

protect & empower congo's women

RAISE
HOPE
♀ FOR CONGO

RAISE HOPE

With the ultimate goal of protecting and empowering Congolese women and girls, the RAISE Hope for Congo campaign works to:

Raise awareness about the conflict and the resulting widespread sexual violence against women and girls.

Increase news coverage of the conflict in eastern Congo.

Cultivate and educate activists about the root causes of and solutions to the conflict.

Influence and change policy on the Congo through promotion of the 4Ps—Peace, Protection, Punishment, and Prevention.

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark skin holding a young child. The woman is looking down at the child with a gentle expression. The child, who has dark skin and large, expressive eyes, is looking directly at the camera. They are both wearing a blue garment with a yellow and white floral pattern. The background is a rough, textured wall made of dark bricks or stones.

Protect and empower Congo's women



Congo has played host

to the world's deadliest
conflict since World War II

WHY CONGO?

Since 1996 the Democratic Republic of the Congo has played host to the world's deadliest conflict since World War II. More than 5.4 million people have died from the ravaging effects of war and its aftermath. Today, eastern Congo is caught in an epidemic of appalling sexual violence, as militias use rape as a military tactic to destroy communities and exert control over natural resources. This war is on the brink of yet another major escalation, and the international response has been wholly inadequate.

Following a landmark peace agreement and a tumultuous political transition backed by the world's largest United Nations peacekeeping operation, the Congo held largely successful elections in 2006. However, elections were not a panacea to eastern Congo's ills: 45,000 people die each month, mostly from hunger and disease resulting from the ongoing conflict. Some 500,000 people fled their homes in 2007, and women and girls continue to be routinely targeted for appalling acts of sexual violence.



WHY WOMEN?

Congolese women and girls in particular bear the vicious brunt of this crisis. Indeed, eastern Congo right now is perhaps the most dangerous place in the world to be a woman or a girl. Used as a weapon of war, sexual violence and rape exists on a scale seen nowhere else in the world. Often successful in its intent to destroy and exterminate, rape is causing the near total destruction of women, their families, and their communities. Yet efforts to protect women and girls in the Congo are failing spectacularly.



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WHY NOW?

Finally, in late 2007 and early 2008, the United States and its allies did the high-level diplomacy necessary to secure a peace agreement between the Congolese government and multiple armed groups operating in the East. While the recent ceasefire agreement, signed in January 2008 by the Congolese government and 22 rebel groups, is hailed as a diplomatic success, the continued suffering of Congolese civilians remains an international failure. Not surprisingly, the prevalence of sexual violence in eastern Congo received no mention in the lengthy ceasefire agreement, and women were mentioned only once.

The peace deal is just the beginning. The United States government, working closely with its allies, must strongly support the peace deal's implementation and help rid eastern Congo of the militias that wreak havoc on civilian populations. U.S. citizens have a vital role to play in pressuring the U.S. to move the Congo up on the foreign policy agenda, because strong U.S. engagement can avert an even more catastrophic conflict and help secure lasting peace in eastern Congo.

THE CAMPAIGN

The RAISE Hope for Congo campaign aims to build a permanent and diverse constituency of activists that will advocate for the protection and empowerment Congolese women and girls. The Enough Project will collaborate with national, grassroots, and Congolese organizations, across various constituencies and the political spectrum, to build this grassroots movement. Enough will also continue to provide policy analysis and recommendations, focusing on the 4Ps—Peace, Protection, Punishment, and Prevention.

This multifaceted and multiyear campaign will provide a menu of actions for activists to choose from in tailoring their own campaign experience.

RAISE

AWARENESS

The campaign will provide activists with informative tools to educate themselves and their communities about the conflict in eastern Congo and the epidemic of sexual violence against women and girls.

RAISE

YOUR VOICE

The campaign will provide a menu of actions that activists can take to raise their voices and call for an end to the conflict and sexual violence in eastern Congo. This menu will include a petition to the President of the United States, as well as tools for supporting legislative efforts, such as the International Violence Against Women Act.

RAISE

THE PROFILE

The campaign will work with activists to raise the profile of the Congo conflict in the media and on the national stage. In addition to encouraging activists to write sample op-eds and letters to the editor, the campaign will ask supporters to urge the major broadcast news networks to increase their coverage of the Congo through the “Be a Witness” campaign.

The RAISE Hope for Congo Campaign will be launched through a national speakers' tour to educate and raise awareness about the conflict in eastern Congo and the resulting epidemic of sexual violence against women and girls. The tour will be accompanied by the CONGO/Women exhibit featuring photographs by Lindsay Addario, Marcus Bleasdale, Ron Haviv, and James Nachtwey.

The RAISE Hope for Congo Campaign is partnering with V-Day and STAND (the student-led division of the Genocide Intervention Network) to sponsor Congo Teach Ins on college campuses across the country. Through this initiative, we will reach thousands of students by providing a curriculum to activist students who will hold their own teach ins on campus. This project will enable students to educate each other about the conflict in eastern Congo and resulting sexual violence against women and girls, as well as what they can do to be a part of the solution.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: **WWW.RAISEHOPEFORCONGO.ORG** EMAIL: **CONGOCAMPAIGN@ENOUGHPROJECT.ORG**



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