

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. Congolese national police (PNC) are stationed in several key locations to maintain the relative calm. Nonetheless sporadic armed attacks and killings persist, and road blocks by unknown assailants demanding levies for passage have been observed, including on the main road from Bunia to Mahagi. Under these circumstances humanitarian road access to many displacement sites remains limited. In addition, a recent surge of activities by the Patriotic Resistance Front of Ituri (FPRI) in Irumu territory raises the prospect of new displacements. On 15 July, the provincial government organized a peace conference, which was attended by over 500 members of the Lendu community. From 15 to 18 July the DRC's Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator visited displacement sites in Fataki, Djugu territory and Mahagi territory, and met with humanitarian actors in Bunia. He expressed concern over the current centralization of aid in Bunia and called for humanitarian aid to be deployed more evenly across the province. Outside of Bunia, the largest concentrations of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) are found in Drodro, Rho, Kasenyi and Tchomia in Djugu territory. In Mahagi territory, there is a very large concentration of IDPs in Ramongi.

BACKGROUND: Since 6 June, a flare-up of generalized violence between the Lendu and Hema communities 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. In addition, several tens of thousands of people are staying with host communities. During the month of June, 8,647 people fled to Uganda according to UNHCR's Uganda office, nearly doubling the number of daily crossings as compared to May 2019. Some of the affected areas of Ituri province are Ebola-hit.

North Kivu Province

On 17 July, the World Health Organization's Director-General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, declared the Ebola outbreak in the DRC a "public health emergency of international concern". Even though numbers of new confirmed cases of Ebola are on the decline, new infections have been particularly prevalent in Beni and Butembo, the HQ of the Ebola response. The security situation in North Kivu remains volatile, as all territories continue to experience armed conflict and cyclical displacement. Between 8 and 14 July, a rise of protection incidents was reported, with an increasing number of violations committed by the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC); Rutshuru and Masisi are the two main territories affected. Masisi territory also saw a movement of people to IDP sites from areas affected by clashes between armed groups. The increase of IDPs has been particularly significant for the IDP site of Bukombo, where the National Refugee Commission (CNR) reported the arrival of 581 household of 2,578 persons between 11 and 18 July. In Beni territory, after a period of relative calm, the Allied Democratic Forces rebel group (ADF) has launched three attacks against the FARDC on 12 and 13 July. Humanitarian access remains a challenge given persistent insecurity and the area's distance from Goma. On 16 July, UNHCR staff traveling from Nobili to Goma has been refused entry to Rwanda at the Ruhengeri border point between Rwanda and Uganda, allegedly due coming from a high Ebola risk area. Other border crossing points are not affected by this restriction. After the recent deadly attacks in the Nobili area on 9 and 12 July, further displacements towards Nobili were observed this week. Those who have nonetheless returned to their homes recently accuse the FARDC of mistrusting returnees.

BACKGROUND: Since 30 March, and with a sharp intensification as of 7 May, attacks against civilians and military outposts by presumed members of rebel group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), led to significant displacement 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 in 9 surrounding localities. In Masisi, the security situation has deteriorated sharply since the beginning of the year, with 1,593 protection incidents, most commonly pillaging and physical injuries, recorded by UNHCR between January and June 2019.

Immediate needs

Ituri Province

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

- **Shelter:** many IDPs are 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.
- **Health:** mass displacements are occurring in an Ebola-affected area (and prone to other disease outbreaks including measles and malaria), exacerbating already systemic health needs. During the reporting period, MSF conducted a measles vaccination campaign in Bunia for 67,000 children. Health facilities everywhere are overwhelmed; in IDP sites as well as communities, frequent child deaths are recorded due to a lack of medical care and malnutrition.
- **Food assistance:** WFP has started food distributions in select locations (Kasenyi and ISP site), but needs are 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 are particularly dire in the most overcrowded IDP sites and in collective structures. Women who lack access to female hygiene products are disproportionately affected.
- **SGBV:** due to overcrowding, women and girls are at high risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Women in IDP sites report having to resort to survival sex to cover their most basic needs. Girls and women are not sufficiently aware of their rights and have no access to PEP and dignity kits.
- **Protection:** The high influx of newly displaced persons creates tensions between previously and recently displaced persons, with discriminatory access to facilities and services for the newly displaced. Registration and/or “fixing” are also urgently needed, particularly in the 61 IDP sites that are now found throughout Ituri.

North Kivu Province

- **WASH,** specifically hygiene, remains the most pressing need. While water availability in the Nobili area has increased and sanitation projects are ongoing, no actor is currently positioned for a hygiene response.
- **Health** needs remain severe, with local facilities overwhelmed. The stock of Post Exposure Preventive (PEP) kits is depleted since February in 6 health centers. Even in health zones supported by the NGOS IEADA and Save the Children, IDPs have to cover half of the cost of their treatment, prohibitive for many. In other areas health services are in acute need of support.
- **Food assistance:** WFP has transported and distributed food aid to Nobili between 5 and 13 June. It had to end the distribution once its supplies were exhausted. UNHCR has been advocating for WFP’s return since 13 June.
- **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, and pushes them towards staying with host families. The number of newly displaced people in need of shelter is still on the rise.
- **Non-Food Items (NFIs):** UNHCR distributed NFI kits to 3,379 IDP and host community households from 30 May to 23 June, and the RRMP rapid response mechanisms distributed NFIs to 16,000 households between 24 and 29 of June. Many IDPs, especially those living with host families, are still in need of assistance.
- **SGBV:** Several cases of rape, including of minors, have been reported; but important gaps remain regarding the prevention of SGBV and for judicial and psycho-social response.
- The most significant outstanding **protection needs** are community-based protection to promote the participation of communities and the displaced in response mechanisms and solutions; protection targeting vulnerable youth and women; and birth registrations to prevent the risk of 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. With resources immediately available, UNHCR will focus on the new IDP site to be opened in Bunia for up to 10,000 persons; the site of Kasenyi on the shore of Lake Albert (an entry/exit point to Uganda) and surrounding communities, and Drodro Centre where up to 90,000 people are living in schools or churches. Further locations will be added if funds become available.

