

WEEKLY EMERGENCY UPDATE #27

Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo

7 – 13 January 2020



Operational context and protection situation

Ituri Province

The security situation was calm in the city of Bunia. However, armed clashes resumed in the territories of Djugu, Irumu and Mahagi during the reporting period. In addition, natural hazards (floods and violent winds) affected areas along the shores of Lake Albert. Consequently, population movements were reported in the affected areas, and displaced people faced various protection risks. On 13 January, armed clashes opposing the DRC army and an armed group in the Walendu Tatsi sector, in Djugu Territory, led to a movement of population. According to local sources, the displaced fled from Tsoro, Pitso, Uzi, Angu and Ata villages towards Pimbo, Budu, Djugu-center and Atse, where they need urgent humanitarian assistance.

BACKGROUND: Since 6 June 2019, 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, 12 of them coordinated by UNHCR, and housing over 82,000 individuals (17,000 households). Outside of Bunia, the largest concentrations of IDPs are found in Drodro, Rho, Fataki, Kasenyi, Tchomia and Ramogi, in Djugu, Irumu and Mahagi territories. Overall, some 929,821 people are displaced throughout the Province according to the *Comité de Mouvement de Population*, a mixed committee made up of Government and the national and international Humanitarian community. UNHCR's Protection Monitoring system documented 8,100 human rights violations between January and December 2019 in Ituri Province.

North Kivu Province

The security context was dominated by the resumption of clashes between armed groups in the Bashali-Mokoto area, Masisi Territory, as well as by armed men's activities on the Mweso (Masisi) and Nyanzale (Rutshuru) axis. Military operations by the DRC army against armed groups continued. Army officials announced that they controlled more than 80% of the Kihondo groupement in Rutshuru Territory. Consequently, population movements and human rights violations (lootings, murders, extorsions, etc.) were reported. 49 cases of cholera were reported at the Saint Benoit health center in Masisi Territory, due to a shortage of drinking and potable water. The continued military operation in these territories of North-Kivu has forced over 1,400 civilians to seek refuge in Kalehe Territory, South Kivu Province. They said to have been subject to human rights violations including arbitrary arrests, physical assault and denial of resources.

BACKGROUND: Over 1.5 million IDPs are located in North Kivu Province as of 25 December 2019 according to the *Comité de Mouvement de Population*, a mixed committee made up of Government and the national and international Humanitarian community. The vast majority (94%) live with host communities, while some 90,263 reside in 22 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). OCHA reported that 112,000 IDPs were located in the Nobili area. As of late October, it was thought that most of them have returned. However, a new massive forced displacement was generated from 15th December onwards, of up to 24,000 households (130,000 individuals). In Masisi and Rutshuru territories, OCHA reports 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 13,396 human rights violations between January and December 2019 throughout the Province.

Immediate needs

Ituri Province

- **Protection:** Persistent violence 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 numbers of unaccompanied minors exacerbate child protection needs. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) against minors is on the rise.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)** risks are high, including sexual exploitation, survival sex, and early forced marriage, as consistently reported by women.

- **Shelter:** IDPs outside established sites still live in precarious conditions, exposed to abuse. Despite ongoing shelter construction, the lack of space remains a challenge. Advocacy is needed for local authorities to grant more space.
- **Non-Food Items (NFIs)** are still needed for many IDP families, 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 products and to reproductive health services.
- **Access to education** is hindered by host communities' incapacity 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 for relevant partners to intervene.
- **Right to an identity and personal documentation:** 95% of children aged 0 to 4 who live in UNHCR-coordinated IDP sites do not have birth certificates, which exposes many to various human rights abuses.

North Kivu Province

- **Protection** needs are enormous, including physical security for civilians in and around IDP sites, and for those on the run; community-based protection for host and IDP communities to participate in 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. Women are reticent to report incidents due to stigma and exclusion, thus incidents are underreported. Despite referrals to medical facilities, legal follow-up is quasi non-existent, perpetuating impunity. Displaced girls and women experience disproportionately high risks and are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and 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 Territory do not have sufficient shelters, which has forced some IDPs towards host families. UNHCR is therefore reinforcing shelter support in sites. In Beni Territory the situation has become particularly dire considering recent mass displacements, with an unconfirmed number of IDPs sleeping in the open air. In Masisi and Rutshuru territories, shelter needs are exacerbated by cyclical displacements.
- **Non-Food Items (NFIs)** are urgently required for newly-arrived IDPs around the towns of Oicha and Beni.
- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH):** There are urgent needs in IDP sites in Masisi and Rutshuru territories, particularly given the current cholera outbreak in Masisi. Water scarcity and the increasing number of IDPs in Oicha and Beni are endangering peaceful coexistence with local communities. The WASH situation is particularly affecting girls and women, as crowded toilets and the lack of water pose higher risks for them.
- **Education:** In several localities in Masisi, Lubero, and Beni territories, school closures are regular because of conflicts. IDPs who cannot find shelter in host communities also tend to occupy school classrooms, disrupting classes.

UNHCR's response

Ituri Province

- **Protection:** During the reporting period, the CCCM Working Group, co-led by UNHCR and IOM, organized a capacity building session on site management and administration, for 40 field staff working for AIDES, Caritas, the civil protection, OCHA and WFP.
- 86 households (384 individuals) were relocated from the General Hospital IDP site to the new site of Kigonze in Bunia.
- **Shelter:** As of 13 January, a total of 1,233 shelters, out of 2,300 planned, were built by UNHCR's partner Caritas, and are now inhabited by relocated IDPs in the new displacement site of Kigonze in Bunia.
- **Non-Food Items (NFIs):** UNHCR distributed 82 NFI kits, composed of mats, blankets, 10-liter jerrycans, laundry soap and menstrual hygiene kits, in the new displacement site of Kigonze, in Bunia.

North Kivu Province

- **Shelter:** As of 31 December, UNHCR's partner AIDES completed the construction and handover of two community structures and four primary classrooms in Beni Territory. In addition, 1,700 transitional shelters and 170 communal latrines were completed and are now inhabited in Masisi, Lubero and Rutshuru territories. An additional 380 transitional shelters are being built for IDPs living in host communities in Masisi health zone.
- UNHCR and partner AIDES distributed 1,000 tarpaulins to 500 IDP households in Mweso, and 348 emergency shelters were finalized in Masisi health zone. The same 500 households also received cash-for-shelter assistance.
- 20 community hangars were under construction in Oicha, Beni Territory, in order to host IDPs who fled in that area.
- UNHCR's partner AIDES provided multipurpose cash assistance to 1,660 households in Masisi Territory.
- **Community-based protection:** UNHCR and Caritas provided cash assistance for income generating activities to 50 vulnerable IDP, returnee and refugee households in Mweso, Masisi Territory.

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 – the operation has opened a Field Unit in Beni as of October 2019, 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, CCCM and Drivers. Further emergency response staff (Field and Protection) are expected between now and the end of the year; however, needs still outpace available human resources.

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