

COMMUNITY EFFECTS OF WEAPONIZED RAPE IN DRC

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How has mass sexual violence by combatants effected the community as a whole?
- How has it effected public health?
- How has it effected education?
- How has it effected social participation?

MIXED METHODS

- Publicly Available Data used to compare two cities
- House hold surveys of two cities
- Publicly available data used in longitudinal comparisons
- 6 Focus groups

DRC CONFLICT

First Congo War

Congo's post-Mobutu history is inextricably linked to its Eastern neighbor Rwanda and Uganda. In the 1994 Rwandan genocide of the Tutsis, Hutu power groups like the Intrahamwe and Impuzamugambi massacred 800,000 Tutsis and Hutus promoting peace in 100 days. In response, the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front, or RPF, overthrew the Rwandan Hutu government. During and after the genocide, an estimated 2 million refugees, mostly Hutu, poured over Rwanda's western border into the Congo. The refugee camps became unofficial army bases for exiled Hutu power forces, terrorizing the local population with impunity until 1996. The Congolese Tutsis forced the Rwandans out of Congo, starting the First Congo War. In response, Laurent-Desire Kabila invaded Congo with the support of the Rwandan and Ugandan armies. In 1997 they marched into Kinshasa, the capitol, overthrew Mobutu's government and re-named the

Second Congo War

country Democratic Republic of Congo. Eastern Congo continued to be an unstable war zone. Kabila turned on his former backers (Rwanda and Uganda) and allowed Hutu armies to regroup in eastern Congo. This resulted in a Rwandan/Ugandan joint invasion in 1998. The five-year conflict pitted Congolese government forces, supported by Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe, against rebels and soldiers backed by Uganda and Rwanda. In July 1999, the seven countries involved signed the Lusaka Peace Accord and 5,000 U.N. peacekeepers (the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, or MONUC) were sent to monitor the situation. In January 2001, President Kabila was assassinated by his bodyguard, and his son, Joseph Kabila, took over. Joseph Kabila proved to be an adept negotiator and in 2002 completed successful peace deals that finally saw Rwanda's and Uganda's withdrawal from the Congo. In December 2002, Kabila negotiated a peace deal with internal rebel groups, promising them a power-sharing interim government. This deal became official when Kabila signed a transitional constitution in April 2003.

Rape as a Weapon

In war, many see rape as the inevitable "spoils of war". However, this greatly differs from the sexual violence present in conflicts like Congo. Rape is used in conflicts as a weapon to terrorize villages and to starve out families (women won't go to the farms as they are often targeted for rape on the way). Orders come from the top of the military hierarchy. Research shows that rape serves to build camaraderie among soldiers, show force, and to punish villages if they support the opposition.

INITIAL FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Preliminary analysis shows differences in social participation by adults and children in areas that have experienced mass sexual violence by combatants. The cultural shift that has taken place in the aftermath of mass sexual violence by combatants is marked by a lack of community closeness and commitment. Parents keep their children closer to home for a long amount of time. They do not reach out to extended family and friends as other communities do in times of need. They keep their fields close, doors locked, and show a distinct distrust of others. A major step towards healing could be to start to repair community bonds that once existed. The network of extended family members and community has long been a source of resilience in communities, particularly in rural Africa, and can possibly be used to repair communities damaged by similar mass traumas.

Mapping armed groups in eastern Congo

