

IF WE COULD READ & HEAR THEIR STORIES... Protection Strategies Employed by Victims of Sexual Violence: A Comparative Study of Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Kathryn Birch

“Rape, like genocide, will not be deterred unless and until the stories are heard. People must hear the horrifying, think the unthinkable, and speak the unspeakable.”

—Tamara L. Tompkins, 1995

Abstract

Sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict societies is a security, public health, human rights issue, and “an act of aggression against a nation or community.”¹ The prevalence and severity of sexual violence as well as its subsequent health and socio-economic consequences fundamentally change societies. Legal and social dimensions, such as women’s second-class status in the Congo and Liberia, actually support the use of rape and perpetuate its ruthless effects. While rape has been recognized as a war crime and a crime against humanity, very little is known about the protection strategies adopted by victims and their communities’ and how these strategies impact society. The context in which the violence occurs and the protection strategies employed by different communities must be better understood in order to develop holistic and effective solutions for bringing justice to the perpetrators of sexual violence and the care of victims.

Introduction

Sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict societies is a security, public health, and human rights issue. It is “an act of aggression against a nation or community.”² It is

Kathryn Birch is a candidate for the MALD degree at The Fletcher School for May 2008. Kathryn has past experience in East and West Africa working with HIV positive orphans and in rural community health. She has concentrated her work at Fletcher on issues facing communities in post-conflict settings as well as global health.

pervasive throughout affected communities, and thus, by definition, fundamentally changes the society. Rape and other forms of sexual violence in war create horrific physical, psychosocial, and economic consequences, among others. Further, many legal and social dimensions help support the use of rape and perpetuate its ruthless effects. Although awareness of its use as a tool of warfare is increasing, there is much less known about effective strategies to combat rape and care for its victims, their families, and their communities.

Understanding the effects of and responses to sexual violence for both the victim and community is crucial for peace, healing and reconciliation. The different protection strategies that various societies develop as a response to sexual violence will have resounding impacts on how the victims, their families, their communities, and the society as a whole are affected. Understanding the context recognizes how the societal responses to the victims of sexual violence impact the experience of the victims.³ This paper will argue that developing a holistic and effective solution that includes both the prevention of sexual violence and the care of its victims is dependent upon the context in which the crimes take place and the protection strategies employed.

The experience of sexual violence en masse in Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) exemplify the potential of communities to either accept or abhor the victims of such violence. In post-conflict Liberia, communities

The experience of sexual violence en masse in Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) exemplify the potential of communities to either accept or abhor the victims of such violence.

accepted the fact that most of the population was raped during the war and are now living within this new social framework. Those who were victims themselves have demonstrated particular resourcefulness and agency in regards to their current situation. In contrast, the communities of the crisis-ridden Congo maintained their patriarchal and discriminatory social structure against women, imposing upon the victims of sexual violence a culture of silence and loss of dignity. The women themselves feel helpless under this structural oppression and have opted to remain silent in self-defense.

Both of these cases demonstrate drastically different community and individual protection strategies that the respective societies adopted against sexual violence as a means for survival, and each has its own effects. While Liberia is struggling with increased incidence of domestic violence and the practice of polygamy, the country and its people desire to and are able to move beyond the war context into a more stable and democratic society. Meanwhile, the Congo remains steeped in crises. Liberia and the DRC illustrate the value of recognizing the protection strategies of sexual violence and the context in which they take place. These two countries may inform efforts to formulate and implement holistic and effective interventions among communities that experience mass sexual violence.

Background: Rape as a Tool of Warfare

The acts of sexual violence represent the actual and symbolic penetration of the enemy into vulnerable communities. It is an effective military strategy both as a tool of warfare and in its ability to boost morale among troops. Sexual violence is used to terrorize, to humiliate, and to utterly destroy what holds entire communities together – socially, morally, and economically. In fact, the terms “sexual violence” or “sexual assault” are only euphemisms for what victims endure. Sexual violence does not merely refer to “rape” but to atrocities such as vaginal and anal penetration with objects such as gun barrels and knives; cutting open of pregnant women’s bellies to dismember the fetus; and to the repeated gang rape of a mother in front of her family. These types of assault have the ability to inscribe the rapist’s victims into the perpetrator’s “realm of power,” allowing him to torture, punish, extract information, or commit genocide as he wishes.

While its use is concentrated among young girls and women, sexual violence is also committed against males. Victims can be attacked anywhere, anytime – on roads, in fields, or inside their homes. Looting and ransacking the victim’s possessions usually follows the attack and often leads to short-term economic crises. Many conflict zones are experiencing unprecedented levels of sexual violence. As a consequence, societies are becoming more physically, psychologically, and socially fractured.

The Context of Rape in War

Types of Sexual Violence

“...They took my bottle of water, which I’d put down beside me, and they pushed it into my vagina, ordering me to sit down. One of them held me down with all his weight, to make it easier to push the bottle in. I bled a lot, because my vagina was torn.”⁴

Forms of sexual violence include, but are not limited to: forced removal of clothing; oral, anal or vaginal rape; forced observation of sexual assaults; penetration with objects such as rifles, knives, wood, glass, nails, stones, sand, and hot peppers; forced marriage; and forced engagement in ‘sex for survival.’⁵ Different types of sexual violence and extreme physical and psychological torture may also be used before, during, and after a rape, particularly when the victim is resistant. This was the case with a young girl, a victim of sexual violence who had her genital labia and breasts cut off and chest cut open. She died before she could be raped.⁶ Other stories include victims being tied into humiliating and obscene positions for hours; their genitals and sexual organs mutilated by cutting or object insertion. Below is a quote from a woman named Serapina. She is a woman who was first gang raped and then forced to eat her husband’s remains. She remembers:

“They mutilated my husband’s body. Cut off his arms.” And then, she says in an unfathomably calm tone, “they forced me to eat my husband’s flesh. They said they would kill me if I refused.”⁷

The particular act of rape can be committed on an individual by an individual or on an individual by a group (gang rape), as was the case with Serapina from Congo. In fact, the majority of the armed groups in the DRC commit systemic gang rape. Often rape is forced incest; soldiers will force a son to rape his mother or a

father to rape his daughter. To create the maximum amount of humiliation and fear, rape is often public, committed in front of the victim's children, family, and community. Finally and significantly, rape is used by its victims in order to survive. For example, a victim may have a soldier "boyfriend" in order to avoid being raped by others and ensure the survival of her family. This "survival rape" will be explored further in the case of Liberia.

