

LES FILMS DE LA PASSERELLE AND RYVA PRESENT

THE MAN WHO MENDS WOMEN

www.MUKWEGE-THEMOVIE.com

A FILM BY **THIERRY MICHEL** AND **COLETTE BRAECKMAN**
DIRECTED BY **THIERRY MICHEL**



PRODUCTION: CHRISTINE PIREAUX / ERIC VAN ZUYLEN / SCÉNARIO: THIERRY MICHEL AND COLETTE BRAECKMAN / RÉALISATION: THIERRY MICHEL
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“What was behind this massive and barbaric sexual violence? Who were the perpetrators? What was the role of natural and mineral resources in this violent evolution? What responsibility had Congolese there in what was happening? The same questions always asked were not unknown to me.”

Denis Mukwege

Bukavu 2013

Movie website

www.mukwege-themovie.com

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I. SYNOPSIS

Winner of the Sakharov Prize 2014, Doctor Mukwege is internationally known as the man who mends thousands of women who have been raped during the 20 years of conflicts in the East of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, one of the poorest countries on the planet, despite its extremely rich sub-soil.

His endless struggle to put an end to these atrocities and denounce the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators is not welcome.

At the end of 2012, the Doctor was the target of another attempt on his life, which he miraculously survived.

Threatened with death, this doctor with an exceptional destiny now lives cloistered in his hospital in Bukavu under the protection of the United Nation peacekeepers.

But he is no longer alone in his struggle. The women to whom he has restored physical integrity and dignity, stand beside him, true activists for peace, hungry for justice.



II. DATASHEET

Director : **Thierry Michel**

Autors : **Colette Braeckman
Thierry Michel**

Assistants : **Jean-Moreau Tubibu
Patrick Byamungu**

Photography : **Michel Téchy
Thierry Michel**

Soundman : **Jean-Luc Fichet**

Screenplay : **Thierry Michel
Colette Braeckman
Christine Pireaux**

Editing : **Idriss Gabel**

Editing adviser : **Emmanuelle Dupuis**

Sound mixing : **Pascal Zander**

Calibration : **Franck Ravel**

Production administration : **Céline Rauw**

Production secretary : **François Dombret**

Producers : ***Les Films de la Passerelle*
Thierry Michel et Christine Pireaux
Ryva Production
Eric Van Zuylen**

Technical data :

Feature film : 112 minutes
Support : HD - Beta Digit
Versions : french, english & dutch

A coproduction Les Films de la Passerelle / Ryva Production / RTBF Secteur Documentaires / Public Senat / Lichtpunt / Wallonie Image Production Produit avec l'aide du Centre du Cinéma et de l'Audiovisuel de la Fédération Wallonie Bruxelles et de Voo / RTS / TV5 Monde / Coopération belge au développement - DGD / SPF Affaires étrangères / OIF / NED / Fondation George A. Forrest / Brussels Airlines / Tax shelter Bisanga / Circus Belgium / Les Editions rurales / Laboratoires Sterop / Liege Airport / Neo-Tech / Creative Europe – Media Programme of the European Union / Le Parlement Européen soutient les Droits de l'Homme Distribution Les Films de la Passerelle / Ventes internationales Cat&Docs

III. THE FILM



This is a film about conviction and commitment; about how Dr. Mukwege's struggle has lasted for 20 years despite the obstacles thrown in his path and the threats to his life; about how he built a hospital with psychological and legal departments to physically and psychologically heal women, and how he fights on a daily basis alongside these women to put an end to the causes of violence in his country.

The film also bears witness to the important role played by those who surround the doctor, above all the women to whom he has dedicated his life, but also his colleagues and his family. Dr. Mukwege is not alone. His strength stems from the people around him.

The film travels across Kivu, with its lake and its magnificent landscapes, just as Denis Mukwege travelled as a child with his father, a protestant preacher, on his visits. He is deeply attached to Kivu.

