

# Voices from Burundi

Findings from field research on insecurity within Burundi

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*“Since I was married, my husband was a drunkard and used to come home in the middle of the night. Whenever he came he accused me of sleeping with other men. He would beat me, burn me and wound me in my private parts”*

*Interviewee*

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## Introduction

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This report summarises the findings of the research carried out in five zones in Bururi and Rutana provinces in Burundi by Matana Diocese as part of the FCO funded project: “Building Resilience and Early Warning Systems to Reduce Sexual Violence in Conflict”.

Five research teams conducted group discussions and key informant interviews in five locations from 1 – 3 December 2016. The research was based on an adapted form of the Saferworld Gender Analysis of Conflict Toolkit. Research was conducted in Kirundi, team leaders then captured the findings in individual reports which were subsequently translated into English. The team leaders also attended a one day analysis workshop where the findings were discussed in more detail.

The research was used to develop a model for a conflict early warning system within the five zones. The findings and the proposed model were presented to the communities and further refined in the light of their feedback.

This research was carried out as part of the Building resilience and early warning systems to reduce sexual violence in conflict project. This project, which was funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office focused on preventing the spread and impact of sexual violence in conflict in Burundi.

Field work was carried out across five sites in Burundi in December 2016. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in Kirundi and then translated into English.

## Insecurity

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### Type of Insecurity

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) was the most common form of violence reported in the findings, with women and girls being subject to rape and beatings. A sense of lawlessness was also widely reported with instances of robbery and murder perceived as getting worse. Robbery is frequently associated with a desperate search for food as families increasingly suffer hunger and are unable to feed their families.

More subtle is the absence of any practical rights for women and girls who may be discarded by men at will and who then have no control over the household assets or wealth; finding themselves rejected by their own families and, without any means of livelihood they can easily be forced into prostitution. Where husbands die widows can also be forced to marry their brother-in-law. Throughout the research, women were described as property belonging to the man who, having paid a bride price, now owned her.

Polygamy, although illegal in Burundi, remains common and further undermines the rights of women and girls. Accounts were shared of men registering new wives in different communes, sometimes with false identity cards, in order to circumvent the law. Others cross the border to Tanzania and find new wives there. There is a widespread sense of impunity as many of those in positions of authority have more than one wife and do little to implement or promote the law.

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*“I am married, I have thirteen children and four are married already. My husband sold the cassava that we had harvested and went to spend the money with his other wife. He then took away all the things we had in the house; and left me with the little children. To survive and feed my children I have to borrow money or work for people. Some of the children do not go to school because I am not able to send them. ”*

*Interviewee*

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Under pressure, families break down and can often split up with the youth moving apart from their parents to find work while younger children eke out a living on the street. Travelling alone, young women become easy prey for abusers from within IDP or refugee camps or from militia and security forces.

Young girls are also vulnerable and can be withdrawn from school, they are then encouraged to dress as adults in order to attract a husband who will pay a bride price to the parents thus bringing in welcome cash and relieving the family of an additional mouth to feed. Too young, many either are unable to fall pregnant and so are thrown out for another wife or do fall pregnant and suffer from vaginal fistula leading to them being rejected by the new husband and unwelcome back with their own families. Civil society networks that used to provide some form of limited safety net for these girls are struggling to maintain support due to the levels of insecurity.

Levels of rape and sexual abuse have led to high rates of pregnancy. Girls who had been impregnated however are often thrown out by families and abandoned by the fathers, unable to feed their babies stories were told of girls leaving their infants to die.

Although women and girls are the most vulnerable the level of insecurity also affects young men who can be pressurised into dropping out of school and joining militia groups. A sense of hopelessness was described with young men feeling that poverty, hunger and armed violence were inevitable and that there was therefore little point in continuing with education. Instead it made more sense to join a militia and find security from within that group; indeed failing to join can make young men a target for aggression by youth militia groups.

