



Action plans | Advocacy | Authority engagement

 Democratic Republic of Congo

Local advocacy for the protection of female sellers

By Gracia Kambale Bahwere, Protection Coordinator at Oxfam

Introduction

For several decades, there was no market in the community of Kihuma or, more precisely, in the centre of Kihuma. However, the sector leader of Osso Banyungu officially authorised the opening of a local market in this locality in around 1994. This decision had never been followed through. Women went to sell their farming produce in the centre of Masisi (the capital of the Masisi territory), a commune situated 12km away from Kihuma. Along the route, these women were victims of rape and various other attacks (collection of their food supplies, extortion of property, etc.) by unidentified armed men and elements of the armed forces at illegally erected barriers along the section of road between Masisi and the centre of Kihuma.

Once these various obstacles had been overcome, the women sold their farming produce at prices imposed by the sellers in the centre of Masisi. They were forced to accept these imposed prices for fear of having to return to Kihuma carrying heavy loads on their backs. They did not make a profit from the farming produce harvested in their fields.

What has been done (action taken by community members: CPSs and PFOs)

A session was held in Kihuma to draw up a women's protection plan, with the participation of local authorities. Following this session, the female members of the women's forum (WF) and peasant farmer organisations (PFOs) made a presentation to the grouping leader about the protection risks facing women who go to sell their farming produce at the market in the centre of Masisi. They also negotiated a site where a local market could be set up to enable them to sell their farming produce locally.

Outcome/solution

The structure members engaged with the grouping leader during the session for drawing up the women's protection plan to mitigate these protection risks. The grouping leader called a meeting with village (locality) leaders and, together, they managed to allocate a plot of land for the creation of a local market. This makes it possible to reduce the risks facing women who go to sell their produce in the centre of Masisi. Currently, this market operates in Kihuma (one of the localities targeted by the project in the DRC). Sellers from the centre of Masisi (the capital of the territory) are beginning to go to the centre of Kihuma to buy farming produce. This attracts farmers from the villages surrounding Kihuma to sell their produce at this market.