

dr. Denis
Mukwege Foundation



Annual Report 2017

www.mukwegefoundation.org

Table of contents

Table of contents..... 2

Letter from the director 3

Why we need to eliminate wartime sexual violence..... 5

Who we are..... 7

How we work 8

What we do 9

What we will do..... 15

Letter from the director

2017 was a crucial year for the Mukwege Foundation. We refined our objectives and were able to reap the first fruits of our labours. However, as sexual violence is still committed in many conflict-affected countries, we need to .

In December I met with survivors drafted for military sexual slavery by Japan during the Second World War.

After the end of the war, the victims did not dare to speak out for more than 50 years. They suffered in silence, the truth living on only in their own memories. Now, in their nineties, the world hears the voices of the women. Their legacy is their wavering perseverance in breaking the silence and demanding justice.

Since the end of the Second World War, generations of women and girls around the world have faced similar ordeals. In the conflicts in Colombia, Bangladesh, Mexico, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Rwanda, Uganda, Mali, Kosovo, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia and other countries, rape has been used as a tactic to destroy the victims, their families and their communities. Today, sexual violence is committed systematically in Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Sudan, Darfur, Myanmar, Syria, Iraq and other conflicts.

In all these countries, the silence around these crimes and the total impunity are striking. Many victims do not speak out because they risk being killed. Their communities do not believe them, shame them, mock them and leave them behind. Therefore, their stories go undocumented and are absent from history books and international newspapers.

Yet there is hope. In an unprecedented international meeting, dozens of survivors from around the world gathered to affect change – in



Esther Dingemans
Director

their communities, and around the world.

Women from different generations, from past and from current conflicts on all continents came together to share their experiences and continue their efforts to eliminate sexual violence in conflict. Tired of waiting for action to trickle down from international bodies, survivors are taking matters into their own hands.

The power of these women is admirable. They have been sold as slaves, they have been held as toys of military men, they were imprisoned in dark prison cells or raped in front of the eyes of their own children. But the perpetrators of these crimes did not succeed in breaking them.

We must not only stand behind survivors in their fight for change. But, as an international community, we must also provide access to quality services, unveil the truth, recognize the harm done, compensate those whose lives have been destroyed, and punish governments that fail to invest in justice or commit atrocities. Governments should make the end of sexual violence an international priority.

In 2017 we catalysed the development to achieve these goals, and cemented our role as a leading organizing working to end the use of wartime sexual violence. In the coming years, we hope to continue at the same pace.

We are committed to continuing to support Dr Mukwege in his mission by taking his work to a global level: provide quality support to survivors and ban rape as a weapon of war.

We are grateful for the support of the Dutch Postcode Lottery and other donors who are enabling us to use innovative ways towards ending sexual violence. Their trust is crucial to continue our work and achieve lasting, long-term change.

"Tired of waiting, survivors are taking matters into their own hands."



Why we need to eliminate wartime sexual violence

Sexual violence is used as a tactic of warfare around the world. While hundreds of thousands of people fall victim to these atrocities, the crimes rarely make headlines. The international community has failed to prevent and stop them and often does not provide acknowledgement and relief to survivors. We are working to change this.

Rape and other forms of sexual violence are being used as a weapon of war in numerous conflicts around the world, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Iraq, Syria, Myanmar and South Sudan. Armies, rebel groups and terrorist organizations target civilians with grotesque violence that involves gang rape, sexual slavery, and other atrocities.

While there is not sufficient information available to determine the exact number of individual victims, research indicates a generally upward trend in the number of conflicts where systematic rape is reported. While in 1990, rape was reportedly common or massive in only about 20% of conflicts, the percentage increased to 44% in 2009.

Large-scale sexual violence has serious physical, psychological and socio-economic consequences for victims and long-term implications for families, communities and countries.

Survivors face a cascade of consequences from permanent physical injuries, to long-term, debilitating PTSD, and from crippling social stigma to exclusion from legal redress or compensation.

Moreover, rape during conflicts reinforces gender inequalities and normalises sexual

violence, even after a conflict has ended. The consequences go beyond individual traumatising, and harm societies as a whole over generations.

A world in which wartime sexual violence is condemned and survivors speak out.

