

WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY 2022 BLOG: ADAPTING TO COVID-19 SAFETY MEASURES BY ASSOCIATION DES JEUNES POUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT INTÉGRÉ KALUNDU, (AJEDI-KA ASBL)

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About AJEDI-Ka: A humanitarian and child protection agency in DRC

[AJEDI-Ka](#) is a non-profit humanitarian agency providing relief, rehabilitation, protection, and resettlement services, as well as advocacy for children. These advocacy areas put a focus on vulnerable girls and boys who are exiting Armed Forces and Groups, Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups (CAAFAG), Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC), Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), orphans, and child victims of armed conflict. AJEDI-Ka has been operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) since 18 December 1988 to combat soil erosion and protect the environment. In order to respond to the humanitarian needs of populations affected by armed conflict and other natural disasters, AJEDI-Ka integrated child protection into its programme in 1998 in order to promote, defend and protect the rights of children affected by armed conflict.

Context during COVID-19: Lockdowns and safety measures stopped community initiatives and forced staff to stay home

During the COVID-19 pandemic, AJEDI-Ka, in collaboration with the International Rescue Committee, implemented a child protection project in the territory of FIZI, South Kivu province, DRC. The pandemic had led to the suspension of program activities, and for a period of time, AJEDI-Ka focused its attention solely on raising awareness of prevention of the virus through safety measures. In terms of impact, the lockdown had blocked all initiatives aimed at communities, the office was partially closed, and staff were forced to stay at home. But after the lockdown, activities resumed under additional safety and social-distancing measures in all Child Friendly Spaces.





What did AJEDI-Ka do in response to the COVID-19 crisis? Awareness raising, prevention, and adapting Child Friendly Spaces

AJEDI-Ka staff were able to respond to the challenges of COVID-19 by using various safety measures during recreational games organised at the child-friendly spaces, such as regular hand washing, taking temperature before starting games, respecting social distancing, and wearing masks. One innovative result observed during the COVID-19 response period was that children took ownership of the safety measures and popularised them (especially regular hand washing). AJEDI-Ka also organised door-to-door awareness raising sessions in all the health areas targeted by the project. It should also be noted that psychosocial support and protection case management activities were carried out by telephone, with the support of a community focal point.

What are the remaining challenges? Limited access to financial resources and basic services for vulnerable children and communities

The ongoing challenges faced by AJEDI-Ka staff are mostly related to limited access to financial resources, which did not allow AJEDI-Ka to disseminate the safety measures throughout the community or the territory of FIZI, and sensitisation was more focused on the beneficiary children, their families and local leaders and authorities. An additional challenge was the stigmatisation of the pandemic, as the communities initially had a misperception of the disease. Other protection concerns among IDPs, returnees and refugees was elevated, as these groups already lack access to basic services.

What still needs to be done? Continued awareness raising and capacity strengthening

- Supporting local organisations in their awareness raising and dissemination of safety measures against COVID-19 and other infectious disease outbreaks
- Building the capacity of the organisations' staff to be more effective in the field

Conclusion: Effective response to IDO's must consider and involve the entire affected population, including girls and children!

The COVID-19 activities have involved the entire affected population, in particular women, girls, and children. These activities are in line with the intervention strategy outlined in the global Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and the DRC's COVID-19 HRP and focus on prevention activities, psychosocial support, and case management.