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# RAPE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF WAR

AN EXAMINATION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN RWANDA AND  
THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

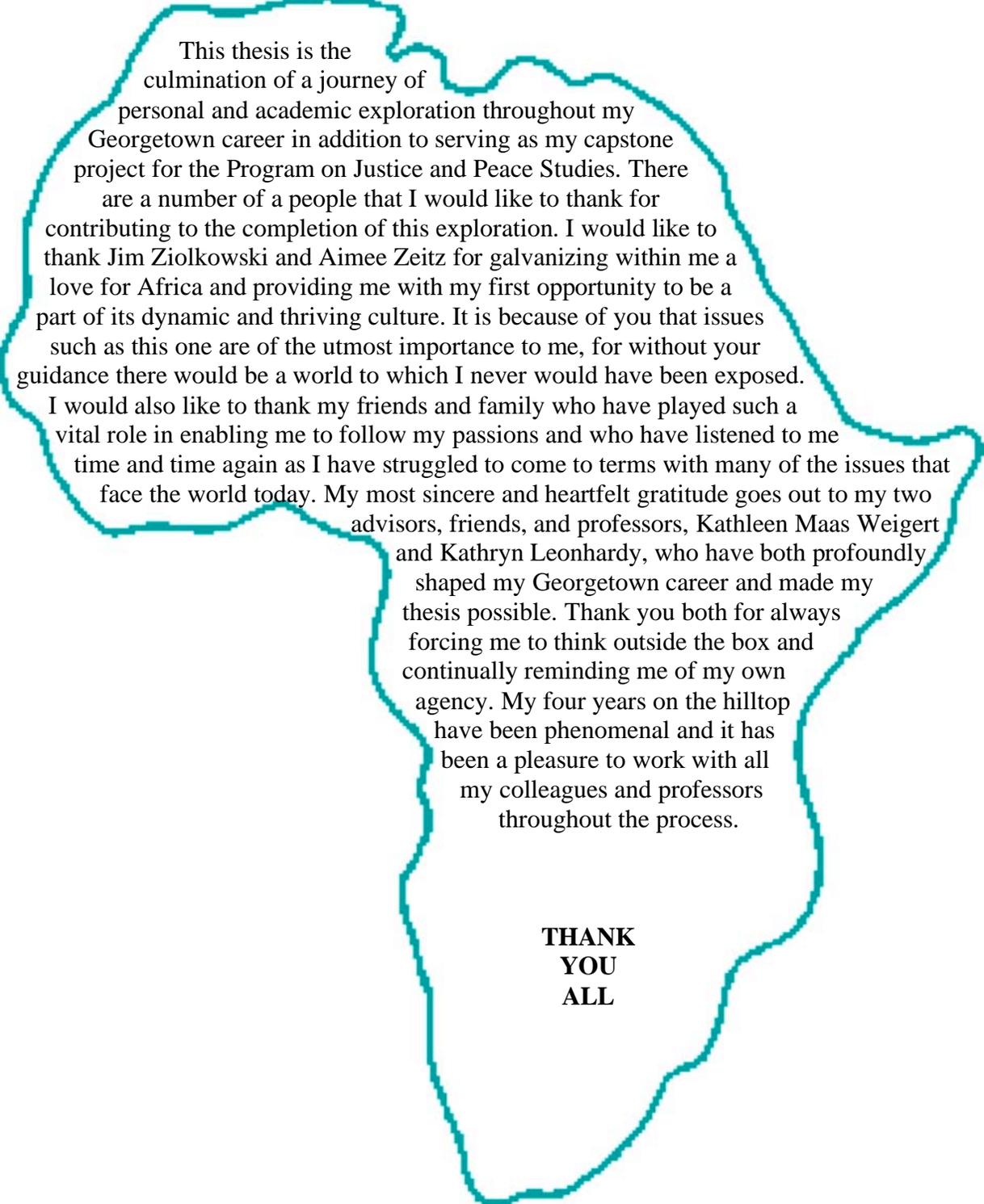


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**THANK  
YOU  
ALL**

## Acronyms

AFDL	Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FAR	Rwanda Armed Forces
FLC	Front du Libération du Congo
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MISP	Minimum Initial Service Package
MONUC	Mission des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PTSD	Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
RCD	Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WE-ACTx	Women's Equity in Access to Care and Treatment

## Rape as an Instrument of War: An Examination of Sexual Violence in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Today, a war is raging in the heart of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It is a war that disproportionately affects women, as a virtual epidemic of rape is reverberating throughout Congo and hundreds of women are sexually assaulted each day. The sexual violence is more brutal and more pervasive than it has been anywhere else in the world and little is being done to acknowledge the problem, prevent its occurrence, or respond to it in an effective manner. A show of power and authority, sexual assault is being used to devastate lives and destroy livelihoods.

Sexual violence is relevant to both Justice and Peace Studies and International Health as it is a serious public health and human rights issue and one that principally affects women and girls. The rape epidemic bestows a crippling, society-wide impact. The devastation caused by sexual violence knows no borders as it affects people from all cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. In times of armed conflict, women and girls are particularly vulnerable as rape may be “used by fighting forces to terrorize, destroy and humiliate communities. Women may be forced to exchange sex for their very survival. And when war forces them to flee their homes, the risk of rape follows them and the threat of domestic violence grows” (International Rescue Committee [IRC], 2007a, ¶ 3).

Human rights abuses run rampant in conflict, and women and girls are the most frequent victims. By its very nature, sexual violence is a fundamental violation of human rights and contrary to several principles enshrined in international law. Governments, the international community, health professionals, and others play a critical role in identifying ways to prevent sexual violence from occurring and in responding to the violence that has occurred. It is also the responsibility of these stakeholders to ensure that human rights are upheld. In light of the abject

horrors currently occurring in Congo, there is a clear need to identify ways to prevent rape from occurring and to respond effectively to the violence that has occurred.

This thesis seeks to elucidate several key components that are necessary in a comprehensive approach to rape in conflict and its aftermath. These key areas of intervention will provide direction for addressing the immediate situation of sexual violence in Congo and aid in the identification of priorities to prevent rape from being used as an instrument of war in the future. The first section will address the history of the use of sexual violence as a war tactic in order to provide context and situate the reader in the subject material. The second chapter will explore the Rwandan genocide and the incidence of rape in both the conflict and post-conflict settings. The third section will analyze the war in the DRC and explore the role that rape has played in advancing that conflict. In the fourth chapter, a comparative analysis of the roles of rape in Congo and Rwanda will be conducted. In the fifth section, the similarities and differences between the two situations will be used to pull out some key lessons learned from these conflicts in terms of prevention and response to rape in conflict and its aftermath. This chapter will layout several priorities for addressing the situation of rape in Congo and preventing such catastrophes from occurring in the future. The sixth chapter will present a set of recommendations for future prevention initiatives and response protocols. Following this section, the thesis will conclude with a discussion of the challenges ahead and the need to comprehensively address the use of rape as an instrument of war. As women and children continue to be raped in the DRC each and every day, such an analysis simply cannot wait.

## Chapter I: A Historical Perspective

*“We learn from history that we learn nothing from history.”  
~ George Bernard Shaw<sup>1</sup>*

Rape<sup>2</sup> has long been used as an instrument of war. It is a global problem that has instilled terror in the lives of victims<sup>3</sup> already severely affected by conflict, displacement, and violence.<sup>4</sup> Widespread sexual violence<sup>5</sup> has been documented in the 20<sup>th</sup> century during conflicts in Bangladesh, Burma, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Uganda, Vietnam, the former Yugoslavia, and other places around the world. Victims of attacks “have brought with them harrowing stories of abuse and suffering” (UNHCR, 1995, p. 1). Women have been on the front lines of these conflicts as they are “raped, abducted, humiliated and made to undergo forced pregnancy, sexual abuse, and slavery” (Renzetti, 2005, p. 1010). All these types of gender-based violence are borne out of patronizing behaviors that systematically undermine women’s and girls’ rights and protections during conflict and peace. Sexual violence in conflict situations has historically been both arbitrary and systematic. The former is thought to arise “partly as a result of the breakdown in community support systems, social norms, and laws,” and the latter so as to “destabilize populations, advance ethnic cleansing, express hatred for the enemy, or supply combatants with sexual services” (Ward & Vann, 2002, p. s13).

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<sup>1</sup> Quote excerpted on April 5, 2008 from <http://americanhistoryquotes.com>.

<sup>2</sup> Rape is defined as “a physical invasion of a sexual nature committed on a person under circumstances which are coercive” (United Nations, 1999a, ¶ 16).

<sup>3</sup> The term “victim” is used throughout this thesis despite its negative association with powerlessness. The term “survivor” may be more apt in some circumstances as it empowers the victim rather than the perpetrator while conveying the notion that women have survived a violation of their human rights and dignity. For the purposes of this thesis, the author feels that it is important to use the term “victim” as it better portrays the true horror that has occurred.

<sup>4</sup> Violence is defined as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation” (World Health Organization, 2002, p. 5).

<sup>5</sup> Sexual violence is defined as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting” (World Health Organization, 2002, p. 149).

Widespread international attention was directed to the sexual violence, torture, and forced pregnancies that occurred in the former Yugoslavia. Rape was used casually, consciously, and with the utmost callousness as a weapon of war in what is today known as Bosnia (Russell, 2007). Harrowing data suggest that an estimated 20,000 to 50,000 women were raped during a five-month period in Bosnia in 1992 (Renzetti, 2005). These women fell victim to “massive, organized, and systematic” rape that was used “not only as an instrument of war but as a method of ethnic cleansing intended to humiliate, shame, degrade and terrify the entire ethnic group” according to the Special Rapporteur appointed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (Chinkin, 1994, p. 4). Similar patterns on a much greater scale were seen during the Rwandan genocide in 1994 where an estimated 500,000 women were raped (Renzetti, 2005). After these conflicts, international criminal tribunals for Rwanda and Bosnia were established to prosecute the offenses committed during the genocides. In a landmark turn of events, “cases tried by international tribunals for Rwanda and Bosnia characterized sexual violence committed against women during those conflicts as crimes of genocide and as crimes against humanity” (Ward & Vann, 2002, p. s13).

In Sierra Leone, nine years of civil war and unrest “unleashed widespread and systematic sexual violence against women and girls. This violence has included gang rape, sexual slavery, and assault” (Bogert & Dufka, 2001, p. 304). In Sierra Leone, sexual violence was used to terrorize, humiliate, punish, and ultimately control. One of the many dire consequences in Sierra Leone was a high incidence of sexually transmitted infections among the victims of sexual violence (Bogert & Dufka). Fortunately, their civil war officially ended in 2002, disarmament was completed by 2004, and the country is currently at peace.

Numerous other incidents of women being raped in conflict can be cited to bring to light the patterns of female exploitation during conflict that have been seen in recent years. During the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Iraqi soldiers raped an estimated 5,000 Kuwaiti women (Chinkin, 1994). “Women in Kashmir suffered rape and death under the administration of the Indian army” in the early 1990s (Chinkin, p. 2). Sustained and frequently brutal violence was perpetrated against women in the form of threats, rape, and murder throughout Peru’s 12-year internal war that ended in 2000 (Chinkin). “Liberian women have been repeatedly raped in the ethnic violence of that country’s civil war and women from East Timor have been raped as well as killed since the occupation by Indonesia commenced in 1975” (Chinkin, p. 2). More recently, there has been a growing attentiveness to the situation in Darfur and the role that rape is playing in that conflict.

International outrage continues to grow at the human rights abuses occurring in the world today, especially as they pertain to the rights of women and girls. While rape has been an instrument of war in many other conflict situations, researchers say that Congo’s problem is unlike anything they have seen before. That being said, it is important to establish the issue in light of historical perspectives to be able to understand the trends, patterns, similarities, and differences between various scenarios in order to elicit some key lessons learned and ensure a continuously-evolving and appropriate response to rape as an instrument of war.

## Chapter II: Rwanda – Genocide, Rape, and Ramifications

*“There are no devils left in Hell... they are all in Rwanda.”*  
 ~ A Rwandan missionary<sup>6</sup>

*A Brutal Genocide*

If one had wandered into Rwanda a century ago, one would have found “a country ruled by tall, willowy Tutsi cattle lords under a magical Tutsi king, while darker-skinned, stockier Hutu farmers tended the land, grew the food, and kept the Tutsis clothed and fed. They lived in symbiotic harmony... there was no hatred between the two groups” (Gibbs, 1994b, ¶ 18). Then, the once beautiful country of Rwanda, known as the “Land of a Thousand Hills,” played host to one of the most brutal genocides ever seen. Nowadays in Rwanda, if cows are seen grazing on corn, manioc, beans, or another staple, it is a clear symbol of ethnic oppression (Hursarska, 2008). Tutsis were traditionally breeders and Hutus have customarily occupied the role of cultivators. So, the cow grazing on a field has become a clear sign of ethnic delineation and oppression of Hutus by Tutsis.

The small country, a former Belgian colony located in the heart of east Africa, shares its borders with Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>7</sup> It was the post-colonial games and interest-driven politics of Belgium that originally generated the ethnic hatred that fueled the 1994 genocide. Historically, Rwanda had one shared language and a history as an integrated and united country. It just so happened that some people, who tended to be tall with thin features like Ethiopians or Eritreans, tended to be cattle-owners while a stockier people with broader features traditionally tilled the land. These trivial differences, abused by the Belgians, became the foundation of control for the colonists, a power based on division and

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<sup>6</sup> (Gibbs, 1994b)

<sup>7</sup> Please see Appendix 1 for a map of Rwanda.

exploitation. “They embellished a racial myth that the tall, thin Tutsi minority were descended from royal lineages and the stocky Hutus were an inferior people. The Tutsis were then educated and used as administrators, while the rest of the people were treated harshly” (Short, 2003, ¶ 4). The division was formalized in 1932 when the Belgians issued identity cards that specified the ethnic identity of Rwandans as Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa. As the wave of independence swept across Africa in the mid-twentieth century, the colonists realized that they would have to shift their support to the Hutu majority if they wished to maintain their influence in the society that they had polarized. To this aim, the Belgians provided military and political support to the Hutus in order to overturn the privileged elite and to facilitate the development of a party committed to liberation of the Hutu (Verwimp, 2004). In 1959, the Hutu revolution swept through Rwanda, successfully liberating it from Belgian and Tutsi rule and installing Greg wa Kayabanda as president in 1962. With a Hutu now in power, a form of reverse discrimination emerged in which Tutsis became the oppressed and were no longer allowed to be educated. “Having inflamed the Hutu’s resentment of the Tutsi elite, the retreating colonizers left the minority to the mercies of the mob” (Gibbs, 1994b, ¶ 20). Despite independence, discriminate killings of Tutsis and moderate Hutus continued to occur. Outbreaks of ethnic violence forced thousands of Tutsis to seek refuge in Uganda where they waited for the opportunity to regain power. Back in Rwanda, ineffective governance and favoritism plagued Kayabanda’s rule. In 1973, a military coup overthrew Kayabanda and installed Juvenal Habyarimana as president of Rwanda.

The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was born in 1989 from a group of Tutsi refugees who helped President Yoweri Museveni liberate Uganda (Short, 2003). The RPF gave the refugees the cohesion and determination necessary to invade and effectively seize control of Rwanda. In October 1990, Tutsi refugees attacked Rwanda from Uganda and made very rapid progress:

A civil war followed between the Rwandan armed forces and a rebel army of Tutsis during which the civilian populations in the north of Rwanda were the main victims. During this war, in the period of 1990-93, a total of 2,000 Tutsi were killed in local massacres. These massacres were not spontaneous outbursts of violence on the part of a poor peasant population, but were organized by the national power elite. (Verwimp, 2004, p. 233)

Despite this, the RPF managed to reach the outskirts of Kigali by 1992. This prompted the Hutu-led government of Rwanda to embark on a campaign of reprisal and further extermination.

The international community pressed hard for reconciliatory negotiations. The Arusha Accords, signed by the Rwandan government and the RPF in Arusha, Tanzania on August 4, 1993, formalized a set of five protocols designed to halt the invasion and create a power-sharing agreement between the two parties (Gibbs, 1994b). A United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force, led by Canadian General Romeo Dallaire, was erected to uphold the peace agreement, but many signatories remained opposed to sharing power because “the prospect of reconciliation was too much for Hutu hard-liners” (Gibbs, ¶ 24). The reluctance of many Hutus to compromise and the monopolization of power by presidential advisors led to extreme resentment toward the moderate Hutu President Major General Juvenal Habyarimana (Verwimp, 2004). Plans began for the mass-extermination of Tutsis and moderate Hutus as propaganda supporting a campaign of ethnic purification infiltrated media sources. “Hate radio poured out diatribes of lies and poison, calling for the Tutsis to be eliminated” (Short, 2003, ¶ 5). “The Hutu-supremacist Radio Mille Collines broadcast messages for Hutus to ‘weed their fields’ and ‘eliminate the cockroaches’” (Perry, 2007, ¶ 13). The state-sponsored propaganda urged civilians to “shorten the Tutsi” and “cut down the tall trees,” further instilling the ideology of hate (Austin & Torrice, 2006). On April 6,

1994, President Habyarimana's plane was shot down while returning from a peace conference in Tanzania that was intended to put an end to years of struggle. The genocide was born.

