

What are the main findings in the study?

- **Demographics:**
 - In South Kivu, women are subjected to sexual violence regardless of age, marital status or ethnicity. Both the mean and median age was 35 years with an age range of 3.5 to 80 years. 60% of survivors were less than 16 years of age and 10% were 65 years of age or older. The majority of women (53%) were married, 22% were widowed, and 9% reported that they had been abandoned by their spouses. The majority of women self-identified with the Bashi tribe (65%).
 - The majority of rape survivors (59%) were illiterate, and only 9% had attended secondary or post-secondary school. The majority of women presenting to Panzi Hospital reported agriculture as their source of livelihood (74%) and almost 10% reported that they were unemployed.
- **Presentation to Panzi Hospital:**
 - Many sexual violence survivors who presented to Panzi Hospital came alone (36%). Other women were accompanied by aid workers (13%), family members (7%) or other patients traveling to Panzi Hospital (7%). Less than 1% of women were accompanied by their husbands.
 - Most rape survivors wait extended periods of time before accessing medical care. The mean time delay was 10.4 months and the median time delay was 7 months. Only 12% of women presented within the first month following the sexual assault. Many women came within the first year following the attack or had a much-delayed presentation, not seeking help for more than three years following the assault.
- **Patterns of sexual violence:**
 - Women in South Kivu are not safe anywhere; they are attacked not only while they farm their fields (16.4%) or collect firewood in the forest (14.7%) but also in the supposed safety of their own homes (56.5%), often while sleeping at night with their families (57% of the women reported being attacked at night). If present, the husband was often beaten, killed, or restrained while the woman was raped.
 - In some instances, the victim's family members were forced to watch her being raped, which caused the victims to feel even more shame. These family members were most often the husband, the children, or the mother/father-in-law.
 - The sexual violence in South Kivu is largely militarized. Just over half of all perpetrators (52%) were identified as being armed combatants. Although another 42% were identified by the women only as "assailants", analysis of the patterns of violence strongly suggests that this group is also comprised largely of armed combatants.
 - Military rape in South Kivu is marked with a predominance of gang rape, which was described by almost 60% of sexual violence survivors presenting to Panzi Hospital.
 - 12% of the women reported being captured and held as a sexual slave for at least 24 hours, with some women being held captive for several years. Sexual slavery more frequently involved young, single women. In some instances, the women were taken

as “wives” by a particular soldier, often a chief or commander. In other instances, the women were raped by many men over a period of time. Many women were eventually able to escape. Occasionally, family members paid money to the captors in exchange for the women’s release.

- The sexual assaults are also remarkable for extraordinary brutality including genital mutilation, instrumentation with foreign objects, forced rape between victims, and rape of pregnant women. There are also horrific reports of young children being slaughtered in front of their parents and of family members being tortured and killed. The military pattern of rape was also notable for a preponderance of pillaging with many survivors reporting the loss of cash, food, livestock, clothing and other valuables.
- An analysis of sexual violence trends over time revealed that the total number of reported assaults at Panzi Hospital had steadily decreased between 2004 and 2008. Figures have been affected, however, by a number of particularly serious incidents in 2004, such as one single weekend in June when up to 16,000 women were reportedly raped by military forces in Bukavu. [Note: Although not falling within the period of the study, cases of military rape have again surged in 2009 as a result of the Kimia II military offensive, with over 9,000 people – mostly women and girls, but also men and boys – raped in the affected provinces over the course of the year.]
- The analysis also demonstrated a civilian adoption of rape. From 2004 to 2008, the number of civilian rapes increased by an astounding 1733% or 17-fold, while the number of rapes by armed combatants decreased by 77%. These findings imply a normalization of rape among the civilian population, suggesting the erosion of all constructive social mechanisms that ought to protect civilians from sexual violence.
- Consequences for survivors (largely derived from the qualitative analysis):
 - Sexual violence survivors experienced a host of physical symptoms following rape, including pelvic, lumbar and abdominal pain as well as reproductive abnormalities such as infertility and premature labor and delivery. Women often expressed concern about infections, particularly HIV, after being raped. Psychological symptoms following sexual violence were also common. Women described sadness, anger, fear, anxiety, shame and misery.
 - Many women also suffered significant losses such as the death of family members, spousal abandonment and loss of personal valuables as a result of the attack.
 - Some women reported that they became pregnant as a result of the sexual violence. Management of pregnancy resulting from rape is always challenging even in western countries with advanced health care systems. In the DRC, any pregnancy, labor and delivery can be detrimental to a women’s health, and risks are significantly higher for young girls whose bodies are not mature enough for labor and delivery and for women who have serious pelvic injuries and scarring from the physical damage often caused by gang rape.
 - The epidemic of sexual violence also affects the livelihoods of women in South Kivu. Almost 74% of sexual violence survivors in this study reported agriculture as their

- source of livelihood. Women who suffer bodily injuries may be unable to return to the heavy physical labor required to cultivate the fields. Other women may be in a position to return, but may only be able to work in a reduced capacity, thus reducing their income and limiting the ability to support their families. Some sexual violence survivors are displaced from their homes and their communities and thus are forced to desert their fields and to at least temporarily abandon their source of livelihood.
- Many children are affected by the sexual violence in South Kivu, including 1) those who are themselves survivors of rape (6% of the survivors in the current study were under age 16); 2) those who have experienced sexual violence secondhand by witnessing the rape of their mothers and/or other family members (not quantified in this study, but likely a significant number, particularly since many of the assaults happened in the family home at night when children would have likely been present); and 3) those children who were conceived and born out of rape and are often highly stigmatized by the community because they are viewed as offspring of the enemy, or even abandoned by their families.