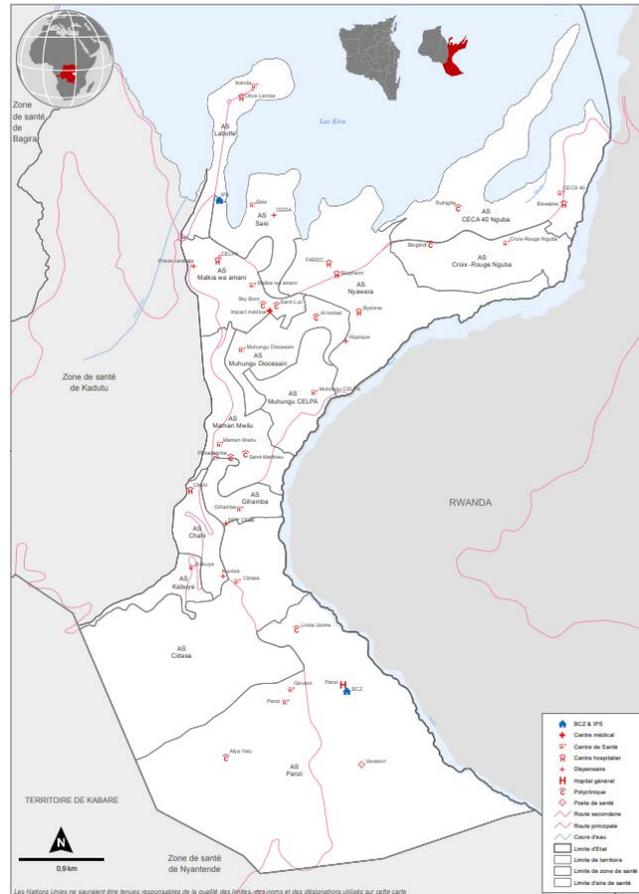


DRC (Sud Kivu)

Fire in Ibanda municipality, city of Bukavu

On 17 August, a fire broke out in the Nyalukemba neighbourhood of Ibanda Municipality in the city of Bukavu, Sud Kivu, only a few days after two fires affected the neighbouring municipality of Kadutu. 289 houses were damaged, and between 2,500 and 3,000 people were left homeless in the aftermath of the fire. They are yet to receive any shelter and NFI assistance. Parts of the only health clinic in Nyalukemba were destroyed, along with medicine and medical equipment stored in a pharmacy. WASH and food needs have also been reported.



Source: OCHA 2014

Anticipated scope and scale

Between 10 and 17 August, three fires broke out in Kadutu and Ibanda municipalities. The fire in Ibanda had the most severe impact. The rainy season that starts in September is likely to cause flooding and landslides and negatively impact already poor WASH conditions, increasing the need for humanitarian assistance. Fires are likely to reoccur during the dry season (May-September), with overpopulation and inadequate urban planning exacerbating their impact.

Key priorities



289
homes damaged



+ 2,500
people affected



WASH
assistance urgently needed



Disease outbreaks
could erupt during the rainy season

NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE



IMPACT



Limitations

The analysis of the current situation and impact relies for the most part on local sources. There has been no statement from the government or NGOs.

Humanitarian Constraints



Humanitarian access is challenging because of poor roads conditions. Houses in the affected area are built on hillsides and are very close to each other, impeding access.