Together with the world-renowned gynaecologist and activist Dr Denis Mukwege, we apply a set of strategies to end conflict-related sexual violence worldwide. Our initiatives use advocacy to unite governments and inspire joint action. We bring different actors in conflict-affected countries together in order to scale up holistic quality care for survivors and share best practices in victims' support from DRC.

We envision a world in which wartime sexual violence is condemned and has consequences for individual perpetrators as well as states who fail to take action. We envision a future where survivors receive the care they need and where they have not only have the freedom to speak out, but are encouraged to do so.

What women endure in our societies in times of peace is a latent form of what they then suffer in times of conflict.

Dr. Denis Mukwege

Who we are

The Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation is one of the very few specialized organisations worldwide focussing exclusively on conflict-related sexual violence. Our strategies to end the atrocities include initiatives to stop and prevent the violence, to provide quality care to victims and to make survivors' voices heard at the international level.

We have mapped out the systemic changes that need to happen to break the cycle of violence, denial, and impunity once and for all.

At the local level, we directly support Dr Denis Mukwege's Panzi Hospital and Foundation in the DRC. Since 1999, Panzi has helped to care for more than 50,000 survivors of sexual violence. Our organisation was founded to support the team to take its outstanding expertise and activism to a global level. We help promote Panzi's ground-breaking model of holistic care for survivors of sexual violence, and we support its expansion to other conflict-torn regions.

At the international level, we work with governments and international organisations to strengthen the international norms prohibiting sexual violence, as well as exploring innovations to our legal systems to gain justice

for victims. Furthermore, we are helping survivors to set up a global network, to amplify their voices and promote their involvement in programmes and policies which impact them.

Our approach puts survivors of sexual violence at the fore. It stems from extensive consultations with them and addresses the fact that existing prevention and support programmes — while well-intended — often do not meet survivors' needs, or even reach survivors at all.

In doing so we are challenging the assumption that severely traumatised victims cannot be expected to speak for themselves. In fact, when given the right support, survivors are proving to be effective advocates for their needs, well able to make invaluable contributions at all levels of the response to wartime sexual violence.



How we work

The Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation works at the international level in close contact with survivors around the world and organizations in the field. We use national and international advocacy and global campaigning in order to achieve lasting and systemic change.



Our source of inspiration

In DRC, Dr Denis Mukwege and his team at Panzi Hospital have been treating more than 50,000 victims of sexual violence in the last two decades. The impact of their work on individuals, the region and the country as a whole inspires us to take these best-practices to a global level.

Support survivors

We scale up medical, psychological, legal and socio-economic support and build networks of survivors. If survivors are heard, they can lead the global fight for recognition and change.

Build a norm

We translate the demands of survivors into compelling national and international advocacy that moves governments and the public to use their influence for change. The violence must end, the crimes be acknowledged, and the harm repaired.

Eliminate wartime sexual violence

Our goal is to achieve a world in which sexual violence is no longer used as a method of warfare.

What we do

Expansion of holistic care worldwide

Realizing the right to medical, psychological, legal and socio-economic support

Based on their long experience of providing care to victims of wartime rape, the team at Panzi Hospital in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has pioneered a holistic approach which provides not only medical care, but also psycho-social support, legal assistance and socio-economic support.

By helping survivors of sexual violence to fully heal and reintegrate, their individual well-being and society at large benefits, as survivors become agents of change within their communities.

The Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation supports Panzi in the implementation of this successful and sustainable model in other areas in DRC and in other conflict-affected settings. In a south-to-south capacity building approach, members of the Panzi medical team train experts in other countries.

In 2017, with support of the Mukwege Foundation, Panzi teams of experts have travelled to Conakry, Guinea to strengthen the national capacity to provide holistic care for survivors of sexual violence. Similar exchange visits took place in the Central African Republic and Rwanda.

Guinea

At the end of 2017, a partnership was reached with Pro Victimis to implement the holistic model in Guinea. On September 28th of 2009, a politically-motivated massacre took place in the stadium of Conakry resulting in 156 murders and 110 women raped, with some of them kept in sexual slavery for days by the military and government-controlled militias.

Some of these victims never received proper medical care, or psychosocial assistance. Dr Mukwege travelled to Guinea to collaborate with some of these survivors and an association of victims, AVIPA, which fights for the rights of the victims of the massacre.

