

Strengthening the protective environment for women in Ituri Province to contribute to eliminating gender-based violence in the DRC (**Pro-Femmes Ituri**)

Armed conflict, normalization of violence, and fragmented response mechanisms has meant women and girls in the Ituri Province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) face high risk for gender-based violence (GBV) with limited access to comprehensive care.

Pro-Femmes Ituri strengthens the protective environment for women in Ituri, with a particular focus on GBV survivors, by improving access to services in Bunia and collaborating with communities to combat stigma.

Context

With political and social structures weakened by decades of armed conflict, GBV against women and girls has been increasing in the DRC in recent years. Approximately 43% of Congolese women reported experiencing some form of domestic violence in 2023, of whom 22.5% were victims of sexual violence by an intimate partner.¹ Social norms, stigma, and fear of retaliation limit survivors' ability to report incidents, seek help, and access care.

Eastern DRC has long been the epicenter of intersecting crises of armed violence and GBV. In particular, Ituri province and its capital city of Bunia, are home to one of the largest populations of internally displaced people in the DRC. Since the beginning of 2023, nearly a half million people have been newly displaced in the province, bringing the provincial total to over 1.76 million. At the same time, Bunia's health zone (HZ) has only one health facility able to provide comprehensive care to GBV survivors, and this facility lacks sufficiently trained staff and supplies to provide holistic care. In 2025, of the 1,705 GBV survivors registered in the Bunia HZ, only 29% received care within 72 hours, and only 24% received a PEP kit (406).²

Funded by the European Union via Enabel and led by Pathfinder International in partnership with FECONDE, Pro-Femmes Ituri strengthens the protective environment for women and girls in Bunia to ensure GBV survivors have access to comprehensive services and feel empowered to use them.



Awareness-raising activity at a camp for displaced persons in Kigonze, Mamie Uringi, Pro-Femmes Ituri staff member, August 28, 2025.

Pro-Femmes Ituri Overview

Funder: European Union via Enabel

Technical Partners: Pathfinder and FECONDE

Government Implementing Partners:

Ministère du Genre, Famille et Enfants
Ministère de la Santé Publique, Hygiène et
Prévoyance Sociale

Budget: €1,130,000

Period: December 2024 – December 2026

Intervention Areas: Bunia urban and
peri-urban areas, Ituri Province, DRC

¹Institut National de la Statistique (INS), École de Santé Publique de Kinshasa, and ICF, Demographic and Health Survey of the Democratic Republic of the Congo 2023–2024: Final Report (Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Rockville, MD: ICF, 2024).

²Ministère de la Santé Publique, Hygiène et Prévoyance Sociale, Système National d'Information Sanitaire (SNIS/DHIS2), Routine data, 2025, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Objectives

Goal: Strengthen the protective environment for women in the Bunia HZ through a model of dynamic interventions designed to build on existing achievements and consolidate partnerships with communities, government actors, and bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies.

Objective 1: Support communities in changing norms and attitudes that contribute to GBV

Objective 2: Mobilize community-based GBV early warning, prevention, and response mechanisms within the project's intervention area

Objective 3: Increase GBV survivors' access to holistic care via Integrated Multisectoral Service Centers and other referral and counter-referral mechanisms

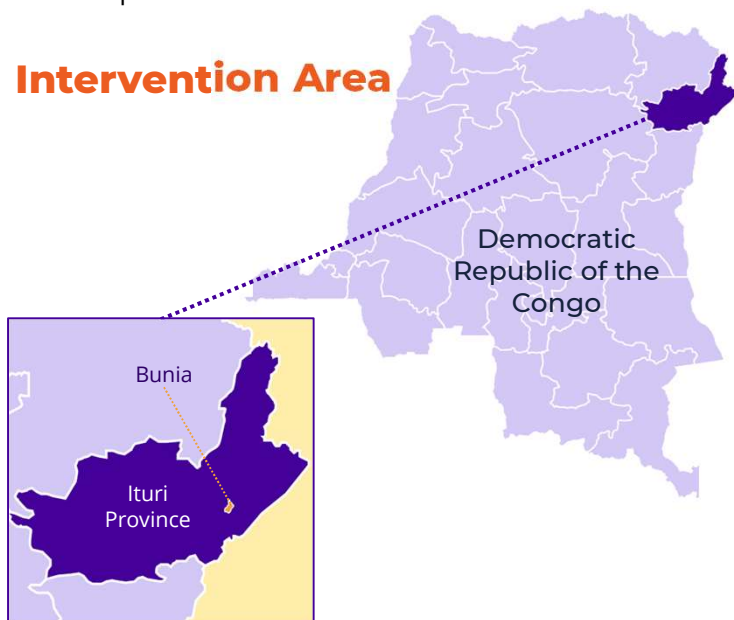
Objective 4: Strengthen the coordinating role of public social services in GBV prevention and holistic care for survivors

Expected Results

By project end, Pro-Femmes Ituri will achieve the following objectives:

1. Community members adopt attitudes and norms that support gender equality and combat GBV
2. Community-based GBV early warning, prevention, and response mechanisms are established and operational in the project's intervention area
3. GBV survivors have increased access to holistic care, including medical and psychosocial services, legal protections, and socioeconomic reintegration
4. Public services are strengthened to better coordinate GBV prevention efforts and provide comprehensive care for survivors

Intervention Area



Key Interventions

Objective 1

- Assess community needs through focus groups using human-centered design
- Build capacity of stakeholders working to combat GBV on male engagement and positive masculinity approaches, community dialogues, and advocacy techniques
- Support community-based organizations in conducting communication campaigns on gender and the fight against GBV
- Implement approaches that increase men's and boys' engagement
- Work with communities to promote mapping of available GBV services, with the goal of strengthening the network of support structures and local organizations that make up it

Objective 2

- Map existing community mechanisms for identifying and supporting survivors
- Establish local community monitoring advisors to identify GBV survivors and refer them to support services

Objective 3

- Strengthen capacity of clinical providers in the medico-psychosocial care of survivors, supply chain management, and data management
- Strengthen capacity of social service providers in psychosocial support, reintegration, and referral for survivors by providing refresher trainings of trainers on these topics and quality assurance supervision
- Establish a network of GBV focal points in health areas supported by the project
- Strengthen provision of integrated services for GBV survivors through "One-Stop Centers" at the Hôpital Général de Référence de Bunia

Objective 4

- Support Provincial Gender and Health Divisions in strengthening their coordinating role in GBV prevention and response
- Monitor activities of Ituri province stakeholders working in GBV prevention and response through improved use of service data
- Revitalize the *Groupe Thématique Genre*, the platform that brings together all stakeholders working to combat GBV under the leadership of the Provincial Governor and the Provincial Gender Division, to improve coordination and streamline care for survivors