

Democratic Republic of the Congo

March 2020

During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR DRC is producing a condensed monthly Operational Update. Specific information about UNHCR's response to COVID-19 in DRC can be found [here](#).

Refugees



PROTECTION

- In March, **115 new South Sudanese refugees were registered** in Bele and Biringi settlements (respectively in Haut-Uele and Ituri provinces). Meanwhile, **288 refugees were voluntarily repatriated** to their countries of origin: 149 to the Central African Republic (CAR), 134 to Rwanda, and 5 to the Republic of Congo.
- A total of **3,279 refugees from CAR have so far been voluntarily repatriated** in an operation that started in November 2019 and was suspended in March amidst the COVID-19 outbreak. Over 15,000 more refugees from CAR have expressed their wish to return.
- A total of **499 Rwandan refugees were voluntarily repatriated** so far in 2020, and almost 24,000 since 2017.
- On 28 March, **20 South Sudanese refugees (11 households) were relocated** from the Aru Transit Centre to Biringi refugee settlement, both in Ituri Province, where they can receive assistance. To prevent any spread of COVID-19, handwashing and temperature checks were mandatory at departure and arrival, while a 60-seater bus was used to transport the 20 individuals, ensuring social distancing.
- Despite challenges related to COVID-19, UNHCR and partner Terre Sans Frontières **continued protection monitoring activities** among South Sudanese refugees. In March, nine cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) were recorded. All received psychosocial support, while the five cases of rape received medical assistance. Access to justice remains a gap.



SHELTER AND CORE RELIEF ITEMS (CRIs)

- On 19 March, **155 newly arrived South Sudanese refugees (53 households) were relocated** to the new Bele settlement, Haut-Uele Province, from the overcrowded Meri settlement. A total of 122 shelter construction kits were distributed to 110 households in Bele, for them to upgrade their transitional shelters.
- In March, UNHCR began a **soap distribution for 3,257 Burundian asylum seekers** living in three overcrowded reception centers in South Kivu Province. The distribution is also planned in Lusenda camp and Mulongwe settlement, in line with the prevention of COVID-19.
- UNHCR and partner ADSSE **distributed clothes donated by UNIQLO to children aged 0 to 15** in 175 households in Zongo, a locality hosting refugees from CAR in Sud Ubangi Province.
- UNHCR and partner ADSSE **distributed sanitary pads to 101 girls of childbearing age** at the school of Inke refugee camp, Nord Ubangi Province. Awareness-raising also encouraged girls not to skip school during their period, by boosting their self-esteem and showing them how to manage their period.
- In the new Bele settlement, Haut-Uele Province, **UNHCR distributed 770 mosquito nets** to 841 South Sudanese refugee households in a door-to-door fashion, to prevent any spread of COVID-19. **Two new ambulances** were also made available in Biringi settlement (Ituri Province) and in the refugee-hosting locality of Dungu (Haut Uele Province).



LIVELIHOODS AND FOOD SECURITY

- To contribute to refugees' livelihoods, UNHCR's partner ADRA **allocated arable land to 440 Burundian refugee households** in Mulongwe settlement, South Kivu Province. UNHCR also provided support to 36 members of embroidery groups in Mulongwe, and to 120 members of tailoring groups in Lusenda camp. The 120 persons also received awareness-raising on the management of income-generating activities.

- On 7 March, South Sudanese refugees **expressed discontent during a regular cash-for-food distribution** in Biringi settlement (Ituri Province), as some persons usually do not receive food rations for various reasons. Awareness-raising session and calls for peaceful coexistence have since been undertaken and calm has been restored. Upon arrival, South Sudanese refugees tend to be selected for self-reliance assistance, to decrease dependence on food assistance, although all refugees continue to receive cash-for-food rations.
- As the agricultural season started in February in eastern DRC, **100 farmers' groups of 10 households each were created amongst South Sudanese refugees**, while also including local households. 12 groups received seeds, while land and agricultural tools were provided to other groups who had received farming training.



EDUCATION

- In the town of Aba, near Meri refugee settlement in Haut-Uele Province, **UNHCR supported four primary schools hosting South Sudanese refugee pupils**, by providing a total of 36 desks.



HEALTH

- The DRC Government officially declared a **measles epidemic in Businga, Nord Ubangi Province**, which is near Bossobolo Territory, an area hosting some 20,000 refugees from CAR. UNHCR provided logistical support to health structures in the affected area, to facilitate the monitoring of suspected cases. In 2019, UNHCR and partners carried out a mass measles vaccination campaign in areas hosting refugees from CAR. The reasons for the re-emergence of the disease need to be investigated by relevant actors.
- Following bushfires that destroyed parts of the health center in Bili refugee camp in January, UNHCR's partner AIRD **rehabilitated the maternity ward**. New permanent infrastructure is still needed to replace the temporary structures erected to host the destroyed laboratory, paediatric unit, and general consultations room.

Congolese returnees

- On 18 March, UNHCR **suspended the voluntary repatriation of Congolese refugees living in Angola**, due to bad road and weather conditions, and to prevent the spread of COVID-19. According to the last survey conducted by UNHCR in Angola, 877 remaining refugees in Lóvua settlement (Angola) have expressed the wish to return to DRC.

Statelessness

- From 4 to 5 March, UNHCR organised a **two-day workshop on statelessness in Kalemie**, Tanganyika Province, gathering over 60 members of state authorities and the civil society, community leaders, and UN actors. The Provincial Government committed to implementing the validated roadmap on the prevention of statelessness, while UNHCR reiterated its support for the fight against statelessness.
- In March, UNHCR **registered 80 new-born refugees from CAR, and obtained birth certificates for 70 new-born South Sudanese refugees**. Birth registration and birth certificates help refugees benefit from assistance, but also helps preventing statelessness by facilitating the obtention of identity documentation.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)



PROTECTION

- Expulsions of DRC citizens from Angola continued, despite border closures linked to COVID-19. On 31 March, **47 DRC citizens were expelled to Kandjadji** (Kasai Province) after having allegedly been tortured. UNHCR temporarily made its Transit Center available to host the expellees, but only nine remained and took medical screenings, while the others' location is unknown.
- In Ituri Province, violence and displacements continue in **Mambasa and Djugu territories**. Some 1,275 families are estimated to have fled to the displacement sites of Bule and Drodro, and surrounding villages.

- In North Kivu Province, since 19 March, some **165 displaced households returned from Nobili** (a location near the Uganda border where they had fled in December 2019) to their places of origin in Kamango, northern Beni Territory. Reports described the movements as “go-and-see” visits, possibly encouraged by the closure of the DRC-Uganda due to COVID-19, which has reduced humanitarian aid and other activities in Nobili. Due to insecurity in North Kivu Province, Nobili had only been accessible through Uganda.
- From 3 to 12 March, UNHCR and partners carried out a mission to **register displaced persons who have returned to the area of Bendera** (Kalemie Territory, Tanganyika Province), since November 2019. A total of 7,378 persons (3,700 women and 3,678 men), composing 2,030 households, were recorded in 17 villages in the area. 676 persons who were formerly associated to armed groups were also recorded as living in the villages.
- As part of **Quick Impact Projects for community-based protection in Ituri Province**, UNHCR and partner AVSI rehabilitated a health center that caters for displaced and local communities in Dehbu, Djugu Territory. Two classrooms were also built in Bule, two water points installed in Masumboko, and two hangars built in the local market of Drodro-Largu, all in Djugu Territory. In Kasenyi (Irumu Territory), public latrines were built at the port, which is an important marketplace for displaced and local communities.
- Similarly, in the town of Uvira and in Fizi Territory (South Kivu Province), UNHCR and partner AVSI **completed 17 community-based protection projects**, mainly consisting of the construction of community spaces to encourage social cohesion.
- In March, **5,750 protection incidents were reported** in some of the provinces affected by internal displacement¹, including 669 cases of sexual and gender-based violence, according to UNHCR and partners. The main victims were returnees. UNHCR was able to **respond to at least 1,057 of the cases** through its partners, providing advocacy and referrals to police, judicial, medical or psychosocial services.
- To contribute to the **prevention of human rights violations**, UNHCR and partners carried out awareness-raising on topics ranging from SGBV and child protection, to positive masculinity, reaching a total of 13,263 persons in the provinces affected by displacement².



SHELTER AND CORE RELIEF ITEMS (CRIs)

- As **8,390 new persons have arrived in the ISP displacement site in Bunia** (Ituri Province) since January, emergency shelters are needed to host the new arrivals, while social distancing remains a challenge. UNHCR’s partner Caritas completed 5 community hangars this month, but additional space is needed.
- In the new displacement site of Kigonze in Bunia (Ituri Province), which is serving to decongest the overcrowded Hopital General displacement site, UNHCR’s partner Caritas continued the construction of new emergency shelters, **reaching a total of 2,159 shelters** in March. A total of 1,992 households have also been relocated to Kigonze so far, including 286 in March.
- In the town of Oicha, North Kivu Province, **120 displaced households have moved into 20 new communal hangars** (6 families per hangar) built by UNHCR’s partner AIDES. However, access to water remains an issue, and an additional water point is needed to avoid tensions. Core relief items, including kitchen sets, are also needed.
- From 2 to 6 March, UNHCR **inspected the evolution of its shelter project** for displaced persons, returnees, expellees from Angola, and host community members in Tshikapa Territory, Kasai Province. The main recommendations consisted of considering metal sheets to reinforce roofs, and taking water, sanitation and hygiene needs into consideration for 2020.
- Following a **core relief item and cash distribution to victims of violent floods** in the locality of Ndjoko Punda (Kasai Province) in November 2019, UNHCR carried out a post-distribution monitoring amongst 153 out of the total of 470 beneficiary households. The evaluation showed that the blankets and tarpaulins received were already in use, and that the majority of the cash had been spent on materials for shelter construction. Dire needs in terms of shelter and livelihoods remained amongst this community.
- As part of shelter assistance in Fizi Territory (South Kivu Province), UNHCR and partner AIDES provided **tools and technical support to 1,000 displaced** and local households for them to build their shelters. So far, 925

¹ Kasai, Kasai Central, Kasai Oriental, Sankuru, Lomami, Tanganyika, Haut-Katanga, North Kivu provinces.

² Kasai, Kasai Central, Kasai Oriental, Lomami, Tanganyika, Haut Katanga, North Kivu and South Kivu provinces.

are completed and inhabited, and 542 households received cash-for-shelter through mobile money. The construction of 750 latrines has also begun as part of this project.

\$ CASH-BASED INTERVENTIONS (CBI)

- In March, UNHCR and partners provided **multipurpose cash assistance to a total of 1,152 households in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu provinces**; 559 in displacement sites in Djugu Territory (Ituri Province), 417 in the town of Beni (North Kivu Province), and 176 in the Kimbi-Lulenge area (South Kivu Province). Beneficiaries were mainly women at risk of SGBV and single-women households, both displaced and locals. In Beni, beneficiaries said they would use the cash to repair their shelters or start income-generating activities.

Clusters and Working Groups

- While UNHCR is preparing Business Continuation Plans (BCPs) for its operations in DRC, the different Clusters are also preparing for COVID-19 to have an impact on assistance for and protection of IDPs. For example, in the Kasai region, the Protection Cluster (led by UNHCR) has put in place a **business continuation plan based on three possible scenarios for COVID-19**: (1) no case of COVID-19 is declared, total freedom of movement with prevention measures in place (current scenario), (2) case(s) of COVID-19 detected in the Province, restriction of movements and reinforced prevention measures, (3) case(s) of COVID-19 detected amongst communities and local contamination, complete confinement, implementation of response and prevention measures.

External / Donor Relations

Funding received as of 6 April 2020

[Donors for UNHCR operations in DRC in 2020](#)

United States of America (6.2 M) | Sweden (3.1 M) | Canada (0.72 M) | Japan (0.56 M) | United Nations Foundation (0.32 M) | International Olympic Committee (0.23 M) | European Union (0.17 M) | UNAIDS (0.03 M)

[Major donors of regional or other funds with soft earmarking 2020](#)

United States of America (13.9 M) | Germany (8.4 M) | Sweden (3.9 M) | Canada (3.7 M) | Finland (3.3 M) | Private donors Australia (2.1 M)

[Major donors of un-earmarked funds in 2020](#)

Sweden (76.4 M) | Norway (41.4 M) | Netherlands (36.1 M) | Denmark (34.6 M) | United Kingdom (31.7 M) | Germany (25.9 M) | Private donors Spain (20 M) | Switzerland (16.4 M) | Private donors Republic of Korea (10.5 M)

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