

PRESS RELEASE

UNICEF and its partners provide assistance in essential household items to displaced persons and returnees on the DRC-Uganda border

Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, March 6, 2014 – On Tuesday March 4th, UNICEF and NGO partners Solidarités International and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) began delivering essential household items to over 63,000 displaced and returnee men, women and children in Nabili in North Kivu Province's Beni territory. This large-scale assistance is organized within the framework of the Rapid Response to Movements of Population (RRMP) mechanism co-managed by UNICEF and OCHA.

Because of fighting between the ADF-NALU rebel group and the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) last year, over 66,000 people fled their homes near Kamango to seek refuge in Nabili and other villages along the DRC-Uganda border. This assistance is jointly conducted by UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) to enable 12,771 vulnerable families to receive essential household items such as sleeping mats, blankets, soap, clothing and cooking utensils as well as a 15-day food ration.

"Due to insecurity, thousands of children, women and men from the Kamango region have lived in an extremely precarious situation for several months," said Barbara Bentein, UNICEF DRC Representative. "As soon as the security situation improved, and our partners had access, this intervention in essential household items was mobilized to help families meet essential needs and resume a normal life."

With support from the WFP-led 'Logistics Cluster,' significant resources have been deployed to assist in moving these relief supplies to the remote Nabili area. Loaded with 14,000 family relief kits of essential household and personal items, 14 trucks travelled from North Kivu's provincial capital of Goma through Rwanda and Uganda before entering DRC again to reach Nabili. With support from the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), one of RRMP's most important donors, the supplies were met in Nabili by RRMP teams who traveled to Nabili by the ECHO-supported helicopter managed by WFP's Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS).

In January 2014, additional clashes between the ADF-Nalu and the FARDC caused thousands of people to find refuge in schools where classrooms are used as dormitories and benches for firewood. To ensure that the 15,000 displaced children of primary schooling age continue their education, RRMP partner NRC rehabilitated and built 44 emergency classrooms in the town of Nabili. In August 2013, despite a volatile security situation, RRMP increased access to education, clean water and sanitation and RRMP partner Merlin deployed mobile health clinics to address basic health needs and malnutrition among the displaced population.

More than half of the displaced persons in eastern DRC are children, and they continue to pay a heavy toll due to multiple displacements. In addition to interrupting their education, children are at times separated from their families, which make them even more vulnerable. Among the 203 unaccompanied and separated children already identified in Nabili, UNICEF and partner NGOs Acope and EAD have reunited 36 with their families, and placed 108 others in transitional foster families. Each day, an average 120 children, including 55 girls take part in creative and recreational activities at child-friendly spaces in Nabili where children and families can receive psycho-social support and which acts as a mechanism to identify the most vulnerable children and direct them to appropriate response services.

Note to editors

The Rapid Response to Movements of Population (RRMP) mechanism co-managed by UNICEF and OCHA is funded by ECHO, Japan, Korea, Pooled Fund, Sweden (SIDA), Switzerland, UK Aid and USAID/OFDA.

About UNICEF

UNICEF works in 190 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

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