Crisis impact

On 17 August 2018, a fire broke out between Irambo I and Pesage II avenues in the Nyalukemba neighbourhood of Ibanda, in Bukavu (Sud Kivu). (La Libre Afrique 18/08/2018) Most houses in Ibanda are made of wood, which enable the fire to spread rapidly. The fire was brought under control in the evening. (RFI 18/08/2918)

The fire damaged 289 houses and left between 2,500 and 3,000 people homeless. Although the local authorities reported no fatalities, the number of people injured is unknown. Many people have been forced to sleep outside since losing their homes. Several children were reported missing after the fire began. (Actualite CD 20/08/2018, Radio Okapi 19/08/2018, La Libre Afrique 18/08/201)

Most local sources report that the fire originated from a cooking accident. Another hypothesis mentioned is that a solar panel battery exploded. (La Libre Afrique 18/08/2018, RFI 18/08/2918)

Two other fires broke out in neighbouring Kadutu municipality on 10 and 15 August. However, the damage to houses and infrastructure was far greater in Ibanda, as an entire neighbourhood of the municipality was almost destroyed. (La Libre Afrique 18/08/2018)

Shelter and NFI: The fire damaged 289 houses, leaving between 2,500 and 3,000 people homeless and in need of shelter assistance. (Actualite CD 20/08/2018, Radio Okapi 19/08/2018, La Libre Afrique 18/08/201) As of 22 August, the population affected by the fire had still not received shelter or NFI assistance. (Actualite CD 22/08/2018)

WASH: Access to drinkable water is a major problem in Ibanda. Overpopulation and a lack of funding mean the absence of a regular water supply is a recurring problem, and people living in Bukavu sometimes spend months without running drinking water. People resort to drinking unclean water from the river or digging wells in their land. These makeshift wells are often built near latrines, which poses serious health concerns and exacerbates the risk of waterborne diseases spreading. (AFEM 24/03/2017, Speak 13/11/2015) In the aftermath of the fire, it was reported that water to the affected area had stopped running. The MONUSCO truck has supplied four tanks of potable water, but it is unknown whether there is enough to help all people in need. (RFI 18/08/2918)

Health: In Nyalukemba neighbourhood, where the fire broke out, the only medical structure (Etoile du Congo Clinic) was partially destroyed. The 50 patients being treated there were promptly evacuated. The pharmacy where all the medicines and medical equipment were stored was destroyed. (Le Nouvelliste 19/08/2018) There are five hospitals in Ibanda health zone. The most important one (Hôpital Général), located in Panzi, can accommodate 450 patients. 42 doctors and 79 nurses work at this hospital, which was not affected by the fire and is still functional. (CAID 15/04/2018)

The most common diseases reported in Ibanda are cerebrospinal meningitis, acute renal insufficiency, malnutrition, anaemia, and arterial hypertension. (CAID 15/04/2018) People may be more susceptible to diseases because of their current living circumstances, caused by the fire. Poor WASH conditions coupled with the upcoming rainy season starting in September are likely to facilitate the development and spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera.

Food: It was reported that the fire victims are in need of food assistance. (VOA Afrique 20/08/2018) The exact number of people still in need of food assistance is unknown, however. A local civil society committee that was set up after the fire distributed bags of rice to affected families (Actualite CD 22/08/2018) Most livelihood activities in Ibanda are fishing and commerce. As agricultural activities are not a main source of livelihood, no losses of cattle or crops were reported. The mountainous terrain of Ibanda's soil makes it inadequate for agriculture. (Balegana, 2010)

Protection: Several burglaries were reported during the fire. Some electric wires were cut and there is a risk that insecurity will return in the affected areas. (La Libre Afrique 18/08/2018)

Impact on critical infrastructure

The fire primarily damaged residential houses and Nyalukemba's health clinic. No damage to infrastructure has been reported.

Vulnerable groups affected

The number of IDPs affected by the fire is unknown. Ibanda municipality hosts 14,882 IDPs (4.1% of the population), more than half of the IDP population in Bukavu (25,618). They are staying with host families. (IOM 02/05/2018)

Humanitarian and operational constraints

There is a 42.77km road network in Ibanda, more than 71% of which is made of asphalt and the rest of dirt. Both categories of roads are in a state of advanced degradation. Many houses are only accessible by dirt roads, and difficulties in reaching the affected areas were reported during the immediate fire-fighting response. (La Libre Afrique 18/08/2018, Balegana, 2010) Moreover, houses in the area are built extremely close to each other, and it was very difficult for emergency assistance responding to the fire to navigate the small corridors in between. (RFI 18/08/2918)

