** When discussing the issue of termination of pregnancy, the face-to-face courses have included an exercise that invites participants to reflect on their own beliefs, views and levels of comfort discussing, advocating for and/or facilitating access to safe abortion services. Participants are encouraged to reflect on the factors that may influence their comfort levels, how they relate to societal norms on abortion, and on their awareness of their organisation's policy on this topic.
- **The use of audio-visual materials:** The use of audio-visual material is greatly appreciated by participants, particularly in online courses. Participants also appreciated having access to the recording of each weekly online session, which allowed them to overcome difficulties linked to connection problems, not uncommon in remote areas from where some participants join the Course.
- **Accessibility of course materials and tools:** Several participants appreciated the fact that the

“

Having facilitators who are experts in the field, not only in knowledge but also in practice, was key to my learning”

Former participant

Course provides students with a rich set of materials, including PowerPoint (PPT) presentations, academic articles, audio-visual materials, key humanitarian guidance manuals and other relevant tools. As a participant said, “I still regularly go back to the course materials now, five years after I attended the course”. A USB key with all the materials is provided to participants of residential courses, and all materials are accessible and downloadable on the Moodle platform.

3.3.2 Lecturers and experts

The Course is taught by expert facilitators who deliver, during face-to-face courses, a day or half a day of training on one of the topic areas. In line with the Course’s partnership-based model, most of the modules are developed and delivered by representatives of partner organisations, with other modules delivered by other expert organisations and individual experts. While the group of facilitators has been relatively stable over the past years, this approach has ensured quality control and a degree of sustainability in the facilitation of the Course. In addition, and in line with a strategy developed in October 2021, the Course has started to involve survivor representatives as teachers in the online course: previously, survivors’ involvement had only happened in the training in Uganda.

A few challenges were also raised. Several interviewees said that they would have benefited from a stronger focus

on **helping participants to think through application in their context** rather than simply applying a set of rules.

An additional concern raised was the extent to which facilitators were strongly identified with a particular organisational perspective or positioning on certain issues. One way to address this would be to have co-facilitators and/or have facilitators interact with other topics that they are not primarily responsible for. While this would increase the amount of time demanded of facilitators, it is likely that the benefits would be significant. It would also create more of a dialogue on some of these issues and ensure that learners are able to get more of a grasp of some of the debate and complexity around the different topics. An alternative/addition would be to ensure that meetings with all teachers are scheduled regularly, in parallel and in addition to Steering Committee meetings, to enable cohesion, critical cross-cutting discussions, and group spirit.

Importantly, where courses have involved survivor facilitators, this has acted as an antidote to these challenges. It has grounded the discussion in the realities faced by survivors rather than organisations and allowed for a subtle but relevant shift from a course perspective predominantly centred on organisational protocols, procedures and programming, to one that is also centred around the narratives and vision of survivor leaders and groups.

This has created a complementary, dynamic dialogue between the two, and points to a strong advantage of more locally-based courses that can include survivor leaders as speakers or facilitators. Teaching students, both in the online and the face-to-face course, has been a positive experience for the two survivor leaders who were interviewed.

“

When survivors speak, you face reality”

Survivor facilitator

3.3.3 Teaching contexts

As outlined above, the course has taken place in Geneva and in Uganda and has taken place both on-line and face-to-face. All of these different formulations or locations were seen to have both advantages and disadvantages to them, which are summarised briefly in this section.

Online and face-to-face teaching

Online: Not surprisingly, the interviews point to both positives and negatives in doing the course on-line. On the one hand, the prompt development of the on-line course enabled the Centre to continue delivering the course during 2020 and 2021 without interruptions, in a period when Covid-related travel restrictions made it impossible for partners' staff to travel to Geneva or Uganda and impeded any form of gathering. The online course has also proved to be more inclusive as it is accessible to a diverse group of people who would be unable to travel, including due to visa restrictions (thus enabling the participation of people from certain areas/countries), time availability (facilitating participation by managers), or cost (the cost of participation being reduced to the course alone, without airfare, visa and accommodation costs).

Due to a higher degree of self-directed study, the online course also allows participants more time to reflect on what they are learning and on their own practice, as it takes place over 8 weeks rather than 5 days. Feedback from participants suggests that they appreciated the fact that this approach allowed for a gradual but longer learning process and content absorption, as it enabled them to reflect on their work context and apply knowledge in practice. This more spread-out structure also enabled students to do the course alongside their ongoing work commitments and reduced the number of consecutive hours that participants spent in webinars.

UNIQUE BENEFITS

Face-to-face

- Relations and interactions with participants and trainers
- Strong sense of group
- Possibility to debrief regularly
- Networking and bonding with other participants

Online

- More gradual, learning process
- More time to reflect on applying learning in practice
- Compatibility between work and course attendance

However, it was clear that what was lost in terms of relational interaction was significant. There was general consensus that, when discussing a topic as complex as sexual violence, face-to-face interaction was important.

Face-to-face: The reactions to the online course point to many of the pros and cons of face-to-face teaching. The in-person nature of residential courses was seen as invaluable by many, particularly the opportunity for interaction and discussions in plenary and small groups among participants. Participants particularly valued the opportunity to share some of the challenges with colleagues working in similar or comparable situations, fostering a strong sense of bonding within the group. When asked whether participants would prefer a face-to-face or online course, one survey respondent said, "The face-to-face modality is better since it ensures vital interaction especially on critical and sensitive training topics which encourages participants also to debrief, share and express themselves emotionally and freely."

Geneva and Uganda

None of the participants have attended the course in both locations, which makes direct comparisons a challenge. However, looking at the interviews with Course facilitators and partners, and at the feedback from the course in the different locations, a number of key areas emerged.

Uganda: It was clear that those who had attended the Course in Uganda recognised the strength of the increased interaction and of the proximity to the operational context. One participant described it as "far more grounded in reality."⁹ In particular, the close collaboration with the Refugee Law Project, which works with survivors of sexual violence and various survivor groups, was seen as extremely valuable. As one former participant said, "We got to work with those who have a lot more experience. A group of survivors would come and stay the night at the hotel, and we would have a session with someone working with survivors, and then a panel discussion with survivors. It made a huge impression on participants."¹⁰

Geneva: At the same time, many of those interviewed saw the value in continuing to hold the course in Geneva. A Geneva-based course draws on those operating in head offices, allows participants to interact with those based in this specific political and institutional context, and creates the opportunity for a strong geographical spread in both participants and content.