Sexual Violence as an Effective Military Strategy

*"The objective of the rapists is not sex. They want to destroy a person. They don't kill, they destroy."*⁸

As a military strategy, sexual violence is used to pacify and terrorize its victims and their communities. This is done as a means to indirectly "conquer" a territory and destroy any cohesiveness in the society. For instance, the use of sexual violence en masse is usually planned and organized in advance and includes pillaging the village after the violence is carried out. The primary aim of the rapists "is to inflict trauma and thus to destroy family ties and group solidarity within the enemy camp."⁹ Combatant groups can conquer people by using rape for ethnic cleansing or group extermination (i.e. the case of the Rwandan genocide in 1994). They can use rape for revenge and punishment against specific groups of people, such as against those who allegedly sympathize with the enemy, and in order to gain/neutralize magical powers.¹⁰

Acts of sexual violence are community-building exercises as well. Commanders of combatant groups may instruct their troops to carry out a mass rape and to claim the rapes as their "prize" for victory. This can help build troop morale. Rape may also be required as a rite of initiation by commanders who want to manufacture cohesiveness among troops. After they have carried out a rape, the troops belong to a "brotherhood of guilt."¹¹ They are now bound to each other through the dark and gruesome acts committed together. Since they have committed atrocities that they perhaps never felt capable of, the only place they may feel accepted is with their commander and the new brotherhood. Thus, sexual violence can be used as a military strategy that manipulates power in order to destroy victims' communities *and* create communities among perpetrators.

The motivations behind sexual violence are numerous and are often used as justification for sexually violent behavior. Patricia Rozée has created formal categories of rape motivations and justifications. While each category is important to account for in other specific contexts of sexual violence, *punitive rape* and *survival rape* are particularly relevant to the Liberia and the DRC contexts. *Punitive rape* is used to punish, to elicit silence and control; and *survival rape* is when young women become involved with older men to secure goods and/or services needed to survive.¹²

Surrounded by a Culture of Impunity

In order to understand the different protection strategies employed by individuals and communities, it is critical to recognize that all of these atrocities are carried out within the context of virtual impunity. War creates an environment in which the appropriate institutional functions that exist to serve and protect civilians from human rights atrocities cease to exist. War destroys security, impedes development, and creates space for corruption and criminal activity without the fear of punishment.

The use of sexual violence as a tool of warfare is typical of militias, rebels, and particularly undisciplined groups. For instance, the Mai Mai, a rebel group in eastern Congo, will usually abduct women for long periods of time, requiring them to perform sexual acts for multiple combatants in the group. However, these groups are not the only ones to commit such atrocities. Government troops and civilians - neighbors, officials, UN personnel, and even family - also take part in the culture of impunity. In these cases, rape is often referred to as a “women’s issue,” a “bailable”¹³ offense or an issue of little importance. It seems that as the use of sexual violence becomes more pervasive, communities become more callous, instead of increasingly outraged, towards the issue. This common response is illustrated in the case studies and seems to be in part the result of women’s “second-class status” in these societies as well as a coping mechanism for the affected communities.

As noted earlier, sexual violence is committed on people of both genders and of all ages (there are documented cases on victims from 4 months – 84 years old) in order to gain power and control over them, albeit for different reasons. Those most likely to be victimized by sexual violence are often the most disadvantaged and vulnerable social groups, such as women, poor farmers, and minorities.¹⁴ While sexual assault on males aims to produce passivity and feelings of incompetence, the same assault on females aims to activate her sexuality and induce shame and guilt.¹⁵ For both, the assault attacks the “core constructions of identity and security in their most personal and profound sense,” thus bringing them into the enemy’s realm of control.¹⁶

General Individual and Communal Responses

In general, rape victims are psychologically damaged and physically injured as a result of the crimes - and most will never fully recover. For instance, a significant number become pregnant and an unknown number become infected with HIV. These kinds of consequences dramatically change the course of their future livelihoods and possibilities. Other family and community members are also psychologically and/or physically affected as a result of the sexual violence.

Physical Injuries and Health Consequences

The immediate physical injuries of rape and accompanied brutality are devastating. Immediate bodily injuries from rape, physical abuse or dismemberment can include: constant pain, weakness, and sickness; excessive bleeding; internal and/or external tearing of genitals; potential miscarriages if the victim was pregnant before the rape; and unwanted pregnancies.¹⁷ Furthermore, massive internal bleeding, organ damage, or death can occur as in the case of “rape-shooting” where a rapist thrusts the barrel of a gun up the vagina and discharges the weapon. When injuries such as these occur, the physical healing process is extremely long and physically and emotionally taxing, as is seen in the quote below:

When you see that a woman has been shot in the vagina, with a destroyed bladder and destroyed rectum, you have to do a colostomy...The genital area needs to be cleaned up, as it has been soiled by dripping faecal matter, which takes two to three months. Then the genitals, the urinary tract and the digestive tract need to be operated on. Some women need five to six surgeries. Some may never recover from their wounds.¹⁸

Unwanted pregnancies are a form of ethnic cleansing and have been a consequence of many well-known modern conflicts.¹⁹ Women in this position are forced to choose between two alternatives – an unsafe abortion or keeping the child – as either choice risks rejection by her family and community.²⁰ Often mothers of these “*faible*” children in the DRC believe that their breast milk was contaminated from the rape, and thus refuse to breastfeed the newborn, endangering its life.²¹ A physician who operates on victims of sexual violence at Panzi hospital in South Kivu illustrates the exceptional situations in which women who have born a child of rape are placed:

It is a big strain as a woman to keep a child born from rape...[because] the father of this child killed her husband and five of her children.²²

Also of particular concern are the long-term affects of sexual violence on women’s reproductive health, particularly since many of those assaulted are of childbearing age.²³ Post-rape complications can include heavy and irregular periods (which may suggest the presence of a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI)), painful urination, and vaginal infection leading to infertility.²⁴ Vesico-vaginal fistulas or recto-vaginal fistulas are particularly painful lifelong consequences of rape.²⁵ As well as lifelong pain, fistulas also render a woman incompetent of controlling her secretions, which often forces her to become socially outcast because of her ever-present, unpleasant odor.

