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Floods and conflict fuel an alarming humanitarian emergency in DR Congo

GENEVA – Severe flooding triggered by torrential rains in recent weeks has displaced almost 10,000 people in Tanganyika Province, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This unfolding emergency reflects the double crisis facing the DRC, where extreme weather shocks such as flooding compound the suffering caused by ongoing conflict and mass displacement.

The Rugumba River burst its banks, inundating large areas of Kalemie and Nyunzu territories. Homes, schools and agricultural land have been destroyed, leaving thousands without shelter or livelihoods. Stagnant and contaminated floodwaters are raising concerns over the risk of disease outbreaks, with reported cholera cases in the province already six times higher than during the same period last year.

The flooding has hit a community already under severe strain. Since January, Tanganyika has received around 50,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) fleeing violence in South Kivu. Many had

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Article on the impact of flooding and conflict on the humanitarian situation

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been sheltering in local homes, churches, and schools—now damaged or destroyed. The floods also wiped out key crops like cassava, maize, and peanuts, worsening an already serious food insecurity situation in the country.

According to recent assessments, 2.3 million people across four provinces affected by ongoing conflict — South Kivu, North Kivu, Ituri, and Tanganyika — face life-threatening hunger in the coming months unless urgent action is taken.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and humanitarian partners are providing emergency support, including shelter, clean water, food, and medical care. However, response efforts are hindered by critical funding gaps, leaving thousands without the aid they urgently need.

In addition, reports indicate that some Congolese refugees who recently fled to neighbouring Burundi have since returned to DRC. Many cited dire living conditions, including limited access to food, shelter and basic services, as key factors influencing their decision to return even in the face of persistent conflict and uncertainty in the DRC.

However, Congolese refugees are still on the move as they continue to cross the border into neighbouring countries seeking safety. Nearly 120,000 people have so far arrived in Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda, with the latter having received over 5,500 refugees in the last week. This trend highlights the urgent need for increased support in both host countries and return areas to address the challenges faced by returnees and refugees in neighbouring countries.

With continued displacement caused by floods and conflict, food insecurity, and the looming threat of disease outbreaks, a coordinated and robust humanitarian response is critical to prevent further suffering and loss of life. UNHCR has received only 20 per cent of the funding needed to carry out its life-saving response in the DRC. The people of the DRC are in dire need of aid, and without timely and adequate intervention, the consequences of this tragic 'double crisis' will only deepen.

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