

Echo's of women's security Femme au Fone: one year in South Kivu

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY IN ENGLISH



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I. INTRODUCTION

« Les filles ne sont pas considérées et ne sont pas scolarisées par ce que les parents disent que celle-ci va aller se marier »

« Ma nièce est tombée grosse de mon beau-frère. Cette situation m'a mis en insécurité totale parce qu'elle m'avait mis en conflit avec mon mari, ma belle-famille et même ma famille »¹.

This report, ***Echo's of women's security, Femme au Fone, one year in South Kivu***, contains a series of data and conclusions on the precarious security situation of women in South Kivu. At the same time we provide you with information on the different types of gender based violence women and girls in this province live through on a daily base, including local differences within the province. The data in this report come from our analysis of the SMS sent by over 500 women from all municipalities of South Kivu, validated by over 90 in-depth interviews from 5 municipalities.

Femme au Fone (FAF) is a project based on an SMS communication system that connects local women to women's organizations lobbying on local, national and international level, with the objective to take into account way local women themselves define security, peace and protection. The communication system based on texts messages (SMS), processes information by way of a computer system, managed by a multidisciplinary team. This team is responsible for verifying, analyzing and distributing the SMS information, according to an established protocol and by using the multiple media. Lobbying takes place based on this information and policies that are based on Resolution 1325. By involving local women in this way women give their own input for the definition of security in their own places and also help shape potential solutions.

Why this report? It's been a year since the FAF- project started, 10 months since the start of the SMS system, and in this report one can find the themes, conclusions and recommendations proposed by women of South Kivu, as analyzed by the Femme au Fone editorial team.

This report serves as an additional step towards our aim to construct a Barometer (on women's security) for the Kivu region and to formulate indicators that make monitoring of women's security possible. At this moment the FAF-project had been limited geographically to South Kivu only (in-depth interviews in 5 out of 9 municipalities) and the actual data collection was limited to the period of January - September 2014. Nevertheless, this report provides the foundation for FAF to enter a new phase: this is the first report that is actually based on the received SMS plus the radio programs made based on these SMS, (Resolution 1325) theory and finally the interviews conducted in 5 territories. It can serve as a 'Barometer' measuring the degree of security of women in South Kivu, based on the terms (input) they delivered themselves.

The next actions of the FAF-project are now up for discussion: this report gives us the main issues to be discussed between the participating organisations, and it can thus serve as a foundation for a future FAF manifesto, containing renewed objectives and policies.

¹ « Girls are not taken serious and don't go to school, because parents say they are going to be married anyway » "My niece was made pregnant by my brother in law. That makes my situation completely insecure, because I have a conflict now with my husband, my in-laws and even with my own family!" Citations from women from Uvira, interviewed by Femme Au Fone, July 2014.

II. Research Questions

Before this research, we formulated the following research questions:

1. How do women in South Kivu define their security?
2. What are the indicators by which the security and /or threats can be measured ('Barometer')?
3. What are the problems (the most acute and severe) in the opinion of the women?
 - a. What actors are especially threatening women's security?
 - b. In which places?
 - c. At what point in their life?
4. What are the possible solutions for these problems (and who are responsible to implement these)?
5. What are the possible actions to initiate in response (in this stage above all for FAF)?

III. Methodology

A. The contacts using the SMS system are mostly women that are in reach of, or are associated with the FAF partner organizations: that is to say, to the Noyaux Club d'Ecoute, AFEM-SK (NCE), the Radio Clubs of Radio Maendeleo (RC) and to groups associated with SPR. There are also radio listeners of Radio Maendeleo's 'Femme au Fone' broadcast (Saturdays 10-11.00 hours) that participate. This is a very diverse group: it includes farmers (both women and men), housewives, herdsman and -women, dressmakers, teachers, local government officials, women and men working as NGO activists, students, etc. People who have been interviewed during the trips in South Kivu territories also belong in most cases to these groups.