Violence, incited and orchestrated by the new Hutu government, swept through the country as "militant members of the Hutu majority attacked moderate Hutus and the Tutsi minority" (Matloff, 1995, ¶ 6). "At first the killing wasn't purely ethnic. It was also political" (Gibbs, 1994b, ¶ 8). But soon, civilians were carrying out the brutal attacks. The Hutu death squads, called the Interahamwe – "those who kill as one" – were orchestrating the insensate carnage. "The killing was intensely personal; the machete was the weapon of choice. Farmers killed their neighbors. Doctors killed other doctors. Students killed their fellow students. Even some priests helped to kill large swaths of their congregations" (Whitelaw, 2007, ¶ 6). With civilians being persuaded to take up arms and kill neighbors, friends, family members, and strangers – the entire nation was swept up as "either victims or killers, witnesses or collaborators" (Whitelaw, ¶ 5). The resemblance of their children to their Tutsi wives led some Hutu men to exterminate their own children (Perry, 2007). These systematic killings were painstakingly monitored and executed on a national scale, with the aid of government-prepared assassination lists, the diffusion of extremist propaganda, radio incitement, and the creation and training of militias (Straus, 2004).

Tutsi and moderate Hutu were slaughtered during the genocide by Hutus from all walks of life, using every weapon at hand, from grenades to tree limbs to farm tools. Like the few genocides that preceded it, Rwanda's 100-day campaign of extermination was one of the most vicious series of war crimes ever implemented by human beings. (Donovan, 2002, ¶ 2)

Fourteen days after the assassination of Habyarimana, between 35,000 and 43,000 people were exterminated during a six-hour killing spree at the Parish of Karama in Butare, leading to a higher death toll than any single day in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau (Jones, 2002). Within one hundred days, more than 800,000 Rwandans were dead and more than ten percent of the general population and approximately seventy five percent of the Tutsi population had been killed (Kuperman, 2004). As the RPF continued to advance, the army and militias who had orchestrated the genocide fled into the former Zaire in search of asylum. In July 2004, the RPF took Kigali, defeated the Hutu government, and gained control of a country whose Tutsi population had been all but exterminated.

*International culpability.* After the Holocaust in 1948, the world signed the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, also known as the Genocide Convention, which obliged signatories to prevent crimes of genocide.<sup>8</sup> But signatories across the world conspicuously evaded their duties by refusing to use the word “genocide” to refer to the situation in Rwanda. The international community wanted the world to believe that it was “just Africans doing their thing” (Austin & Torrice, 2006). Several governments even went so far as to further entrench the ethnic turmoil by supplying the arms and the military training that made the genocide possible. Despite evidence of mass human rights abuses, the international community refused to intervene.

The warnings were there: the genocide was organized and predicted and Romeo Dallaire repeatedly “warned UN headquarters of the threatened slaughter and called for help” (Short, 2003, ¶ 2). A UN cable from Hutu leaders alerted the Security Council of the impending crisis: “Belgian soldiers to be killed and thus guarantee Belgian withdrawal from Rwanda... In 20

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<sup>8</sup> Please see Appendix 8 for the full text of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

minutes, personnel could kill up to 1,000 Tutsis” (Austin & Torrice, 2006). International forces, stationed in Rwanda, stood by and watched the preparation for the genocide begin, yet they failed to respond (Austin & Torrice). International organizations repeatedly notified the UN of the occurrence of major human rights violations, but their efforts were in vain. Within the first days of the genocide, the Interahamwe killed ten Belgian peacekeepers (Austin & Torrice). Again, General Dallaire’s requests for more troops were denied. Instead, the Security Council issued a confidential decision to not intervene, thereby ignoring its obligations under the Genocide Convention. The UN peacekeeping mission was pulled out. The United States did not want another failed intervention in Africa and the Clinton administration did not want to risk another Mogadishu (Austin & Torrice). Not only did the international community fail to respond during the genocide, the international public failed to hold Rwanda’s government accountable. A TIME/CNN poll conducted in the United States in 1994 indicated that only 34 percent of respondents favored taking action while 51 percent were opposed (“Kind words, but not much more,” 1994). In retrospect, “many analysts now believe that if warnings had been heeded, the international community could have contained the Rwandan genocide to a conflict” (Donovan, 2002, ¶ 7). The international community never even stated that what was occurring in Rwanda was unacceptable. Instead, several nations admitted their mistakes and delivered formalized apologies long after anything could be done. A UN document, *Report of the Independent Inquiry into United Nations Actions during the 1994 Rwanda Genocide*, published in December 1999 examined and acknowledged the failure of the UN and the international community to prevent the genocide.

While the international community neglected their responsibilities, well over 200 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) took action in post-genocide Rwanda

(Kayitesi-Blewitt, 2006). The International Rescue Committee (IRC) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) played prominent roles in post-genocide Rwanda. Setting up in Kigali, most NGOs devoted their attention across the borders to the refugees rather than focusing their resources on the survivors within Rwanda (Kayitesi-Blewitt). Between 1994 and 1996, approximately \$2.5 billion dollars were devoted to the Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire and Tanzania while a mere \$572 million was spent in Rwanda itself (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 1996). While hard to estimate, it should be noted that it may have cost the international community as little as \$300 million to prevent these atrocities from ever occurring (Austin & Torrice, 2006).

*The aftermath.* The perpetrators of the genocide that fled from the RPF sought safe haven in refugee camps in neighboring states.<sup>9</sup> Here, they gained control of the camps and used this control to “incite Hutu civilians to join their movement and reinvade Rwanda and complete the genocide. There were repeated incursions and continued killing” (Short, 2003, ¶ 7). The camps became “organizing beds for the former Rwandan government” (Austin & Torrice, 2006). The continued attacks ultimately led to Rwanda’s invasion of the former Zaire to encourage repatriation and to break up the camps. Fourteen years later, Rwanda has withdrawn from the present day DRC, secured its borders, allowed for the safe passage of two million returnees, and released several genocide participants from prison in a national reconciliation effort. The Kagame-run “benevolent dictatorship” has been able to keep a lid on the tension and move toward the creation of a nation without ethnic divides. “The aim is an idealistic one... Rwanda first, Hutu and Tutsi later” (Whitelaw, 2007, ¶ 11). But the healing process is far from complete: Rwanda’s damaged courts cannot handle the volume of genocide-related cases and it has proved

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<sup>9</sup> Please see Appendix 3 for a map of Rwandan and Burundian Refugee Movements between 1994 and 1999.

impossible to recover all the corpses or to separate bodily remains. Rwanda continues to grapple with its past as people who partook in the genocide are allowed to return home if they are willing to tell the truth and apologize. Rwanda will forever be infamous in the international community for “its efforts to incite ordinary civilians to unthinkable violence with the aim of exterminating a minority ethnic group” and will continue to live in the shadow of its past for many years to come (Donovan, 2002, ¶ 2).

*Rwanda: A Tale of Systematic Rape and Gender-Based Violence*

During the twelve-week massacre in Rwanda, an estimated 250,000 to 500,000 rapes were committed according to the UN Special Rapporteur on Rwanda, Rene Degni-Segui (Jones, 2002). Speaking of the atrocities against Tutsi women, he noted, “rape was the rule and its absence the exception” (Jones, p. 81). Rape in Rwanda was seen on a much larger scale than in the former Yugoslavia:

Most survivors describe the genocide as a bloodbath during which rape was inevitable for practically all females – implying that, whether or not they have chosen to describe what happened to them, nearly all the women and adolescent girls who survived the genocide are now living with the traumatizing memory of a brutal sexual attack that they had suffered or witnessed firsthand. (Donovan, 2002, ¶ 4)

Rapes were conducted during the Rwandan genocide by Hutu extremists “to foster their political goals through mass sexual violence... they sexually assaulted young girls and women because of their gender in a systematic attempt to exterminate the Tutsis and their supporters” (Cohen, d’Adesky & Anastos, 2005, p. 613). A key component of the campaign of torture and

extermination, systematic sexual violence was used just like any other crude weapon: methodically, repeatedly, and purposefully.

The rape witnessed in Rwanda was the first of its kind in terms of its murderous dimension and savage mutilation. Killing frequently followed rape, either immediately or after a period of forced sexual slavery and exploitation. “Rape and forced sexual servitude were accepted, or desperately sought, as the price of evading slaughter” (Jones, 2002, p. 81). Tutsi women were traditionally “regarded as more beautiful and sexually adroit than Hutus” (Hilsum, 2004, p. 33). This placed Tutsi women in a position to be able to exchange sexual servitude for “mercy,” as they knew full well that an “eminent Hutu man would prize a Tutsi mistress as a status symbol” (Hilsum, p. 33). These forced “marriages” lasted anywhere from a few days to the length of the genocide and in some cases longer. Some women were told, “you alone are being allowed to live so that you will die of sadness” (Torgovnik, 2008, p. 16). Thousands of women and girls struggle on a day-to-day basis with the reality that they bartered sex for survival and have thus been granted a life sentence of severe physical, emotional, and sexual trauma.

The sheer brutality seen in rape in Rwanda occurred on a scale never before imagined. Reports of extreme mutilation by machetes, spears, and other weapons were not uncommon (Kayitesi-Blewitt, 2006). Not only did these weapons inflict horrifying injuries, but they also often spread blood from one victim to another, carrying with them a risk of infection. Accounts of extreme and savage mutilation abound:

Objects are said to have been used to cause extra pain, and rapes with objects are said to include among others, rapes with stones, with branches from trees or bushes, with weapons. Rape accompanied by mutilation is reported to include: the pouring of boiling water onto the genital parts and into the vagina in order to

create pain and ordeal, the opening of the womb to cut out the unborn child before the killing of the mother, the cutting off of breasts and the mutilation of other parts of the female body. Even rapes of female cadavers were not unknown.

(Jones, 2002, p. 81)

But the crude brutality does not stop there. A silent weapon was in the mix – calculated to inflict massive pain and suffering – HIV. Not only was there the immediate mutilation and humiliation of rape and its long-term ramifications, but there was also HIV/AIDS in the picture.

Sexual assault undermines the essence of community that has long been prevalent in African society. With men no longer able to protect their wives, family and community units were shattered and terrorized. People leave their homes in search of safety, but the unfortunate reality is that such safety is rarely found.

#### *The Failure of the Supposed Safe Havens*

Fleeing the genocide, the people of Rwanda flooded across Congo's borders. Perpetrators and victims fled from the RPF and the genocide respectively, leaving behind a nation without people. More than 2.2 million Rwandans fled the country seeking refuge abroad:

The population grew so desperate that in a single 24-hour period, a quarter of a million people streamed across the border into Tanzania, creating an instant city, the second largest in the country. Some were Tutsi, but many were Hutu who feared that the rebels, now controlling much of eastern Rwanda and threatening to capture Kigali, would enact revenge for the massacres. (Gibbs, 1994b, ¶ 13).

Elsewhere, a million Hutu refugees flooded into the town of Goma in the former Zaire in just five days (Gibbs, 1994a). Two hundred thousand refugees were estimated to cross the northwestern frontier into the former Zaire in just 24 hours (Gibbs, 1994a). Some 1.2 million

refugees sought refuge in Zaire while 580,000 searched for safety in Tanzania, 270,000 in Burundi, and 10,000 in Uganda (UNHCR, 2000).<sup>10</sup> “The refugees of Rwanda’s civil war stretch for miles in every direction, building what are fast becoming death camps” (Gibbs, 1994a, ¶ 3). Meanwhile, thousands of previous refugees suffered across the eastern border in Tanzania and across the southern border in Burundi. Reports of Rwandan refugees dying at the rate of one a minute echoed around the world. “They camp on doorsteps, in schoolyards, in cemeteries, in fields so crowded that people sleep standing up. Men and women search for water only to find a thick, slimy brew so fouled by human waste that it does more to spread disease than quench thirst” (Gibbs, 1994a, ¶ 10). Refugees languished in camps in bordering countries, camps that soon became time bombs.

But the violence did not stop. Refugees were not separated from militants, members of the former Rwanda Armed Forces (FAR) and the Interahamwe militias, who were implicated in the genocide. With thousands of perpetrators seeking protection outside Rwanda, Hutus continued to attack Tutsis in the refugee camps: “the anti-Tutsi violence in and around the camps did not abate” (Iogna-Prat, 1997, p. 2). Those who had used terror and violence in the genocide continued to do in refuge. The bodies of the victims from the continuing violence were different; they were “not passive, wasting corpses, but twisted wrecks of crushed skulls and flaking blood” (Gibbs, 1994a, ¶ 14). The propaganda of hate was unrelenting and messages of revenge continued to be broadcast over the radio. Ironically, the perpetrators who were broadcasting these messages were harbored and protected by French forces conducting “humanitarian relief” efforts in Goma.

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<sup>10</sup> Please see Appendix 4 for a chart of Rwandan refugee populations in the Great Lakes region at the end of August 1994.

From the very beginning, the refugee camps mirrored the administrative structure that had just been ousted in Rwanda. The same groups that executed acts of genocide were reconstituted in the camps:

The administration which runs the camps fairly efficiently is a faithful reconstitution of the administration which presided over the genocide, and the “police” and “justice” in these camps is in the hands of this same administration, which resorts to threats, extortion, summary executions, and manipulation of crowds. (Iogna-Prat, 1997, p. 16)

Humanitarian workers found themselves working within this structure, collaborating with perpetrators of the genocide, because the organizational structure lent itself to efficiency and effective distribution of relief items. In the words of The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees’ (UNHCR) High Commissioner Sadako Ogata, “While our humanitarian assistance and protection serve an innocent, silent majority of needy and anxious refugees, they also serve militants who have an interest in maintaining the status quo. This cannot go on” (UNHCR, 2000, p. 262). While the distribution system was promptly changed to ensure equitable food distribution, the social structure of the camps lent itself to urging a policy of revenge and reconquest, making a marked impact on the security of the camps.

The climate of insecurity in the Rwandan refugee camps resulted from both internal and external factors. On the external level, the military levels associated with conflict had profound ramifications in the refugee setting:

Too often the camps are situated close to the combat zones and refugees find themselves caught in the crossfire... Moreover, the proximity of the camps to the frontier of the country of origin constitutes a further danger because the camps are

often transformed into “safe havens” by one or other parties, which may even go as far as taking refugees hostage and using them against their will for political, military, or logistical purposes. (Iogna-Prat, 2007, p. 7)

Such a militarization of refugee camps was seen post-Rwanda, especially in the former Zaire where the refugee camps were a few mere kilometers from the Rwandan frontier. This militarization made refugees vulnerable to, among other things, intimidation, harassment, forced recruitment, and sexual attacks. The internal factors leading to insecurity occurred predominantly as asylum-seekers took control into their own hands, often attacking fellow refugees. Violence, murder, theft, rape, intimidation, and the atmosphere of insecurity in Rwandan refugee camps jeopardized the very basis of the humanitarian efforts. “UNHCR made repeated calls for measures to be taken by the Security Council to ensure the civilian and humanitarian nature of the refugee camps” but the calls were left unanswered, further exacerbating the already grotesque problems and human rights abuses (UNHCR, 2000, p. 254).

Among the monstrous human rights abuses occurring were the high levels of sexual violence. Female refugees were among the most susceptible of at-risk populations. “Refugees and asylum-seekers, including children, in many instances have been subjected to rape or other forms of sexual violence during their flight or following their arrival in countries where they sought asylum” (UNHCR, 1995, Annex 4, ¶ 2). Women and girls were inherently vulnerable as a result of family separation during the confusion and chaos of flight and because men were more often called into battle. “In addition to being displaced from their place of origin and temporarily homeless, refugee women lack protection in the social and physical milieu where they find themselves... and may continuously be targets for violence” (Lehmann, 2002, p.152). Left to support their families on their own, with little economic and social power, women remained

vulnerable to sexual exploitation and coercion. It is not surprising that women become easy targets for men seeking to exploit their powerlessness. “Many women are forced to use sex as a means of supporting themselves and dependents” (Lehmann, p. 152). In Rwanda, “cases of women being forced to exchange sex for food, being raped while seeking firewood, and having to submit to sex in exchange for protection are all well documented” (Lehmann, p. 152). Military troops, fellow refugees, and security and border guards, among others, were committing this sexual violence against those who fled Rwanda.