⁹ Former Steering Committee member.

¹⁰ Post-course feedback by a former participant.

Localisation

However, there was general agreement that the benefits of a move towards a more localised, contextually relevant approach to various global regions outweighs the negatives, and this appears to be the direction of travel for the Course.

The issue of relatability and accessibility was referred to repeatedly in feedback: not only in terms of the specific regional contexts in which affected populations live and people are working, but also in terms of having relevant local partners engaged in an ongoing mutual learning, the networks of individuals working on sexual violence, and the potential to create communities of responders. One interviewee also mentioned the importance that study field visits would have to increase participants' understanding of the reality on the ground, and to be exposed to practical realities and living examples of "what works" to address sexual violence.

In 2021, seven years after the delivery of the first course in Geneva, the Steering Committee agreed to work towards the 'contextualisation' of the mainstream international Course to two different world regions. At the time of writing, funds have been raised for this purpose and initial preparatory work has started. Among the various complexities that need to be reflected upon from the start of the process is to ensure a diverse group of partners and knowledge holders have an equal seat at the table, and that power relationships and dynamics are managed in such a way as to build authentic synergy and 'cross-pollination'.

3.3.4 Developing and maintaining a safe learning space

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, and the possible impact that reading, studying and discussing sexual violence can exert on people's emotional wellbeing, the Course has always paid attention to establishing and preserving a safe learning space.

Feedback from the majority of participants shows that the Course, whether online or face to face, offers an emotionally safe space to discuss, explore, reflect, self-reflect, and share ideas and experiences around sensitive issues. While this feedback is positive, it is important that those running the Course give ongoing



The learning environment was very open, communicative and welcoming”

Former Participant

consideration and thought to the issue of what constitutes a safe learning space, what aspects could potentially jeopardise it, and what the Centre's responsibility is in preserving it and ensuring participants have access to a sufficient level of safe support in their own contexts.

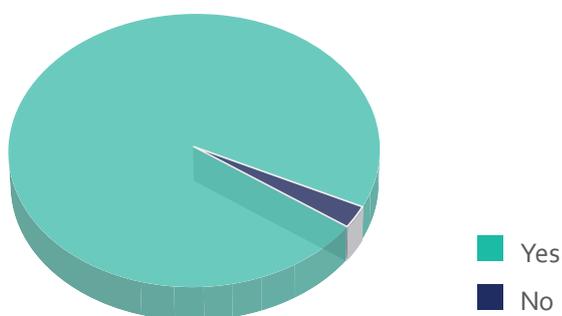
In both residential and online courses, ground rules and values are established from the start, and messages around the potential impacts of participation in the Course and the importance of self-care are shared at the outset by Course coordinators. In the face-to-face course, a daily debriefing moment was created at the end of each day, often in the garden or in an outside area, to check in with everybody and reinforce a sense of togetherness. Informal moments such as during meals, coffee breaks and a dinner party on one of the evenings, also provide time for team building and socialising.

For online courses, the lack of these informal opportunities has an impact on the ability of students to socialise and interact as a group. Following suggestions made by previous participants, Course coordinators established a 30-minute 'Post-class café' after each class to allow for more informal discussion and networking.

Additionally, a 'Wellbeing room' on the online platform was created, to raise awareness among participants about the possible impacts of engaging in the Course and about the importance of self-care, to share resources with participants, and to encourage them to identify support resources and systems within their own organisations on staff health and psychosocial support. However, it has been more difficult for the Centre to ensure that all participants have available options for emotional debriefing and psychological support should they want to.

¹⁰ Post-course feedback by a former participant.

Did you feel that it was a safe learning environment?



While ongoing support is probably available in some organisations, including remotely (such as psychosocial hotlines etc.), it is important not to assume that this is the case for smaller organisations, researchers or independent participants. For online courses, therefore, where the classroom and the groups play less of a 'containment' role as compared to residential classes, and where participants are constantly exposed to potential stressors from their surrounding work/life environments, there needs to be sufficient identification of support needs.

It is clear, therefore, that there needs to be an ongoing effort to understand what constitutes a safe learning space for different groups of learners and to continuously monitor, review and involve participants in defining and redefining what this means in practice. Discussions with participants, coordinators and trainers point to the fact that the Centre needs to position the concept of safety at the intersection of a number of areas and components including gender, diversity, inclusivity, physical and technological safety, teaching styles, methods and tools, participants' interactions, abuse prevention and safeguarding policy and mechanisms, self-care systems and mechanisms, internal and external support, and the larger organisational/institutional context.

This section, therefore, has explored the learning that goes on within the Course, organised around the three sub-areas of Participants, Content and Delivery. It has shown that while few managers attended the Course in the initial years, a deliberate effort to include them has led to the majority of those trained over the years falling into this category. This focus on those individuals who are likely to

be in a position to foster change within their projects and organisations has been vital to the objectives of the Course, creating a 'critical mass' within organisations on sensitivity towards sexual violence. It has also allowed for peer exchange between those working at similar levels within organisations, and between medical and non-medical practitioners. While a number of recommendations are made to make minor changes in the participants, content and delivery of the Course, feedback from participants is overwhelmingly positive and many of these changes are already being implemented.

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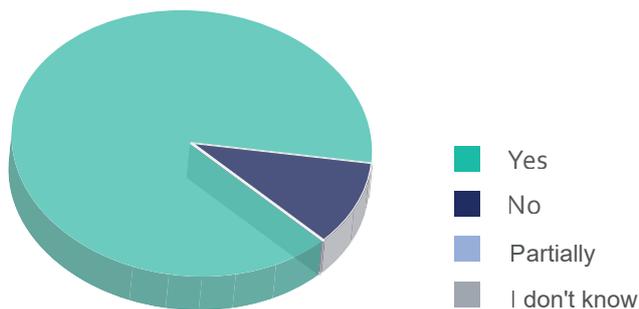
— Evaluation of Outcomes:
Knowledge, Attitudes,
Practice and Impact

This Section focuses on how the Course has changed learners' attitudes towards sexual violence; the impact it has had on the way in which participants work both at an individual and institutional level; and, therefore, the wider impact it has had on survivors and local contexts.

4.1 Knowledge

When asked whether the Course has increased participants' knowledge of the topic area in the Survey, an overwhelming majority of respondents (89.5%) answered yes while the remaining (10.5%) answered partially.

Would you say the Course increased your knowledge of sexual violence in conflict and emergency settings?



