

WEEKLY EMERGENCY UPDATE

Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo

5-11 November 2019



Operational context and protection situation

Ituri Province

UNHCR's Protection Monitoring recorded 111 human rights violations in Ituri, compared to 199 the week prior, a decrease of 88 incidents (44%). The reduction could be due to a comparative lull in armed conflict, notably in Djugu Territory. However, civilians continued to endure human rights violations committed by state armed forces, the national police, and unidentified armed men. Cases of rape committed against minors remained of concern. In Irumu Territory, which recorded the highest percentage of violations (47%), prominent armed groups continued to target civilians, including in two cases of kidnapping. Voluntary restrictions of movements also continued, with civilians afraid to visit their fields. Increasing displacement from North Kivu Province into southern Irumu Territory (Ituri Province), were reported. In Mambasa Territory, local armed groups' enduring hostility towards the Ebola response severely impacted access to health, and the protection environment. Following the assassination of a community radio presenter engaged in the Ebola response on 2 November, the radio ceased broadcasting due to fear of retaliation.

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 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 72 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 5,530 incidents between January and October in Ituri Province.

North Kivu Province

The situation in North Kivu remained extremely worrying, with Masisi, Rutshuru and Beni territories especially affected by conflict. A total of 217 human rights violations were recorded by UNHCR's Protection Monitoring during the period, slightly less than previously. Masisi Territory was particularly affected, with 12 armed attacks recorded in just seven days, all concentrated around the town of Mweso. Armed elements reportedly dressed as civilians when committing exactions including lootings, kidnappings and bodily harm. In Rutshuru Territory, intense fighting endangered the civilian and humanitarian character of displacement sites; a national army offensive took place in the Kihondo IDP site on 6 November. Many of the site's inhabitants fled for fear of retaliations. In Beni Territory, large-scale military operations against armed groups, ongoing since 30 October, have caused casualties on both sides. The conflict has led to retaliatory attacks by a prominent armed group against civilians, with at least 11 people killed, 10 kidnapped, and 8 wounded. Schools, health centers and road traffic in the region are reportedly affected.

BACKGROUND: Over 1.5 million IDPs are located in North Kivu Province as of October 2019, 94% of whom are staying with host communities, while some 91,000 reside in 24 IDP sites coordinated by UNHCR or IOM. Displacements are mostly cyclical, with causes that include armed conflict, human rights violations 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 by a prominent armed group led to significant displacements from the town of Kamango towards the town of Nobili (Beni Territory). Until recently, OCHA estimated the total number of IDPs in the Nobili area at around 112,000; but as of late October, most of them had returned. In Masisi and Rutshuru territories, OCHA estimates that over 67,000 people were displaced towards host communities in May and June alone, while arrival numbers into several IDP sites have been significant. UNHCR's Protection Monitoring system documented 9,034 protection incidents 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:** A lack of child-friendly spaces (especially outside of Bunia), and high numbers of unaccompanied minors, exacerbate child protection needs. Cases of SGBV against minors raises serious concerns.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)** risks are high: sexual exploitation, survival sex, 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 for emergency shelters 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, frequent child recruitment by armed groups, or children who recently left armed groups and face reintegration issues.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)** remains widespread, particularly in Masisi and Lubero. Women often fear to come forward due to fears of stigmatization and exclusion, so incidents are underreported. Despite the referral of survivors to medical structures, legal follow-up is virtually non-existent, perpetuating impunity. IDP women are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and survival sex.
- **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, and require a flexible response capacity. In Oicha (Beni territory), 120 recently-displaced households are still sleeping in a school. Shelter needs are also routinely exacerbated by cyclical displacements, for example in Masisi and Rutshuru territories.
- **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. Difficult WASH conditions particularly affect vulnerable displaced women.
- **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