His commitment to support the Guinean survivors was the impetus behind this project, which will officially start in 2018 and will consist of knowledge-sharing between two African associations – Panzi Foundation in DRC and AVIPA in Guinea. The Mukwege Foundation will coordinate this project and facilitate exchanges between the partners.

Global Survivor Network

Bringing survivors from different generations and cultures together



Participants at the first retreat for survivors of sexual violence in conflict in 2017 in Geneva.

A group of survivors of wartime sexual violence from different countries are starting to organise themselves very effectively in a growing network, which we support.

This network began to evolve in June 2017, when we organised an international survivor retreat, where 34 women from 14 countries came together in order to connect with other survivors to share their stories, learn from one another and amplify their voices. The aim of this retreat was to support survivors to fight for their rights and jointly explore opportunities for taking united action against wartime sexual violence.

Participants were courageous individuals from around the world who surmounted obstacles

to break the silence in their home countries and made important progress in the fight against rape as a weapon of war.

The retreat also included a public exhibition, "Hidden Voices," where survivors used music, video, art, and poetry to show their strength. The exhibition highlighted the ways in which survivors express themselves through arts to fight for recognition and change. An estimated 200 people attended the exhibition, representing NGOs, media, politicians, universities, UN agencies and civil society.

During the retreat, participants followed music therapy sessions and wrote a song together, which expressed their feelings.

► Video: <https://youtu.be/8IkOMsPp6jQ>

The participants of the retreat identified several areas that require more attention at the national and international level. Some of these topics include: medical and psychological care for survivors, female solidarity and empowerment, healing with art, access to services for victims in isolated zones, justice for child victims, involvement of men in preventing violence, recognition of victim status by legal mechanisms and breaking the silence at different levels - both individually and within the community.

The participants decided to set up a global survivor movement, which could play an important role in advocating for the needs of survivors, informing governments and humanitarian organisations about the support that survivors need and how they could be part of the decision-making processes.

Following the creation of the Network, the survivors came together to show their solidarity through a first joint statement in November 2017. Survivors created a video message of support that was shown at a conference for Asian "comfort women." The members of the Survivor Network highlighted the fact that these women are still lacking justice. They demanded, as less than 50 survivors in Korea are still alive, the government must make a change now. Leading media outlets in Korea, including the Choongang Daily and the Seoul Newspaper reported on the initiative of the Network.

► Video with messages of support:
<https://youtu.be/MSCPb4TSJts>

In order to stay connected, the women who attended the retreat in June joined a WhatsApp group, where they share stories of their ongoing activities, and ask for help where needed.



"Hidden Voices": An exhibition by sexual violence survivors in 2017 in Geneva.



Survivors meet the Grand Dutchess of Luxembourg.

Looking forward

Survivor-led networks are being created at two levels — globally and nationally. The international dimension is essential, bringing survivors from different generations and cultures together to learn from each other. It promotes solidarity, builds the survivors' confidence, and increases their awareness of the commonality of their experiences. It helps them to see their personal experiences in the wider context of systematic sexual violence in conflict, and has strengthened their resolve to mobilise lasting change by challenging the structural causes of conflict-related rape.

Momentum is building far faster than could have been expected, and we continue to seek financial support to enable these networks to scale up and move to the next level of activity. Together with the survivors, we envisage several activities in the coming years related to the network's structure, speaking out publicly, connecting with one another, documenting stories, building capacities and expanding the network.

Structure and working groups

A follow-up meeting is planned for February 2018 in The Hague. Building on survivors' achievements, and moving forward, the aim of this meeting will be to discuss the strategy of the Network, including its structure, mission and vision, and main aims for the coming years. Working groups are being created, where 5-8 women will focus on certain thematic areas (i.e., reparations, communications, advocacy, events) to guide the Network as a whole.

Speaking out at public events

Already at the end of 2017, the Global Survivor Network has received increasing amounts of attention. As a result, the women comprising the network will continue to speak out at relevant events. These activities will be linked to a global campaign, that will be designed in 2018.

Better means for connection

In addition to the existing WhatsApp group, tools will be created to facilitate contact among survivors in the Network. A GoogleGroups account, a preformatted but very secure online forum, will be created in 2018. In the future we aim to scale this up to something more significant, as we want to reach out to thousands of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence worldwide, and a public-facing, online presence would add value to this network by enabling the survivors to engage with a much wider public.