When asked to give an example of content areas that people learned the most, the two that were most frequently mentioned were the incorporation of a survivor-centred approach to responses and sexual violence against men and boys.

Examples of what they learned on the issue of **survivor-centredness** included, inter alia, references to the importance of incorporating safe and ethical procedures and approaches in programmes; the need for all projects to prioritise survivors' needs, rights and preferences; the necessity to work on staff attitudes towards survivors so that no harm is done and empathic esupport is provided; and the importance of considering services as part of a holistic response.

The centrality of the survivor-centred approach aspect in respondents' answers mirrors the centrality this framework occupies in the curriculum and how it is mainstreamed across the spectrum of modules. The

“

[It] enabled people to step outside of their organisational structures and think about sexual violence from a thematic perspective”

Survey respondent

mainstreamed across the spectrum of modules. The findings also point to how survivor-centredness was successfully embedded as a framework for learning, debate and coordination independently of participants' organisations.

In relation to the module on **addressing sexual violence against men and boys**, a significant number of participants from the Survey talked of it as being an “eye opener”, reflecting similar feedback from course-specific feedback over the years. Aspects of this topic that participants saw as particularly new and relevant included learning about the evidence of the scale of sexual violence

“

Initially we don't seem to care about the male survivors majorly for lack of experience to engage with them. But the training exposed me to effective ways of working with male survivors during emergencies”

Survey respondent

against men and boys in conflict settings, how to build inclusive services that enable disclosure by and access for male survivors, and the importance of being attuned to physical and behavioural signs of sexual violence in men and boys, including those with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions.

These and other findings show how the introduction of a module on sexual violence against men and boys has been a defining moment in the trajectory of the course. When it was introduced, the module, designed and delivered by Refugee Law Project (RLP) – a pioneer organisation in the field working with male survivors – was included early on in the curriculum to ensure that participants incorporated a gender inclusive lens across all modules. The positive and often ‘destabilising’ role of this thematic topic seems to have contributed to amplifying this issue on the agenda of the Steering Committee organisations and to indirectly influencing and nuancing partners’ internal efforts in this area.

Beyond these two main areas, Survey respondents also mentioned that the Course had increased their knowledge of issues around **medical care** (including forensic examinations and pregnancy management), ethical aspects to **data collection, prevention and risk mitigation, and access to justice** for survivors of sexual violence and/or legal dimensions to sexual violence care.

4.2 Attitudes

Building learners’ capacity, including their attitudes towards and understanding of sexual violence, is critical to bringing about change. When asked if their attitude had changed as a result of completing the course, 75% of the said yes (53%) or partially (22%), and the rest (25%) said no.

Of those who answered ‘yes’ or ‘partially’, when asked to give an example of how their attitude had changed, the majority of answers included the following key areas:

- **An increased and nuanced awareness of the issues of sexual violence, particularly in situations of conflict.** Some participants referred to a shift the course has operated in them in terms of an evidence-based and broader understanding of sexual violence and its impacts. Some of the comments by participants included: “I pay more attention to the topic in a less stereotypical manner”; “I realised how multidimensional the issue is, that it

demands a holistic, multidisciplinary response and working relationships/partnerships with a wide range of actors.”¹¹

- **An improved ability to talk about the issue,** for instance through having a better understanding of the wider context in which sexual violence takes place, a stronger familiarity in using the language around sexual violence, and enhanced confidence around discussing and addressing the issue in their work contexts. This is to be considered particularly relevant for the role of managers, whose ability to discuss this issue with their teams and other decision-makers in their organisations and local communities is of high importance.

- **A better understanding of the importance of sexual violence responses and programmes alongside a strong sense of the possible.** An attitude change that was captured in the evaluation was that of participants whose sense of barriers and challenges in addressing this issue has diminished as a result of attending the course. Several participants conveyed a shift from a position of ‘it’s too difficult to address this’ to ‘it’s possible despite the challenges’, which has powerful potential to influence practice. As one respondent said, “There is always a way to care for a survivor if you want to, regardless of the barriers in the system.”¹²

- **Enhanced attitude towards survivors:** A crucial shift the Course has enabled is reflected by participants whose attitudes towards survivors and/or survivor groups have changed since attending the course. References to how the Course has enabled or strengthened their empathic, supportive and empowering approach to survivors were mentioned in several of the responses to the Survey.

- **Stronger awareness of male survivors and the need for appropriate responses:** Linked to the point above, the Course has particularly impacted the attitude of participants towards considering the needs of different groups of survivors. Some participants have shifted their attitude from “men cannot be raped” to “we acknowledge that this happens”. It is evident that the Men of Hope Refugee Association in Uganda (MOHRAUG) and the male survivor advocates who have been interacting with the students in the context of this class for several years, have played a major role in fostering awareness around male survivors’ needs and realities. Another, and consequent, shift that is evident from the findings is from a ‘one size fits all’ approach to an understanding that

¹¹ Interview with a former facilitator.

¹² Survey respondent.

responses are not neutral inasmuch as they might serve certain groups while failing to provide adequate entry points or responses for others. “I learned that when setting up sexual violence clinics we should consider male victims and have a pathway that provides access to them”²³ comments a respondent.



The encounter with the groups and with survivor representatives showed me the survival, agency and activism part, which impacted and enriched my way of seeing and interacting with survivors”

Survey respondent

Overall, these findings demonstrate how the Course has created a chain reaction of change in individual attitudes towards this topic and its subtopics. With managers and technical advisors as the main target group of this course, and with findings under the Practice section below hinting at increased participants' initiative in building operations and capacity of their teams and partners in this area, it can be reasonably assumed that the individual attitude change this course generated was a catalyst for change in attitude at the project and teams level.

4.3 Practice

The findings also demonstrate that the Course has had a meaningful impact on participants' practice in responding to sexual violence. When asked whether their practice had changed as a result of the Course, 87% either said yes (54%) or partially (33%), while 13% of participants said either no (8%) or that they did not know (5%).

Of those in the former category, when asked to describe an example of how their practice had changed, the following were the core themes that came through, with a sample of specific examples given:

- **Improved quality of programmes, strategy, preparation and monitoring:** This is the area where most participants said their practice has improved as a result of their participation in the Course. The Course has improved participants' ability to better conceptualise, prepare and implement projects in this area, with increased skills being perceived in the ability to ensure that quality, safety and confidentiality are embedded in both new and existing programmes. Some participants in management positions highlighted how their participation in the course has sparked their ability to create new programmes and to better mainstream sexual violence response across the sectors and operations.

