

# DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC of the CONGO

## Victims of Sexual Violence

*Ministering to the spiritual, physical and psychological needs in the Congo*

### Support for Victims

The war in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) between 1998 and 2003 involved several African countries and armed militia groups. It is considered one of the greatest humanitarian crises in the world, yet it received little international media attention even during the height of the conflict. The violence has continued unabated since 2003 due to armed militias and ethnic groups. Millions more civilian deaths resulted from conflict, hunger, abuse or disease.

The church is working to minister to the spiritual, physical and psychological needs of those who have suffered the most. Among them are women who have been victims of sexual violence. Rape has been well documented as a weapon of war in the Congo. Committed by any number of local armies and militia, there are staggeringly high levels of rape. As much as 50% of women in some communities have reported being raped. A breakdown in overall civil society has become apparent, as an increasing number of civilian men are also committing this crime against women.

CBM has a renewed partnership with the Communauté Baptiste au Centre de l'Afrique (CBCA) to care for women trying to recover from their traumatic experiences. Support groups have been formed for these courageous women (and a few men) who have been subjected to sexual violence. Some of these women and girls became pregnant after their rape and are now struggling to support their children with little assistance.

*I was 16 and on my way to a good education and future. One day when I was home with my sister four men in uniform broke into our house. They all raped me and my sister. Now I have this baby to care for. The counsellors heard about me and came to my house. They got me to the hospital to get the care I needed there. They invited me to this support group. I received a \$50 loan to help me start a business. That \$50 is my child's only father. The difficulty is that my child has been sick so I had to use the money to buy medicine. I want to start paying my bill at the hospital but so far I have not been able to. Now I live with my sister and six other siblings. I try to care for them as well because my mother is dead and my father abandoned us long ago. I have not gone back to school because I must look after my child so I do not know what my future holds. I try to cope by occupying myself with finding things to distract me from my situation. I pray every day that God will help me forget this terrible thing that has happened to me, and that I will be able to care for my child.*

The CBCA women's department has a trained nurse and psychologist who help meet the needs of these women by reintegrating them back into their families, and providing the means for skills training so they can support themselves and their children. CBM has committed to providing resources for this valuable ministry.

### Get Involved

Your support and prayers can help victims of rape through counseling, the formation of support groups, medical assistance, food aid, and access to microcredit.

**\$30** provides food for an individual

**\$50** provides a microcredit loan

**\$115** supports an individual in a support group

**\$20,000** can help sustain a support group for 175 women



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