- **Registration:** A total of 10,873 households (48,684 individuals; 55% women and girls, 45% men and boys) were registered in nine out of 12 IDP sites coordinated by UNHCR in Ituri as of 8 November, as part of a registration exercise intended to collect information on IDPs' needs. Registration will be concluded in the three remaining sites of Drodoro, Rho and Bule (Djugu Territory) in the coming weeks.
- **Shelter:** During the week, in UNHCR-coordinated IDP sites in Djugu Territory, 50 family shelters were completed in Rho (for a total of 250 so far) and 400 in Bule (for a total of 1,064 so far). The first 40 family shelters were constructed for IDPs staying with host communities in Drodoro. At the new "Lycée Kigonze" IDP site in Bunia, 150 shelters were completed during the week, and 450 in total so far.
- **Community-based protection:** Community-based protection structures in Djugu Territory continued to organize awareness-raising sessions on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in school settings in Tchomia, and around IDP sites in Drodoro. UNHCR partner AVSI also trained three IDP committees in Linga, and 15 community leaders in Fataki on their duties and responsibilities.
- Two community fora on peaceful coexistence between IDPs and host communities were organized in Fataki and Tchomia. 15 complaint boxes were installed in these locations for beneficiary feedback.
- **Protection monitoring:** 111 protection incidents were recorded between 3 and 8 November, compared to 199 the previous week, a decrease of 44%. This decrease could be due to a lull in armed conflict, notably in Djugu Territory. However, civilians continued to endure violations including looting (29 cases), rape (11 cases), assault, extortion and arbitrary arrests (10 cases each). The most affected territories were Irumu (47%) and Djugu (30%).
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** 11 cases of rape were reported this week on seven girls and four women. Among them, ten survivors were referred to medical facilities for emergency treatment within 72 hours. The alleged perpetrators are civilians, state armed forces, and members of armed groups.

North Kivu Province

- **Shelter:** UNHCR's shelter project for returned IDPs in North Kivu, implemented by partner AIDES, is nearing completion with 1,678 transitional shelters complete out of 1,700 as of 7 November. The remaining shelters, built by beneficiaries using local construction materials, are being finalized in Lubero Territory.
- Emergency shelter response to recent arrivals in IDP sites is ongoing; altogether 848 emergency shelters are planned before year-end in Kalinga and Bukumbo sites in Masisi Territory, which were overwhelmed by arrivals in recent months. 124 of these shelters are under construction, 49 completed.

- The rehabilitation of a primary school hosting 120 IDP households in the displacement-affected town of Oicha was almost complete as of 7 November. To free up the school and allow teaching to resume, UNHCR will build 20 collective hangars for IDPs on a nearby property.
- **Community-based protection:** Community-based protection structures continued to conduct awareness-raising workshops within communities, with a focus this week on feedback, referral and conflict resolution mechanisms, in addition to gender equality, women's rights, and the prevention and response to SGBV in the last weeks. Several thousand people participated. Further community-based awareness-raising efforts (community fora, radio broadcasts) focused on peaceful coexistence between communities. Suggestion boxes were installed in several localities to ensure the project's accountability to beneficiaries.
- To improve peaceful coexistence between IDPs, refugees, host communities and returned IDPs, 300 people received material support for an agricultural project in Nyanzale, as part of "Quick Impact Projects" (QIPs). QIPs are also ongoing around Beni, in agriculture and for the reintegration of formerly exploited children.
- **Protection monitoring:** Between 1 and 7 November, 217 human rights violations (the majority of them lootings, kidnappings and bodily harm) were recorded, affecting 151 men and 61 women. These figures are smaller than those of the previous week (241 violations), but do not reflect an improvement in the protection situation. The most affected territories were Masisi (79) and Lubero (46), with the situation in Masisi particularly worrying.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** community-based protection structures around Bwito (Masisi) referred two cases of rape, both on underage girls, to health structures for medical follow-up.

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 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. 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, CCM and Drivers. Further staff in Field and Supply are expected between now and the end of the year; however, needs still outpace available human resources.

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