- **Better coordination and partnerships with other actors:** This is also an area where participants see most change as a result of their engagement in the Course, with countless examples of how collaboration with other international and national actors has either started anew or become stronger, closer, and survivor-centred. The aspects of improved collaboration mentioned by participants include increased information sharing, creation of referral pathways, active participation in multi-stakeholder meetings such as those within the sub-cluster working group.

- **Improved capacity-building initiatives:** After attending the course, a large number of participants have developed new or improved existing capacity-building initiatives led by their organisations, with the element of survivor-centredness emerging as one of the most mentioned features of these courses. Initiatives go from general sensitisation sessions for staff of various profiles to technical training for first line providers. Participants mentioned a number of target groups that benefited from these training initiatives – colleagues, health and psychosocial staff in health structures, national governmental and non-governmental partners, GBV sub-cluster members, being those most mentioned.

- **Better attention to male survivors and specific groups:** Participants' increased awareness towards male-directed sexual violence has translated for some into practical programming decisions towards a better inclusion of male survivors in operations' target groups. A good number of examples mentioned by respondents go in the direction of ensuring that awareness-raising materials are inclusive of male survivors and of various groups of survivors, of creating specific entry points and referral systems for male survivors and child survivors, and ensuring that capacity-building efforts include specific skills focused on receiving and supporting male survivors.

²³ Survey respondent.

- **Working with the community and survivor groups:** A smaller but relevant number of participants mentioned how the course led them to gradually “localise” sexual violence interventions, in terms of rooting their work into communities, better involving community leaders and survivor groups, and developing the idea of family and community-based interventions.

Those who said their practice had *not* changed as a result of the Course generally said it was either because they had moved on to a different line of work, or that they had not yet had the opportunity to implement changes. One participant mentioned that he wished the Course included more practical exercise to help participants transfer theory into practice - a comment that echoes the feedback often emerged during post-course evaluations and that could be addressed via the development of cases studies and practical exercise based on fictional or participants’ operational scenarios.

These findings point to a very **robust correlation between learning, attitude change and work practice**, and in particular to changes that are highly significant for the ultimate target group, namely sexual violence survivors. This shows not only that the Course content clearly links learning with attitudes and practice, but also demonstrates the importance of training those who have the ability to implement change on the ground. This finding is backed up by an internal evaluation done by ICRC in 2017 after a total of 84 members of their staff had done the course to date. It found a strong increase in participants’ confidence to work on sexual violence, and examples of concrete actions undertaken by the participants demonstrated that the increase in confidence had impacted on their everyday work.¹⁴

Furthermore, the evaluation suggests that **targeting decision makers holds a strong potential of facilitating an organisational shift in policy decisions, internal norms and practice**. Some interviewees flagged the fact that all of the core partners have developed internal training on sexual violence that targets a higher number of participants, have increased dedicated human resources, and have brought sexual violence to the level of an operational priority. While these changes in practice have certainly not been a direct result of the course alone – and no doubt vary between organisations – it is clear that the impetus created by training significant numbers of individuals within organisations who are in a management position has been influential in this happening.

4.4 Impact

From the beginning, the Course has deliberately focused on training managers in order to inform structural changes that are needed within many organisations and across the spectrum of humanitarian sectors and programmes. While changes in knowledge, attitudes and practice point to some of the ways in which individuals have changed their practice and influenced others around them, this does not necessarily amount to broader institutional change. Institutional change is not an easy process and is often hard to measure or attribute to one particular source or activity. However, the findings point to a number of ways in which the Course has contributed to wider change that ultimately has an impact on the core beneficiaries of the Course – namely, survivors of sexual violence.

The findings point to a series of areas where long-term durable change has been enabled by participants’ and their teams’ change in knowledge, attitudes and practice.

- **First, an increased understanding and capacity** of team, managers, partners and duty bearers. This was the area of change participants most highlighted when asked about the longer-term impact of their practice change. Some participants highlighted that this change is more likely to be long term and sustainable when capacity building training is cyclically implemented.
- **Second, improved access and outcomes for survivors.** Several participants mentioned that the changes enacted that were prompted by the course ended up expanding the access to responses for survivors. For instance, one participant has implemented one-stop centres in seven districts of Mali, demonstrating a significant expansion of practice with a large impact potential at a national level. Other participants described how various technical and strategic decisions at project level enabled access for an increased number of survivors who were able to receive care and support, with a specific accent being put on the increased access for male survivors. As one participant working in a medical organisation said, “My team has been detecting more cases and has improved their referrals of similar cases to appropriate service providers as well as providing further education on SV/GBV.”¹⁵
- **Third, increased collaboration and trust among actors, including duty bearers.** A significant number of participants connected an increased access to

¹⁴ ICRC internal report, “Sexual Violence in Emergencies” Seminar, ‘Snapshot of ICRC participants’ perceptions’, September 2017.

¹⁵ Survey respondent.

care for survivors to increased collaboration with other actors, including those who are often known to lack a survivor-centred approach. The testimony of some participants who increased their project's collaboration with law enforcement agencies is telling in this regard and highlights the potential longer-term impact of these efforts with such crucial national actors.

- **Fourth, increased or improved strategies, investment, and implementation at an organisational level.** This was mentioned by several high-level managers whose efforts have led to the creation of specific mandated strategies or bodies within their own organisation, an impact with strong potential for sustainability. A small number of participants mentioned how their organisation's effort brought some potentially longer-term results in terms of institutionalisation of guidelines. As one former participant told us, "We persuaded the Ministry of Health to implement an assessment of local practices to identify and generate guidelines to approach sexual violence from the perspective of health and how it should integrate other institutions."¹⁶

For those who had not seen significant impact, some of the reasons given included the fact that the Course was too short, or focused too much on the foundational aspects of programming in this thematic area. The lack of additional financial or human resources to enact the change that participants would have liked to see was mentioned by several respondents as an impediment to concrete change, as was the challenge of staff members completing the Course and subsequently moving on to other roles or organisations. Similar to the areas of change outlined under "Practice", some respondents said that the Course was not practical enough to enable a real change in practitioners' work.