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*“A man raped me. We met when I was taking home sugar canes that I had bought for selling. He took some canes but refused to pay me and asked me to go to his home to be paid. When I went, I found his wife there, and she told me that her husband had gone to the bush to cut trees. I went to see him and he kept showing me a 5,000 franc note and asked me to earn it. He seized me and raped me. His wife found us fighting after he had raped me... The man who raped me was taken to prison. He was released shortly after and has been free since then. Today, when I meet him, I am speechless”*

*Interviewee*

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## Places of Insecurity

Women and girls stated that they were most at risk when out alone and particularly if out after dark. Gathering firewood was seen as high risk as was collecting water or looking after animals at pasture. Religious buildings, both churches and mosques were seen as places of safety however there were mixed reports for other institutions with accounts of abuse related for both schools and medical clinics. Stories were told of female students being forced to have sex with teachers in order to get the required grades, other stories told of women applying for jobs being expected to have sex with the potential employer in order to get the job. Tragically, several individuals described being at risk within their own homes and subject to verbal, physical and sexual abuse.

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*“A woman who is not beaten is like a house that is never cleaned”*

*Local Saying*

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Travel was also dangerous for women and girls who were vulnerable both on public transport and at roadblocks. It was said that the threats contained in some of the militia songs and slogans to eliminate opposing groups by “marrying” women and so raising up a new generation of recruits is now being put into practice.

The security and judicial system was described as being in suspension with the powerful having impunity, complaints would not be followed up and in some cases the only people to which one could report abuses were the abusers themselves.

## Times of Insecurity

Women and girls are most insecure after dark and when alone. Drug and alcohol abuse exacerbates the situation with women and daughters being raped or beaten as men return to the house. It is reportedly common to hear fights from within household compounds. Women are unlikely to report cases of abuse within the family as, without any property rights, they become highly vulnerable if action is taken against the man and he is sent to prison. Conversely if no action is taken by the authorities women are vulnerable to “discipline” by the husband. An account was shared of a young girl who was raped repeatedly by her father while working with him in the fields, her mother however defended the father rather than her daughter as without him “how would they survive?”

Age is no protection with traditional beliefs suggesting that having sex with an infant leads to wealth.

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*“A banana is best before its ripe”*

*Local Saying*

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The situation is worst during harvest time<sup>1</sup> as, even though much of farm work has been done by the women, the men sell the product and have cash. This can be used to pay the bride price and so take a new wife, pay bribes to circumvent unwelcome laws or simply spend it on alcohol or prostitutes. The lack of food has pushed food prices up<sup>2</sup> and this is seen by many men as an opportunity to increase their income; food stocks are therefore sold leaving the household hungry. The burden of hunger falls primarily on women and girls; as one respondent observed: “a man does not go hungry if he has something to sell”.

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*“The water belongs to the bull”*

*Local Saying*

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## Raising the Alarm / Responses

The most common response to imminent threat was to cry out for help; banging drums or beating on jerry cans were also common ways of raising the alarm. Information was also passed through community meetings and announcements by administrative and faith leaders. Risk reduction approaches were to travel in groups and to not go out after dark. The main response was to flee from the area or the relationship however in discussion it was felt that encouraging neighbours to intervene and respond to cries for help would also be useful.

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<sup>1</sup> Rice and beans are harvested in December/January and again in June/July/August along with Cassava.

<sup>2</sup> The price of cassava is reported to have increased by 300%.

## Gender Norms, Behaviour and Roles

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### A “Real Man”

A “real man” was described as one who is strong and who heads his family. He is one who is in charge, who gives orders, speaks aggressively in the family and does not allow anybody to underestimate him. He does not consult with women or seek their views; he is not subject to his wife. He goes to the bar or market square where he is generous with his money buying drinks for his friends. He gets drunk and goes home late where he might “educate” his wife or children. He is responsible for the farm and for business, attending discussions with his friends and travelling for business. He will have more than one women and will be unfaithful to his wife.

