



# OCHA

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## Humanitarian Action in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Weekly Bulletin, 13 January 2012

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- **Persistent insecurity forces thousands out of their homes in the Kivus**
- **Children account for 60 percent of displaced in Mitwaba**
- **Alarming health, water, health and hygiene situation in Saramabila, Maniema Province**
- **Measles still widespread in north-eastern Province Orientale**

### General Overview

More than 4,400 people are estimated to have fled their homes following two successive attacks in the same week earlier this month in South Kivu, according to local sources. The attacks took place on 31 December 2011 and 4 January 2012 when the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, an armed group better known by its French acronym FDLR, allegedly attacked the villages of Luyuyu and Ngolombe in the area of Shabunda, killing and wounding several dozens of people, looting and burning houses. The displaced have found refuge where they can: some have been taken in by host families; others are occupying churches, schools and other buildings, while others have simply taken to the nearby forest. About 40 people have been evacuated for treatment. Aid organizations plan to assess the situation in the coming days in order to provide food and non-food assistance to those affected by this latest bout of violence. Local sources estimate that as many as 60,000 people could be displaced due to persistent insecurity in the past few weeks.

In North Kivu, with an estimated 35,000 displaced people, Walikale is home to continuous population movements linked to persistent armed clashes pitting FDLR fighters and other armed groups. While there has been a flare-up in fighting since November 2011, the IDPs represent successive waves of movement dating back to August 2011. International NGO Solidarités International who recently undertook a fact-finding mission and other humanitarian partners have identified the most pressing needs- health care, water, food, shelter, education, sanitation- and are mapping out how best to deliver the much-needed aid in an area where poor security and roads conditions pose a risk. North Kivu and South Kivu, located in the east, are the most volatile provinces of the country. They account for over 95% of the displaced population. In 2011, 177 security incidents against aid organizations were recorded in 2011 in these two provinces, including the deadliest of the year that killed five people in South Kivu.

Recent clashes between the Congolese army and the Mayi-Mayi armed group and a steady chain of violent acts by the same Mayi-Mayi group have pushed close to 11,000 people out of their homes in Mitwaba, in the southern Katanga province. According to the faith-based organisation Caritas, there are about 6,500 young boys and girls, accounting for 65% of the displaced. Aid organizations have said they will travel to the area in the coming days to assess the situation and start aid delivery.

### Humanitarian Needs and Response

#### **Maniema Province: Alarming health conditions in Saramabila**

On 29-30 December 2011, an inter-agency mission travelled to Saramabila, a small town in the ill-known Maniema Province, to assess the humanitarian, security and human rights situation of the town that has been attacked five times between March and November 2011. Located some 380 km south-east of the provincial capital Kindu, Saramabila is showing the signs of an alarming crisis.

Between June and December 2011, 606 children under five years old were affected with anaemia, 75 of them died, the mission found. However knowing health practices in the area and families' dire financial means, it is estimated that the number of deaths could be higher.

The mission also found that potable water does not exist in Saramabila. The sole water adduction system built by a local NGO is unsafe for drinking; all other water points on average 10 households- in DRC, that's about 50 people-share water from unsafe wells; on an average 35 people share a latrine, but the overwhelming majority of latrines is in poor state; 95% of households have no means adequate to dispose of household refuse and other waste. The numerous attacks have led to thousands of people displaced, however at the time of the mission as much as 65% of the displaced had returned to the province whose population is estimated at 90,000.

Food, water, health, hygiene and non-food items are the most pressing needs, the mission said, adding that funding were needed to refurbish roads leading to Saramabila.

### **Cholera on the increase in South Kivu and Province Orientale**

Bukavu, the provincial capital of South Kivu, has recorded 159 cholera cases since the beginning of 2012 year, health sources have reported. Cholera is endemic in South Kivu, one of the four eastern provinces where the disease is permanent health issue. Response efforts, which have included information campaigns, clean water points, establishment treatment centers, have not yet succeeded in curtailing the disease.

The disease has also seen a spike in the capital Kinshasa; in Tchomia and Gety in Province Orientale, 231 cases with 18 deaths were recorded over the past five weeks, 50% of which were recorded during the first week of January 2012. Kinshasa and, Province Orientale are part of the four provinces, along with Equateur and Bandundu, suffering through their worst epidemic in almost a decade. The World Health Organization and the UN's Children Fund (UNICEF) are leading fundraising efforts to fight the disease. Over 21,000 cases were recorded during 2011, with the east accounting for close to 55% of cases.

Aid organizations have attributed the persistence of the disease to a number of factors, including the poor state of the country's water, sanitation and sanitation infrastructures; the poor adherence to recommended hygiene measures;; a dysfunctional health system. Next to the emergency response, longer term investments in health, water and sanitation need to be made by the government with support to international partners to prevent the disease from becoming endemic across the entire country.

### **Province Orientale struggles to tackle measles epidemic**

If the measles situation in the areas of Faradje and Ubundu in Province Orientale can serve as a barometer, then the north-eastern Province Orientale could be facing an uphill battle to tackle this disease. About 210 cases (three deaths) were recorded in Faradje during the last three months of 2011; in Ubundu, sources say as many as 589 cases were recorded between August and December 2011. However above and beyond the numbers, it is the quasi-absence of any aid organization to fight the disease that is the most worrisome. Médecins Sans Frontières, who appears to be the only active organization against that disease, conducted a mission to Faradje in late December during which it provided medicine and trained the few medical staff on hand. Along with cholera and an acute form of malaria that has killed 500 people since January 2011, measles has contributed in affecting the health of thousands, notably of children. About 131,650 measles cases, of which 1,609 deaths, have been recorded since January 2011, according to the World Health Organization.

#### **For more information, please contact:**

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