B. Data: This report is based on information collected by means of four sources:

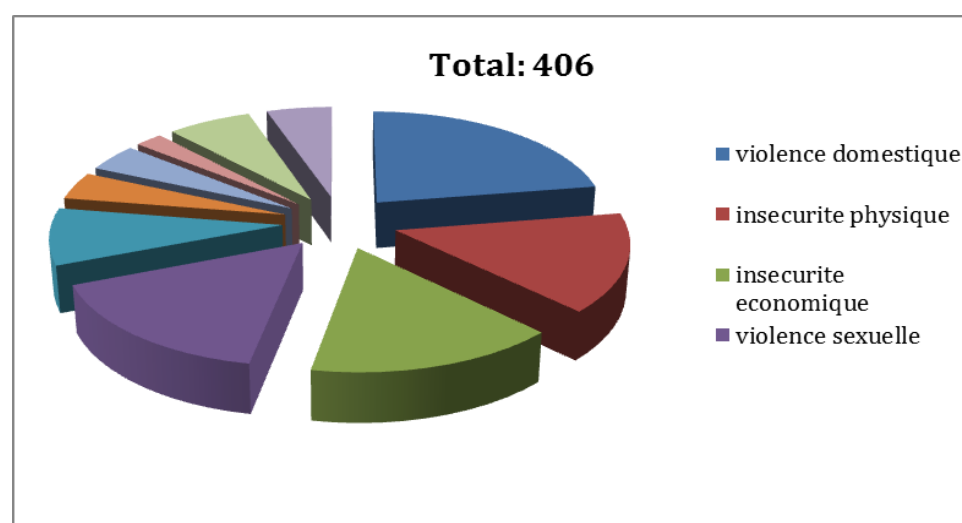
1. **The SMS message system of FAF.** Within the period of January 1-September 30, 2014, 1539 text messages were sent by nearly 500 contacts from South Kivu, both women and men. The messages tell all the stories and incidents that affect women's security in the region. They cover the 8 territories (municipalities) of South Kivu province: Shabunda, Fizi, Kabare, Kalehe, Walungu, Uvira and Mwenga Idjwi, as well as the provincial capital Bukavu.
The SMS were divided into those who have spontaneously been sent, dealing with incidents (facts) and those sent in response to a theme discussed in the FAF weekly radio show. For this report only the spontaneously sent were taken into account. The content of the remaining 406 text messages was analyzed in relation to incidents defined in the SMS system, and later on, categorised in relation to one of the defined human securities, again as part of our work on women's security and implementation of Resolution 1325 of the UN. The text messages are always checked by the FAF team: the team calls senders and checks not only the senders of messages but also include other nearby sources to complement the verification process of the messages.
2. **Radio broadcasts.** We broadcasted 37 radio programmes, wherein authorities, specialized organizations (NGOs) and women's organizations talk about topics that women want to address to their regions. The themes and issues discussed in these programs are derived from the SMS-messages and from meetings in the country (and taking into account the topics they repeatedly mentioned when women talk about their (see annex).
3. **Literature.** During this first year of the project, the FAF team studied a lot of literature, in

group training sessions (on the situation of women in general, DR Congo and Kivu). We did compare this literature with our hypotheses to verify the latter (see paragraph VI).

4. **In-depth Interviews.** We were not satisfied with the formulated hypotheses alone. To check the SMS messages and our hypotheses we collected stories on women's security. The FAF-team visited several territories the province of South Kivu in the first year of the project. In May 2014 Bagira, Kadutu (Bukavu) and Walungu were visited. In July 2014 the team went to Idjwi, Uvira, Sange and Kamanyola. FAF conducted a total of 94 interviews. From these interviews we identified a list of security issues mentioned by the sources, but in general the interviews were used as a second source (together with theory) to confirm (or falsify) our hypotheses based on the SMS messages and Radio broadcasts.

