

WEEKLY EMERGENCY UPDATE

Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo

19-25 November 2019



Operational context and protection situation

Ituri Province

The security and protection environment in Ituri deteriorated during the reporting week, due to increased armed group activity, especially in Djugu, Irumu and Mambasa territories. Civilians suffered human rights violations, notably lootings, injuries and extortions committed by presumed elements of the national army, armed groups, and unidentified armed men. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence committed against minors remain of serious concern, representing 93% of rape cases this week. Some 387 individuals (67 households) are estimated to have been displaced due to recurrent clashes between the national army and unidentified armed men in Pimbo, Djugu Territory. Recently displaced households sought refuge in neighboring areas and in the woods. Unidentified armed men continue to threaten the protection environment on the shores of Lake Albert in Djugu Territory. Fishermen reported being illegally taxed, and people reported voluntary restrictions of movements in the area. In southern Irumu Territory, lootings perpetrated by presumed members of an armed group are preoccupying. Presumed elements of same armed group attacked the national police force and military positions in Mandumbi, Mambasa Territory. Subsequently, an estimated 332 individuals (55 households) were displaced to neighboring localities.

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. Outside Bunia, the largest concentrations of IDPs are found in Drodro, Rho, Fataki, Kasenyi, Tchomia and Ramogi, in Djugu, Irumu and Mahagi territories. An estimated 1,575 people who fled to Uganda are reported to have returned, but UNHCR is not able to establish the exact numbers. UNHCR's Protection Monitoring system documented 5,530 human rights violations between January and October 2019 in Ituri Province.

North Kivu Province

The situation in Beni Territory sharply worsened during the reporting period, as a result of the major ongoing military operation against the armed group ADF, which started on 30 October. ADF's retaliations against civilians took on alarming proportions, with incursions and killings of civilians a few kilometers from the Boikene MONUSCO base in Beni town, and in Oicha. As of 25 November, 14 people had been killed in Boikene, Masiani and Oicha. The killings provoked public anger and anti-MONUSCO protests, with unprecedented city-wide shutdowns in Beni, Butembo and Oicha, as a sign of protest. The situation degenerated into a riot in front of MONUSCO premises, leading to looting and arson. UN staff was evacuated and all UNHCR activities in Beni, Oicha and Butembo have been suspended. So far, UNHCR and its partners are unable to access IDP sites or to assess protection needs, due to insecurity. All UNHCR partners were evacuated from Oicha and surroundings. Meanwhile, conflict is ongoing in the rest of North Kivu, particularly in Masisi and Rutshuru, where 3,649 households reportedly fled their villages from Bukombo to Birambizo (Masisi Territory), following armed clashes. Most of the displaced are taking refuge in abandoned and public building, as well as in host communities.

BACKGROUND: Over 1.5 million IDPs are located in North Kivu Province as of October 2019. The vast majority of them (94%) are living with host communities, while some 91,000 reside in 24 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 9,034 human rights violations between January and October 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:** The lack of child-friendly spaces (especially outside of Bunia), and high number of unaccompanied minors, exacerbate child protection needs. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) committed against minors is on the rise, posing serious challenges.
- **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. 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' 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 towards competent partners for intervention.

North Kivu Province

- **Protection** needs are enormous, including physical security for civilians in and around IDP sites, and for those on the run from ongoing conflict; community-based protection for host and IDP communities to participate in solutions and 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, particularly in Masisi and Lubero. Women are reticent to report incidents due to stigma and exclusion. As result, incidents are under-reported. Despite referrals to medical facilities, legal follow-up is virtually non-existent, perpetuating impunity. Displaced girls and women experience disproportionately high risks, and are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), as well as 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 do not have sufficient shelters, which has forced some IDPs towards host families. In Oicha (Beni Territory) the situation has become particularly dire, with 700 households sleeping in schools and churches, and many more staying in the open air. In Masisi and Rutshuru, shelter needs are routinely exacerbated by cyclical displacements. UNHCR is currently reinforcing shelter capacity in IDP sites to resolve some of these needs.
- **Non-Food Items (NFIs)** are needed, especially mats, which are urgently required for newly-arrived IDPs around the towns of Oicha and Beni.
- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH):** The situation requires urgent support in IDP sites in Masisi and Rutshuru. Water scarcity, and the increasing number of IDPs in Oicha and Beni, are endangering peaceful coexistence with local communities. The WASH situation is also particularly affecting girls and women, as they are more exposed to crowded toilets and the lack of water.
- **Education:** In several localities in Masisi, Lubero, and Beni territories, school closures are regular because of conflicts. Also, many IDPs who cannot find shelter in host communities tend to occupy school classrooms.