The emerging HIV/AIDS epidemic, the exact size and extent of which is unknown in the DRC, is terrifying. Although it is not possible to determine the true rate of HIV prevalence in the DRC, it is estimated that nearly 60 percent of combatants involved in the war are HIV-positive, creating a high risk of infection for the women who are raped by them.²⁶ Further, the risk of transmission for both HIV and STIs is augmented through forcible sexual encounters, due to genital tears and injuries and lack of protective vaginal secretions.²⁷ For example, all female patients seen by clinics in Monrovia, Liberia have tested positive for at least one STI, and most patients said they had been raped.²⁸ Young girls who have not yet reached puberty are most susceptible to these types of vaginal injuries during rape.²⁹

Although the psychological consequences of rape can last for years, they usually begin to appear shortly after a sexually violent incident. These can include: shock; intense terror; rage and shame; severe anxiety and depression; loss of self-esteem; self-blame; memory loss; and day/nightmares. A report on sexual violence victims in South Kivu found that a substantial number of women were tormented by the fear of having contracted HIV/AIDS or other STIs.³⁰ For most, “sexual relations had become a real nightmare.”³¹ The psychological trauma experienced by both the victim and the community often helps to trigger a new cycle of violence, “helplessness, frustration, and anger are often acted out in the community or in the family system.”³² For example, domestic violence has sharply increased since the end of the Liberian war, likely related to the mass rapes committed during the war.

Battered Livelihoods

Most victims of sexual violence lack access to medical care for their injuries. For instance, 70 percent of the rape victims interviewed in South Kivu had received no medical treatment at all due to fear of stigmatization, lack of access to treatment, lack of funds, or insecure conditions for travel to health centers.³³ Most of these women

resorted to washing themselves with tepid water.³⁴ These conditions and behaviors have long-term effects. For example, 91.5 percent of the 492 rape victims interviewed in South Kivu continue to suffer from one or more rape-related physical or psychological problem.³⁵

There are also very serious economic consequences for sexual violence victims. Women are the economic backbone of rural communities.³⁶ Yet, women are humiliated and forced into extreme poverty because of their rejection by family and community. With little education and resources available to them, they often turn to prostitution or selling small items in markets.³⁷ Women may also choose to move to a more urban landscape, creating for themselves anonymity and perhaps more income-generating options.

Sexual Violence Changes Societies

Moving beyond the individual and community level, there are many other destructive consequences from sexual violence besides the ones mentioned. The widespread culture of impunity leads to a lack of justice and reparation for the crimes committed; family units are distorted for generations (i.e. the large increase in the practice of polygamy and domestic violence in post-war Liberia); and there is an erosion of the economic and social fabric of entire regions as distrust, fear, and anxiety invade society. Pervasive sexual violence and its intended consequences cause social suffering on many levels. Everyone is affected – having been forced to endure sexual violence themselves or experience watching loved ones be violated and possibly killed – and society is inevitably changed. In essence, “rape destroys communities by transforming its women into objects.”³⁸ Liberia and the DRC offer two case studies in which the societies affected have been altered in drastically different ways.

Liberia: Victim or Agent?

In Liberia’s post-conflict context, the majority of its population is youth, with the median age being 18.1 years.³⁹ These youth live and work within a post-war social framework, and have exchanged most of the traditions and customs of their elders for a culture that they see as modern, free, and resourceful. The war was centered on Liberian rural youth and their interests in “agrarian justice,” including reform of customary land and marriage law.⁴⁰ The use of sexual violence was a significant factor in this cultural change as the brutal practices of forcing a father to have sex with his daughter in front of the family, for instance, helped to break apart family ties. The practice of “survival sex” has also helped to shape the modern Liberian social framework. What Mats Utas calls the “agency of victims” accurately describes the unique protection strategies employed by those who have suffered from sexual violence in Liberia – they can be both rape victim and survivor.⁴¹

Post-war Context

Liberia has recently emerged from a 14-year war that ended in 2003 when the then President and former warlord, Charles Taylor, accepted asylum from Nigeria because of the international pressure on him to resign. The war left 85 percent of the population unemployed, and systems of infrastructure, health, education, and justice destroyed.⁴² During the war, it is estimated that approximately 200,000 people were killed; 60-70 percent of the population of 3 million suffered from some forms of

sexual violence (both women and men); many women and children were abducted and used for sex slaves; and 3 out of 4 women were sexually violated.⁴³

Democratic elections in 2005 brought to power Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the “iron lady” and Africa’s first female President. Since her election, there have been efforts to restore basic services to Liberians, such as electricity and running water, as well as an effort by the President to combat the issue of rape. The effort faces significant challenges since it must put forward a viable solution that is both accepted by Liberian society and able to extend reparations to an extraordinary percentage of the population who were victims of sexual violence.

Despite some steps forward, the people of Liberia are still struggling with “the inheritance of war,” – violence, poverty, impunity, and social disorder.⁴⁴ With a population growth rate of 4.84 percent and 97.3 percent of people under the age of 65, the Liberian people of today are young and live in a post-war social framework that lacks faith in any kind of institutions.⁴⁵ “They consider that family, marriage, education, markets, and the administration of justice have all failed them.”⁴⁶

Unfortunately, sexual violence did not end with the war, and the lack of a functioning judicial system has forced victims to continue to cope with little to no recourse to justice. Yet for the most part, protection strategies of female victims in Liberia, both during and after the war, have been action-oriented and resourceful. For example, young girls often initiate relationships with the opposite gender in the hope that their new “boyfriends” can provide for their basic needs. They learn to create for themselves conditions in which they can survive, even when it means providing sexual relations in exchange for material goods.

Unfortunately, sexual violence did not end with the war; and the lack of a functioning judicial system has forced victims to continue to cope with little to no recourse to justice.

This new social framework, severed from the traditional customs of their elders, is one where the “survival of the fittest” reigns supreme. There is higher incidence of domestic violence and rape by all types of community members as well as an increase in the practice of formal or informal polygamy. Many young girls feel unable to return home because of sexual violence they endured and the shame associated with the decisions they had to make in order to survive during the war. Thus, they must also participate in the “survival of the fittest” framework, continuing to employ their wartime protection strategy of “survival sex.”

