

(1186) Public Health War-Related Injury Surveillance: Towards Action

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PROBLEM

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has been in the throes of conflict for the past seven years through which has claimed over 3.5 million lives. The conflict included:

- 1) civil wars, internal rebellions, militia (e.g. the Mai Mai) and ethnic clashes e.g. among tribes in the Ituri Region and
- 2) wars of aggression carried out by foreign armies from Rwanda and Uganda.

There is no systematic actionable data that would allow a better understanding and solution to the problem.

OBJECTIVES

To determine the prevalence, pattern, distribution and characteristics of war-related injuries in Kisangani.

To generate data that would help global humanitarian efforts to prevent such war-related injuries.

To determine the causes and risk factors of these injuries.

METHOD

Retrospective study of the Medical records between 1996 and 2002 at the participating units including the University Teaching Hospital of Kisangani, Lubunga, Kabondo, Kisangani Referral Hospitals, the Military Health Pavilion, , Private Clinics and Simama Rehabilitation Centre.

RESULTS

Around 9 543 cases were studied and the data included sex, age, site, circumstance, weapon used and situation of victim. 80% of civilians were women and children.

CONCLUSION

War-related injuries which reached epidemic proportions between 1997 and 2000 remain a public health concern accounting for mortality and morbidity and related diseases such as epidemics of diarrheas, bone infections, malnutrition etc . Victims were seen mostly at the Military Health Pavilion, University Teaching Hospital of Kisangani, Kisangani and Kabondo Referral. Individuals not directly involved in the war were also targeted in residential areas, public edifices, schools and military establishments. Generally more men than women and children were affected.

The following are recommended:

- 1) Tackle the root causes of violence through promotion of democracy and good governance, tolerance and peaceful conflict resolution.
- 2) Discouraging hegemonic and ideologies that lead to ethnocentrism.
- 3) Fighting poverty and socio-economic disparities through equitable redistribution of national wealth.
- 4) Promoting embargoes on the production and traffic of SALW.
- 5) Reinforce collaboration between civil society and the Government Agencies engaged in non proliferation, banning and abolition processes.
- 6) Reinforce the capacity of the health workers living in conflict zones by training them in trauma cases management by offering financial and technical assistance for research and also equipping adequately health care facilities in order to cope with injuries cases