In 1994, a devastating cholera epidemic spread through a refugee camp in Zaire, killing an estimated 20,000 people in the first few days (Shanks & Schull, 2000). As organizations attempted to control this scourge, the lack of security became visibly apparent as a factor interfering with relief efforts. Upon delving into the issue, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) found that the Zairian national army had been driven out of the camp and the security was now in the hands of a Boy Scout troop. Not surprisingly, this troop failed to protect many and the “resulting insecurity had a devastating impact on refugee midwives working in a maternal health center inside the camp. Shortly after the center opened, the midwives confided to MSF doctors that the center’s guards were raping them while on night duty” (Shanks & Schull, p. 1152). Disparaging reports like this are not uncommon, only further adding insult to injury.

#### *The Ramifications of Rape in Rwanda*

Women and girls are especially vulnerable to sexual violence during war and conflict, whether in the midst of fighting, while in transition, or inside camps for refugees. But the horrors of sexual violence in Rwanda did not end when the fighting came to a close. The ramifications of rape are both profound and severe and have a strong influence on health and international human rights law.

*Health.* The youngest victims of Rwanda’s epidemic of rape are now nearing their teenage years. According to government reports, as many as 5,000 children were born to women who were raped during the Rwandan genocide (Donovan, 2002). Other sources cite the estimated number of children conceived during the genocide to be 20,000 (Torgovnik, 2008). One of these children was the daughter of Zilipe Mindamage who was “so ashamed to be carrying the child of a Rwandan Hutu militiaman who raped her in [1994] that she gave a false name at the hospital and left the infant behind after giving birth. She said she hated the child – the bitter fruit of the attack by the man who also slaughtered her parents and brother” (Matloff, 1995, ¶ 2). Forced pregnancy, a form of ethnic cleansing and eugenics, resulted in thousands of *enfants mauvais souvenir*, children of bad memories, and countless episodes of abandonment and infanticide (Matloff).<sup>11</sup> With an abandonment rate of nearly eighty percent, orphanages lacked the resources to handle the flood of unwanted babies (Matloff). Not only did these children have profound demographic influences, but they also altered the social dynamic, falling victim to isolation and rejection. “Bonds among community members may be further undermined when women bear the ethnically-mixed offspring of rape at the hands of men from other ethnic communities” (Jones, 2002, p. 82). Often, the women who could not bear the thought of carrying the offspring of their attackers turned to abortion. Illegal in Rwanda, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that up to fifty percent of maternal deaths in refugee settings result from unsafe abortions (Lehmann, 2002). For those children who did survive, shame, trauma, and stigma have been continued hallmarks of their lives since birth.

For countless others, their torture has barely begun. For the 250,000 to 500,000 that were raped during the genocide in Rwanda, their trauma is far from over. “At least half of them are

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<sup>11</sup> Please see Appendix 7 for more information about the present-day ramifications of unwanted pregnancy for rape victims.

now HIV positive” (Hilsum, 2004, ¶ 1). More than a decade ago, the leaders of the country’s majority Hutu population tried to exterminate the Tutsis. Today, they are succeeding as many rape survivors are dying of AIDS. While it is impossible to determine the prevalence of infection among the massacred or what percentage of Rwandans presently living with HIV/AIDS contracted the infection during the genocide, it appears that around one-third of Rwandese soldiers were HIV positive before the genocide (Jones, 2002). “We will never know whether the rapes committed during the genocide account for today’s HIV/AIDS prevalence in Rwanda or... whether the natural course of the pandemic would have brought the country, like so many of its neighbors, to a comparable rate of infection today” (Donovan, 2002, ¶ 9). What is known is that HIV was used consciously and deliberately as a weapon of war during the systematic rapes in 1994. “Eyewitnesses recounted later that marauders carrying the virus described their intentions to their victims: they were going to rape and infect them as an ultimate punishment that would guarantee long-suffering and tormented deaths” (Cohen, d’Adesky & Anastos, 2005, p. 613). The gender-based violence seen in Rwanda and HIV were on a collision course that ultimately led to a predictable AIDS epidemic. As the effects of HIV/AIDS begin to take their toll, medical care and access to life-saving antiretroviral therapy must be combined with psychosocial support and programs that address poverty and other barriers to care.

Taking into account the physical and psychological trauma of rape, it is no surprise that many survivors see no prospect of recovery and still more continue to suffer. “Many feel that their survival is its own form of torture” (Kayitesi-Blewitt, 2006, p. 319). Plagued by physical and psychological illness, Rwandan survivors of rape continue to grapple with sexually transmitted diseases, fistulas, scars, chronic pain, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder

(PTSD), and flashbacks (Cohen, d'Adesky & Anastos, 2005). Rape continues to be a taboo subject in Rwanda, as the trauma suffered by rape victims lives on in silence.

*International human rights law.* History was made on September 2, 1998, as Jean-Paul Akayesu, mayor of a small town in Rwanda, became the first person to be convicted of genocide. Convicted at the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania, Akayesu's conviction was "a major development in the evolution of international law" (Vo, 1998, ¶ 3). Despite this successful conviction, the International Criminal Tribunal has not lived up to its mandate, partially due to a lack of funding and diplomatic support (Austin & Torrice, 2006). Included within the verdict was the ever-important acknowledgement that "rape and other forms of sexual violence that occurred in 1994 also constituted genocide as they were committed with the intent to destroy a particular group" (Vo, ¶ 4). Prior to this historic decision, the 1948 Genocide Convention left room for interpretation by defining genocide as killing or "causing serious physical or mental harm" with the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" but did not specifically mention rape or systematic sexual abuse. Significant progress has thus been made:

Through the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, which was established to investigate and punish those responsible for the 1994 genocide, sexual violence during civil war has now been classified among the least tolerable of atrocious acts. The Rwanda Tribunal determined that rapes committed in the service of armed conflict are not only war crimes, but also crimes against humanity, and in some cases, acts of genocide. (Donovan, 2002, ¶ 10)

Furthermore, the catastrophe in Rwanda became the first genocide to be officially recognized by the UN since the Holocaust. Subsequently, numerous other perpetrators have been found guilty

of rape as an act of genocide, including one woman. Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, a minister in the genocidal government, was convicted of picking Tutsi women for her son and his companions to rape (Hilsum, 2004). Nowadays, international legal and humanitarian constructs now define systematic rape and sexual violence against civilian populations during conflict as a way to demoralize a population, as an instrument of genocide, and as a crime against humanity. Perhaps the only positive outcome of the otherwise-devastating Rwandan rape scourge of 1994, this crucial development in international law has paved the way for future accountability, retribution, and punishment.

## Chapter III: The Democratic Republic of the Congo – Death, Disaster, Rape, and Ramifications

*“There is no precedent for the insensate brutality of the war on women in Congo. The world has never dealt with such a twisted and blistering phenomenon.”*

*~ Stephen Lewis, former UN Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa<sup>12</sup>*

*Africa’s World War*

At this very moment, the deadliest conflict since World War II is raging in the heart of Africa, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since the war began in 1998, sixteen million people have been affected and more than 5.4 million people have died in the DRC, accounting for a greater loss of life than in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Darfur combined (Polgreen, 2008).

“Congo’s loss is equivalent to the entire population of Denmark or the state of Colorado perishing within a decade” (IRC, 2008b). Nearly half of the deceased were children younger than 5 years old (Polgreen). It is a hidden war in a country with problems as enormous as the terrain.<sup>13</sup> In fact, if one were to place a map of Europe across Congo with London at its most western point, Moscow would fall 200 miles shy of the eastern border (“Congo: In the heart of darkness,” 2000). The second largest country in sub-Saharan Africa, the DRC is a “land so vast and ungovernable that it has long been perceived as the continent’s ultimate hellhole” (Robinson & Walt, 2006, ¶ 4). With plentiful soil containing diamonds, gold, copper, tantalum, and uranium and with a river that could power the whole continent, Congo once had limitless potential (Robinson, 2007). That potential has been permanently marred, however, as the richness of its resources has turned the DRC into a vortex of manipulation and pandemonium, not to mention a battleground for foreign armies. Congo continues to be ravaged by both direct and structural violence.

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<sup>12</sup> (Wakabi, 2008, p. 15)

<sup>13</sup> Please see Appendix 2 for a map of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Congo was first plundered by slave kingdoms and then by foreigners looking to take advantage of its vast natural resources. In 1885, King Leopold II of Belgium seized the opportunity to exploit the land and made the DRC his private possession. Tales of Leopold's associates chopping off hands and heads to force locals to deliver Congo's bounty to him still echo around the country ("Congo: In the heart of darkness," 2000). Soon after, the DRC became a Belgian colony. As with most African colonies, the colonizers brought some health and education initiatives, built a few roads, and impeded political development. Decades of power-hungry and brutal foreign rule resulted in the death of more than three million people (Dentzer, 2008). When Congo became independent in 1960, chaos took reign.

It took only a few months for the DRC's first elected Prime Minister to be assassinated by Belgian- and U.S.-backed forces because of the administration's mounting ties to the Soviet Union (Robinson & Walt, 2006). Army general Mobutu Sese Seko, a U.S. favorite during the Cold War because of his anti-communist inclinations, took advantage of this opening and seized power. "Mobutu presided over one of the most corrupt regimes in African history, siphoning off billions from state-owned companies and allowing most of the country to languish" (Robinson & Walt, ¶ 9). During his three-decade reign, the country was renamed Zaire, Mobutu used the treasury as his personal bank account, and the government managed to systematically underinvest in almost anything that could benefit the people. When it appeared that things could not possibly get worse, the 1994 genocide in Rwanda spilled over into Congo and the country has been in a downward spiral ever since.

Perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide poured into the DRC, bringing with them thousands of Hutu civilians who feared retribution. "The old Rwandan army and the gangs of killers fled into Congo, where Mobutu gave them shelter and weapons" ("Congo: In the heart of

darkness,” 2000, ¶ 8). In Congolese camps, Hutu civilians and genocide leaders came face-to-face with Tutsi who had fled Rwanda many years before. The perpetrators of the genocide convinced Hutu civilians that their lives were at risk and that they must rebel against the Tutsi-led Rwandan regime to maintain their dignity. Ethnic tensions and civil war continued to brew alongside the massive influx of refugees from the fighting in Rwanda. In September 1996, the governor of Kivu province in the eastern DRC threatened to expel all Tutsi from the country (Puechguirbal, 2003). Fearing massacres, Congolese Tutsi began to arrange the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo (AFDL) as a source of military protection for themselves (Puechguirbal).

Back in Rwanda, fears of insurgency heightened. The Kagame-led Rwandan regime invaded Congo and attacked the Hutu camps with the reported intention of creating a buffer zone to protect Rwanda’s western border from further retributions. With the help of Ugandan forces and Congolese Tutsis, Rwanda’s attempts to eliminate the Interahamwe hiding in Congo’s eastern forests worked better than expected (Robinson & Walt, 2006). The invading armies marched across the country, exterminating 200,000 refugees, so called “genocide criminals,” who had fled the army’s advance as they went (Lefort, 2003, ¶ 4). “Rwandan troops emptied the border refugee camps, thus depriving the Hutu militia of their rear base, and forced many refugees to return to Rwanda” (Puechguirbal, p. 1272). In May 1997, a mortally ill Mobutu fled as the invaders took Kinshasa and installed Laurent Kabila, a small-time rebel leader, as president of the newly named Democratic Republic of the Congo (Robinson, 2007). Not surprisingly, this scramble for power led to the collapse of Congo’s already fragile economy, the further decline of already atrophied state institutions, and the complete loss of any semblance of law and order. “Violence became commonplace. It’s a culture characterized by acute spasms of

violence, fueled by ethnic hatred, that is in turn fed by confrontations between radicals from both of the Rwandan sides – all of which has spilled over into Congo” (Lefort, 2003, ¶ 4).

The Congolese had high hopes for immediate change and many thought Kabila would “usher in an age of freedom and prosperity” (“High hopes fade in Congo,” 1997, ¶ 3). Soon the grassroots democracy that Kabila had encouraged a few short months before was suffocated. It became hard to distinguish Kabila from Mobutu and the hopes of the Congolese people were dashed as all non-AFDL political activity was banned, demonstrations were met with bullets, and ministers had to swear personal allegiance to Kabila (“High hopes fade in Congo”). Before long, the government of the DRC began to have serious disagreements with former allies Rwanda and Uganda and attempted to expel all foreign troops (Puechguirbal, 2003). President Kabila sought new allies in the Interahamwe of eastern Congo, prompting what was later termed Africa’s first world war.

In response, Uganda and Rwanda invaded the DRC for the second time in 1998, this time in an attempt to dislodge Kabila. A Congolese rebel group called the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD), a coalition of former Kabila allies and former Mobutists, banded together to advance Rwandan and Ugandan efforts (Puechguirbal, 2003). This time, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Sudan, and Chad sent troops to shield Kabila and protect a neighboring state from invasion. No less than eight foreign armies and fifteen armed groups became entangled in the conflict. “At one level, they have been sucked into the vacuum; social and population pressure east of Congo has drawn the neighbors towards a country with few people for its size and no state structures. But each also has internal political reasons for going to Congo” and ulterior motives abounded (“Congo: In the heart of darkness,” 2000, ¶ 12). Greed is cited as the primary cause of the second war as the scuffle for resources and power dragged in

neighboring countries, produced factions, and induced campaigns of ethnic cleansing. A UN Security Council report on this issue describes “systematic and diverse looting on a massive scale” (Roberts, 2001, ¶ 1). “The battles among these bands have rarely led to major victories or defeats: the whole idea is to maintain insecurity and justify the militarization that enables the massive plundering. Amid all of this, the local people have paid a terrible price” (Lefort, 2003, ¶ 5).

The war reached a stalemate with the country half controlled by rebel groups and divided into three zones: the northern part controlled by the Front du Libération du Congo (FLC) and supported by Uganda; the eastern part controlled by the RCD and supported by Rwanda; and the western and southern parts under the control of Kabila and the government in Kinshasa with the support of Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia (Puechguirbal, 2003). In July 1999, the Lusaka Accords were signed and the government of Congo, three rebel groups, and five intervening nations agreed to a ceasefire (“Congo: In the heart of darkness,” 2000). The agreement provided “for an Inter-Congolese Dialogue between the DRC government, the armed opposition, the unarmed opposition, and civil society. It also requested that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) assist in organizing the dialogue under the aegis of a neutral facilitator” (Puechguirbal, p. 1272). But the ceasefire did little to stop the actual fighting and all sides have persistently broken it. In December 2000, for example, an estimated “60,000 refugees fled into Zambia from the fighting that [had] just delivered the town of Pweto to Congo’s anti-government rebels” (“Congo: In the heart of darkness,” ¶ 4). Eighteen months after the ceasefire arrangement, President Kabila was shot dead by one of his bodyguards and his son, Joseph Kabila, assumed power at the age of twenty-nine (Robinson & Walt, 2006). One year later, hope was once again rekindled in Congo:

After some arm-twisting by continental power South Africa (whose leaders recognized the crucial role Congo could play in their plan for an African rebirth), the young leader and most of the rebel groups and foreign forces in the country signed a peace deal. A national army was formed, aimed at integrating soldiers who had previously been trying to kill one another. And Congolese people, who maintain a sense of spirit and beauty despite the horrors around them, dared to hope for a better country. (Robinson & Walt, 2006, ¶ 10)

In October 2001, the Inter-Congolese Dialogue began in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, but it soon adjourned in disagreement (Puechguirbal, 2003). A second round of negotiations in Sun City, South Africa, in March of 2002 resulted in the adoption of more than thirty resolutions; subsequently, the presidents of Rwanda and the DRC signed a peace agreement in Pretoria, South Africa that July (Puechguirbal). Unfortunately, “the war has since given way to several similar conflicts in the five eastern provinces that have continued to exact an enormous toll on the lives and livelihoods of local populations” (Coghlan et al., 2007, p. ii). The country continues to be devastated by a complex web of local, regional, and national conflict and in many parts of the country the fighting has never really stopped.

Today, the DRC continues to be ravaged by violence, death, and destruction “producing a record of human devastation unmatched in recent history” (Robinson & Walt, 2006, ¶ 2). The historic election in 2006 was supposed to end Congo’s various long-standing rebellions and civil wars, in addition to overcoming its tradition of poor governance. The people of Congo elected Joseph Kabila, the front-runner and perhaps the only candidate capable of presiding over the chaotic country, in the country’s first fair election in 45 years (“Hold your breath for the big

one,” 2006). By standard measures the conflict is over, but Congo continues to be ravaged by direct and structural violence:

Fighting persists in the east, where rebel holdouts loot, rape, and murder. The Congolese army, which was meant to be both a symbol and protector in a reunited country, has cut its own murderous swath, carrying out executions and razing villages... Even deadlier are the side effects of war, the scars left by years of brutality that disfigure Congo’s society and infrastructure. The country is plagued by bad sanitation, disease, malnutrition, and dislocation. (Robinson & Walt, ¶ 3)

An estimated 45,000 people continue to die every month from hunger and disease resulting from gutted infrastructure and a flattened economy (Polgreen, 2008). The mortality rate is 57 percent higher than in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa (Polgreen). Preventable illnesses, especially in children, account for most deaths (Depoortere & Checci, 2006). “Children continue to bear a disproportionate burden of the humanitarian crisis in DR Congo, accounting for almost half of all deaths” (Coghlan et al., 2007, p. 14). Of the 5.4 million deaths since August 1998, an estimated 2.1 million occurred since the formal end of the war in 2002 (Coghlan et al.).

