



OCHA

United Nations Office
for the Coordination of
Humanitarian Affairs

PARTNERSHIP FOR HUMANITY

Humanitarian Situation in the Province Orientale of the DRC Snapshot report, 1 December 2009

Headlines

- As of November 2009, there are an estimated total of at least 448 376 IDPs in the province
- 1,376 civilians killed and 2,337 (including 676 children) abducted by the LRA from December 2007
- Prevailing insecurity and regular attacks limit access to the affected populations

Security Situation and political context

Haut-Uele and Bas-Uele districts

- The Ugandan armed group Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has openly moved out of its hideouts in Garamba National Park in Dingu territory, Province Orientale.
- Since September 2008, this group has been terrorising the population, attacking, looting and burning villages and abducting civilians, including children. These attacks have caused panic in the targeted and neighbouring villages, with many precautionary displacements and on 14 December 2008, the DRC, the Sudan and Uganda launched joint military operations against the LRA with aerial bombardments, provoking the dispersion of the LRA towards three territories of the Haut-Uele district, the borders with the Central African Republic and the Sudan and further into the district of Bas-Uele.
- In total, 21 LRA attacks were reported in October in Bas-Uele and Haut-Uele compared to 24 in September, and 32 in August; 29 people were killed in October compared to 59 people in September and 15 in August; 51 abductions were reported in October against 165 abductions in September and 39 in August.
- More than 6,000 national army troops (FARDC) are deployed in Haut-Uele to areas considered strategic for the protection of the population.
- Between December 2007 and 30 September 2009, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has recorded an estimated total of 1,376 persons killed, and 2,337 civilians abducted, including 676 children in Haut-Uele and Bas-Uele.

Ituri District

- The continued presence of armed elements in southern Irumu territory, known as Front Populaire pour la Justice au Congo (FPJC) and Front de Résistance des Patriotes de l'Ituri (FRPI), continues to be an obstacle to the return of internally displaced persons to their villages of origin and to slow down humanitarian operations. The vast majority of the Internal Displaced People (IDPs) are from the Walendu Bindi area.
- At the end of September 2008, FPJC/FRPI militiamen began attacking positions of the FARDC and looted several villages in the territory of Irumu forcing the displacement of more than 100,000 people.
- The FARDC, with logistical support from the United Nations Mission in DRC (MONUC), launched several military operations against the FPJC since 12 April 2009. Though not completed, the operation "Iron Stone" has pushed the armed elements to disseminate in clusters in a wide area and observers have noticed an increase of attacks on civilians. In July 2009, a FARDC military operation against militia groups displaced an estimated 13,000 people in the southern part of the Irumu territory. In addition, five international NGOs have temporarily suspended four times their activities in Geti, since July 2009 citing insecurity and access to the Walendu-Bindi collectivity is highly restricted.
- At the end of September 2008, the FPJC began attacking positions of the FARDC and looted several villages in the territory of Irumu but since mid-October, the rebels are on the retreat.
- Militia fighters of the FPJC/FRPI appear to have merged into the local population in some places, and in others are staying close in the surrounding hills.
- Many survivors and displaced persons have been severely traumatised by the attacks. Psychological and health care will have to be a priority.

Humanitarian Access

Haut-Uele and Bas-Uele Districts

- Access to the affected populations, most notably outside of Dungu, remains very difficult. This is due to volatile security conditions in many zones with high concentrations of IDPs but also of LRA as well as to the minimal road infrastructure in this very remote region. Humanitarian organisations are thus dependent on air transport which is very costly.
- However, in the Bas-Uele, the temporary establishment of MONUC base in Dingila in July 2009 has enabled humanitarian actors to convey assistance in foods and no-food items toward some 2,000 displaced household (around 10,000 displaced people) and to organize “joint protection team mission” (JPT mission) for protection needs assessment of the population.
- Improvements have also been noticed recently since the establishment of other MONUC bases in Duru and Faradje and the increasing number of escorts provided by MONUC since April 2009. United Nations organisations are currently establishing a joint office in Dungu protected by MONUC, and some 20 international and national NGOs have begun programming in areas outside of Dungu.

Ituri District

- Access to the affected populations and the distribution of assistance is heavily depending on improved security guaranteed by FARDC with support from MONUC forces. Since the military operation resumed, the humanitarian access has deteriorated in South Irumu.
- Humanitarian access has been severely restricted in the last months. On 19 October, a bridge has been rehabilitated, thanks to the financial support of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in order to facilitate the access between Kiomanda and Kisangani via Mombasa. In addition, the NGO Handicap International and Atlas Logistics recently moved to Mambasa, to implement a project for emergency rehabilitation of the axis Mambasa-Dungu via Mungbere and Gao.

Population movements

Haut-Uele and Bas-Uele districts

- The terror spread by the LRA continues to cause population displacements in both districts. As of 31 October, the total number of IDPs inside the two Uele districts is estimated at 267,600 persons. In addition, according to, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) around 27 000 persons have sought refuge in Southern Sudan and 42,500 in the Aru territory in Ituri District. Many of the displaced persons are still on the move. On the positive side, some 35,000 returnees have been registered in Dungu and Faradje territories in Haut-Uele.
- According to the Population Movement Commission (CMP) in Ituri, there was a small increase of IDPs, going from 153,500 in January 2009 to 180,750 in October, following the arrival in the Aru territory of displaced people from the territory of Faradje in Haut Uele due to LRA attacks.
- From 21 October to 22 October, UNHCR relocated 239 families from the site of Tchomia to Mbavi in the Djugu territory, Ituri district. These households, displaced in Tchomia since 2005 and unable to return home because of inter-communal tensions, have already benefited from non-food items (NFIs), including tarpaulins and cooking pots from UNHCR. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is building shelters, while the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) will provide agricultural inputs.
- Should the security situation improve further, the process of return could accelerate. Despite the recent military operations, the overall security has improved across Ituri district since 2004, and up to 2,140,000 displaced persons have been able to return to their villages of origin by the end of September 2009 (75% of the case load in 2006 and 2007) but only 100,000 in the last 12 months.

Humanitarian response

- Although security and physical access constraints, United Nations agencies and NGOs have provided humanitarian assistance to 45% of the IDP population in Haut and Bas-Uele in term of food and no-food items. However, unmet needs exist for instance among 13,000 displaced people in the territory of Faradje have been waiting for food distribution for the last four months. To facilitate the recommended humanitarian access in Bas-Uele and Isiro, the logistic cluster has been instructed to carry a feasibility study on road access to route humanitarian assistance by December 2009.
- Between April and June 2009, seven attacks were reported after a humanitarian distribution. This emerging tendency is of utmost concern and has prompted the humanitarian community to reflect upon the “Do No Harm” principle. The Provincial humanitarian coordination mechanism (CPIA) in Bunia formulated four conditions that must be fulfilled before a distribution takes place:

- Check that a thorough sensitisation on the methodology of the distribution has been done and is accepted by all parties concerned;
 - Send a protection mission to carry out a “Do No Harm” assessment;
 - Make sure that there is a stable and well disciplined FARDC and/or police presence before and after the distribution, and that they have themselves been paid and received their food supplies before a humanitarian distribution;
 - Make sure that there is a significant presence of humanitarian organizations and put in place a monitoring mechanism.
- The NGO Solidarités and the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) programme are currently operational in Geti in the Irumu Territory of the Ituri District, to register new families in order to plan the distribution of humanitarian assistance once the security is provided by the Congolese national army and police in accordance with “Do not harm” principle. According to local authorities, 19,818 people are displaced (3,933 families) in 23 villages near Geti, out of a total of 110,000 IDPs in the Irumu territory).
 - The NGO Oxfam-GB and FAO have provided antibiotics and other medications in order to limit the negative effects of the foot-and-mouth disease, which has already affected 4,000 cows in the Irumu Territory.
 - Approximately 609 MT of food were distributed to some 39,590 people returning to Ladedjo, Laudjo, in Djugu Territory and Nzeba in Mahagi Territory, following the improvement of the security situation in these areas.
 - A total of 300 soldiers of the 508th battalion attended a workshop on the protection of civilians in Bafwasende and Bafwabalinga, organized by the Protection cluster of Kisangani. UNHCR, MONUC/Human Rights and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) presented modules of international humanitarian law, international protection of civilians and human rights. A similar training has been completed in the Aveba, Komanda and Marabo localities in Irumu Territory.