

# Democratic Republic of the Congo

April 2020

*During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR DRC is producing a condensed monthly Operational Update. Specific information about UNHCR's response to COVID-19 in DRC can be found [here](#).*

## Refugees



### PROTECTION

- Following the floods in South Kivu Province, **road access to Kavimvira and Mongemonge Transit Centers, and to Sange Assembly Point** (hosting a total of 2,900 refugees and asylum-seekers), is compromised; Kavimvira is accessible with difficulty, Mongemonge is accessible by boat only, while Sange is cut off. This hampers protection and COVID-19 prevention activities.
- In April, **seven separated South Sudanese children were placed in host families** in Biringi settlement, Ituri Province, following best interest assessments.
- In areas hosting South Sudanese refugees, UNCHR has **dispatched 58 mobile phones with SIM cards, and 36 pairs of walkie-talkies** to 80 refugees, health centres and focal points to ensure communities are able to report any alerts in case of a total lockdown linked to COVID-19.



### SHELTER AND CORE RELIEF ITEMS (CRIs)

- Community shelters are being constructed in Mulongwe settlement in preparation of the **relocation of Burundian refugees from overcrowded Transit Centers (TCs)** in South Kivu Province. Out of the 2,900 residents of the TCs around 1,400 persons have been granted refugee status and will be relocated. Despite limited space in the community shelters, some space will be created between different families to counter the spread of COVID-19.
- In Bas Uele Province, UNHCR and partner Terre Sans Frontieres are providing **cash-for-shelter assistance to 200 vulnerable refugees** from the Central African Republic (CAR) and host community members in Bondo and Bili. So far, 32 shelters out of 200 are finalized. The refugees build shelters themselves and receive doors, windows and cash as assistance. The most vulnerable hire builder to construct their shelters, whom they pay using the cash received.
- In April, UNHCR and partners **relocated 183 South Sudanese refugees (80 households) from Meri settlement to the new Bele settlement**, both in Haut Uele Province. During relocations, medical checks, handwashing and social distancing were mandatory to help prevent COVID-19. As of 1 May, 1,715 refugees had been relocated to Bele (691 households) and received shelter, food and agricultural land.
- From 27 April to 1 May, UNHCR and partners ADSSE **distributed soap and mosquito nets to 21,863 South Sudanese refugees** (6,437 households) in Meri settlement, Haut Uele Province. A door-to-door technique was used to avoid crowds amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.



### LIVELIHOODS AND FOOD SECURITY

- In Nord Ubangi, Sud Ubangi and Bas Uele provinces, **220 refugee farmers from CAR, as well as host community members, received agricultural tools and seeds** from UNHCR's partners AIDES and TSF, to improve their self-reliance. In Bondo, Bas Uele Province, local authorities also allocated 5 hectares of arable land for their agricultural activities.



### WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

- In Bukavu (South Kivu Province), UNHCR equipped the Ndendere Transit Center and surrounding area with **two standpipes to address recurring water shortages**. This also contributes to the prevention of waterborne diseases and supports the regular washing of hands.

- In April, UNHCR and partners ADES launched a **three-months radio awareness-raising campaign on COVID-19**, with 5 local radios active in areas hosting South Sudanese refugees (Ituri and Haut Uele Province). The messages were recorded in eight different languages spoken by refugees and host communities.
- In Bele and Meri settlements, Haut Uele Province, UNHCR and partner ADES initiated a project involving all South Sudanese refugees in **making their own handwashing devices**, called Tippy Taps. UNHCR trained refugees and demonstrated how to use recycled materials, such as jerry cans or plastic bottles, to make their own devices.

**HEALTH**

- Urban refugees in Bukavu (South Kivu Province) and Goma (North Kivu Province) were **enrolled in a health insurance**, and arrangements were made to ensure their access to secondary healthcare through partner AIDES.

## Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

**PROTECTION**

- In Ituri Province, the security situation in Djugu and Mahagi territories remained unstable throughout April. According to local alerts, over **200,000 persons have been displaced** since March. Splinter groups from the CODECO armed group continued their retaliations against the DRC's military, and targeted displaced persons who had returned to their villages of origin. Since the beginning of March, at least 199 returnees have been killed and some 8,000 houses were burnt down by assailants. These attacks discourage other displaced persons from returning home. Humanitarian access to many areas of Djugu and Mahagi territories also remains limited, preventing the delivery of vital assistance.
- Since mid-March, an estimated **8,390 persons fleeing armed attacks have arrived in the ISP displacement site alone**. The site in Bunia, Ituri Province, was already overcrowded with 16,765 inhabitants. New arrivals are hosted in five newly constructed community hangars. As displacement sites do not have capacity for further arrivals, there is a need for additional space to expand existing sites. As attacks continue, people continue to flee their homes.
- As a result of clashes in Mahagi and Djugu territories (Ituri Province), some **1,000 displaced persons reportedly arrived in Aru Territory**, Ituri Province, an area that also hosts South Sudanese refugees. The displaced are mainly staying in host families, and UNHCR has distributed soap to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- In North Kivu Province, military operations against an armed group continued in Beni Territory, as well as armed group activities in Lubero Territory. Some **60,000 people were reportedly displaced in southern Lubero Territory and in Beni Territory's Rwenzori sector**, according to UNHCR's partners and community-based protection groups.
- South Kivu Province's Uvira town has been hit by floods, reportedly **affecting about 80,000 persons**. Houses and water, sanitation, hygiene and health infrastructures have been damaged or destroyed in neighborhoods that were already overcrowded, affecting locals as well as IDPs and refugees.
- In North Kivu Province, around 10,000 displaced persons in Kasindi and Masango (Beni Territory) have **not received any humanitarian assistance since their arrival** in March 2019 and in early 2020. Many live with and rely on host families, who already face economic challenges and limited sanitation infrastructures.
- Intensifying conflict in eastern DRC has been leading to **high levels of human rights violations and elevated risks of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)**. In South Kivu Province, the lack of a holistic response to SGBV incidents constituted a major gap, especially in terms of psychosocial support. UNHCR has prioritized the support to survivors of SGBV in 2020 with several pilot projects, but additional funding is needed to expand this response. Ituri Province's Djugu and Mahagi territories have seen **increased reports of rape, with 144 cases in April alone**,<sup>1</sup> and 2,837 human rights violations overall since early March.<sup>2</sup> PEP kits are running out of stock and humanitarian access remains restricted. There is a lack of access to healthcare, which especially creates health risks for pregnant women and SGBV survivors. In North Kivu Province's Lubero and Beni

<sup>1</sup> Source: SGBV Sub-Cluster.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Local interagency committee (CLIO).

territories, human rights violations doubled in the second half of April, with 355 incidents compared to 145 in the first half of April<sup>3</sup>.

- Since the **closure of schools due to COVID-19 preventive measures and on-going conflict in Ituri Province**, coupled with increased economic pressure on families, a growing number of displaced children from displacement sites in Bunia (Ituri Province) are begging on the streets. They are **exposed to protection risks**, such as sexual violence (especially for girls), kidnapping or economic exploitation. There is a risk that they will not return to school because their families now depend on the income generated by begging.
- In Ituri Province, UNHCR **referred 662 separated and unaccompanied children**, identified in displacement sites, to UNICEF and ICRC for family reunification. The referral process has been adapted to allow for a more rapid reunification in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak.
- In Tanganyika Province, despite challenges related to COVID-19, 21 victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including nine rape survivors, received **psychological and medical support** through partner AIDES. Access to justice however remained a gap, as public court hearings planned for April remained suspended due to COVID-19. Meanwhile, UNHCR's protection monitoring partner INTERSOS had to **postpone its monitoring to May 2020**, in order to adapt to COVID-19 related measures.
- In Ituri Province, UNHCR's partner AVSI **finalized two Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)** in Djugu Territory. First, the construction of four latrines in the market of Drodoro-Largu, improving access to public sanitation for the local and displaced population. Second, 60 displaced and local families received agricultural tools, seeds and land for agricultural exploitation in Blukwa. This provides important livelihood opportunity amidst the COVID-19 outbreak, as the circulation of goods is limited and prices are on the rise.
- In South Kivu Province, UNHCR's partner AVSI, along with community-based protection groups, **finalized the last of the 17 QIPs** in Uvira and Fizi territories, which primarily consisted of community structures (additional school classrooms, community radios, community market spaces, water sources).

