

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Funding Period: June 2002 - March 2006

Amount: \$3,188,688

Purpose: Provide holistic services through a fully integrated program to treat survivors of torture and sexual violence in eastern DRC.

Activity I: Support Survivors of Torture and Gender-Based Violence in South and North Kivu Provinces

Implementing Partner: International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Funding Period: June 2002 – March 2006

Amount: \$2,400,096

Purpose: To increase access to and quality of essential medical, psychological, economic, and legal care for survivors of torture and gender-based violence in South and North Kivu Provinces.

Objectives:

- Enable approximately 12 first-contact health centers to provide quality services in health response related to HIV, gender-based violence and sexually transmitted infections (STI) testing and counseling, as well as appropriate referral to psychosocial, economic, and legal services
- Reinforce the technical and organizational capacities of 12 local NGOs and 20 CBOs to manage and sustain their own institutions while providing quality services to survivors of sexual violence, their families, and communities
- Strengthen the referral network of services, including but not limited to, health, psychosocial care, legal, and economic integration

Accomplishments:

- As of December 2004, 14,147 survivors of gender-based violence received direct services from local NGOs and community-based organizations supported by IRC; 32,680 community members were sensitized on issues of gender-based violence
- The number of women receiving medical assistance, including post-rape reconstructive surgery, has increased due to the referral system set up by the program; in the first quarter of 2005 alone, 1,942 women survivors and five of their male partners benefited from medical services provided by local organizations
- Five new NGO partners have been selected to receive support in providing services to survivors in target sites, bringing the total number of partners to 12; to date, IRC has supported 13 NGOs and 26 CBO partners in providing psychosocial, medical, economic, and legal services to survivors and strengthened the referral network among partners
- IRC provides comprehensive technical assistance and training every six weeks to strengthen the organizational capacity of their twelve grantees

- IRC has provided emergency support to five health structures in Kalehe in response to mass rape and pillaging in the area following the events that unfolded in South Kivu in May/June 2004.¹
- In early 2005, a human rights grantee enabled a woman survivor to win a case against the Captain of Police in Bukavu; he was convicted of rape, sentenced to 20 years in prison and a \$40,000 payment, and was expelled from the national police force. Local partners successfully won 57 of the 60 cases of sexual violence brought to court, and mediated another 23 cases winning compensations for victims and families in out of court settlements with perpetrators.

Activity II: Assisting Survivors of Torture and Gender-Based Violence in Maniema and Ituri Province

Implementing Partner: Cooperazione Internazionale-COOPI

Funding Period: September 2003-March 2006

Amount: \$1,000,000 (This number needs to be confirmed)

Purpose: To provide psychosocial, medical, and socio-economic assistance to victims of torture and gender-based violence.

Objectives:

- Strengthen the capacities of local NGOs to provide psychosocial assistance to survivors
- Identify victims needing services and link to local service providers
- Raise community awareness about women's rights, prevention, and available assistance
- Inform teachers about women's rights and sexual education
- Provide psychosocial, medical and socio-economic assistance to survivors

Accomplishments:

- 237 people attended training modules; provided continuous supervision and follow up to psychosocial agents and others involved in provision of services to survivors
- Agents and NGO staff have received training and refresher courses on physical and social consequences of sexual violence, prevention, helping and listening skills, psychosocial support, and cultural context issues
- 3,133 victims identified and documented
- Project services expanded to reach victims living in outlying areas where communities remain isolated and access to medical and psychosocial care is limited (mobile teams comprise trained psychosocial agents and NGO staff)

¹ On 26 May 2004, fighting broke out in the town of Bukavu, in eastern DRC, when dissident forces under Brigadier General Laurent Nkunda and Colonel Jules Mutebutsi started an uprising against the unified national army of the 10th Military Region, commanded by General Mbuza Mabe. The two opposing camps accused each other of launching the hostilities, which were followed by several more days of heavy combat during which government troops killed at least 15 civilians, including those from the minority Congolese ethnic group known as Banyamulenge.

- 161,242 people reached through community awareness about women's rights, medical and psychological effects of violence; activities included door-to-door contacts, meetings with community associations and vigilance committees at water sources, in communal fields, and schools and churches
- Created new forms of media to reach communities, including radio messages in local languages, street theatre, debates in local languages, songs for and by children, and video; themes include community reintegration, care of survivors, and rapid response to cases of rape; these approaches have had a positive impact on identifying new victims
- 45 teachers trained to improve protection, prevention and information to students about sexual violence
- Psychological assistance provided to 2,877 victims, many of whom continue to suffer from flashbacks and nightmares requiring ongoing care and treatment, especially cases involving medical complications related to the assault
- Organized group therapy sessions organized for young victims of rape
- Medical treatment was provided to 3,022 victims and 755 partners, and psychosocial agents work with medical staff to ensure follow-up; the importance of including partners is emphasized in community awareness activities
- 1,130 victims of gender-based violence received social and economic assistance
- Community associations were formed to organize efforts and build skills in areas such as agriculture, animal husbandry, soap making, tailoring, sewing, phytotherapy, baking and production of cooking oil

Activity III: Legal and Judicial Strategies to Combat Torture and Gender-Based Violence during Armed Conflict

Implementing Partner: Global Rights

Funding Period: October 2005 - March 2005

Amount: \$300,000

Purpose: Build the capacities of civil society organizations to systematically document human rights cases, compile a joint report on torture against women and girls, lead education and anti-torture sensitization and advocacy campaigns, and combat impunity for sexual and gender-based crimes in DRC.

