

DRC

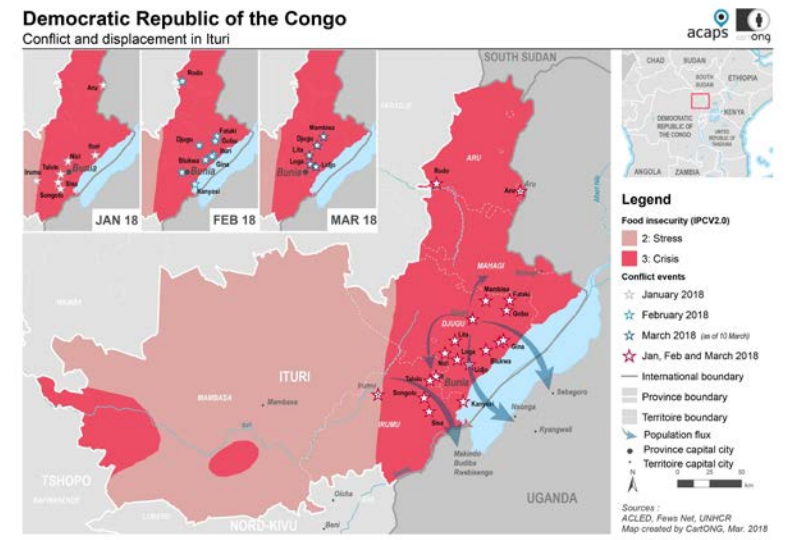
Conflict induced displacement in Ituri

Intercommunal violence between Lendu and Hema communities since December has internally displaced over 300,000 people and led to a severe humanitarian crisis. In a conflict where civilians are being directly targeted, protection of the affected population is a major concern. Thousands of houses have been burned down and livelihood activities, including agriculture, have been disrupted, resulting in significant needs for shelter and food assistance.

NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE



IMPACT



Anticipated scope and scale

Violence, which started in Djugu territory in December, is spreading to other areas of the province. **Over 300,000 internally displaced people** have been reported in four out of five territories in Ituri and numbers are increasing. With **thousands of houses burned** and **disruption of harvest**, the impact of the crisis is likely to last several months even if the conflict subsides.

The historical tensions between the parties in conflict, the national political crisis affecting the country and the possible involvement of foreign armed groups **could lead to a further deterioration of the crisis.**

Key priorities



+300,000 displaced including over 100,000 children

Thousands of houses were burned in over 70 villages

Targeting of civilians +100 people killed

Disruption of harvest leading to crisis food insecurity

Humanitarian constraints



The highly volatile security context is constraining the access to the most affected areas, including displacement sites. Temporary suspension of humanitarian operations due to insecurity occur regularly.

Limitations

Detailed information on specific locations and needs of IDPs is lacking as well as data indicating the scale of damages in conflict-affected areas.

Disclaimer

Numbers of displaced people have been updated as of 21 March 2018.

Crisis impact

Intercommunal violence in Ituri, which started in December in Djugu territory, escalated throughout February. On mid-March, clashes are still being reported and violence is spreading to other parts of the province. Since the beginning of 2018, violence has resulted in the killing of some 100 people (including 41 on 13 March) and the internal displacement of over 300,000 people (Radio Okapi 13/03/2018; Actualite.CD 17/03/2018; Congo Research Group 05/03/2018). The displaced are located in four territories in Ituri province: Irumu, Mahagi, Djugu and Aru. Most of them have sought refuge in Irumu and Mahagi. Some 50,000 are hosted on the site of Bunia General hospital while at least 25,000 were estimated in Mahagi as of mid-February (Radio Okapi 09/03/2018; UNHCR 15/02/2018). Secondary displacement has been reported as people move in search of food, healthcare and shelter due to a lack of assistance (MSF 01/03/2018). In addition, more than 42,000 new refugees crossed the border to Uganda since the beginning of the year (UNHCR 20/02/2018). Such high level of violence and displacement has resulted in a significant increase of needs in the affected locations.

Shelter and NFIs: Houses are systematically burned in the attacks. Thousands of houses in over 70 villages have been burned down, mainly in Djugu territory (Congo Research Group 05/03/2018; UNICEF 16/02/2018; UNHCR 15/02/2018). Most of the IDPs are in need of shelter and NFIs. Many of them have sought refuge in churches or schools in order not to spend nights outside (OCHA 08/03/2018; Radio Okapi 03/03/2018 ; UNHCR 15/02/2018).