Kivu is also the border between Rwanda and Burundi where Denis Mukwege spent part of his youth and where he lived through the ethnic conflicts between Hutu and Tutsi. In April 1994 thousands of Tutsi fled from the genocidal Hutu across this border. Then, in July, thousands of Hutu fled Rwanda across the same border when Paul Kagame came to power. This is what led to the development of the civil wars in Congo that are so atrocious for the civilian populations, particularly the women. It is these conflicts that have led Dr. Mukwege, reluctantly, to become a medical specialist, a gynaecologist, and to vigorously protest against the absence of a political solution to bring an end to these atrocities.

The film accompanies Dr. Mukwege, both in the Congo and during his travels abroad.

In Panzi hospital, where the Dr. Mukwege is forced to live for security reasons since the attempt made upon his life, we follow his words and those of the women he treats.

Abroad, we filmed his crusade to raise the awareness of the international authorities: in New York during his interventions at the United Nations; in Stockholm when he receives the Alternative Nobel Prize; in Washington with Hilary Clinton as she hands him a prize, and in Brussels at the European Parliament for the Sakharov Prize.





This juxtaposition of the personal and collective stories makes him an international figure honoured with prestigious prizes: the Olof Palme Prize, the United Nations Award, the King Baudouin Foundation Prize, Sakharov Prize...

Based on the doctor's struggle against the wounds inflicted on the bodies of the raped, impaled women and against the impunity of the criminal authors of these atrocities, we travel back through the constant criss-crossing of his lifeline and the history of a country.

Story and History

The destiny of Dr. Mukwege is part of the broader history of the Congo and the film tells how he was confronted with the reality of the war. Archive images show him in situations clearly linking him to the conflict. These archive images enable us to understand that, as a doctor, he finds himself at the heart of the problems engendered by the conflicts.

Historical sequences enable the viewer to understand the origins of the war, what is at stake, and the consequences of these various aspects on the life and commitment of Dr. Mukwege.

A prisoner's life



“There have been many changes in my life since the assassination attempt. Today for example, I live at the hospital. I am no longer in contact with the outside world. I cannot go where I please, or do as I please, especially as I continue to receive threats. Yes, the threats continue. I know I must be here, I know this is my calling, my work, but it is also truly dreadful to live life almost like a prisoner.”

(Dr. Mukwege, Panzi)

When, exceptionally, Dr. Mukwege leaves the hospital enclosure (to attend a meeting on the outside), we observe the vigilance that surrounds such an enterprise: the watchful bodyguard, different cars for the outward and inward legs of the journey, etc.

We also follow Dr. Mukwege during trips abroad for his appeals and searches for funding. Denis Mukwege is also a manager, a lobbyist and a spokesperson for civil society.



The landscapes

Kivu, a Biblical landscape among the most splendid in Africa, will play an important role by situating the barbarism of history in this arrestingly beautiful place.

We will film these extraordinary landscapes, which were the backdrop to the childhood and adolescence of Dr. Mukwege, landscapes where he liked to isolate himself from the world, to take stock and think, these splendid high and middle plateaux where he walked as a young doctor.



IV. AT THE HEART OF MAN'S VIOLENCE

"In a country which throughout history has been called "the heart of evil" as well as "the rape centre of the world", Doctor Mukwege, a surgeon and gynaecologist has come to personify hope. Highly respected and admired, he has won prizes and awards across the globe. Over the course of many years, he has operated on and cared for tens of thousands of women and children who have been victims of rape. His hospital has tended to their physical wounds as well as their social needs following the atrocities committed in the Congo, mainly by armed men in uniform, in a conflict that has lasted too long and resulted in too many victims.

Recently, he miraculously escaped an assassination attempt. A brutal attack which killed one of his close friends and threatened his own family. This time, the bullets missed Doctor Mukwege, but it was close escape, a very close one... We all want to believe that there will be a better future for the Congo. We need hope and role models such as Denis Mukwege. "

Margot Wallström
Former Special Representative of the Secretary-General
of the United Nations on matters relating to sexual violence associated with armed
conflicts



V. STATEMENT OF INTENT BY THIERRY MICHEL

It will soon be 20 years since I made a film on the fight for life in a public hospital in Guinea, *Donka, radioscopie d'un hôpital africain*, (*Donka, X-ray of an African Hospital*) which has been awarded some of the greatest international accolades: the Golden Gate Award (San Francisco); Best Documentary of the Year at the IDA in Los Angeles; Best Feature-Length European Documentary Film by Média, etc. It was broadcast by many TV stations in Europe, Japan and the USA. Since then, the issue of health and the fundamental fight for life has continued to fascinate me.



