CARE Rapid Gender Analysis

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) - Mudja, Munigi and Kanyaruchinya IDP camps in North Kivu province

As conflicts persist in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), millions of people face an escalating humanitarian crisis, with women and girls being particularly affected. In 2022, the territories of Rutshuru, Nyiragongo, and Masisi were severely impacted by insecurity arising from conflicts between armed combatants (militia) and government forces (FARDC). The militia expanded its presence into the eastern part of the Masisi territory, causing the adjacent areas, including Goma, to lose access to vital supply routes. Despite being perceived as a safe city, Goma found itself with armed groups as close as 10 to 20 kilometers in proximity.

By December 2022, 530,190 persons were displaced, including at least 318,144 women and girls. In March 2023, 600,000 people including 360,000 women and girls, were displaced due to the conflict that broke out in Rutshuru territory. Unfortunately, gender-based violence (GBV) increased by 37% in the first three months of 2023, and over 38,000 cases were reported in North Kivu in 2022. continues to be a critical and heightened concern for IDPs, especially for women and adolescent girls.

CARE International conducted a Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) (full analysis here) in the displacement camps of Nyiragongo Health Zone, Kanyaruchinya, Munigi and Mudja camps from December 2022 to January 2023 using a range of primary and secondary data.

A qualitative methodology including key informant interviews, individual stories, focus group discussions were conducted with community members in 2 Mudja IDP sites and the Kanyaruchinya IDP camp with more than 4 sub-sites. A total of 123 people participated in the study. However, due to the worsening security situation, RGA could not access highly volatile areas and the rapid nature of this exercise makes it difficult to diverse groups such as widows, people with disabilities and service providers.

Findings and Analysis

The analysis revealed distinct impacts of poverty on households headed by males and females. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), female-headed households experience more pronounced negative effects from the crisis compared to their male-headed counterparts, primarily due to cultural and political barriers that hinder their participation and access to resources.

Gender roles and responsibilities: Women make up to 60% of the IDP population and are heads of households because of family separations. Women are taking up roles traditionally performed by men such as providing food and financial resources for the family. However, traditional roles caregiving roles are still performed by women.

Women who wanted to participate in community activities or travel outside the community required either their husband's or father's permission. Everyone agrees that where there is a man in the household, he has more control over finances. Community members say that when humanitarian organizations distribute food directly to men, it is not reaching the household.

2. https://careinternationalmy.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/laura_tashjian_care_org/EVZgTdoWuIxPLvwTt1jvaxBBZpdv_rRytQtEAd2dVZpXg?e=iE7XB4&CID=070B5D57-7B2B-4768-9AD8-8C974549E4E6
**Access to resources:** Some households facing severe food shortages are forced to adopt negative coping mechanisms, including survival sex and begging. For shelter, displaced families are either living with host families or in camps exposing women and girls to increased risk of (GBV). Although most participants reported improved access to water compared to the situation in their homes, some sites did not have full WASH coverage and safe pathways for fetching water.

Participation at community level and in humanitarian response: Humanitarian organizations have conducted minimal or no consultations with populations most affected by the crisis regarding their preferences and needs for assistance. Although the number of women sitting on decision-making bodies at the community level has increased, women expressed that they still have difficulty influencing decisions as they remain outnumbered by men.

**Safety and Protection:** Human rights violations and GBV are getting worse, especially in Rutshuru and Masisi. Women and adolescent groups were particularly at risk of sexual harassment and abuse within the camps. There are few protection measures or legal services for GBV survivors.

**Coping Mechanisms:** The research showed that men and boys go to cities and host communities in search for employment, while women were required to increase their livelihood activities. There were reports of women adopting harmful coping strategies such as begging and transactional sex.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

Women and children are disproportionately affected by this deep-rooted crisis – becoming exposed to increased risk of exploitation and abuse. Men are facing increased pressures to provide for the household, seek new livelihoods and navigate threats caused by violent rebels/militias/military forces. Below highlights the summary recommendations to inform programming based on findings from this RGA:

- **To the government**
  - Ensure camps are adapted to the needs of displaced population, WASH facilities are adequate, and markets are accessible. Preparedness plans should be based on solid risk and gender analysis.
  - Support humanitarian coordination through the Liaison Committee in strengthening prevention, advocacy against sexual and gender-based violence, humanitarian principles, human rights, International Humanitarian Law and PHSEA.

- **To humanitarian coordination and humanitarian agencies**
  - Strengthen accountability and interagency complaints feedback mechanisms.
  - Strengthen collaboration with local organization, including women to increase their participation.
  - Integrate GBV risk mitigation actions into all sector programs and ensure gender is integrated in joint needs assessments and sectoral assessments.
  - Strengthen the provision for GBV services.

- **To the civil society**
  - Advocate for inclusion of women and vulnerable groups in peacebuilding and conflict resolution and for respecting humanitarian principles.
  - Advocate for the inclusion of Women Rights Organizations (WRO) in peace negotiation process.
  - Work with women’s groups such as VSLAs, religious groups to ensure their voices are heard.

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2. https://careinternationalmy.sharepoint.com/wg/personal/laura_tashjian_care_org/EVZgTdoWulxPlvwTt1jvax8BZpzdy_rRytQtEAd2dVzPxg?e=E7XB4&C1D=070B5D57-7B2B-4768-9AD8-8C974549E4E6