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WEEKLY EMERGENCY UPDATE #26

Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo

30 December 2019 – 6 January 2020



Operational context and protection situation

Ituri Province

The security situation remained volatile in the Province, except in the city of Bunia where the presence of security forces is more effective. Most reported security incidents affected localities in Djugu and Irumu territories, where the DRC army has continued military operations against armed groups. As a result of the clashes, five civilians were killed by armed men during the reporting period in two localities in Djugu and Irumu territories. Subsequent population movements were reported in and around Djugu Territory, while other displacements were reported on the shores of Lake Albert, around Tchomia. A security assessment was conducted on the shores of Lake Albert, to ensure secure humanitarian access and the proper delivery of assistance.

BACKGROUND: Since 6 June 2019, generalized violence led to massive new displacements in Ituri Province. UNHCR and IOM recorded over 110,000 new arrivals in IDP sites in Djugu, Mahagi and Irumu territories between 31 May and 20 June. OCHA estimated that 360,000 people were displaced by the recent crisis; some 145,000 towards IDP sites and the rest to host communities. As displacements continued, Ituri's Site Management and Coordination Working Group (CCCM) now estimates that almost 227,000 people are staying in 72 IDP sites, 12 of them coordinated by UNHCR, and housing over 82,000 individuals (17,000 households). Outside of Bunia, the largest concentrations of IDPs are found in Drodro, Rho, Fataki, Kasenyi, Tchomia and Ramogi, in Djugu, Irumu and Mahagi territories. Overall, some 929,821 people are displaced throughout the Province according to the *Comité de Mouvement de Population*, a mixed committee made up of Government and the national and international Humanitarian community. UNHCR's Protection Monitoring system documented 8,100 human rights violations between January and December 2019 in Ituri Province.

North Kivu Province

The security situation in Beni Territory was calm during the reporting period. The army's operations, supported by MONUSCO, against the ADF armed group continued, particularly in the so-called triangle of death in the Bambuba-Kisiki groupement. As of 4 January, the DRC army said it has gained control of parts of another strategic ADF site. Since 1 January, civilian-military patrols were put in place in the north-west of Beni Territory, following the killing of 20 civilians on 29 December 2019 in a village in the Batangi-Mbau groupement, some 45 kms northwest of Beni town. Educational activities are proceeding normally in and around Beni town, unlike in the rest of the Territory where children still don't have access to school. Back-to-school activities, scheduled for 6 January, did not take place in several schools on the Mbau-Erengenti axis, due to the absence of teachers and students. In Oicha, the resumption of school activities was timid. On 15 December, a presumed ADF attack on Kamongo on led to massive displacements towards Nobili and the surrounding villages of Kalera and Kahondo. Initial estimates by local authorities are of 24,000 newly displaced households, or up to 130,000 newly displaced individuals. Some of them had only just come back from a previous displacement to Nobili, in 2019. A mission travelled to the area to verify population numbers and needs. In Masisi Territory, the presence of armed men was felt in the Bashali-Mokoto groupement and its surroundings. Several human rights violations, mainly murders, rapes and abductions, were committed against civilians. Due to clashes between armed groups in numerous villages, some 1,791 people (398 households) were reportedly displaced, some of them towards host families and others to the IDP site of Kivuye. They have not yet received humanitarian assistance as UNHCR and other humanitarian actors are still responding to earlier displacements. In addition, some 807 other individuals (168 households) fled towards Mweso and JTN (Rutshuru Territory).

BACKGROUND: Over 1.5 million IDPs are located in North Kivu Province as of 25 December 2019 according to the *Comité de Mouvement de Population*, a mixed committee made up of Government and the national and international Humanitarian community. The vast majority (94%) live with host communities, while some 90,263 reside in 22 IDP sites coordinated by UNHCR or IOM. Displacements are mostly cyclical, with numerous causes including armed conflict, human rights violations committed by armed groups and state armed forces, land conflicts, inter-ethnic violence, illegal exploitation of mineral resources, and others. Between March and early June 2019, attacks against civilians and military outposts by a prominent armed group led to significant displacements from Kamongo to Nobili (Beni Territory). OCHA reported that 112,000 IDPs were located in the Nobili area. As of late October, it was thought that most of them have returned. However, a new massive forced displacement was generated from 15th December onwards, of up to 24,000 households (130,000 individuals). In Masisi and Rutshuru territories, OCHA reports that over 67,000 people were displaced towards host communities in May and June alone, while arrivals into several IDP sites have been significant. UNHCR's Protection Monitoring system documented 13,396 human rights violations between January and December 2019 throughout the Province.

