

WEEKLY EMERGENCY UPDATE

Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo

25 July – 1 August 2019



Operational context and protection situation

Ituri Province

Following military offensives by the Congolese national army (FARDC), armed violence has decreased in much of Ituri Province compared to June. Congolese national police (PNC) are stationed in several key locations to maintain the relative calm. Reinforced security measures in some localities have allowed the return of some 3,000 displaced persons to their areas of origin in Mahagi territory. However, despite increased FARDC presence, unidentified armed assailants scattered throughout Djugu territory continue to pose a serious security threat. Their movements are particularly reported around Linga and Jiba, and generally in locations where FARDC and PNC presence is weak. This impacts the protection of civilians and restricts their access to places where they obtain food and other necessities. During the week under review at least 5 civilians (as well as several PNC elements) were killed, others kidnapped; and properties looted and burned. In some areas (Kpandroma, Tchomia), actual or rumored attacks are causing preventive, cyclical displacements. Inter-community tensions are high and peaceful coexistence is a challenge, as communities in displacement-affected areas continue to accuse each other of exactions. Several road axes in Djugu territory remain too insecure, or require MONUSCO escorts to access. In Irumu territory, a recent surge of property extortions by the Ituri Patriotic Resistance Front (FPRI) has raised the prospect of new displacements. UNHCR recorded 579 protection incidents in Ituri province in July (120 of them between 22 and 28 July alone); this however is still not an exhaustive depiction of the protection situation due to persistent access constraints. During the reporting period the third emergency allocation of the DRC Humanitarian Fund was announced, for \$20 million – of which \$7.85 million for Ituri. \$2 million are intended to improve living conditions in IDP sites in Bunia, while the rest will provide life-saving assistance for displaced and host families in Djugu and Mahagi territories. The allocation aims to reach a total of 114,017 persons (22,812 households) in 10 prioritized locations with assistance.

BACKGROUND: Since 6 June, the flare-up of a long-simmering conflict between the Lendu and Hema communities into generalized violence has led to massive new displacements in Ituri province. UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) recorded over 110,000 new arrivals in IDP sites in Djugu, Mahagi and Irumu territories between 31 May and 20 June. OCHA now estimates that 360,000 people were displaced by the recent crisis; some 145,000 of them towards IDP sites and the rest (215,000) in host communities. Outside of Bunia, the largest concentrations of IDPs are found in Drodoro, Fataki, Rho, Kasenyi and Tchomia in Djugu and Irumu. In Mahagi territory, there is a large concentration of IDPs in Ramogi. During the month of June, 8,647 people also fled to Uganda according to UNHCR's Uganda office, nearly doubling the number of daily crossings compared to May 2019.

North Kivu Province

The security situation in North Kivu remains volatile, as all territories of the province continue to experience armed conflict and cyclical displacement. Masisi territory is particularly badly affected, with ever-increasing activities of armed groups since early 2019. Armed groups in the territory systematically target civilians and protection actors, who are considered informants to human rights organizations. Rwandan refugees living in the territory are also targeted. As a direct consequence, displacement from conflict-affected areas into host communities and IDP sites continues. In host communities OCHA estimates that over 67,000 were newly displaced in May and June (an overall 30% increase), while arrival numbers into some IDP sites (e.g. Bukumbo) have also been significant. UNHCR and the National Refugee Commission (CNR) conducted a registration mission between 22 and 26 July in this site, recording 560 newly arrived households of 2,462 persons, over 60% of them children. Masisi territory also suffers from the insufficient presence of humanitarian actors, due in part to the multiplicity of ongoing crises in North Kivu. In Beni territory, the Allied Armed Forces (ADF) and some Mai Mai armed groups continued their attacks against civilians and government forces during the reporting period, and humanitarian access remained constrained. In the Nobili area on the Ugandan border, deadly ADF violence has halted the return of IDPs to their homes, and caused further displacements. The Ebola epidemic continues unabated in North Kivu, with its current epicenter once again in Beni.

BACKGROUND: Since 30 March, and with a sharp intensification as of 7 May, attacks against civilians and military outposts by members of rebel group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), led to significant displacements from the town of Kamango towards the town of Nobili (Beni Territory), near the DRC border with Uganda. As of 24 June, 94,612 displaced people (15,991 households) had been registered in Nobili and 9 surrounding localities, but displacements continue. In Masisi the security situation has deteriorated sharply since the beginning of the year, with 1,593 protection incidents, mostly pillaging and physical injuries, recorded by UNHCR between January and June 2019.

