

WEEKLY EMERGENCY UPDATE

Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo

22 October – 28 October 2019



Operational context and protection situation

Ituri Province

Armed confrontations and attacks continued to endanger civilians during the reporting period, mostly in Irumu and Djugu territories. Most reported human rights violations were lootings (50), injuries (48), extortions (24) and sexual violence (12), with 201 incidents documented overall. Timid returns of some 452 IDP households to their areas of origin in Bahema North community were observed, due to a lull in fighting in this region of Djugu Territory. Voluntary movement restrictions by civilians, who fear the presence of armed men, were reported in localities close to Lake Albert, Djugu Territory.

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 have continued, Ituri's Site Management and Coordination Working Group (CCCM) now estimates that almost 227,000 people are staying in 87 IDP sites. Outside of Bunia, the largest concentrations of IDPs are found in Drodro, Rho, Fataki, Kasenyi and Tchomia, in Djugu and Irumu territories. In Mahagi Territory, there is a large concentration of IDPs in Ramogi. Spontaneous returns of an estimated 1,575 people who had fled to Uganda were observed, but UNHCR is not able to establish exact numbers. UNHCR's Protection Monitoring system documented 4,567 incidents between January and September 2019 in Ituri Province.

North Kivu Province

The situation in North Kivu remained of concern as conflicts and displacement continued. Between 11 and 17 October, 227 human rights violations were recorded by UNHCR's Protection Monitoring, a figure comparable to the period prior. Violations mainly consisted of lootings, extortion, bodily harm and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. Armed conflict intensified in Beni Territory, however the impact insecurity on civilians was most felt in Rutshuru and Masisi territories, which registered the highest numbers of violations (70 each). Around Nobili on the Ugandan border, returns of IDPs to the town of Kamango and its surroundings were still observed. Some 95,000 IDPs (out of an estimated total of 112,000) would now have returned according to OCHA, and face needs in their return areas. A DRC Humanitarian Fund allocation is planned to address their urgent needs in nutrition, health and protection.

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. Until recently, OCHA put the estimated total number of IDPs in the area at around 112,000. In other territories of North Kivu, OCHA estimates that over 67,000 were displaced towards host communities in May and June alone, 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. UNHCR's Protection Monitoring system documented 7,813 protection incidents between January and September 2019 throughout the Province.

Immediate needs

Ituri Province

- **Protection:** Persistent violence in parts of the province exposes populations to several protection risks: killings, lootings, rape, abductions and others. Peaceful coexistence between communities remains a major challenge.
- **Child protection:** A 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)** risks are high: sexual exploitation, early forced marriage, and the use of sex as a source of income are consistently reported by women in focus group discussions.
- **Shelter:** IDPs outside established sites and in host families still live in precarious conditions, exposed to abuse. Despite ongoing shelter construction, the lack of space remains a challenge. Strengthened advocacy is needed for local authorities to grant more space.
- **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 standard. Women and girls lack access to menstrual hygiene services and products, and to reproductive health services.

- **Access to education** is 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.

North Kivu Province

- **Protection** needs are enormous: physical security for civilians in and around IDP sites; community-based protection for local and IDP communities to participate in solutions and response mechanisms; peaceful coexistence; protection for vulnerable youth and women; and birth registration to prevent statelessness are some of the most pressing.
- **Child protection** needs are pronounced in northern North Kivu, with many orphaned or unaccompanied children around Beni, or children who recently left armed groups and face reintegration issues in Lubero.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)** remains widespread, as armed groups in Masisi use it as a weapon of war. Despite referrals to medical structures, legal follow-up is virtually non-existent, perpetuating impunity.
- **Shelter:** IDP sites under UNHCR coordination in Masisi Territory do not offer sufficient or adequate shelter, pushing IDPs towards host families. As arrivals to the sites continue, shelter needs are still increasing. In Oicha (Beni Territory), at least 84 recently-displaced households are sleeping in a school. Shelter needs are also further exacerbated by cyclical displacements, for example in Masisi and Rutshuru territories.
- **Non-Food Items (NFIs)**, for those living with host families as well as in IDP sites, are needed.
- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)** conditions need urgent support in IDP sites in Masisi and Rutshuru territories. Water scarcity is of serious concern for the many IDPs in Oicha (Beni Territory), endangering peaceful coexistence with local communities.
- **Education:** In several localities in Masisi, Lubero, and Beni territories, school closures are regular because of conflict. After waves of displacement, IDPs not sheltered by host communities also tend to occupy classrooms.

UNHCR's response

Ituri Province

- **Shelter:** The construction of the new "Lycée Kigonze" IDP site in Bunia is underway to decongest other existing sites. The first 294 emergency shelters have been constructed, out of a planned 2,000.
- **Registration:** A total of 9,184 households (41,526 persons) have been registered so far, in seven out of 12 IDP sites coordinated by UNHCR. This ongoing registration exercise intends to collect information on IDPs' needs and vulnerabilities. Persons with specific needs, namely out-of-school children and lactating women, represent 34% of the total population in the sites. Registration will continue in the following weeks.
- **Community-based protection:** Community-based protection structures conducted awareness-raising sessions on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) in Komanda, Irumu Territory. Posters on PSEA were installed in the community-based structures' offices. To increase accountability to beneficiaries, suggestion boxes are now displayed on sites in this locality.
- To help mitigate tensions between communities, an awareness-raising session on peaceful coexistence was organized for IDPs from indigenous communities, and other IDPs, in a site in Bwanasura, Irumu Territory.
- **Protection monitoring:** A total of 201 protection incidents (mostly lootings and injuries) were reported during the period, compared to 185 incidents last week. Attacks and the presence of unidentified armed men remain of concern in Djugu, Irumu and Mambasa territories.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** A total of 12 cases of rape were reported (11 girls and one boy). Among them, nine survivors were referred to medical facilities for emergency treatment within 72 hours.

North Kivu Province

- **Community-based protection:** Community-based protection structures continued to conduct awareness-raising workshops within their communities, with a focus this week on gender equality, women's rights, and the prevention and response to SGBV. Several thousand participants were reached across most territories of North Kivu. Other community-based awareness-raising efforts focused on peaceful coexistence between IDPs and host communities.
- This week, several "Quick Impact Projects" (QIPs) to increase peaceful coexistence between IDPs, refugees, host communities and returned IDPs began to be implemented. They include the rehabilitation of two water networks and the construction of a communal market.
- **Protection monitoring:** Between 18 and 24 October, 227 human rights violations (the majority of them lootings, extortions, bodily harm and SGBV) were recorded, affecting 157 men and 70 women. The most affected territories were in equal measure Masisi and Rutshuru, with 70 cases each.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** A total of 10 rape cases (two underage girls and eight women) were recorded during the period; six violations were perpetrated by members of armed groups and four by civilians. All survivors were referred to medical facilities for emergency treatment 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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