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*“The cock that drinks from only one stream is weak”*

*Local Saying*

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A “good man” by contrast would work for his household, discuss things with his wife, respect his wife, care for her and be faithful to her. He would take care of the family, help his wife with the household chores, get home early, not get drunk, register his wife and children with the authorities and not abuse drugs. He would not have more than one wife and would be faithful to her. He would not steal the family’s assets or resources. A “good man” would be trustworthy and tell the truth; they would affirm and build up their family.

### A “Real Woman”

A “real woman” shows respect for her man and does not slander him in front of others. She bears with all problems and does not express her views. She does not speak loudly, tolerates everything in the home and even when she is treated unfairly she does not answer back to her husband. She is shy, she prays, stays at home, does the household chores, keeps herself clean, protects the household, gets home early and does not drink. She is economical and generous, good mannered. She should work for her household, assist people who have problems, provide a good education to her children and be faithful to her husband.

A true man or woman would fight against evil at home, in the community, in the church and in the country.

### Behaviour

The behaviour reported in discussion groups reflected the “real” men and women stereotypes rather more than the “good”. Men’s behaviour was seen as rooted in arrogance, the result of the norms that they have been brought up with reflecting a sense of superiority compared with women. Women’s behaviour was seen to be rooted in low levels of self-esteem and a sense that they were not as able or intelligent as men. The norms were described as powerful with the cost of non-conforming seen as high. If men or women try to behave differently they can be despised and told that they are not true men or women. Such unmanly behaviours include carrying a child on your back, cooking or washing clothes if the woman is not sick while unwomanly behaviour includes putting the roof on the house, speaking at a meeting where men are present or coming back home at night when the gate is closed. Men might find themselves ostracised from their peers and excluded, young men might face violence. Women however might face physical abuse, divorce or abandonment.

Expectations do vary with age slightly with older men and women having more ability to act differently with older men tending to be quieter than younger ones; there are also variations according to faith.

It was felt by respondents that the situation had got worse during times of violence and hardship as many families broke up and many of the young turned to alcohol and drugs. During this time rape, murder and adultery increased as couples were separated by the crisis. More recently respondents acknowledged that laws have been passed to provide some level of protection however the application of these laws remains a challenge.

## Roles in Creating or Sustaining Violence

### Young Men

Young men are mobilised by politicians to act in support of the politicians ends. They are encouraged to drop out of school and participate in militia groups and youth movements. As such they intimidate the population, holding rallies and demonstrations. They take up arms and abuse their power to rape, rob and to extort. Becoming brutalised they lose hope and take refuge in alcohol and drug abuse. The mobilisation of young men is key to the ongoing violence as it enables leaders to project their power either through direct action or through the threat of direct action. In many ways they are the source of power for the leaders and breaking this link by making young men more resilient to mobilisation will reduce the power and influence of negative actors.

### Young Women

Young women were primarily described as the victims of violence suffering rape, physical and verbal abuse and rejection with some suffering from diseases such as HIV/AIDS. They may also be withdrawn from school and so lose out on education. Unfortunately the researchers did not focus sufficiently on exploring the ways in which young women might not only be victims of violence but also implicitly encourage or facilitate it through their expectations and perceptions.

### Adult Men

The impact of adult men was primarily through the cultural messages and norms that they maintained through their actions. By thinking of wives as property and as subordinate to men they effectively legitimised domestic and sexual violence and the desertion of wives and family for alternate wives. By living this out they influence future generations and so sustain the levels of domestic violence. This violence is both direct, through beatings, rape and verbal abuse but also structural through issues such as property rights and their control over household assets and resources.

### Adult Women

As for young women older women were also described as victims of physical, emotional and sexual abuse. The break-up of families through separation can also lead to an increase in prostitution, street children and the loss of opportunity for their children. This in turn can make it easier to mobilise young men into the militia groups. Researchers also found that older women played a role in sustaining gender norms and stereotypes showing disdain for women that did not play their expected role or assume the expected status; these women were described as failing to show “respect” for their husbands or of failing to be disciplined. Some women were also accused of encouraging unfaithfulness or of “bewitching” others.