These findings point to the importance of having a **critical mass of people from a particular organisation doing the course, and of providing them with ongoing follow-up support and supervision, in order to change not just individual but also institutional approaches to the issue.** As one participant from an organisation that has had an important number of individuals do the course said, "Over time, it became 'normalised' [within my organisation] to speak about sexual violence."¹⁷ This points, in turn, to the crucial role of organisations in supporting trained individuals to enable the transfer of learning into practice. A number of interviewees and partner representatives mentioned the positive impact of investments their organisations have done into that go beyond the mere

participation of staff members in the course to include resources, mentoring schemes, and the creation of internal communities of practice. In other words, those organisations that were able to embed training in an enabling and supportive organisational and operational culture were more likely to enable significant and durable change both inside and outside of their organisation.

"The course was an eye opener. I interacted with so many practitioners, and this was important because we [researchers] do policy recommendations and must interact meaningfully with those actors who interact routinely with survivors. We often do not have these engagements. I would definitely recommend this course to researchers on sexual violence in humanitarian settings".

Former participant

One area where broader change was most evident – although, again, this is likely to have been the result of multiple factors – was in **responses to male survivors.** One facilitator noticed a change amongst participants who came to the Course: "The shift from feeling we have to persuade people about sexual violence against men, to having conversations and people saying, 'yes, we understand it is an issue but we don't know how to deal with it', that's the biggest shift I've seen in the past years.

¹⁶ Interview with a former participant.

¹⁷ Interview with former participant.

I'm not sure when that happened, or whether it was the result of a critical mass of people going back to their organisations and discussing it. But I do know that it started by putting the issue on the map."¹⁸ It is realistic to suggest, therefore, that the creation of this "critical mass" within some of the biggest global humanitarian organisations, coupled with policy discussions at the Steering Committee level, have contributed to the creation of an environment in partner organisations that is more conducive to addressing sexual violence against men and boys.

Another area of actual or potential change is within the wider **research domain**. While researchers and scholars have not so far been the main intended target group of the course, the potential change that can be achieved by involving researchers more in the course was raised during this evaluation. According to a participant who was a researcher in the Women Peace and Security field at the time of attending the Course, the Course was critical in helping her to incorporate ethical research methods into her practice. It also empowered her to put sexual violence response on the map of her own organisation. There is a strong argument, therefore, for deliberately

targeting this group. It would influence evidence generation, policy making and donor decision-making and would also be in line with the course's original theory of change – namely training those who are best positioned to make strategic decisions to tackle sexual violence in conflicts and emergencies.

This section has analysed how the Course has changed learners' attitudes towards sexual violence; the impact it has had on the way in which participants work both at an individual and institutional level; and, therefore, the wider impact it has had on survivors and local contexts. Drawing primarily on findings from the survey and follow-up interviews with individual participants, it has demonstrated that a key area of change has been a greater understanding and awareness of survivor-centred approach and addressing sexual violence against men and boys. Survey respondents also highlighted how the Course had increased their knowledge of issues around medical care (including forensic examinations and aspects), ethical aspects to data collection, prevention and risk mitigation, and access to justice for survivors of sexual violence and/or legal dimensions to sexual violence care.

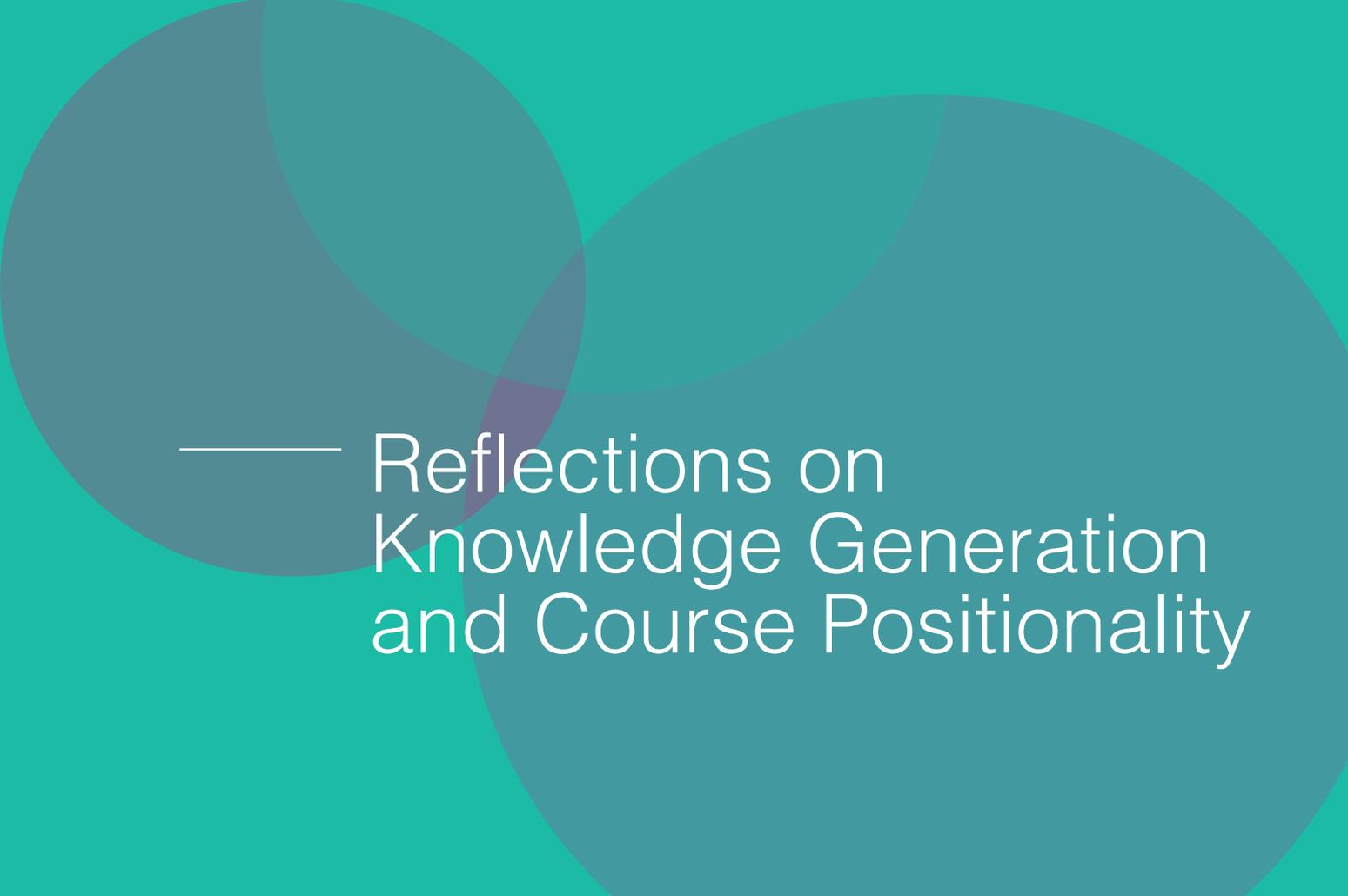
Impact of the Course: One participant's story

