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WEEKLY EMERGENCY UPDATE

Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo

26 November – 2 December 2019



Operational context and protection situation

Ituri Province

The security situation and protection environment in Ituri further deteriorated during the reporting week, due to intensified armed group activity and armed clashes in Djugu, Irumu and Mambasa territories. Five people (four aid workers and one civilian) were killed in a targeted armed attack on an Ebola treatment center in Biakato (Mambasa Territory) on 28 November, perpetrated by elements of a prominent armed group. Seven people were also kidnapped and four were severely injured in the same attack. Growing insecurity in this area risks restricting humanitarian access to displaced people. In Irumu Territory, unidentified gunmen raided the Jupayaka and Jupunvor localities. Due to fear of further attacks, about a hundred civilians reportedly hid in the woods and returned to their place of origin during night time. In Djugu Territory, an estimated 86 households (430 individuals) were displaced after two armed incursions by unidentified gunmen in Lenge locality, in which a civilian was decapitated and goods were looted. The households sought refuge in neighboring localities. The presence of unidentified armed men on the shores of Lake Albert in Djugu Territory continues to disrupt commercial, agricultural and school activities in the area. Civilians continue to endure human rights violations such as killings, lootings, abductions (including of local leaders), injuries, extortions and rape, committed by presumed elements of state armed forces, armed groups, and by unidentified armed men.

BACKGROUND: Since 6 June, 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 1.1 million people are displaced throughout the Province according to OCHA. UNHCR's Protection Monitoring system documented 6,970 human rights violations between January and November 2019 in Ituri.

North Kivu Province

The security situation in Beni Territory remained alarming during the reporting period, with no improvement since the previous week. In retaliation to a major military offensive ongoing against them, presumed elements of the ADF armed group continued to target civilians, with 107 people killed in targeted attacks between 22 and 28 November. At least 35 people were also kidnapped. Attacks have since continued, with heavy casualties. Protests against MONUSCO and UN Agencies, all assimilated to the peacekeeping response, also continued in Beni. Following the torching of a MONUSCO base and of the Beni town hall on 25 November, city-wide shutdowns gained momentum, extending to North Kivu's provincial capital Goma. The situation remains extremely tense with mob violence, lynching of armed forces and police and youth arrests. Since all but critical UN staff was evacuated, and UNHCR's activities in Beni, Oicha and Butembo have been suspended, UNHCR and its partners are so far unable to access IDPs and assess their numbers or needs. Large displacements are believed to be taking place from rural areas (where targeted attacks are occurring), to the relative safety of cities such as Beni, Butembo and Kasindi. Meanwhile, conflict is ongoing in the rest of North Kivu. 935 households fled their villages this week in Rutshuru and Walikale territories, following armed clashes.

BACKGROUND: Over 1.5 million IDPs are located in North Kivu Province as of October 2019. The vast majority (94%) live with host communities, while some 89,000 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 Kamango to Nobili (Beni Territory). Until recently, OCHA estimated that 112,000 IDPs were in the Nobili area. However, as of late October, most of them have returned. In Masisi and Rutshuru territories, OCHA estimates 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 12,311 human rights violations between January and end of November 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, which are consistently reported by women during discussions.
- **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' capacity 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.
- **Statelessness:** 95% of children aged 0 to 4 who live in UNHCR-coordinated IDP sites do not have birth certificates, which exposes them to the risk of statelessness.

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. As result, 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 to survival sex. As many IDPs live in squalid conditions, their sexual and reproductive health and hygiene needs are generally unmet.
- **Shelter:** IDP sites under UNHCR coordination in Masisi Territory do not have sufficient shelters, which has forced some IDPs towards host families. UNHCR is reinforcing shelter support in sites to address this. In Beni Territory the situation has become particularly dire in light of 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 response

Ituri Province

- **Shelter:** UNHCR is providing shelter in IDP sites under its coordination in Djugu Territory. So far, a total of 2,355 emergency shelters were built in Savo site (Bule), Rho site and Djalla site (Drodro).
- 372 displaced households were relocated from host families to new sites in Djugu (Chamusa and Blukwa).
- A total of 596 emergency shelters were built in the new Kigonze IDP site in Bunia.
- **Community-based protection:** For the 16 Days of Activism, UNHCR and partners organized awareness-raising sessions on gender-based violence and positive masculinity for 16,364 persons in in Djugu, Mambasa, and Irumu territories. Participants included local authorities, community leaders and grassroots organizations.
- 20 persons (13 men and seven women) working for a local organization that provides protection and assistance to displaced persons and victims of human rights violations, were trained on peaceful coexistence.
- 70 students participated in information sessions about social cohesion in schools in Drodro, Djugu Territory.
- **Protection monitoring:** 170 protection incidents were recorded between 24 and 30 November, compared to 149 incidents the previous week, an increase caused by worsening insecurity. Civilians continued to endure lootings (59 cases), injuries (33 cases), and rape (14 cases). The most affected territories were Djugu, Irumu and Mambasa.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** 14 cases of rape were committed on seven girls and seven women. Among them, 12 survivors were referred to medical facilities for emergency treatment within 72 hours. The presumed perpetrators are civilians, presumed elements of armed groups, and members of state armed forces.

North Kivu Province

- **Shelter:** UNHCR's shelter project for returned IDPs, implemented by partner AIDES, is complete. 1,699 out of 1,700 family shelters were finalized in return areas in Masisi, Rutshuru and Lubero territories.

- In response to recent arrivals in IDP sites in Masisi Territory, 112 emergency shelters are still under construction in the Bukombo and Kalinga sites, the population of which has increased, and 201 are completed.
- **Community-based protection:** In the context of the 16 Days of Activism, community-based protection structures throughout North Kivu organized dialogue fora and awareness-raising workshops on gender equality, women's rights, and sexual harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and early marriage. Several thousand participants were reached, including via radio broadcasts and performances.
- Awareness-raising sessions on complaint and referral mechanisms continued, and on the use of suggestion boxes.
- 100 members (38 women and 62 men) of community-based protection structures were trained on conflict resolution in Nyiragongo Territory.
- UNHCR and partner Caritas provided \$150 per person in multi-purpose cash assistance, to 142 people with specific needs, specifically women at risk of sexual exploitation, in Nyiragongo Territory.
- In Nyanzale, Rutshuru Territory, two water networks were completed and a health center, a primary school and a communal market were still under construction, as part of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs).
- **Protection monitoring:** Between 22 and 28 November, 245 human rights violations (mainly assassinations, arbitrary arrests, extortions and bodily harm) were recorded in North Kivu, compared to 301 the previous week. The decrease does not reflect an improvement in the protection situation. It is partly due to humanitarian actors' sharply diminished access to Beni Territory, given recent events.

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 –, as of October 2019 the operation has opened a Field Unit in Beni, 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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