

BURMA

Despite positive developments, such as the inclusion of sexual violence in the nationwide ceasefire agreement signed on 15 October 2015, PSVI continues to be an issue in Burma. The lack of officially held data, coupled with the culture of impunity and secrecy/hostility towards the media by the army, mean the extent of the problem is not fully known. Many crimes of sexual violence in conflict areas are assumed to go unreported.

1. What are the issues surrounding the stigma faced by survivors of sexual violence, their families, communities etc.

- Fear of reporting, due to shame and cultural narratives that define women's issues as "unspoken" issues, is greater when crimes are committed by members of armed groups, due to the risk of retaliation.
- When traditional mechanisms are used "reparation marriages" of the victim to the perpetrator may be ordered, which deters reporting.
- The sense of shame is so strong that many victims choose to go away from their families or communities to avoid blame and discrimination, and try and start a new life elsewhere.
- Some ethnic group's i.e Chins believe that sex outside of marriage is shameful and brings disgrace on the woman and her family. So, when women are raped they often prefer to keep silent about the crime than face censure from the community.

2. Who is doing something already in these countries incl. FCO, DFID, Champion countries, local initiatives (NGO, government, leaders)

- **UK** programmes will continue to deliver progress in rule of law, civil and political freedoms and media reform, including through working with international partners to help Burma sign up to and implement key international treaties and commitments.
- **UK co-hosted with Tearfund on 11 November 2016, hosted** a workshop on stigma experienced by survivors of sexual violence and children born as a result which would identify specific actions that need to be taken and lay the foundation for the development of a stigma action plan.
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3. Specific activities that need doing e.g. access to legal or medical care, judicial reform, evidence gathering etc.

- Encourage the Government to adopt a comprehensive law to address violence against women, and to uniformly enforce the 1959 Defence Services Act so that military perpetrators can be prosecuted in a transparent manner.¹
- Encourage the Government to promote women's equality and participation in the political process by appointing a Gender Advisor within the President's Office.
- Encourage men in armed forces and ethnic armed groups to use their authority and leadership to stop sexual violence and ensure protection of perpetrators and their commanding officers.

¹ SRSR Report: Conflict Related Sexual Violence 2016

- Lobby the Government to develop a Myanmar Women, Peace and Security Plan, including concrete action on PSVI.