Immediate needs

Ituri Province

- **Protection:** Persistent violence exposes populations to several protection risks: killings, lootings, rape, abductions and others. Peaceful coexistence between communities remains a major challenge.
- **Child protection:** The lack of child-friendly spaces (especially outside of Bunia), and high numbers of unaccompanied minors exacerbate child protection needs. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) against minors is on the rise.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)** risks are high, including sexual exploitation, survival sex, and early forced marriage, as consistently reported by women.
- **Shelter:** IDPs outside established sites still live in precarious conditions, exposed to abuse. Despite ongoing shelter construction, the lack of space remains a challenge. Advocacy is needed for local authorities to grant more space.
- **Non-Food Items (NFIs)** are still needed for many IDP families, namely clothes and kitchen sets.
- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)** conditions in most sites and in host families are below standard. Women and girls lack access to menstrual hygiene products and to reproductive health services.
- **Access to education** is hindered by host communities' incapacity to enroll IDP children in school, notably due to limited teachers and classroom space. 72% of children aged 6 to 12 and living in UNHCR-coordinated IDP sites are out of school. This requires advocacy for relevant partners to intervene.
- **Right to an identity and to documentation:** 95% of children aged 0 to 4 who live in UNHCR-coordinated IDP sites do not have birth certificates, which exposes many to various human rights abuses.

North Kivu Province

- **Protection** needs are enormous, including physical security for civilians in and around IDP sites, and for those on the run; community-based protection for host and IDP communities to participate in responses; peaceful coexistence; and protection for vulnerable youth and women.
- **Child protection** needs are pronounced in northern North Kivu, with many unaccompanied children, frequent kidnappings and child recruitment by armed groups, or former child soldiers facing reintegration issues.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)** remains widespread. Women are reticent to report incidents due to stigma and exclusion, thus incidents are underreported. Despite referrals to medical facilities, legal follow-up is quasi non-existent, perpetuating impunity. Displaced girls and women experience disproportionately high risks and are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and survival sex. As many IDPs live in squalid conditions, their sexual and reproductive health and hygiene needs are often unmet.
- **Shelter:** IDP sites under UNHCR coordination in Masisi Territory do not have sufficient shelters and UNHCR is therefore reinforcing shelter support in sites. In Beni Territory the situation has become particularly dire considering recent mass displacements, with an unconfirmed number of IDPs sleeping in the open air. In Masisi and Rutshuru territories, shelter needs are exacerbated by cyclical displacements.
- **Non-Food Items (NFIs)** are urgently required for newly-arrived IDPs around the towns of Oicha and Beni.
- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH):** There are urgent needs in IDP sites in Masisi and Rutshuru territories. Water scarcity and the increasing number of IDPs in Oicha and Beni are endangering peaceful coexistence with local communities. The WASH situation is particularly affecting girls and women, as crowded toilets and the lack of water pose higher risks for them.
- **Education:** In several localities in Masisi, Lubero, and Beni territories, school closures are regular because of conflicts. IDPs who cannot find shelter in host communities also tend to occupy school classrooms, disrupting classes.

UNHCR's presence

- UNHCR's Sub-Office in Goma covers North Kivu and Ituri Provinces and supervises operations in South Kivu Province. The Goma Sub-Office oversees all North Kivu while a smaller Field Unit in Bunia manages operations for Ituri. Both emergencies were initially covered by a small team in Ituri, and by staff of the Goma Sub-Office on mission. This solution however is cost-ineffective and complicates security management in a volatile area of responsibility.
- To meet growing needs in the northern part of North Kivu – including Ebola preparedness needs and emergency response – the operation has opened a Field Unit in Beni as of October 2019, and the Goma Sub-Office is being reinforced with permanent and temporary staff. In addition, to face the dramatically worsened humanitarian situation in Ituri since early June 2019, the Bunia Field Unit has been strengthened with additional staff in Protection, Security, Reporting, Supply, Shelter, Programme, CCCM and Drivers. Further emergency response staff (Field and Protection) are expected between now and the end of the year; however, needs still outpace available human resources.

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