C. During a 'Future Search' meeting held in November 2014 in Bukavu, a total of 60 women from various regions in South Kivu and North Kivu discussed the results of this process: the list of indicators on women's security from the FAF system. They helped to improve and validate these indicators.

D. Major limitations of the methodology: The analysis presented here has some limits. FAF actually works with qualitative, not quantitative, data, sent by a group of 500 people, a small sample of the South Kivu population (although the group is present in all the province of territories). FAF did not visit all territories of South Kivu to make interviews, which means that the security situation in some areas is more known than those from which only SMS messages are received. We are planning to visit Fizi (meanwhile implemented), Mwenga, Shabunda and Kalehe (in 2015). In addition: the text messages coming from certain territories are more numerous than those from others, while they come from groups falling within the reach of the partner organizations (so mostly from the villages and not from remote areas). Sometimes the (dis)functioning of the telephone networks is also to be taken into account. Although we cannot talk about these results as absolute and scientific facts (despite taking into account the biased elements in this report) we can still work with the results: They come from different sources, they are checked against the theory, compared with the interviews and moreover resulting indicators were validated in the 'Future Search' sessions and in the other sessions by the staff and beneficiaries of FAF (lately on 2 and 3 December 2014). Of course further research is needed and will be undertaken by the FAF team, in collaboration with Blanca Diego and Bob van der Winden as consultants.



IV. DATA

1. SMS messages collected 1 January -30 September 2014

Counted were 1133 SMS text messages whose content was related to the radio broadcasts, and 406 related to security issues (from South Kivu): there are more reactions to issues of broadcasts than spontaneous sent messages related to the security situation of women. Only considering and categorising the spontaneous SMS about security / incidents the following results come up:

	Bukavu	Kabare	Kalehe	Walungu	Mwenga	Uvira	Idjwi	Fizi	Shabunda	TOTAL
1 Domestic violence	11	15	8	10	9	13	8	7	10	91
2 Physical insecurity	4	14	11	15	4	4	5	2	2	61
3 Economic insecurity	8	15	5	9	4	9	4	4	5	63
Of which: incidents at roadblocks: 32										
4 Sexual violence	10	20	11	9	2	4		2	7	65
Of which: incidents caused by armed forces:14										
5 Cultural insecurity	3	7	3	5	3	3	5	3	3	35
6 Theft	2	3	2	4	2		3	3		17
7 Witchcraft (accusation of)	2	3	3	4	2		3			17
8 Popular justice		2		3	2		2			9
9 Juridical Insecurity	1	9	4	2	6	2	2	1		27
10 others	1	2	5	2	4	2	2	3		21
TOTAL	42	90	52	63	38	37	34	25	27	406

V. Analysis of text messages and radio broadcasts between January and September 2014

By comparing the different observations from text messages and radio broadcasts, it appears that the physical insecurity women experience in their homes, families and communities is among the biggest problems of women in South Kivu today.

By analysing data of text messages and radio broadcasts we first distinguished between responses and opinions, so we then could concentrate on the reported incidents (see above). This resulted in a list of incidents, which we then compared with the incidents mentioned in radio programs.

Based on this material, we conclude that over 10 months we have received many SMS messages, especially on incidents with physical insecurity, domestic violence, sexual violence and economic insecurity. In the end we categorized the incidents as: a. Physical and Mental security; b. Economic security; c. Security in the Household - within the (extended) family; d. Legal security; e. Cultural security; f. Political security.

By analyzing SMS and radio programs we can make the following **assumptions or hypotheses**.

1. Dangerous places: On the basis of the SMS messages and radio programs we were able to make a list of dangerous places where the integrity of women is at stake, mostly places where women are involved in their daily activities: a. Agricultural field; b. water sources or water points; c. Home; d. Market; e. School.

