

WEEKLY EMERGENCY UPDATE

Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo

18 – 25 July 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. 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 almost 3,000 displaced persons to their localities of origin in Mokambu and Kpandroma chiefdoms in Mahagi territory. However despite the increased FARDC presence, unidentified assailants scattered throughout the area continue to commit abuses against civilians. This impacts the protection of civilians and restricts their access to places where they obtain food and other necessities. On 19 July, unknown assailants attacked a group of fishermen who were escorted by the FARDC, in Tara village, Bahema Nord chiefdom. Three civilians were wounded, one FARDC soldier killed and 13 fishermen remain missing. 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. From 22 to 24 July, the Acting Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in the DR Congo visited Bunia and met with humanitarian agencies including UNHCR. Discussions focused on the necessity for strengthened cooperation between MONUSCO and humanitarian actors to gain access to displacement areas, and the need for humanitarian actors to be impartial in their assistance. 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 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

The security situation in North Kivu remains volatile, as all territories continue to experience armed conflict and cyclical displacement. Between 7 and 19 July, 382 protection incidents have been reported, a 14% increase compared to the previous two weeks. Incidents of murders, kidnappings, forced labor and rape have increased most sharply. The rise in incidents, mostly concentrated in Masisi territory, can be attributed to increasing activities of armed groups since June 2019. Armed groups systematically target civilians and protection actors, who are considered informants to human rights organizations. As a consequence, Masisi territory is witnessing the movement of people from conflict-affected areas into IDP sites. The increase has been particularly significant for the IDP site of Bukombo. UNHCR together with the National Refugee Commission (CNR) is conducting a registration mission between 22 and 26 July. As of 24 July 326 household of 1516 persons were registered. In Beni territory, the Allied Armed Forces (ADF) armed group resumed its attacks on civilians - killing three on 18 July and kidnapping and killing another four on 19 July - and government forces. Armed clashes between the FARDC and ADF are ongoing throughout the territory, and humanitarian access remains a challenge. The latest resurgence of violence has also halted the return of IDPs from the Nobili area towards their homes, even causing new displacements. Those who had nonetheless returned to their homes 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. MSF has conducted a measles vaccination campaign in Bunia for 67,000 children. However, 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, Beni territory, has increased and sanitation projects are ongoing, no actor is currently positioned for a hygiene response.
- **Health** needs across most territories of the province remain severe, with local facilities overwhelmed. The stock of Post Exposure Preventive (PEP) kits is depleted since February in 6 health centers around Nobili. In health zones supported by IEADA and Save the Children INGOs, IDPs have to cover half of the cost of their treatment, prohibitive for many. In other areas health services are also in acute need of support.
- **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 for the next two weeks.
- **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 in the area is still on the rise. In Beni territory and specifically around the Nobili area, 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.
- **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; several sites in 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 staying 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 late July 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 1,076 (173 households), and 1,139 persons (210 households) out of 1,346 (262 households) targeted received NFIs. In addition, 928 persons (158 households) out of 1,086 (186 households) received hygiene kits.

- In **Kasenyi**, UNHCR will **provide 600 emergency shelters and 40 community hangars** through its partner CARITAS. The shipment of construction materials from Bunia to Kasenyi has started on 21 July, and the partner has been briefed on the selection of beneficiaries. Construction work has begun at a first site on 24 July, and is expected to start at the other sites on 29 July.
- In **Drodro**, UNHCR plans to build emergency shelter for **3,200 displaced households** through its partner the Danish Refugee Council. A UNHCR expert team is visited 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 launched its **community-based protection project** on 18 July. Since 22 July the partner is deployed on the axis from Fataki to Bule to identify existing community-based protection structures. **17 such structures have been identified as of 24 July.**
- UNHCR, through its partner INTERSOS, conducts **protection monitoring** to the extent that the territory is accessible, and 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.

North Kivu Province

- In the Nobili area, 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, community leaders, civil society, IDP committees, humanitarian actors 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.
- 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.
- 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 **distributing reusable sanitary pads to 100 girls and women of the IDP and host communities** in Nobili. The management of menstrual hygiene is a major challenge for girls and women in displacement situations, during which they are exposed to multiple vulnerabilities. Focus groups conducted on 19 July revealed overwhelming appreciation for the sanitary pads (96% of surveyed women and girls were in favor). The **continuous availability of durable, washable sanitary napkins meets the menstrual health needs of women and girls and can prevent infections.**
- 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, the project has **reached a 51% completion rate**, and all shelters are expected to be completed by November 2019.
- A UNHCR-supported community protection structure identified **7 unaccompanied children in the Katale IDP site**, in Masisi territory, and referred them to the Division of Social Affairs for better care.
- Thanks to an intervention by another community protection structure under UNHCR's community-based protection project, the NDC Rénové armed group **released two persons from arbitrary arrest.**

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.

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