

WEEKLY EMERGENCY UPDATE

Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo

12-18 November 2019



Operational context and protection situation

Ituri Province

The security and protection environment in Ituri deteriorated during the reporting week, due to increased armed group activity, especially in Djugu and Irumu territories. UNHCR's Protection Monitoring recorded 165 human rights violations in Ituri, compared to 111 incidents last week, an increase of 54 incidents (48.6%). Civilians endured killings, lootings and injuries committed by elements of the national army, presumed elements of armed groups, and unidentified armed men. Displaced people living in spontaneous sites are especially exposed to human rights violations. Cases of rape committed against minors remain of concern. 589 households are estimated to have become recently displaced due to ongoing violence in Mahagi and Djugu territories. In addition, 62 huts burned down this week in a natural fire in a spontaneous IDP site in Djugu. In Mambasa Territory, unidentified assailants continued to disrupt the Ebola response; an Ebola screening point and handwashing devices were set on fire, and a humanitarian worker was assaulted in his home.

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 have 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, Tchomia and Ramogi, in Djugu, Irumu and Mahagi territories. An estimated 1,575 people who had fled to Uganda were observed as having returned, 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 security and protection situation in Beni Territory worsened sharply in the past week, caused by a major military operation against a prominent armed group that started on 30 October. Retaliations against civilians took on alarming proportions, with 53 people killed in just a few days. On 16 November alone, 16 civilians (including 9 returned IDPs) were killed and 11 kidnapped. The attacks are concentrated around the towns of Oicha and Mbau, the latter almost emptied of its inhabitants. The population of villages around Oicha is reportedly seeking refuge every night around the Oicha police station. Most IDPs who were previously living in spontaneous sites around Oicha have now sought refuge at the Mwangaza site, near which UNHCR rehabilitated a school. Home to 120 households until recently, the site's IDP committee now reports 700 households staying in squalid conditions in schools and churches, exposed to risks and attacks. According to local sources, all humanitarian organizations have evacuated from Oicha due to the increased insecurity, and IDPs sleeping outside face emergency shelter and food needs. Displacement is also visible in Beni town, with at least 350 displaced households (over 2,500 people) recorded in one neighborhood. Arrivals to Beni continue, and preliminary registrations indicate that 91% of them are women and children with food assistance, NFI and WASH needs. Meanwhile, conflict is ongoing in the rest of North Kivu, particularly in Masisi and Rutshuru, where 425 households reportedly fled their villages on 10 and 13 November. They are staying with host communities.

BACKGROUND: Over 1.5 million IDPs are located in North Kivu Province as of October 2019, the vast majority of them (94%) staying with host communities, while some 91,000 reside in 24 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 the town of Kamango to the town of Nobili (Beni Territory). Until recently, OCHA estimated that 112,000 IDPs were in the Nobili area, but 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 9,034 protection incidents between January and October 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:** A lack of child-friendly spaces (especially outside of Bunia), and high numbers of unaccompanied minors, exacerbate child protection needs. SGBV committed against minors raises 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 live in precarious conditions, exposed to abuse. Despite ongoing shelter construction, the lack of space 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 and those on the run from ongoing conflict; community-based protection for local and IDP communities to participate in solutions and response mechanisms; peaceful coexistence; and protection for vulnerable youth and women are some of the most pressing.
- **Child protection** needs are pronounced in northern North Kivu, with many unaccompanied children, frequent kidnappings and child recruitment by armed groups, or reintegration issues for former child soldiers.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)** remains widespread, particularly in Masisi and Lubero. Women often fear to come forward due to stigmatization and exclusion, leading to underreported incidents. Despite referrals to medical structures, legal follow-up is quasi non-existent, perpetuating impunity. IDP women are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and survival sex. Stay in squalid conditions, their sexual and reproductive health and hygiene needs also go unmet.
- **Shelter:** IDP sites under UNHCR coordination in Masisi do not offer sufficient shelter capacity, pushing IDPs towards host families. UNHCR is working on increasing shelter capacity in IDP sites. In Oicha (Beni Territory) the situation has become particularly dire, with a sharp increase in IDP households sleeping in schools, churches, and outdoors. In Masisi and Rutshuru, shelter needs are routinely exacerbated by cyclical displacements.
- **Non-Food Items (NFIs)**, namely mats, are urgently needed for new IDPs around Oicha and Beni.
- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)** conditions need urgent support in IDP sites in Masisi and Rutshuru. Water scarcity is of serious concern for the increasing number of IDPs in Oicha and Beni, 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 17,873 households (82,229 individuals, 53% women and girls, and 47% men and boys) were registered in 11 IDP sites coordinated by UNHCR in Ituri as of 18 November, as part of a registration exercise intended to collect more information on IDPs' needs and vulnerabilities.
- **Shelter:** UNHCR's shelter project is advancing in IDP sites under UNHCR coordination in Djugu Territory. This week, 500 family shelters were built in Savo site (Bule), and in Rho site (Drodo).
- **Community-based protection:** Thanks to collaboration with local NGO FOMOPROLIF, awareness-raising sessions on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and peaceful coexistence reached 286 people in schools and IDP sites in Komanda (Irumu Territory), including displaced and local students, and school staff.
- In Mambasa Territory, authorities and community leaders were trained on the prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. Displaced women attending prenatal consultations were trained on SGBV prevention and management.
- **Protection monitoring:** 165 protection incidents were recorded between 11 and 17 November, compared to 111 the previous week; an increase of 54 cases (48.6%) explained by intensified armed group activity, especially in Djugu and Irumu. Civilians continued to endure lootings (68 cases), injuries (29), extortions (20), arrests (19), and rape (9 cases). The most affected territories were Djugu (32%), Irumu (29%) and Mambasa (23%).
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** 9 cases of rape were reported this week, on eight girls and one woman. Among them, seven survivors were referred to medical facilities for emergency treatment within 72 hours. The alleged perpetrators are civilians, and one element of state armed forces.

North Kivu Province

- **Community-based protection:** Community-based protection structures continued to conduct awareness-raising workshops, with a focus on feedback, legal referral and conflict resolution mechanisms, in addition to gender equality, women's rights, the prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), and the prevention and response to SGBV. Several thousand participants were reached. Further community-based awareness-raising efforts (radio broadcasts,

theater plays) focused on peaceful coexistence between communities. Suggestion boxes were installed in several localities to ensure accountability to beneficiaries.

- Two community-based protection structures in Kitchanga (Masisi) finalized protection plans. Two structures in Nyanzale (Rutshuru) received office and communication supplies to conduct their activities. Quick Impact Projects, namely the construction of a communal market, and rehabilitation of a school and two water networks, are ongoing.
- **Protection monitoring:** Between 8 and 16 November, 223 human rights violations (mainly lootings, extortions and arbitrary arrests) were recorded; a figure comparable to the previous week (217 violations). The most affected territories were Rutshuru (72 incidents) and Beni (57). Due to security and access constraints, the number of incidents recorded around Beni is not representative of the sharp deterioration of the situation there.
- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):** Community-based protection structures around Nyanzale (Rutshuru) referred twelve cases of rape to health facilities for medical follow-up.

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. The Bunia Field Unit has also been strengthened with additional staff in Protection, Security, Reporting, Supply, Shelter, Programme, CCCM and drivers. Further Field and Supply staff are expected by the end of the year. However, needs still outpace available human resources.

Contacts

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

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

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

Carlinda Lopes, Associate Reporting Officer, UNHCR FU Bunia, DRC, lopesc@unhcr.org, tel: +243 815 768 152

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