In the *Heart of Darkness* originally written more than a century ago, Joseph Conrad described the exploitation of Congo as “the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human consciences and geographical explorations” (2006, p. 30). Unfortunately the same words ring true today, as the country remains as dangerous, volatile, and shattered as ever. Entangled in a climate of chronic instability and ethnic tension, the region frequently flares up with massacre and counter-massacre. “Its current circumstances cannot simply be described as either an emergency or development situation, or as a conflict or post-conflict scenario, as all of these can be observed to be occurring in different regions of the country” (Coghlan et al., 2007,

p. 15). The most recent peace agreement, signed on January 23, 2008, between the government and rebel leader Laurent Nkunda once again kindled a spark of hope. But this hope was promptly dashed as renewed fighting broke out days later; new negotiations are ongoing. Put simply, the aftershocks of Africa's most devastating conflicts continue to shatter lives and livelihoods in Congo.

*The international response: the failure of never again.* After Rwanda's tragedy in 1994, former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called for the international community to hold countries accountable and to make sure that such atrocities are never again repeated. But the abused words of "never again" ring hollow in light of the conflict in Congo. The immense weight of evidence in front of the international community regarding the conflict in Congo has been met with passivity and indifference. "Resulting increases in mortality may be moderate in size, but sustained over long periods and across large populations, they may ultimately dwarf other acute but geographically and temporally circumscribed crises... Rich donor nations are miserably failing the people of the DRC even though every few months the mortality equivalent of two Southeast Asian tsunamis ploughs through its territory" (Depoortere & Checchi, 2006, p. 8). Once again, history seems to be repeating itself and the world seems willing to let Congo bleed.

That is not to say that there has been no intervention by the international community. In August 1999, the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of military and civilian UN personnel to the capitals of the Lusaka Accord signatory states and to the bases of military belligerents. Since that time, the UN mission in the DRC, known officially as the Mission des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo (MONUC), has been expanded to include observers and civilian support staff in a multitude of fields (Puechguirbal, 2003). "Since 2000,

the world has spent billions on its peacekeeping mission in Congo” (Robinson & Walt, 2006, ¶ 4). It is currently the largest UN force anywhere in the world, “but the troops number just 17,500, a tiny presence in such a large country” (Robinson & Walt, ¶ 4). The UN peacekeepers lack the necessary personnel to establish complete order and are thus forced to ally themselves with ineffective, and often corrupt, Congolese troops. “What was needed was highly trained and well-resourced troops who could prevent arms flows and protect vulnerable citizens” (Doyle, 2004, Aid call section, ¶ 5). Instead, Congo received UN troops that were poorly equipped and poorly trained. Furthermore, efforts by the UN in the DRC are drastically underfinanced. In February 2006, UN and aid groups called for \$682 million in humanitarian funds to assist Congo, but only \$94 million was eventually pledged, a mere \$9.40 for every person in need (Robinson & Walt).

The international community can no longer claim innocence about the abuses occurring in Congo and their profound and protracted effects on health and human rights. The atrocities can no longer be ignored. There is an incredible need for stronger international action so as to ensure that the international community does not “switch off the lights yet again on what may be the world’s greatest humanitarian crisis” (Depoortere & Checchi, 2006, p. 8).

#### *A War Against Women*

The most frequent targets of this conflict are women. “It is, in fact, a war against women, and the weapon used to destroy them, their families and whole communities, is rape” (“War against women,” 2008, ¶ 3). Experts on the situation in eastern Congo believe the number of rape victims in the provinces of North and South Kivu to be well in excess of 100,000 over the past ten years (Russell, 2007), and this number represents only the tip of the iceberg (Gettleman, 2007). In the DRC, rape has become the norm, not the exception.

In Congo, rape is being systematically used as a tactic of war to destroy women, their families, and entire communities. Women have become the battlefield for foreign armies and those who use terror as a weapon of war. A potent means of terrorizing and destroying entire communities, sexual violence in Congo has become an instrument of war. “The sexual violence in Congo is the worst in the world... the sheer numbers, the wholesale brutality, the culture of impunity – it’s appalling” (Gettleman, 2007, ¶ 5). Women fleeing the fighting talk of vast bloodshed, rape, executions, and torched villages. “They raped women and burned the houses... They took tongues and thumbs and the genitals of women and men” (Robinson & Walt, 2006, ¶ 7). The situation in the DRC is a brutal one. One humanitarian aid worker recounts: “I’ve been told a story where a whole family was abducted and taken to the forest. Men are at gunpoint forced to rape their own daughters or other female relatives. And if they refuse, they are killed. People are forced to eat human flesh” (Manalsuren, 2007, ¶ 3). Unprecedented cruelty, humiliation, and degradation are the hallmarks of this current epidemic. Large numbers of rapes occur in public places in the presence of witnesses. Women and girls are most often attacked when they leave their village and while engaged in everyday activities such as collecting water, cultivating fields, searching for firewood, or walking to the market. In Congo, four types of rape have been identified: individual rape, gang rape, rape in which victims are forced to rape each other, and rape involving objects being inserted into the victim’s genitals (Manalsuren).

Combatants of all groups perpetrate the widespread and systematic violence against women in eastern Congo. In the words of one soldier, “women must be raped to overcome the enemies” (Jackson, 2008). As military activities increased throughout the region, so did crimes against women, rape, and sexual violence. Often carried out to punish alleged support of the

enemy, rape is conducted during military operations to instill shame in the victims. Government troops partake in the violence as well:

Frustrated and often hungry, Congolese units have taken to looting and pillaging the people they are meant to protect... The upsurge in rapes, killings, and torture by Congo's security forces has become so serious that the UN peacekeeping mission in Congo is debating whether to end its cooperation with the police and army altogether. (Robinson & Walt, 2006, ¶ 12)

No matter where they are or who stumbles across them, all women and girls in the DRC are vulnerable to the cycles of rape and murder that continue in the east. A show of violence, these rapes are intended to humiliate, terrorize, and demonstrate power. "These rapes are a show of force... The point is to show the husband, the family, the village, that they're all powerless. It's as if the rapists are saying: We can do what we want to you" (Lefort, 2003, ¶ 13).

Sharp rises in the number of rape victims are seen with each wave of violence as each new battle is followed by pillaging and rape. Some rape treatment centers reported a doubling in cases as a result of the latest round of fighting that began in September 2007 and flared up last December (Wakabi, 2008). In a recent eighteen-month period, Médecins Sans Frontières treated 7,400 rape cases at Bon Marche hospital in the capital of Ituri district (Manalsuren, 2007). Before this, clashes between troops in late May and early June of 2004 resulted in mass death, rape, and the emigration of thousands of refugees. Women as old as seventy-five and girls as young as three have been subjected to this cruel and inhumane form of torture (Gettleman, 2007). According to the United Nations, 27,000 sexual assaults were reported in 2006 in South Kivu Province alone despite the existence of the biggest peacekeeping force in the world

(Gettleman). These numbers likely represent only the tip of the iceberg and the true number of sexual assaults may be up to 50 times higher (“Rights group reveals Congo rape horror,” 2005).

Some women are gang raped; others are forced to trade their freedom for sexual servitude (Jones, 2002); several have been raped by relatives who are forced to do so at gun point (Manalsuren, 2007); and one account tells the story of a woman who was shot through the vagina (HRW, 1996). Many women have been “sadistically attacked from the inside out, butchered by bayonets and assaulted with chunks of wood” to the extent that “their reproductive and digestive systems are beyond repair” (Gettleman, 2007, ¶ 2). Another victim recounts her trauma, “If a woman is pregnant, they make your children stand on your belly so that you will abort. Then they take the blood from your womb and put it a bowl and tell you to drink it” (Jackson, 2008). The mounting incidence of sexual brutality in Congo is resulting in rising rates of trauma, fistula, and sexually transmitted infections (Wakabi, 2008). Painful accounts echo around the country. It is not “uncommon to hear accounts of armed groups seizing young women from farms or water points and enslaving them and raping them for one to three months,” other women speak of “gunmen breaking into their homes and brutally raping them in front of their families” (IRC, 2007b, ¶ 5). The catastrophes seen in the DRC are unlike anything seen before and they have metastasized into a wider social phenomenon: “rape is now on a daily basis – rape is the norm” (“War against women,” 2008, ¶ 18). As many as 90 percent of women in some villages have been raped and entire communities have been destroyed (“War against women”). The systematic and violent rapes in Congo are being executed in a manner that is used to terrify communities and humiliate families in a premeditated fashion:

This is not rape because soldiers have got bored and have nothing to do. It is a way to ensure that communities accept the power and authority of that particular

armed group. This is about showing terror. This is about using it as a weapon of war... This is a show of force, of power, it's done to destroy the person... Sex is being used to commit evil. ("War against women," ¶ 20-41)

### *Rape in Refuge*

Because of the rape and destruction, many have fled the DRC in search of refuge and a sanctuary from the violence.<sup>14</sup> They leave behind their life's possessions, corpses of loved ones, and the ashes of a community in search of a better life. An estimated eighty percent of rural families have fled their homes at least once during the conflict: 462,200 were refugees, and more than 2,330,000 people were internally displaced within the DRC's borders as of January 2005 (UNHCR, 2005). But most never find a safe haven and instead escape violence in conflict only to face similar brutality in the refugee camps. Congolese refugee women are susceptible to rape, sexual assault, and other forms of violence on top of the challenges of living as a refugee. "Even in these supposedly protected camps, women are raped every single day" ("War against women," 2008, ¶ 16). Women in the refugee setting are tasked with not only providing food for themselves, but also for their families, and in many instances they become the head of the household as men are either dead or off fighting. "Shortages of food, wood, water, and health care have created great burdens for them. Women and girls often have to travel long distances to find resources, inadvertently exposing themselves to violence by roaming the countryside" (Puechguirbal, 2003, p. 1273). In a different vain, Congolese women sometimes turn to prostitution as a means of livelihood (Puechguirbal). They are raped and subjected to violent sexual abuse, and in return they may be guaranteed safe passage or given a meager amount of food for their families.

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<sup>14</sup> Please see Appendix 5 for statistics regarding Congo's refugee populations.

For many refugees, dusk is accompanied by fear. “People prowl around the camp at night” looking for their next victim (Jacobs, 2007, ¶ 1). Women and girls “are being exploited inside and outside the camp” (Jacobs, ¶ 13). Among those who have fled, about 40,000 are crowded into a camp in Bulengo and another 136,000 are residing in other camps around Goma and in Uganda (UNHCR, 2000). In these camps, “the all-too-familiar cycles of destruction, rape and violence that have plagued this vast country for the past ten years, leaving more than four million dead, seem to have returned” (Jacobs, ¶ 7). At the UN camp in Bunia, home to 16,000 refugees, a “significant, widespread, and ongoing pattern of [sexual] abuse” threatens to further undermine the already chronic instability (Loconte, 2005, ¶ 7). In 2005, UNICEF treated more than 2,000 victims of sexual violence in several months in Bunia alone (Loconte).

Refugees are exploited by peers, enemies, militants, and in the vilest scenarios, peacekeepers. A December 2004 report from the United Nations prompted the former Secretary General Kofi Annan to admit that pedophilia, rape, and prostitution were among the allegations of misconduct being made against peacekeepers in the DRC (Loconte, 2005). This is not the first time that there have been claims of sexual abuse by UN staff. Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, and other parts of West Africa have seen endemic sexual violence against refugees by their guardians (Loconte). But there is still no independent oversight of MONUC forces. Unfortunately the UN has no jurisdiction over military personnel from sovereign governments.<sup>15</sup> Disappointingly, a year after a memo was sent in August 2003 to MONUC headquarters in Kinshasa detailing suspicions of sexual misconduct, no action had been taken (Loconte). Abuses by UN personnel at the camp in Bunia continue to undermine the work being done by the

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<sup>15</sup> The following countries are contributors of military personnel to the MONUC mission: Algeria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, France, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Jordan, Kenya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Yemen and Zambia (adapted from <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/monuc/facts.html>).

international community. A documentary by Lisa Jackson (2008) reports that nineteen MONUC peacekeepers have been accused of exchanging milk and eggs for sex with girls as young as ten. When peacekeepers engage in sexual violence they violate the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, their actions further decimate the already dismal lives of refugees.

*The Ongoing Ramifications of Rape in the DRC*

*Physical, mental, and social health.* The consequences of sexual assault are long lasting, severe, and have wide repercussions for the future of women, their families, and entire communities. Not only does rape contribute to disease and infirmity on the part of the victim, it also interferes with physical, mental, and social wellbeing. Victims of rape in Congo face enormous health challenges as they seek a new beginning. The safety, health, psychosocial, physical, emotional, and legal needs of survivors of rape continue to be unmet. "Of the women and children who survive the stunning brutality, the physical, emotional and psychological damage will last a lifetime" (UNICEF, 2003, ¶ 2). Unwanted pregnancy, HIV, fistula, and butchered reproductive organs are but a few of the byproducts of such violence. The mental health consequences are often long-lasting and severe and include, but are not limited to, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and conduct, sleeping, and eating disorders. All these factors come together to increase stigma and put victims at further risk of violence.

The potential physical ramifications of rape further exacerbate the problem. For the women who know that help is available and who are strong enough to survive the long walk to a medical facility, getting medical attention is only the first step:

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<sup>16</sup> Please see Appendix 8 for the full text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

About a fifth of the 250 beds in Panzi hospital are occupied by women who undergo as many as six operations to repair the sexual injuries to their bodies, or be treated for mutilation and other wounds. In this hospital, the sexually assaulted victims are two or three times as numerous as civilians treated for gunshot wounds, and four or five times as numerous as wounded soldiers. (Lefort, 2003, ¶ 12)

Some of these women are treated by aid agencies, others make it to district or regional hospitals, but most languish on their own and do not “break the taboo, the stigma that attaches to any woman who’s been raped” (Lefort, 2003, ¶ 8). Where facilities exist, “health workers are being trained to perform safe deliveries, identify and treat sexually transmitted diseases and to assist rape victims” in the hope of mounting an effective response (IRC, 2008a, ¶ 2).

One of the most common ramifications for Congolese rape victims is unwanted pregnancy. The frequency of rape-induced pregnancy for adolescents and women varies from five to eighteen percent in Congo (Rosenberg et al., 2006). “High exposure to frequent, forced, and unprotected sex clearly puts refugee women at high risk of unwanted pregnancy. Additionally, refugee women often have limited or interrupted access to contraception and little or no access to emergency contraception” (Lehman, 2002, p. 152). Furthermore, sexual assault “frequently results in gynecological problems, problems of sexual functioning, and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV infection” (Rosenberg et al., p. 758). High prevalence of HIV among militants combined with the massive rape epidemic in eastern Congo prove to be a death sentence for many women. “Data from the Panzi hospital in Bukavu indicates that approximately 27 percent of rape victims tested positive for HIV” (UNICEF, 2003, ¶ 7). In addition, many rape victims contract syphilis, a condition that further increases the risk of becoming infected with

HIV (Lefort, 2003). Many of these women have few outlets for medical assistance and face rejection from their community and loved ones due to stigma and the acknowledged correlation between HIV and rape.

To avoid such rejection, women are often reluctant to report cases of rape. “Many women fail to seek help because they are afraid of the reaction within their family or community” (Manalsuren, 2007, p.1). “Sexual violence is so stigmatized. The victims don’t come and seek medical care” (“Rights group reveals Congo rape horror,” 2005, ¶ 12). These and other various factors come together to increase stigma and put victims at further risk of violence.

Sexual violence also has wide-reaching ramifications in terms of social wellbeing in conflict areas. The rape epidemic deals blows to countries’ societies, economies, and stability:

The rape of women and children has a devastating impact on entire communities. Children have lost all aspects of their protective environment – with many schools closed, health care facilities non-existent, family members killed before their eyes, siblings forcibly recruited in the armed forces, entire families displaced and communities broken up. (UNICEF, 2003, ¶ 9)

Malnutrition is soaring in the DRC. Economic destabilization is yet another possible outcome of the vulgar sexual exploitation occurring at this very moment. Institutional capacity, among other things, is eroded: “The persistent elevation of mortality more than four years after the official end of the 1998-2002 war provides further evidence that recovery from conflict can take many years, especially when superimposed on decades of political and socioeconomic decline” (Coghlan et al., 2007, p. ii). The need for holistic interventions, targeting not only health but also various other support systems, for the victims of rape could not be more clear.

