



## PRESS RELEASE :

### *MOBILE CINEMA TO BREAK THE SILENCE SURROUNDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE*

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***An African proverb says: “The baby that sleeps on his mother’s back without crying may risk dying in silence.”***

It is through this scope that a MOBILE CINEMA project has been launched in South Kivu in an attempt to BREAK the silence surrounding sexual violence committed against women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With the use of a roaming big screen, moving from one village to another through the territories of South Kivu over the course of the next twelve months, the mobile cinema gives the opportunity to hundreds of thousands of viewers to watch a film and partake in the discussions revolving around the messages contained in the film.

Witness accounts of raped women and girls are proof of the physical and psychological consequences of this drama. By listening to the accounts made by their husbands or their fathers, the shame and upheaval felt by these men comes forth, shedding light upon the taboos and scars surrounding rape, that often punish twice those who have survived such atrocities.

Emphasizing the efforts put forth by local organizations that attempt to fight this plague, one comes to acknowledge the tremendous challenges and barriers their sensitization efforts are met with. Despite the promulgation of a law on sexual violence two years ago, the film highlights the challenges related with the access to justice and the impunity many victims and their families are confronted with.

According to the Provincial Coordination on Acts of Sexual Violence related to Gender of the UNPFA, close to one thousand five hundred women were raped in the province of South Kivu between January and June alone. This number means that more than eight women get raped on a daily basis in South Kivu alone. Over the last few years it is estimated that 40,000 women have been raped by armed groups, the military and other civilians in eastern DRC. More so, these figures only represent the cases in which the victims or their families have accepted to report the rape. Given the taboos and the scars surrounding this crime, how many women have not even had the courage to speak out?

Produced by IF Productions in collaboration with Whyze Communications and Research Netherlands, BREAK THE SILENCE was foremost produced for a western audience, and was screened at a dozen international film festivals ([www.fightingthesilence.com](http://www.fightingthesilence.com)). However the directors, two twins Ilse and Femke van Velzen, wanted to make sure their work would also have an impact in the DRC where the rape phenomenon still plagues families and communities. Thanks to the footage of the initial documentary film, IF Productions has screened 4 new films in the Swahili language. The first 60-minute film targets a large audience, and deals with the consequences, the taboos and the search for solutions to tackle rape, including the implementation of the new law. Three derived films were put together targeting three specific groups in this project: the youth, the military, and couples. The derived films were elaborated for groups of approximately 50 viewers with sequences assembled into sections of 10-20 minutes each, punctuated by discussions, before screening the next section. All these films come with a FACILITATION GUIDE to ensure a logical sequence of events during the debate and discussions.

Under the supervision of Search for Common Ground ([www.sfcg.org](http://www.sfcg.org)), the Mobile Cinema will be set up in collaboration with local organizations operating to tackle the problem of sexual violence in the province. Such organizations include the Olame Center, the Women's Network for Development and Peace, SOFIBEF, SOFAD, Solidarité Paysanne, RADHF, BVES, CDJP, FSH, SARCAF, FIJPL, GASAP, ECC MERU, VICO, GAO and many more. The project benefits from the support from Amnesty International in the Netherlands along with the UNHCR in DRC.



Since the pilot phase was launched in September, with screenings in Bukavu, Walungu, Baraka, Uvira and Luvungi, the project will draw a road map to circulate throughout all the country roads around southern Kivu. With a big screen of 3 x 4 meters, some speakers, and a generator to provide power the project is set to face the field conditions of South Kivu.

The viewers in Walungu, a locality severely affected by the rape phenomenon, said how important the projection had been to them. *"I was raped, and lost my home"*, told a rape victim after seeing the film. *"It's important to show this, for it was only after I found an outlet in local associations and was able to share what I had endured that I was able to get a hold of myself"*. A man from Walungu added: *"The film shows well how men also suffer from their wives being raped. It is important to provide them with counseling, and not solely help the women"*. Frustrations were also voiced: *"You tell us about the new law condemning acts of sexual violence, but will all those foreigners living in the forest be punished also one day?"* said a young man after a public screening. During the projection of the derived film for a crowd of about sixty militaries from the tenth military region in Bukavu, it was obvious that the very notion of a rape was subject to confusion, *"The girls come towards us, and we pay them. And after that you call it rape?"* said a military. During the discussions surrounding the derived films, this project collaborates with committees from the FARDC partaking in the to the LOBI MOKOLO YA SIKA joint Search For Common Ground and ECC MERU project destined to sensitize members of the armed forces.

*"The Mobile Cinema is captivating and pleasant, and therefore is a very effective means to reach a great number of people"*, said Lena Slachmuisjlder, Director of Search For Common Ground in DRC, which has produced broadcasts for hundreds of radios in the country since 2001. *"The need for sensitization, despite all the undergoing efforts, remains huge. The taboos, stereotypes and confusion surrounding the mere definition of what rape is and how to respond to it, yet need to be discussed and clarified. This project will awaken the hearts and minds and will reach out to people all over the province to inform them and open them to dialogue."*

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