

WEEKLY EMERGENCY UPDATE

Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo

29 October – 4 November 2019



Operational context and protection situation

Ituri Province

Armed violence continued to endanger civilians during the reporting period, mostly in Irumu and Djugu territories. Most human rights violations recorded by UNHCR's Protection Monitoring recorded 199 human rights violations during the week, and most incidents were lootings (65), injuries (22), abductions (21), forced labor (21) and sexual violence (13). Cases of rape committed against minors remained a serious concern. In localities bordering Lake Albert in Djugu Territory, unidentified armed men are reportedly still active; civilians tend to voluntarily restrict their own movements in these areas for fear of being attacked. On 30 October, a 38-year-old displaced man was killed by armed men in his field in Dhendro, Bahema Nord community (Djugu Territory). In Mambasa Territory, military offensives have intensified with the aim of dismantling a prominent armed group. In southern Irumu Territory, several groups continued to commit exactions (lootings and kidnappings) against civilians.

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 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 2019 in Ituri Province.

North Kivu Province

The situation in North Kivu remained of concern, with all territories affected by varying degrees of conflict, and the impact being felt by civilians. Between 25 and 30 October, 241 human rights violations were recorded by UNHCR's Protection Monitoring, a figure comparable to recent weeks. Violations mostly consisted of extortion, kidnapping and bodily harm, mainly affecting men; while Sexual and Gender-Based Violence disproportionately affected women. The impact was most felt in Masisi Territory (109 violations), where aid workers' access to recent IDPs in Nyabiondo Health Zone has been restricted by targeted attacks against them. Lubero Territory witnessed a resurgence of conflict, with armed groups destroying a health center accused of being associated with the Ebola response, for the second time in one month. In Beni Territory, military operations against armed groups, which were officially launched on 29 October, are complicating humanitarian actors' access to persons of concern outside the city of Beni.

BACKGROUND: Over 1.5 million IDPs are located in North Kivu Province as of October 2019. The vast majority are staying with host communities (94%), while some 91,000 reside in 24 IDP sites coordinated by UNHCR or IOM. Displacements are cyclical in most of the Province, with interlinked causes that include 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 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 number of IDPs in the Nobili area at around 112,000, but most of them had returned as of late October. In other territories of North Kivu (Masisi and Rutshuru) 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 7,813 protection incidents between January and September 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. SGBV committed against minors is raising 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 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 or 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, as certain armed groups in Masisi use it as a weapon of war. 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. Their sexual and reproductive health needs largely go unmet.
- **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 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 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 9,184 households (41,525 persons; 23,044 women / 18,481 men) were registered in nine out of 12 IDP sites coordinated by UNHCR in Ituri, as part of an ongoing registration exercise to collect information on IDPs' needs.
- **Peaceful coexistence:** On 31 October, UNHCR organized a workshop with 22 Hema community leaders from Djugu and Irumu territories. Over 400,000 members of the Hema community are displaced in sites and host families. They reported human rights violations, most committed by unidentified armed men, which include sexual violence against women and girls as a weapon of war, killings, and abductions. Young people from the community have limited access to education, and are exposed to the risk of juvenile delinquency. Child malnutrition in IDP sites remains of concern. IDPs in sites have easier access to humanitarian aid, but the periodicity of aid varies according to the location and available humanitarian actors. UNHCR recommends joint humanitarian assessments to investigate human rights violations committed against the Hema, and to better document their needs.
- **Community-based protection:** UNHCR and its partners Caritas and AVSI provided capacity-building to 45 members of displacement-affected communities in Mambasa Territory, who are now able to report on protection incidents and refer victims of physical and sexual abuse to relevant medical and judicial structures.
- Twelve members of community-based protection structures, as well as the IDP committee of Biakato site (Mambasa), participated in an awareness-raising workshop on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). Posters on PSEA were installed in community-based structures' offices.
- A radio broadcast on peaceful coexistence between IDPs and host populations in Komanda was made possible thanks to a local collaboration between NGO FOMOPROLIF, and "Radio La Référence".
- **Shelter:** In Djugu Territory, 500 emergency individual shelters in Drodoro, and 200 individual shelters in Bule were built for 700 households during the week.
- **Protection monitoring:** A total of 199 protection incidents (mostly lootings and injuries) were reported during the period, compared to 201 incidents last week. Attacks and the presence of unidentified armed men remain of concern in Djugu, Irumu and Mambasa territories.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** A total of 13 cases of rape were reported (eleven girls and two women). Among them, ten survivors were referred to medical facilities for emergency treatment within 72 hours.

North Kivu Province

- **Shelter:** UNHCR's shelter project for returned IDPs is nearing completion, with 1,669 transitional shelters out of 1,700 complete as of 31 October (98%). The shelters are built by beneficiaries using with local construction materials.
- Emergency shelter response to recent arrivals in IDP sites is ongoing; 848 emergency shelters are planned before year-end in Kalinga and Bukombo sites in Masisi Territory, which were overwhelmed by large-scale IDP arrivals in recent months. 124 of these shelters are under construction, 49 completed.
- The shelter project also includes the rehabilitation, almost completed as of 31 October, of a primary school occupied by IDPs in the displacement-affected town of Oicha.
- **Community-based protection:** Community-based protection structures continued to conduct awareness-raising workshops for several thousand participants, with a focus on gender equality, women's rights, "positive masculinity", PSEA in school settings, and SGBV. Further community-based awareness-raising efforts (community fora, radio broadcasts) focused on peaceful coexistence between IDPs and host communities.
- Two water networks were rehabilitated and a communal market was constructed, as part of "Quick Impact Projects" (QIPs) to improve peaceful coexistence between IDPs, refugees, host communities and returned IDPs. Community-based protection structures were also involved in mediating and solving 13 cases of community conflict.
- **Protection monitoring:** Between 25 and 30 October, 241 human rights violations (the majority of them extortions, kidnappings and bodily harm) were recorded, affecting 178 men and 63 women. These figures are comparably greater than those of the previous week (227 violations). The most affected territories were again Masisi (109) and Rutshuru (48). The number of violations also increased in Lubero territory due to a resurgence of conflict.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** Four cases of rape were recorded by protection monitoring during the period, two by armed elements and two by civilians. All survivors were referred for medical treatment within 72 hours. Community-based protection structures also identified and referred ten SGBV victims to medical facilities.

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 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.
- 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, CCCM 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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