

Displacement in Beni

Briefing note – 29 November 2019

Crisis Impact Overview

- A series of violent attacks against civilians in Beni city and Beni territory in North Kivu province in November has triggered mass displacement across the territory with an unconfirmed number of people fleeing to Beni city.¹ The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) are believed to have carried out the attacks, in retaliation for a military operation of the Congolese armed forces (FARDC) against armed groups in DRC's northwest border region on 30 October.²
- In response to the attacks, residents in Beni began protesting the lack of protection on 22 November.³ On 25 November, demonstrators set the town hall on fire and attacked a camp of the UN mission MONUSCU.⁴ Several organisations have announced the evacuation of staff from Beni until calm is restored.⁵ An unconfirmed number of civilians has died in clashes with security forces.⁶ Civil unrest is ongoing.⁷ Limited access due to insecurity in Beni territory and violent protests in Beni city make it difficult to verify information on IDPs.⁸
- As of 29 November, verified information on the number and origin of IDPs hosted in the city of Beni is lacking. Detailed assessments are not available and there is very limited information on IDPs in Beni city and the specific humanitarian conditions and needs of displaced people. The city of Beni's office for civil protection has recently called upon local leaders to identify IDPs hosted in Beni city to coordinate humanitarian assistance.⁹
- According to UNHCR, 2,560 people fled violence arrived in Beni on 18 November alone¹⁰ and about 275,00 people are estimated to be displaced in Beni territory.¹¹ In addition to rural populations fleeing to Beni city from its vicinity, urban Beni residents are also affected by displacement as many have fled their homes due to a recent surge of attacks within the city.¹²

Key priorities



Displacement



Lack of shelter



Food assistance

National response capacity

A local office for civil protection exists.¹³ There are no reports about national authorities or NGOs responding to displacement in Beni city.¹⁴

International response capacity

Beni is key site for the international Ebola response and numerous UN agencies and other INGOs are present.¹⁵

Anticipated scope and scale

- As the FARDC's military operation against the ADF continues, there is a risk of further retaliatory attacks, making the imminent return of displaced populations unlikely -- particularly those who have fled rural areas around Beni city.
- Deadly attacks against civilians in Beni territory continue.¹⁶ Persisting attacks are likely to trigger more displacement movements across the territory and into Beni city. Needs are likely to increase.
- Access and operational capacity of humanitarian agencies are limited by insecurity around Beni city and ongoing violent protests in Beni city itself.



Humanitarian constraints

- The recent outbreak of violent protests in Beni city may cause operational constraints within the city. There is a risk of protests in other cities that may hamper access. Demonstrators in Goma reportedly tried to block the main road to Beni on 27 November.¹⁷
- The security situation across North Kivu is very volatile due to ongoing military operations against non-state armed groups. The risk of additional attacks in Beni territory and Beni city persists.
- Access to Beni is further hampered because of its remote location. However, Beni has an airport that is accessed by UNHAS flights.¹⁸

Sectoral needs



Shelter

IDPs staying with host communities or in public spaces are likely to need emergency shelter. There are no reports of emergency shelters being set up in Beni city and UNHCR mentions that an unverified number of displaced people are staying in churches and schools.¹⁹

A protection cluster exists in DRC since 2006²⁰ but most of the shelter activities of UNHCR and partners in North Kivu is focused on Kalinga and Bukombo sites in Masisi territory.²¹



Food and livelihoods

Displaced people fleeing Beni territory during the November attacks reportedly left their homes suddenly and had to leave their belongings.²² IDPs who arrived in Beni city are likely to have limited personal assets and may need food and livelihood assistance, especially because food prices are high.²³



WASH

Displaced populations without adequate shelter and access to water and sanitation facilities face increased risks of contaminated water and contracting waterborne diseases like cholera and malaria, which are general public health concerns in DRC and North Kivu.²⁴



Protection

IDPs in DRC's Ituri and North Kivu provinces face severe protection risks due to continuing conflict.²⁵ In November, UNHCR expressed concern over the widespread human rights violations in the provinces²⁶ and highlighted that overcrowded shelter further increases protection needs.²⁷

Aggravating factors

- **Protests in Beni:** The situation in Beni city is currently extremely volatile. In reaction to the recent surge of attacks of civilians within Beni, residents started protests against the government and the UN stabilization mission MONUSCO, which according to demonstrators fails to protect civilians.²⁸ On 25 November, protestors set the Beni town hall on fire and attacked one of the MONUSCO camps in Beni.²⁹ Several organizations including UNICEF, WHO and WFP announced since 26 November temporary relocations of their staff from

Beni.^{30,31} There are concerns of a spread of the protest. Media reported solidarity protests in Butembo.³² In Mangina village close to Beni, residents held a general strike.³³ Demonstrators in Goma reportedly tried to block the main road to Beni on 27 November.³⁴

- **Instability and insecurity:** Beni territory has been a centre of militia violence for decades.³⁵ Various armed groups are active in the region,³⁶ including the Mai Mai and increasingly the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).³⁷ Violent clashes with the armed forces occur frequently³⁸ and insecurity limits access to rural areas beyond Beni city.³⁹ In September, an additional increase of banditry was noted in Beni territory.⁴⁰ Following the government's launch of a military operation on 30 October, the region faces further deterioration of security due to clashes and retaliatory attacks.^{41,42} Deadly attacks on civilians have also occurred in Beni city itself.⁴³ As of 25 November, the North Kivu Security Tracker counted 77 civilian deaths in attacks believed to be carried out by ADF since the operation began.⁴⁴
- **Ebola epidemic:** Beni used to be an epicentre of DRC's Ebola outbreak.⁴⁵ In recent weeks, the number of Ebola cases in DRC has declined, but Beni remains a zone with active transmission.⁴⁶ Of the 22 Ebola cases observed in the last 21 days, 6 were reported in Beni health zone.⁴⁷ Population movements could lead to a spread of the disease. This risk is particularly concerning as the WHO already reported that insecurity in the region limits its access to communities in Beni health zones.⁴⁸ The Ebola response capacity was further limited after the WHO relocated its non-essential staff from Beni city on 26 November.⁴⁹
- **Other disease outbreaks:** North Kivu is prone to epidemics such as cholera and malaria.⁵⁰ Additionally, a measles outbreak was declared in June 2019⁵¹ that affects North Kivu.⁵²
- **Food insecurity:** Beni territory is particularly affected by the severe conflict-related food insecurity in North Kivu province.⁵³ Currently, around 301,000 people in Beni territory are estimated to face IPC-Level 3 (Crisis) and about 75,000 people IPC-Level 4 (Emergency).⁵⁴

North Kivu province, DRC

Source: WFP 08/2018

