



Women Find Support in Survival



Photo: USAID/Leah Werchick

Rape victims who have been successfully reintegrated into their communities assemble in a “peace hut” near Walungu, South Kivu in DRC.

Rape in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is both a weapon and a consequence of war. At a minimum, an estimated tens of thousands of rapes and/or mutilations have taken place during the past ten years. Fighting and insecurity continue in some areas of eastern Congo, perpetuating such acts of violence. The subject of rape is taboo in DRC. Women who have been raped and their babies born of rape are often rejected by their own families.

USAID addresses the immediate and long-term needs of sexual violence survivors, their families, and their communities in areas of eastern Congo that have been most affected by armed conflict. USAID programs have offered healthcare, counseling, and reintegration support to over 10,000 survivors of rape since 2000. The program also works with the media to disseminate important information on community reconciliation, which includes issues around sexual violence.

With USAID funds, international organizations work with local non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations to increase their capacity to provide holistic support to survivors including medical, psychosocial, and socio-reintegration services, while promoting judicial support and referral when appropriate. Justice networks are being created to increase documentation of rape and bring justice in DRC. These efforts have contributed to the prosecution in a rape case, resulting in a 10-year jail sentence and \$10,000 fine. This was the first ever rape conviction in eastern Congo. There are now seventy-two rape cases in the process of being heard in court.

Photo & Caption