*Impunity and indifference.* Perhaps the most devastating ramification of rape in the DRC has been the apathy with which the international community has responded to the crisis and the lack of interest in addressing impunity and human rights abuses. Hundreds of thousands of lives have been shattered by the rape epidemic in Congo, and yet less than a dozen victims have seen their attackers prosecuted. “There are known criminals... Unless these high-profile criminals who are implicated for rape, mass rape, and other human rights violations, unless they are punished, impunity invites crime to be repeated” (Manalsuren, 2007, p. 1). The impunity may well be at the root of the problem and it is essential that the message be sent that such acts of violence are unacceptable. The rapists must be brought to justice. In the words of the UN Security Council, the need to end impunity is a vital component of the “comprehensive approach to seeking peace, justice, and national reconciliation” (Manalsuren, p. 1). The question becomes how to use the tools of the international community to combat the sexual assault and the culture of impunity on which it thrives

It will take years of sweat and tears, hard work, and proper financing to restore the DRC to its potential. “If the country has any hope of escaping the cycle of violence, misrule, and despair, it will need the largesse and mercy of governments all over the globe” (Robinson & Walt, 2006, ¶ 15). The international community thus has a vital role to play in helping to end the lingering violence, holding perpetrators accountable, and protecting Congo’s natural resources from further exploitation. “The world must stop the horror and help the survivors... rape is an affront to human rights, human decency, and human dignity... the world cannot be silent as rape is used as a weapon of war in eastern DRC” (UNICEF, 2003, ¶ 2-6). Immediate action must be taken:

The shame of indifference should be reason enough for action. But without more money from the developed world to help rebuild, without more troops to secure the peace and protect innocent civilians, without a genuine effort by Congo's leaders to work for the country rather than just their part of it, and without Congo's neighbors ending their meddlesome ways, Africa's broken heart is unlikely to heal. (Robinson & Walt, 2006, ¶ 16)

Without action, hundreds of thousands more women and children will be raped and thousands more innocent lives will be lost.

## Chapter IV: Similarities and Differences

*“When the crimes begin to pile up, they become invisible. When suffering becomes unendurable, the cries are no longer heard.” ~ Bertolt Brecht<sup>17</sup>*

The sickening horrors that occurred in Rwanda and that are occurring in the DRC bear some striking resemblances. The mass extermination of human life, the intentional degradation of others, the systematic rape of women and girls, and a past of international meddling followed by inaction are just a few of the themes that run a common course through the histories of these two nations. While these themes do, at points, diverge, overall there is a pattern of history repeating itself. After one hundred days of atrocities in Rwanda, the international community’s declaration of “never again” rang clear in the hearts and minds of many, but today that same refrain rings hollow to hundreds of thousands of Congolese citizens. An understanding of these patterns, of the similarities and differences, is vital to put an end to the cycle of rape, death, and destruction occurring today in Congo and to ensure that this broken record is truly never again played. This chapter focuses on the intent of war and rape; the role of the international community, with special attention paid to the role of the United States and the UN peacekeeping forces; the role of the international media; and the role of churches.

*The Intent of War and Rape*

The Rwandan genocide was a systematic attempt by one ethnic group to exterminate another. Militias, civilians, and military alike rounded up and killed all who appeared to be Tutsi, in addition to those who sympathized with Tutsis, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. The intent was to destroy an ethnic group and erase the memory of their very existence. It was a civil war with only two players: the Hutu and the Tutsi. By the very nature of the ethnic delineations in Rwanda, everyone was involved. There was no escaping the genocide. A crucial component of

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<sup>17</sup> (Austin & Torrice, 2006)

this genocide was the humiliation of the Tutsi by the Hutu. Rapes occurred to foster political goals and the mass sexual violence served to undermine everything that was Tutsi. Rape was a show of force and power, one that drove hundreds of thousands of Tutsi women into the depths of submission and humiliation. The sexual violence that occurred undermined the fabric of the nation and the essence of community that has long been prevalent in African society, and it was designed to do just that. The culture of impunity in Rwanda during the genocide amidst complete social disarray led to an environment in which rape became acceptable. Most rapists have not yet been brought to justice and most will never be. A crucial weapon in the campaign of torture and extermination, sexual violence is but one piece of the puzzle of Rwandan atrocities.

The ethnic tensions that plagued Rwanda spilled over into neighboring Congo during the genocide. The current crisis in the DRC largely emerged as a result of ethnic tensions coming head to head with a “smash-and-grab for gold, diamonds, and other minerals” (Perry, 2007, ¶ 12). As ethnic tensions and civil war brewed alongside the influx of refugees from Rwanda, neighboring countries saw the social and political vacuum in the DRC and took advantage of it. Congo thus became a battleground for foreign armies seeking redress for Rwanda, fighting over resources and power, and setting off campaigns of ethnic cleansing. In this theater of war, no fewer than eight nations and fifteen ethnic groups continue to be involved. In the pursuit of power, destruction is a common theme. In Congo, the destruction is often targeted toward women through terrorizing campaigns of sexual violence. The culture of rape is believed to have spilled over with the Hutu militiamen who sought safe-haven in the DRC, but has since been transplanted into the groups who are at war in Congo. Combatants of all groups perpetrate this sadistic violence as a show of force, leaving their victims with enormous health problems, filled with shame, and often dead. Horrifying as it is, rape is the norm in Congo. It does not arise from

boredom; it is a systematic tool used to ensure that the power and authority of the perpetrators is accepted. Rape is the violent tool of choice of many in this reservoir of human suffering, and it is still occurring.

The widespread violence, the use and intent of rape, and the culture of impunity are obvious common denominators between Rwanda and the DRC. Crucial differences arise in the number of players, the extent of the sexual violence, and the duration of the violence. In Rwanda, there were but two players fighting over a bitter ethnic rivalry, whereas in Congo there are too many actors and interests involved to define. Simply put, Rwanda had a genocide and the widespread conflict in Congo has been labeled “Africa’s first world war.” While the same Hutu-Tutsi divisions plague the landscape in the DRC, the 200 ethnic groups in Congo and more than twenty-three intervening parties complicate the whole scenario. Like in Rwanda, rape is used in the DRC to terrorize and destroy entire communities. However, in Congo the sheer numbers and degree of brutality make this epidemic unlike anything that has been seen before. Furthermore, the duration of the violence was circumscribed in Rwanda, taking place in one hundred days. Today, the violence that rages in Congo has been commonplace for more than twelve years. Still, little has been done and the lessons of the past have not been heeded.

#### *The Role of the International Community*

The international community has a duty and responsibility to protect the citizens of all nations and to make sure their human rights are upheld. In particular, it is the responsibility of the international community to uphold the rights of women and girls, specifically as it pertains to their safety and security of person:

Violence against women and girls violates several principles enshrined in international and regional human rights law, including the right to life, equality,

security of person, equal protection under the law, and freedom from torture and other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment. (Ward & Vann, 2002, p. s13)

The 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide further clarifies the roles and responsibilities of governments of all nations to prevent and punish acts of genocide during war and peace. Despite these obligations, the international community has conspicuously evaded its duty to intervene in Rwanda and the DRC where mass epidemics of sexual violence have been a clearly evident and intrinsic part of the ongoing war.

In both Rwanda and Congo, the weight of evidence begged for intervention and yet the response was nothing more than blank indifference. “The world has little interest and a lack of political and military ‘tools’ for instilling security where warring parties want to continue fighting each other” (Roberts, 2001, p. 1421). In Rwanda, humanitarian aid was provided after the fact as a substitute for the lack of effective military or political action both to prevent the genocide and then during the genocide. While the humanitarian efforts may have averted many deaths and rapes, over 800,000 deaths and many more rapes could have been prevented had there been an effective military and political response in the early days of the genocide. As a result of Rwanda’s catastrophes, the UN passed Resolution 1325<sup>18</sup> in 2000 that calls upon all parties to armed conflict to “take specific measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and sexual violence” (United Nations [UN], 2000). The *Report of the Independent Inquiry into United Nations Actions during the 1994 Rwanda Genocide* (UN, 1999b) cited lack of political will and resources, in addition to errors in judgment as the principal reasons for the failure to prevent the genocide in Rwanda.

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<sup>18</sup> Please see Appendix 8 for the full text of UN Resolution 1325.

Several years later, similar catastrophes were and continue to be ignored elsewhere on the continent, specifically in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Passivity and indifference were and are the hallmarks of the international community's response. No longer able to claim ignorance about the abuses occurring in Congo, the international community has instead chosen to disregard their very existence. In many ways, despite Resolution 1325 and international human rights law, the world has been agreeable to letting Congo bleed as incomprehensible numbers of women and girls continue to be raped each and every day.

*The United States.* The prominence of the United States as a member of the international community cannot be ignored. The power and influence it wields are forces to be reckoned with in the global arena. Yet, the United States has conveniently not become involved with the devastating epidemics of rape in both Rwanda and the DRC.

The crisis in Rwanda came shortly after the intervention in Somalia, where U.S. troops were sucked into the fighting. The loss of eighteen American soldiers and the injury of 73 more during "Blackhawk Down" served to dull the American appetite for humanitarian assistance missions (Bowden, 1997). President Clinton said, "Lesson No. 1 is don't go into one of these things and say, maybe we'll be done in a month because it's a humanitarian crisis" ("Kind words, but not much more," 1994, ¶ 2). With the failure of "Blackhawk Down" still on the minds of the American populace; with troops in Korea, in Europe, and on the horizon in Bosnia; and with Rwanda offering little in terms of minerals or political value to the United States, the decision was made not to intervene. The Clinton administration chose to bury evidence to justify the lack of response. The word genocide was not publicly used until May 25, 1994, but even then, the impact was severely watered down by using the phrase "acts of genocide" (Carroll, 2004, ¶ 9). In the words of Donald Steinberg, Clinton's special assistant to Africa during the

genocide, “We avoided the term ‘genocide’ for fear it would result in pressure on ourselves to take the forceful actions we weren’t prepared to take” (2008, ¶ 13).

Similarly, the tragic events of September 11, 2001, gave the United States a justification for inaction as things got worse in Congo. In the wake of the terrorist attack, immediate security risks were the first concern and so the “War on Terror” was launched, consuming large financial and military resources. The subsequent invasion of Iraq again diverted efforts away from other humanitarian crises and overshadowed the need for alternate, perhaps more pressing interventions. Despite a clear need for support from the United States, the DRC was left to suffer in the wake of more politically important circumstances.

Ironically, most Americans are touched indirectly by the conflict in the DRC as minerals essential to the operation of cell phones, laptops, and video games come from deep within the beleaguered African nation. Congo is home to 80% of the world’s reserves of tantalum, also known as coltan, an essential component in the manufacture of electrical devices known as pinhead capacitors that are present in tens of millions of electronic devices (Vesperini, 2001). “Regional analysts say the international demand for coltan is one of the driving forces behind the war in the DRC, and the presence of rival militias in the country” (Vesperini, ¶ 2). Coming from deep within the war zones in eastern Congo, this “blood tantalum” connects millions of people around the world to the crisis in the DRC.

In both tragedies, the United States conspicuously avoided its responsibility to intervene. It is important to note, however, that the U.S. was not alone in its inaction. While the role of the United States in the global arena is paramount, equally culpable are other countries with enormous influence in the area. Bodies such as the European Union, member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Organization of African

Unity, amongst others, failed to act. As a result of this inaction, the perpetrators were able to continue their campaign of terror and the citizens of Rwanda and Congo suffered great losses of life and dignity. While the costs of inaction are huge and the benefits of action widely documented, intervention to stop the tragic rape of women and girls has failed to be a priority for the United States and others in the past two decades.

*Peacekeeping forces.* Despite the overall lack of response from the international community, the United Nations Security Council established peacekeeping forces in Rwanda and Congo. Forces were deployed to help implement the Arusha Accords in 1993 in Rwanda and the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in 1999 in the DRC.

Numbering 2,500 strong in Africa's smallest nation, the tasks of the peacekeepers stationed in Rwanda involved monitoring the ceasefire agreement, establishing a demilitarized zone, coordinating relief efforts, and monitoring the security situation. As tensions came to a head in Rwanda, the peacekeeping forces could no longer ignore indicators of the impending slaughter. Repeated calls for help were more than ignored and the UN peacekeeping mission was withdrawn as the violence erupted. As a result, the number of UN supported personnel charged with maintaining the peace in Rwanda decreased one hundred fold. Not surprisingly, the remaining UN force was left powerless and forced to stand by and watch the rape, death, and destruction that accompanied the genocide.

On the other hand, the UN peacekeeping force in Congo numbers 17,500 strong. Despite it being such a small presence in a large country, it has been steadily expanding since it was authorized to monitor the peace process after the Lusaka Accords. Concerns regarding the alleged sexual improprieties of MONUC forces in the DRC have been addressed with the introduction of a "code of conduct" to help prevent future abuses (Loconte, 2005, ¶ 4). The

organization has a “zero-tolerance policy” concerning sexual assaults by UN peacekeepers, and has responded to allegations with several investigations (Loconte). Despite previous instances of sexual abuse, the leadership of the UN seems to be moving in the right direction in recognizing and addressing that sexual exploitation and abuse is a problem in some missions (Loconte).

### *The Role of the International Media*

The media is an incredibly powerful entity. The attention paid to various issues by the media is directly correlated to the consciousness of these issues among the populace. Driven by corporate and institutional politics, the media has a great power of persuasion as it can heighten awareness of certain issues and fail to report others.

While the Rwandan genocide was raging, the focus of the international media was on the historic election and inauguration of Nelson Mandela in South Africa. During the years of 1993-1995, when Rwanda could have and should have been a focus of media attention, only one in four U.S. network news stories concerned international events (Livingston & Stephen, 1998). Domestically, the U.S. government managed to avoid leaking information about the genocide to the media and thus the large majority of the population remained ignorant of the atrocities as they were occurring. “There were few voices in civil society, on college campuses, in the media, or in Congress calling for action beyond humanitarian relief” (Steinberg, 2008, ¶ 11).

International media coverage of the carnage in Rwanda failed to bring attention to the gravity of the situation, dismissing the killings as tribal warfare. Not given the attention it deserved, the scant reports of killings in Rwanda were misguided and ineffective at mobilizing a response. On April 15, 1994, the *New York Times* ran an article that described Rwanda as small, poor, and insignificant (Sciolino, 1994). According to the article, Rwanda had been engulfed by an “uncontrollable spasm of lawlessness and terror” (Sciolino, ¶ 4). “No member of the United

Nations with an army strong enough to make a difference is willing to risk the lives of its troops for a failed central African nation-state with a centuries-old history of tribal warfare and deep distrust of outside intervention” (Sciolino, ¶ 5). The headline of the story, “For West, Rwanda is not worth the political candle,” succinctly captured the notion that the United States had little interest in intervention. Other news sources such as the BBC and Reuters aired and printed reports detailing the true nature of the massacres, but they failed to reach mass audiences. It was a story, but not a huge one. The genocidal events that led up to the exodus of refugees from Rwanda were given far less space and airtime than the exodus of refugees itself (Kuperman, 2004). The dire situation in the refugee camps became a huge story around the world, leading news bulletins in Europe and North America. It became front-page news in the British tabloids and was on the cover of *The New York Times* for six weeks in July and August of 1994 (Hilsum, 2004). In retrospect, the tragic events of those 100 days of genocide have become permanently etched in the minds of many. Countless books, films, songs, and NGOs have sprung up in reaction to the devastation. But the information followed the genocide. As such, preventive efforts and interventions were no longer an option. It was too late.

On April 7, 2003, the *New York Times* carried a story about a massacre of almost one thousand civilians in the DRC. The less than full column story ran on page A6 and was lost amidst a flurry of articles about the war in Iraq. Many other papers did not even mention the story, and others who did ran only a short excerpt. As Zuckerman (2003) asks, “This disparity leaves U.S. with a question: Is Iraq more important than Congo?” (p. 2). It would certainly seem so as the media has ignored Congo and all its strife. The destructive war in the DRC is on the radar of those who pride themselves on their attentiveness to humanitarian affairs, human rights, and the African continent, but is absent from the consciousness of others. “Africa’s first world

war” has been largely ignored and remains a dismissed emergency. It has persistently fallen outside the media spotlight, and the DRC has been left to struggle through the violence.

The conflict in Rwanda evaded the attention of the international media. As a result, a will to intervene was not galvanized and thousands suffered from sexual abuse and violence.

