

## **Christine Schuler-Deschryver, Tireless Advocate For Women, Writes from the Democratic Republic of Congo**

The recurring wars in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have caused one of the greatest humanitarian disasters of the century, with more than four million dead, millions more displaced and more than a hundred thousand women raped in the Sud-Kivu province alone, in conditions of extreme savagery. We have screamed our suffering, we have welcomed powerful representatives from around the world, we have begged for an end to the violence, all in vain. We are blocked by the deafness and indifference of the rest of the world to the "femicide" now taking place in the DRC, where the bodies of women and children have become a playground where anything is permitted.

The rapes quickly grew to epidemic proportions and became commonplace. Women's bodies are being used as torture chambers.

Despite the despair, the horror, the tears, the overwhelming feelings of impotence, the cowardly longing to give up and flee, there was always a glimmer of hope. Our glimmer, I'm certain, was the arrival in Bukavu of women's rights activist and author of "The Vagina Monologues" Eve Ensler, crossing mountains and valleys to touch for herself the suffering of these voiceless, muzzled women, in whose name we speak, for whom we express ourselves. All the women of Sud-Kivu and, I'm sure the entire DRC, support and join in this campaign against rape co-sponsored by V-day and UNICEF.

We remain convinced that only these mobilizations can push the world's leaders to prioritize the security of our people and put an end to this silent "femicide", these terrible crimes against humanity.

We only demand one thing : THE RIGHT TO LIVE, to live freely in our own land, we insist that justice be done and that this impunity at all levels be ended.

Bukavu, August 6, 2007

Christine Schuler-Deschryver, Women's right activist