

Sexual exploitation and abuse in Humanitarian actions in DRC

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Agenda

- Introduction
- Research methodology
- Sexual exploitation and abuse
- SEA patterns in DRC
- Accountability mechanism
- Implications for trust and collaboration
- Lessons learned.

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Context

- ✓ Ongoing conflicts in Eastern DRC since 1994
- ✓ Increasing number of IDPs: 5.5 million IDPs (OCHA 2020)
- ✓ Humanitarian actions and peace keeping mission
- ✓ High prevalence of sexual exploitations and abuse
- ✓ The PSEA 6 principles: *Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct.*
- ✓ Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13),

The logo for Erasmus, featuring the name 'Erasmus' in a stylized, cursive script.

Research question

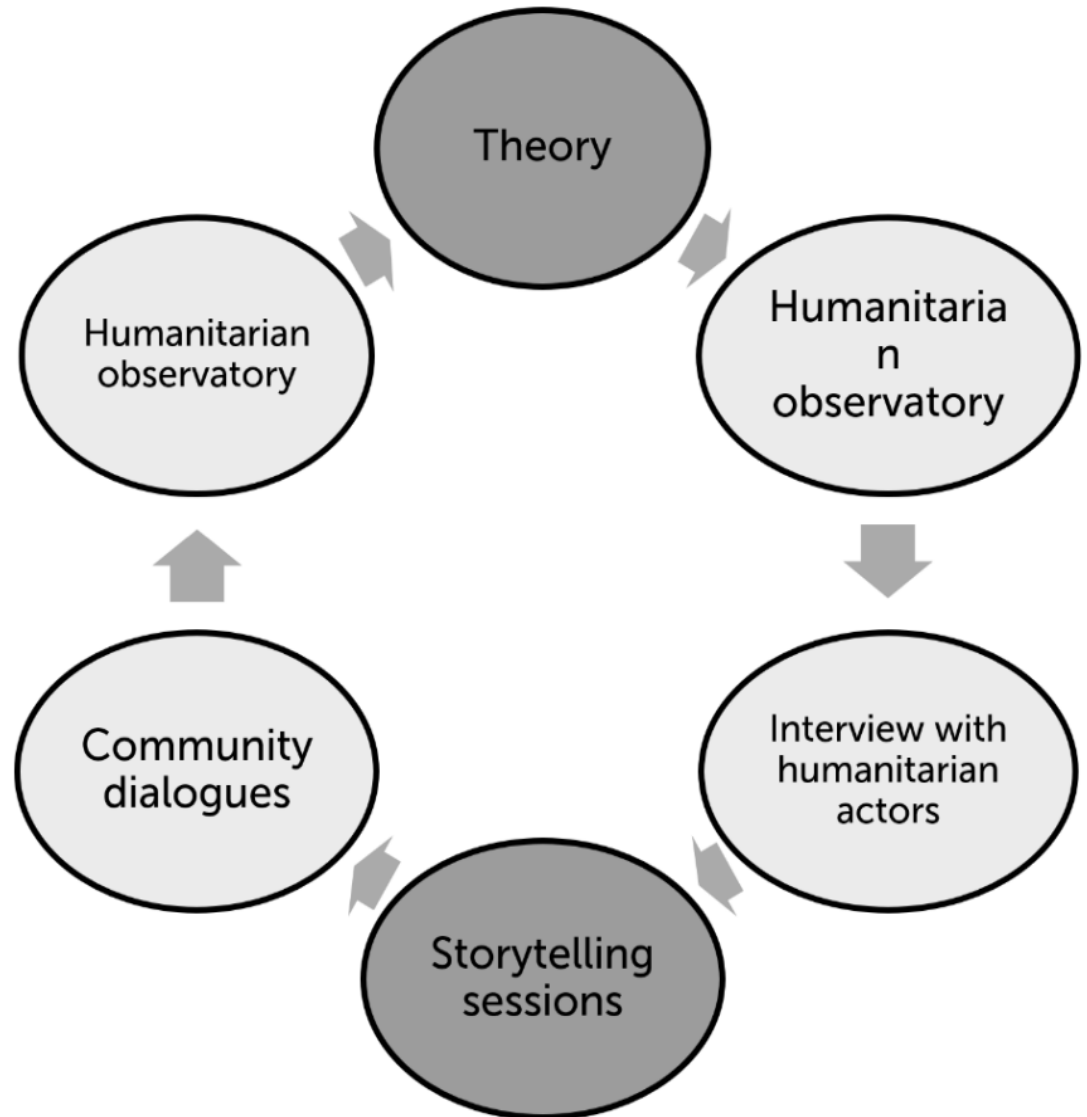


How are advocacy and accountability mechanics shape the trust between affected communities and humanitarian actors to fight Sexual exploitations and abuse in DRC