## **SHELTER AND CORE RELIEF ITEMS (CRIs)**

- On 24 April, UNHCR and its partner the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) assessed the **damage caused by heavy rains and violent floods** in three villages hosting returnees in Kalemie, Tanganyika Province. 144 houses are confirmed to be destroyed, but much more damage is likely to have gone unreported as some villages remained unreachable due to deteriorated road access.
- According to UNHCR's estimations, **around 70 displaced families, who were registered by UNHCR, remain at the General Hospital displacement site** in Bunia, along with a number of new arrivals. No new shelters are available to proceed with their transfer to Kigonze site, due to a lack of funding.
- UNHCR and partner AIDES completed a shelter project in Kazimia and Kikonde, South Kivu Province. **1,000 internally displaced and host community households** were able to construct their own homes and latrines.
- In Ituri Province, UNHCR and partners **built 877 emergency shelters** at the Bule, Telega and Tshukpa displacement sites, in Djugu and Irumu territories. In Mahagi Territory, 144 traditional shelters were rehabilitated, and 800 displaced households received emergency shelter construction materials. Internally displaced and local persons were hired for these shelter projects, thereby providing them with an important source of income.
- In North Kivu Province, UNHCR and partner AIDES have so far **built 1,941 out of 2,381 planned shelters** in displacement sites in Masisi and Rutshuru territories. Assessments were also conducted to identify the shelter needs of recently displaced persons in Walikale, Lubero and Beni territories.
- In Oicha town (Beni Territory, North Kivu Province), **120 displaced households moved into 20 communal hangars** built by UNHCR's partner AIDES. They were previously staying in public building such as churches and schools.
- Following the floods in Uvira (South Kivu Province), **UNHCR donated core relief items to the local Government**, including 500 buckets, 500 mosquito nets, 100 tarpaulins, 250 mats and 800 kitchen sets, which have been distributed to affected families.

<sup>3</sup> Source: UNHCR's protection monitoring partner, INTERSOS.

 **CASH-BASED INTERVENTIONS (CBI)**

- On 15 April, UNHCR completed a **cash distribution for 2,909 vulnerable women** living in displacement sites and with host families in six locations in Ituri Province. The assistance allows displaced and host community women to turn away from harmful coping strategies, such as survival sex or other activities putting them at risk, and to improve their access to livelihoods. The assistance can also help women who have experienced a loss of income due to COVID-19 related movement restrictions, or childcare duties. The distribution was spread over more than a week to limit large gatherings of persons, in line with COVID-19 prevention protocols.
- From 3 to 24 April, **1,097 displaced households received mobile money cash assistance** out of a total of 5,974 targeted by UNHCR and partner INTERSOS in the cities of Beni and Butembo, North Kivu Province. The use of mobile money is a way to reduce direct contact amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, while a hopscotch game was used to promote social distancing. The distribution is ongoing. In Beni, UNHCR's partner Caritas also provided cash assistance to 33 displaced households who were absent during a distribution in March.
- As part of Quick Impact Projects in South Kivu Province, UNHCR and partners completed a **cash distribution for 108 women and girls at risk of SGBV** in Ndunda and Rusabagi, Fizi Territory. All 108 women and girls also received a training to start their own income-generating activity.

**WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)**

- In Djugu Territory, Ituri Province, UNHCR's partner DRC **built 20 individual latrines** in Lala displacement site. The latrines are crucial to improve sanitary conditions in the site, and to prevent the propagation of diseases.
- In Nobili, North Kivu Province, **urgent water, sanitation and hygiene needs persist** since January. Over 100,000 IDPs are gathered in locations with barely any infrastructure, posing significant risks in terms of spread of diseases.
- As part of the shelter project in Kikonde and Kazimia (South Kivu Province), **1,000 latrines** were constructed.

## Clusters and Working Groups

- In Ituri Province, the UNHCR-led Protection Cluster issued an alert about internally displaced persons in six displacement sites in Djugu Territory, having been **without food or cash assistance for over seven months**. Families depend on informal daily work, on their peers' charity, or at times on negative coping mechanisms such as survival sex. Insecurity limits livelihood opportunities while there is no access to free medical care, making this group particularly vulnerable in case of a spread of COVID-19.
- **77,790 persons (15,558 households) were affected by major floods in Uvira**, South Kivu Province, between 16 and 18 April according to the UNHCR-led Shelter Cluster. 3,457 shelters and 2,772 latrines were destroyed. Many victims sought shelter in 17 informal sites (school, churches, etc.) with little to no access to healthcare or hygiene facilities. Given the limited space available at the sites, respecting COVID-19 preventive measures is a challenge, while the lack of land in areas safe enough to build shelters is a major concern.
- The UNHCR-led Protection Cluster met with different actors to **coordinate the response to protection needs for victims of the floods in Uvira, Ruzizi plains and Baraka** (South Kivu Province). Several protection risks were identified in Uvira, mainly related to the security situation, heightened risks of SGBV and child protection (17 non-accompanied and up to 100 separated children were identified) according to INTERSOS and the local interagency committee in Uvira.

## External / Donor Relations

Funding received as of 28 May 2020

### [Donors for UNHCR operations in DRC in 2020](#)

United States of America (6.6 M) | CERF (6.3 M) | Sweden (3.1 M) | European Union (1.6 M) | Canada (0.73 M) | Japan (0.56 M) | United Nations Foundation (0.32 M) | International Olympic Committee (0.23 M) | UNAIDS (0.19 M)

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