

Rape and Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Militia Attitudes towards Combat and Sexual Violence

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Sexual Violence in the DRC: Understanding the Epidemic





Understanding sexual violence in the DRC

Investigating the genesis, patterns, effects and mitigating and preventive factors around sexual violence in DRC requires a coordinated, multi-disciplinary approach:

- Multiple methods

- Different populations, including high-risk populations

- Men, women, service providers, survivors of violence

HHI Projects in DRC

- A clinical chart review at Panzi Hospital
- Qualitative data project examining women's attitudes towards, and need for, family planning services
- Focus groups with men and women from the community about societal attitudes toward, and responses to, sexual violence
- Survey of SV survivors and SV service providers

HHI Projects in DRC

- An important population missing from this examination
- To study a phenomenon, we must understand its underlying causes
- In addition to speaking with survivors, community members and service providers, we must also speak with armed actors and militia members in the DRC

Armed Actors in DRC



Brief Background

- Armed groups have proliferated in the DRC since the 1990s
- Over 20 rebel groups have been identified in the conflict
- Active fighting continues despite January 2008 “Amani peace process” – thousands displaced and continuation of human rights violations by multiple groups
- Some current indications of possible peace: disarmament of some Mai Mai groups; CNDP is considering registering as a political party

Studying Armed Actors

Previous HHI research results have underlined the importance of the role of armed actors in sexual violence. In a HHI survey of 280 survivors:

- 83% of women reported that their attacker was wearing some kind of military uniform;
- 46% of women reported being abducted by their assailant;
- Women reported being assaulted by 2.83 attackers on average (range 1 – 10 attackers);
- 69% of women reported gang rape (rape by more than one person).

Studying Armed Actors

- These findings speak to the highly “militarized” forms of rape in the DRC
- Looking at militia attitudes towards conflict and violence provides invaluable insight into root causes of sexual violence, how it comes about, how sexual violence is viewed in the ranks, and which factors influence soldiers’ behavior in combat

The Militia Project





Little is known about how armed groups in DRC function on a day-to-day level

Start with basics:

- Learn about daily life
- Command structure
- Soldiers' greatest problems and hopes for future
- Experiences with violence
- Reasons for fighting

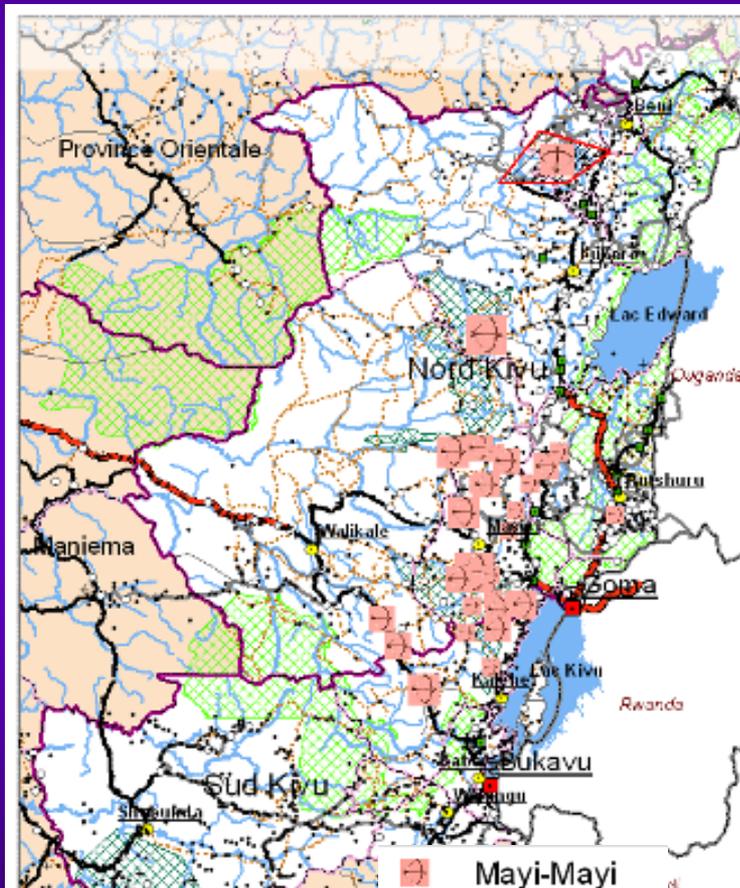
All of this will paint a picture about the profile of any given group, help us understand motivations and possible intervention points

So what is the greatest challenge to doing
this type of work?

Trust = access



The Mai Mai



Map from IPIS

<http://www.ipisresearch.be/maps/Oost-Congo/web/index.html>

- Local militia created to defend civilians against other armed groups in the area
- Though ostensibly formed to protect local population, they have also been implicated in looting, abductions, rape and mass displacement

Methods

- Access to soldiers negotiated with command of the Mai Mai “Shikito” group – a sub group of the Mai Mai
- 25 Semi-structured interviews administered by local, trained NGO personnel in private settings
- 2 Field sites: Katogota, Kamituga
- Important to have pilot phase to refine questionnaire, train interviewers, and improve research methodology



Data Analysis

- Transcribe recordings from interviews into Swahili, translate these documents into English
- Do context analysis on transcripts to identify important themes and relationships between themes

Preliminary Results

Reason for joining Mai Mai

“[Armed men] were killing the population, beating them without any reason and looting goods and raping the population, we felt we might be exterminated. We decided to create this group to be able to protect the population.”

Soldiers' problems

“The main challenges are the fact that war are living in the forest, we lack everything: we don't have food, or healthcare, we are not being paid. We lack everything.”

Obeying orders

“Shikito gives us an order, and we have to do it whether we want to or not.”

“I go where I am sent and then I don't do what I have been asked to do because that might not be good.”

Chain of command

Sophisticated communications system combining modern (cell phone, radio) and traditional (runners, liaisons) techniques

Preliminary Results

Religion and Mai Mai beliefs

“God is in heaven, but witchcraft is here on earth”

Women living with the Mai Mai

“[Women’s] main role is in the intelligence service. Those who are not soldiers are working in the farms, they do small businesses and cook.”



Demobilization and reintegration

“It would be better to have peace so everyone can leave the forest once and for all.”

“All over the country, people don’t have jobs... so if I decide to leave the group to go in the town, there is nothing I can do there because there are no jobs.”

Education and sensitization

Preliminary Results

Sexual violence and Mai Mai

“If one person from the group decides to rape, or a fellow soldier rapes a woman, people will say that the group of Shikito is raping women.”

Reasons/motivations for sexual violence:

“Men become addicted to rape because intelligence or mind doesn't work normally.”

“Men think that any person in the militia or in the military has a priority to take any women.”

Awareness of disease

“The consequences for those who have committed rape can mostly be getting contaminated by disease. They can get sick without knowing because they do not get tested.”

Challenges

- Creating rapport with interviewee
- Avoiding “coached” responses and “shut down”
 - Interviewer: “According to you, what could be the motivation for men to commit rape?”
 - Interviewee: “I don’t know and I don’t have any answer about it.”

Implications

- Radio messages and sensitization in military meetings
- Health information – risks of sexual violence in information on how to get tested for STIs
- Jobs and income-generating training

Future Research Needs



Future Research Needs

Going forward, we need better understanding of:

- Female combatants and women living with armed groups
- Comparison across armed groups: FARDC, FDLR, CDNP
- Perpetrator motivations and militia command structures
- Effectiveness of recovery and reintegration strategies
- Sexual violence against men and boys

Questions, Comments