Retrospectively, people realized the horror of what had occurred and wondered why it was that they knew nothing of it while it was occurring. But today, in Congo, the same problem scourges the global community. The consciousness and knowledge of the problem among everyday individuals is about as absent as it was during 1994’s genocide. As Robinson & Walt (2006) suggest, “perhaps the global reservoir of wealth and goodwill runs only so deep. Perhaps the attention and outrage directed toward another African tragedy, the genocide in Darfur, has left the world too exhausted to take on Congo’s” (¶ 5).

### *The Role of the Churches*

Religion and the church have long been focal points in Rwandan and Congolese culture. The church is not only a source of communal faith and of religious conviction, but also a central part of community life. Many churches are actively involved in maintaining schools, health centers, programs that provide support for orphans and vulnerable children, in addition to various other aspects of community life.

Throughout Rwanda’s history, churches had always been a refuge from ethnic fighting and tension. Tutsis sought asylum in churches throughout numerous waves of violence. The churches sheltered and protected those most at-risk, providing social support services whenever possible. When the genocide broke out in 1994, many Tutsi fled to churches in search of help and hope. But something had changed: “churches became death zones” (Austin & Torrice, 2006). Despite being one of the most evangelical countries in Africa, many Tutsis were

slaughtered in and around places of worship. Nyamata church was one of many religious sites that became the epicenter of a massacre. The church was a “crucible of the killing” where an estimated 50,000 died (Perry, 2007, ¶ 2). Six out of ten individuals who sought refuge in Nyamata ended up in body bags, and today, you can still see the blood splattered against the walls (Perry).

In Congo, churches have proved to be an integral part of the response to the deadliest battle since World War II. The Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Christ in Congo, a protestant church, have responded to the crisis with trauma counseling, feeding programs, reconciliation programs, rehabilitation of schools and health centers, in addition to improving preparedness of communities and individuals to handle the devastation. Bishop David Yemba, Congo’s newest Roman Catholic bishop, is a firm advocate of the peacemaking role of the church. “The church is preaching peace and our people are tired of war and we encourage the people to do what they can to move towards peace... The church is playing a significant role in the reconciliation of individuals as well as the reconciliation of groups” (Coudal, 2005, ¶ 8-9). In Congo, unlike in Rwanda, churches have maintained their protective ability and continue to be a source of hope in this war-torn country. “For many who have fled, the parish is a refuge” (Jackson, 2008). Efforts must be made, however, to ensure that the potential of churches is utilized and not thwarted so as to ensure that churches in Congo do not become the morgues that they became in Rwanda.

## Chapter V: Lessons Learned

*“Rape and sexual violence are not collateral damage. Nor are they inevitable in wartime.”*  
 ~ Carol Bellamy<sup>19</sup>

Devastating cycles of violence, oppressive social relationships, and intractable and deeply embedded conflict are all in play when rape is used as an instrument of war. The international response to this issue has been minimal and unfocused, and thus lacks priority on the global agenda, the necessary resources, and the sense of urgency that it demands. In order to advance beyond the cycle of rape, violence, and destruction seen today, significant change must take place. In the first part of this chapter, emerging solutions in the prevention of rape in conflict and post-conflict scenarios will be explored. The second part will survey promising practices in the response to rape in conflict and post-conflict scenarios. These practices will be explored in the hope of facilitating promising prevention and mitigation programming in the future.

*Emerging Solutions in the Prevention of Rape in Conflict and Post-Conflict Scenarios*

*Conflict resolution and generating political will.* As we have seen in Rwanda and Congo, the costs of ignoring the warning signs are high. Conflict resolution and the mobilization of political will play vital roles in preventing rape in situations of conflict. If the conflict can be diffused before it erupts, the likelihood that rape will be used as a tool to further the war is significantly decreased. In the words of one soldier, “all this is happening because of the war. We would live a normal life and treat women naturally if there was not war” (Jackson, 2008). According to Hintjens, the “term ‘identity’ tends to have positive connotations” until those ethnic tensions boil over into a genocide or civil war (2001, ¶ 1). “To make the genocide thinkable, myths of origin were reinvented and differential forms of citizenship enforced. Identity politics became a means of legitimizing collective violence and scapegoating” (Hintjens, ¶ 1). These

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<sup>19</sup> (UNICEF, 2003)

tensions were exploited to justify mass extermination and, in turn, systematic sexual abuse. To make matters worse, the fighting and rape in eastern Congo is a direct ramification of the failure of conflict prevention and resolution in Rwanda. The DRC “is a consequence of the failure to disarm and resettle those responsible for the [Rwandan] genocide... It is a huge failed state within which the organizers of the genocide are allowed to live, obtain arms, seek to reinvade Rwanda,” and collude with other entities to create chaos (Short, 2003, ¶ 13). Here, too, rape has been used time and time again to further entrench the conflict. If rape is to be prevented, the conflict must be stemmed before the opportunity to deliberately use rape as an instrument of war reveals itself. Conflict resolution tools must thus be successfully targeted to undermine the intent of war and rape. The tools of conflict resolution, had they been effectively implemented at an earlier stage, could have diffused the tension and perhaps eliminated these conflicts. If that failed, the tools of conflict resolution could have eased the fighting, and thus prevented the epidemics of rape in both Rwanda and the DRC.

The prevention of interpersonal violence is no small task. However, there are some clear warning signs:

Countries with weak governments and institutions are at considerable higher risk for interpersonal violence than countries with developed institutions, and countries at war are likewise at higher risk than countries at peace. The same factors that lead to high levels of interpersonal violence – lack of economic development; weak social, political, and judicial institutions; and warfare – also adversely affect nations’ ability to collect data and to address the causes and consequences of this violence. (Rosenberg et al., 2006, p. 758)

Among the other factors known to reduce inhibitions against violence, and thus against sexual misconduct, are economic inequality, gender inequality and patriarchal norms, poverty, weak economic safety nets, poor rule of law, and a poor criminal justice system. In any successful conflict resolution program, these risk factors must be addressed.

Keeping in mind the above risk factors and in the interest of preventing the occurrence of rape in conflict, a multi-pronged intervention is essential:

We must insist on constitutional and legal reforms that reduce the power of the executive and overhaul the electoral framework; economic policies that ensure a more equitable distribution of land and income; a framework for addressing ethnic violence and humanitarian crises; engagement of civil society and the business community in governance issues; accountability for crimes; and the dismantling of the ethnic militias. (Steinberg, 2008, ¶ 27)

Furthermore, a successful conflict resolution program entails the removal of the political motive for violence, the resolution of traditional tensions between groups, and the reinforcement of traditional social support structures. Reducing access to weapons and other implements of war may also help avert conflict and minimize health ramifications. “Violence prevention may be seen as a luxury rather than a public health priority” in lower and middle income countries; however, the “magnitude of the problem and the associated health burden negate this view” (Rosenberg et al., 2006, p. 766). If these issues can be successfully addressed, future episodes of mass sexual violence during war can be successfully averted.

Without political will, however, there is no potential to create and sustain an adequate conflict resolution process. Governmental investment in this issue will facilitate the creation of programs and policies that foster the development of environments conducive to preventing the

use of rape as an instrument of war. It is vital that governments realize that “rape is not incidental to armed conflict; it is a distinct and insupportable war crime. Crimes against humanity transcend other criminal acts; they are more grotesque, more abhorrent, and more antithetical to the collective perception of what constitutes human behavior than other acts of mass aggression” (Donovan, 2002, ¶ 10). Governments must be rendered capable and politically willing to prevent acts of sexual violence. Furthermore, such commitment has the ability to open up a dialogue concerning issues of sexual violence, thereby raising awareness and cultivating a proactive response. The successful resolution of conflict and the creation of political will to prevent rape require “a diligence, vision, and determination too often lacking in our common approach toward emerging crises. But the alternative – more Rwandas, Somalias, Bosnias – is unthinkable” (Steinberg, 2008, ¶ 28).

*Advocacy and education efforts.* Awareness must be raised at all levels through advocacy and educational programming, thereby mobilizing information and resources, to foster the creation of an environment that is not conducive to sexual violence. There is a clear “need for concrete action to detect, deter, and redress instances of sexual violence” (UNHCR, 1995, p. 10). Prevention is better than cure, and the prevalence of rape during conflict only serves to support this notion.

Awareness campaigns have a vital role to play in this process. Education and training programs are important tools in disseminating information about basic human rights, the causes and consequences of rape, and the legal ramifications of such acts. In addition, if executed efficiently and in a culturally sensitive manner, such campaigns have the potential to modify negative attitudes toward victims and reinforce the sense of collective responsibility. More importantly, educational programs bring the issue of sexual violence to the table for discussion

and dialogue. Appealing to the moral imperative of intervention to prevent rape during times of conflict, they have the ability to rapidly disseminate information and to generate an environment that fosters dialogue about the issue. “National women’s organizations in host countries can play a valuable role in advocating and addressing the issue of sexual violence against women” (UNHCR, 1995, p. 16). Churches may also be an excellent venue for the distribution of such information. Numerous other tools, such as radio broadcasts and billboards, can be used to educate the populace. In the DRC, “a few washed out billboards tell men that rape is wrong, but there’s little evidence Congolese officials take the problem seriously” (“War against women,” 2008, ¶ 48). While these efforts are a start, the use of advocacy tools to prevent rape is a largely untapped resource. Heightened awareness could bring much needed attention and resources to preventive efforts and thus stimulate action.

*International intervention.* The international community has a responsibility to protect individuals around the world from the horrors of rape. Several international documents detail the duties of signatories to uphold their commitment to human rights and the prevention of rape, genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. International law clearly prohibits sexual violence through numerous documents. The Geneva Conventions; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights; the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are among the most prominent of these documents. The fourth Geneva Convention explicitly addresses the issue of rape in conflict as it “provides protection for civilians in international armed conflict and specifically provides that women should be protected against rape” (Chinkin, 1994, p. 7). Through these documents, the international community has affirmed the basic human right to not

be subjected to sexual violence. In the words of the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, “wars will always happen, but I think there are rules to war, as well – that’s what the Geneva Convention is all about” (Manalsuren, 2007, p. 1). In light of these international documents, the international community has a vital role to play in the prevention of rape. If countries are failing in their commitment to uphold human rights and prevent sexual violence during wartime, the above declarations are not being upheld. Despite the necessity of international political will, too often the “international community has blinked in the face of mass atrocities” (Steinberg, 2008, ¶ 20). The need for the international community to fervently promote, uphold, and protect human rights in situations of mass rape could not be more clear.

The international community has a critical role to play in preventing rape in conflict and its aftermath. In both settings, the primary focuses of prevention should be on diplomatic intervention. If such intervention can prevent the conflict or prevent its escalation, then it will correspondingly decrease the incidence of sexual violence. Other interventions such as the provision of humanitarian assistance and public information dissemination also have great prevention potential. Another possible avenue to ensure that justice is served and that prevention is effective is through the imposition of targeted external sanctions against countries or groups or individuals that perpetrate war crimes.

If all other prevention efforts fail, intervention by peacekeeping forces may be necessary. While “non-consensual military action is a last resort” the presence of international personnel on the ground may contribute to a reduction in the use of rape as an instrument of war (Steinberg, 2008, Beyond apologies to action section, ¶ 3). In Rwanda, the underfinanced and ill-equipped peacekeeping force was not in a position to prevent sexual violence during the genocide. The withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping force occurred as the violence in Rwanda peaked, thus

nullifying any protective presence that the troops could have had had they stayed. Presently, the UN peacekeepers in Congo suffer from similar predicaments as they are also poorly trained, scantily equipped, and drastically underfinanced. While allegations of sexual abuse perpetrated by UN personnel continue to be investigated and addressed, the UN peacekeeping force has maintained an active role in Congo despite the outbreaks of violence and may serve as a resource to abate future outbreaks of rape and violence. “Some 17,000 troops and personnel have cobbled together a fragile peace” in the DRC (“War against women,” 2008, ¶ 14). Presently, UN peacekeepers are utilizing an innovative approach to combat rape. They have instituted “‘night flashes’ in which three truckloads of peacekeepers drive into the bush and keep their headlights on all night as a signal to both civilians and armed groups that the peacekeepers are there. Sometimes when morning comes, 3,000 villagers are curled up on the ground around them” (Gettleman, 2007, ¶ 37). This is but one example of the potential protective role that peacekeepers may have in situations of conflict. However, the reports of abuse by peacekeepers remain extremely disheartening. UN peacekeepers must stay true to their mandate by better policing and regulating themselves so as to prevent future episodes of violence perpetrated by peacekeepers. In order to fulfill MONUC’s mission of peace, the violation of people they are charged with protecting must stop.

The need to prevent the use of sexual violence as an instrument of war extends well beyond the conflict itself. As seen in Rwanda and Congo, the occurrence of rape does not abate as individuals migrate into the refugee setting. In such an environment, the main implementing arm of the international community is UNHCR. Alongside various international NGOs, UNHCR works with host governments to establish refugee camps and temporary settlements while simultaneously attending to the needs of the refugees. Among the critical needs of the refugees

are freedom and protection from sexual exploitation. These organizations thus play a crucial role in the prevention of rape in the refugee setting. Several best practices have emerged in light of UNHCR's vast experience in the refugee setting. Knowing that the location, design, and social structure of a refugee camp<sup>20</sup> may contribute to the incidence of rape, it is important that camps be designed in such a fashion so as to minimize security concerns (UNHCR, 1995). This means, among other things, avoiding the creation of camps near the border, improving lighting and security services, providing specific accommodation for female headed-households, preserving the family and original community wherever possible, and situating basic services within protected areas. Ultimately, the camp layout and organization may become a determining factor in the protection of refugees from acts of sexual violence:

Communal latrines and washing facilities may be at some distance from the living quarters, thereby increasing the potential for attacks. Many camps are not lit, or poorly lit, compounding these risks at night. Night patrols exist in some camps, but not in others. The distance refugees must travel to food, water, and fuel distribution points or collection areas may also expose them to danger. (UNHCR, p. 10)

Even while a conflict is raging, it is the duty and responsibility of the international community to intervene and protect individuals from sexual misconduct whenever and wherever possible. In doing so, however, it is important to keep the above recommendations in mind.

*Female empowerment.* The status of women in pre-conflict society is undeniably correlated with the occurrence of sexual violence during conflict. The patriarchal dynamic in these societies is essentially about privilege and the unequal distribution of power that reinforces

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<sup>20</sup> Please see Appendix 6 for a map of refugee camps in the Great Lakes region.

the cycle of sexual violence. In many ways, the horrific sexual violence seen in Rwanda and Congo is a product of the methodical marginalization of women in those cultures. Rape is by its very nature exploitation. With women representing upwards of fifty percent of the world's population, it is not surprising that the way they are treated has colossal ramifications for the future.

In Rwanda, the patriarchal structure of society “denied women access to opportunities outside the home, and has historically discriminated against women, both formally and informally, in education, health, politics, and employment” (HRW, 1996, The status of women in Rwandan society section, ¶ 8). Article 16 of the 1991 Rwandan Constitution guarantees Rwandan women equality, but social reality dictates otherwise. The profound and systemic discrimination against women has made them second-class citizens and prime targets for acts designed to degrade, humiliate, and terrorize. Prior to the genocide, women were not normally killed or involved in conflicts, but during the genocide they became routinely targeted victims of sexual assault (Jones, 2002). The situation is much the same in Congo:

Prior to the conflict, there was a gap between the law relating to women's rights and reality. The law states that Congolese women and men have equal rights and that a woman cannot be forced into marriage. It grants women the right to vote and says they can enjoy the rights of inheritance. In reality, however, a woman could be turned out of the house of her deceased husband by her in-laws and be deprived of all goods the couple had acquired. Also, family law does say that the husband is the head of the household and must provide protection for his wife and that she must obey her husband. (Puechguirbal, 2003, p. 1273)

The descent into social disarray that has accompanied the conflict in the DRC has thus facilitated the systematic abuse of women. Ostracized before the conflict, women became the most frequent victims of the campaign of rape and degradation that has become a hallmark of the conflict in Congo. And yet, “strength is something that few women in Congo lack. They bear the burdens, farm the fields, and hold the families together, yet nothing it seems is being done to protect them” (“War against women,” 2008, ¶ 47). The patriarchal power dynamics in these countries have led, over the course of centuries, to a methodical denial of women’s rights.

In such an environment, it is then not surprising to learn that women become targets for degradation and humiliation through rape.

Male attitudes of disrespect toward women may be instrumental in causing incidents of sexual violence. For example, camp guards and male refugees may look upon unaccompanied women and girls in refugee camps as sexual property. Husbands or other male family members may also abuse a victim of a previous attack because they believe she is no longer “virtuous.” (UNHCR, 1995, p. 9)

Female empowerment thus becomes a critical tool in the prevention of rape during conflict. If the status of women can be successfully elevated, such targeted violence is less likely to occur. As a result, female education, church groups, women’s savings and loans groups, microfinance grants, income generating activities, and other gender-based programming all have an indirect, yet vital, role to play in prevention.

