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A War Within Wars: The Impact on Women of the Violent Struggle For Natural Resources in the Congo

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Abstract

Wars in the Congo for the last two decades have been a struggle characterized by a global competition between industrialized nations and the world's emerging economies for easy access to the most strategic mineral use to advance innovation in modern technology. The demand for raw materials has displaced many people in DRC and led to territorial dispute, armed resistance, and a breakdown of law. Multinational companies have contributed, directly and indirectly to the crisis. To access very strategic minerals, several horrendous methods were used such as tortures, killings, population displacement and sexual violence or/ gender based violence. The use of rape as a strategy and a weapon of modern conflict were described by Baaz and Stern who quoted Eve Ensler as 'femicide', a 'systematic pattern of destruction toward the female species' (Baaz and Stern 2013, p.6).

This paper will attempt to address the basic questions, which are at the core of Congo's crisis:

- How is the struggle over natural resources fuelling the violence in the Congo?
- How does this violence translate into sexual violence directed at women and girls and;
- Finally, what is and can be done to resolve these two related issues?

About the Authors

Kyendamina Cleoplace Mukeba (Cleoplace) is an environmental lawyer based in Vermont USA. He fled the first Congo war in 1996 and travelled through Tanzania, Malawi, and Mozambique and eventually made his way to a Zambian refugee camp and onto the capital city Lusaka where he was reunited with my wife after six years apart. Three years later, in August 2005, he arrived in Vermont, USA through the refugee resettlement program. In 2007, he enrolled in a degree program, earning a BA *Cum Laude* in Political Science with minors in Global Studies and Environmental Studies, from Saint Michael's College Vermont in 2012. He graduated with a Master's in Environmental Law and Policy from Vermont Law School in 2015. He co-founded the organization Saint Michael's College for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (SMC for DRC) and the Vermont Ibutwa Initiative (VIBI) with a dual mission to raise awareness among the American public of the political and social issues in eastern Congo; and most importantly to help rebuild the lives of women and girls who are survivors of sexual and / or gender-based violence in DRC.

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At CSR, our focus is on the social, economic and political challenges that occur when change is brought about by resource extraction and development. We work with companies, communities and governments in mining regions all over the world to improve social performance and deliver better outcomes for companies and communities.

INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has great potential in natural resources that has turned out to be more of a curse than an opportunity to its people. The greed and global competition for the strategic minerals needed for modern technology found particularly in the DRC have been at the center of many wars and conflicts before and after the independence of Congo in 1960. The race in accessing raw materials by multinational companies has created serious environment damages and human tragedy. Accessing land with mineral deposits has never been a source of concern to rebel groups or corporations that want to control access. The simple method used in accessing land was killing of villagers, raping women as young as 6 months and old 85 years, and torture. Thus, land exploitation for natural resources was linked to women and girls' exploitation.

This paper will highlight the beginning of the collapse of the Congo as a state but the emphasis will be on the current crisis that began in the last two decades. The paper will explain the correlation between conflict mineral and Sexual Gender Violence in DRC. It will also address the question of the state and non-state actors' contribution to- establishing stability. What approaches and strategies were used and why they were ineffective to alleviate people's suffering? What could be a stable solution to long due problems of women and girls' health in Congo?

I will finish up by making some recommendations to contribute to a strong Congo that will be a potential next world emerging economy.

PART I: CONTEXT OF THE CONFLICT

Congo's Experience at the Hands of Western Colonizers and Neocolonial Powers

The struggle for peace and stability in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a persistent fight against foreign domination, which historically could be traced, back to the confrontation between African traditional organized society and European intruders in Central Africa. The idea of the Congo and other African countries to be part of the world capitalist system in twentieth century was a result of earlier established relationship between African and European continent more than four to five hundred years, fifteenth century (Ntalaja 2002, p13-14). However, the real fate of Congo's destiny started during the scramble of Africa around 1885 after the Berlin conference. The agenda of the conference focuses more on freedom of navigation and commerce in Congo basin. The real partition or scramble for Africa took place behind closed door after the conference when European powers appropriated themselves African territories through conquest means (Ntalaja 2002, p.18). Thus the Congo became a personal property of Belgian monarch, Leopold II. The significance of the partition period would matters less than the role played by the United States' support leaving a huge territory like Congo to one man. The world power was under the leadership of Bismarck and he was "convinced that it was better for the Congo to go to the King of weak little Belgium, and be open to German traders, than go to protection-minded France or Portugal or to powerful England. In return for a guarantees of freedom of trade in the Congo, he agreed to recognize the new state (Hochschild 1998, p.84)." Thus, the name Congo Free State was born. That decision would be a critical juncture between what happened and what Congo has become today.

After acquiring a huge territory of about 2,354, 409 square kilometers, 81 times the size of his Kingdom Belgium, King Leopold decided to initiate some economic enterprises characterized by hard labor, torture, oppression and killing. The Belgian monarch controlled the Congo from 1885 to 1908; from 1908 up to 1960 the Congo was a Belgian colony and the country was still run on the same Leopoldian model of economic oppression. In 1960 Congo Leopoldville as it was called snatched independence from Belgium, and in 1961 the first democratically elected Congolese premier Minister was murder by Mobutu

with the blessing of the CIA apparatus. During the period that ran from 1961-65 Congo was under a United Nations Peace Keeping mission rule together with CIA. In 1971 Congo Leopoldville under a new leadership of President Mobutu changed the name to Zaire up to 1997. The first war of 1996 was called “the war of liberation” that ousted President Mobutu; this war was engineered and funded by Rwanda and Uganda with Laurent Desire Kabila as a commander of the so-called “ revolution” under the Alliance des Forces Democratiques de Liberation (AFDL) or Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) banner. In May 17, 1997 Laurent Desire Kabila proclaimed himself as President of Zaire. He decided to use the country’s older name- Congo Leopoldville but took Leopoldville. To avoid any confusion with Congo Brazzaville, President Kabila renamed the Congo- Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The name change was a strategy to show a new vision of the country, which meant to break away from the past that was characterized by lack of development; sadly, any attempt of name change only worsened the political, economical and social situation in the country. Under Belgian Monarch Leopold II, ten million people lost their lives under a system of economic exploitation due to slave labor, torture and killings. In President Mobutu’s regime the country had a reputation of the most corrupt country in the world. It has a dysfunctional public sector, poor infrastructure, high mortality rate of children under the age of five and a serious drop of life expectancy both for women as well as for men. Finally under the so-called new era of liberation, Laurent Desire Kabila left a legacy of incompetent government cadres and the country has been plunged in what has been known as the worst humanitarian crisis after the WWII. Now under President Joseph Kabila, the government struggles to stabilize the country, but the reign and system of terror has characterized his presidency. Terror has been President Joseph Kabila’s policy tool to deal with all who oppose him or his government.

Strategic Resources as an Economic Foundation of Wars in Congo

Denying Congo's potential is to fight against the future of humanity. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is found in the heart of Africa and covers an area of 2,345,409 square kilometers. It is landlocked, except for a coastline of 40 km containing the mouth and lower reaches of the Congo River, which connects the country to the Atlantic Ocean. It is the second largest country in Africa after Algeria. Congo shares borders with nine countries, Angola, Congo Brazzaville, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Zambia. Economically, the DRC has enormous wealth in natural resources with ecological diversity that is also rich in non-mineral goods including forest and water resources. An estimated 77 per cent of the total land area of 2,2267,600 square kilometers is covered by forest and woodland including the tropical rainforest in the equatorial zone; the Mayombe timber; and the productive woodlands and grasslands of the savannah zones north and south of the equator. The Congo has a wide array of minerals, including copper, cobalt, tin, zinc, gold, diamond, iron ore, silver, cadmium, uranium, europium, niobium (or columbite), tantalum and thorium. These are strategic minerals with great value such as uranium, used in nuclear weapons, and rare metals such as niobium and tantalum are used for space aeronautics in the twenty first century. Experts estimate that, Africa has 15 per cent of the world niobium reserves and 80 per cent of its tantalum deposits. Of these African reserves, the Congo alone has 60 per cent of the niobium and 80 per cent of the tantalum. These metals, together with other highly valued resources such as methane gas from Lake Kivu, are concentrated in the northeastern region of the country, which also possesses large quantities of gold, diamond, coffee, tea and timber. Congo is not a major oil producer but it exploits crude oil offshore in its territorial waters along the 40-km strip of the Atlantic Ocean (Ntalaja 2002, p27-28).

