

WEEKLY EMERGENCY UPDATE

Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo

1 October – 7 October 2019



Operational context and protection situation

Ituri Province

Armed clashes continued to endanger civilians in Mambasa, Djugu and Irumu territories during the week. Most of the 178 reported human rights violations were lootings, injuries, and sexual violence. As in the previous week, there were no reported attacks on IDP sites, due to intensified army patrolling with MONUSCO's support, especially at night. Peace and reconciliation efforts were intensified by local authorities and community leaders in Djugu Territory. Return movements of Congolese refugees who had sought asylum in Uganda since May were observed in Djugu and Mahagi, with exact numbers yet to be established. Some 315 returnee households are estimated to have returned to their places of origin (10 to Mahagi and 305 to Djugu), taking advantage of the relative calm, and to enroll their children in school. Timid returns of IDPs to their areas of origin were also observed by community leaders from Ituri's provincial capital Bunia, and neighboring locality Iga Barrière (Irumu).

BACKGROUND: Since 6 June, generalized violence has 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 (215,000) in host communities. **As displacements continued, Ituri's Site Management and Coordination Working Group (CCCM) estimates that almost 227,000 people are staying in 87 IDP sites.** Outside Bunia, the largest concentrations of IDPs are in Drodoro, Rho, Fataki, Kasenyi and Tchomia, in Djugu and Irumu territories. In Mahagi territory, there is a large concentration of IDPs in Ramogi. In June, 8,647 people fled to Uganda according to UNHCR's Uganda office, nearly doubling the number of daily crossings compared to May 2019. **UNHCR's Protection Monitoring system documented 4,567 incidents between January and September 2019 in Ituri Province.**

North Kivu Province

The security and protection situation in much of North Kivu Province remained of concern during the week, particularly in Rutshuru and Lubero territories, where ongoing fighting significantly increased human rights violations committed against civilians. In Masisi Territory, armed groups continued to endanger civilians, including in some cases Rwandan refugees. In the northern part of North Kivu Province, while a relative lull was observed in fighting, the security situation remained tense around the town of Oicha (where almost 20,000 recent IDPs are located) and in the so-called "triangle of death". IDPs in Oicha stay in extremely precarious conditions, some sleeping in schools and most lacking access to water and sanitation. Children in the area are exposed to protection risks, from kidnapping to forced recruitment and abuse. In the Nobili area, on the Ugandan border, intensified returns of IDPs to their areas of origin were observed, despite recent insecurity. These returns are likely linked to IDPs' livelihoods and to community leaders encouraging returns. The spread of the Ebola epidemic is showing signs of slowing down, with no new cases in Beni reported for 21 days, and on average one new case a week.

BACKGROUND: Since 30 March, and with a sharp intensification as of 7 May, attacks against civilians and military outposts by members of a prominent armed group led to significant displacements from the town of Kamango towards the town of Nobili (Beni territory). By 24 June 94,612 displaced people (15,991 households) had been registered in Nobili and 9 surrounding localities, but displacements continued: **the Nobili crisis committee recorded 6,329 newly-displaced households between June and August.** In host communities in other territories of North Kivu Province, OCHA estimates that over 67,000 were displaced in May and June, while arrival numbers into several IDP sites have been significant. During July, UNHCR and the National Refugee Commission (CNR) recorded 5,256 new IDPs (1,225 households) in 8 IDP sites in Masisi, with the most (2,754 persons) having arrived to Bukombo site. Displacements into IDP sites (on a small scale) and into host communities continue. **UNHCR's Protection Monitoring system documented 7,813 protection incidents between January and September 2019 throughout the Province.**

Immediate needs

Ituri Province

- **Health:** IDPs' access to appropriate healthcare in displacement-affected areas, and overwhelmed health facilities remain of serious concern. Child mortality rates are high.
- **Shelter:** IDPs outside established sites, and in host families live in precarious conditions, and exposed to abuse. Despite ongoing shelter construction in several areas, the lack of space for emergency shelters remains a challenge. Strengthened advocacy is needed for local authorities to grant more space.
- **Food assistance** is urgently needed, and the looting of fields left behind in areas of origin compounds food insecurity.

- **Non-Food Items (NFIs)** are still needed, namely clothes and kitchen sets.
- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)** conditions in most sites and in host families are below standards. Women and girls lack access to menstrual hygiene services and products, and to reproductive health services.
- **Access to education** is still hindered by host communities' limited capacity to enroll IDP children in school; there are not enough teachers and available classroom space. The majority of IDP children do not go to school.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence** risks are high, with survival sex used as a source of income, notably in Bunia.
- **Protection:** Ongoing violence exposes populations to several protection risks: killings, lootings, rape, abductions among others. Peaceful coexistence between communities is another major challenge. There are tensions between newer and older waves of displaced persons; the more recently-displaced are facing discrimination in access to facilities and services. A lack of child-friendly spaces (especially outside of Bunia), and many unaccompanied minors, exacerbate child protection needs.

