

PRESS RELEASE

More than 350,000 people, victims of armed conflicts in DRC, assisted since the beginning of 2006

Kinshasa, 4 May 2006 - UNICEF and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) have provided humanitarian assistance, in the course of the



Children are among the first victims of armed conflicts in DRC: Photo OCHA-DRC

first quarter of 2006, to 120,000 new internally displaced persons (IDPs) per month in the Democratic Republic of Congo, amounting to some 356,000 primary beneficiaries since the beginning of 2006. These people have been displaced mainly as a result of military operations and armed clashes in the eastern and southern regions of the country.

The Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), jointly managed by UNICEF and OCHA and implemented in the field by Solidarités, CESVI and IRC, focal points partners in the east and very soon by CRS in Katanga, assisted these vulnerable people through more than 80 emergency humanitarian interventions. These interventions occurred mainly in the provinces of Katanga, North and South Kivu, as well as in the Ituri District.

In comparison with the average of 35,000 IDPs assisted per month in 2005, RRM activities have experienced an increase to date of 250%, an alarming figure which indicates a deterioration of the humanitarian situation. Financial resources allocated to the RRM have been stretched and will need to be renewed shall this dramatic trend continue. Moreover, nearly 585,000 people, direct and indirect beneficiaries, benefited from the interventions in water and sanitation, emergency food and health care. Nearly 6,500 children also benefited, within the framework of interventions carried out by RRM teams, from the UNICEF emergency education programme.

"Since the creation of RRM in October 2004, RRM teams have never before been called into action as much as they are now" Mr. Ross Mountain, the Humanitarian Coordinator for the DRC declared.

The east remains the most volatile area of the country, both for the local population and for humanitarian actors. In Ituri District, access by humanitarian actors has been severely reduced in the last few weeks, and security conditions remain precarious. In Katanga, a silent crisis continues. In all these areas, access to water, food, and shelters is woefully inadequate. The protection of populations, victims of human rights abuses, violence and other violations must be aggressively reinforced.

Clearly the current armed conflicts are having a great impact on the stability of the population. According to RRM statistics, 96 % of the 356,000 people directly assisted by RRM fled as a result of military operations and various fighting in these areas.

Considering this alarming situation, UNICEF and OCHA express their concern regarding the fate of the civilian populations who are victims of armed conflict in the DRC. They call on the government of the DRC to fulfil its responsibility towards the security and protection of civilians and the people. They also appeal to donors to vigorously support the humanitarian action in DRC outlined in the 2006 Action Plan which aims to provide assistance to more than 30 million vulnerable people throughout the country.

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For more information on the humanitarian crisis in DRC, <http://www.rdc-humanitaire.net/>