COVID-19
GNWP Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy and Appeal
April 2020

Country Update
Democratic Republic of Congo

As of April 16, 267 COVID-19 cases have been recorded in DRC, including 22 deaths.[1] On March 24, the Congolese government declared a state of emergency and took measures to stop the spread of the virus, including shutting down borders, restricting domestic and international travel, prohibiting large gatherings, and closing down schools, restaurants, and places of worship. The capital city, Kinshasa, is under total lockdown. In addition to the COVID-19 outbreak, a new Ebola case[2] was reported in the eastern city of Beni on April 10th, adding on to a measles epidemic, a cholera outbreak, and ongoing armed conflicts. At the same time, the country’s experience in tackling Ebola outbreaks may serve as a valuable resource in responding to the COVID-19 emergencies. The shutdown of Ebola treatment centers has been suspended, as responders are evaluating whether they can be used to help address COVID-19.

Impact on Women, Peace, and Security:
After the first COVID-19 case was confirmed, there was confusion and frustration among Congolese citizens due to inaccurate information from government and health officials.[3] GNWP partners have noted an increase in fake news, and the selling of counterfeit medicine.[4]

The COVID-19 is expected to have a devastating impact on the informal sector economy in DRC, which will have disproportionate adverse effect on women, who constitute the majority of informal workers.

In DRC, where GNWP has active YWL members, most NGOs have stopped non-essential staff from coming in and out of the country, and some “non-essential” aid workers were evacuated, which has made the delivery of necessary services more difficult. Moreover, aid agencies have been concerned about the closures of borders with Burundi and Rwanda, which often serve as their supply routes. The governor of North Kivu expressed concerns about aid agencies “importing” COVID-19, and emphasized the risk to refugee and internally displaced populations.

On March 30, the police killed at least 3 people and wounded 11 others, according to a UN source, when they fired live rounds at members of the Bundudia Kongo politico-religious movement who were demonstrating in Kinshasa to “chase the spirit of the coronavirus.” The authorities should issue clear orders to the security forces that they are to act with restraint while enforcing restrictions in place.

Response by women peacebuilders:
- Some local NGOs and grassroots activist, including GNWP partners, are working to produce masks that meet sanitary requirements outlined by the WHO, but resources for distributing and reproductions of the masks are scarce. Additionally, GNWP partners and YWL members are working to create rapid information sharing and dissemination platforms, to ensure the population is informed.