## Roles in Building or Sustaining Peace

### Young Men

Young men can have a role in preventing violence by breaking away from the existing gender norms and by modelling relationships that demonstrate respect rather than power. By speaking out against violence they can work against the forces that encourage mobilisation into gangs or militias. Representing 19% of the population, 15 – 24 year olds if equipped and enabled also have a major role in the future development and economic growth of the country, investing in their education, skills and moral development could therefore help to reverse the current social and economic decline.

### Young Women

Young women can have a major impact on challenging current gender norms, and have influence through their participation in music, dance and songs. Education has the potential to empower women improving development outcomes for the community as a whole. Young women can contribute to peace by ensuring that women's perspectives and voices are heard in community discussions and through their involvement in development programmes and organisations.

### Adult Men

With the strong social networks that men tend to have with other men through time spent in the public squares they can be a good avenue for spreading positive and constructive messages and for challenging existing norms. As elders they have influence over younger men and so the impact of a few who are willing to stand out and challenge existing norms can be magnified.

### Adult Women

As mothers adult women have a major role in sustaining or challenging norms within the family and particularly amongst children, with responsibility within the household they are able to drive the social and cultural development of their families and as the main workers can also provide economic development for the family.

## Suggested Indicators

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The community identified possible indicators that would suggest an increase in the risk or likelihood of physical and sexual violence. The suggested indicators were:

- Cost and Availability of basic food items
- Number of arguments heard within homes by neighbours
- Level of alcohol consumption
- Shop opening hours – specifically business continuing after dusk
- Number of people travelling between communities
- Number and behaviour of young men collecting in public places
- Number of children dropping out or being absent from school both girls and boys
- Number of people approaching the pastor for counselling
- Number of physical / sexual assaults reported to police
- Number of patients reporting to health centres for treatment for physical or sexual assault
- Number of women suffering break-up of the family and eviction from the home
- Number of rallies or demonstrations



- Number of people from out of the area moving in (IDPs)
- Number of people from the area moving out or away (IDPs/Refugees)

These were then developed further to form a series of questionnaires incorporated within a data collection plan (see separate document) as part of an overall early warning and response system. A key aspect of this was the agreement by the communities to establish community early warning and response forums that would be responsible for analysing the collected data and agreeing actions that could be taken as a community to prevent or mitigate risks.

## Next Steps

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The draft early warning and response (EWRS) concept was then discussed with the communities in January and February 2017 leading to a refinement of both the questions and the concept. Thirty individuals, fifteen female and fifteen male were then selected from five parishes in Matana Diocese, covering fifteen collines. These individuals were then trained in the surveys and in the data collection techniques and technology during March 2017, this led to some further refinements of both the approach and the indicators. A “Whats App” group has also been set up to allow the data collectors, the Diocese of Matana staff and Tearfund to continue to support and encourage the teams as they both collect and discuss the collected data.

The system is due to go live on 17 April 2017 with the first data being collected during that week.

# Annex A

## Methodology

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The research was based around a series of key questions that formed the structure for group discussions. The questions were:

- What concerns do people have about their security and how do people currently respond to these concerns?
- Where do people feel most at risk and who or what do they feel most at risk from?
- What roles do people of different genders play in the community?
- What are the predominant gender norms for different social groups?
- How do people's actual behaviours compare to these gender norms?
- How have norms relating to masculinity and femininity been shaped and changed by the current situation?
- How are men and women affected by the current levels of insecurity?
- How do the roles that men and women play stimulate or enable insecurity?
- How do the roles that men and women play stimulate or enable peace?
- How do gender norms and behaviours shape whether violence is used, by whom and against whom?

Within these group discussions a number of tools were also used that included the development of a timeline, the use of flash cards and the construction of daily diaries for men and women

## Aggregated Findings by Question

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Responses to each question have been aggregated and categorised. Responses from each community are shown in different colours:

- Matana
- Bururi
- Ntaho
- Rutana
- Timbura

The reports from the individual communities are available on request.