Protection: People fleeing from fear are highly vulnerable and face protection risks as safety mechanisms are lacking and the presence of security forces is very low in displacement sites (OCHA 08/03/2018). About 100 people have been killed since the beginning of the conflict, and civilians have been directly targeted (Radio Okapi 13/03/2018; Congo Research Group 05/03/2018). Children are especially vulnerable. At least 70 unaccompanied children and 250 separated children were recorded among the displaced population in Bunia and its surroundings (UNICEF 15/03/2018; Radio Okapi 04/03/2018). There are reports of children being recruited by armed militias. Cases of SGBV have also been reported among the displaced (Radio Okapi 04/03/2018).

Health: Due to poor living conditions, inadequate shelter and a lack of food, IDPs are at risk of contracting diseases. Amongst the displaced deaths have been reported as a result of malaria, respiratory infections and diarrhoea. Many of the displaced have suffered or witnessed atrocities and are in need of mental health care (OCHA 08/03/2018; MSF 01/03/2018). There are reports that dead bodies following attacks have been left to decompose which is increasing the risk of disease spreading in the area (Radio Okapi 15/03/2018).

Existing health structures do not have sufficient capacities to respond to the increase in health needs related to the conflict. As of early March, Rethy health zone in Djugu territory was reporting to be almost out of medicine following the care provided to IDPs (Radio Okapi 03/03/2018). In addition, the destruction and/or looting of health structures which had already been reported in 2017 is ongoing and the presence of some 50,000 IDPs on the site of Bunia's general hospital is further disrupting the health system in the province (UNICEF 16/02/2018).

Food: Violence and displacement have disrupted the agricultural system and resulted in significant loss of maize harvest, driving most of the conflict-affected areas into Crisis food insecurity (IPC3). The next harvest season (June to August) is likely to be negatively impacted by the conflict as people are likely to have limited access to their fields. The most affected territory is Djugu which is especially concerning as it is considered to be the grain basket of the province (Jeune Afrique 13/03/2018; Fews Net 28/02/2018; OCHA 28/02/2018).

Education: More than 30,000 children are out of school as a result of the violence in Ituri. At least seven schools were looted or burned and over 100 schools are closed down due to insecurity or being used as shelter for IDPs (Radio Okapi 03/03/2018; UNICEF 16/02/2018).

Livelihood: The production and provision of goods have been severely disrupted by insecurity, leading to an increase of prices of main food products including potatoes, beans and maize (RFI 13/03/2018; Radio Okapi 12/03/2018; Fews Net 28/02/2018).

WASH: The water and sanitation conditions of most displaced are likely to be poor (MSF 01/03/2018).

Vulnerable groups affected

Children, women, and older people constitute the biggest part of the displaced population (UNHCR 15/02/2018). Some 120,000 children are estimated to have been displaced by the conflict, including over 300 who are unaccompanied or have been separated. Children are also highly vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups (UNICEF 16/02/2018; UNICEF 15/03/2018).

Humanitarian and operational constraints

The highly volatile security context is constraining access to the most affected areas, including displacement sites and many people in need are in areas that are inaccessible to aid organisations (MSF 01/03/2018). Humanitarian agencies are regularly forced to temporarily suspend their operations due to insecurity in the area. The main road between Djugu and Bunia is particularly dangerous. In March a violent attack on an armed convoy travelling the road between Bunia and Gety was reported (Radio Okapi 12/03/2018; OCHA 08/03/2018).

Aggravating factors

Seasonal information

There are two rainy seasons in Ituri, from March until June and from September until January. More rains are likely to increase the risk of disease spreading amongst the displaced population and host communities. The province is affected by cholera. Rains and displacements could increase the spread of the outbreak (Radio Okapi 20/01/2018; Irin News 08/03/2018). In addition, the rainy season could further constrain access due to poor road conditions (OCHA 08/03/2018; Fews Net 02/2018). The province is at risk of mudslides. In 2017, a mudslide in Djugu territory resulted in over 40 deaths and the destruction of some 50 houses (Afrique Lalibre 19/08/2017; Jeune Afrique 24/08/2017).

South-Sudanese refugees

More than 44,000 South Sudanese refugees are living in Ituri. A large majority of them are located in Aru territory. They are a vulnerable population who rely on aid assistance. They are at risk of being negatively impacted by the ongoing insecurity and access constraints (UNHCR 31/01/2018).