UNHCR's response

Ituri Province

- **CCCM:** UNHCR begun relocating displaced people from the overpopulated General Hospital site, in Bunia, to the new site of Kigonze. Since 20 November, 622 households (136 individuals) were relocated. UNHCR and partners constructed shelters, and UNHCR ensures site coordination through its partner Caritas.
- **Shelter:** UNHCR's shelter project is advancing in UNHCR-coordinated IDP sites in Djugu Territory. Over 2,500 individual emergency shelters were built, including 250 for IDPs in host families in Drodro and Bule, out of the 5,073 planned.
- **Community-based protection:** For World Children's Day, 2,437 individuals participated in awareness-raising sessions on SGBV, positive masculinity, and the promotion of children's rights in Tchomia, Drodro, Fataki and Linga (Djugu).
- Awareness-raising sessions on social cohesion, and the eradication of all forms of violence, also saw participation from 13,934 individuals (8,108 men and 6,826 women) in Tchomia, Drodro, Fataki, Jiba and Linga (Djugu).
- **Protection monitoring:** 149 protection incidents were recorded between 17 and 25 November, compared to 165 incidents the previous week; a slight decrease. Civilians continued to be the victims of lootings (29 cases), injuries (25), extortions (19), and rape (15 cases). The most affected territories were Djugu (34%), Irumu (31%) and Mambasa (31%).
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** 15 cases of rape were reported during the period, on 14 girls and one woman. The 14 girls were referred to medical facilities for emergency treatment within 72 hours. Presumed perpetrators were elements of the national army (FARDC), unidentified elements of armed groups, and civilians.

North Kivu Province

- **Community-based protection:** In Kirumba, a community-based protection structure, supported by UNHCR's partners Caritas and Intersos, complained to the national army about harassment from the military along a road axis in Lubero Territory, where soldiers reinstalled a barrier forcing people to pay illegal taxes. The commander of the military promised to follow up on the situation and to hold another discussion.
- In Kirumba and Kanyabayonga (Lubero Territory), community-based structures finalized two community protection plans, with the support of UNHCR's partner Caritas. The plans identified protection risks, such as military harassment, arbitrary arrests, illegal detentions, and SGBV, that need to be addressed.
- UNHCR and partner Caritas provided multi-purpose cash assistance to 111 people with specific needs, specifically women at risk of sexual exploitation in Rusayo and Monigi, Nyiragongo Territory. Each received \$ 150 to meet their urgent needs.
- In Kasindi, Beni Territory, 56 young people, among them 36 girls, were identified to benefit from skills trainings, through Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) aimed at reducing risks of abuse, sexual and economic exploitation of displaced people, and other of specific risks. In addition, 200 young people received support for income-generating activities, including carpentry, agriculture and breeding.
- 102 heads of households, including youth, persons with disabilities, and elderly persons formed four solidarity groups in Jomba (Rutshuru Territory) to develop income-generating activities in sectors including pig breeding, potato farming, manufacturing plastic baskets, and selling beans.
- **Protection monitoring:** Between 17 and 21 November, 301 human rights violations (mainly lootings, extortions, forced labor and physical assaults) were recorded in North Kivu, compared to 223 the previous week; an increase of 78 incidents.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** A community-based protection structure in the Nobili area (Beni Territory) identified a 2-year-old girl victim of rape, who was referred to Lamia health facility for medical care. However, there are no Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) kits in the area for the treatment of SGBV survivors.

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. The Bunia Field Unit has also been strengthened with additional staff in Protection, Security, Reporting, Supply, Shelter, Programme, CCCM and drivers. Further Field, Protection and Supply staff are expected by the end of the year.

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