



WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY 2022 BLOG: CAPACITY STRENGTHENING AND CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION DURING COVID-19 BY BUREAU OF INFORMATION, TRAINING, EXCHANGE, AND RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT (BIFERD)

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About BIFERD: A humanitarian and development organisation supporting vulnerable children and communities in DRC

The Bureau of Information Office; Training, Exchange, and Research for Development (BIFERD) is a national Humanitarian and Development organisation founded in 2004 in the North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The activities of the BIFERD are carried out in three specific provinces in North Kivu (Territories of Rutshuru, Masisi, Nyiragongo), South Kivu (Territories of Mwenga, Shabunda and Kalehe) and in Ituri. The target population of the NGO BIFERD includes displaced people, indigenous populations affected by crises and disasters, vulnerable children, vulnerable women and other vulnerable groups. BIFERD's mission is to reduce poverty and the vulnerability of populations through multisectoral interventions and by working with others in a spirit of coordination and collaboration.

Context during COVID-19: Lockdowns created barriers to connecting with and supporting communities

During the period of COVID-19, the BIFERD staff was greatly affected, as lockdown measures did not allow the field teams to organise field supervision and also to participate in coordination meetings of the emergency education sector. These measures also made connecting with beneficiaries much more difficult. With little movement allowed, BIFERD staff were forced to work from home and utilise remote methods. However, access and use of technology was not easy for staff members due to factors such as lack of electricity and lack of internet.

What did BIFERD do in response to the COVID-19 crisis? Adapting to remote ways of working for training and distance learning

To respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the BIFERD staff were able to carry out a rapid survey of the population while respecting the safety measures taken by the DRC Government and WHO. Meetings were also held with a very small number of staff in the offices and certain activities such as training and



distance learning were organised for the benefit of the children while respecting the safety and distancing measures.

What are the remaining challenges? Increased economic inequalities due to the pandemic have further heightened child protection risks

The COVID-19 pandemic has left huge economic shocks to families in the DRC. As a result, many children have been subjected to child labour, gender-based violence, such as early marriage and unwanted pregnancies. To combat these challenges, huge efforts are needed to address the needs of children and their families post-COVID-19 to ensure that children's rights are upheld and protected.

What still needs to be done? Capacity strengthening with governments in the development of IDO preparedness plans to focus on the protection of children

There is surely much work still to be done. Notably, the socio-economic reintegration of children who, due to school closures throughout the DRC, experienced violence and abuse in their homes and communities during this period. Another important point that emerged was the apparent need for more support to states in the development of pandemic and epidemic preparedness plans to focus on the protection of children. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation of children in DRC has remained worrying.

Conclusion: The care of children who have been affected by COVID-19 requires specific support through a multi-sectoral approach and strong coordination of interventions!