Contextual information

Drivers of the current conflict

The violence started in Djugu territory in December by a confrontation between Lendu (farmers) and Hema (herders) that escalated and spread throughout the area. The exact origin of the conflict is unknown but historical tensions over land exist between those two communities (Congo Research Group 05/03/2018; Reuters 02/03/2018). The national political crisis has already stirred conflicts in the Kasai and the Kivus, and most likely also has a role to play in the current violence in Ituri. Disintegration of state authority and general frustration amongst the population are likely to play a role in the dynamics of the conflict (Congo Research Group 05/03/2018).

Past displacement

Before violence started in December, some 344,000 people were internally displaced in Ituri. A significant majority of these IDPs (249,000) were located in Irumu territory while 15,000 were living in Djugu and 2,000 in Mahagi (OCHA 13/12/2018).

History of conflict and relevant stakeholders

Historically Ituri has been affected by cyclical outbreaks of violence since 1966 due to inequalities among communities and tensions over land. Between 1999 and 2003 conflict between the Lendu and Hema communities in Ituri played a key part in Congo's second war. These years of conflict in Ituri resulted in at least 55,000 deaths and over 500,000 displaced (Rift Valley Institute 2013). Some members of armed groups involved in this earlier period of conflict have been accused of taking part in the current cycle of violence. Such allegations include the Front of Integrationist Nationalists (FNI) and the Patriotic Resistance Front in Ituri (FRPI) both of which originated from Lendu self-defence groups in 2002 (Congo Research Group 05/03/2018; Congo Actuel 05/02/2018; Rift Valley Institute 2013).

International and neighbouring countries' relationship to the conflict

Foreign armed groups have been accused of taking part in the current violence affecting Ituri. Uganda and Rwanda have historically played a major role in the conflict in Ituri, notably by contributing to the militarisation of the different armed groups. They have an interest in the region because of its natural resources (ores and precious wood) (Rift Valley Institute 2013; Afrique Libré 05/02/2018; Congo Research Group 05/03/2018). Recent sources indicate that there has been an

increase of arms in the province fuelling the conflict. This could be due to foreign actors providing support to parties in conflict (ECHO 12/03/2018).

Key characteristics

- Demographic profile: Almost 9 million people live in Ituri. The most populated territories are Djugu (2.8 million) and Mahagi (2.6 million) (OCHA 08/03/2018; CAID 31/03/2017).
- Food security figures: Aru and Mahagi territories are facing crisis food insecurity (IPC3) as well as most of Djugu and half of Irumu territories (see map) (Fews Net 28/02/2018).
- Nutrition levels: 4.6 million people are in need of nutrition assistance in the DRC including 2.2 million children under five who are affected by severe acute malnutrition (SAM) (OCHA 19/01/2018).
- Health statistics: 200 health structures have been recorded in Djugu territory and 140 in Mahagi territory. Most of them are in poor condition. The most common diseases in the region are malaria, respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases and typhoid fever (MSF 01/03/2018; CAID 31/03/2017).
- WASH statistics: 13.1 million people are in need of WASH support in DRC and 50% of the households do not have access to drinking water (OCHA 19/01/2018).

Response capacity

Local and national response capacity

Governmental forces, both police and military (FARDC), have been deployed in conflict-affected areas. However, in most cases they have been ineffective in protecting the populations under attack and some sources are suggesting that political motives could explain the lack of capacities (Congo Research Group 05/03/2018).

Local authorities are involved in the registration of the displaced population but do not have the capacity to ensure an adequate response to all the needs induced by the crisis (UNHCR 15/02/2018).

International response capacity

UN Peacekeeping mission MONUSCO reduced its presence in the province at the end of 2017 after a base was closed in Irumu territory. However it increased its presence again in support to the FARDC on 10 February (Radio Okapi 18/12/2017; Actualite.CD 15/02/2018). This could help ensure better access to affected population. However, the trust of the population in the peacekeepers is

fragile in Ituri, which makes its operations in the areas especially sensitive (Congo Research Group 05/03/2018).

UN agencies and international NGOs including UNICEF, MSF and Caritas are present in the area. However the scale of the emergency goes beyond their current capacities, partly due to funding challenges (UNICEF 15/03/2018; ECHO 12/03/2018; MSF 01/03/2018).

Information gaps and needs

- Detailed information on specific locations and needs of IDPs is limited.
- Information on the scale of damage in conflict-affected areas is lacking.
- There is a lack of information on the impact of the conflict on WASH facilities and needs relating to WASH.