Congolese researchers have questioned and denounced the United States, its allies, and their mercenaries' involvement in the crisis in eastern Congo for a very long time. Professor Filip Reyntjens of L'Universite d' Anvers, who was key note speaker during the Great Lake regional meeting on the crisis in Congo in Kinshasa from August to December 2000, has made a sensational revelation, stating that the current war going on in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is an American plan to cease the eastern part of the Congo from central authority where there is rich strategic mineral wealth. The plan was to weaken the Congo so that multinational companies could smoothly do their job (Kankwenda & Mukoka 2013, p91- 92).

Coltan: What is so Special with About this Particular Mineral? Coltan is a combination of two minerals, Colombo –tantalite and it's also called 3Ts (Tin, Tantalum and Tungsten). These two rare minerals are known as ores, but columbium is also known as niobium. It is estimated that 80% of the world known tantalum reserve is in Africa, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and it is located in eastern part of the country (Ntalaja 2002, p.28). The focus on this particular mineral is due to the fact that both tantalum and niobium have extremely high melting points, over five thousand degrees Fahrenheit. Coltan is virtually impossible to corrode, has superconductivity, and can handle a huge electrical charge. And it is easily mixed with other metals such as tungsten, molybdenum, and titanium. About 60 percent of the world's tantalum goes into electrical capacitors used by the electronics industry. These capacitors regulate the flow of electricity within integrated circuit and are found in mobile phones, video cameras, and laptop computers. Because it doesn't corrode, tantalum is used for chemical processing equipment but also for nuclear reactors, aircraft engines, and missile parts. It is impervious to body fluids, so it is used in medical and surgical applications such as metallic implants. It goes into special glass with high refractive qualities, making it ideal for camera lenses and very thin lenses on personal eyeglasses. When combined with carbon and graphite, it becomes one of the hardest material known and is used for the cutting edges of high-speed tools (Eichstaedt 2011, p.140).

The Beneficiaries of the Bloody Congo Wars

It isn't an exaggeration to state that there is no country on this planet that did not benefit either directly or indirectly from sufferings, killings and murder of Congolese people by purchasing an electronic device embedded with conflict minerals from the Congo. UN Group of experts' reports have indicated that Rwanda and Uganda have not only occupied the Congo but they have also destabilized and spent millions of dollars on troops and fights. (Reid 2006, p.77). The story took its root way back in the 1990s when Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) commencing operation officer and the current President of Rwanda Paul Kagame (Kagame) launched a first attack ever on Rwanda. Kagame was an officer in National Resistance Army (NRA) of Ugandan President Yoweri Kabuta Museveni. Kagame's ultimate mission and goal was to liberate his minority group who has been in exile for three decades. The history of violence goes back to when the NRA overthrew Ugandan President Milton Obote in 1986, and more violence broke out in the region. The Rwandan invasion in Congo-Zaire-1996-1997, again in 1998-2004 and since 2008 have left unimaginable human casualties and environmental destruction (Mbeko 2011, p.69).

In middle of Congo's first war, multinational companies rushed to make deals with the most likely winner of the war of coalition led by ADFL. Countries like Angola, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi made the coalition and were allies then under Laurent Kabila's muscular hand. Humanitarian workers on the ground demanded to stop of hostilities, but nobody cared. What mattered were business transactions from multinational companies around mineral deposit sites who made an estimated total of 20,000 billion of \$ U.S. (Mbeko 2011, p.231). See Appendix A at the end of this paper for specific information about collaboration between multinational corporations and armed groups. U.S.-based corporations have also been major economic beneficiaries of easy access to Congolese minerals and resources, and the U.S. has played a major role there. Moreover, the beginning of yet another chaos in the Great Lake region of Africa started during Clinton's administration when he signed Africa New Opportunities Act in 1995. With the collapse of Soviet Union, marking the end of a bipolar world since the WWII leaving the US as the sole world power, has favored a fast growing of U.S. multinational companies. The Act granted unchallenged opportunities to American corporations to apply a new strategy for the conquest of African mineral

reserves and particularly those found in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. More Americans, Canadians, Europeans, and South Africans invested their resources in that vast program (Mbeko 2013, p.227). The 2008 global financial crisis created a desire from the world powers to compete on strategic resources which they don't necessarily possess. But accessing those resources wasn't a difficult question. In the old order, conquest was estimated to be a way to access to land and resources; but the modern view created an alternative strategy of using multinational companies, which can go without being noticed. This new strategy is another form of 'colonization' that aimed at annihilating political, economical and human fabric of African continent. To achieve to that ultimate goal local groups were ready to work with corrupt leaders in a new era of relation between Africa and Western Countries. Congo was target because it holds more than half of the world cobalt, 10% of copper, 30% of diamond, and more than 70% of Coltan reserves (3/4 world reserves), it's a vital metal in cutting edge technology (Mbeko 2011, p.228).

The table below describes companies involved, transit countries and type of mineral that have been merchandised.

This is a sample of companies, which get minerals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo through Rwanda

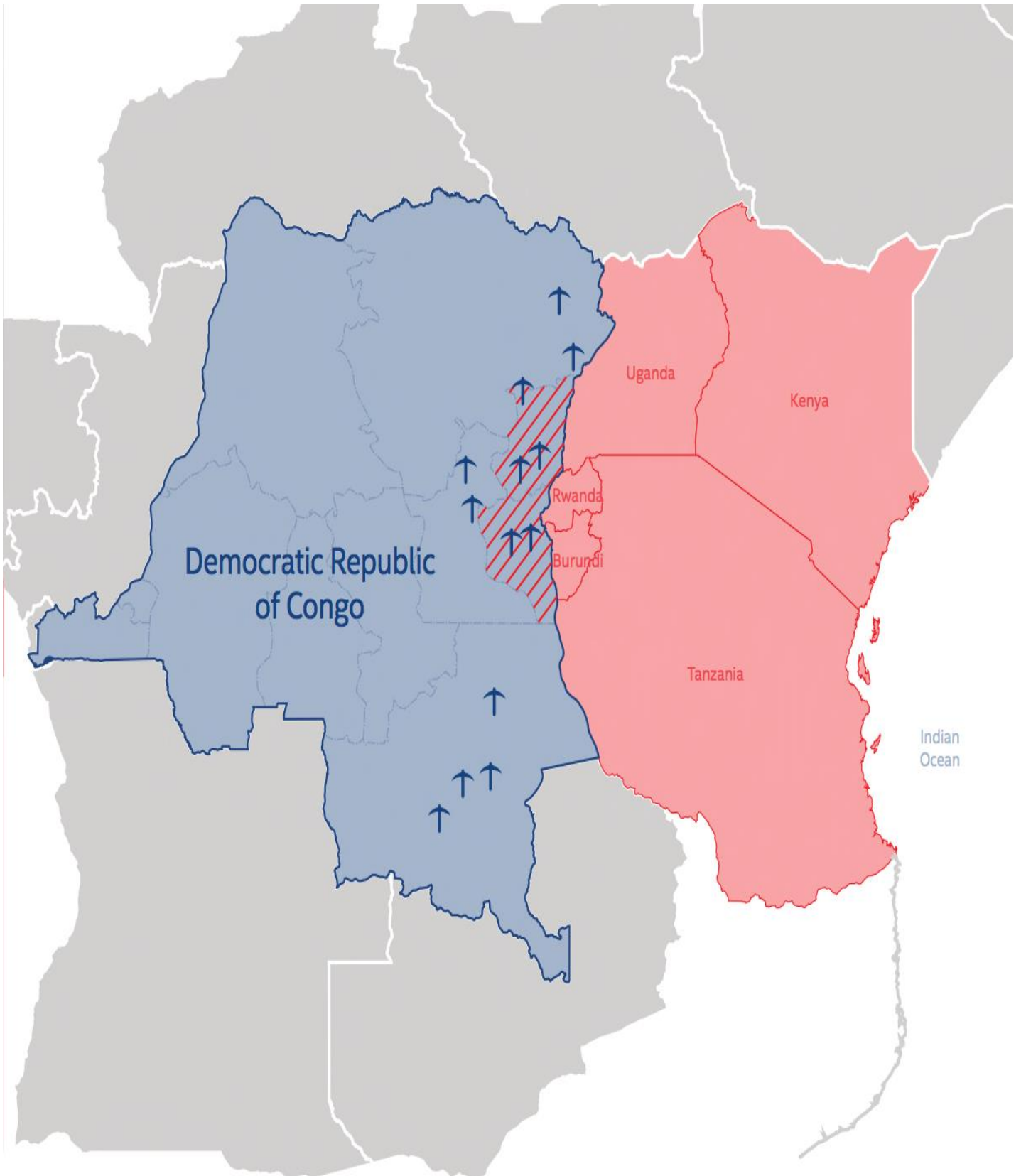
Company	Country of destination	Merchandise
Cogen	Belgique	Cassiterites
Muka-Entripse	Belgique	Cassiterites
Issa	Allemagne	Cassiterites
Chipstopa Floss	Allemagne	Cassiterites
Redemi	Rwanda	Cassiterites
Banro-Ressources Corp.	Malaisie Canada	Cassiterites/Coltan Cassiterites
Bharat Extano-Office	Republique Unie de Tanzanie	Cassiterites Coltan
Coopimar	Rwanda	Coltan
Geologistics Hanover	Rwanda	Coltan
Rwasibo-Butera	Allemagne	Coltan
Eagleswings	Swisse	Coltan
Veen	Pays-bas	Coltan
Soger	Pays-bas	Coltan
Patel Warehouse	Belgique	Coltan
Afrimex	Pays-bas Royaume-Uni	Coltan Cassiterites
Chimie Pharmacie	Pays-bas Pays-bas	Coltan Coltan
Sogem	Belgique Belgique Belgique Belgique	Coltan Cassiterites Coltan
Cogecom	Belgique Belgique	Coltan Cassiterites
Cogea	Belgique	Coltan
Panalpina	Kenya	Coltan
Tradement	Belgique Belgique	Coltan Cassiterites
Ventro Star	Royaume-Uni	Coltan
Raremet	Inde	Coltan
Finconord	Pakistan	Coltan
Finiming Ltd	Belgique	Coltan
Finconcorde	Federation de Russie	Cassiterites/Coltan
Patel	Inde	Cassiterites
Cicle International	Belgique	Coltan
Masingiro	Allemagne	Coltan
Union-Transport	Allemagne	Coltan
Specialty Metal	Belgique	Coltan
MDW	Belgique	Cassiterites/Coltan
Transintra	Belgique	Cassiterites