A former participant working for a medical organisation in a conflict context and within a restrictive social and security environment, explained how he had implemented changes in a project he was managing. Over a three-month period after the end of the course, his project increased access to care for survivors, with a sharp increment in the number of survivors who both spontaneously accessed care and were referred by partner organisations, and saw an increase in adolescent survivors and adult male survivors who accessed services. In his view, this outcome was achieved as the result of a combination of measures that he, as a mid-manager, implemented through the team under his direct supervision; and as a result of advocating for change within the larger project context. These measures included training of the team on how to identify clinical and silent signs of sexual violence in various populations and groups, the creation of specific referral systems and entry doors into the service for child and male survivors, the recruitment of GBV educators and the initiation of awareness-raising sessions and focus group discussions within the community, and the collection of feedback from survivors who were received and supported. He also shared reflections on the important role he played as a manager in ensuring careful and continued support and supervision for team members who are at the forefront of response, particularly those with a history of abuse and who were supported and accompanied in their professional and personal journey.

Interview with a former participant

¹⁸ Interview with facilitator and member of Steering Committee.

05



— Reflections on
Knowledge Generation
and Course Positionality

The previous sections have outlined the core evaluation of the Course. This final section dives deeper into the way in which knowledge is generated and the way in which the Course positions itself within this.

All the evidence points to the fact that this Course continues to fill an important and specific niche. This niche is one that involves some of the largest global humanitarian actors, that focuses specifically on sexual violence response, that targets managers and decision makers, that brings different profiles together in the same space and that combines multiple sectors and stakeholders, and that combines academic approaches with practice. Most importantly, a niche where academic institutions and humanitarian organisations increasingly work with survivor leaders and groups as both experts and partners in ways that allow them to increasingly shape the narrative around sexual violence and to inform interventions.

While the findings point unequivocally to the Course's success, **it is also important to reflect on how it has influenced, and been influenced by, broader issues** around the way in which knowledge on sexual violence is produced, how methodologies for response are developed, the actors involved in this and the power dynamics that exist around it – in other words, the broader ecosystem that the Course exists within.

Ultimately, the Course was initiated in a western-based institution in Geneva, a city that is symbolically and institutionally also the focal point for global humanitarian policymaking and operations. Its positioning, therefore, is not neutral. Alongside the many strengths that this institutional setting holds – not least the profile and recognition that it has given the Course – from the outset there has been an awareness of some of the corresponding limitations and potential pitfalls. When looked at over the last 8 years, the Course has gradually evolved or shifted in a number of key areas, which point to the direction that it might take in the future. This final section, therefore, reflects on a number of different areas based on the findings of the evaluation.

5.1 Engagement with survivors

From the outset, survivor-centredness has been part of the Course's ethos and approach and the inclusion of survivors' voices in the Course has always had the unequivocal support of the Centre. However, there was also an honest recognition that figuring out what this means in practice, what role survivors themselves should play in the complex Course architecture, is an ongoing challenge. In many respects, it represents one of the key journeys that the Course has been on.

While there was no suggestion that the Course has somehow 'got it right', there was a clear sense that the notion of what it means for the Course to be survivor-centred has shifted significantly, and that survivor-centredness has gone from being a concept mainstreamed throughout the training to an understanding of **survivors as critical and central to the conversation**. This was evident, for instance, in the extent to which this was almost a lens through which many of those interviewed for this evaluation viewed the Course. Specifically, there was a recognition of the desire to ensure that the Course "brings us to their reality," not 'just' as testimony givers where their voice was heard, but as unique knowledge holders whose expertise is centred.

“

I appreciated the Course because it made me feel like we're connected to the whole world, that you feel our pain. Sexual violence is against our culture, it cancels us. But this helps us remember.”

Survivor Facilitator

While significant progress has been made over the years – including having survivors as teachers on the course; having survivor groups as interlocutors to participants on the course in Uganda; and developing a module focused exclusively on survivors’ advocacy and network – there is still scope for more reflection needed on the underlying power dynamics that inevitably lie behind and shape the Course context. For instance, the inclusion of survivors as teachers has not yet been matched by ensuring that they are part of decision-making regarding the Course. Although they are de facto creators and re-creators of Course content and approaches, **survivors are not yet members of the Steering Committee** and the interaction between the Course and survivor leaders is often facilitated by one of the core partners.

Another example is the issue of the scholarship entry requirements. The requirement to have a Bachelors’ Degree undermines or deprioritises other criteria, such as demonstrated leadership roles, therefore **excluding some survivor leaders from participating in the Course**. As one interviewee said “the academic requirement runs counter to the whole purpose and objective of providing a space for survivor leaders to participate in the course in the first instance – to bring their voices and experiences to the course so that practitioners are better able to design interventions that can meaningfully address survivors’ realities [...] Moreover, taking this approach [with a degree as a requirement] may create further inequalities of discrimination within the survivors’ groups. [...]”¹⁹. These internal inconsistencies, therefore, are problematic, particularly from an intersectional perspective. As the same interviewee put it, “I think the issue of intersectionality vividly comes into play here – it is often those who are already “more” vulnerable, especially on the basis of their socio-economic status, which often includes low literacy levels or lack of access to education, that are disproportionately exposed to and targeted for GBV, including during conflict and emergency situations”.

Furthermore, a key area that will need careful reflection is the issue of how the Course and any involvement with it benefits survivors’ lives and communities. The survivor teachers, who are also leaders of survivor groups, interviewed for this evaluation talked of the importance for the Course and its partners to **take into account the issue of resources for the communities that they represent**. This not only points to the complex area of ensuring that those who are involved in lecturing receive adequate compensation for their time, but also that the communities they represent see meaning as well as

benefit from the Course – either directly or indirectly. It pushes partners to understand the idea of “survivor-centeredness” in a new and more radical way. It shows the **false/problematic separation between teaching a course on sexual violence in conflict and emergency settings** and engaging meaningfully with survivors’ communities in those settings in ways that go beyond the strict boundaries of a Course in which survivor communities are equal partners. The implications of this framework are political and might involve a further shift from survivor-centredness as a primarily operational framework for humanitarian interventions and a pedagogical framework for Course delivery, to an “internal framework” that interrogates the Centre’s very role and positioning. In other words, if the Centre runs a Course aimed at influencing policies and operations to address sexual violence, it must also embrace a more consistent role in upholding survivors’ communities and be shaped by them.

