Overview

Globally, humanitarian crises have triggered and exacerbated Gender-based Violence (GBV). In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), humanitarian actors assist approximately 30,000 survivors per year. Reported cases include rape, sexual slavery, trafficking, forced/early marriage, intimate partner violence and sexual exploitation and abuse. Abuse of power and gender inequalities further exacerbate the vulnerability of women and girls to all these forms of violence.

In 2019, the DRC is still affected by conflict, food insecurity and epidemics, including an Ebola outbreak that started in August 2018. Consequently, millions of people are obliged to flee their homes in search of food, health and protection. Women and children among displaced and host communities are the ones most exposed to life-threatening forms of gender-based violence (GBV). Sexual violence is the most reported form of GBV, but many survivors are afraid to report rape or violence due to stigma and the fear of reprisal from perpetrators. However, sexual violence committed by national security entities has decreased, according to an impact evaluation on sexual violence published on the 20th May 2019.

The democratic transition is creating hope for the stabilization of the country despite the serious humanitarian crisis.

The Government has developed accountability frameworks to address GBV, including national protocols for case management and a database of incidents. It also has a comprehensive Strategy against Gender-based violence under review and a National Road Map on the Call to Action for the Protection from Gender Based Violence. Risk mitigation but also life-saving activities such as clinical management of rape, mental health/psychosocial support and protection services are severely underfunded despite the Government’s commitment and advocacy.

92 million USD needed to provide life-saving response, risk mitigation and prevention services to 5.9 million women, men, girls and boys targeted in 2019 by the GBV Sub-cluster.

Principals Needs and Gaps

The impact evaluation shows four major challenges in the overall GBV response: impunity and access to justice including reparation; the effectiveness of a «pangovernmental» approach; coordination capacities and dedicated national budget to ensure national coverage and avoidance of discontinuity in prevention and services. The humanitarian response is not an exception and whilst GBV has received funding over the years to support prevention activities as well as multi-sectoral service provision, there are huge financial deficits in relation to humanitarian needs.

Prevention and risk mitigation is much less supported by GBV actors and donors as against services, but overall gaps are essentially geographic, with service provision difficulty reaching the last mile to save lives within the recommended delays. Lastly, national capacities need to be reinforced for improved sustainability.

12019, Lattanzio. « Evaluation conjointes des programmes de lutte contre les violences sexuelles en République Démocratique du Congo entre 2005 et 2017 »

* Based on the Humanitarian Response Plan update 2019
Priorities for GBV sub-cluster members

Analysing the root causes of GBV as well as most urgent needs in the humanitarian response, the GBV sub-cluster has prioritized the following advocacy points addressed to the actors meeting at the #EndSGBV Conference in Oslo in May 2019 to multiply efforts:

- To reduce the impact of activities in mineral rich resourced areas as they are contributing to sexual exploitation and abuses but also to ethnic conflicts which inadvertently lead to the use of rape as a weapon of war as well as other forms of Gender Based Violence;
- To fight the culture of Impunity and invest in the judicial systems. Until the culture of Impunity is curtailed in the wake of non-functional judicial systems with insufficient resources, access to justice and reparation for survivors will remain a chimera.
- To create a focus on the vulnerability of adolescents particularly adolescent girls and reinforce inclusion approaches, for instance better involvement of Persons Living with Disability
- To support strategy to address the inadequate Humanitarian Access due to continuous armed conflicts and weak infrastructures
- To address social norms from the first stage of an emergency till the stabilization phase and reduce systematic Violence against Women and Girls as a result of cultural norms
- To ensure the provision of Post Rape kits are supported by adequate programming while prioritizing national capacity building
- To ensure that National NGOs have direct access to humanitarian funding

Way forward

Overall, the current vision of GBV actors is on the national Road Map of the Call to Action, and some support on “how” is in the mentioned impact evaluation. Under an operational point of view GBV actors will first prioritize to strengthen a holistic response to GBV survivors through the establishment of ‘one stop centres” accompanied by proximity strategies and capacity building of service providers. Secondly, scale up of prevention strategies including positive masculinity, risk mitigation efforts through the involvement of other sectors in the humanitarian response, community engagement and community resilience. Thirdly, ensure improvement of accountability to affected population, evidence based intervention towards assessments and monitoring and evolution.

The GBV sub-cluster in DRC has presence in 7 field locations. Members include Government partners, UN agencies, International NGOs and National NGOs. Key donors of the GBV response in DRC are: Belgium, Canada, European Union, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom and common UN fund such as CERF and DRC Humanitarian Fund.

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