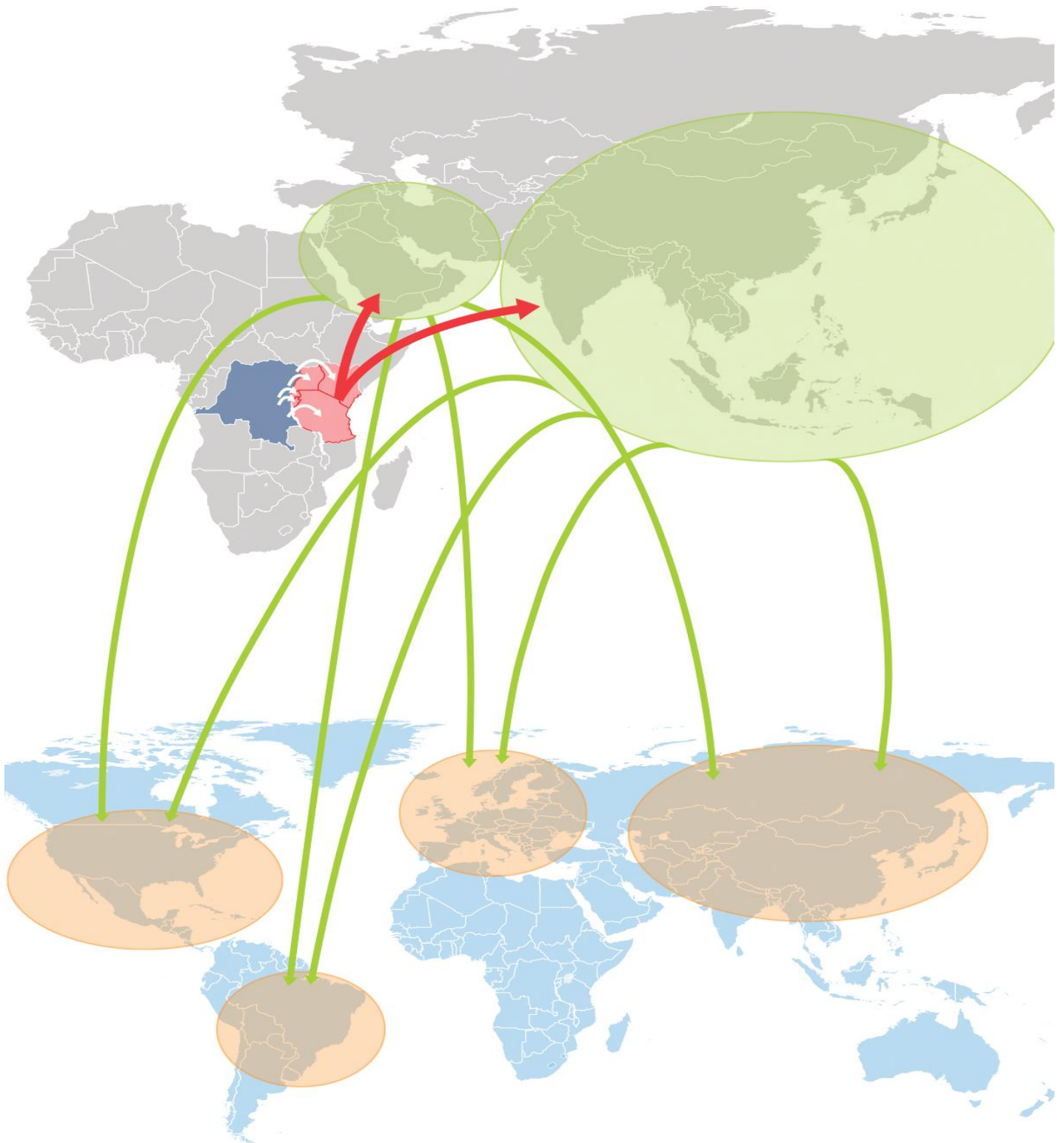
Source: Administration douniere du Rwanda, cite par ONU, Rapport du Groupe des experts sur l'exploitation illegal des ressources naturelles de la RDC. P.86.

From a Village in Eastern Congo to your Hand, Consumer Power in Fueling the Conflict

To understand why conflict in eastern Congo continues to boil with devastating consequences for civilian populations, we must follow the money trail. Greed ensures that these conflicts remain violent and unsettled. The mines themselves are an ongoing human calamity: men and boys work endless hours in mine shafts that go sometimes thirty feet or more into the ground. Many of these laborers are forced by the armed groups to work in these mines and to pass pans of dirt from hand to hand out of the scorched earth. Then the soil is panned for trace elements that are eventually melted into tiny pieces and collected for sale. A worker normally makes \$1 to \$5 a day for his labor, which is not enough to feed, cloth, and house himself or a family (Prendergast & Cheadle 2010, p. 184-185).

The following images illustrate the location of the mines and the global supply chain into which they feed.





Enough Project and Intel.Icons by Ben Rex Furneaux, Gerardo Martin Martinez, Andrew J. Young, Berkay Sargun from The Noun Project. Maps from Vector Free Maps.com

Conflict Minerals Supply Chain

Reports from UN group of experts on Congo and independent individual investigators underline the facts that there is no rebel group operating in isolation. The militias control access to the mines and tax the miners who are most of the time local villagers to access mining pit. The minerals that come from the mines controlled by miners and militias sell there to the *negociants*. In their turn the negociants sell the minerals to buyers and exporters known as *comptoirs* in either Bukavu or Goma respectively, both Capital city of South Kivu and North Kivu. Reports also indicate there is a direct link between most comptoirs and negociants. In other words comptoirs consider negociants as their employee because they some time provide them with money to buy the minerals ores. There is responsibility at every level of supply chain, the comptoir also sell their minerals to mineral traders, so often identified as freelance buyers for the global mining companies who are the owners of those refineries or smelters mostly found in Maylasia, Singpoor or Thailand. The smelters convert and refine the raw ore into useable metal. At this point, it's difficult to trace the origin of ores. Finally, these mineral ingots are sold to a multinational companies, Nokia, Dell, Intel, Hp, Apple Sumsung etc , around the world who make parts and several components for many products (Eichstaedt 2011, p.105-106).

The Dodd-Frank Bill and Section 1502

The Dodd & Frank Bill on section 1502 is the law that called for publicly listed American companies to disclose if any of their products includes minerals from conflict zone areas in eastern Congo. However, the Dodd-Frank Bill did not prohibit or ban companies, which use conflict minerals. The drive behind scaring a legal framework was address on the fact that militias also use rape as a way of driving people away from areas they want to control. Section 1502 of Dodd-Frank amended the '34 Act to include section 13(p), "Disclosures Relating to Conflict Minerals Originating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo". The Security Exchange Commission (SEC) disclosure intended to protect consumers by providing a basis for informed decision. Therefore, Dodd-Frank will regulate capital market disclosure in an attempt to affect social and public policy. Thus section 1502 of the bill gave the SEC 270 days to create a rule for

conflict mineral supply chain disclosure. The proposed rule issued by SEC included three important parts to the process for conflict mineral. The term “conflict minerals” is ascribed to these minerals because militant groups mine, tax, and sell them on the black market in order to fund the enslavement of the local population. The conflict minerals are specific and include tin, tungsten, and tantalum (the three ‘T’s) that are essential to production in many electronic devices used every day in the U.S. But for the purpose of Section 13(p), conflict mineral will include

“cassiterite, colunite-tantalite, gold, wolframite, or their derivatives or any other minerals or their derivatives”. This list should be determined by the Secretary of the State to be financing conflict in the DRC (Smith 2013, p.423).