5.2 Institutional evolution towards greater localisation

The history of the Course shows how it has been shaped by a number of key institutions and has also shaped them. It has also increasingly drawn in individuals and institutions based in the global south into the epicentre of the Course. This expansion has been critical as it has not only diversified the voices of those engaged in core discussions about every aspect of the Course, but has also shifted the location of expertise and allowed space for a plurality of knowledge systems.

While making Uganda one of the course locations has been a key landmark, the current intention is to further localise the Course. The findings suggest that this trajectory is critical. Localised efforts are backed up by the notion that rooting the Course in local realities, expertise and partnerships makes it more able to address and reflect regional and local contextual and linguistic realities. Following this trajectory further might involve localising the target groups, centring regional expertise and sensitivities, developing meaningful relations with local and regional partners, and creating locally owned curricula and tools, which is likely to contribute substantially to effective learning and evidence-generation processes and, ultimately, to improved outcomes in addressing sexual violence in each context.

¹⁹ Interview with Steering Committee member.



Localisation provides much more practicality – it’s more relatable. It creates a network and a space where practitioners can engage with one another.”

Former Steering Committee member

At the same time, there might be a place for the Geneva-based course to continue alongside localised courses. The Geneva course continues to create an axis for participants who might not otherwise be able to get into a larger, extra-national conversation. By allowing those who normally do not have access to places where power is effectively concentrated, their voices are heard in ways that would not normally be possible. This, therefore, continues to play an important function. As one interviewee said, “You can’t just bring the Course to Uganda, you also need to take Uganda to the Course”²⁰, demonstrating that this also means bringing marginal and relevant voices to the ‘Centre’. In addition, to retain synergy and unity between these two ‘types’ of course (Geneva-based and local), it is important to create continuity, for instance through bringing on board local NGOs and groups as equal partners, and enable a continuous and dynamic dialogue between these various Course realities. They can then learn from each other, creating synergy between different iterations of the Course.

5.3 Creating a community of people who have a shared understanding and approach

While the Course in and of itself has had an impact, to influence and shape wider context, there is significant thinking taking place about areas and activities that go beyond the ‘confines’ of a traditional course format. In part, this is recognition of the fact that the Course has created a “critical mass” of people inside a number of key organisations, as well as a diverse web of people across

sectors and across the globe with a common understanding of, and dedication to, addressing sexual violence in their role. As demonstrated in this evaluation, this has begun to have an impact on broader conversations about sexual violence, which is now more alert and open to new ways of looking at the challenges around it.

This progress suggests that it is important for ongoing reflection on how to use the Course as a platform for other forms of engagement. Keeping a core group of people together in some form will build momentum in this regard as it will enable the Course to be used as a catalyst for wider conversations and projects. For instance, a number of interviewees suggested the possibility of mentoring and/or coaching schemes in which practitioners are supported in transferring knowledge into practice. Being at the intersection of organisational, humanitarian and academic environments, the alumni network holds strong potential for fruitful peer teaching, learning, experience exchange and mutual support within the wider ecosystem. If the Centre can skilfully manage to maintain the momentum among alumni then it will have an ongoing impact well beyond the boundaries of the Course.

5.4 Part of a wider body of evidence

The evaluation has also shed light on how the wider context that partners, learners and survivors are all a part of, the elements that they bring into the classroom, are a source of knowledge and evidence generation and uptake that substantially adds value to what is prepared by facilitators. The findings show that the catalytic potential over the years of this interaction of field experience and classroom learning, therefore, is huge. Yet in order for that to happen to greatest effect, the practice-based knowledge and evidence that is created in the Course settings, in group discussions and in participants’ assignments, needs to be captured and inserted into policy and advocacy discussions around responses to sexual violence. Some of this has already happened in small, ad hoc ways – for instance through participating in four different panel events at the ICRC Humanitarian space in Geneva.

As one interviewee put it, the Course becomes not just about enhancing capacity and skills, “but planting a

²⁰ Interview with Steering Committee member.

seed for change.” This change, however, needs to be documented and packaged in such a way as to have an impact on wider policy and academic discussions. It would also give the Course greater visibility which, in turn, would increase its credibility and give it an even stronger voice.

In summary, therefore, this section has looked at the broader ecosystem in which the Course is operating: the importance of a genuine and continuous engagement with survivors and progressive centring of their agency, narratives and lived experiences; the current trajectory around institutional evolution and the move to greater localisation; the recognition of the need to create a community of alumni as practitioners who have a shared understanding and approach; and the place of the Course within a wider body of evidence on sexual violence in conflict and the importance of capturing practice-based knowledge and evidence created within the Course. It points to something of a “new era” for the Course, that pays more attention to the wider context and is aware of and continuously critiques the way in which knowledge is generated.

06

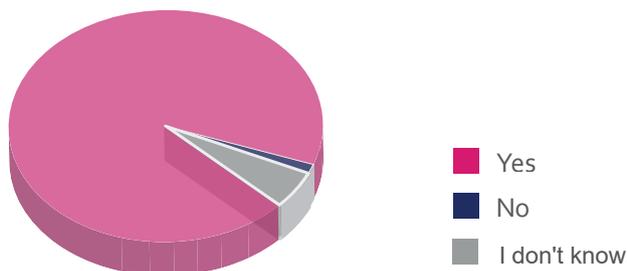


— Conclusion and
Recommendations

This evaluation has painted a picture of a Course which, when measured both quantitatively and qualitatively against its stated objectives, has been highly successful. To date, 475 professionals have been trained, many of whom are in management positions within their organisations, and there are multiple metrics that demonstrate this has had a positive impact on attitude and practice towards better addressing sexual violence in humanitarian contexts. These include increased projects to address survivors' needs, enhanced access for survivors to essential services, improved coordinated responses on the ground, and increased capacity of local teams and local actors. The findings also show that the Course has been catalytic in generating significant change at individual, project and organisational levels, and that many of the changes are a result of the dynamic interaction between these different levels.

The evaluation also demonstrates how the partnership model and ongoing inter-pollination between humanitarian practice, the academy, and survivors' spaces, has created opportunity for evidence generation, operational advancements, self-reflection and constructive debates in a climate and spirit of mutual care. Finally, and as the graph below demonstrates, demand for the Course remains high.