## Main Security Concerns

Main security concerns were:

Rape	XXXXX
Beatings or Wounding	XXXX
Murder	XXXX
Sexual Immorality /Pregnancy out of Marriage	XXXX
Robbery	XXX
Polygamy	XXX
Drug and Alcohol Abuse / Drunkenness	XXX
Hunger and Poverty	XX
Denial of Rights	XX
Denial of Control over Assets or Resources	XX
Torture	X
Separation / Abandonment	X
Bullying / Traumatizing	X
Kidnapping	X
Family Quarrels	X
Impunity for wrongdoers	X

## Main Warning Signs of Violence

The main warning signs or indicators of existing or imminent violence were:

Levels of drug and alcohol consumption, availability and trafficking	XX
Drought and the effects of climate change leading to reduced harvest and food availability	XX
Increasing feeling of insecurity within the home or compound	X
Lack of cooperation and communication between spouses	X
Withdrawal of children from school	X
Increasing numbers of divorce, separation or abandonment	X
Increasing number of disputes or arguments in the household	X
Increasing number of street children and street women	X
Women becoming traumatised, talking to themselves, looking in shock or deranged	X
Increasing numbers of bush fires (People set fire to the bush to express their anger and frustration)	X
Increasing incidences of house or compound break-ins	X

Abundant harvest leading to men having access to increased levels of cash which can be used for alcohol, drugs and to meet women	X
Increases in the number of men and women staying out after dark	X
Urbanisation	X
Increase in the number of roadblocks or security structures	X
Numbers of young men loitering within public spaces	X

## Ways of Raising the Alarm or Passing Information

The alarm is raised and messages promoted by:

Calling for help	XXXXX
Mobile Phone	XXXXX
Public/Church Announcements	XXXXX
Banging Drums or Jerry Cans, Blowing Whistles	XXXX
Community Meetings	XXXX
Radio and TV Messages	X
Newspapers	X
Drawings, images or pictures	X
Games and drama	X

## When and where do People Feel Most at Risk?

People described the places where they felt safe and most at risk

Picture	Women			Men		
	Safe	Neutral	Risk	Safe	Neutral	Risk
Woods / Gathering Firewood		X	XXXX	XXXXX		
Pasture		X	XXXX	XXXXX		
Water Point		XX	XXX	XXXXX		
Family / Home	X	XXX	XX	XXX	XX	
Buses / Transport	X	XXX	XX	XXXXX	X	
Roads		XXXX	XX	XX	XXX	
Demonstrations	XX	X	XX	XXXX	X	
Political Rallies	X	XXX	X	XXX	XX	
Garden / Fields	X	XXXX	X	XXXXX		
School	XX	XXXX		XXX	XX	
Clinics	X	XXXXX		XXX	XX	
Church	XXXXX			XXXXX		
Mosque	XXXXX			XXXXX		

## Responses to Violence

The main responses suggested to combat actual or threatened violence were:

Flee or Move Away	XXX
Training in GBV / violence prevention	XX
Referral to civil society organisations	XX
Development activities	XX
Avoiding Unsafe Places (especially if alone and at night)	XX
Encouraging behaviour change and family discussion and agreement	XX
Punishment of violent actors	X
Providing advice to survivors	X
Keeping watch to protect assets and resources	X
Meeting husband's needs, keeping the house and children clean, taking care of husbands	X
Avoiding drug addiction	X

## Gender Roles

Participants described a typical day for men and for women.