The first thing in the process of application is for a company to determine if the new rule applies to them. Applicability may be determined by whether a company is a “registrant that files reports with the Commission under [Exchange Act Sections 13(a) or 15(d)]” and for which “conflict minerals...are necessary to the functionality or production of a product manufactured or contracted to . . . be manufactured” by such issuer. The second part of the proposed process required any such company to perform a “reasonable country of origin [for conflict minerals] inquiry.” If, through the inquiry, an issuer determined that no conflict minerals used came from the DRC, the company would disclose that information and the process by which it was determined in their annual filing of Form 10-K and on the company’s website. If a company determined that conflict minerals used were, in fact, from the DRC, or if the company was unable to determine their origin, it would have included this information in its annual Form 10-K and on its website. The third part of the proposed process required those companies using conflict minerals from the DRC or undeterminable origin to complete a Conflict Minerals Report (“CMR”). The CMR would include the due diligence measures taken to discover “the source and chain of custody of its conflict minerals” for each product manufactured or contracted for manufacture for which it could not determine. The proposed rule required an independent, private sector auditor to certify the CMR. In the CMR, an issuer would include due diligence measures to ensure that any scrap or recycled conflict

minerals were truly from scrap or recycled sources. Issuers would attach the CMR as an exhibit to the annual form 10-K and make it available on their website. Finally, the proposed rule also required issuers to maintain business records that are related to their reasonable country of origin inquiry (Smith 2013, p 424-425).

These companies were given time to comply with the new rules but before the legislation was enacted some leading companies commented on the rule. For example, Intel through its spoke person Chuck Mulloy stated that, “complying with the new regulations eats into profits (he won’t estimate how much), but “we don’t want to support people who are raping, pillaging, and killing”. Today Intel’s microprocessor in 2012 were conflict free for tantalum according to their statement (Gettleman 2013, p.56). Different views are expressed when it come to support the bill. Some companies believe that pulling out the region altogether would eradicate a lot of “conflict minerals” in products, but the group, which is trying to work toward a positive solution like the Conflict Free Supply Initiative (CFSI) stressed that taking that road would damage the economy in central Africa. They believe that might ignite more volatility and violence. Business groups put pressure on the SEC to extend the deadline but the court denied the appeal in June 1st, 2014. However, the SEC did back down on plans to force companies to disclose publicly whether a product was conflict-free (BBC News Network June 2014). The big beneficiaries of those decisions are U.S companies that continue increasing their productivities. The most recent research shows that gold; tantalum, tin, and tungsten are components in most of the electronic devices that are multiplying in U.S. homes (Gettleman 2013, p.56). As Prendergast put it “Then there are consumers like us-completely unaware that our purchase of cell phones, computers, and other products are helping fuel a shockingly deadly war halfway around the world, not comprehending that our standard of living is in some ways based on the suffering of others (Prendergast & Cheadle 2010, p. 186).”

PART II: A WAR WITHIN WARS

Rape as a Weapon of War

In recent decades the use of rape as a weapon of war has increased in scale, organization, and brutality around the world, according to the UN Development Fund for Women, leading a former UN force commander to declare, "It has probably become more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in armed conflict (Prendergast and Cheadle 2010, p. 181)." Systematic rape was used to carry out ethnic cleansing and genocidal campaigns in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, and Darfur, prompting renewed attention to the use of rape as a weapon of war. Sexual violence in the former Yugoslavia set the stage for how modern rape is deliberately utilized as a weapon, often with the most heinous tactics. As the region descended into war, a group of senior Serbian officers adopted a military strategy proposed by psychological experts that concluded that Muslim communities "can be undermined only if we aim our action at the point where religious and social structure is most fragile. We refer to the women, especially adolescents, and to the children (Prendergast and Cheadle 2010, p. 181)." The judgment continued that raping women and girls would evoke panic among the Muslim populations, forcing them to flee, thus creating ethnically cleansed regions. A Revolutionary United Front (RUF) was on the brink of losing a conventional civil war against the government. In 1993, the RUF transformed into a guerrilla insurgency using rape as a means of removing populations from the diamond mines that would come to finance the brutal war (Prendergast & Cheadle 2010, p.181)

A war within wars means that women have become a target and made the majority of casualties in that conflict. In many armed conflicts women have been the primary target of sexual violence in multiple parts involved. The motivation behind it is to demoralize the entire community. Sexual Gender-based violence as a global phenomenon inflicts more casualties in the developing world than any war. A study done by the World Health Organization found that 30 to 60 percent of women have had experience of physical or sexual violence by a friend or a husband. The former director-general of WHO, Lee-wook concluded that "violence against women by an intimate partner is a major contributor to the ill health of women," the

general observation is that women don't so often report it and that render tabulating more complicated to get an accurate figure. The study has estimated that 21 percent of Ghanaian women reported in a survey that their sexual initiation was by rape; 17 percent of Nigerian women have been raped or endured raped at the age of nineteen, and 21 percent of South African women reported that they have been raped when they were thirteen years old (Kristof 2009, p.61-62).

Land Exploitation Leads to Women Exploitation

The sexual violence being perpetrated in the DRC is taking place in the context of a protracted and brutal civil conflict that dates back to 1998. The conflict is often referred to as 'Africa's World War' due to the fact that the DRC is inextricably embedded in the larger context of other local conflicts; the proximity of the Rwandan genocide, the Sudanese civil war, the Ugandan civil war, and the Angolan civil war. The combined strategic alliances formed between government forces of these countries and internal militia groups has led to the emergence of a war zone with the DRC falling in the middle (Meger 2010, p.124).

Greed and power are underlining factors in Congo's conflict. In order to get access to a mining place, the rebel group rape and kill innocent civilians. The brutality that follows the act of rape is that rapists may shoot or insert a wood stick inside a woman's body. It is not a new strategy but different from what is usually known used by rebels. What happened in DRC according to Sara Meger is about 'masculinity', which "relies on a gender binary". Masculinity characteristics are "socially constructed, thus masculinity must be understood as not a natural trait, but something that must be achieved before one's peers (Meger 2010 p.121)".

The high demand of Coltan has increased at a global market creating what has been termed as "Coltan rush". The phenomenon has led many farmers with their families to abandon their land against their own wishes. Those farmers who lived under rich lands with Coltan deposits on have been forced to flee for their safety (Molango 2008-2009). In order to keep control of the area soldiers as well as combatant

have used raped as a tool to humiliate and subdue women and girls. It is not about survival sex where women and girls have to use their bodies in order to support their families or themselves after their husbands have divorced them, but it's more about destruction.

The fact that rape is often used as a strategy of war in the Congo means that its something which have been planned, organized and executed for ultimate goal as Prendergast quoted Congolese activist Solange “when they rape the women, they send a message to the men and the community that they have the power and the control. It is designed to humiliate and to spread HIV/AIDS. And if they capture an area that was under the control of a competing group, they rape and say they are punishing the women because they were spies (Prendergast & Cheadle 2010, p. 83).”

Sexual terrorism: Rape With Extreme Violence

In 2005, the United Nations (UN) Secretary General Kofi Annan was quoted in *The European Journal of Contraception and Reproductive Health Care* saying that: “violence against women remains pervasive worldwide. It is the most atrocious manifestation of the systematic discrimination and inequality women continue to face, in law and in their everyday lives (Filippi 2010, p.221).

The *American Journal of Public Health* has estimated that violence against women is a substantial public health problem globally. In the U.S an estimated of 2,1 million women are raped or physically assaulted per year and more than 10,000 rape victims and 79,000 assault victims require hospitalization (Koenig et al. 2006). These statistics are relevant here because they prove that even in a developed country like the U.S with strong policy and law against Sexual Gender- Based Violence, the problem still unresolved. Imagine a failed state like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) apparently with little or no existence policy to protect women against sexual gender-based violence, the situation is even worse. Substantive studies were done by other journals in 2011 on sexual –gender based violence in eastern DRC have found that approximately 20500 women and girls were raped in the 2-year period from January

2005 to December 2007. In South-Kivu alone, among 492 women and girls who had experienced sexual violence, nearly 80% of cases were gang rapes, and 12, 4% involved the insertion of objects into the genitalia. Additionally, this study estimated that 96% of raped victims were female and 30% were female minors. The Demographic Health Survey indicates that 9, 9% of women aged 15 to 49 years were raped in 12 months (Peterman et al. 2011).

