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EMERGENCY UPDATE

Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo

16-29 December 2019



Operational context and protection situation

Ituri Province

The protection of civilians remained of concern in Djugu, Irumu and Mahagi territories, due to insecurity caused by unidentified armed men and elements of the DRC army. On 20 December, unidentified armed men attacked three villages in the Walendu Tatsi sector, Djugu Territory, killing a dozen of people and leading to important displacements towards Tchomia, on the shore of Lake Albert. During the reporting period in Lokpa, Masikini, Budza and nine other localities, some 238 households (1,183 individuals) fled, fearing a potential attack. They fled towards Nioka and the IDP site of Rho (15 households) in Djugu Territory. In addition, 140 households (709 individuals) fled the health zones of Tchomia and Bambu, Djugu Territory, towards Ludjo, Wadd'a, Bunia and across the border to Uganda, following clashes between armed men and the DRC army.

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, an estimated **929,821 people are displaced in the Province**, according to the *Comité de Mouvements de Population*, a mixed committee composed of Government and national and international humanitarian actors. UNHCR's Protection Monitoring system documented 8,100 human rights violations between January and December 2019 in Ituri Province.

North Kivu Province

On 15 December, an attack by presumed ADF members on Kamango led to a massive population movement towards Nobili and two surrounding villages. Initial estimates by local authorities are of 24,000 newly-displaced households (130,000 individuals), some of whom had just recently returned from a previous displacement in Nobili in mid-2019. In Beni Territory, four raids perpetrated by presumed Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) elements, and one by presumed Mai-Mai elements, were also documented, killing 44 civilians and seriously injuring 14. Meanwhile, DRC army officials indicated significant progress in military operations against armed groups in eastern DRC, and in control of one of the most important presumed ADF sites. On 23 December during a press briefing, the army spokesperson presented 37 captured presumed ADF elements, bringing to 521 the total of those captured since the launch of the operation on 30 October. In Masisi Territory, armed groups continued to target civilians in the Bashali-Mokoto chiefdom, restricting their movement, notably to fields and other essential areas. Military clashes between armed groups forcibly displaced 599 households (2,583 individuals) from several localities in Masisi Territory.

BACKGROUND: Over **1.5 million IDPs are located in North Kivu Province** as of 25 December 2019, according to the *Comité de Mouvements de Population*, a mixed committee composed of Government and national and international humanitarian actors. 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 Kamango to Nobili (Beni Territory). OCHA estimated that 112,000 IDPs were located in the Nobili area. As of late October, it was thought that most of them had returned, however the new massive displacement of an estimated 24,000 households (130,000 individuals) took place from 15 December to Nobili.

In Masisi and Rutshuru territories, that over 67,000 people were displaced towards host communities in May and June alone according to OCHA, 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.
- **Statelessness:** 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 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 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 response

Ituri Province

- **Protection:** During the reporting period, 183 households (869 individuals) were relocated from the General Hospital displacement site to the new site of Kigonze, in Bunia. 56 displaced households who were staying in classrooms in Bule were also relocated to the UNHCR-coordinated site of Plaine Savo.
- UNHCR's site management partner, Caritas, organized an awareness-raising session for 898 displaced households in Ramogi site, on the good management of the multi-purpose cash assistance distributed by WFP during the reporting period.
- **Shelter:** 65 emergency shelters were under construction in the IDP site of Lala in Bule by UNHCR's partner DRC. 134 other shelter were under construction in Kigonze site by Caritas.
- **Non-Food Items (NFIs):** During the reporting period, UNHCR distributed 183 kits composed of mats, blankets, jerrycans, laundry soap and menstrual hygiene kits in the new displacement site of Kigonze, in Bunia.
- **Community-based protection:** Community-based protection structures continued awareness-raising on the prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), peaceful coexistence and the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). 770 people were reached including 221 in Komanda, 119 in Biakato, 198 in Lwemba and 232 in Ndalya.
- **Protection monitoring:** UNHCR and partners recorded 586 human rights violations between 16 and 29 December. There is an increase compared to previous weeks, due to the activities of presumed Mai Mai elements and other armed groups in Mambasa and Djugu territories. Civilians mainly endured lootings, kidnapping, killings, injuries and physical assaults, and extortions. The most affected territories were Djugu, Irumu and Mambasa.

- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** UNHCR's partner INTERSOS documented 24 cases of SGBV committed against 18 minors and six adults. 16 cases were referred to medical services within 72 hours, and the survivors benefited from the Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP kits).

North Kivu Province

- **Shelter:** During the reporting period, UNHCR's partner AIDES continued the construction of 366 emergency shelters in Mweso health zone, as well as in the displacement sites of Bweru (180), Bibwe (126) and Mpati (60), in Masisi Territory.
- **Non-Food Items (NFIs):** In response to recent population movements in the territory, UNHCR targeted 1,477 households that will also benefit from NFI distribution.
- **Community-based protection:** UNHCR and partner Caritas provided multi-purpose cash assistance to 197 people with specific needs (PSN), specifically women at risk of sexual exploitation in Kitchanga, Masisi Territory. Each household received \$150.
- Awareness-raising sessions continued about peaceful coexistence, positive masculinity, the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), referral mechanisms and the prevention of SGBV. 11,922 people were reached in Beni, Masisi, Rutshuru and Lubero territories in North Kivu Province, as well as in Kalehe Territory in South Kivu Province. Sensitization radio messages were also broadcasted.
- As part of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in Nyanzale, Rutshuru Territory, the construction of a community market in Kibirizi was completed, while the primary school was under construction. UNHCR and partner Caritas provided cash assistance to 80 displaced, returnee, Rwandan refugee, and local households in Kitchanga (50) and Birambizo health (30), in Masisi and Rutshuru territories. The beneficiaries received training on income-generating activities and each household received between \$30 and \$50, depending on the activities they chose.
- **Protection monitoring:** Between 16 and 29 December, 584 human rights violations (mainly extortions, looting, killings, and physical assaults) were recorded in North Kivu Province. The most affected territories during the reporting period were Beni, Masisi and Lubero.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** Seven cases of rape, committed against four minors and three adults, were identified by community-based protection structures, and were referred to the Katsiru and Kasoko Health Centers in Rutshuru Territory.

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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