Immediate needs

Ituri Province

Humanitarian needs are overwhelming, including in the capital Bunia and the territories of Djugu, Irumu and Mahagi. Needs assessments by UNHCR and other humanitarian actors indicate that the following needs are critical:

- **Health:** mass displacements are occurring in an Ebola-affected area (and prone to other disease outbreaks including measles, cholera and malaria), exacerbating already systemic health needs. MSF has vaccinated 67,000 children in Bunia against measles, and is about to vaccinate 7,000 more in Drodro; however the measles epidemic is gaining ground, with insufficient available vaccines and funding. Health facilities in displacement-affected health zones are overwhelmed. In both IDP sites and host communities, child mortality rates are high due to a lack of medical care.
- **Shelter:** many IDPs are still sleeping in the open or in public buildings, exposed to elements and to potential abuse. The lack of shelter in the rainy season compounds risks (especially health-related) for the most vulnerable.
- **Food assistance:** WFP has organized targeted food distributions in select locations (Kasenyi and ISP sites), but needs remain overwhelming. The looting of fields left behind in areas of origin further exacerbates food insecurity.
- **Non-Food Items (NFIs)** are a need expressed by IDPs everywhere; some of them also report needing clothes.
- **WASH** conditions continue to be particularly dire in the most overcrowded IDP sites and in collective structures (Drodro, Kasenyi). Women who lack access to feminine hygiene products are disproportionately affected.
- **SGBV:** due to overcrowding, women and girls are at high risk of sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse. Women in IDP sites report having to resort to survival sex to cover their most basic needs, notably in hygiene. They are insufficiently aware of the consequences, and have little or no access to PEP or dignity kits. According to a recent UNHCR assessment, this phenomenon is alarmingly widespread in IDP sites in Bunia.
- **Protection:** The high influx of new IDPs has created tensions between previously and recently displaced persons, with discriminatory access to facilities and services for the recently displaced. With displacement often de facto occurring along ethnic lines, peaceful coexistence between communities is a challenge. Protection actors also highlight major needs in child protection, with a lack of child-friendly spaces and many unaccompanied minors.
- **Registration and “fixing”** are urgently needed in the 61+ IDP sites now found throughout Ituri. Establishing exact displacement numbers in affected areas is paramount so beneficiaries can receive adequately tailored assistance.

North Kivu Province

- **Shelter:** In Masisi territory, IDP sites do not provide adequate reception infrastructure (such as community hangars) for new arrivals, which does not favor the installation of IDPs in sites, but rather pushes them towards staying with host families. The number of newly displaced people in need of shelter in the area is still on the rise. In Beni territory and specifically around Nobili, repeated tarpaulin distributions for emergency shelter have somewhat reduced shelter needs; however these needs are perpetuated by new displacements.
- **Non-Food Items (NFIs):** Many recent IDPs, especially those living with host families, lack sufficient NFIs.
- **Health** needs across most territories of North Kivu are severe, with local facilities overwhelmed. The stock of PEP kits is depleted since February in 6 health centers around Nobili. Even in health zones supported by international NGOs, IDPs often have to cover prohibitive fractions of the cost of their treatment, limiting access. The province is affected by simultaneous measles and Ebola epidemics, and health services across the board need urgent support.
- **SGBV:** SGBV remains endemic in North Kivu, particularly in Masisi territory where some armed groups (NDC-R) use it as a weapon of war. Province-wide systemic gaps remain in SGBV prevention and response, notably access to psycho-social and medical response (including PEP kits), and the fight against impunity (judicial response).
- **WASH** is a pressing need, particularly in IDP sites in Masisi and Rutshuru where sanitation conditions are dire. In the Nobili area, Beni territory, water and hygiene have somewhat improved thanks to recent interventions.
- **Food assistance:** After an interruption of distribution on 13 June, WFP has resumed the distribution of food rations on 20 July to IDPs in Nobili, and targets 15,991 households. However the needs of most IDPs in the province, particularly those who have lost their livelihoods as a result of land- or property-related conflicts, go unmet.
- **Protection needs** remain enormous, with the most significant being community-based protection to promote the participation of communities and the displaced in response mechanisms and solutions; peaceful coexistence initiatives; protection actions for vulnerable youth and women; and birth registrations to prevent statelessness.

UNHCR's response

Ituri Province

UNHCR's strategy is to focus efforts in selected sites/communities in coordination with other partners, trying to avoid dispersing its limited resources in too many areas. In its shelter interventions, with resources immediately available the agency is focusing on the new IDP site (“*Lycée Kigonze*”) to be opened in Bunia for up to 10,000 persons; several sites in Kasenyi on the shore of Lake Albert (an entry/exit point to Uganda), and Drodro, where some 77,000 people are staying

in and around schools or churches. Further locations will be added if funds become available. UNHCR also conducts protection monitoring, and has just launched a community-based protection project, in these areas.