2. Continuum: The stories we collected lead us to conclude that discrimination against women, and the violence that it entails, is part of a *continuum*, i.e., it occurs in all stages of a woman's life. One can make a classification of the most repeated incidents of violence, according to age:

- Child: Rejection at birth; victims of sexual violence, abuse, harassment from known and unknown men. Slave labour in the family (brothers, uncles, parents, in-laws ...) abuse in schools, around military barriers and abduction by armed groups.
- Young girls: Education and Economic Discrimination (inheritance); early marriage.
- Adult: Abuse and husband's abandonment; no participation in family decisions; violence on the part of the family (see the in-laws); stolen inheritance; payment of taxes on the market; accusation of witchcraft; no access to justice; no access to money for the family economy.
- Elderly women: Accusation of witchcraft, abandonment; disinheritance after husband's death; they are considered a burden and useless to society.

Women are conscious of these continuous burdens and so they inform their daughters about the various discriminative treatments they will have to suffer throughout their lifetime.

3. The actors that threaten women's security can be classified (1) as **External (to the family):** State agents (military, public service workers, administrators, mwami (traditional chiefs), police, and armed groups), bandits, community, neighbours and (2) as **Internal (inside family):** husband, children, brothers, uncles, in-laws.

4. Types of violence we have identified are also classifiable as an external and internal violence: **External Violence**, is when the actors and factors that endanger women's daily security come from outside the family, e.g. are related to the presence of weapons in armed conflicts and to local and state forces present in communities and public places such as markets, roads and fields. **Internal violence** is (domestic) violence committed within the (extended) family sphere. It is the violence that occurs in the home, in the inner circle of women, immediate and extended family.

5. Which institution of the State does guarantee women's rights in the province? The so desired involvement of the authorities as expressed by the listeners of *Femme au Fone* through SMS and radio programs remains very modest as to effectively improve their security situation.

There are NGOs, churches, women's movements, but there is only one shelter (V-day). Women do not mention the authorities when they tell their stories in interviews and text messages. Instead, they emphasize the importance of being organized amongst themselves. Sometimes they refer to local NGOs.

6. The 2003-2004 conflict was an especially violent moment for women in South Kivu. Forced displacements, violations, robberies and kidnappings; divided families, husbands and illegal expropriations. Life started all over again at point zero. Without doubt the conflict for many women was a very traumatic experience; many lived in great anxiety for not knowing what to do or how to get out of this situation. This is also the moment in history South Kivu, where sexual violation was frequently used as a weapon of war. Nevertheless it is clear to us that **women's security is being threatened also at places where there is no presence of armed actors.** Moreover this was the case before **and** after the armed conflict. In other words: discrimination against women and certain acts of violence that already took place in

times of peace were rising sky-high during times of conflict (such as 2003-2004), but violent acts were committed before the war, and continue to take place after the conflict. The fact that many atrocities remain unpunished causes an increase in insecurity.

7. Need for knowledge: Women talk about the need to be organized. Those that reach out for more justice are women more organized and in general women who have received a considerable amount of training or education. The organized women are those who can advise other women, support and accompany when they suffer violence, discrimination and abandonment. Women have expressed the importance of being part of a women's association (defending human rights) as one of the solutions to regain their security. There they are not only getting more aware but also learn how to initiate revenue-generating activities. With these actions, they would also be more able to express their problems and are supported in their endeavours to find proper solutions. The need for knowledge and information about their rights is widely expressed.

VI. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Human Rights of Women (and girls) are part of a certain number international human rights codified in different codifications and treaties. These laws and principles collectively condemn all forms of violence against women. An example is: "Protocol to the African Charter of Human and people's Rights in relation to women's rights in Africa (Maputo Protocol)." To understand what the origin of gender-based violence against women is, we refer to two fundamental concepts defined in the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women" (CEDEF 1979), discrimination and inequality, article 1.