The quote that says *It has probably become more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in armed conflict* is not simply a mere statement rather a living night mere experience for many Congolese women for years. These stories of brutal attacked against women in eastern Congo, though presenting similar characteristics and marks, have each happened miles away from the other. They come from different provinces and villages. As Prendergast quoted Congo analyst Jason Stearns saying that “there is no way of knowing how many women in Congo have been raped. Societal taboos dissuade women from discussing their experiences and often lead to the rejection of rape survivors by their own husbands, family members, and villages. But by any account, we’re talking about numbers in the hundreds of thousands of rape survivors, many of whom lack the basic support network that would enable them to treat the wounds they sustained during the rape, cope with resulting pregnancies, and overcome the accompanying emotional trauma (Prendergast & Cheadle 2010, p.183).”

In Mwenga District, South Kivu Region of the DRC 15 Women Buried Alive

This account is happening in my own village, the district of Mwenga where coltan, cassiterites, gold, tembers and other form of wealth surround the district. In daylight, Rwandan, with Burundians and Ugandan forces have hostage the district of Mwanga in South Kivu in the subdivisions of Bulinzi, of Bogombe, and of Ngando against poor villages without any protection from their own army – the Congolese army between the 15th and 22nd of November, 1999. The viciousness of these forces was demonstrated when women refused to become sex slaves and to be raped. Women from the three subdivisions were all subjected to the same type of torture and death. The natural instinct was to resist

the soldiers to touch their bodies “ and they first beaten, the African hot pepper was rubbed all over their bodies’ wounds and inserted through every orifice of their bodies: eyes, mouths, noses, ears, anus, and vaginas, in order to make these women suffer. Then, the women were buried alive (Ngemi 2000, p25.”) These attacks showed how cruel soldiers and their commanding officers, who ordered the rapes, can be.

The 2001 UN Report on Terror and Rape in Eastern Congo

The woman narrating this horrific story is a survivor of not only rape, but also of witnessing her daughter’s murder. This account happened in South Kivu more than 100 miles away from the first story.

On May 15 of the year 2001, four heavily Hutu armed combatant broke into a house and found a woman whose baby was crying. They proceeded to another room where this woman’s daughter was and she said, “ I knew they will rape her”. But she resisted and said she would rather die than have relations with them. They cut off her left breast and put it in her hand. They said, “Are you still resisting us?” She said she would rather die than be with them. They cut off her genital labia and showed them to her. She said, “Please kill me.” They took a knife and put it to her neck and then made a long vertical incision down her chest and split her body open. She was crying but finally she died. She died with her breast in her hand.

These stories are not known; I tell them here to illustrate the loss of humanity the world is ignoring in the Congo. (Human Rights Watch 2001, p.55).

From A Thousand Sister A Journey Into the Worst Place on Earth to be a Woman- Lisa Shannon

Interviews a woman named Generose.

Generose’s story happened many miles away from the first and second story. It deserves to be read in its entirety.

Generose is in the hospital with a life-threatening bone infection- her leg is rotting where the Interahamwe cut it off. We find a quiet corner in the back of the building and I ask her about that day.

“I was in my house preparing food for my husband when they came,” she says. “They made me prepare food for them, then asked me to wake my husband, who was asleep. They demanded money. I had one hundred and thirty dollars, and I gave it to them, but they didn’t care. They said, ‘The money was the nurse’s participation. The husband is head of the school. He has to make his contribution.’

“My husband said, ‘I have nothing.’

“They started to beat him, so I cried for help. The Interahamwe shot him immediately, killing him.

“I continued to cry to alert other people. They said, ‘Shut your mouth.

Put your leg on the chair.’

“They took a machete and cut off my leg. We had six children at home; one was my sister’s child. The Interahamwe cut the leg into six parts and burnt them in the fire. They gave each child a piece of my leg and commanded it to eat.

“One of the children said, ‘I can’t eat a part of my mother. You already killed my father, so you will have to kill me.’

“They killed my child. They tried to burn the house. The children got us out. They took me to the garden outside. Because of the burning of the house, because of the despair, because of the loss of blood, I was like a dead person. The next day, I found myself at the hospital in Walungu without knowing how I got there. The UN and the head of the neighborhood had taken me.”

“When was the next time you saw your children?” I ask her.

“Two months and a week,” Genorose answers. “It was painful when they saw me with only one leg. They ran away, saying they would wait until the leg grows back before they would talk to me. I could only cry.

“I approach them, and told them, ‘You need to thank God. I am alive. I only lost my leg. Not like Mama Annie.’”

“Who’s Mama Annie?” I ask.

“The Interahamwe began the attack that night with our neighbor Mama Annie. They killed her husband. She was pregnant. They cut off her eyes, nose and mouth. They cut out her pregnancy. I met her in the hospital. She died after four days.”

Generose stops for a moment. “Neighbors came to visit us and they told us about the wedding....”

The wedding. So here it is, and I sense it before she even begins the story. By my count, the worst wedding day ever.

“After us, they went to another neighbor’s. They took the bride to the forest, where they raped and killed her. They burned her compound where the wedding feast was supposed to take place. Forty-six guests were inside. They burned them alive.

“I would not stay one day in my village. There was no husband there, no house.

“I can’t go back, I can’t see the souvenirs. I asked for help from a neighbor who had a car. He drove us the forty-five kilometers here and dropped us with a relative, a cousin I knew well. We grew up in the same house. We arrived, she prepared cassava. Her husband said, ‘I’m sorry, there is no place. I don’t have enough money to accept another in my charge.’(Shannon 2011, p.149-151).

Story from the town of Kindu by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn

This is a story happened in a different province, the province of Maniema (in old Kivu province). It is another account of Hutu militias who fled from Rwanda and hid in a more remote part of the Congo. Their only mission is to terrorize, rape and kill the population.

One of Congolese victim is Dina, a seventeen-year old from the town of Kindu.... She is one of six children who grew up working on her parents’ farm growing bananas, cassava, and beans. Two of her brothers attended school for a bit, but none of the daughters did, “It’s more important to educate boys,” she explained, and she seemed to believe it. All the local residents knew that there were soldiers from the Hutu Interahamwe militia in the area, so Dina was fearful whenever she went out to farm the crops. But the alternative was to starve. One day, because of the danger, Dina cut short her work in her bean field and headed back to town well before sunset. As she walking home, five Hutu militia members surrounded her. They had guns and knives and forced her to the ground. One of them was carrying a

stick. “If you cry out, we will kill you,” one of them told Dina. So she kept quiet as, one by one, the five men raped her. Then they held her down as one of them shoved a stick inside her.

When Dina didn’t come home, her father and friends bravely went out to the fields, and there they found her, half dead in the grass. They covered her and carried her back to her home. There was a health center in Kindu, but Dina’s family couldn’t afford to take her there to be treated, so she was cared for only at home. She lay paralyzed in her bed, unable to walk. The stick had broken into her bladder and rectum, causing a fistula, or hole, in the tissues. As a result, urine and feces trickled constantly through her vagina and down her legs. These injuries, rectovaginal and vesicovaginal fistulas, are common in Congo because of sexual violence. Dina said, “ My people had no tribal conflict with them... their only purpose was to rape me and leave me bleeding and leaking wastes” (Kristof and WuDunn 2009, p. 84-85)”

Vermont Ibutwa Initiative’s Client Mado: Raped at the Age of Two

The Vermont Ibutwa Initiative took Mado Christophe in its program when she was still two years old after being raped by an unknown person. At the time of the incident, her grandmother was caring for Mado; her mother was out of the village for a day having taken Mado’s brother to see a doctor for needed medical care. After being with her grandmother for a while, Mado was hungry and began to cry; her grandmother felt obliged to go to the field to look for something for Mado to eat. Mado was left at the house in the care of some older children. An old man came by and started talking to Mado who was playing with the others; he gave Mado some candy and then left with her. When the mother returned, she immediately noticed the girl’s absence. She asked Mado’s friends where she has gone; they said that an old man who they didn’t know had left with her. A search was begun, and after four hours Mado was found in the grass, bleeding from the vagina; she was unconscious. She was taken to the hospital for medical care.

Vermont Ibutwa Initiative has helped Mado to heal. She is now four years old and she enrolled in pre-school.

Rebuilding Women and Girls' Lives in South Kivu Region of the DRC

How can one rebuild someone's life at a place that has a reputation of "The World capital of rape", where rape is used to terrorize civilian population with sticks, knives or bayonets, or simply fire their guns into a woman's vaginas (Kristof 2009, p.84)? How do you bring healing to a population that feel that they are no longer living? What kind of law could help this out? Would the International Violence Against Women Act introduced in 2007 by the then senator Joseph Biden and Richard Lugar, change anything on the ground? Do militias from any part of the world and more especially Congolese rebels care about any law, either binding or not? The fact is that for more than 100 rebel groups operating in Congo "men are the normal victims of war, women have become a weapon of war (Kristof 2009, p. 87)."