Erasmus

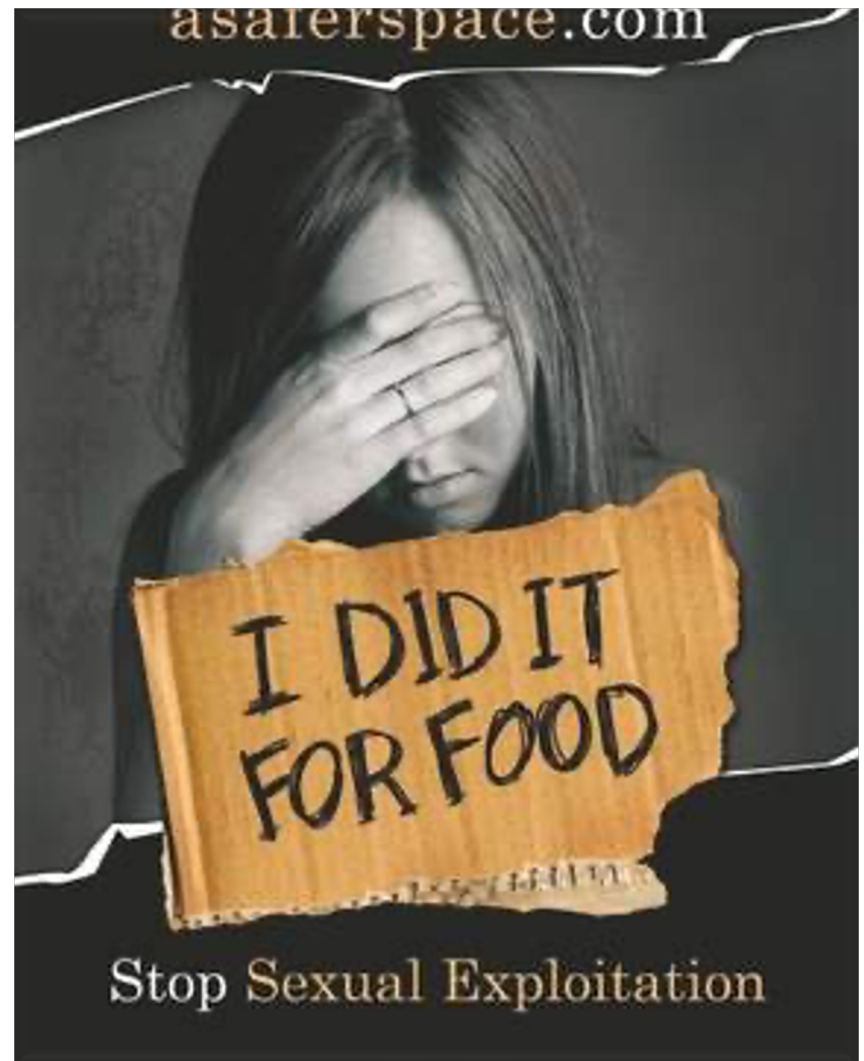
Interactive methodology

- *A collaborative research approach*
- *Recurrent interactions and joint learning activities between researchers and practitioners to answer a research question.*



Sexual exploitations and abuse (SEA)

- Sexual exploitation: Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another (ST/SGB/2003/13)
- Sexual abuse: the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions (ST/SGB/2003/13)



The perpetrator takes advantage of his victim's vulnerable state

Erasmus

SEA Patterns in DRC

- The sexual exploitation of aid recipients: trading aid for sex
- The sexual exploitation of job applicants: trading aid for job
- The sexual exploitation of fund applicants: trading fund for sex
- The sexual exploitation of colleague at lower positions: trading sex for promotions or job security.
- The sexual exploitation of sex professional: trading sex for money, *UN no-tolerance policy towards SEA*
- Forced or coercive sex with maids in organizations' guest houses

One of the girls we interviewed related: "... He came with my cousin's friend and said he wanted to help me as I was an orphan. A few days later, he invited me to lunch; and then asked me to have sex with him if I wanted to get her support for school fees. We had sex but when I told him that I got pregnant, he left our city, I couldn't see him anymore".



Accountability mechanisms

Formal

- ✓ Hotline number
- ✓ Online form
- ✓ Email addresses
- ✓ Community-based Complaint Mechanisms (CBCM): *formalized mechanism to give victims and witnesses of misconduct by an to report cases, and for organizations to deal with these complaints in a structured manner*
- ✓ Community-based Complaint Network (CBCN)
- ✓ PSEA focal points
- ✓ Suggestion box

Informal

- ✓ Direct contact with local chief, local authorities or NGOs managers
- ✓ Amicable solutions
- ✓ NGO managers, often friends of perpetrators or concerned about the NGO reputation

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Implication on trust

- ✓ Reluctance to use no trust-based accountability mechanisms
- ✓ Lack of feedback from investigations leading to loss of trust
- ✓ Language barrier preventing victims to report (french for uneducated women)
- ✓ Long investigation process, resulting in loss of trust
- ✓ Fear of reprisals: Victims, family members, witnesses, association members
- ✓ Poor involvement of community members in complaints management
- ✓ Aid subordinated to disciplinary action for un assisted victims
- ✓ Lack of follow-up

One of the women we interviewed related: "A few days after the denunciation, I got several calls. I fear for my security. I called them and asked them to stop the process."

"We can not have access to help until we accept to open disciplinary action to accuse/punish the perpetrators."

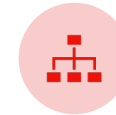
"...I have his child; I gave them all the details and the documents as proof. They are forcing me to open a disciplinary action so that I may get help while the father of my child is still looking for a job in the UN. I wonder what my son will react when he learns that his father no longer has a job because of me. We don't even trust in the UN process of compensation."



Lessons learned



The involvement of program staff complaint in the management constitute a risk for the security of the complainants and witnesses.



PSEA focal point in all agencies and organizations to provide regular information and briefings on PSEA.



The need to publicize the hotline numbers (495555)



Lack of telephones for most women and difficulty in explaining SEA to unfamiliar people as a big barrier



Many cases are not reported: Lack of trust, reputation and fear of reprisals- Better to adapt mechanisms to local context



No feedback to victims during investigations.



Short-term projects for local NGOs do not make the mechanism sustainable.

Thank you

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