

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

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Sexual exploitation of minors in brothels and survival sex in North-Kivu

1 CONTEXT

For several decades, the Eastern region of the DRC has been grappling with conflicts and natural disasters that have constantly increased the vulnerability of the population, especially women and girls. The insecurity caused by armed and/or inter-communal conflicts, population movements and the resulting collapse of community protection mechanisms exacerbate the risk factors for sexual and gender-based violence in the province of North Kivu, particularly in the territories of Nyiragongo, Rutshuru, Masisi, Béni, Lubero and the city of Goma.

Since the beginning of 2023, 10,339 survivors of GBV have benefited from key services, including 66% cases of rape, 11% of physical assault, 8% of early marriage, 8% of psychological violence, 5% of sexual assault and 2% of denial of resources and opportunities.

2 USE OF NEGATIVE COPING STRATEGIES AND GBV RISK FACTORS

Besides the aggravating GBV risk factors linked to insecurity, the lack of humanitarian assistance, the absence of economic resilience mechanisms and the inadequate funding of

socio-economic and educational reintegration activities for GBV victims, many women and girls are increasingly adopting negative survival strategies, such as survival sex, early and/or forced marriage and sexual exploitation in brothels. These survival mechanisms increase the exposure of these women and girls to various types of GBV, including rape, sexual violence, physical violence, psychological violence, and the denial of resources and opportunities.

3 MAISONS DE TOLERANCE AND THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE OF MINORS

The situation grim – even for minors, as evidenced by the proliferation of brothels throughout the province, but particularly in the territories of Nyiragongo, Béni, Sud Lubero, Masisi and the town of Goma. Unlike the practice of survival sex by adult women, the exchange of sex for money, goods or services in brothels with minors is an act of sexual exploitation and abuse. Far from being a new phenomenon in the humanitarian context of North Kivu, several alerts made since 2017 pointed to this problem, which hinders the development of children and their rights to be protected from any abuse

or exploitation, recognized in the revised family code (2016), the Congolese constitution and the law on child protection (2009), among others

Actions including the development of a provincial action plan have been carried out by the government in collaboration with several national and international actors to curb this child protection problem since 2018. This action plan sets out 4 areas of intervention and objectives with a view to coordinate action by all the stakeholders involved in the fight against this scourge - Protection and Prevention (2) Psychosocial, Medical and Legal Assistance (3) Social Reintegration of Child Victims of EAS (4) Management and Coordination.

In addition to the workshops, other smaller-scale initiatives were carried out in certain areas, including:

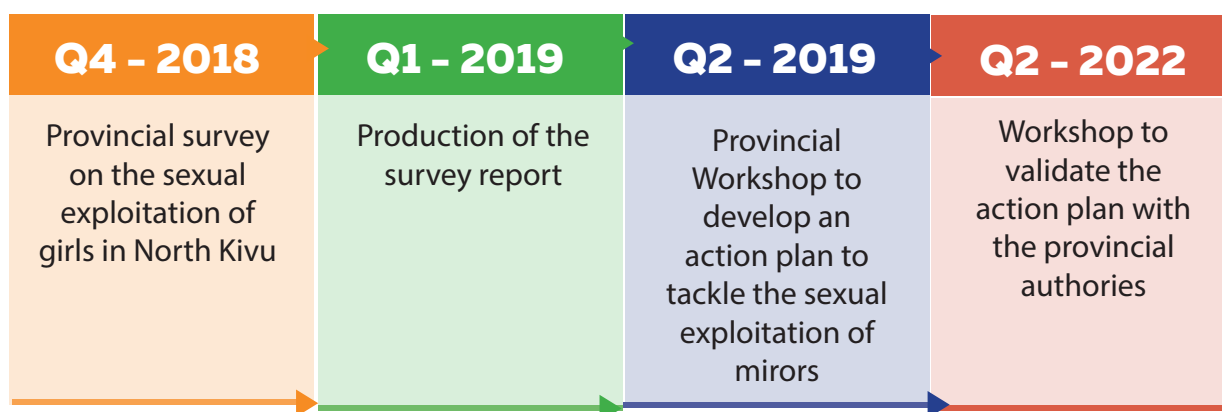
- Awareness raising and support for children who have escaped from the brothels.
- Dismantling of several brothels by the urban and territorial authorities in Goma, Béni and Masisi.
- Sensitization of brothel gatekeepers and owners
- Advocacy to the National Ministry of Justice to close these brothels in the province.
- Sensitization of local authorities

to report cases identified in their community.