Ten years later, during the shooting of another film in Africa, *Congo River*, I travelled up the river and through the history of this great country of which I have in some ways become the chronicler for around twenty years and ten films. During this period of shooting, I filmed the tragic circumstances of women who were victims of rape and mutilation designed to wreak havoc on the social cohesion of the families and communities that they belonged to. I had not only gathered the testimony of a huge number of victims, but also the senseless stories of rapists, including the Mai-Mai militia who encourage this behaviour, describing themselves as rabid dogs capable of the most extreme violence, including against unarmed women.

This is how I subsequently came to want to film the path taken by one of these doctors, at the heart of this region of huge lakes, for almost a theatre for political violence, in-fighting and ethnic wars in which women were among the main victims. This doctor, doctor Mukwege, carries out, in the province of Kivu, exceptional work, with utter determination.

This project was made even more obvious, as doctor Mukwege is an extraordinary character, an example not only for Africa but for the world of humanitarian engagement, political courage and the determination to fight against the forces of evil.

After my last film on power and political ambition, *L'irrésistible ascension de Moïse Katumbi* (The Irresistible Rise of Moïse Katumbi), I wanted to produce a portrait of a man who fights every day, whilst risking his own life, against these obscurantist forces; an example for Africa, one of those men who are a source of honour and pride for the African continent, in a similar way to Nelson Mandela. Or to Martin Luther King in the USA.

As a backdrop, we again come across the themes dealt with in my previous films: the fight for dignity of the disenfranchised; exposing the arrogance of those in power; and the impunity they grant themselves against the background of this economic war and mafia-type interests to appropriate the huge wealth of mining resources in the Congo but also the exceptionally fertile lands of this paradise on earth, which has for many has become a hellish world of hatred and violence and for others a land of resilience and resistance.

VI. STATEMENT OF INTENT BY COLETTE BRAECKMAN

When, two years ago, Doctor Denis Mukwege received the King Baudouin Foundation prize, Louis Michel suggested to me that I carry out a "book interview" with him, and, thinking this was an excellent idea, I got to work.



I already knew the Doctor as I had met and interviewed him during my many reports from South Kivu. Some months after the prize award ceremony, I spent two weeks in Bukavu, and met at length with the chief doctor at Panzi hospital during interviews which allowed me to find out more about the doctor, the man, the pastor, the father and the citizen.

The book *L'homme qui répare les femmes* is the result of this meeting with a man whose personal history bears testimony to the last two decades in Kivu, marked by war, violence against women and a systematic policy of terror.

Following publication of the work, I was struck by the doctor's qualities as a physician, but also, presenting the book with him in Kinshasa, by his ability to raise awareness, his eloquence and the strength of his conviction. I then reflected that this man have gone through stages: firstly as a doctor, humanitarian and humanist, he resolved, at a given moment, to step up efforts and and to appeal to international public opinion so that the agony of the women of Kivu would be publicised, given more media attention and consequently judged unacceptable by the "universal conscience", until "world leaders" felt obliged, finally, to put an end to this scandals.

The testimony of this man was shocking and placed him in grave danger, creating a sort of fervour around him, to such an extent that Mukwege, who has become an international hero, is also virtually under house arrest in his hospital, fearing for his safety...

The life of this man could have inspired another book, a novel, for example, but I wanted make a film about it, working with Thierry Michel.

Our strengths were evident: Thierry and I know the Congo well. Whilst my experience mainly centres around the printed press and books, I also have some knowledge of the world of cinema, having already produced *The Drowned Gold of Kamituga*, with Yvon Lammens, and a long time prior to that, a documentary with Jean Jacques Piché and another with Manu Bonmariage. On each of these occasions I had welcomed this collaboration and the rich benefits gained from team work.