Aggravating factors

Seasonal information

The rainy season in Sud Kivu runs for eight months, from September through April. (FEWSNET accessed 22/08/2018). The populations affected by the Ibanda fire are at risk of seeing their situation worsen because of adverse weather, flooding and landslides. In September 2017, for instance, heavy rains caused a 300m landslide fissure that affected around 500 houses in Ibanda municipality. (Enviro News RDC 19/09/2017)

Ibanda is surrounded by bodies of water such as Lake Kivu in the north, Kauwa River (separating Ibanda from Kadutu), Mukukwe River, and Ruzizi River. (Balegana, 2010) The rivers frequently overflow during rainy season, causing material infrastructural damage and sometimes leading to fatalities. Kauwa River in particular represents a threat: during the dry season (from May to the beginning of September), Ibanda residents use it as a waste dump, blocking the pipes and increasing the risk of the river overflowing during rainy season. (Jambo RDC Info 12/12/2017)

Previous fires in Ibanda and Kadutu

Fires are a recurring problem in Bukavu during the dry season. This is the third (and most significant) fire that occurred within a week in Bukavu municipalities.

On 10 August, a fire started in the neighbouring municipality of Kadutu. The municipal fire truck was out of order, and local responders were unable to contain the fire in time. Considerable infrastructure was destroyed, including a primary school, a local church, a telephone antenna, and more than 80 houses. At least 400 people were affected. (Radio Okapi 12/08/2018)

A few days later, on 15 August, another fire broke out in Kadutu market. 29 buildings (shops, for the most part) were destroyed. (La Libre Afrique 18/08/2018, Jambordc 16/08/2018)

In 2016, a similar fire affected the same two avenues in Ibanda. Almost 50 houses were destroyed then. (La Prunelle RDC 17/08/2018)

Unchecked urbanisation

Nyalukemba is one of the most impoverished and densely populated neighbourhoods in Ibanda. Most residential houses are made of wood and, due to the mountainous terrain, are built on hillsides along Lake Kivu. The lack of urban planning and non-compliance with building regulations during Ibanda's expansion led to overpopulation and extremely precarious housing conditions for most residents. (La Libre Afrique 18/08/2018, VOA Afrique 20/08/2018, RFI 18/08/2018, Le Nouvelliste 19/08/2018)

Disease outbreaks

DRC is experiencing a cholera outbreak, with 15,843 cases and 556 deaths (CFR: 3.5%) reported across the country. 71% of the suspected cases have been reported in Sud Kivu, Kasai Oriental, Kongo Central, Sankuru, and Tanganyika provinces. (WHO 20/07/218, UNICEF 11/08/2018) So far in 2018, the cases in Sud Kivu are largely localised in Fizi, Uvira, and Minova territories. Bukavu is considered a 'sanctuary zone' or 'primary source' for cholera, and the risk of an outbreak developing and spreading is very high. (WASH Cluster 29/07/2018, Global Alliance Against Cholera and Other Waterborne Diseases accessed on 22/08/2018)

An Ebola outbreak was declared on 1 August in Mabalako health zone, Beni territory (Nord Kivu). Although the outbreak is contained to Nord Kivu and Ituri provinces, the risk of the virus spreading to neighbouring Sud Kivu is high. (MoH DRC 19/08/2018, WHO 04/08/2018) Ebola preparedness mechanisms are already in place in Sud Kivu and UNICEF has distributed hand-washing kits and aquatabs for purifying water. (OCHA 22/08/2018)

Political stability and security

Many armed groups operate in Sud Kivu, especially the FDLR, the Nyatura, and the Mai-Mai militia groups, and incidents of looting, rape, and banditry are regularly reported. (HRW 15/05/2018, Kivu Security Tracker 06/2018) Eight security incidents involving armed actors have been reported in Bukavu this year. (Kivu Security Tracker accessed 23/08/2018)