Following your attendance in this course, would you be interested in additional courses on addressing sexual violence in conflict and emergency settings?



In light of these findings, the evaluation makes a number of recommendations that are grouped into two sections: first, recommendations focused on strengthening learning; and second, building out some of the ideas outlined above to realise the opportunities for the Course to be 'more than a Course'.

Strengthening Learning – Participants, Content and Delivery

Participants

- While the training should remain targeted, there is scope to **deliberately target those who are currently missing from the current profile of participants**, for example by encouraging participation of students from local organisations, nationalities, and profiles less represented in the current cohort, including men. This will lead to richer dialogue, more effectiveness, and better outcomes for all groups of survivors.
- Specific focus should be put on increased **participation of survivor leaders** by dismantling any structural barriers to their attendance.
- In line with the Course's theory of change, the partners could specifically encourage **researchers** to attend the training, with a view to strengthening connections and conversations between practitioners and researchers and ultimately influencing policy discussions and the broader evidence base.

Content

- Consider **expanding topic areas** in both the main Course and through additional modules. Three key areas that came through the evaluation are:
 - Addressing the needs of survivors who experience intersecting discrimination and are particularly marginalised in current responses;
 - Livelihoods and economic and social opportunities for survivors;
 - A more holistic approach to the topic of pregnancy as result of rape. This should broaden the existing focus on providing safe abortion care to include a focus on how to better support children born of rape and their parents, families and communities.

- Based on the impact that the teaching on **sexual violence against men and boys** has had on previous participants, consider developing this area of training further to incorporate emerging evidence and allow more time for aspects that are often overlooked in humanitarian settings.

Delivery —————

Methods

- Ensure that all topics that are taught are first **embedded in the wider context and evidence-base** before considering specific organisational positions. This ensures a wider understanding of the existing evidence base and incorporates complementary approaches.
- Ensure a stronger **engagement with practical aspects**, for instance including more case studies and practical exercise, in addition to any theoretical underpinnings to foster praxis.
- Encourage all facilitators of a particular Course to come together before it starts to foster a sense of shared purpose and ownership and to identify important linkages between the various components and sessions/modules of the Course.

Teaching contexts

- Continue to hold the course in **both Geneva and Uganda**, alongside other localised adaptations that will unroll over the coming years.
- The **on-line version should also continue alongside in-person courses**. While the findings suggest there are limitations with the on-line version, it fulfils a particular need and enables participation that would otherwise often prove impossible (not least for refugee survivor participants who may struggle to get travel documentation), and thus remains relevant and effective and essential to building a diverse alumni network.
- In the on-line course, find ways to **increase interaction** both during on-line sessions and off-line among participants, to foster peer learning and networking. An increased use of audio-visual material is particularly important as it fosters interactive learning and thinking.

- In order to maintain the quality of the Course, ongoing **investment in human resources** is critical. Therefore, the Centre should ensure adequate investment in this area, not only to maintain the quality but to allow for any future development of the Course.

Knowledge generation and Course positionality

Continue to create a genuinely survivor-centred course —————

Being genuinely survivor-centred is deeply complex and touches on multiple issues. Therefore, it is important for the Steering Committee and others involved in decision-making to make time for an ongoing dialogue on what it means in practice to ensure that survivors are at the centre of the Course. In this regard, it is important to:

- Ensure that survivor **representatives and leaders from different regions are included in every aspect of the Course**, including as Steering Committee members, as expert lecturers, and as participants.
- Foster an approach that recognises that **survivors are not a homogenous category** and include a wide variety of constituencies with unique and overlapping specificities, across the globe. This heterogeneity should be reflected in survivors who lead, teach and attend the course.

Continue to become more rooted in the local —————

Course partners have already initiated a process of decentralisation and localisation of the Course in various regions of the world. The findings support this approach, with a number of recommendations linked to this:

- Ensure that the process is rooted in **meaningful and equal partnerships and centred on local expertise and participation**, and that attention is given to the transformation of power relations. Once the Course is established in various regions, one approach could be to rotate the Course around different regions, ensuring experience sharing and dynamic interactions between each.

- Ensure that **scholarships** for national NGOs and Community-based organisations (CBOs) are made available in each iteration of the Course, to mitigate barriers to participation for relevant participants at the local level.
- Alongside this decentralisation or location, ensure that the Course, and those who attend it, remain **connected to global conversations** and the broader context. Maintaining the Course in Geneva, albeit less regularly, could be one part of this. In addition, some of the ideas below in building a community of practice are also relevant to this.
- Invest time in working out how localised forms of the Course can be **sustainable** in terms of both financial and human resources.

Continue to invest in building a community of practice within and beyond the Course

With an average of over 60 participants being trained each year, the Course's alumni is an ever growing component of the Course's wider ecosystem. It holds significant potential for exchange of knowledge and experience, involvement in teaching and research initiatives, and measurement of impact on practice over time. In relation to this, the Centre could consider:

- Continuing the ongoing efforts of **structuring the alumni network** into an organic and dynamic community of practice that continues the learning experience after the end of the Course and promotes and participates in joint research, training and other projects. This process will demand adequate time and effort to be incorporated into Course plans, and will need human resource investment to be successful.
- Be more deliberate in creating and maintaining a **continuum of learning** that links the Course, alumni, research and other parallel projects (including practical ones working with survivors).

Build out the broader body of evidence

With the Centre situated at the intersection of research and humanitarian practice, there is a strong argument to be made for ensuring that the Course plays a catalytic role

in evidence generation and in strengthening the links between the academy and humanitarian practice. In particular, the Centre could consider:

- Building in a mechanism for **generating research within each Course**, for example by fostering small writing teams that link researchers with survivors and other practitioners attending the Course. However, it is vital that this is done in a way that is not extractive and that insists on equal partnership, centring local knowledge and authors, and equal authorship.
- Invest in **other activities alongside the Course**, including presenting papers at conferences, encouraging publication in journals (for instance through Special Issues) and through encouraging shorter comment pieces in organisational blogs and other internal publications. This could be done through a stronger involvement of the Steering Committee in Geneva, any future regional Standing Committees, research departments in partner organisations, and the alumni network, helping to promote opportunities and creating a network for joint submissions/approaches.

Annex 1 —

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Sara (Meg) Davis (2016-2020)
Laura Pasquero (2021-present)

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