VII. INTERVIEW WITH THIERRY MICHEL

Rape as a weapon of war

The main theme of the film is the rape of women, which is often committed "with extreme violence", a very weak term, as it often involves impalement, with the aim of mutilating women's genitals and reproductive system, to destroy the fabric of families. As these crimes have taken place in public, there is a clear desire to break down communities and to use rape as a weapon of war. And the aim is to take possession of land for agricultural and mining reasons, given the wealth of resources concealed under the ground in eastern Congo.

Faced with this situation, one man was key: Doctor Denis Mukwege. For over ten years, many women have come to him to be treated following these horrific acts of sexual violence. He quickly realised that these weren't just individual cases and that there was a clear, inherent desire to cause massive destruction.

Since then, he has been brave enough to "repair" tens of thousands of women who have been raped, but also to report these rapes and to make a plea on an international scale. Because whilst it is important to treat the physical wounds, their cause also needs to be addressed in order to put an end to such tragedy. This led the doctor to the United Nations, where, in a historic speech, he called on the international community.

Filming history in the making?

The documentary "L'homme qui répare les femmes" (The man who repairs women) looks at the war during the last two decades in eastern Congo, since the invasion of the Rwandan Hutu refugees in the DRC in 2004, following the genocide.

We also wanted to discover how the Congolese justice system works today, through current court proceedings, where we were the only people filming. There is this cycle of impunity in the Congo and it's the central question in the film: how is it possible that for almost two decades such tragedies have occurred over and over again?

We therefore returned to the combat zones, sites of massacres, and we found the vestiges and witnesses of this story in order to be able to recount both the history of a region in the Congo, of these resilient women, but also to portray a great African personality.

A character rooted in the history of his country

The personality of Doctor Mukwege and his exceptional destiny follow a dramatic narrative. An exemplary figure, a model of commitment and above all, courage. A man who as well as being a surgeon is also a Pentecostal pastor and an activist for the rule of law. We therefore delved back into his history because it was determined by the history of the Congo.

He was the director of Lemera hospital, in the very heart of the province of Kivu where a number of his both team and his patients were massacred. This was the catalyst for his fight. He witnessed this massacre. He therefore felt as though he was on a mission, strengthened by his ethical and religious engagement: to break the conspiracy of silence. These events have rarely been spoken about, there has never been an enquiry, let alone any convictions.

His plea to the international community had direct consequences on his life: intimidation from the outset, which later turned into threats and assassination attempts ... And whilst he narrowly escaped death, a trusted friend, who was also his security guard, was assassinated whilst with him. However, he has never wanted to leave the Congo, and he has never ceased to act as a spokesperson for this tragedy, becoming, as a consequence, a prisoner in his own hospital, under constant United Nations escort on the rare occasions he ventures outside its walls.

The storyline of the film

I wanted to make a film which was the synthesis of a man, a landscape, and country and its history. Starting with one man's fight, that of an African doctor engaged in a struggle against evil in the heart of Africa, and setting it against the backdrop of 20 years of conflict in the country, in the middle of these communities of resilient women who were victims of this period of turmoil in the middle of a sublime landscape, the province of Kivu. We also needed to achieve a dialectic balance between the individual and the collective. Above all, we needed to tell a story, a narrative that went beyond the local, the personal, to make it a universal parable, on this struggle between life and death, this fight against pure evil.

The report on the doctor

From our first meeting for the project, the doctor and we ourselves were aware of the explosive cocktail that a film by Thierry Michel and Colette Braeckman on Doctor Mukwege would create. At this point I was still prohibited from staying in the DRC following my expulsion, and the doctor had just survived a assassination attempt. That's why we began with sequences shot during the doctor's international trips: to Belgium to receive his honorary degree from the University of Louvain; then to the United States during his visit to the American Senate and to receive the Hilary Clinton Prize in Washington; and subsequently to the European Parliament during the annual meeting of female parliamentarians from the four continents. We also started the interviews with the doctor and gathered together a lot of archives; however, the main objective was obviously to film the doctor in the field, in his country, in his province, in his hospital, with these women who were victims of the horrific war that had afflicted the Congo for the last 20 years.

