

To the conference participants
South-South Institute for
Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys
25th – 29th May 2015
Phnom Penh,
Cambodia

8th May 2015

Dear conference participants,

I congratulate you on the 2nd Conference of the South-South Institute for Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys. I am sorry I could not attend in person. Cambodia is a country very close to my heart, and I take a strong interest in the issues that you will discuss over the next two days.

Men and boys are still too often cast solely as perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict, and not acknowledged as victims and survivors. But as you all know, sexual violence does not discriminate. People of any age and gender are at potential risk.

Survivors of both sexes are often reluctant to speak out, for very understandable reasons. When they do speak out, they often face rejection and wholly unjust stigmatisation, and this can often be particularly acute for men and boys. I have had the privilege of meeting male survivors. Their courage and dignity are truly inspiring. They deserve better and we must make it easier for them to make their voices heard.

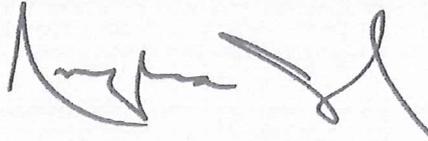
We have started to see growing international recognition of the need to ensure conflict and post-conflict recovery for all civilians and combatants affected by sexual violence, but it is still not enough. We still have a long way to go to make sure that all survivors can access the support and services that they need, and receive the recognition and justice that is their right.

We need to help improve cooperation between organisations that work with survivors so that they receive assistance. We must do more to address the stigma that condemns survivors to live in silence and fear, and encourages perpetrators to believe they can act with impunity. This requires new thinking and new approaches, and we need to make sure that these include men and boys from the start. And we need to encourage more male leaders from all walks of life to be willing to help break the taboo that still surrounds these issues.

I'm determined to help do my part, building on the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict held in London last June.

Your work is a vital part of this effort, and it is a privilege to be able to join forces with you. I wish you all a very successful conference. I thank you for the work you do. I look forward to seeing your recommendations, and I hope we can all work together in the years to come.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Angelina Jolie Pitt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and a long, sweeping tail.

Angelina Jolie Pitt

Co-Founder of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative