

WEEKLY EMERGENCY UPDATE

Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo

2-8 December 2019



Operational context and protection situation

Ituri Province

The situation remained volatile during the reporting week, due to intensified armed clashes in Djugu, Irumu and Mambasa territories. Armed clashes in Kpabu (Djugu Territory) led to the forced displacement of an estimated 300 persons to neighboring localities. Return movements were also observed, but returnees found their houses looted or destroyed. Attacks against community leaders and village chiefs in Djugu Territory have revived fears of insecurity. Presumed elements of an armed group accused local leaders of collaborating with state armed forces. The presence of unidentified armed men on the shores of Lake Albert, in Djugu Territory disrupted commercial, agricultural and school activities. Two fishermen were killed, seven were kidnapped and three escaped an ambush by gunmen. On 3 December, this year's ninth targeted attack against an Ebola treatment centre, this time in Biakato (Mambasa Territory), led to the evacuation of health staff. The presence of an armed group from North Kivu in Irumu Territory led to preemptive displacements, with people hiding in forests and unable to go to their farms. Civilians continue to suffer human rights violations such as killings, lootings, abductions (including of local leaders), injuries, extortions and rape, committed by presumed elements of state armed forces, armed groups, and unidentified armed men.

BACKGROUND: Since 6 June 2019, generalized violence 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, 12 of them coordinated by UNHCR, and housing over 82,000 individuals (17,000 households). Outside of Bunia, the largest concentrations of IDPs are found in Drodro, Rho, Fataki, Kasenyi, Tchomia and Ramogi, in Djugu, Irumu and Mahagi territories. Overall, some 1.1 million people are displaced throughout the Province according to OCHA. UNHCR's Protection Monitoring system documented 6,970 human rights violations between January and November 2019 in Ituri.

North Kivu Province

The situation in Beni Territory remained of significant concern. Presumed elements of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) armed group continued to target civilians, with reported incursions in Mbau, Ndama and Nobili. Following the incursions, seven civilians were found dead on 5 December in villages around Nobili. Some 3,000 people left Beni town to settle in Makumu, Mambasa Territory (Ituri Province). On 6 December, following a homemade bomb attack by presumed ADF members in Beni the day before, provincial authorities put in place systematic searching of all vehicles and luggage. After the evacuation of most UN and humanitarian staff from Beni on 26 November, essential staff started returning as of the end of last week. UNHCR is conducting a security evaluation, and hopes to redeploy its staff to Beni as soon as possible. Some humanitarian actors (SOCOAC, Tear Fund and CNR) conducted a rapid multi-sectorial evaluation that identified 5,000 displaced families in two areas of in Beni town. The displaced persons lived in host families but their basic needs (food, household items, clothes) were not met. Meanwhile, Unicef recorded some 2,500 IDP families in Mangina, following attacks in Musandaba, Mandumbi and Biakato. Meanwhile, conflict is ongoing in the rest of North Kivu, leading 896 households to flee their villages this week in Rutshuru and Masisi territories.

BACKGROUND: Over 1.5 million IDPs are located in North Kivu Province as of October 2019. The vast majority (94%) live with host communities, while some 89,000 reside in 22 IDP sites coordinated by UNHCR or IOM. Displacements are mostly cyclical, with numerous causes including 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 against civilians and military outposts by a prominent armed group led to significant displacements from Kamango to Nobili (Beni Territory). Until recently, OCHA estimated that 112,000 IDPs were in the Nobili area. However, as of late October, most of them have returned. In Masisi and Rutshuru territories, OCHA estimates that over 67,000 people were displaced towards host communities in May and June alone, while arrivals into several IDP sites have been significant. UNHCR's Protection Monitoring system documented 12,311 human rights violations between January and end of November 2019 throughout the Province.

Immediate needs

Ituri Province

- **Protection:** Persistent violence exposes populations to several protection risks: killings, lootings, rape, abductions and others. Peaceful coexistence between communities remains a major challenge.

- **Child protection:** The lack of child-friendly spaces (especially outside of Bunia), and high numbers of unaccompanied minors exacerbate child protection needs. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) against minors is on the rise.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)** risks are high, including sexual exploitation, survival sex, and early forced marriage, as consistently reported by women.
- **Shelter:** IDPs outside established sites still live in precarious conditions, exposed to abuse. Despite ongoing shelter construction, the lack of space remains a challenge. Advocacy is needed for local authorities to grant more space.
- **Non-Food Items (NFIs)** are still needed for many IDP families, 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 products and to reproductive health services.
- **Access to education** is hindered by host communities' incapacity to enroll IDP children in school, notably due to limited teachers and classroom space. 72% of children aged 6 to 12 and living in UNHCR-coordinated IDP sites are out of school. This requires advocacy for relevant partners to intervene.
- **Statelessness:** 95% of children aged 0 to 4 who live in UNHCR-coordinated IDP sites do not have birth certificates, which exposes them to the risk of statelessness.

North Kivu Province

- **Protection** needs are enormous, including physical security for civilians in and around IDP sites, and for those on the run; community-based protection for host and IDP communities to participate in responses; peaceful coexistence; and protection for vulnerable youth and women.
- **Child protection** needs are pronounced in northern North Kivu, with many unaccompanied children, frequent kidnappings and child recruitment by armed groups, or former child soldiers facing reintegration issues.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)** remains widespread. Women are reticent to report incidents due to stigma and exclusion, thus incidents are underreported. Despite referrals to medical facilities, legal follow-up is quasi non-existent, perpetuating impunity. Displaced girls and women experience disproportionately high risks and are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and survival sex. As many IDPs live in squalid conditions, their sexual and reproductive health and hygiene needs are generally unmet.
- **Shelter:** IDP sites under UNHCR coordination in Masisi Territory do not have sufficient shelters, which has forced some IDPs towards host families. UNHCR is therefore reinforcing shelter support in sites. In Beni Territory the situation has become particularly dire considering recent mass displacements, with an unconfirmed number of IDPs sleeping in the open air. In Masisi and Rutshuru territories, shelter needs are exacerbated by cyclical displacements.
- **Non-Food Items (NFIs)** are urgently required for newly-arrived IDPs around the towns of Oicha and Beni.
- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH):** There are urgent needs in IDP sites in Masisi and Rutshuru territories. Water scarcity and the increasing number of IDPs in Oicha and Beni are endangering peaceful coexistence with local communities. The WASH situation is particularly affecting girls and women, as crowded toilets and the lack of water pose higher risks for them.
- **Education:** In several localities in Masisi, Lubero, and Beni territories, school closures are regular because of conflicts. IDPs who cannot find shelter in host communities also tend to occupy school classrooms, disrupting classes.

UNHCR's response

Ituri Province

- **Shelter:** UNHCR's shelter project is advancing in the UNHCR-coordinated Drodro and Bule IDP sites, Djugu Territory. Between June and November, UNHCR built 3,879 emergency shelters (including 39 communal hangars) out of 5,073 planned, in collaboration with its partner the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).
- A total of 596 emergency shelters were built in the new Kigonze IDP site in Bunia town.
- **Protection:** UNHCR conducted a joint humanitarian mission to evaluate protection needs in displacement-affected areas in Djugu Territory. The mission followed consultations with Lendu community leaders on 4-7 December, which highlighted human right violations such as killings, abductions, lootings, and physical and sexual abuse. Affected communities reported needs in terms of cash and food assistance, access to drinkable water, building and rehabilitation of schools, and hygiene kits for women and girls.
- **Community-based protection:** After receiving capacity building from UNHCR and partners Caritas and Avsi, local community-based protection structures conducted awareness-raising sessions on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) to 371 members of host communities in Mandima (Mambasa Territory) and Komanda (Irumu Territory).
- **Protection monitoring:** UNHCR and partners recorded 226 protection incidents between 1 and 7 December, compared to 170 incidents the previous week; an increase caused by worsening insecurity. Civilians continued to endure lootings (62 cases), injuries (37), abductions (30), forced labor (26), and rape (14). The most affected territories were Djugu, Irumu and Mambasa.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** 13 cases of rape were committed on nine girls and four women in Djugu Territory. Among them, seven survivors were referred to medical facilities for emergency treatment within 72 hours. Six survivors did not benefit from treatment: one died after being raped by two unidentified men, one refused

treatment because of stigma and fear of reprisal, one did not have access to adequate treatment due to a lack of medication in the health center, and three were abducted by the perpetrators. The presumed offenders are civilians, presumed elements of armed groups, and members of state armed forces.

North Kivu Province

- **Protection:** For the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, UNHCR and partners organized awareness-raising among communities in Beni, Lubero, Masisi and Rutshuru territories, inviting them to make individual and collective commitments against SGBV. Communities were sensitized against stigmatization and harmful practices that form some of the causes of SGBV, and emphasis was placed on the need to consider survivor support.
- **Shelter:** UNHCR's shelter project for returned IDPs, implemented by partner AIDES, is completed. 1,700 family shelters were completed in return areas in Masisi, Rutshuru and Lubero territories. In Beni Territory, the construction and equipment of four classrooms at the Mwangaza school was also completed.
- In response to recent displacement towards IDP sites in Masisi Territory, UNHCR and partners completed 213 emergency shelters, while 103 are under construction in Bukombo and Kalinga sites.
- **Community-based protection:** In the context of the 16 Days of Activism, community-based protection structures organized awareness-raising on gender equality, women's rights and sexual harassment, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), and early marriage. Several thousand participants were reached, including via radio broadcasts and performances.
- Awareness-raising sessions on complaint and referral mechanisms continued, and on the use of suggestion boxes. Radio messages were broadcasted on peaceful coexistence and the prevention of SGBV.
- **Protection monitoring:** Between 29 November and 5 December, 207 human rights violations (mainly bodily harm, kidnapping, and extortions) were recorded in North Kivu, compared to 245 the previous week. The decrease does not reflect an improvement in the protection situation. It is partly due to humanitarian actors' sharply diminished access to Beni Territory, given recent events.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** Seven cases of SGBV (two young girls and three women) were recorded in Nyanzale (Rutshuru Territory) and referred by community-based protection structures to health centers for medical assistance.

UNHCR's presence

- UNHCR's Sub-Office in Goma covers North Kivu and Ituri Provinces and supervises operations in South Kivu Province. The Goma Sub-Office oversees all North Kivu while a 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 of responsibility.
- 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 emergency response staff (Field and Protection) are expected between now and the end of the year; however, needs still outpace available human resources.

Contacts

Jackie Keegan, Head of Sub-Office (A.I.), UNHCR Sub-Office Goma, DRC, keegan@unhcr.org, tel: +243 817 009 315

Hanson Ghandi Tamfu, Reporting Officer, UNHCR SO Goma, DRC, tamfu@unhcr.org, tel: +243 824 413 770

Alexandra Stenbock-Fermor, Associate External Relations and Reporting Officer, UNHCR's Regional Representation in Kinshasa, DRC, stenbock@unhcr.org, tel: +243 822 253 121

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