



SYNERGY OF WOMEN FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

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INTRODUCTION

Synergy of Women for Victims of Sexual Violence has been working in the North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo since 2002. Armed conflict has affected the province since 1994 and in 2002 various organizations working with survivors of sexual violence decided to create a platform in order to have a larger lobbying voice and offer more services to survivors. Today the platform is made up of 35 organizations in North Kivu who provide services such as: medical care, counseling, micro-grants, legal counsel, family mediation, community education and national and international advocacy.

The mission of Synergy is to create collaboration between community-based organizations in eastern DRC who are engaged in assistance for sexual violence survivors in order to increase the quality and access of support and to restore victims to a healthy, respectful state.

CONGO BACKGROUND

The Democratic Republic of Congo has suffered through war since 1994, primarily affecting the eastern region where Synergy works. In 1994, millions of Rwandan refugees spilled over into eastern Congo throwing the whole region into turmoil. In 1996, the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko was overthrown in an operation supported both nationally and by neighboring countries. In 1998, Rwanda and Uganda invaded Congo and eventually 8 other nations were fighting in Congo making it what is now called Africa's First World War. North Kivu province was at the center of all of this and therefore is one of the regions in the world with the highest rate of sexual violence.

SYNERGY PROGRAMS

SFVS programs focus on:

- **Lobbying for equitable justice:** 'Judicial marketing' to mobilize local authorities, the local community, and the international community to demand that judicial services guaranteed by the Congolese law are provided for survivors of gender-based violence.

- **Counseling support for survivors of gender-based violence:** Organize reference systems and train counselors throughout North Kivu to provide consistent psychosocial care for survivors.
- **Medical support for survivors:** SFVS listening points, placed throughout North Kivu, refer survivors to partner organizations for appropriate medical care.
- **Economic assistance for survivors:** SFVS provides income generation grants and support through collective agriculture fields to survivors in order to assist them with reintegration back into their communities.

This particular project will:

- Provide micro-grants for survivors
- Give legal counsel to survivors
- Host community education seminars on civic rights and duties

Long-term goals include:

- Advocate for a mixed tribunal including international and Congolese magistrates for a special court in DRC to try high profile sexual violence and human rights perpetrators.
- Continue to prosecute sexual violence cases in the local courts.
- Assist 3,500 sexual violence survivors over three years with micro-finance support.
- Assist 1,500 survivors over three years with emergency medical care.
- Train counselors in family mediation and psychosocial support.
- Mobilize community groups including men and women to lobby at the provincial and national levels for the rights of sexual violence survivors.

SYNERGY STATISTICS

- 9,544 survivors of sexual violence have received counseling and medical care.
- 1,854 survivors were given income generation grants to start a small business.
- 482 girls had their school fees paid for.
- 462 cases have been brought to court. 78 cases received sentences.
- 80 workshops and 518 community education sessions were hosted on the law and the consequences for sexual violence and the responsibility of local authorities.