

DOES WAR AFFECT GIRLS AND BOYS DIFFERENTLY?

QUOTES FROM CAP MEETINGS

“Both girls and boys are participating in the conflict, but boys are more likely to die because they are more directly involved.”

“Especially for boys, there is the violence. But violence is a strategy – boys do not take to violence because it is something natural for us. It is more a strategy because we realize that without violence, without committing violence, we cannot survive.”

“Even though both boys and girls are affected by the war, there is one big difference. Girls are more likely to be subjected to rape or sexual violence.”

“It is different for boys and girls when they are coming back [from being with the LRA rebels]. The boys come back without children. But us, we all have children from our time with the rebels. They are our children, you cannot leave this child, it is yours. But if you want to make a new life, start a new life with a man, you will always suffer because of this child. And the child will suffer too, because of you, because of your past in the bush.”

“The girls continue to do the domestic work and often they have to do even more because their parents are away or too sad and worried to work.”

“If a girl joins the paramilitary and then she leaves and comes home pregnant she is going to have a hard time. People will think she is available for sex. But if a boy comes back home, he is greeted like a hero.”

“For boys, they are expected to find work early. Families need the money. So boys stop being children when they start producing and realizing that

they are part of the work world. People look at them differently and behave differently with them. Because they are workers now, not children. So their childhood is shortened so much. For girls it is the opposite – they stay in the home, so they get more dependent.”

“In our country there are so many generations of conflict. The culture of machismo, of men’s culture, men’s world is very strong. What is happening here, with the armed groups, is an extreme version of that.”

“In Colombia there are some females who are participating with the armed groups. They stop being young. They become more like men, their feminine side disappears.”

“It is difficult when you discuss sexual discrimination and gender problems because they are not just issues, they represent ideas that have deep roots. It can be hard to find the beginning of those roots. For example, genital circumcision of girls. In my country it is widely practised. The girls can be very young – seven or eight years. People say that it is a religious practise. But if you delve deep in the Muslim religion, there is no evidence of that.

“So we have to think about mentalities. Some people see women solely as vessels for giving birth. This is typical attitude. With women too. They think that they are there to give birth, they are there to take care of the family. This is taught. We need to ask about the beginning of these ideas.”

“Things don’t change too much. For example, sometimes we have a meeting in the camp. They call for one from each family to come. You will see only men go to the meeting. The women will stay at home, and maybe two or three will get together – more for gossiping. Women cook, fill the water, clean the house and care for the children... It is still the same for my generation.”

“It is hard to be a female and to want to be strong. My father says that I am a bad girl, the girl that always wants to be the leader, the girl who wants to be strong. He says that is not a Cambodian girl, that is a European girl.”