- Care and support for some victims of these exploitation by key organizations.
- Setting up of day centers for children as a means of prevention.
- Printing and dissemination of awareness-raising tools.

Following the intensification of the clashes linked to the M23 crisis and the ongoing crises in the Grand Nord, the number of people, including minors, adopting these survival mechanisms is growing. It is against this backdrop that the GBV AoR and protection stakeholders, in close collaboration with the political and administrative authorities, have embarked on several large-scale activities, including **a workshop to review the prevention and protection strategy on these issues and high-level advocacy in December 2022, a workshop for the elaboration of an accelerated roadmap for the action plan in April 2023 and an update of the mapping exercise.**

This latest mapping, carried out in the first quarter of 2023, shows that a total of 145 brothels have been identified by GBV stakeholders, 67 of which are in the IDP sites in Karisimbi and Goma.

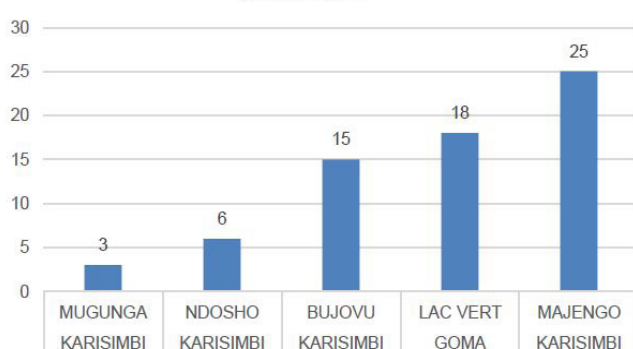


Source: GBV AoR avril 2023

¹ Synthèse des actions clés en annexe

The latest security audits carried out as part of the Scale up of prevention and response plan indicate that these brothels are frequented by the displaced persons themselves, certain members of the host communities, the military and police officers responsible for camp security or whose positions are located close to the camps. This report highlights the sensitive nature of the issue, as well as protection risks and fear of reprisals for victims and those working in the field.

Mapping of Maisons de tolérance per IDPs site and Health Zones



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MAJOR CHALLENGES

- The lack of follow-up on actions against the proliferation of "maisons de tolérance", including in IDP sites, despite the authorities' orders.
- The risks of protection and reprisals against victims and protection workers
- Limited resources to cover the specific needs of women and girls in addition to household needs (food, water, NFI etc).
- The challenges of preventing and responding to GBV in a context of populations movements
- Lack of awareness of this phenomenon among humanitarian actors
- Under-reporting of GBV cases linked to these survival strategies

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NEXT STEPS

- Reinforcement of the advocacy for the application of the provincial decree of May 2023 on the closure of «Maisons de tolérance».
- High-level advocacy for these issues to be considered in humanitarian and development funding.
- Provincial survey to update mapping in all affected areas.
- Finalization of the accelerated roadmap for the revised action plan.
- Mobilization of resources to implement the plan, and disseminating the plan.

N°	ACTIVITIES	PERIODE Quarter
01	Provincial analysis on the sexual exploitation of girls in North Kivu: Following a number of alerts shared by stakeholders and members of the GBV coordination at provincial and local levels, partners undertook an assessment/analysis of the issue in all zones.	Q4 2018
02	Production of the assessment report Report produced and shared by all the working groups to inform stakeholders of the results of the work carried out in this thematic.	Q1 2019
03	Provincial workshop to draft an action plan to fight sexual exploitation of children : The provincial coordination of the Gender Thematic Group, with the support of protection actors, organized a provincial workshop to elaborate a plan to prevent and provide a holistic response in the Grand-Nord and Petit-Nord regions of the province.	Q2 2019
04	Workshop for validation of the action plan by the provincial authority Workshop to validate and ensure ownership of the action plan by the provincial, national and local authorities.	Q4 2021
05	Update mapping of brothels in certain areas	Q3 2022
06	Workshop to consider a prevention and response strategy on the issues of tolerance houses and survival sex following the resurgence of the M23 crisis and other crises in the Greater North Reinforce the consideration of GBV protection issues in humanitarian response plans and update a prevention and response strategy in collaboration with key stakeholders.	Q4 2022
07	High-level advocacy to the authorities for the closure of brothels and fight against impunity	Q4 2022
08	Workshop to draw up an accelerated roadmap for implementing the revised action plan Identify the key actions of the action plan with immediate impact for accelerated implementation in the context of limited resources.	Q1 2023