



NORWEGIAN  
REFUGEE COUNCIL



Save the Children

World Vision



Human Rights Council 46<sup>th</sup> session

19 March 2021

Written version

Item 10: Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on  
Human Rights Situation in Kasai Region, Democratic Republic of Congo

*Joint Statement made by World Vision International on behalf of Care International, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Save the Children International and World Vision International*

Madam President:

On behalf of World Vision, Care, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, and Save the Children, we welcome 2021 with cautious optimism and a reminder of the stark reality in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) – a country that sees 19.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, 50% of which are children<sup>1</sup>. Today, 1 in every 12 people in humanitarian need globally live in the DRC.

Already one of the least developed areas in the DRC – characterized by high malnutrition rates, disease outbreak, poor healthcare, food insecurity, and protection violations, including gender-based violence (GBV) – insecurity in the Kasai region in 2016 only exacerbated a dire situation. For the January to June 2021 period, Kasai is among one of the provinces with the highest population facing acute food insecurity, with IPC levels between Crisis and Emergency levels<sup>2</sup>. Today, 7.8 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and affected by ongoing insecurity in the Kasais<sup>3</sup>.

While United Nations (UN) reports improvement in the Kasai region, the exception remains with respect to sexual violence, with 763 verified cases during the reporting period<sup>4</sup>. Humanitarian partners in Kasai condemn the intensification of violence in January 2021 in the Kakege health zone which saw 21,000 people displaced, looting and loss of property with over 500 homes burned, and the separation of families which has resulted in over 140 unaccompanied children<sup>5</sup>. A UN-led multi-sector rapid assessment conducted in February 2021 highlights an estimated 200 girls and 3,000 boys who continue to be associated with armed groups<sup>6</sup>. Child recruitment continues to be a concern; per the 2020 Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) report on grave violations, 1,047 late-verified recruitments were recorded in the Kasais between 2017 and 2019 as a result of increased access to children who had self-demobilized; in 2020, 179 new recruitments were recorded.

Newly displaced and marginalized communities do not have access to shelter and land, making them vulnerable to food insecurity, and protection violations, including GBV. On average, households have one meal per day, and must resort to eating dangerous wild foods found or borrowing money to buy food. Durable shelter is virtually unavailable, with the vast majority of displaced and host communities living in precarious situations, multiplying incidents of GBV – young people often sleep in collective centers, such as community spaces and churches<sup>7</sup>. Amidst

---

<sup>1</sup> 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Democratic Republic of Congo

<sup>2</sup> [DR Congo: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Snapshot, July 2020 to June 2021](#)

<sup>3</sup> 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan: Kasai, July to December 2020

<sup>4</sup> [UN Security Council, Children and armed conflict in the DRC, Report of the Secretary General, October 2020](#)

<sup>5</sup> UNOCHA, Inter-Cluster Regional, Région Kasai, Rapport de l'Évaluation Rapide Multisectorielle, 22 Février 2021

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

the humanitarian need, while there is relative calm in Kakenge, and Kasai more generally, cases of sexual violence (specifically sexual assault and rape of young girls) are on the rise, health centers are ill-equipped to provide post-exposure prophylaxis kits, and local authorities are unable to respond to the needs of survivors<sup>8</sup>.

Health needs are sobering, and have a detrimental impact on communities. Less than 25% of the population has access to hand washing, soap, and latrines<sup>9</sup>. Main health diseases reported to affect adults include: malaria, acute diarrhea, severe acute malnutrition, and typhoid fever; for children, main health diseases include: acute diarrhea, malaria, and acute respiratory infections<sup>10</sup>. The conflict has had a negative impact on the use of curative services, particularly in the epicenter of conflict which affects indigenous populations.

Focus group discussions conducted during the assessment in February 2021 highlight two main community concerns which, if not solved, will see lasting crisis: marginalization of indigenous groups (namely: Batwa), and customary legitimacy reigning in the group, which remain unresolved by provincial authorities<sup>11</sup>. Land access also has significant role in discussion of indigenous rights, and displaced populations; only 40% of the population has access to land, which leads to the exploitation of others without access – namely: extremely poor, marginalized, and displaced communities.

Targeted violence resulting in destruction of land and shelter, increase in protection violations and GBV, lack of fundamental health care, and food insecurity that is intertwined in conflict, amounts to grave violations of human, child, and indigenous peoples' rights.

Together, we call on the Government of DRC, Member States, and the International Community to:

- Strengthen comprehensive protection systems, including life-saving assistance for survivors of GBV who lack access to a complete referral pathway, including access to justice services.
- Implement commitments to the Optional Protocol on the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC), ensuring political and financial investment into comprehensive, gender-responsive programs that ensure the safe reintegration of girls and boys.
- Immediately increase of humanitarian, development, peace and reconciliation funding now, and beyond MONUSCO's withdrawal, particularly as actors work towards solutions of past and ongoing conflict, and ensure the implementation of the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) mandate across the region.
- Support the State to assert greater accountability to settle conflict over land ownership and conduct investigations into violations of IHL and international human rights law of all Congolese – particularly children, women, marginalized, and indigenous peoples.

Thank you.

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.