Continued Violence & Second-Class Status

The continued sexual violence in post-war Liberia can be traced back to the culture of impunity that made rape a dismissible offense, and the male desire to reassert their lost masculinity and control over their women with physical and sexual violence.⁴⁷

Eighty-five percent of the victims who are coping with past and present sexual violence are under the age of 18 and most of them know their perpetrators.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, while the majority of Liberians would like to see truth crime tribunals

held for ex-combatants, close to 80 percent of sexual violence cases are dealt with out of court.⁴⁹ This perspective of rape as a “secondary war-crime” brings to the forefront the discriminatory tradition of treating women as second-class citizens. With family units and support networks destroyed and the judicial system in shambles, the victims of rape are left to cope alone in a broken country and broken communities.

With 85 percent unemployment in Liberia,⁵⁰ young males are struggling to adjust to a post-war context that does not provide them with adequate opportunities to provide for their families. The death of many men in the war has left fewer men to take on the traditional role as head and provider of a household. The rise in physical and sexual violence in post-war Liberia is most likely closely related to these frustrations, as men reassert their dominance through the use of violence.

On the national level, there are a few steps being taken towards ending impunity for and acceptance of sexual violence. The day after her inauguration, President Sirleaf passed the Rape Law, which expanded the definition of rape and increased the severity of punishment.⁵¹ Sirleaf has also worked to establish Liberia’s Gender-Based Violence (GBV) National Action Plan that seeks to address the increased rates of domestic violence by fighting the “traditional and cultural practices that perpetuate violence against women.”⁵² The plan seeks to strengthen the health sector, reform the legal system, and provide psychosocial, economic, and social empowerment services to victims of GBV.⁵³ Although these steps may be heading in the right direction, they seem inadequate to deal with the pervasiveness of rape and the detrimental underlying social norms.

Protection Strategy: Survival Sex

“Too often the girls are considered only silent victims of (sexual) assault – devoid of agency, moral conscience, economic potential, and political awareness.”⁵⁴

Many girls and women use the protection strategy of survival sex both during and after the war. Young women during the war would become the “girlfriend” of a combatant in order to avoid torture, rape, forced labor, abduction, and to support the survival of their families by the acquisition of looted goods through her combatant “boyfriend.”⁵⁵ The young women were in constant need of this “protector,” becoming extremely vulnerable if he were to die or choose someone else. The best scenario for a young woman was to be in a relationship with a “big man” in the war (i.e. a high ranked officer), guaranteeing her full protection, food, and the protection of her family and their property. Families in hiding would encourage this behavior as they hoped to have something left when the war was over as this quote suggests:

You had your family and they did not have any food. If you did not have a relationship with a commando how would your family survive? You had

The best scenario for a young woman was to be in a relationship with a “big man” in the war (i.e. a high ranked officer), guaranteeing her full protection, food, and the protection of her family and their property.

your mother, father, brother, sister, uncle. If you didn't love to a commando, they would not get food.⁵⁶

This survival sex often brought young women onto the front lines of the war – looting villages and fighting alongside their combatant boyfriends or being abandoned in areas where they had absolutely no social ties. Before the war, these behaviors would not normally be tolerated, but during the war they were necessary to survive. Cynthia Enloe characterized the type of actions needed in order to survive in this environment:

The archetypal image of the camp follower is a woman outcast from society, poor but tenacious, eking out a livelihood by preying on unfortunate soldiers. She is a woman intruding in a 'man's world.' Skirts dragging in the battlefield mud, she tags along behind the troops, selling her wares or her body, probably at unfair prices. If by chance she falls in love with a soldier, she is destined to be abandoned or widowed.⁵⁷

The tactical decision of a young woman to use this protection strategy would not come lightly. Many had already been the victim of extreme sexual violence and torture before they chose to be in a relationship with a soldier in order to survive. This was the case with Hawa, a 15 year-old girl who fled from her home, was forced into hiding from the rebels, and eventually caught – imprisoned for two months where she was tortured, raped, and humiliated.⁵⁸ While in prison, a rebel boy “came her way,” and she started seeing him. Even though she “did not want him” at first, she later agreed because she had heard he was the rebel commander of the town. He had five other women besides her.⁵⁹ Hawa explains why she chose to protect herself with survival sex:

You mean you were seeing him only because he was a commando?

Yes, that was the only way I could be safe.⁶⁰

Although Hawa was forced into a powerless position and had to make an undesirable wartime decision, her decision to proactively shape her own future empowered her to take control of her situation. For her, the military represented security; something that she needed. Young women like her learned to skillfully manipulate their boyfriends, leaving one for another based on self-interest. One of the most important things the girls learned to do was to encourage their combatant boyfriends to bring loot back. For some, looting was merely for survival but for others it meant riches they never thought they would have:

I never really used to enjoy going out with these fighters. I was doing these things because I wanted to survive – do you understand?

Some of them used to really enjoy being with commandos because they used to encourage the commandos to go and loot and because of that some of them have got money up to this day...they looted...diamonds, gold and other things.⁶¹

For the girlfriend of a combatant, the rank of her boyfriend was a symbol of status. The higher the rank, the more protection and loot he could offer her. If a

commando had many “wives”, he had proven that he was capable of providing for them. Thus, it helped increase the security of the females if they encouraged their boyfriends, and even male family members, to fight and earn their status.

Finally, some young women went one step further and became active combatants in the war, gaining for themselves modern commodities and the power and position to rule over others. Going beyond tactical agency, these women would choose the war-zone life over that of escape or exile.⁶² They knew the rules of the game in the battlefield and chose to manage their lives there, despite the dangers.

Sexual Violence During War Changed Liberian Society

Financial Relationships and Emasculation

“If you don’t have money, you don’t have true love. We just believe in the barter system that started during the war. You get the pleasure of my body, and I get the pleasure of your pocket...love is one of the war victims.”⁶³

During and after the war, some relationships have become purely financial for females. They expect to get money from their “husbands” in order to provide for their families. In fact, many young women are encouraged by their families to offer their bodies, in particular to UN personnel, since prostitution can yield up to \$200 a month which is a typical Liberian annual income.

In an economy with 85 percent unemployment, women have become the providers for their families when everything else fails. This emasculates their men who were unable to protect them during the war and are now unable to provide for them, failing to fulfill the hegemonic model of masculinity.⁶⁴ Below is a Liberian lullaby that starkly illustrates this new reality:

Your ma is a hopo-jo (prostitute), don’t cry baby. Your ma go look for food, don’t cry baby. Your ma fucking for you, don’t cry baby. Your pa is a useless man, don’t cry baby. Your pa doesn’t care for you. Don’t cry baby. (Liberian Lullaby)⁶⁵

Social Impact of Acknowledged Sexual Violence

The decision or need to continue within the context of survival sex during peacetime for economic reasons has led to further disintegration of accepted social norms. There appears, for instance, to be a connection between prostitution for survival and the breakdown in values attached to sexual behavior.⁶⁶ Both men and women regularly have multiple partners within their community, and many women accept that their husbands have several women, as it “enhances his power.”⁶⁷ Unavoidably, this contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS and the breakdown of families, further worsening the lives of survivors of sexual violence.