Testimonies of victims

We chose to film the stories of women who had been raped. Some are overwhelming, moving because certain women are now incapable of having children or even incontinent for life. But others carry messages of hope, like the resilient women who have overcome the trauma thanks to the action of the foundation created by Doctor Mukwege, which enables psychological revalidation and transforms some victims into community leaders.

The work of Doctor Mukwege is completely revolutionary and holistic. He works on several levels: the medical, but also psychological, economic and legal, ... whilst continuing to ensure gynaecological interventions, between two international trips, the management of the hospital and the training of his teams. He has a formidable energy.

The issue of impunity

In light of this phenomenon, one crucial issue is that of impunity. The soldiers or former rebels who committed these rapes during periods of conflict today hold important positions

and the victims sometimes find themselves coming face to face with their rapists - the very people who are supposed to protect them - wearing kepis decorated with stripes or medals.

In light of such impunity, the international community called for the creation of an international criminal court for the Congo. However, the project was soon abandoned. Nevertheless, there are attempts to eradicate impunity.

We filmed a trial during which soldiers who had committed rapes were brought to justice. The United Nations and the legal clinics, including that of Doctor Mukwege, support these women and prepare the files on these criminals. But all too often, those who are tried by the military justice system are what the lawyers refer to as "small fry". The big fish who enjoy political or military notability escape a rather meek justice.

A United Nations file, a document of paramount importance, the Mapping report, was produced following investigations; it lists 615 acts of serious violence which violate human rights and/or international law committed during 20 years of conflict and war in the DRC. This report, which culminated in the disclosure of the names of all those responsible, caused an outcry when it was published. Pressure for reasons of government and diplomacy resulted in the report finally being shelved. The full report was declared "strictly confidential" and I was prohibited from accessing it. There is therefore no desire to confront this issue directly as it would call into question people who are now in positions of power.

Mobilisation of civil society

Moreover, Doctor Mukwege does not focus on this issue solely from a medical point of view. One of his activities is the mobilisation of civil society, with, in particular, the creation of legal clinics. Because it is often difficult for a woman to confront the judicial system alone. Not only is there the issue of racketeering, but also, where there is a conviction, the payment of compensation. Where government officials are convicted, the government is deemed to be liable *in solidum* and therefore has to plead for the fact that the convicted official is insolvent. However, the government has almost never settled its debts. This causes a general feeling of abandon.

Nevertheless, the legal clinics encourage victims to have the courage to file complaints with the judicial system. Thanks to this support, the women gain additional moral and institutional strength. They are no longer just victims; now they are also plaintiffs, playing a role in society. The solution to the problem can be found in this popular mobilisation and, above all, the freeing of speech.

Vox populi

Today, the phenomenon of rape as a weapon of war has been dramatically reduced. The international campaign, led by Doctor Mukwege as well as key players in Congolese civil society, has been successful. Unfortunately, the end of the war brought about social degeneration and whilst there is no longer any real war to speak of, there are many more localised conflicts involving unruly factions.

New forms of rape have become more prominent. Domestic rape, which is becoming a real issue in society, but in particular the emergence of many child rapes. Often for reasons associated with magical thinking.

The population is now organising itself to observe, inform and control matters. It has no other choice. There are women's collectives. When they spoke publicly during a meeting, some proposed a sex strike, others that rapists be captured and castrated. In North Kivu, there is now a radicalisation, the emergence of a feminine and feminist conscience. These women's collectives have been established as a result of question, raised by Doctor Mukwege during one of these meetings, "Where are the men? Where are your fathers? Where are your husbands? ".

It is therefore a matter of an individual and collective force. These women are no longer afraid. When they face the prosecutors, they no longer conceal the corruption and today they do not hesitate to report their attackers.

The music in the film

The music works on three levels. Firstly, there is that of the African song, of this profound song that speaks to us of violence, of oppression but also of resistance and dignity. These are the songs written and composed by Edo Bumba, a young singer from eastern Congo who today lives in exile in Sweden. We also wanted to emphasise the grandeur of the landscape, lake and mountains of Kivu, with orchestral music that devotes all of its lyrical power to the exceptional nature of this province and we worked with a Belgian composer, Michel Duprez. We finally used several pieces of sacred classical music as the film is about passion (in the Biblical sense) but also the resurrection of an injured and scarred people. This was the basis for us choosing sections from "L'Évangile selon saint Matthieu" (The Gospel according to Saint Matthew) by J.S. Bach to depict the story as a journey through a time of violence and persecution that leads us towards a spiritual resurrection, a new man.

