

## Report on the awareness community information on Abortion Stigma Reduction targeting Internally Displaced women of Lushagala IDP Camp in Goma, North Kivu the Democratic Republic of Congo



This programme of awareness on Abortion Stigma Reduction is a continuation of our activities aiming at saving the lives of many women in Goma, North Kivu/ DR Congo, this activity was held on May 9th, 2024 bringing together IDP women from Lushagala Camp in Goma who indicated that they do not have information about abortion. “ All what we hear is that abortion is a sin and anyone who does it, commits a sin and God will kill her or face severe problems in life as consequences of that sin, that is why we fear it”. This what exclaimed one among IDP women who attended our information session,

### Background information

Goma has a population of 2million and currently hosts more than 3million people IDPs composed of 75% women and children, living in dire conditions in Camps. During their lifetimes these women have been victims of all forms of sexual abuses and many are psychologically unstable, on top of dire life conditions they are also confronted with the reality of unwanted pregnancy, rapes and other forms of sexual abuses, including sexual exploitation. Helping women to access information about

safe abortion will save therefore many lives because so far women are involved in abortion but in most cases not safe. Our activities focuses on two major things: Providing accurate information to women about abortion so that they can take informed decisions and provide with choices during pregnancy, and the second is to reduce unsafe abortion for those who opt to do it by helping them with information on how best they can do it without putting their lives at risk.

### Information session with IDP women from Lushagala Camp in Goma

This information session focused on these adult women because they remain the pillar and source of information to young girls, they are mostly the advisors and generally the consultants in their communities, due to their age they have something to say and can easily change the attitudes of people in the communities.

Welcome remarks and self-introduction

Definition of key concept on abortion stigma reduction

Exchange of experiences and cases about abortion in camps

Way forward

The information which was chaired by Florence Mapatano and Solange from SWID a partner organization welcomed the participants and asked each one to present his/herself.

The key words which were explained are:

Abortion, Voluntary abortion, involuntary abortion, abortion reduction, abortion stigma,

The chairperson of the meeting took time to explain in very simple words and in local language which each word means and this helped women to understand better the topic.

The participants also looked into history and their tradition in order to see if the word abortion existed, there was consensus that abortion is not a white culture which is being imposed in Africa but is was part of the tradition, even unsafe abortion existed in the communities much as it was highly punished.

Sharing of experiences

One of the IDP women said “

I still remember one day when I aborted, I was five months pregnant and then in the process I aborted three times, I was concerned and decided to go to the health center and after checking they told me that there was nothing wrong with my body. I was then a subject of discussion in the whole family of in-laws and even in my community which connected me to someone who could bring misfortune to the family and the community, I knew if anything bad could happen there was a chance to be attributed to me, I lost esteem and also lost all my friends who took distance from me because they do not want to be seen as being associated with me. My salvation happened when a certain white woman came and was treating people in the Community, I went to her and she took care and treated me and now I gave birth to a baby boy. Then people started coming to me again and I become also part of the community.

More experiences were shared among women which are related to stigma and other forms of discrimination against women. In our daily interaction with people in the community, we do observe the following:

Lack of information, religious and cultural beliefs, stigmatization and the use of harbor in order to terminate pregnancy.

Our approach has been mainly to share with people accurate information, and let them know how to access services, this approach leaves people with their freedom to choose, and our intention is to reduce stigma and reduce unsafe abortion practices which put women at risks.

## Challenges

Our project is highly affected by the lack of funds which will help us to collect all necessary information about safe-abortion and to train specialized staffs in abortion, more research work is needed in order to come up with clear evidence based in each community and mark all service providers, analyze the existing policies and come up with advocacy orientation.

Being knew topic in the community it is more and more demanded by many people but we have not yet managed to reach to all those who need this information because of funding.

Way forward

We appeal upon you to support our fundraising activities and help us to get the necessary funds