Informal polygamy has also increased in both rural and urban areas to unprecedented levels. It was used prolifically throughout the war (i.e. the higher the rank of a commando the more women he was entitled to) and society became callous towards its practice. Below is just one example of this practice:

I would go and love to [have a relationship with] this commando...When bringing me to this new town, he would take another girl from the street

and bring her to our home...if I would complain he would kill me. Of course, I would agree with everything he is saying...and then the man would go and bring a third one – again you could not talk or they would shoot you.⁶⁸

Young men between 14-15 years old might have five “wives” and older men who had one wife before the war now might have ten. The desire to have more than one partner is tied to one’s status and power. This situation is exacerbated by the patriarchal traditions and the consequences of war; women could only access goods and services via males and wartime casualties produced a disproportionate amount of women.

Out in the Open and Accepted as a ‘Heritage of War’

Surprisingly, young girls in Liberia, in general, will be up-front and frank about their experiences. They are willing to talk about rape, and it seems to be less stigmatized compared to pre-war settings.⁶⁹ Communities see past sexual violence as something that should be dealt with publicly, as a part of reconciliation and healing.

My own experience in Ganta City, Nimba County supports this assertion that rape is a subject allowed in public conversation. The guard who was posted outside my building at night spoke to me after my first week there about his wife. She had been raped during the war and was now suffering from a fistula. She needed surgery and he was hoping I could help. His son also suffered from the war, and he was the only able-bodied caregiver left in the home. The fact that my guard would easily tell me such a personal and debilitating story suggests that the sheer magnitude of rapes during the war may have facilitated the decrease in the associated stigma.

More often than not, husbands, families and communities are ready to accept the consequences of sexual violence as a “heritage of the war” – something that happened to all families, all social networks.⁷⁰ To help a victim reintegrate into her community, for example, a family may decide to take a young girl who has suffered from sexual violence to a spiritual healer for ritual cleansing and healing.

This acceptance does not, however, fall equally upon everyone. There are many young girls who feel they can never return home after they had intimate relations with combatants or became combatants themselves.⁷¹ If they were to return, they would most likely be social outcasts.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Coerced or Consented?

“When you lift the stone of sexual violence, you will find another stone of the treatment of women more generally, which is effectively slavery. Women do everything: they walk miles for food or water, they care for the children, they cook, they clean, they cultivate the land and they earn the family income...That is the female condition in the Congo.”⁷²

The responses to sexual violence during the recent conflict of individuals and communities in the DRC are distinctly different from the responses found in Liberia. Whereas Liberian victims act to transform an awful situation into one of survival and resourcefulness and the communities worked within a new paradigm of social norms, victims in the DRC are forced into silence and judged by their communities as having “used their bodies to save their lives.”⁷³

In the Congo, the burden of blame for the act of sexual violence is defined by one's perspective. Although the female victim feels that she was raped and violated against her will, Congolese society brands her as an adulteress or a collaborator. This branding is almost unbearable as a Congolese rape survivor showed when she pleaded to Amnesty International to "please tell them that rape is not adultery."⁷⁴ These pleas have not been taken into account by communities as over 30 percent of the victims (out of a total of 492 interviewed) in South Kivu were urged by their family to remain silent on what happened to them and only 7.1 percent had received support from their husbands.⁷⁵ Victims of sexual violence are socially displaced, forced into a culture of silence, and their dignity is destroyed.

War Context

The conflict in the DRC is the deadliest anywhere since World War II, "dwarfing Bosnia, Kosovo, Darfur, and even the South Asian Tsunami."⁷⁶ The complicated history of the DRC is one of a damaging colonial legacy, a violent dictatorship, chaos, exploitation, rape, and death. It has resulted in numerous humanitarian emergencies, numerous atrocities, and the devastation of a nation with great potential. In 1960, the Congo gained independence, bringing into power the kleptocracy of Mobutu Sese Seko; the Congo's First War (1996-1998) was sparked by the neighboring genocide in Rwanda; and the Congo's Second War (1998-2003) is often known as Africa's first world war and the most deadly fighting since WWII.⁷⁷ Various rebel groups are still active in the Congo today, most notably in the eastern regions (North and South Kivu, Ituri), constantly morphing into different formations and asserting their regional power and influence in the form of violence and resource exploitation. Since the conflict started in 1998, the latest of four mortality studies published by *The Lancet* finds approximately 3.9 million dead as of January 2006.⁷⁸ Finally, the war has "virtually eliminated what remained of Congo's infrastructure after thirty years of mismanagement and erosion under Mobutu – its health, judicial and educational services and its road and communication networks."⁷⁹

Within this horrific war-context, the burden of sexual violence is so great that experienced UN and international humanitarian NGO staff were "unanimous that they had never come across as many victims of rape in a conflict situation as they had in DRC."⁸⁰ Around 40,000 rapes had been reported as of 2004, with an average of 40 women raped every day in South Kivu.⁸¹ There are also a high number of women who have been raped repeatedly, at different times and by different forces.⁸² It is important to note that these numbers are only the tip of the iceberg and accurately measuring the burden of sexual violence is difficult. The scale of sexual violence is unprecedented and the numbers are therefore assumed to be much higher, since most rapes go unreported, due to fear of reprisal, lack of faith in the judicial system, women's social status, and related stigma. Also, it is always difficult, if not impossible, for victims of rape to obtain adequate medical care in the DRC.⁸³ Finally, it has been reported that despite the magnitude of sexual violence, particularly in Eastern Congo, the number of rapes has increased recently (since 2002). The increase may have happened because there is little left for assailants to loot from people who have been repeatedly attacked. Assailants often accept the lack of supplies and resources as a lack of support, and rape may then be used for punishment.⁸⁴

Second-Class Status

*"I have the feeling that if you are born a woman in this country, you are condemned to death at birth...why are we silent about this?"*⁸⁵

In the Congo, a woman's status as a second-class citizen is rooted in both law and culture, and there is a direct link between this status and the systemic sexual violence inflicted on women during wartime.⁸⁶ Before the war, women suffered from economic, political, and social discrimination and were seen as inferior to men. In Congolese law, the national Family Code makes a woman the property of her husband. Even when the law allows for equal gender relations, custom predominates, limiting a woman's rights in the areas of land ownership, decision-making power, and in emphasizing the importance of virginity.⁸⁷

In the Congo, a woman's status as a second-class citizen is rooted in both law and culture, and there is a direct link between this status and the systemic sexual violence inflicted on women during wartime.

