

DRC: Claudine Ngomora, "Life has become pointless, will I ever go home again?"



Photo: Jane Some/IRIN

Claudine Ngomora at a food distribution centre at Cagala, Walungu Territory, South Kivu Province

BUKAVU, 31 July 2007 (IRIN) - Claudine Ngomora, 25, fled her home after an attack by people she says are known as the Rasta in February 2007. She has survived on the goodwill of friends and relatives in Walungu Territory in the province of South Kivu, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Claudine recounted her story at a school in the Cagala area of Walungu, where NGO, Malteser International, was distributing food to 3,000 internally displaced persons:

"I have five children, the eldest of whom is eight years old. I live with all the children, together with my husband, with a family that has been kind enough to host us here in Walungu. I left my home in Kaniola five months ago and I cannot say I have had a full stomach since.

"I am always hungry. There is not enough food for me and my children. Hunger and disease are the biggest problems we currently face. I left my banana trees and my cassava crop was just getting ready. I know it was looted by the attackers.

"Nowadays, I find that life has become pointless. I feel so helpless. I wake up in the morning, sweep the house and do general household chores. I wash the children's clothes with or without soap, and then I take the hoe to till the land my husband has leased on a short-term basis.

"We haven't harvested anything yet from this small piece of land. That is why we are always hungry. After coming back from the farm, I help the host family with whatever needs to be done; cooking, cleaning, clearing the compound of weeds etc, but I ask myself: For how long will this go on?

"Will I ever go home again? I wish we had peace in Kaniola, in fact in the whole of Congo. I could return home and perhaps then, my first born and second-born, who are of school-going age, could have a chance to go to school. Right now they just hang around the house. I can't afford their fees, let alone uniforms.

"I miss having a home to call my own."

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