



 Democratic Republic of Congo

Advocacy with the authorities

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Introduction

Populations in the DRC face violations and abuses of their rights by armed groups, state agents and civilians. Some threats are directly linked to conflicts, such as looting, killings and gender-based violence. However, these individual threats are just one part of the abuses experienced by women and men in the DRC. Abuses are committed more generally by state and non-state actors. In addition to conflict, there are other causes at the root of these abuses, such as the fragility of state institutions (lack of services, impunity, corruption, etc.) and sociocultural norms relating to certain groups, especially women and girls.

Intervention strategy

In order to remedy the above problems, SOPROP, in partnership with Oxfam, has implemented or revitalised three types of community protection structure (CPS): community protection committees (CPCs), women's forums (WFs) and agents of change (AoCs). The key roles of these structures are to lead advocacy actions with the authorities, to raise awareness among community members, to refer victims of abuse to care services, and to monitor protection incidents.

In order to enable these structures to operate and perform well, SOPROP, in partnership with Oxfam, organises consultation sessions with the structures' members, community leaders and local authorities, with a view to identifying needs in terms of technical, material and financial support.

Thus, the outcomes of these consultations reveal the essential points that must be taken into consideration in order to successfully carry out the advocacy actions. The CPS members undergo capacity-building in terms of advocacy at the local level and analysis of the power wielded by the various actors. This analysis allows CPS members to correctly identify the targets of their advocacy.

Before the structure members go to the local authorities to carry out their advocacy, the latter also undergo capacity-building on issues such as protection of civilians and their roles and responsibilities within the communities, so that they can understand the community protection approach.

In our community approach, advocacy is carried out at the local, territorial and provincial level.

At the local level:

This is advocacy carried out by CPS members with local authorities, in favour of victims of abuse/violation of human rights. These members identify protection risks and undertake actions to mitigate them. These actions can be carried out in terms of advocacy with local representatives of the authorities, such as the police, the armed forces, the National Intelligence Agency and the Directorate-General of Migration. These actions also include rapid responses to the early-warning system and responses to the community and women's protection plan.

At the territorial level:

This is advocacy carried out by members of the advocacy network. The advocacy network is a structure made up of local associations with a capacity to influence the territorial authorities. It is situated in the capital of the territory or chiefdom, where the authorities that control the other entities targeted as an intervention zone are based.

This structure deals with protection risks to which a solution has not been found at community level (local level). It prepares advocacy notes to present to the territorial authorities at round-table meetings organised in the capital of the territory/chiefdom. Following these meetings, the authorities undertake to reduce the protection risks to which the populations are exposed in the intervention zone.

At the provincial level:

This is advocacy carried out by SOPROP and Oxfam with the provincial authorities. SOPROP, in partnership with Oxfam, organises provincial round-table meetings attended by territorial and local authorities, CPS members, members of the advocacy network and certain community leaders. The meetings deal with protection risks to which a solution has not been found at territorial level. Members of the different communities present their problems/risks to the provincial authorities and the latter undertake actions to mitigate them.

Monitoring mechanism

At all levels (local, territorial and provincial), monitoring committees are put in place to check the extent to which the commitments undertaken by the participants at the different round-table meetings or exchange sessions have been met. The results of the work carried out by these monitoring committees provide material to deal with at new round-table meetings and exchange sessions with provincial, territorial and local authorities that will be organised in the intervention zone.