By tradition, a woman is socially inferior and her body is the symbol of her family's honor.

The national Family Code fails to protect women, legalizes their inferior status, and illustrates the insignificance attached to violence against women. For example, article 444 states, "The husband is the head of the household. His duty is the protection of his wife; his wife owes her obedience to her husband."⁸⁸ Other articles include separate punishments for men and women if caught in adultery, the provision of wealth management to the husband, and the obligation of a woman to acquire her husband's consent before taking a case to court.⁸⁹

When the Family Code does treat women with equality, Congolese culture most often limits their access to these rights. For instance, women's education is not a priority in the Congo, giving

her few opportunities to learn about her rights beyond her husband or family's influence.⁹⁰ Women are also not allowed to inherit anything from their husbands or to own property and are most likely not allowed to make decisions regarding contraception and family planning.⁹¹

Congolese culture is also concerned with women remaining pure and therefore, honorable. Virginity is particularly prized and considered fundamental for a girl of marriageable age in order to obtain the maximum dowry for her family.⁹² A young woman who has been a victim of rape has little hope for marrying. In fact, a young girl's family may desire to settle informally with the perpetrator, sometimes resulting in the forced marriage of the girl to her rapist.⁹³ In this climate of invasive impunity and inferiority, the young girl is helpless and hopeless – a sacrificial lamb for the sake of her family's honor. A doctor said the following after having treated a young girl for physical injuries from sexual violence:

We can do little else to prevent her from being rejected. It's not her fault. Physically she will probably get better...(but) on the psychological level, it remains a problem. She lost her virginity, which is something very important in the village. She can't even talk about it.⁹⁴

Protection Strategy: A Culture of Silence and Loss of Dignity

The inferior status of women in the Congo, coupled with their lost purity as rape victims, has resulted in a victim protection strategy of silence to try and protect themselves from a complete loss of dignity. In fact, this strategy of protection for both the woman and her family runs so deep that even before a girl becomes a victim of sexual violence, her family may send her away to a safer location to protect her from rape.⁹⁵ Although victims are all coerced, society brands them as consenting; they are seen as “collaborators, adulterers, provocative, or worse.”⁹⁶

Factors that influence the decision of families to use this protection strategy can include: if the woman became pregnant as a result of a rape; if she became infected with HIV/AIDS or other STIs; and whether there was a significant amount of public attention given to her experience.⁹⁷ If a victim’s family decides not to abandon her, they will most likely encourage her to remain silent and to “just tell people you were away for a short time.”⁹⁸ The victim’s silence is especially important to the family if she is young and unmarried; the silence protects her future, as is illustrated below:

My mother told me I should thank God that I was alive. She told me to be brave and not to say anything to other families so as not to lose my reputation. She said if I publicized it, I might not get a husband. They could say I have illnesses because I was with soldiers.⁹⁹

Obviously, if a woman knows that public knowledge of the crime and her health status will risk her future wellbeing and relationships, she will prefer to stay silent on both issues than endure stigmatization and humiliation. For example, in Fizi region of the DRC, 63 percent of the 492 women interviewed in the South Kivu study had told no one what had happened to them.¹⁰⁰ Many of these women will flee their communities, seeking the anonymity of urban centers.¹⁰¹ Even during childbirth, women usually choose not to inform their doctor that they had been raped.¹⁰² They adopt a culture of silence that allows them to do the best they can in order to survive after society has branded them as dishonorable, spoiled, and consenters of the crimes they endured, against their will.

Sexual Violence During War Changed Congolese Society

Abandoned and Unmarriageable Women

Where a victim of sexual violence in Liberia may feel free to speak of her rape and experience relational freedom, in the Congo, the victim is silenced and unmarriageable. Since a Congolese woman’s value is strictly tied to purity through virginity, wifehood, and child-bearing, sexual assault most often results in “social murder,” as the girl has lost all her value to her community and her own human dignity.¹⁰³

Husbands often choose to maintain their honor by either rejecting or refusing to live with wives who are victims of sexual violence for fear of contracting HIV/AIDS along with the intense community stigma.¹⁰⁴ Many blame their wives for the assault:

Afterwards I went home. I tried to hide it from my husband but he found out. He said that I had accepted it voluntarily. He said this although I had bruises and marks where the soldiers had pressed their fingernails into my inner thigh.¹⁰⁵

While the husbands who leave will most likely remarry, the wives are left unmarriageable, marginalized, and subject to sexual abuse by her husband's own family.¹⁰⁶ Some husbands may take a second wife and place his first wife in a subordinate position.¹⁰⁷ If a woman's husband was killed during an attack, the husband's family can become extremely callous towards her and hold her responsible for his death.¹⁰⁸ Francine, a Congolese woman who saw her husband killed, was accused of being a 'traitor' and an 'accomplice' of the attackers by her husband's brothers because "she could not have survived otherwise." She had become "everybody's woman."¹⁰⁹

The most poignant type of stigma and ostracism occurs when a rape results in a pregnancy. A woman's family and community deny her love and support because her unborn child will be a lasting symbol of rape. The child is seen as "an affront – a bad memory left by the attackers and above all as a future threat to the community... it's a little snake in the grass, sooner or later it will bite..."¹¹⁰ Yet the woman has little or no choice because abortion is illegal, dangerous, and condemned by both Catholicism and Congolese culture. She is therefore emotionally and practically disadvantaged in caring for her child, and the child itself is at a higher risk for brain damage, neglect, and abuse.¹¹¹ For the Congolese, the emergence of new life from an event that displaces family honor is disgusting.

Understanding the context in which sexual atrocities took place and the potential need for drastically different protection strategies is crucial in order to effectively and holistically address the consequences of sexual violence and prevent it from happening again.

