

## **ALLERTE:**

### **Sex workers affected and excluded from the response to EBOLA virus prevention mechanisms in RD.Congo; Specific case of the cities of Goma and Bukavu.**

The border towns Bukavu in South Kivu and Goma in North Kivu are considered as sex work hubs in eastern DR.Congo, with an estimated density of 369,514 inhabitants, a strong movement of female sex workers are noticed. UMANDE's<sup>1</sup> annual report reveals more than 3809 migrant sex workers working in Bukavu from Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. Add to that the presence of more than 10,289 Congolese women who live for sex work.

For more than a year the Ebola outbreak has been declared in Eastern DR.Congo; And the international community through the WHO has declared since July 17, 2019, the Ebola Virus outbreak, as a public health emergency of international concern (USPPI)<sup>2</sup>; And a program for the national response has been set up jointly with the Congolese Government. Despite all these strategies to fight against EBOLA, the cities of Goma and Bukavu have just been affected by this epidemic, and psychosis has invaded all communities.

If all communities are affected by this epidemic and psychosis, they are not affected at the same level of vulnerabilities and risks. Facing the sexual immigration, the vulnerability, the stigmatization, the exclusion but especially the high risks of a daily meeting of a person infected by the EBOLA virus, the sex workers are at the high risks to be infected. Unfortunately there is no specific program to prevent it by and for Congolese and immigrant sex workers working in Eastern DR.Congo.

Here, the sex workers' organizations observe that there is no sensitization campaign specific to sex workers about the transmission of the EBOLA virus by the sexual voice, nor the fact that migrant sex workers are involved in migration; At the moment when the WHO<sup>3</sup> states that any survivor of EBOLA and their sexual partners should benefit from advice on safer sex practice, and should test their sperm three months after the onset of the disease.

On Friday<sup>4</sup>, August 16, 2019, a 24-year-old female sex worker died in Mwenga by EBOLA from the city of BENI in North Kivu, after having traveled over 1200Km through the cities of Goma and Bukavu, through virus detection doors; His 7-month-old male baby has been quarantined since Saturday, August 17, 2019.

Restrictions are also noted in the borders for sex worker women's movements (Rwanda-DR Congo); (Burundi-DR Congo).

#### **Recommendation of the sex worker organizations of RD.Congo meeting within ACODHU-TS:**

- ★ We solicit specific interventions and sensitization for the sex worker community working in the affected and transboundary cities;
- ★ That a global action in the region be set up fastest in the midst of sex workers through organizations members of the Congolese Alliance for Human Rights sex work project ACODHU-TS;
- ★ Involvement of the leaders of sex workers in the joint strategy put in place by WHO and government;
- ★ Set up a specific response committee for sex workers

#### **DR.Congo's sex workers Organization and leader signatory**

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<sup>1</sup> UMANDE Annual Report 2018

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.who.int/csr/don/18july-2019-ebola-rdc/fr/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/faq-ebola/fr/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://information.tv5monde.com/video/rdc-deux-premiers-cas-d-ebola-dans-le-sud-kivu>