It is the manifestation of inequality of power that historically has shaped the relation between man and woman that have led to domination over and discrimination against women in society. According to the document *Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council on Women, Peace and Security: Understand the implications, fulfil the obligations*, the "lack of analysis and contextualization, contributes a lot to the construction of stereotypes sustaining the causes and consequences of discrimination. These stereotypes tend to justify women's vulnerability in terms of natural failures, rather than focus on socio-cultural factors, logic, ideologies and practices really responsible for this state of affairs." ²

For the author "the understanding of gender as a socio-cultural construct provides the opportunity to discuss the ethical and moral foundations, which cause women to be discriminated. That is to challenge the patriarchal ideology rooted in cultural values, and cultural practices. This ideology is based on the notion of the superiority of men over women. It structures the value systems and social order, and ends up being internalized and accepted by the vast majority of the population, including women" (Cultural Security).

Discrimination and the different types of violence that it causes are aggravated in times of war: "the armed conflict worsens existing patterns of sexual violence against women in two main ways. The "violence of everyday" of which especially occurrences of **domestic violence** increase, caused by communities breaking apart during and in the aftermath of conflicts. Secondly the "violence of everyday" is increased by the masculine and military presence that goes with these conflicts" (UN, 2003) ³.

According to *Bridge Gender Development Section of the University of Sussex* "the

² Françoise Nduwimana. *La Résolution 1325 du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU sur les femmes, la paix et la sécurité Comprendre les implications, remplir les obligations*, Bureau de la Conseillère spéciale pour la parité entre les sexes et la promotion de la femme (OSAGI). United Nations.

³ Amani El Jack, *Gender and Armed conflict. Overview Report*, Institute of Development Studies – August 2003, University of Sussex, UK. Bridge Development Gender.

acceptance of rape as a war crime and the broad media coverage of rape as a weapon of war in the conflicts in Bosnia and Rwanda, has placed this kinds of gender-based violence in the public eye and has made humanitarian intervention more acceptable. In reality however, to inform and recognize these crimes is still a challenge, especially when one considers the fact that in most cases the victim is acquainted with the assailant or violence occurs in the home. International organizations continue to show some reluctance to address these issues, considering them "too difficult, too complicated and too private".⁴

VII. VERIFICATION OF THE HYPOTHESES: INTERVIEWS HELD IN 4 TERRITORIES AND BUKAVU

Between the theory and our hypotheses many similarities can be found concerning violence against women. In essence there is no major difference between the lessons learned from conflicts in other countries and our hypotheses that are distilled from the text messages and radio programs.

Interviews (made by eight members of the FAF team in May and July 2014 in the Walungu territory, Kabare, Uvira and Idjwi as well as Bukavu (Bagira, Kadutu) were made in order to test our hypotheses again. For us it is very important to give women back their voice, and to reach out and go to them. A total of 94 interviews were made; this total of 94 categorized and compared with our SMS data and our hypotheses.

Here we used the 'pillars' of 1325 UN resolution which we used to model our categorisations and indicators of (in) security. What we also noticed is that the problems of women in the interviews correspond with the security indicators measured by the several SMS messages analyzed. Thus we were able to formulate a list of indicators, which we verified in a workshop in November 2014 (with 60 women from different territories of South Kivu and Kivu (See Section VIII) and later refined in a workshop on 2 and 3 December 2014.

In addition, we noted that the specific conditions South Kivu territories do not stand on their own. There are similarities between the different territories (which can be captured through a questionnaire by using Smartphones we have planned for 2015), but one should always take into account the importance of going to the field to capture the differences and specifics of certain places. Examples of these specifics are (mainly from interviews): Uvira (child custody in the absence of marriage, problems of seasonal migration); Idjwi (family planning, malnutrition, crop diseases, environmental destruction, illegal fishing); Kabare (rape of girls, malnutrition, soil infertility, accusation of witchcraft); Walungu (trauma following the abuses of the FDLR and other armed groups, abandoning families by husbands -mine squares, trade- barriers, soil infertility). More research is needed to specify these further. Standing out are Fizi (the presence of armed groups, displaced by war and barriers to normal movement), Shabunda (precocious marriage, presence of armed groups), Kalehe (accusation of witchcraft), and Mwenga (precocious marriage, bad infrastructures and very few formal, civil, weddings).