Conclusion

The sheer pervasiveness of sexual violence has fundamentally changed these two societies. Although women were seen as second-class citizens in both cases, Liberian victims were shown as agents, acting to transform an unbearable situation into one of survival, and their communities developed a new paradigm of social norms in which to live and work. A very different protection strategy developed in the Congo. The victims experienced a complete loss of dignity, as they were forced into silence and excluded from their communities. Compared to the resourceful role of many women in Liberia, the victims of rape in the DRC found themselves in isolation and completely rejected.

Understanding the context in which sexual atrocities took place and the potential need for drastically different protection strategies is crucial in order to effectively and holistically address the consequences of sexual violence and prevent it from happening again. In each particular context, the strategies employed will have resounding impacts on how the victims, their families, their communities, and the society as a whole is affected.

Finally, it should be recognized that sexual violence as a tool of warfare socially marginalizes over half of the population. Therefore, "violence against women and girls in war cannot be seen as business as usual. Rape during wartime is not inevitable."¹¹² In light of this, it is recommended that:

- The culture of impunity should be eradicated through national and international human rights action and justice mechanisms. Even though the International Criminal Court (ICC) has classified rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, and enforced sterilization as potential crimes against humanity, the international community too often dismisses sexual violence as an “inevitable consequence” of war.¹¹³ Likewise, while some national governments, such as Liberia, have made improvements on national rape laws, sexual violence continues mostly undaunted. This attitude and lack of legal implementation has aided and abetted the denial of access to treatment and justice, as those brave enough to seek either are often harassed and even arrested;
- Policymakers and practitioners should be careful to account for the particular war-context and protection strategies employed by victims of sexual violence and their surrounding communities in developing responses to and programs for prevention and the treatment and care of victims, their, families, and communities;¹¹⁴
- National governments should abolish discriminatory laws against women and enforce new procedures through legislation, the justice system, and training of military and police personnel so as to promote women’s equality and the just prosecution of crimes, offering compensation when necessary. Reducing the occurrence of sexual violence in both Liberia and the Congo will be a useful indicator in guiding the countries on their paths to recovery, as it is central to reestablishing lasting security, peace, and reconciliation.

Endnotes

- 1 Forced Migration Review (FMR), “Sexual Violence: Weapon of War, Impediment to Peace,” Published by the *Refugees Studies Center* in association with the *United Nations Population Fund*, issue 27 (January 2007): 36.
- 2 Forced Migration Review (FMR), “Sexual Violence: Weapon of War, Impediment to Peace,” Published by the *Refugees Studies Center* in association with the *United Nations Population Fund*, issue 27 (January 2007): 36.
- 3 Meredith Turshen and Clotilde Twagiramariya, ed., *What Women Do in Wartime: Gender and Conflict in Africa*, (London:Zed Books Ltd, 1998),14.
- 4 “Women’s Bodies as a Battleground: Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls During the War in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (South Kivu 1996-2003),” published by *Réseau des Femmes pour un Développement Associatif*, *Réseau des Femmes pour la Défense des Droits et la Paix*, and *International Alert* (2005): 34.
- 5 Mendy Marsh, “Sexual Violence in Liberia: Perspectives from the Field,” Presentation given in New York, December 2006, slide 5.
- 6 Human Rights Watch (HRW), “The War Within A War: Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Eastern Congo,” (New York: June 2002), 55.
- 7 Story of a rape survivor in Congo, interviewed by IRC employee Kevin Sites, October 10, 2005. Available at: <http://hotzone.yahoo.com/b/hotzone/blogs1152>. Accessed on 04/28/07.
- 8 Quote from Mukengere, a doctor from Panzi hospital in South Kivu which specializes in the care of victims of sexual violence, IRIN News, 12 December 2006, “DRC: Healing the Wounds of War at Panzi Hospital, South Kivu,” Available at: <http://irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=62422>. Accessed on 04/12/2007.
- 9 Bülent Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen, “Becoming Abject: Rape as a Weapon of War,” *Body and Society*, 2005;11;111. Available at: <http://bod.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/11/1/111>. Accessed on: 04/15/07.

- 10 HRW 2002 Report, 56. There is a belief in the DRC that having sex with a young child can protect one from the HIV/AIDS virus.
- 11 Diken and Laustsen, 111.
- 12 Michael L. Penn and Rahel Nardos, Overcoming Violence Against Women and Girls: The International Campaign to Eradicate a Worldwide Problem, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 54-55. The categories created by Rozée are: *punitive rape* which is used to punish, to elicit silence and control; *status rape* which occurs as a result of acknowledged differences in rank—master/slave, nobleman/commoner, etc; *ceremonial rape* which is undertaken as part of socially sanctioned rituals or ceremonies; *exchange rape* which is when genital contact is used as a bargaining tool or gesture of conciliation or solidarity; *theft rape* which is involuntary abduction of individuals as slaves, prostitutes, concubines, or spoils of war; and *survival rape* which is when young women become involved with older men to secure goods and/or services needed to survive.
- 13 Bailable here means that the perpetrator, if caught, is capable of being set free on bail and lacks punishment for his crimes.
- 14 Women's Bodies, 60.
- 15 Hypothesis put forward by Inger Agger in Women in War, 38.
- 16 Quoting Carolyn Nordstrom in Women in War, 38.
- 17 Genital tearing happens particularly in women who have suffered from female genital mutilation.
- 18 Quote from Mukengere, a doctor from Panzi hospital in South Kivu which specializes in the care of victims of sexual violence, IRIN News, 12 December 2006, "DRC: Healing the Wounds of War at Panzi Hospital, South Kivu," Available at: <http://irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=62422>. Accessed on 04/12/07.
- 19 Conflicts such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Rwanda, East Timor, and the Sudan have seen ethnic cleansing.
- 20 Golie G. Jansen, "Gender and War: Effects of Armed Conflict on Women's Health and Mental Health," *Affilia* 2006; 21;141. Tufts Library. 16 April 2007.
- 21 Médécins Sans Frontiers (MSF), "I Have No Joy, No Peace of Mind: Medical, Psychosocial, and Socio-Economic Consequences of Sexual Violence in Eastern DRC," (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: 2004), 23.
- 22 Quote from Mukengere, a doctor from Panzi hospital in South Kivu which specializes in the care of victims of sexual violence: IRIN News, 12 December 2006, "DRC: Healing the Wounds of War at Panzi Hospital, South Kivu," Available at: <http://irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=62422>.
- 23 Women's Bodies, 40.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 A fistula occurs when there have been internal tears to the vagina and urethra, causing constant and uncontrollable urine and vaginal discharge.
- 26 United States Institute for Peace, "Special Report: AIDS and Violent Conflict In Africa," October 2001, Available at: www.usip.org. Accessed on 04/12/07.
- 27 Women's Bodies, 41.
- 28 Amnesty International (AI), "Democratic Republic of Congo: Mass Rape: Time for Remedies," (London: October 2004), 9.
- 29 Women's Bodies, 40.
- 30 Women's Bodies, 42.
- 31 Ibid. Physical symptoms associated with these psychological disorders can include: headaches, nausea, stomach pains, psychosomatic body pain, sexual dysfunction, sleeplessness and fatigue.
- 32 A Psychologist in Baraka, interviewed by MSF in 2004 Report.
- 33 Women's Bodies, 41.
- 34 Women's Bodies, 42.
- 35 Women's Bodies, 39.
- 36 Women's Bodies, 43.

