ADDRESSING HIV NEEDS OF DISPLACED POPULATIONS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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Role of UNHCR

• **1951 Refugee Convention:** ‘State parties shall accord to refugees in their territories access to the same ‘public relief and assistance as their nationals, including medical care.’

• Became UNAIDS cosponsor in June 2004

• Lead organisation for HIV and displaced persons (IDPs and refugees) acc. to UNAIDS div. of labour
  – Complimentary to HCR’s lead role in Protection, Shelter and Camp Mgt within humanit. reform process
Displacement Cycle

Conflicts-affected population

Refugees
Host community

IDPs
Host community

Return

Repatriation

Border

Interactions with other linked populations:
- Armed forces/peacekeepers
- Sex workers

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency
Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in DRC

- UNHCR provides assistance to:
  - Refugees 224,000
  - Returnees 82,000
  - IDPs 1.6 million

- IDPs often worse off than refugees who enjoy protection under 1951 Convention.
Impact of Conflict and displacement

• Pre-existing poverty exacerbated
• Community social structures broken and ability to cope compromised
• Often struggle for survival
• Women and children most vulnerable incl. sexual gender-based violence (SGBV)
  – In DRC, wide scale rape
    • Rape survivors stigmatised and shunned by partners and communities
• Drugs and alcohol abuse common
IDPs Fleeing Conflict in Central Katanga
Return and Reintegration Programs

• UNHCR in DRC is implementing the following:
  • Medical screening.
  • HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns
  • Condom distribution
  • Provision of counselling services to returnees
• In some instances, PLWAs advised to delay return until ART available in areas of origin
• Every returnee educated about HIV through mass information activities in host country and/or on arrival in country of origin
Collaboration

• UNHCR collaborates with UNAIDS Country Coordinator and team, cosponsors, Gov, int’l and nat’l NGOs and donors

• Various for HIV interventions for displaced persons are mapped out w aim of strengthening nat’l and regional initiatives
  – Integrated approach w host comm.
  – e.g. World Bank funded GLIA project and World Bank MAP for DRC
Challenges

- Sustained stability in DRC:
  - Critical for return and reintegration
  - National plans can take hold in more comprehensive fashion
  - Basic support infrastructure can be put into place
  - Requires increased resources

- HIV is cross-cutting issue that requires improved coordination, advocacy, and resources with active involvement of Gov, donors, UN agencies, NGOs and beneficiaries

- Flexible funding to change acc. to IDP/ref sit’ns
- Gathering reliable data at nat’l and regional level