

On the Frontlines: Insights into the State of Protection in 2021

The Global Protection Cluster's End of Year Event

8 December 2021

Speaker Profile: Jonas Habimana Seruvugo, Founder and Executive Director at BIFERD (Bureau d'Informations, Formations, Echanges et Recherches pour le Développement), the Democratic Republic of Congo



“Armed conflict, disease and disasters are all risks to children’s protection that require governments to act – respecting policies, supporting partners, and allocating more funds to national NGOs working on the front lines to protect children and their well-being.” – Jonas Habimana Seruvugo

Speaker & Organisational Profile:

Jonas Habimana Seruvugo is the Executive Director of [BIFERD](#) a national NGO founded in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 2004. BIFERD delivers humanitarian and development response interventions, with a focus on the protection of communities. The organisation supports implementation of the Child Protection Minimum Standards and conducts Child Protection monitoring. This includes collecting and sharing information on abuse and violence towards children and engaging in coordination mechanisms to support prevention and response to such violations, including via the protection cluster and children protection working group at country and local levels.

BIFERD also works with hundreds of families living in poverty with a particular focus on supports to displaced or orphaned children. During COVID-19 pandemic, BIFERD has educated more than 68,000 children from 208 schools on COVID-19 prevention and the organization also works to educate parents and schools’ teachers on the prevention of violence and abuse against children. BIFERD is a member of the [NEAR Network](#), the [Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction](#) and a [Sphere focal point](#).

Jonas was born in a small village, Rwanguba, in DRC in 1979. He now lives in Goma city and is father to six children. He holds a postgraduate in Community Development from the Great Lakes Institute for Rural Development (ISDR GL) and is an active member of the Steering Committee of the [Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#).

Protection Risks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo:

The DRC is one of the [toughest places in the world to be a child](#). [Millions are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance](#) and grave violations against children and gender-based violence remain major issues with many children disproportionately impacted. This is particularly the case for children living in vulnerable situations, including [displaced children](#), unaccompanied or separated children, children associated with armed groups and victims of sexual violence. Natural disasters, conflict and COVID-19 are significantly driving up protection risks. The pandemic in particular has pushed many families into poverty, increasing rates of malnutrition. [Armed groups occupying and attacking schools further places children at risk](#). For more insights regarding key protection risks in DR Congo, please see the Global Protection Cluster’s recent report, entitled ‘[Conflicts of Volcanic Magnitude](#)’.