The plan for a systematic change in women and girls' lives in eastern Congo, shouldn't rest on rape alone as the beginning and the end of the all story. The media, news articles, magazines and television have failed to truthfully report and informed the public about other forms of violence such as "mass killings, systematic torture, forced recruitment, forced labor and property violation, are rampant in cases surrounding rape. Inability for men to have a romantic relationship with their wives is a serious question that needs to be addressed (Baaz and Stern 2013, p.6). The word rape attracted more funding than presenting other forms of violence. Researchers who met and listen first hand with survivors of sexual violence have described rape as 'monstrosity of the century' (Li Review 2008), 'femicide', a 'systematic pattern of destruction toward the female species' (Eve Ensler, cited in Kort 2007), incomprehensible' (Nzwili 2009), the 'worst in the world' (Gettleman 2007), and due to these facts eastern Congo in general and South Kivu in particular has been described as 'war zone tourism' (Baaz and Stern 2013, p.6).

Dr. Denis Mukwege is the director and founder of the Panzi hospital in Bukavu/South Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He is among others to witness first hand of what a human being can

do his fellow human being. Panzi hospital is a local focal point for the majority of victims of sexual violence since 1999. Colette Braeckman gives a deep analysis of Dr. Mukwege's experience at Panzi hospital in working with women who have suffered the worst sexual brutality in our modern time. To get the most out of Dr. Mukwege's work with women, the author choose the interview approach. Dr. Mukwege thinks that everybody has the rights to live in Congo but not by looting and murdering innocent women and girls. The HIV virus and syphilis and other form of STDs are no longer urban issues, They have also shifted to rural areas with serious impact on villagers whose way of treatment rely on tree leaves, and root of certain traditional plants. In his long experience, Dr. Mukwege discovered yet another dangerous small virus called *chlamydia*, which is difficult to detect, but is ravaging lives of a lot of women because it attacks the vaginal area of the body. He also pointed out how Congo is isolated in terms of benefiting from medical assistance from the World Health Organization by just comparing Congo with it neighbor Rwanda. There is not enough antiretroviral HIV medicine treatment, the country got 15% of the stock and yet in our neighboring Rwanda the country cover 80% of its patients. Congo has been suspended by the World Fund for its corrupt practices from the list of those who should be benefiting from funds. The treatment is important in the sense that it helps women who has been rapes few hours after the attack to stop pregnancy or attracting virus (Braeckman 2013, p.141).

Despite his tireless work with women, Dr. Mukwege has also received men as victims of events following torture and killing that happened in front of their eyes. He observed that so often men come in secret and told him that it is difficult to have romantic relationship with their wives because of what they experienced. Images of those horrific events never stop hunting them all the time. They also feel guilt due to the fact that they were not able to defend their wives and children. Children have witnessed how their mother were violated in presence of their father who did not do anything to stop it. These fathers feel ashamed and not able to perform sexual intercourse with their wives with whom they have children. Dr. Mukwege concluded that what men are experiencing is not about having problems with their wives, rather they also have problem with themselves (Braeckman 2013, p. 143).

A Case Study in the Power of Activism: Vermont's Contribution in Bringing Peace and Healing in Eastern Congo

It's so often easy to be overwhelmed by what is going on in the Congo and the lack of a U.S. government's response to the crisis. The bitter statements uttered by many Congolese and some Americans do make sense and represent half of facts. However, some senators, congressmen and women, and activists have done their part to bring peace in the DRC. If senators started speaking on this issue it's because their constituency pressured them. In the case of Vermont, the Congressional delegation was introduced to this issue by a Saint Michael's College professor and her students, who organized a "Blood Cellphone" campaign in October 2009. Members of the group visited all three offices in the same day, demanding that the members of the delegation hold a hearing on the war and sign on to the renewal of the Violence Against Women Act (Dromage 2009, p. 15).

A year after a successful appeal to VT Senators, Laurie Gagne, Director of the Edmundite Center for Peace and Justice, Vermont Ibutwa Initiative's Board President, and Professor at Saint Michael's College approached Congolese community with a simple question. There is so much going on in Congo, so how can we help you? Congolese community's response was that we are doing fine here, we would appreciate if you take care of those whom we left behind, meaning in the DRC. Through that inspirational question, the idea sparked the creation of an organization that continues saving lives in eastern Congo today. Gagne has since 2010 taken a giant step in making the suffering of Congolese Women and Girls at the center of her priority agenda and created the Dear Hillary Campaign for the Congo, a political advocacy group that continues today under a new name, Saint Michael's College for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (SMC for DRC). The SMC for the DRC brought together the Saint Michael College's students and the Congolese community living in Vermont to advocate for change in U.S government policy on conflict minerals in Congo.

Together with Saint Michael's College students Gagne has since then raise awareness on campus by inviting activists to come and talk during Congo week. The first year, 2010, began with a panel discussion

including Friends of the Congo (represented by Kambale Musavuli and Maurice Carey), the Enough Project (Represented by founder and executive director, John Prendergrast), Jocelyn Kelly from Harvard University (Harvard Humanitarian Initiative) and Emeritas Professor Weiss. That experience opened the way to invite other speakers including Lisa Shannon, author of *Thousand Sisters A*, Jeffrey Gettleman, a *New York Times* East Africa bureau correspondent and Vince Thomas, a Story Teller and Strategist with Intel Corporation, just to mention a few.

The SMC for DRC organized in every semester and work under a chosen *theme*. The first campaign was launched under a theme called postcard campaign in the fall of 2010. The movement created 56 chapters around the world which included Canada, the DRC, United Kingdom (UK) and the United States. The organization targeted, then Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton (Hillary)'s birthday and mailed out about 17,000 postcards to State Department. The SMC for DRC main reason to name the movement under her name it was because of her position as a secretary of state and as a powerful woman in the world. The group believed that it is her responsibility as a powerful woman in the World to leave a good legacy as someone who stopped the violence that targeted women and girls in eastern Congo.

The post cards campaign was a driving force behind an invitation from the State Department to meet with Melanne Verveer who was Hillary Clinton's appointment as Ambassador at Large for Global Women's Issues. In April 2011, the SMC for DRC organized a theme "Join Hands for Congo in solidarity of what is happening in Congo. In Washington with African drums, chanting "Peace in Congo" slogan brought down six State Department high-ranking officials including Ambassador Yammamoto to speak with SMC's delegation. The SMC for DRC's demand was for Obama administration to appoint a special envoy in Congo. In September, the group's demand was half met, instead of a special envoy, the administration appointed a special representative, his excellency Ambassador Barrie Walkley who in March 2012 was invited to Saint Michael's College for a panel discussion.

The movement continues working on raising awareness on devastating impact of minerals trade from the Congo to women and girls and has recently launched a campaign to make St. Michael's College a "conflict mineral free campus." SMC for DRC is also working with Vermont Ibutwa Initiative to raise fund to support its mission in South Kivu province of the DR Congo.

The Vermont Ibutwa Initiative (VIBI)

General Perspective on South Kivu Province

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is constituted with eleven provinces among which the South Kivu province where the Vermont Ibutwa Initiative, Inc (VIBI) is established and work with survivors of sexual-gender based. The province of South Kivu is situated on South East of the former Kivu province-Maniema. With a population of 1.500.676, South Kivu covers an area of 64. 915 square kilometers. The province is divided in three demographic zones/territories, a highly populated zone, composed of the territory of Idjwi, Kabare, Walungu and Uvira where the Vermont Ibutwa's operations are based. We also have moderately populated zone like Kalehe, Mwenga and Fizi, and an under populated territory of Shabunda. The territory of Uvira covers an area of 3.146 square kilometers with an estimated population around 200.000. Among other territories, which were affected by wars, Uvira is no exception; in fact it is in Uvira where the war in Congo started in October 25, 1996. Unlike in other territories, the most targeted population was women and girls (RFDA, RFDP and IA 2004)

Women in South Kivu

The economic situation of women in South Kivu province is characterized by highly feminized poverty, which is aggravated by a lack of political and a clear mechanism of women promotion in social cultural plan in a male dominated culture of oppression and discriminatory practices toward women. The war found the local population, particularly women, in a dysfunctional public structure and a lack of adequate economic and social infrastructure caused by three decades of Mobutu dictatorship. But, many studies and reports credited women as economic engine of subsistence economic growth in South Kivu, which is

essentially based on agriculture and farming. About 80 percent of the South Kivu populations are engaged in agriculture; among them 70 percent are women (RFDA, RFDP and IA 2004).

