

Information à la Presse N°2007/020

RDC : Lancement à Bukavu, dans la province du Sud Kivu de la campagne nationale : "STOP AU VIOL MAINTENANT"

Kinshasa 24th November, 2007. UNICEF DRC this afternoon launched the national component of an international campaign against gender based sexual violence in Bukavu, South Kivu province. It was organised in collaboration with the NGO *V-Day*, the Ministry for Women's and Family Affairs (CONDIFFA), the UN Mission for Congo (MONUC) and several other United Nations Agencies. Madam Olive Kabila, the First Lady of the Democratic Republic of Congo performed the official launch for the campaign dubbed "STOP THE RAPE NOW!" The president of the National Assembly, Vital Kamerhe, represented the government, and pledged to use his office to maintain the issue of sexual violence on the national agenda.



Ten Ministers of State, Senators and Parliamentarians, eight Ambassadors and Heads of Missions, and several representatives of non-governmental associations attended the ceremony. Speaking on behalf of the United Nations, Mr. Ross Mountain, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General and Resident Coordinator for the UN in DRC, commended the on-going local initiatives to assist the victims of sexual violence and reiterated the support of the United Nations. Referring to the impunity and the large numbers of perpetrators not facing trial, he expressed concern about the justice system, which he described as "the weakest link in the fight against sexual violence."



The "STOP THE RAPE NOW!" campaign will run from now until the end of 2009 in collaboration with the government of the DRC. The main objectives of the campaign are to raise awareness, to prevent further occurrences, and continue providing assistance to the victims of sexual violence, and especially, overcoming constraints to their reintegration in families and communities.

Sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo began to draw national and international attention at the height of the armed conflicts, which began in the middle of the 1990s. Frequent incidents of violence emerged behind the veil of generalised insecurity and lawlessness, and these have led to a breakdown of society and support systems for families and communities. This has increased the vulnerability of thousands of women, children and the men who have been affected.

Since 2003, UNICEF has been working with UNFPA, HCDH and CONDIFFA together with other UN agencies and ministries, national and international non-governmental organisations, all under the umbrella of the Joint Initiative against sexual violence in the DRC. The activities under this joint initiative include providing medical and psychosocial assistance to the victims and assisting the most vulnerable among them to resume some viable socio-economic activity. More than 30,000 women have received assistance from UNICEF including information about their legal rights in case some victims decide to seek redress in the courts with the help of other partners.



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