Furthermore, in the upcoming year, a website will be created to provide a tool for survivors to present their stories, learn from one another, and provide information to the public.

Documenting stories

Not only will the online platform serve to connect women, it will also meet one of our goals of documentation. Documenting survivors' experiences and testimonies is central to their healing process. One of their first priorities is the creation of a safe space online, where all survivors are treated with respect and dignity, and where their stories can be told on their own terms through film, photography, writing and music. It will form a collective memory where history can be written

for future generations. Not only does this support individuals in their healing, but it gives support to those who do not yet feel able to speak out. It creates an inspiring resource to raise wider awareness of the human consequences of wartime rape, and to challenge the widespread denial of these crimes.

Capacity Building

We also aim to provide capacity-building trainings to strengthen the network. These trainings will provide network members with the tools necessary to continue their advocacy (e.g., public speaking), but also will help them become more independent within their own

activities, both nationally and globally. Topics of the capacity building training will include, but are not limited to: communications, advocacy strategies, monitoring and measuring impact, fundraising, financial management and reporting.

Expanding the network

Finally, we aim not only to expand in number of survivors participating in the network, but also in the number of countries involved. While at the end of 2017 there are 14 countries included in the Network – Bosnia, Burundi, Colombia, DRC, Guinea, Iraq, Kosovo, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Rwanda, South Sudan, Syria, and Uganda - we aim to eventually have representation from all (post) conflict countries.



Norm building

Unite governments to make the end of sexual violence an international priority

We build alliances to move states to take their legal and moral responsibility to prevent and halt sexual violence, and to support survivors through reparations.

As a first step, we bring governments together which are committed to improving the systematic monitoring of conflict-related sexual violence, to taking measures to prevent and halt them, and to providing reparations to survivors. This initiative aims at building a global norm against wartime sexual violence and transforming the lives of thousands of people worldwide by acknowledging the harm suffered and providing practical support.

In 2017 experts of our organization in international media and spoke at conferences in order to raise awareness among the general public and increase the pressure on the government to act. In addition, we wrote open letters to decision makers in governments and teamed up with other organizations to inform them and shape the discussion.

During extensive meetings with experts, such as during a round table we organized in Paris and at a conference in Oslo, we developed detailed solutions to innovate international cooperation and propose concrete solutions.

Achievements

We contributed to the development of the Guidelines on combating sexual violence and its consequences in Africa which were commissioned by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and cover the legal framework and the obligations of states. The ACHPR is an international body to promoting and protecting human rights. Our suggestions were adopted by the member states and are now in the final document and help governments and organizations to strengthen their response to conflict-related sexual violence.

Moreover, we work closely with Dr Mukwege and facilitate his advocacy work, such as in his role as a rapporteur for the High-Level Working Group for Health and Human Rights of Women, Children and Adolescents of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Office of the High-Commissioner for Human Rights. The report of the working group calls on governments to step up their action to uphold the right to health in their laws. We provided practical support throughout the writing process and the launch of the report which provided new insights into the relations between health and human rights.

What we will do

We have innovative ideas that have the potential to make a real change both in the lives of individual survivors and at a systemic level. In 2018 we expect a number of these initiatives to take off and yield concrete results.

Support survivors

An expected deterioration of the situation in the DRC will require full attention of Panzi and an increase in providing financial and practical support to enable the team to respond to the current crisis.

Meanwhile, the expansion of the holistic model in the Central African Republic will continue and is expected to lead to a concrete implementation plan in 2018.

Global Survivor Network

In 2018, we hope to be able to support the Global Survivor Network so that it can expand membership, launch its own campaign, and work towards joint calls for action. This would include capacity building support, support to facilitate exchanges between survivors from different countries, both at national and at global levels. Survivors also aspire to regional 'clusters' where survivors from a number of



countries can learn from each other's experiences and join forces. There is also a strong call from survivors to support them in a project documenting their history on their own terms, through the use of film, photography and other forms of creative expression.

Norm building

After having established first contacts with a number of governments and influential individuals, we work towards involving them closely in the further process. Together with the reparations working group within the Global Survivor Network, we will continue the discussion about justice and accountability.

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