Criminality is prevalent in Bukavu. Ibanda's Nyalukemba neighbourhood is one of the most insecure areas of the city, with violent acts of banditry, robbery, general crime, and homicides regularly reported. (ADIB 05/11/2017) In February 2018, protests took place across Bukavu after three people were killed. Exasperated by the persisting violence, civil society expressed dissatisfaction towards the local authorities, criticising them for failing to protect citizens. (La Libre Afrique 16/02/2018)

Key characteristics

- Demographic profile:

| | Bukavu | Ibanda |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| Number of inhabitants | 870,954 | 362,975 |
| Number of IDPs | 25,618 | 14,882 |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Surface area | 44.9km ² | 11.57km ² |
| Density (in inh/km ²) | • 19,397 inh/km ² | 31,372 inh/km ² |

Source: IOM 02/05/2018, CAID 15/04/2018

- **Food security figures:** Bukavu is in Stressed Phase (IPC 2) and food insecurity levels are expected to remain unchanged until January 2019. (FEWSNET accessed 22/08/2018).
- **WASH statistics:** Only 58% of the population have access to drinkable water in Sud Kivu. (OCHA 21/08/2018)
- **Economy:** The main economic activities in Ibanda are trade and fishing on Lake Kivu. Ibanda is not an agricultural or pastoralist area, but some inhabitants practice subsistence agriculture. (Balegana, 2010)
- **Languages:** The main languages spoken in Ibanda are Mashi and Kilega. Swahili is the national language. French and Lingala are also spoken in some areas of the municipality. (Balegana, 2010)

Response capacity

Local and national response capacity

To contain the fire, the local authorities and MONUSCO mobilised several fire trucks. MONUSCO provided four tanks of drinkable water. (La Libre Afrique 18/08/2018, RFI 18/08/2018)

In the immediate aftermath of the fire, a committee of 10 residents was set up, and immediately organised food distribution to support those affected. (La Libre Afrique 18/08/2018) The former mayor of Ibanda (now member of the DRC Parliament) also contributed to the response by providing a dozen bags of rice and beans. (Radio Okapi 19/08/2018)

The provincial government is yet to activate the Civil Defence Unit that is supposed to intervene in case of a disaster. The national civil protection cell has been unable to intervene because of a lack of funding. (Radio Okapi 19/08/2018, Le Congo Libere 22/08/2018)

International response capacity

In Sud Kivu, there are 58 operational actors and about 80 projects. (OCHA 27/04/2018) So far, no international organisation has made a statement about the fire in Ibanda.

Population coping mechanisms

In the immediate aftermath of the fire, people started collecting material from the ashes (roof sheets, nails) to build makeshift shelters. Residents were also dismantling wooden planks from houses to contain the fire. (La Libre Afrique 18/08/2018, VOA Afrique 20/08/2018)

Information gaps and needs

The number of people injured in the fire is unknown. It is therefore challenging to evaluate the full extent of health needs.

Although a cholera outbreak has hit Sud Kivu, the disaggregation of cases by geographic location is currently unknown. There is a lack of information about the number of cholera cases reported in Ibanda (or if the disease is even present).

There is no information on the extent of damage caused to houses, whether completely or partially destroyed.

Lessons learned

According to the Society of Architects of Congo (Société des Architectes du Congo – SAC) this fire could have been prevented if all regulations for urban planning had been carefully observed. Many buildings in Bukavu are considered 'at risk': built chaotically, too close to each other, and with inadequate materials.

SAC included several recommendations in its statement:

- Reinvigorate local fire services
- Better identify risk areas
- Reinforce prevention activities
- Reinforce urbanism and construction standards
- Finally, habitat and urbanism policies in Bukavu must be revamped to prevent such disasters in the future. (7 Sur 7 22/08/2018, Agence d'Information d'Afrique Centrale 22/08/2018)

