

RECONCILIATION

STOP SEXUAL VIOLENCE - SPEAK UP!

Presbyterian World Mission Addresses Sexual Violence in Conflict in Eastern Congo



Eastern Congo has been called “the most dangerous place on earth to be a woman.” In areas where rebel forces use rape as a weapon to demoralize and subjugate local communities, Presbyterian World Mission is standing with the Church of Christ in Congo to faithfully respond to the plight of survivors. After two decades of conflict, remnants of more than 30 armed groups continue to terrorize the population through brutal murder and sexual violence, including gang rape and the

maiming of women’s bodies with foreign objects. Coerced by fear, civilians agree to perform forced labour in mines controlled by some of these groups.

In his [report of 23 March 2015 to the Security Council](#), the UN Secretary General states that from January to September 2014, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) recorded 11,769 cases of sexual and gender-based violence in the five Eastern Provinces of Congo. Of these violations, 39 percent were directly related to the dynamics of conflict and perpetrated by armed groups, including members of the Congolese armed forces. The reintegration of former rebels has proven no guarantee for behavioral change, rather twisting attitudes in the general population towards sexual violence and causing rape to proliferate into society with an increase in number of civilian perpetrators as a result. Long overdue, the government has recently stepped up efforts to battle the generalized impunity perpetrators enjoyed.

The Church of Christ in Congo (ECC) is the national umbrella organization for more than 65 Protestant denominations. Rev. Berthe Nzeba, a Presbyterian pastor who heads the ECC’s Women’s and Families Department, accompanies the manifold efforts by women leaders of ECC member churches as they respond to the direct needs of rape survivors.

Presbyterian World Mission works with Rev. Nzeba to support these programs and to further the ECC’s advocacy work, where ECC women leaders represent the Protestant community in national and international interreligious platforms and in Civil Society coalitions to end sexual violence and advocate for peace and security.



Serving as a facilitator for women's and children's interests, Christi Boyd, a PC(USA) mission co-worker, comes alongside Rev. Nzeba to help her strategize around shared priorities and build synergies and alliances between ECC women leaders. Christi documents the personal accounts

of survivors of rape and interprets the larger geo-political context of local realities to build bridges of solidarity with PC(USA) constituents.

Please join the PC(USA) campaign to [Stop Sexual Violence](#). You can do so in various, complementary ways in order to have the greatest collective impact. Your donation to the Extra Commitment Opportunity (ECO) account [E052171-ECC Department of Women and Families](#) will help:

- Hands-on projects to:
 - Subsidize medical care and education support for affected children;
 - Provide seed money to create self-reliance for those rejected by spouses;
 - Establish communal agricultural projects to meet daily family needs;
 - Assist with community-based orphan care;
 - Promote regional reconciliation by helping to launch an initiative to empower women from western Rwanda and eastern DR Congo to address experiences of sexual and other forms of violence while enabling them to advance economically. For this initiative, please indicate “Reconciliation and Empowerment” on the memo line of your check or cover letter.

- Training programs to:
 - Support literacy training for adult women;
 - Build skills for income generating activities of rape survivors;
 - Train counselors for spiritual, psychological and social accompaniment;
 - Finance workshops for Biblical trauma-healing in children.

- Advocacy initiatives will further amplify our partners’ voice:
 - [Urge Congress](#) to reintroduce and enact the International Violence Against Women Act [H.R. 3571](#);
 - [Urge Congress](#) to support [H. R. 131](#) in commitment to long-term peace, stability, and observance of human rights in Congo, and to call on the DRC government to investigate and prosecute war crimes, specifically against women and children;
 - Call on the US Government to uphold provisions [1502](#) and [1504](#) of the Dodd-Frank Bill on transparency measures in the mining sector;
 - Join the Conflict-free consumers movement for [Campuses](#), for [Cities](#), and for [Congregations](#), and promote the [Congo's Gold Campaign: Look Who's Getting Engaged!](#)



Please, also consider sustaining Christi Boyd's ministry by making a gift to ECO account [E200314-Jeff and Christi Boyd](#). Congregations can designate contributions towards the Boyds' Directed Mission Support account, D506075, as well. Thank you for helping the ECC Women and Families Department to address root causes of violence and poverty in our globalizing world and to engage in reconciliation to restore a culture of peace.

Read [Sifa's story](#) (pictured, above left, with mission co-worker Christi Boyd and Jeanne Banyere, one of the ECC women leaders in East Congo).

View the [Heartbreak and Hope in Congo Webinar](#).