The majority of women can't access their fields for fear of being raped again. The war has produced many widows, internally displaced, most of which are single moms. Most of the women who have been raped were divorced by their husbands and depend on food assistance to survive -if it is available for them. There is high rate of women and girls who are seropositive due to the high rate of sexual assaults perpetrated by armed combatants. In addition to rebel groups' strategic and planned attack on women, this war has brought poverty, which at one point force many girls into prostitution as a strategy to survive. Some research suggests that just in the month of July 2003, 837 victims came from the Plaine of Ruzizi, Uvira –Center and Mboko-Baraka (RFDA, RFDP and IA 2004).

Legacy of Sexual Violence in South Kivu

Dr. Denis Mukwege, a gynecologist who does most of fistulas surgeries to women- who are coming from different villages- at Panzi hospital in Bukavu , stated that rape is an imported phenomenon in Congo. The statement which he [Mukwege] made almost cost him life when, in October 2012, he escaped to an assassination attempt. Congolese people have lived in poverty for decades during Mobutu dictatorship but soldiers have never raped a woman- he added. But when Dr. Mukwege talks about rape, he is referring to something different. He said that women were not only raped but they have been mutilated with different types of tools. Collective rape has been committed, and spouses, neighbors, children were forced to watch. (Breckman 2012, p.77).

How do you describe such extreme way of raping a woman? What is particularly different in Congo? In her writing Erika Carlsen described that the stories of the women who have been raped in Congo are not simply words on a page, devoid of any feeling or real connection to the faces they represent” she continue saying that “Although it is painful and extremely exhausting to be emotionally and intellectually present when reflecting on the atrocities taking place in the Congo, I encourage the reader not to forget that this is reality”. Erika thought that what is happening in Congo is unique and different, therefore “I

reconstructed the word “rape” as “ra/pe” to encourage a constant consciousness in the mind of the reader.... of the horror of ra/pe and its effects on women, men, and the whole community. Pursuing her artistic imagination, Erika believe that the division of the word is meant to serve as a visual reminder of the fact that “rape” is not simply another word; it is an atrocity that aim to destroy and objectify its victims. She said that “I reconstructed ra/pe with a slash to represent the way this horror operates upon unequal distributions of power and agency, and how it forcibly separates a woman from her sense of self, security, and community (Carlsen 2009, p).

However, sexual violence has always existed in South Kivu traditional society, but it was considered as an imaginable act that was profoundly reprehensible. It was first extremely humiliating for both, herself and her family. In Uvira custom and tradition, particularly in Fulero¹ and Vira² who live at the coast of Lake Tanganyika³, after rape a woman will send a message to her spouse through an intermediary person that she has been sexually assaulted. The husband will take an arrow to avenge his wife by going after the perpetrator who committed the horrible act and kill him. For the woman victim, she has to go through ritual traditions for cleansing and changing her clothing before getting back in her marital home (RFDA, RFDP and IA 2004)

Impact of Sexual Violence on Women and to the Community in South Kivu

South Kivu province is the epicenter of violation and sexual violence against women and girls. It is difficult to estimate how many women and girls have been infected with HIV virus and other infectious related health problems, but it is estimated that 60% of combatants engaged in the war in DRC were seropositive. Therefore, there is a high probability for transmission of HIV virus to women and girls who have been raped. In a rape situation, there is a high risk of HIV virus transmission than with a consented sexual relationship. It has been observed that genital injuries, including lacerations and abrasions of the vaginal walls or other organs, augment the probability of transmission if the abuser is seropositive.

¹ South Kivu tribe from Uvira

² South Kivu tribe from Uvira

³ It is a second largest Lake in Africa and the 5th in the world

Vaginal secretion protection normally presented in consensual sexual relations are also absent in cases of rape. At Saint Paul General Hospital in Uvira victims who were consulted and treated presented types of STDs. These include gonorrhoea, early syphilis, chancroid, chlamydia, genital herpes, vaginal bubo, vaginal trichomoniasis, and HIV/AIDS (RFDA, RFDP and IA 2004).

There are many factors that made and continue to make the lives of these women more difficult including lack of infrastructure, access to resources and a culture of taboo surrounding discussion of sexual. The *International Alert Journal* estimates that 70% of women who were interviewed victims of sexual violence did not receive any medical treatment. Part of the group refused to go to the hospital for several reasons. Some women did not want to know their HIV status for fear of stigmatization. Another group of women couldn't access the treatment center due to distance from where they live. Women did not want to risk rape once again by taking a long and uncertain road that led to a health center. Women survivors of the worst atrocities in South Kivu weren't only raped, but they were also robbed and deprived of their land and financial means. Thus, they were unable to pay for hospital costs or be treated at a special hospital at more developed town ((RFDA, RFDP and IA 2004).

The psychosocial impact of sexual violence will have long downsides in survivor's lives if not diagnosed adequately and treated. A recent study conducted in Uvira show that 91% of women who were interviewed claim to suffer from behavioral problems. The most recurring are latent fear, shame and mostly self-disgust, self-loathing, excessive sweating, insomnia, nightmares, memory loss, aggression, anxiety, a sense of dread, and withdrawal into themselves. Women with dyspareunia, sexual disgust and libido disorders or severe lower abdominal pain, often struggle to find a harmonious sex life and sexual intercourse can become a total nightmare (RFDA, RFDP and IA 2004).

State and Non State Actors' Capacity to Deal with Women and Girls' Health

The poor health infrastructures of Mobutu's time were looted, destroyed and closed during the two decades of war in the DRC. The current Congolese government lacks the will and capacity to deal with the problem. Due to insecurity surrounding most villages, health workers, fled villages for their safety. In

Uvira for example there is only one hospital and the several small, old and inadequate health centers which lack basic equipment and medication. Additionally, the lack of infrastructures and well-trained health workers were prohibiting a response to the local population who desperately need care. Cases like fistulas surgeries have been referred to Panzi hospital in Bukavu through an insecure and destroyed ((RFDA, RFDP and IA 2004)

In my fact finding mission trip conducted in the Plaine of Ruzizi/ South Kivu/DRC, I spoke to almost seventy women, all survivors of sexual violence, or children either born from rape or orphans due to multiple wars. I heard the plight of women who no longer believe in their own government to solve and address their problems. For many youth, their hope is to see their mothers'-succeed because their future depends to their mothers' progress. Why? Because the majority of men have divorced their wives, the only hope is to see their mothers succeed. The young people whom I spoke to don't even believe they have a government. In the Plaine of Ruzizi, the youth talk more about international organizations than their own government. They see NGOs' cars pass almost everyday; though they don't stop in their villages but at least they see them. International organizations are overwhelmed with emergency situations, which are happening around the world with limited resources. Thus, they can't commit all their resources in one place or country. International NGOs can't commit to a long solution, they deal with emergency relief assistance, which Congo needed and still needs, but now, the country needs a permanent, bold and more reliable source of funding to start rebuilding a more stable future for women and girls. Small organizations like the Vermont Ibutwa Initiative with a clear vision could make a big difference in women and girls' lives in South Kivu/Plaine of Ruzizi.

Vermont Ibutwa Initiative, inc (VIBI) Operation in South Kivu/Plaine of Ruzizi

The Vermont Ibutwa Initiative, Inc (VIBI) was inspired by the SMC for DRC political advocacy work on the Congo. As a co-founder of the SMC for DRC, to continue raising awareness here in the U.S. without working with people for whom we purport to speak seems to an incomplete work. At one point I thought, if one goes to Congo and say to a Congolese woman that someone is fighting on your behalf to

stop violence here [eastern Congo], the woman might not quite grasp what you're trying to communicate. But a clear language of saying, *how can I help you* make more sense to this person than an abstract concept of advocacy. Going to Washington to speak to government elected officials, writing post card campaigns, chanting and beating African drums outside the State Department seem to be the right things to do or to accomplish, but in my mind something was missing. Thus, the work will be completed if political advocacy is well balanced with a practical plan for saving lives in Congo. How could we connect with families and communities who have been dispossessed, but are still breathing? How could Ibutwa help a divorced mother with medical costs, education opportunity for their children, and provide social economic integration?

The old concept of peace was about the total cease-fire, which was followed by an elaborate plan to help people. It is difficult to apply the old concept in Congo's crisis because of was such a lengthy crisis. The contemporary view [my personal view] is that people don't have to wait until there is total peace in order to get assistance to rebuild their lives. The "Ibutwa" initiative started in response to suffering of many devastating impact of violence and rape. Thus, Ibutwa is working with a community group in Vermont to establish the Vermont Ibutwa Initiative. The group includes representatives of local religious communities and of several area colleges/universities.