In the post-conflict scenario, activities specific to the protection of and assistance to female refugees should be exercised from inception. Women need to be guaranteed safe passage, provided with the appropriate identification, and put in charge of the distribution of various goods. If the power over these activities rests in males’ hands, the likelihood of women having to

barter sex for survival drastically increases. As their status as women already renders them susceptible to exploitation, the necessary steps must be taken to ensure that they have essential resources. Here again, female empowerment plays a vital role, as does the recruitment of female peacekeepers and female UNHCR staff to model gender equity.

*Emerging Solutions in the Response to Rape in Conflict and Post-Conflict Scenarios*

While prevention of sexual violence is the ultimate goal, an appropriate and targeted response to rape is a crucial component of any program. The road to eradicating the use of rape as a tool of war is a long and difficult one; as such, a planned and well-executed response to rape is critical in the early stages. An analysis and inventory of “emergency, acute, long-term, and rehabilitative services can identify needs and help strengthen care and support services for victims of rape” (Rosenberg et al., 2006, p. 766). Ideally, such an analysis will be incorporated into a national plan for preventing and responding to sexual violence during conflict and its aftermath. The following sections will address the response to rape through promising practices targeting humanitarian assistance and health intervention, impunity and justice, and media attention.

*Humanitarian assistance and health intervention.* Health or the absence thereof plays a large role in conflict and systems of oppression. *The Constitution of the World Health Organization* (1948) defines health as “state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organization, 2002). The attainment of the highest possible standard of health is a fundamental human right and it is a crucial component of peace and security. Health inequity can create conflict scenarios with hugely negative ramifications, which include instability on the community, national, and international level; the subversion of political and economic structures; and oftentimes, war and

death. It is thus clear that health has a crucial role to play in the prevention of sexual violence during wartime.

The provision of health care and basic health services is also a critical component of the appropriate response to rape and war as they can be incalculably destructive to human health. The incidence of rape during conflict and its aftermath undermines health on every level. According to one rape victim, “these problems have affected our health. Our suffering is indescribable” (Jackson, 2008). The mental, physical, and social ramifications of sexual assault are profound and life altering. Mental ramifications, among which are feelings of guilt, shame, fear, and anxiety; physical ramifications, such as trauma, fistula, severe bleeding, incontinence, and infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted infections; and social ramifications, like stigmatization, unwanted pregnancy, and rejection by loved-ones, converge to form a health nightmare. Victims, debilitated by rape, are stripped of their ability to use health as a resource for their day-to-day lives. The devastating health corollaries of rape are not bound by location. Thus, victims in both Rwanda and the DRC suffer through the same trauma.

The physical and psychological consequences of sexual violence can be mitigated by well-targeted relief efforts. “Physicians and other health professionals are gatekeepers in efforts to monitor, identify, treat, and intervene in cases of interpersonal violence” (Rosenberg et al., 2006, p. 764). The speed and suitability of treatment are crucial factors in the outcome of rape. In order to address the whole spectrum of victims’ health needs, interventions require much more than the necessary treatment and medications. Counseling for PTSD, support groups, housing, food, education, job training, and income generating activities are among the most critical needs of survivors. These activities tend to receive only a very small portion of overall humanitarian aid during conflict and its aftermath, but are nevertheless instrumental in attending to the health

and lifestyle needs of rape victims. For example, education programs account for less than three percent of the UNHCR budget for 2008 (UNHCR, 2007).<sup>21</sup> Similarly health programs constitute less than five percent of the same budget (UNHCR).

Organizations must work with affected populations to inform them of their right to care and provide access to such treatment wherever possible. In addition, practitioners also face the demoralizing challenge of the relationship between HIV/AIDS and sexual violence during conflict. During the response to rape, the sensitivity of the topic must be kept in mind and staff must be well trained in how to deal with incidents of sexual violence. Victims should be assured that their confidentiality will be respected and should be made to feel comfortable about speaking up. The burden on health practitioners to attend to the immediate and long-term needs of these survivors is a weighty one but one whose importance can simply not be underestimated.

Furthermore, wars destroy infrastructure and force millions to flee. During the genocide in Rwanda and the conflict in Congo, hospitals and other health infrastructures were decimated. “Access to medical care is a big concern. The clinics in the villages are not equipped to assist and it’s a half a day’s walk in a volatile area to the closest working medical center where they can receive proper care” (IRC, 2007b, ¶ 9). For those who fall victim to rape in refugee camps, their plight is no better. For one seventeen year old in Bulengo camp, on the outskirts of Goma town sunset brings fear:

It’s not safe for us here. We’ve had cases of cholera, dysentery, and there’s no medical center. The facilities here are terrible. This camp has been here for five months and it was only last week that we got a water pump... And we’re just

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<sup>21</sup> Please see Appendix 9 for a detailed budget of UNHCR’s programs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

hungry. We have to start out life every day without eating or drinking. (Jacobs, 2007, ¶ 11-16)

With such dire circumstances seen in both Rwanda and the DRC, the objective of achieving a complete state of physical, mental, and social wellbeing becomes nothing more than a distant goal. And unfortunately, the health impacts of rape today in Congo are just as damaging as they were fourteen years ago in Rwanda.

*Impunity and justice.* It is crucial that those who perpetrate acts of sexual violence be punished. Not only do victims deserve to see their attackers brought to justice, but such retribution also highlights and brings attention to the notion that rape is unacceptable and simply will not be tolerated. In Rwanda and the DRC, impunity seems to be just as widespread as rape itself. The freedom of an accused rapist can be bought for at little as \$3 (Jackson, 2008). Impunity is a crucial factor that leads to sexual violence and undermines efforts at prevention. Many rapists may be motivated by the likelihood that victims may not report the assault and that their crime will likely go unpunished. Assaultants in Jackson's documentary, *The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo*, corroborate this view, iterating that the lack of consequences is a large factor in why they choose to commit such crimes. Perpetrators are immersed in a culture that enforces the notion that they can do whatever they want with no legal redress. With little fear of the consequences, rape is not successfully prevented through deterrence. In Rwanda and Congo, the justice system is on its knees and correspondingly, very few cases have been brought to trial. Amidst the chaos and violence in Rwanda in 1994 and in Congo throughout the past decade, the rule of law completely collapsed. The need to punish rapists for their wrongdoings is important in that it may give a sense of closure to the victims, send the message that such crimes will not be permitted, and thus act as an effective deterrent. "The need to end impunity for such

acts as part of a comprehensive approach to seeking peace, justice, truth, and national reconciliation” is an absolutely critical element of response to rape (Manalsuren, 2007, p. 1).

Time and time again the UN Security Council has reiterated the need to end the impunity on which sexual violence thrives. In order to bring an end to such impunity, justice must be served. The tools of the international community may serve as a critical resource in this aim. As detailed previously, customary international law dictates that sexual violence during wartime be punished, preferably as crimes against humanity or war crimes. The rights and responsibilities to prosecute sexual attackers primarily rest with the state in whose territory the rape occurred. The duties in this regard are the conduction of a thorough investigation, the identification and prosecution of those responsible, and the protection of victims from reprisal. The duty and power to prosecute these crimes may crossover into the international arena if the crimes are deemed to be crimes against humanity or war crimes. In such circumstances, “we need for instance, to look at referring situations of grave incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence to the International Criminal Court in The Hague” (Manalsuren, 2007, p. 1). Through their respective justice systems, communities, national governments, and the international community must work together to punish acts of sexual violence. While justice has yet to be served in Rwanda and the DRC, it must be a critical priority in the response to rape in the future.

*Media attention.* Leadership, fueled by political and social will, is a catalyst for action in the response to rape. The need for global citizens to rally around the cause of women’s rights and protection from sexual violence during times of conflict could not be clearer. Such mobilization has the potential to engender political commitment, at both the national and international levels, and to hold governments accountable for addressing the issue. While it is technically the role of

governments to protect the rights of women, a great deal of responsibility falls with the general populace to make sure that governments rally around these responsibilities.

Currently, the general public is sitting on the sidelines of the conflict in Congo, enjoying the luxury of ignorance. For the few that know about the rampant human rights abuses occurring in the DRC, most neither see themselves as part of the problem or the solution. In Rwanda, the situation was much the same. The niche for the media in raising awareness and calling public attention to the issue and the need to respond is unmistakable. The role of the media is to sensitize the world to what is happening and foster awareness in order to fundraise and draw public attention to the issue. In this aim, the media uses “visible victims” and horrific pictures that elicit a response. The abundance of these victims in the DRC makes it an appealing undertaking for the media, but little coverage has resulted. If the investment in raising public awareness about the situation were made by the media, the potential returns in terms of awareness, advocacy, international commitment, social and political will, and finances could drive an efficient response to rape as a weapon of war.

- ❖ In summary there are several chief lessons learned:
  - In the prevention of rape in conflict and its aftermath the following should be target areas:
    - Conflict resolution and generating political will
    - Advocacy and education efforts
    - International intervention
    - Female empowerment
  - In the response to rape in conflict and its aftermath the following should be focus areas:
    - Humanitarian assistance and health interventions
    - Impunity and injustice
    - Media attention

## Chapter VI: Imagining the Way Forward

*“The world needs to be told about it, to be told of this reality.”*  
~ Dr. Ahuka<sup>22</sup>

In addressing the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, solutions must be innovative and involve a continuum of agents, from the village to the international level. Priorities in addressing the situation of rape in Congo must be established and a global dialogue concerning how to prevent such catastrophes in the future must begin. In closing, this section focuses on several key strategies that are essential components in a comprehensive approach to rape in conflict and its aftermath.

A commitment at the uppermost political level is the first and most critical step in addressing sexual violence. Broad-based leadership remains the key in uniting governments, civil society, the media, women’s groups, and human rights activists in the struggle against gender-based violence in conflict. The response cannot be localized solely on the national level; an international response is critical. Yet, the international community has essentially turned a blind eye, ignoring what has been termed, as noted earlier, “Africa’s first world war.” The DRC is a forgotten emergency, often falling outside of media coverage and victim to persistent aid shortages. Despite the presence of warring-factions from numerous surrounding nations, civilian victims of this conflict have been left alone, to fight for their own survival. Using a human rights framework for planning, development assistance must be integrated into the construction of social contexts that promote gender equality and prevent conflict.

Development assistance, however, comes at a cost. Funds must be mobilized if the international community is to have to necessary resources at its disposal for effective intervention. In recent years, humanitarian actors have met with some success in addressing the

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<sup>22</sup> (Martens, 2004)

plethora of challenges in the DRC. In 2007, an estimated 80% of displaced persons received some variety of emergency assistance (UN, 2007). Additionally, the number of epidemics was cut in half and 31% of health zones received humanitarian assistance, benefiting approximately 25 million individuals (UN). The potential impact of international funding and political commitment is limitless. However, a mere 31.3% of the *2008 Humanitarian Action Plan Appeal for the Democratic Republic of the Congo* has been met (UN). Of the requested \$575 million, only \$180 million has been successfully mobilized with an additional \$57 million pledged (UN). The large deficit in available funding clearly restricts the potential impact of intervention. Furthermore, a mere 22% of UNHCR funds are earmarked for protection, monitoring, and coordination (UNHCR, 2007). The need to mobilize and effectively allocate resources to address the situation of rape in the Congo, in both prevention and response capacities, is clear.

The necessary political mobilization will not arise on its own accord. Human rights advocates, health professionals, and others must unite behind the cause. Advocacy and education efforts, including increased media coverage, would no doubt ignite a response to this crisis. Student-groups may be a potentially powerful weapon in the fight against sexual violence. Youth and young-adults have a vital role to play and have proven their ability to catalyze political, environmental, economic, and social change. Student campaigns have successfully raised national and local awareness of the humanitarian consequences of the conflict in Darfur, and they have the power of members and the resources to make the problem of sexual violence in Congo as well known. The power of members to plan effective national campaigns, organize materials and resources, disseminate educational information, conduct policy and advocacy training, and create a network of informed and active peer advocacy groups is clear from the example of STAND: A Student Anti-Genocide Coalition, which grew out of the injustices

occurring in Darfur. Started on the campus of Georgetown University, STAND now has more than 700 chapters and has raised awareness among thousands (STAND, 2008). Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, praised student activists participating in a fundraising drive for Darfur. Joined by several other notables, Pelosi said, “Your activism challenges the conscience of the world. I am positive that the United States and the world would not know as much as it does without the efforts of students in this country. When you speak, the world listens” (STAND, 2008, ¶ 1). Similar success stories may be possible in the future if the use of sexual violence as an implement of war gets the student attention it deserves. The emergence of student-run groups is thus a feasible and potential tool in the response to rape during conflict and its aftermath.

Recently, a group of activists tried to block mutual-fund investments that may be linked to the genocide in Darfur. The movement sent a clear message “to investment advisors that we don’t want our savings being used to slaughter innocent individuals” (“Fidelity funds reject ‘Darfur’ proposal,” 2008, p. c15). Similar movements have the potential to send the same message but with Congo as their cause. Community organizing for social change could be a critical element in bringing the crisis in the DRC to the forefront of the global agenda. To date, there have been few voices calling for action; with more voices, the call for action could not be tuned out.

Fortunately, numerous advocates have called attention to this problem and have succeeded in placing the use of a rape as an instrument of war on the U.S. political agenda. In March 2008, the Senate subcommittee on human rights and the law had a hearing concerning sexual violence in Congo. Denis Mukwege, the director of Panzi hospital, testified that it is a “type of sexual terrorism... done in a methodical manner by armed groups... to destroy the woman, destroy her family, and destroy her community” (Brown, 2008, ¶ 35-36). Senator Dick

Durbin of Illinois reported that rape in war is a “determined strategy to destroy populations... The perpetrators are not held accountable and turn to mass rape because it is cheaper than using bullets” (Brown, ¶ 40). Lisa Jackson, director of a 2008 documentary about rape in the DRC, made clear the role of the United States in this disaster urging everyone in the room to “consider the fact that there is the blood of Congolese women on their laptop computers and on their cell phones” (Brown, ¶ 42). Such a concerted and successful effort to bring the issue to the forefront of the political agenda should be lauded, but much remains to be done. International trainings and conferences have the potential to meet with similar positive results. Information dissemination through documentaries and other venues may bring the stories of victims to the general public. With the silence broken, social and political will can be mobilized and an appropriate approach to the situation can be galvanized.

In addition, a relatively new concept has been developed in international relations called “responsibility to protect” (R2P). In response to the atrocities committed in Rwanda, former Secretary General Kofi Annan urged the international community to devise a set of protocols concerning when and how humanitarian interventions should proceed. In response to this challenge, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, an independent international commission established by the government of Canada to address Annan’s concerns, released a report in 2001. The report, entitled *The Responsibility to Protect*, details the responsibilities of a state to its people and the responsibilities of the international community to intervene should a state fail to fulfill its responsibilities. In essence, if a particular state fails to carry out its duty, the responsibility to do so is shifted to the international community. It provides a sound legal and ethical basis for international intervention should a nation-state be unable or disinclined to prevent genocide, mass killing, or grave human rights violations. While

controversial in terms of breaching state sovereignty, R2P provides a clear basis for humanitarian intervention. Despite this, “the international community has been overly respectful of sovereignty in its response to ... the rapes and mass killings in the eastern DRC” (Steinberg, 2008, ¶ 25). The R2P framework provides an entry-point for the intervention of the international community in response to rape. Such an intervention could, over time, contribute to a decrease in human rights abuses, a significant decrease in impunity, and the protection of peace and justice.

Women’s groups are a critical component of a comprehensive response to rape. Instrumental both in prevention of and in response to rape, they offer an opportunity for collective collaboration. In rural villages, these women’s groups serve as informal self-help groups that address everything from literacy to microfinance. They serve as an arena for discussion, creating a sense of cohesion and unity among members. As members of these groups, women partake in education, health, and literacy initiatives and have the opportunity to take on leadership roles. In sub-Saharan Africa, many of these groups double as savings and loans groups in which women contribute a small portion of their savings to the group each week and, in return, they can borrow a certain amount of money to start up a business or cover health or education expenses. Women derive a sense of security from their membership and perceive these groups as a safe place to save and to receive skills training and mentoring. Not surprisingly, these groups are an avenue of social and economic empowerment. They challenge traditional gender roles and can serve to liberate women from traditional economic and social dependency.