As for our hypotheses we can conclude:

1. Dangerous Places: Interviews confirm that these are: agricultural fields; sources or points of water; home; market and schools.

2. Continuum: When specifying the violence by age, we also see in the interviews that all age groups are affected.

⁴ Amani El Jack, *Gender and Armed conflict. Overview Report*, Institute of Development Studies – August 2003, University of Sussex, UK. Bridge Development Gender.

3. The actors that threaten the security of women are husbands, in-laws, the heirs brothers (internal) but also armed gangs, authorities, other communities and women themselves (internal and external).

4. External and internal violence: see perpetrators.

5. As for the authorities: to solve their problems women prefer to go to the court of the village elders, to the justice and peace commissions and their associations (including local NGOs).

6. The 2003-2004 conflict: Quite a few of the women we interviewed state the situation was worse during armed conflict. For these women, physical, economical, and political security is paramount. At the same time they show that in daily life violence has been and is still present in all its forms.

7. Need for knowledge: During all our visits group meetings were held with the women. In all meetings the women (and also some men) have expressed their willingness to organise themselves.

VIII. VERIFICATION OF THE BAROMETER INDICATORS

The indicators indicate and signal in respect of concrete actions and persons. These are the units to measure, to track and compare how the situation changes in time. The indicators of the FAF program measure the degree of security or insecurity experienced by women in South Kivu **according to their own opinions**. Our reference is to the different types of security that we have defined as priorities; and we need at least one indicator (a question) that gives us information about each type of security (or insecurity).

After the categorisation of the information gathered on peace and security for women in South Kivu, five types of security were distilled from the data: Economic Security, Physical Security, Cultural Security Legal Security, Security Policy and Domestic Security

These five categories were presented to the FAF-partners and beneficiaries in South Kivu on November 3, 2014, with the objective of finalising the list of possible indicators to measure women's security. The team worked in groups on these indicators. Each group received the following information:

- What an indicator is
- A summary of problems reported by women and collected by FAF
- The main conclusions after analyzing all information gathered by FAF since January 2014 to September

The list of possible indicators that came out of this workshop was validated by a group of 60 women from the South and North Kivu in the conference 'Future Search' on 14 November 2014. The methodology used was that of the 'World Café'. For an hour, the 60 women circulated between 6 tables as in a cafe. Each table represented one of the securities and contained a large paper in the centre with the possible indicators out of the FAF workshop. In each table a person of FAF received women and asked them whether and how these indicators could measure security. They were also asked if, in their eyes, the question was correctly formulated and if any indicators were lacking according to their views.

The dynamic of The World Café brought the women to multiple tables, which allowed all to give their advice and defend their criteria.

As a result of these exercises, FAF has prepared a list of indicators we can use with the women of South Kivu.

This list will be used for regular monitoring of the situation regarding security and peace in

the territories. All with the aim of creating another type of information for awareness campaigns as well as the barometer.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

Research questions were formulated before the start of the research, and they have been improved as the research progressed and was adjusted during the FAF project. In this final section, we answer these questions:

How do women define their security in South Kivu?.

Women living in South Kivu do not feel safe. We talk about the data directly coming from women (SMS of all South Kivu territories, interviews and radio broadcasts). They define their security in general as 'peace of minds and hearts', a life free of violence and fear in both public and private domains.

They talk in detail about:

- a. Physical, psychological and mental security
- b. Economic security;
- c. Domestic Security
- d. Legal security;
- e. Cultural security
- f. Political security.

What are the indicators of (in)security ('barometer')?