- In **Bunia**, UNHCR has committed to provide **emergency shelters and core non-food items (NFIs) to an initial 2,000 families** after they are relocated to the new site. This will be done in collaboration with IOM (site planning and WASH) and CARITAS (site management). MONUSCO has started preparatory site development on 15 July, and construction is expected to last 12 weeks; but is on hold while partners wait for additional funding.
- On 17 and 18 July, **UNHCR distributed plastic sheeting for emergency shelters; hygiene kits; and NFIs** consisting of 2 sleeping mats, 2 blankets, 2 soap bars and 2 jerry cans per household, **in the Bunia ISP site**, reaching 155 households (or 962 vulnerable persons) out of a target of 173. A further NFI distribution in this site is planned imminently to exhaust existing stocks and help improve conditions at the site.
- In light of the enormous need for **hygiene kits for women at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse**, UNHCR has committed to distributing more kits, to each woman and girl of reproductive age in the Bunia IDP sites.
- In **Kasenyi**, in response to the recent arrival of some 4,300 IDPs, UNHCR is **providing 600 emergency shelters, and some 40 community hangars** through its partner CARITAS. These structures will be able to host up to **5,400 IDPs**, both older and recent caseloads. During the week of 25 July-1 August the first 2 collective hangars were finished; each to house 12 families. The first 24 vulnerable families were relocated from a school into the hangars on 1 August. Construction of the 600 emergency family shelters is also slated to begin soon.
- In **Drodro**, UNHCR plans to build emergency shelters for **3,200 displaced households** through its partner the Danish Refugee Council. A UNHCR expert team visited Drodro from 18 to 20 July to prepare the project; the partner's teams are also on the ground since then. Site planning activities have begun.
- In all these localities, UNHCR is **reinforcing community-based protection**, with activities focusing on the participation of IDP men, women and youth; conflict reduction; identification and assistance to the most vulnerable, especially women at risk and victims of sexual exploitation; and **reinforcing existing coping mechanisms**, including access to land for agriculture. UNHCR partners **AVSI and CARITAS** launched their **community-based protection projects** in the second half of July; and since the 22nd are deployed on various axes (Fataki-Kasenyi for AVSI in Djugu, and Komanda-Biakoto in Irumu and Mambasa territories for CARITAS) to identify existing community-based protection structures. **81 such structures were mapped by both partners in these localities as of 31 July**. The next step is the selection of those to be supported.
- Starting the week of 29 July, UNHCR has also begun **"fixing" in key locations** to establish **reliable IDP numbers**; fixing was completed in Kasenyi (between 28 and 31 July) and is currently ongoing in Drodro (as of 1 August).
- UNHCR, through its partner INTERSOS, conducts **protection monitoring** to the extent that the territory is accessible, and provides limited referrals for victims of violations. Ongoing protection monitoring is being reinforced, especially along the shores of Lake Albert and in return areas, as these areas become accessible.

North Kivu Province

- In the Nobili area (Beni), UNHCR has distributed **NFIs (sleeping mats, jerry cans and soap), and tarpaulins (for emergency shelter) to a total of 7,298 IDP households (55,364 individuals)** from 30 May to 18 July, in two waves (30 May to 18 June; 9 to 15 July). 879 vulnerable host community households also received NFIs. This was done in synergy with the RRMP rapid response mechanism which distributed NFIs to 15,991 households.
- From 16 to 18 July, UNHCR organized a **capacity-building workshop** for 112 participants representing local authorities, civil society, IDP committees, humanitarian actors and members of local protection structures. The workshop aimed to **strengthen collaboration between actors** to provide **more effective protection** to IDPs. A protection analysis subsequently undertaken by UNHCR and INTERSOS highlighted tensions between ethnic groups being exacerbated by perceptions of unequal access to humanitarian assistance. The analysis was shared with the CLIO to enable action to be taken to address the concerns raised.
- With support from UNHCR, **10 sub-committees of IDPs** were set up in the 10 displacement locations in and around Nobili. They received capacity-building and remain active, notably in registering new displacements.
- UNHCR presented its **community-based protection project** to 53 community leaders and members of the local authorities in Beni on 23 July. The participants declared their support and ownership of the project.
- Since early June, UNHCR has started a pilot project of **distributing reusable sanitary pads to 100 girls and women from the IDP and host communities** in Nobili. The management of menstrual hygiene is a major challenge for girls and women in displacement situations. Focus groups conducted on 19 July revealed overwhelming appreciation for the washable, durable pads (96% of the women surveyed were in favor). Their **continuous availability meets the menstrual health needs of women and girls, and can prevent infections**.
- In Masisi, Rutshuru and Lubero territories, UNHCR is conducting a shelter project in cooperation with AIDES. Under this project, **UNHCR distributed tarpaulins to 500 IDP households of 3,119 persons in Mweso, Masisi territory, for emergency shelter**. Another **1,700 construction kits, and 170 tool kits have been distributed to IDPs in Masisi, Lubero and Rutshuru**; with the kits received the households build semi-durable shelters for themselves. As of 31 July the project was **64% complete**, with nearly **11,000 IDPs** living in finished shelters.

- UNHCR, with partners, is also now starting further peaceful coexistence projects through **community fields** in Beni, Masisi and Rutshuru territories.
 - During the joint **UNHCR/CNR registration mission to the Bukombo displacement site** (mentioned above), urgent shelter, food assistance, WASH and educational needs were identified. UNHCR is liaising with partners as to possible assistance to help alleviate this situation.
 - UNHCR, through its partner INTERSOS, conducts **protection monitoring** to the extent that the territory is accessible, and provides referrals for victims of violations. The activity is being reinforced in North Kivu as well.
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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 –, the operation is opening a Field Unit in Beni. 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 country. In addition, to face the worsening situation in Ituri, the Bunia Field Unit is being strengthened with staff including Protection, Information Management, Field and Supply.
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