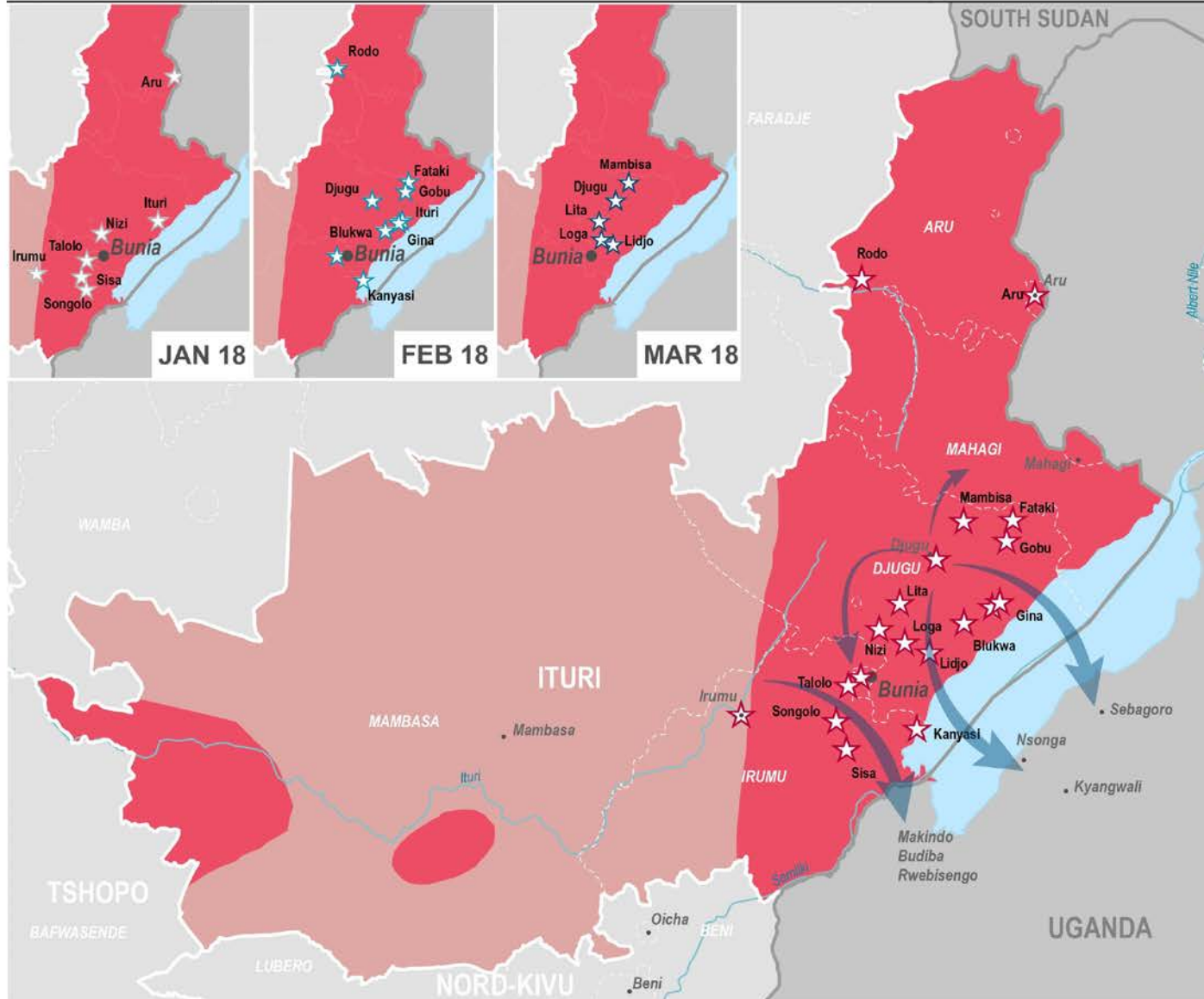
Lessons learned

The inclusion of IDPs living on informal settlements as well as host community members in aid programs is crucial. Leaving parts of the population in need without assistance would impede on a sustainable reconstruction of the affected areas (UNHCR 07/2007).

Map

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Conflict and displacement in Ituri



Legend

Food insecurity (IPC V2.0)

- 2: Stress
- 3: Crisis

Conflict events

- ☆ January 2018
- ☆ February 2018
- ☆ March 2018 (as of 10 March)
- ☆ Jan, Feb and March 2018

- International boundary
- Province boundary
- Territoire boundary
- ➔ Population flux
- Province capital city
- Territoire capital city



Sources :
 ACLED, Fews Net, UNHCR
 Map created by CartONG, Mar. 2018