The risks involved in filming

My penultimate film focused on the assassination of a human rights activist in the Congo. I had been stopped and thrown out of the country, forbidden from visiting and I had had a legal case brought against me in Belgium, by the Congolese Chief General Inspector. The doctor had just survived an attempted assassination that had resulted in one of his close friends being killed.

At the start of the project, as the political and security risks were so obvious, everyone thought that we would never get through the full shoot. We therefore took all possible protection measures. In the end, the two periods of filming, which lasted 10 weeks in total, went smoothly, with no difficulties whatsoever. The authorities allowed us to film in peace and to leave again as quietly as we had arrived.

The distribution of the film

We planned a very special release for this film that depicts violence but also resilience and resistance. And it was no coincidence that, far from glitz and glamour and red carpets, for the World Premiere, we chose the Amnesty International festival and the city of the Hague, the headquarters of the International Criminal Court, the main judicial authority for trying perpetrators and implementing law and justice in the face of this often forgotten war and its abandoned peoples in eastern Congo.

We also wanted Doctor Denis Mukwege to be associated with the preview screening of this film in several European capitals to give it as much political, cinematographic and symbolic

impact as possible.

The film is scheduled for release in Belgium, the Netherlands, in France, in Canada and in the United States. Naturally, we want to screen it in the large cities in the DRC in the presence of Doctor Mukwege.

This interview includes several extracts from the interview with Valéria Musio for the publication "Les femmes, cibles privilégiées des guerres modernes. Le viol, une nouvelle arme fatale" (Women, prime targets of modern war. Rape, a fatal new weapon) GRIP Editions.



VIII. CURRICULUM VITAE

The producer:

Founded in 1984, Les Films de la Passerelle specializes in documentary films committed on various levels: social (the prison world, the steel industry, women's strikes), humanitarian (humanitarian intervention in Somalia, African hospitals), political (dictatorship in Zaire) and North-South relations (kids on the street and favelas in Brazil, colonials in Zaire).

European partners generally finance these productions that have been selected at numerous film festivals, some at which they have received awards. They also have been broadcast worldwide by many television companies. In 1996, Les Films de la Passerelle received an award for best producer from the European Union for the production of "Donka, X-ray of an African Hospital".

The director:

From coal mines to prisons, from Brazil and the Maghreb to black Africa, Thierry Michel has always denounced peoples' distress and shared their revolts, sometimes in a mixture of fiction and reality. Born on 13 October 1952 in Charleroi in Belgium in an industrial region known as "Black Country", Thierry Michel began studying at the Institut des Arts de Diffusion in Brussels at age 16. In 1976, he started working at the Belgian television where he made numerous reports around the world. He then went on to filmmaking. He directed two feature-length fiction films, Hiver 60 which dealt with his country's political situation and Issue de secours, a very personal and poetic piece. Yet his oeuvre is especially known for his many documentaries, which have received international recognition and awards and have been shown around the world. Among them are Gosses de Rio; Zaïre, le cycle du serpent; Donka, X-Ray of an African Hospital; Mobutu, King of Zaire; Iran: Veiled Appearances, Congo River, Katanga Business, The Chebeya affair,...

Thierry Michel is a film director, a journalist and a photographer. He also leads documentary film writing and directing seminars around the world.

The Author:

Colette Braeckman is a Belgian journalist, born April 20, 1946, in Ixelles. She is a member of the editorial board of the French-language newspaper *Le Soir*, where she directs news coverage of Africa and particularly Central Africa. She has also published in reviews and magazines, notably *Le Monde Diplomatique* in both its French and English editions.

Recently, she published "The man who repairs women", dedicated to Dr. Mukwege, and many collaborations (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, *Geo*, *International Politics*, *BBC* etc...) and conferences on topics related to Central Africa.