When I travelled to my homeland, South Kivu, DR Congo in 2012 in a trip funded by the Sisters of Mercy Peace Initiative, my goal (on behalf of the Ibutwa Initiative) was to listen to the women of the region, to hear their stories and to return to the U.S. with a plan of action. What I heard was the need for immediate access to healthcare for women and girls who had been raped. I also heard that the women wanted the opportunity for employment for themselves so that their children, boys and girls, could be safe and get an education in school. Thus our mission was to work with victims of sexual violence in the Congo to rebuild their lives, working to address their physical, psychological, social and economic needs. Ibutwa Initiative's goals are to seek to contribute to the rebirth of the people of the South Kivu by providing women and girls who have been raped with: access to needed healthcare; school tuition of their children; participation in sustainable livelihood programs; and access to community psycho-social

support programs developed in response to, and as a relief to, victims of trauma. The Vermont Ibutwa Initiative also works in the U.S. to raise awareness about life in the DR Congo. It aims to inform the American public about atrocities against women and children.

Awareness Raising

Ibutwa's awareness raising efforts are rooted in our fundamental belief that we, as informed people, have the responsibility to educate those in the United States about the negative impact of war and social disorder on the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These efforts largely take form in presentations given at places of worship and communal gathering, as well as, on college and university campuses. The goal of these efforts is to create a will for committed action and advocacy.

Medical Treatment

Ibutwa provides the funding for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence to receive proper medical care for medical conditions relating to the rape incident. Malaria, TB and HIV/AIDS will also be treated, where appropriate. Due to limited funding, a participant will graduate out of the medical portion of the program when conditions identified upon intake are diagnosed and treated.

Psychosocial Support

Psychosocial support can be defined as processes and practices that alleviate suffering and promote emotional, social, cognitive and spiritual well being. Ibutwa participants are the driving force behind the development of the psychosocial support programs. The content and goals of the programs are determined by the participant's needs.

The organization will act as a funding, facilitating and organizing body. Ibutwa firmly believes in a culturally grounded approach, building on local resources and drawing on local meanings and phenomenology. When the participants and community take ownership, the program is indigenous, and thus, sustainable.

Establish a Women/Trauma Center

The future plan includes the development of a women's community center that will offer programs for women to gather, participate in counseling and other supportive and educational programs such as training in micro-business to empower them toward self-sufficiency.

Progress

In the last two years, Ibutwa Initiative established a program, in collaboration with the women, to meet their goals. So far twenty-eight women have received medical care, 108 children are now in school for the first time and now our sustainable livelihood projects are starting. The value of the work and mission of the VT Ibutwa Initiative is also demonstrated in the collaborations established with:

- “Connecting Cultures and the New England Survivors of Torture and Trauma (NESTT)” program led by Dr. Karen Fondacaro that will empower our trauma relief work in DR Congo;
- First Congregational Church (UCC) of Burlington, VT that continues to serve as our fiscal steward donating bookkeeping services;
- Establishment of a “Project Management Committee” team that is utilizing the expertise of local university faculty to guide our collaborative work in the DR Congo.

The Vermont Ibutwa Initiative will hope to bring one of its Field Coordinators to the United States in 2016. She will be here for several months participating in the New England Survivors of Torture and Trauma Training (NESTT) program at the University of Vermont. NESTT is coordinated by Dr. Karen Fondacaro to meet the psychological, social, and physical needs of survivors of torture. The Field Coordinator's training will prepare her to implement a similar program in the DR Congo. Our Field Coordinator's training will be also critical in the sense that it will also prepare her for running and managing the women center. The center will house different programs, which Ibutwa is currently providing. Part of the women's center will have a clinic that will be treating not only our participants but also helping single mothers, divorced women who were shunned away by their husbands because of rape and are struggling with many diseases. It will also host data collection on sexual and domestic

violence, and will include counseling rooms, and a hall for training and community peace-building programs.

PART III: WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE US?

Recommendations and Suggestions

The world is on fire as many crises unfold around the world at the same time. International organizations are overwhelmed with enormous needs, and resources to address all those issues that seem to be a priority simply are not there. A state of emergency that happened a few months would no longer be a priority compared to one now being announced as Breaking News. This breaking news defines the fierce urgency of an NGO's priority today, where resources should be next directed. The genocide in Rwanda, Darfur and a crisis in the DRC are no longer a priority for some NGOs. The Central African Republic, Ebola, the Crisis in Ukraine, the killing of religious minorities in Iraq, the refugee situation in Syria and the self proclaimed Islamic States have become the most pressing issues on the agenda, displacing what happened two decades ago in the DRC. How should NGOs prioritize their actions and where should their direct their limited resources in a situation of such despair? Most NGOs' mission is to provide aid relief to a desperate population in severe crisis, but rebuilding a community is a government's responsibility. How could we trust Congolese government to rebuild the lives of its citizens that have been so badly destroyed? How do ordinary citizen trust again or expect their own government or big NGOs to address their challenges? And let's not forget our direct complicity in the cause and our direct capacity to influence the solution. If we deal with the fuel for the violence, we have a good chance of ending the war. Consider the evidence:

- In Liberia, when the UN Security Council imposed sanctions on the illegal sale of timber out of Liberia, and it began moving on the illegal diamonds being smuggled out of Liberia. That economic pressure made it much easier to end the war there.

- In Sierra Leone, the long blood diamonds campaign began to make it more difficult for the RUF rebels to trade diamonds that were mined there for arms. That helped put a financial squeeze on the rebels. That helped contribute to the eventual defeat of the rebels and an end to the war.
- In Angola, a UN commission focused attention on the illicit trade in diamonds that was funding the rebels there. The commission's actions helped to divide and weaken the rebellion, which eventually catalyzed an end to the war after the main rebel leader was killed (Prendergast & Cheadle 2010, p.195).

Conclusion

It is not an exaggeration when I say that an average Congolese citizen does not know their country's potential in terms of natural resources. This average citizen still does not understand that Congo has \$24 trillion in untapped mineral deposits and a big chunk of it is found in the east territories. How could a rebel group know what is underground if they weren't told by those who came into Congo with advanced technology equipment? The predatory system was design by corporations using Congo's neighbors as mercenaries to plunder Congo's wealth by using oppressive method in accessing land rich in mineral over. The supervision of operations was under well-organized groups back in their respective countries. The United States military came in eastern Congo with advanced technology machines that helped detect underground mineral location. Therefore, electronic companies that make microprocessor chips buy and sell the product under different brand name. The money earned is used to purchase big guns that are in turn used to dislodge another village population by raping women and using men and young children as slave labors. The cycle keeps moving because at the other end, electronic companies continue making money by creating different series under the same brand name. The impact remains on innocent population –the internally displaced population-who keeps fleeing for months for their safety without any medical and food assistance from their own government. International organizations in the other hand are overwhelmed by the magnitude of human tragedy.

Sexual-Gender Based Violence perpetrated against women and girls in Congo had a unique and unprecedented “trade mark”. The report from Panzi Hospital talked about Rape with Extreme Violence implemented in three ways, gang rape, most the time by three or more men which result to injuries, genital mutilation and intentional transmission of sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia and HIV (Mukwege and Nangini 2009). Dr. Mukwege believes that there is an agenda behind those humiliations and barbarism. It is something, which has been planned, financed and executed by Congo’s neighbors who are also financed and supported by Western powers. The rape pattern explains why rape in Congo is used as a strategy of war. It means that women and girls who even live few miles away from the mine have been a target.

Harman Cohen, an American Ambassador in Africa who held several high positions in the Department of State, including Assistant Secretary of State for Africa during the Bush Administration (1989-1993) stated that for him” Kivu is part of Rwanda territory” on TV-interviews. His statement underscores the state department’s position or responsibility on the crisis in Congo. What Rwandan and Ugandan armies carried for years in eastern Congo and particularly in Kivus once prove American unyielding support the dictatorial regimes in Central Africa.

A very robust strategic plan needs to be drafted by all parties, meaning Western powers and a democratically elected Congolese government. The strategy of using women, as weapon of wars should be clearly stated and defined as a consequence of an underlining cause that the media has refused to talk about. Congo needs partners who will work with its government. Natural resources found in Congo is for Congolese, but the region and the world can also benefit if Congo is stable and in peace with its neighbors. A good framework will be to have an international binding law that defines boundaries in accessing different resources in African and more particularly in Congo.

The majority of the population in South Kivu whom I had the chance to talk to during my facts finding mission trip have given up. The role of NGOs, either of international character or local, is to supplement the government's efforts. But, in DR Congo, the population is counting on smaller organization like VIBI to address their needs in a sustainable ways. What Ibutwa is doing is a drop in a bucket of water; next the government must step in and adequately play its role as protector of its citizens.

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