Much of this research is dedicated to the formulation of indicators that will be used in 2015 in order to be able to regularly monitor the changes in the security situation in certain areas.

This will be done with a group of 40 women from the province and with the help of a smart phone system. In the annex the list extracted from all data and checked in the Future Search workshop in November 2014.

What are the main (severe and frequent) problems in their opinion?

There currently are 4 insecurities that stand out in South Kivu: domestic violence, violence against women caused by armed conflict and physical violence in general, all embedded in a context of economic insecurity. In addition there are differences between the different territories.

Which actors especially threaten women's security?

The actors that threaten the security of women, mentioned in the SMS messages and interviews are husbands, in-laws, heirs - e.g. brothers of the husband (internal) but also armed bands, various civil and military authorities, the community (external) and other women (internal and external).

At which places?

Dangerous places for the integrity of women are places where they perform their daily activities: agricultural field; sources or water points; home; market and school.

At what point in their life?

Indeed there is a continuous presence of insecurities for most women (especially in villages). It can be concluded that discrimination against women, and violence that it implies, occurs in all stages of the life of the women. One can make a classification of the most occurring violence, depending on age.

What are the possible solutions according to their view?

Of all solutions collected by FAF there are those practiced daily and or others more general or structural. We can summarize their proposals with the words of a woman: "Let women leave their fear behind and take their destiny into their own hands."

- Improving security in marketplaces: clean toilets, electricity, control illegally levied

taxes and military and police barriers, respect for off-hours. (Physical and economic security).

- Creation of jobs and centres for learning crafts. (Economic Security).
- Encouraging family planning and improve services of maternal health care. (Physical Security).
- That the law punishes husbands who abuse their wives. (Security and Legal fireplace).
- Creating dialogue in households between parents. (Security at Home).
- Improving the security of girls in schools. Sanctions against abusive teachers; psychological attention to students; make effective the free primary education and ongoing awareness of parents on the need to study the girls and keep them in school until the end. (Physical and political security).
- Approval of a law to fight mob justice based on allegations of witchcraft. Facilitate women's access to free legal (pro bono) support and create a council of elders in the villages. (Cultural and legal security).
- Raising awareness of women and men to women's rights.
- Removing discriminating customs that make women vulnerable to violence.
- Studying the causes, the sources of violence against women against women.
- Breaking the silence that surrounds violent acts against women: 'We need to talk about insecurity in our families, our friends, our colleagues, our neighbours'.

What is to be done? Recommendations:

- **Continue to inform, to mobilise and raise awareness:** develop communication and information strategies of FAF (radio, presentations, and visits to the terrain). Call upon listeners to send more SMS messages relating to the security situation of women in their communities. The team will develop an agenda for the future
- **Publications.**
 - Targeting international organizations and agencies to distribute their report through a public presentation (press conference).
 - Distribute copies to universities, libraries, research centres, etc.
 - Share the report with women in the country (Swahili version)
 - Making available our report to the provincial and national assemblies.
 - Make broadcasts with the report.
 - Publish articles on the website of FAF and partners.
 - Publish in the Newsletter (French, English, Dutch, Spanish)
- **Specific actions.** If we collect and spread information on already developed solutions that imply security for women in their daily lives, we can so help with a strategy to sustain or support their solutions.
- **Campaigns.** If we know the needs of women, we can launch campaigns addressing their issues or gaps. Women will have more knowledge of their rights in general. Thus, regarding security in their daily lives, they will have more tools to present proposals, ideas to improve their physical security, psychological, economic, etc.
- Continue research with interviews in Mwenga, Kalehe, Shabunda, and Fizi.
- Submit small projects to FAF funders (based on women's solutions)
- **FAF** may write a **manifesto** based on this report, for example:
 - What are the policy principles and communication of FAF?
 - How do we cooperate with other NGOs?
 - What are the main campaigns we want to launch and
 - What are the solutions suggested by the women?