Women’s groups can contribute to the prevention and response to sexual violence in several other ways. Not only do they serve to empower women and challenge traditional gender roles but they also serve as an excellent means to disseminate information. Advocacy and education efforts could tap into the network of women’s groups to raise awareness of the issue of

sexual violence and to distribute information about women's rights. Furthermore, the cohesion and sense of security provided by the groups help make female members less vulnerable to violence in general and to rape in particular. They facilitate women pulling together and helping one and other. Women's groups also serve as a great resource in mitigating the effects of rape. Representing women's interests, they may help identify and protect those most vulnerable to sexual violence. Confidentiality permitting, they may also help identify victims so as to ensure they receive the necessary treatment. Groups may serve as a channel for disseminating protection messages and can be a valuable source of information for victims as they seek help. Women's groups have a critical role to play in ensuring a safe and secure environment for all and in responding when that environment fails to protect its most vulnerable citizens.

The power of women's organizations in the response to rape is perhaps best illustrated through a program in Rwanda. In 2004, a group of US-based activists, physicians, and scientists joined with Rwandan women's associations and the government of Rwanda to launch a grassroots program entitled Women's Equity in Access to Care and Treatment (WE-ACTx) for victims of sexual violence (Cohen, d'Adesky & Anastos, 2005). Focusing on HIV treatment, these collaborating partners were able to establish a clinic in Kigali to address the needs of the local women. Women's associations serve as the referral network for the clinic, where women have easy access to counselors, antiretroviral treatments, compensation for school fees, and food. The accomplishments of WE-ACTx are numerous: amongst other services, the program provides voluntary HIV testing and counseling to 1,300 people a month in a family-centered model; cares for 4,000 patients at WE-ACTx clinics in Kigali that offer free comprehensive medical services; enrolls 700 patients in a supplemental nutrition program cosponsored by the World Food Program; and sponsors countless income generating activities (WE-ACTx, 2008). This

innovative partnership could serve as a model for many organizations as they seek to efficiently and comprehensively respond to rape.

Education is also a fundamental component of female empowerment. The third Millennium Development Goal – to promote gender equality and empower women by eliminating gender disparity in education – is a testament to the importance of female education. Inequalities in education hinder poverty reduction, entrench women and girls as second-class citizens, heighten susceptibility to gender-based violence, and render it practically impossible for women to rise to positions of power. “Although no single intervention will eliminate violence against women, a combination of infrastructural, legal, judicial, enforcement, educational, health, and other service-related actions can significantly reduce it and its consequences” (Grown, Gupta, & Kes, 2005, p. 110). Education provides an important entry point for combating and preventing sexual violence. Gender equality in education fosters social change that supports women’s human rights and equal participation in social and economic development. With tools at their disposal, educated women are more likely to be viewed as a resource and thus less likely to be systematically exploited and demeaned through rape. Ultimately, education has the potential to not only lessen female susceptibility to violence but also to heighten community awareness about the damaging effects of violence.

Another innovative response to rape is emerging in the DRC in the form of drama. Drama groups have been shown to be effective tools in combating other public health problems in Africa, such as HIV. In Botswana, theatre and drama are used as part of an HIV community-based initiative that works towards preventing new infections by means of education and awareness, stigma reduction, care and support, and community mobilization (Parker, Rau & Pepper, 2007). Similar avenues of communication have a great deal to offer to rape prevention

efforts. The drama groups present a play in such a way that it involves the whole community and breaks the taboo surrounding the issue of sexual violence, while educating viewers about its prevalence and many ramifications. In the Ruzizi plain area of South Kivu, 7,170 people attended 5 plays about sexual violence in 2006 (International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], 2007). The plays are intended not only to raise awareness and aid in prevention but also to sensitize the community toward victims of rape. The dramas show that women are not responsible for what has been done to them and that they need the community's help rather than its blame.

Radio dramas have also been shown to be a successful educational and advocacy tool. In Botswana, an HIV-centered radio drama called "Rocky Road" aired in two fifteen-minute episodes per week from 2001 to 2006. "A cross-sectional survey in 2003 found that nearly half the respondents listened to the drama at least once a week and the regular listeners were more open to HIV testing and knowing their status" (Parker, Rau & Pepper, 2007, p. 31). As radio is such a powerful means of communication in Africa, an adaptation of this model to focus on sexual violence could reach large audiences and help inform, prevent, and effectively respond to rape. By facilitating information sharing and dialogue, theatrical groups and radio drama are aiding in both the prevention and response to sexual violence. Such innovation needs to be promoted and expanded in hopes of reaching a wider audience.

Despite selected attempts at prevention, albeit few in number, the incidence of rape shows no signs of abating. As a result, an efficient and targeted response to rape is essential in any comprehensive approach. The psychosocial and medical needs of the victims must be attended to as soon as possible. This response should include, but not be limited to, provision of medical treatment, preventive treatment of possible infection with sexually transmitted infections

and HIV/AIDS, termination of unwanted pregnancies resulting from rape, provision of counseling and mental health services, and delivery of other comprehensive services. This degree of service provision is no small feat and the volatility of a conflict scenario only heightens logistical and funding issues. Three successful models, the provision of a Minimum Initial Services Package (MISP), the *maisons d'écoute* strategy, and the service provision model at Panzi hospital, should be brought to scale in conflict-affected areas to address the immediate needs of rape victims.

The MISP is a set of activities, equipment, and supplies used to effectively respond to the reproductive health needs of populations in the early phases of an emergency. Documented evidence already justifies its implementation by appropriately trained staff (UNHCR, 1999). The package is designed to prevent excess maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality, reduce HIV transmission, manage the consequences of sexual violence, and integrate reproductive health care into existent health systems (UNHCR). In its response to sexual violence, MISP calls for the scale up of health services for treatment of victims of sexual violence, careful site planning of refugee camps, early referral of victims to health services, and response coordination between health, community, and protection services (UNHCR). In order to be effective and efficient, the MISP should be implemented under the auspices of a qualified and experienced emergency response coordinator.

Equipment, supplies, and drugs necessary to implement the MISP are provided in Interagency Emergency Health Kit (IEHK 2006) that was developed by the WHO in consultation with international relief agencies. "It has been adopted by many organizations and national authorities as a reliable, standardized, affordable and quickly available source of essential medicines and medical devices urgently required in disaster situations" (International Dispensary

Association [IDA], 2006, p. 1). The IEHK contains, among other things, materials for universal precautions for infection control; equipment, supplies and drugs for deliveries at health centers; equipment, supplies and drugs for some obstetric emergencies; and equipment, supplies and drugs for post-rape management.

The kit contents are based on epidemiological data, population profiles, disease patterns and certain assumptions based on experience gained in emergency situations. Each emergency health kit contains sufficient medical items to support at least 10,000 people for a period of 3 months. (IDA, 2006, p. 1)

The IEHK 2006 can be procured from several pharmaceutical suppliers, including the International Dispensary Association, at an approximate cost of € 23,150 (IDA, 2006).

An additional reproductive health kit containing supplies for post-rape management, sexually transmitted infection treatment, materials for the complications of unsafe abortion, and equipment for essential surgical procedures may also be necessary for use in the initial acute phase of the emergency (UNHCR, 1999). Distributed in three blocks, the kit is designed to treat 10,000 persons for 3 months at the primary health care level; 30,000 persons for 3 months at the health center or referral level; and 150,000 persons for 3 months at the referral level (UNHCR). The reproductive health kit is available from the United Nations Population Fund at an estimated cost of \$10,000 (UNHCR). Together the kits and services provided by the MISP offer a response to rape that has been proven efficient and effective for implementation on a large scale.

*Maisons d'écoute* are one component of a response strategy being pioneered by the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) in the eastern DRC. Through local associations, the ICRC trains counterparts how to identify, listen to, and advise victims of sexual violence in *maisons d'écoute*, shelters for victims of sexual violence (Beaudouin, 2007). The

shelters “provide a place where people can come and talk in private, far from prying eyes, about what happened to them. They also provide housing for as long as necessary – sometimes weeks or even months – for young girls and women who have been rejected by their families or husbands following a rape” (Beaudouin, ¶ 3). Women arrive distraught and physically and emotionally depleted, but are met with volunteers who do their best to provide for their basic needs: food, shelter, and a receptive and compassionate audience. Rape victims are immediately referred to medical facilities, many of which are set up specifically for treatment of rape victims. Surrounded by women struggling through similar ordeals and exclusion, victims are given the time and space necessary to begin their process of rehabilitation. They are also provided with services, funding permitting, to help foster self-sufficiency. A model apt for scale-up on a national level, the *maisons d’écoute* strategy uses local volunteers and resources to help communities effectively respond to the ordeal and trauma of rape.

The services provided at Panzi Hospital provide an exemplary model of holistic response to rape and its ramifications. The hospital specializes in treating victims of sexual violence and is located in Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province. A crucial component of the hospital’s mission is to “provide treatment of the survivor of sexual violence and surgical repair for women suffering from fistulas of the urogenital tract” (“Panzi Hospital,” n.d., ¶ 2). Since opening, hundreds of victims of sexual violence have been cared for at this institution and ten new victims, on average, arrive at the hospital everyday (“Panzi Hospital”). Among the services provided are: ambulatory care and therapy, in hospital surgical and medical care, psychological and spiritual therapy, socioeconomic assistance, and daycare for children conceived from sexual violence (“Panzi Hospital”). One of few facilities capable of providing such extensive care, Panzi Hospital treats an estimated 410 persons each month (“Panzi Hospital”). While at Panzi

Hospital, victims may have to undergo as many as six operations to repair the sexual injuries to their bodies (Lefort, 2003). Growing out of the passion of Dr. Denis Mukwege, Panzi hospital is truly a beacon of hope for survivors in eastern Congo.

## Conclusion

Rape as a weapon of war is both a physical assault and a humiliation tactic, one that can destroy honor and virtue, destabilize families and entire communities, and result in severe physical and mental trauma. It is a pervasive and potent tool used to advance conflict and undermine individuals' humanity. Rape is a means of terrorizing and controlling the local community and its aim is to destabilize and disrupt society. Sexual violence is one of the worst things a woman or a child can fall victim to as its consequences are severe and long-lasting.

In both Rwanda and the DRC, the pervasiveness, brutal nature, and consequences of sexual violence destroyed and continue to destroy the lives and livelihoods of thousands of women. The examples of Rwanda and Congo serve as a resource for the future in that they aid in the development of a set of prevention and response protocols to effectively respond to rape as a weapon of war. The lessons learned from these two conflicts are numerous in nature. It is clear from these examples that resources must be invested in conflict resolution, advocacy and education efforts, and female empowerment. Furthermore, it becomes evident that the international community has the resources, capacity, and responsibility to intervene and protect individuals around the world from crimes against humanity. In seeking to effectively respond to rape, efficient humanitarian and health interventions, the elimination of impunity, and media attention play a vital role. The road ahead is long and rocky, but despair is not an option. Individuals, organizations, and governments must not back down from the challenges, but instead seek to comprehensively address the use of rape as instrument of war. While there are many promising practices and beacons of hope in Congo, the need to continually engage in constructive dialogue and to think "outside the box" is clear. Targeted interventions in focus areas such as a generation of political will, international intervention, female empowerment,

impunity, and post-rape service provision will facilitate an appropriate response to the situation of rape in Congo and the successful prevention of such catastrophes from occurring in the future.

An affront to dignity and an extreme violation of human rights, the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war must be eradicated; it cannot wait another day. Despite an increasing engagement in conflict resolution on the part of the international community, much more must be done at every level to address the issue of sexual violence during conflict and its aftermath. Targeted prevention efforts and innovative responses are essential as the world continues to grapple with conflict and genocide. Today, forty more women will have been raped in South Kivu and this year an estimated 14,000 will be subjected to sexual violence. Of these victims, 13% are under 14 years of age, 3% die as a result of rape, and 10-12% contract HIV/AIDS (Rodriquez, 2007). Immediate action is needed to mitigate the consequences of rape for these victims and to facilitate reform so as to prevent future catastrophes. This time, the world needs to stand behind their declaration of “never again” and prevent such catastrophes in the future. The alternative is simply unthinkable.

Appendixes

Appendix 1 Map of Rwanda

Appendix 2 Map of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Appendix 3 Rwandan and Burundian Refugee Movements

Appendix 4 Rwandan Refugee Populations

Appendix 5 Congolese Refugee Populations

Appendix 6 Refugee Camps in the Great Lakes Region

Appendix 7 Intended Consequences: Rwanda's Living Legacy of Violence

Appendix 8 Relevant International Documents

- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- UN Resolution 1325

Appendix 9 UNHCR Budget for the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Appendix 1: Map of Rwanda



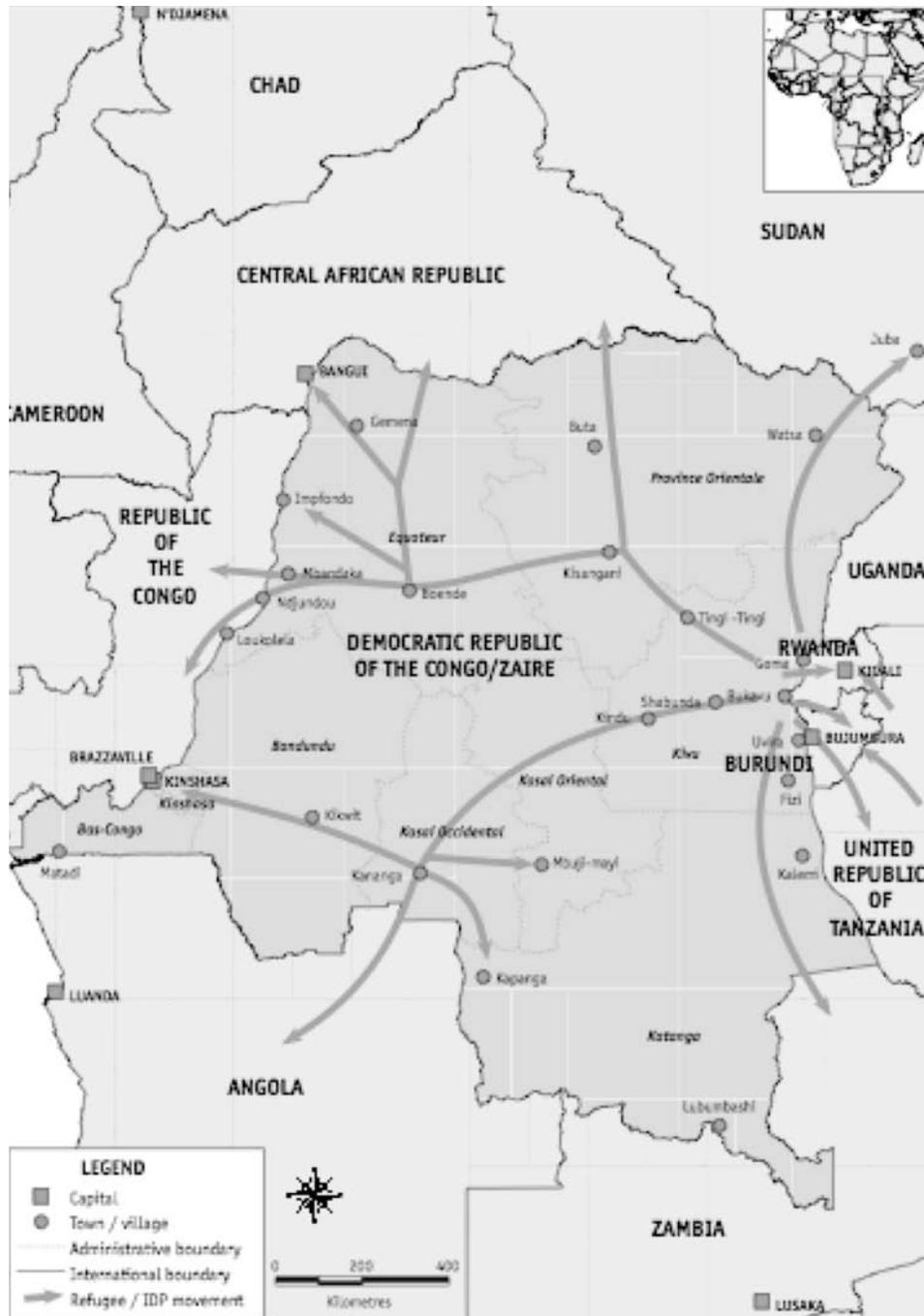
Source: <http://www.icrc.org>

Appendix 2: Map of the Democratic Republic of the Congo



Source: <http://www.icrc.org>

Appendix 3: Rwandan and Burundian Refugee Movements, 1994-1999



Source: (UNHCR, 2000)

*Appendix 4: Rwandan Refugee Populations in the Great Lakes region, end-August 1994*

<b>Location</b>	<b>Population</b>
Northern Burundi	270,000
Western Tanzania	577,000
Southwestern Uganda	10,000
Zaire (Goma)	850,000
Zaire (Bukavu)	332,000
Zaire (Uwirea)	62,000
<i>Total</i>	2,101,000

*Source: (UNHCR, 2000)*