



Democratic Republic of Congo's

Life or Death Transition

DVD Discussion – Facilitator's Guide

Introduction

One of the ways you can help advance the cause of the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and live your faith in solidarity with them is to learn more about how they are affected by the country's ongoing conflict. A great tool to learn about conflict in the DRC is a DVD recently produced by *Caritas Internationalis* entitled "*D. R. Congo's Life or Death Transition*." A free copy of the DVD is available from CRS by sending a request to resources@crs.org or calling 1-866-608-5978.

This Facilitator's Guide is designed to help you structure and facilitate a learning event around the DVD with a group from your parish or community.

Caritas Internationalis is a global confederation of 162 Catholic relief, development and social service organizations, including Catholic Relief Services (CRS), which helped fund the DVD. The goal of the film is to raise awareness of the plight of the Congolese people - particularly the daily horrors experienced by people in the eastern part of the country - and to generate support for the country's transition to a peaceful, stable, and democratic society that respects human dignity and human rights.

The film is just over 51 minute long and is divided into six segments. The DVD's opening screen allows you to play the entire film – or select individual segments:

- Plundering of Resources (9:40)
- Rape as a Weapon of War (7:30)
- The Congo Today (9:20)
- The Political Transition (9:27)
- The International Community (9:20)
- Church's Involvement (4:45) – features CRS staff person Akim Kikonda Kula

Before the Event

- Visit CRS' website for more information about the DRC: <http://crs.org/democratic-republic-of-congo/> and <http://www.crs.org/public-policy/>.
- Read CRS' Democratic Republic of Congo country profile and make copies for participants, available at <http://www.crs.org/public-policy/>.
- View the film by yourself or with a group to decide whether you will show all or part of the DVD.
- Consider inviting local speakers who may have experience or knowledge of the Congo (or who are themselves Congolese) to lead discussion after the video.
- Arrange for time, place, equipment, and logistics.
- Publicize the event or invite people to the event.

Materials Needed

1. DVD: Democratic Republic of Congo's Life or Death Transition.
2. DVD player (and projector if using a laptop) and monitor/screen.
3. Photocopies of the Democratic Republic of Congo country profile.

Suggested Scripture Readings to prepare group for a pre-video reflection

Isaiah 65:17-25

Jeremiah 9:18-23

Micah 4:3-7

Psalms 143: 1-12

1 Corinthians 12:18-26

Pre-Video Reflection/Discussion

In your group, invite participants to reflect on their personal experience with circumstances that either built up or diminished their sense of human dignity. What were the specific circumstances? Has anyone in the group struggled with a lack of money to pay for food or utilities? Has anyone been the victim of violence? How do such experiences affect people's sense of dignity and hope?

Introduce the DVD briefly and ask:

1. What do you know about the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)?
2. What does the film's title tell you about the urgency of the situation?

Discussion Questions

A short summary and a few discussion questions for the topic addressed in each chapter of the DVD are available.

Segment 1: Plundering of Resources (9:40)

The DRC is a country roughly four times the size of Texas, and has an abundance of natural resources, including gold, copper, cobalt, coltan, and diamonds. Fighting has largely been fueled by the exploitation of and control over mineral-rich provinces in the eastern part of the country. Traffickers, who bribe local political and military leaders, have maintained a stronghold in the area, funneling the wealth out of the DRC.

1. Why do you think the conflict in the DRC has been fueled by the control of natural resources?
2. What other regional issues have an impact on the DRC?
3. What did you learn about the practice of trafficking?

Segment 2: Rape as a Weapon of War (7:30)

One of the most horrifying aspects of conflict is the widespread use of rape as a weapon of war. Tens of thousands of women and girls have been subjected to sexual violence, tortured and kidnapped by armed gangs and militia. The effects are far-reaching as survivors are left traumatized and stigmatized within their own communities.

4. Why do you think there is such a strong stigma in the DRC concerning rape?
5. What other issues do the rapes present to the local communities?

Segment 3: The Congo Today (9:20)

During his 32-year reign, Joseph Mobutu exploited much of the country's wealth, while the nation's infrastructure and services lay in ruin. More than a decade of fighting has only exacerbated the situation. Living conditions are desperate. People struggle to feed themselves, often with only enough food for just one meal per day. Access to healthcare and education is becoming increasingly difficult.

6. How did the rule of previous leaders impact the economy of the DRC?
7. Given the debt of the DRC, who should be held responsible for the repayment?
8. Are you aware of current initiatives to forgive the DRC's debt?

Segment 4: The Political Transition (9:27)

After decades of tyranny and instability, the Congolese held democratic elections in 2006. The Catholic Church in the DRC worked to raise awareness among communities of the importance of achieving a peaceful transition to democratically elected leaderships.

9. What impact have the elections had in the DRC?
10. How can we as residents of the U.S. contribute to ongoing stability in the DRC?

Segment 5: The International Community (9:20)

The United Nations Mission in the DRC, commonly known as MONUC, was deployed in 2000 to monitor the 1999 ceasefire and stop fighting between rebels and the government forces. Although MONUC's presence has helped restore some semblance of peace in certain areas of the country, insecurity continues. The international community's support for lasting peace is imperative.

11. Has MONUC's presence been a beneficial addition to the DRC?
12. What must the U.S. do to support an end to the conflict in the DRC?

Segment 6: Church's Involvement (4:45)

The Roman Catholic Church and other churches are an important part of the social and political structure within the DRC. As a result of their role in civil society, the churches and mosques' involvement and support of the elections invoked trust among the people of the DRC. A CRS staff member shares the contributions of CRS to promote civic education during the elections that could bring peace to the DRC.

13. What was the role of the Church in promoting the democratic elections?
14. What has the Church learned from neighboring countries?

Post-Video Discussion

- How do you feel after viewing the film? Did the film challenge or expand your understanding of the crisis in the DRC?
- What scenes or facts from the film affected or surprised you the most?
- How are people in the film culturally similar to you and people you know?

- What is one thing from the film you can share with your family and friends about the urgent humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)?
- What themes arise out of the film?
- What images or principles from our Catholic faith address these issues? Life & Dignity of the Human Person; Rights & Responsibilities; Call to Family, Community, and Participation; Option for the Poor & Vulnerable; The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers; Solidarity; Care for God's Creation.
- In light of your faith, how do you hear yourself called to respond to the stories of the people in the DRC?

Suggested Actions

- Distribute the Democratic Republic of Congo Country Profile document – available on the CRS website: <http://www.crs.org/public-policy/> - in your parish or among your family and friends.
- Strategize how individually and as a group you will follow up and act on your learning and reflection from this event.
- Join the *Catholics Confront Global Poverty* initiative – www.crs.org/globalpoverty - a joint initiative by Catholic Relief Services and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops that seeks to engage one million Catholics in the U.S. in issues that are fueling global poverty such as those in the DRC.
- Join the CRS Advocacy Network to receive information on how you can advocate for peace and justice in the DRC and for opportunities to take action on this and other pressing global issues. Visit <http://actioncenter.crs.org/signup> to join now.