Objectives:

- To build the capacity of Congolese women's and human rights organizations to investigate and document information on sexual and gender-based crimes for future prosecution
- To empower Congolese organizations to increase awareness and understanding among the Congolese population, authorities, government, combatants and the international community about sexual and gender-based violence committed in DRC and the rights of women
- To support and accompany Congolese women's and human rights organizations in advocating for legislative reform and a commitment to put an end to sexual and gender-based violence

Accomplishments:

- Held a series of six workshops in Goma, Beni, Bunia, Kisangani, Katango, Kindu and Kinshasa on proposed legislation to curb sexual violence and create a publicly supported victims unit to care for survivors
- Informed legal analysis of legislative, judicial, and policy actions aimed at ending impunity for sexual and gender-based violence; it was presented at a national workshop attended by 21 advocacy organizations and other legal and human rights experts
- Produced a document synthesizing legal provisions related to sexual violence and judicial mechanisms, and distributed it to organizations and members of the national campaign to end sexual and gender-based violence
- Wrote legislation to modify provisions and procedures related to sexual violence as contained under present penal and family codes and to strengthen measures to assist victims
- Raised awareness of the need for legislative action through a broad-based, national workshop organized in conjunction with leading UN agencies, Catholic Relief Services, and the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (over 49 civil society organizations, members of public institutions, deputies, magistrates and lawyers participated)
- Developed Terms of Reference and reviewed tenders on developing a protocol for documenting, classifying, retrieving, and protecting stored data on cases of sexual and gender-based violence and torture

Activity IV: Attending to the Medical and Health Needs of Victims of Torture and Sexual Violence in Maniema Province

Implementing Partner: CARE International – DRC

Funding Period: October 2004 - September 2006

Amount: \$186,806

Purpose: Improve the health of survivors of torture and sexual violence in the Kibombo Territory of Maniema Province.

Objectives:

- Build the capacity of health providers to treat and counsel survivors of gender-based violence
- Distribute medicines and testing kits to health clinics specific to illnesses and problems associated with gender-based violence
- Increase referrals of survivors for treatment at health centers
- Develop community based advocacy strategy which will increase number of survivors accessing services

Accomplishments:

- Treated 1,660 cases, of which 1,176 people (70.8 percent) directly incurred sexual violence and 484 (29.2 percent) were survivors' partners

- Trained 42 nurses in Kibombo Territory in the two health zones of Kibombo and Tunda; the nurses work in health centers and the reference hospital
- Distributed medicines (antibiotics) in 13 health centers that provide treatment activities for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence
- Provided these centers with equipment, including examination tables, surgical sets, and gowns; the reference hospital in Kibombo has already provided surgical treatment for four patients
- CARE partnership with COOPI in Kibombo, which provides psychosocial support and refers survivors to CARE-supported health centers for medical treatment; CARE, COOPI, and the health zones where CARE works have signed Memorandums of Understanding clarifying their roles and responsibilities
- CARE staff maintain regular contact with the network of traditional birth attendants and community health committees that have been trained and regularly supervised since 2002 under a separate ECHO-funded primary healthcare project (58 traditional birth attendants and 99 peer educators have been trained)
- CARE is in the process of finalizing an operational research study to better understand the phenomenon of torture and gender-based violence in Kibombo territory—the information from this study will help CARE to better respond to the survivors and develop an appropriate advocacy strategy at the community level

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is recovering from years of war among various foreign-backed factions that took the hardest toll on the women and children in villages in the eastern provinces. These areas have been terrorized by armed groups and their citizens have witnessed the destruction of the vital fabric of their communities. The physical and social service infrastructure of the region has been severely weakened; in many areas, it no longer functions. The second civil war, which began in eastern DRC in August 1998 and ended recently with a hard-brokered cease-fire and the installation of a transitional government, left 3.4 million people displaced from their villages, and tens of thousands recovering from trauma, abuse, and gender-based violence.

Despite the hope that the transition from war to peace presents, human rights abuses continue, particularly in parts of eastern DRC where local-level guerilla wars and banditry have raged. Acts of torture and gender based violence constitute a serious threat to the medical, psychological, and social health of the Congolese men, women, and children caught between rivaling militias and armed groups. Local and international organizations have documented thousands of incidents of torture involving sexual and gender-based violence in the rural areas and urban centers of North and South Kivu provinces. It is expected that the magnitude of the problem is much larger than these numbers suggest. Many attacks have occurred in remote areas to which these groups have had little access. Even in accessible areas, under-reporting of abuses (as a result of the stigmatization of rape victims in some communities), fear of reprisals, collusion of authorities, or a lack of awareness about avenues of justice and available services limit the accuracy of estimates about the extent of the problem.

USAID's Victims of Torture Fund is addressing the issue of gender-based violence as torture in the provinces of the east through a series of four grants which cover the geographical areas of North and South Kivu, Maniema and Ituri. Through this project, the Fund is addressing one of the most hidden yet traumatizing acts of torture perpetrated against women, especially during periods of conflict and unrest. Our four grantees—IRC, Global Rights, COOPI and CARE—provide integrated services that address the multiple needs of women who have been sexually violated and traumatized during the conflict. The IRC is expanding services to over 10,000 female survivors of torture, rape, and abduction. CARE provides health services to survivors of gender-based violence through its work with more than 100 health centers. In addition to health supports, the interventions include psychological services and re-integration activities to help survivors become productive participants in their communities. COOPI provides the psychosocial component and such re-integration opportunities as participation in income-generating activities. Global Rights is addressing gender based violence through legal and judicial strategies based on strengthening technical capacity to build dossiers for prosecution, building public and official awareness, and advocating for an end to sexual and gender-based violence through legal and policy reforms.