- 37 HRW 2002 Report, 65.
- 38 Diken and Laustsen, 117.
- 39 CIA WorldFactbook: Liberia, available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/li.html#People>. Accessed on 03/25/08.
- 40 Paul Richards, "To Fight or to Farm? Agrarian Dimensions of the Mano River Conflicts (Liberia and Sierra Leone)," *African Affairs*, (London: 2005; 104: 571-590).
- 41 Mats Utas, "Agency of Victims: Young Women in the Liberian Civil War," in *Makers and Breakers: Children & Youth in Post-Colonial Africa*, edited by Alcinda Honwana and Filip de Boeck, (Oxford: James Curry Ltd, 2005), 57.
- 42 Panel Discussion, "Addressing Sexual Violence in Liberia," United Nations Secretariat, a follow-up to the *International Symposium on Sexual Violence in Conflict and Beyond*, (New York: December 2006).
- 43 AI 2004 Report, 4.
- 44 Utas, 77.
- 45 CIA World Factbook, "Liberia, People." Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/li.html#People>. Accessed on 04/24/07. And Paul Richards and Steven Archibald, et al, "Community Cohesion in Liberia: A Post-War Rapid Social Assessment," World Bank Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction, no. 21 (January 2005), 2.
- 46 Richards and Archibald, et al., 2.
- 47 FMR 2007 Report, 36.
- 48 Panel Discussion, "Addressing Sexual Violence in Liberia," December 2006.
- 49 Panel Discussion, "Addressing Sexual Violence in Liberia," December 2006.
- 50 Support to NEPAD-CAADP Implementation: National Medium Term Investment Program, Volume I of IV, September 2006.
- 51 Elizabeth Blunt, "Liberian Leader Breaks Rape Taboo," *BBC News*, 20 Jan. 2006, available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4632874.stm>. And Transitional Justice Working Group Initiative, "The Road to Peace in Liberia: Citizens Views on Transitional Justice," August-September 2004, Slide 42.
- 52 FMR 2007 Report, 34.
- 53 FMR 2007 Report, 34.
- 54 Quoting Carolyn Nordstrom (1997b: 36f), Utas, 53.
- 55 Utas, 58.
- 56 Interview with Bintu, Utas, 70.
- 57 Quoting Cynthia Enloe (1983:1-2), Utas, 77.
- 58 Utas, 59.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Interview with Hawa, Utas, 62.
- 61 Interviews with Bintu, Utas, 66 and 69.
- 62 Utas, 76.
- 63 Interview with a high school graduate, Utas, 76.
- 64 FMR 2007 Report, 36.
- 65 Utas, 69.
- 66 FMR 2007 Report, 36.
- 67 FMR 2007 Report, 36.
- 68 Interview with Masa, Utas, 69.
- 69 Utas, 77.
- 70 Utas, 77.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 Expatriate woman psychologist working in the DRC, interviewed by Amenesty International, AI 2004 Report.
- 73 Turshen and Twagiramariya, ed., 110.
- 74 AI 2004 Report, 34.
- 75 Women's Bodies, 42.
- 76 Dr. Richard Brennan, Anna Husarska, "Inside Congo, an Unspeakable Toll," *The Washington Post*, 16 July 2006.

- 77 “DRC: Voting Begins, Marking Completion of Long Democratic Transition” *IRIN News*, Available from: http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=56097&SelectRegion=Great_Lakes&SelectCountry=DRC. Accessed on: 10/29/06.
- 78 Coghlan B, Brennan RJ, Ngoy P, et al., “DRC mortality study: Mortality in the Democratic republic of Congo: A Nationwide Survey. *The Lancet*, January 2006;367:44-51.
- 79 HRW 2002 Report, 18.
- 80 AI 2004 Report, 13.
- 81 FMR 2007 Report, 45
- 82 AI 2004 Report, 13.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 HRW 2002 Report, 33.
- 85 Interview with Mukengere, a father of four daughters and a doctor, HRW, 54.
- 86 HRW 2002 Report, 84.
- 87 AI 2004 Report, 11.
- 88 Quoting *code zaiiros de la famille, art. 444.*, HRW 2002 Report, 84.
- 89 AI 2004, 10.
- 90 AI 2004 Report, 11. Illiteracy is estimated at 46 percent for women and 17.5 percent for men.
- 91 Ibid.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 HRW 2002 Report, 82.
- 94 Interview with a doctor who treated a 15-year old girl raped by several men, HRW 2002 Report, 64.
- 95 HRW 2002 Report, 75.
- 96 Turshen and Twagiramariya, ed., 13.
- 97 HRW 2002 Report, 65.
- 98 HRW 2002 Report, 31.
- 99 HRW 2002 Report, 53.
- 100 Women’s Bodies, 43.
- 101 Ibid.
- 102 HRW 2002 Report, 69 and 28.
- 103 Penn and Nardos, 57.
- 104 Women’s Bodies, 42.
- 105 From an interview in Uvira on 31 October 2001, HRW 2002 Report, 64.
- 106 Women’s Bodies, 42. And FMR 2007 Report, 45.
- 107 HRW 2002 Report, 65.
- 108 Women’s Bodies, 43.
- 109 HRW 2002 Report, 65.
- 110 Women’s Bodies, 43.
- 111 FMR 2007 Report, 27.
- 112 FMR 2007 Report, 33.
- 113 FMR 2007 Report, 9.
- 114 For example, the current International Rescue Committee grant to rebuild health infrastructure should be careful to plan clinics and services in a way that the women will feel comfortable accessing them, with no threat of harassment or arrest.