Time	Women	Men
0500 - 0700	<p>Heating water, preparing tea, washing the children, sending the kids to school, fetching water</p> <p>Getting up and cleaning</p> <p>Wake up, make the fire, cook, cleaning, preparing the children, fetching water</p> <p>Wake up, light fire, get water, cook, clean, get children ready</p> <p>Wake up, light the fire, heat water, cook food, feed the family and send the children to school</p>	<p>Most men are still in bed at this time, when they wake up, they take a bath and drink tea</p> <p>Men get up at about 6 am and then eat</p> <p>Wake up, prepare the farm implements (the hoe and the machete)</p> <p>Wake up, prepare the tools</p> <p>Have sex, listen to the news, talk, have breakfast</p>
0700 – 0900	<p>Cleanliness activities, cultivating in the farm</p> <p>Cultivating in the farm</p> <p>Cultivating on the farm, collecting firewood, fetching water, taking the animals out, shepherding, cooking</p> <p>Cultivating, collecting firewood, fetching water, cooking, taking the animals out</p>	<p>Cultivating, keeping the animals, some move around, to work for daily remuneration and other activities.</p> <p>Going to the bar and getting drunk.</p> <p>Going to the bar or the public square</p> <p>Going to the bar or the public square</p>
0900 – 1200	<p>Taking the domestic animals out, keeping them, feeding the members of the household</p> <p>Fetching water, cooking and feeding the members of the household</p> <p>Cultivation, collecting firewood, taking animals out, fetching water, bringing home crops, cooking and feeding the family</p>	<p>Most do nothing, others go to the bar, and others help their wives.</p> <p>At the bar, the public square, eating</p> <p>Cultivation, going to the public square, going to work, returning home, to the square or the bar</p>
1200 – 1400	<p>Fetching water, looking for firewood, washing clothes.</p> <p>Eating and resting</p>	<p>Some are resting by this time; others are in bars, drinking.</p> <p>Resting</p>

	Feeding the family, bringing the animals home Feeding the family, looking after animals Feeding the family	Resting and going to the bar Resting and going to the bar Eating, resting, going to the bar or the public square
1400 – 1600	Cultivating Farming, gathering firewood Farming, gathering grass for the animals, collecting firewood, fetching water Farming, collecting firewood, fetching water gathering food for the animals Taking animals out, fetching water, getting crops from the farm	Some keep their cows, others go to the bar Some keep their cows, others go to the bar Resting and going to the bar Resting and going to the bar Watching over the animals, cutting firewood and visiting friends
1600 – 1700	Harvesting, cooking, making the bed Fetching water Washing clothes, cooking, bringing animals home, making the beds, preparing the children, feeding the family	Some bring their cows home, others stay in bars. At the bar Talking with other men, having sex with other women, getting drunk
1700 – 2100	Feeding the members of the household, washing children, taking them to bed, putting together the different utensils and washing them Cooking, eating, making the bed Making the bed, fetching water, chopping wood, washing children, washing clothes, cooking, eating, bathing, putting children to bed, heating water for the man to wash Fetching water, chopping wood, washing clothes and children, cooking, eating, bathing, putting children to bed, heating water for the man to wash Praying for the family, getting children to bed, waiting for husband, sex, sleeping	Watching over the household, listening to the radio and eating Returning home, milking the cattle, eating At the bar drinking, selling crops, eating and talking to the children, beating the wife At the bar, selling crops, eating and talking to the children, beating the wife Going home, disturbing the family, eating, sleeping, sex or raping the wife
2100 – 0500	Bedroom talk, sleeping Sleeping Tidying up, sleeping, breastfeeding, waiting for husbands to return, sex, being beaten. Sleeping, breastfeeding, being beaten, waiting for husbands to return, sex Sleeping	Bedroom talk, watching over the household, sleeping. Sleeping and keeping watch Sleeping, beating and traumatising women, drinking in the bar, sex, beating the wife, talking with the wife. Sleeping, beating and traumatising women, drinking in the bar Sleeping

## Control of Assets

Participants identified the assets held by families and then explored who had access to and who had control over each of the assets:

Name or kind of wealth	Access	Control	Comments
Land	Men and women Men and women Men and women	Men Men Men	He is the chief of the household

	Men and women Men and Women	Men Men	
Money	Men Men and women Men and women	Men Men Men	
Domestic Animals	Men and women Men and women Men and women Men and Women	Men Men Men Men	He is the owner of the family's assets
Harvest	Women Men and women Men and women Men and Women	Men Men Men Men	He is the owner of the family's assets
Children	Men and Women Men and Women	Men Men	Children belong to their father
Business	Men Men	Men Men	
Vehicle, Motorbike, Bicycle	Men Men	Men Men	
Houses	Men and Women	Men	