North Kivu Province

- **Shelter:** IDP sites under UNHCR coordination in Masisi territory do not offer sufficient or adequate shelter, pushing IDPs towards host families. As arrivals into the sites continue, shelter needs are still increasing. Around Nobili (Beni territory) UNHCR assistance over the summer addressed critical gaps in the shelter needs, but new displacements (at least 6,329 households since June) have created additional needs. In the town of Oicha (Beni territory), at least 235 recently displaced households are sleeping in a school.
- **Education:** In the Nobili area, no humanitarian actor is positioned in education. In several localities in Masisi, Lubero, and Beni territories education is disrupted because of ongoing conflict.
- **WASH** conditions need urgent support in IDP sites in Masisi and Rutshuru territories; and in Nobili where needs were exacerbated by recent floods. Water availability is a serious concern for the many IDPs in Oicha.
- **Health** services need to be strengthened to respond to overwhelmed facilities, prohibitive treatment costs, and simultaneous measles and Ebola epidemics.
- **Food Assistance** is critically needed, particularly for those who lost their livelihoods to conflict but also for those living in managed IDP sites.
- **Non-Food Items (NFIs)**, for those living with host families as well as in IDP sites, are needed.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence** remains widespread, as armed groups in Masisi use SGBV as a weapon of war. Despite referrals to medical structures being in place, legal follow-up is virtually non-existent, perpetuating impunity.
- **Protection** needs across the board are enormous: the physical security of civilians living in and around IDP sites; increased community-based protection to promote the participation of both local and IDP communities in the search for solutions and response mechanisms; peaceful coexistence; the protection of vulnerable youth and women; and birth registrations to prevent statelessness are some of the most pressing.
- **Child protection** needs are particularly pronounced in northern North Kivu with many orphaned or unaccompanied children (around Beni), or children who have recently left armed groups and face reintegration issues (in Lubero).

UNHCR's response

Ituri Province

- **Community-based protection:** Since June, UNHCR and partners Caritas and AVSI trained 40 community leaders and local authorities (including 11 women) in Djugu Territory on community-based protection. Another 15 community-based protection structures and 14 IDP committees received such training in Irumu, Mambasa and Djugu territories. Five protection plans were also established by five community-based protection structures in Irumu and Mambasa territories.
- **Shelter and non-food items (NFIs):** Some 74 families (313 people) who were sleeping in classrooms in Bule (Djugu Territory) were relocated into family shelters at the Bule site and received non-food items (NFIs), namely 95 blankets and 95 mats.
- **Protection monitoring:** UNHCR and partner INTERSOS conducts protection monitoring in accessible areas, and provides referrals to victims where possible. This week, 171 protection incidents (mostly lootings and injuries) were reported, compared to 131 incidents last week; an increase of 26% due to armed confrontations between the army and rebel groups, as well as attacks against civilians, mostly in Djugu and Mambasa territories.
- **Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV):** A total of 14 cases of rape were reported (13 girls and one woman). Among them, 10 survivors were referred to medical facilities for emergency treatment within 72 hours; four received Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) kits. The alleged perpetrators are civilians, one unidentified man, and one member of the national police force.

North Kivu Province

- **Community-based protection:** UNHCR and partner Caritas trained four community-based protection structures in Masisi Territory on IDP protection and their roles and responsibilities. The structures will now work on creating community-based protection plans for their areas. Elsewhere in North Kivu (Lubero and Kayna), two such protection plans were finished; they identify protection risks faced by communities and propose solutions.

- **Peaceful coexistence:** Community-based protection structures were involved in resolving five resource-related conflicts and organizing two forums on peaceful coexistence in the town of Kitchanga.
- As part of a peaceful coexistence project aiming to facilitate IDPs' access to fields and livelihoods in Beni Territory, UNHCR partner SOCOAC finished identifying all 800 beneficiary households and distributed farming tools.
- **Shelter:** Another 8 family shelters were completed for returned IDPs in Rutshuru, Masisi and Lubero during the week, bringing the total to 1,433. To respond to growing shelter needs in IDP sites, 80 emergency shelters are under construction in Kalinga site, 49 of them completed. Altogether 848 emergency shelters are planned before year-end in two IDP sites: Kalinga (300) and Bukombo (548). UNHCR's shelter project also includes the rehabilitation of an elementary school (currently occupied by IDPs) in the displacement-affected town of Oicha. This will facilitate IDPs' access to education and promote peaceful coexistence.
- **Non-food items (NFIs):** In the Nobili area, UNHCR distributed tarpaulins and NFIs (mats and jerry cans) to 202 recently-displaced IDP households living in schools, so they could relocate to emergency shelters and so teaching could resume. Patients in some overwhelmed health centers received the same NFIs.
- **Protection monitoring:** Between 27 September and 3 October, 136 human rights violations (including extortions, bodily harm and SGBV) were recorded, affecting 104 men and 32 women. A large proportion of violations was attributed to the FARDC (41%), with armed groups responsible for another 38%. The most affected territories were Rutshuru and Lubero, both witnessing intensified conflict between the FARDC and armed groups.
- **Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV):** Four cases of SGBV (three in Masisi, one in Lubero) were recorded and referred to medical facilities for emergency treatment, including the provision of (PEP) kits within 72 hours.

UNHCR's presence

- UNHCR's Sub-Office in Goma covers North Kivu and Ituri Provinces, as well as supervising operations in South Kivu Province. The Goma Sub-Office oversees all of North Kivu while a much smaller Field Unit (in Bunia) manages operations for Ituri. Both emergencies have so far been covered by a small team in Ituri, and by staff of the Goma Sub-Office on mission. This solution however is cost-ineffective, puts additional burden on human resources 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 September 2019 the operation is opening a Field Unit in Beni, with seven planned staff. This will help meet expectations of the Humanitarian Country Team and of the SRSG for UNHCR to play an active role in contributing to addressing the many challenges of this part of the Province. 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 and Drivers. Further staff in Programme, Shelter and Field are expected between now and the end of the year; however needs still outpace available human resources.

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