- In **Bunia**, UNHCR has committed to provide **emergency shelters for an initial 2,000 families**, providing plastic sheeting, plastic rolls and expertise. 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 start in early August for 12 weeks. On 17 and 18 July, **UNHCR distributed plastic sheeting, hygiene kits and NFIs**, consisting of 2 sleeping mats, 2 blankets, 2 soap bars and 2 jerry cans per household, in the ISP site. The plastic sheeting distribution reached 962 vulnerable persons (155 households) out of 1076 (173 households) and 1139 persons (210 households) out of 1346 (262 households) targeted received NFIs. In addition, 928 persons (158 households) out of 1086 (186 households) received hygiene kits.
- In **Kasenyi**, UNHCR will **provide 600 emergency shelters and 40 community hangars** through its partner CARITAS. UNHCR and CARITAS conducted two evaluation missions this week to determine details of the site planning. Beneficiary selection and the supply of construction materials to Kasenyi are set to start next week.

- In **Drodro**, UNHCR plans to build **3,000 emergency shelters** through its partner the Danish Refugee Council. A UNHCR expert team is visiting Drodro from 18 to 20 July to plan and prepare for the provision of assistance.
- In all these localities, UNHCR will **reinforce community-based protection** around the sites, 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 or victims of sexual exploitation; and **reinforcing existing coping mechanisms**, including access to land for agriculture. In coordination with UNHCR, the agency's partner AVSI will **present plans for community-based protection to the local authorities** on 18 July.
- UNHCR, through its partner INTERSOS, conducts **protection monitoring** to the extent that the territory is accessible and human resources are available, and (on a limited basis) provides individual referrals for victims of SGBV. Protection monitoring will continue, and will be reinforced especially along the shores of Lake Albert and in return areas, as these areas become accessible.
- UNHCR is coordinating with IOM and WFP to agree on the methodology of identifying ("fixing") persons in the various sites. UNHCR will start its fixing process next week, after which WFP will biometrically register IDPs.
- On 17 July, UNHCR's partner INTERSOS published an analytical **report about survival sex in ISP sites**. The report found that the main reasons for survival sex are financial precariousness, caused among other things by the cost of hygiene kits (for girls aged 12-17) and of medical bills (for women aged 18-59). The report recommends that the SGBV Sub-Cluster develops projects for income-generating activities for girls and women in IDP sites. It further calls on humanitarian actors to intensify awareness campaigns on the consequences of survival sex, and underlines the urgent need for distributions of hygiene kits in at the ISP site.

North Kivu Province

- In June, UNHCR assisted **2,500 vulnerable IDP households (19,222 people) in Nobili with tarpaulins, sleeping mats and jerry cans**. This enabled those among them who stayed in public buildings (schools, churches) to relocate within host communities, **allowing primary and secondary schools to be freed up** for exams. UNHCR also assisted close to **900 vulnerable host community households** with NFIs.
- From 9 to 15 July, UNHCR distributed **NFIs to 4,798 households living with host families** in Nobili. The assisted households also received tarpaulins, mats and jerry cans.
- From 16 to 18 July UNHCR organized a **capacity-building workshop** for 11 participants representing local authorities, community leaders, civil society, IDP committees, and members of local protection structures in Nobili. The workshop aimed to **strengthen the collaboration between these actors** to provide **more effective long-term protection** to IDPs.
- **Protection monitors** have been deployed into the Nobili area by UNHCR and partner INTERSOS since 23 May. A small UNHCR team on the ground ensures **protection by presence**.
- With support from UNHCR, **10 sub-committees of displaced people, and 2 protection committees** were set up in the 10 displacement locations in and around Nobili.
- In Masisi, Lubero and Rutshuru 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**. Another **1,700 kits for local construction, and 170 tool kits have been distributed to returnees in Masisi, Lubero and Rutshuru**. With the kits received, the households build the shelters themselves under the supervision of AIDES staff, with UNHCR's technical support. As of 18 July, all shelters have **reached a 51% completion rate**, and are expected to be fully completed by November 2019.

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 plans to open 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 will be strengthened with staff including Protection, Information Management, Field and Supply.

Contacts

David Nthengwe, Senior Regional External Relations Officer, UNHCR's Regional Representation in Kinshasa, DRC, nthengwe@unhcr.org, tel: +243 817 009 484

Marie-Hélène Verney, Head of Sub-Office, UNHCR Sub-Office Goma, DRC, verney@unhcr.org, tel: +243 822 560 471

Gloria Ramazani, External Relations Associate, UNHCR SO Goma, DRC, ramazang@unhcr.org, tel: +243 812 686 039

Nandor Gergely, Associate Reporting Officer, UNHCR SO Goma, DRC, gergely@unhcr.org, tel: +243 812 287 781