In Numbers

27.3 mi highly food-insecure people
26 provinces affected
5.2 mi people displaced
2.1 mi beneficiaries reached since the beginning of 2021

Highlights in March 2021

• With 27.3 million highly food-insecure people, DRC is the largest food security crisis in the world in absolute numbers.

• On 18 March, WFP launched a social safety net project in the N’select commune (Kinshasa outskirts). It aims to assist families who lost their jobs or who were prevented from carrying on with their small-scale trading activities because of COVID-19 and its containment measures.

In Kind Food Assistance USD 54.7 mi
Cash Food Assistance USD 39.1 mi
Nutrition USD 19.4 mi
Other activities USD 16.2 mi
Total USD 129.4 mi

Situation Update

• The preliminary results of the latest IPC analysis (19th IPC) have been published. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has the highest estimated number of food-insecure people worldwide, with 27.3 million people who are food insecure between February and July 2021, representing about 28% of analysed population. Of this figure, 20.5 million people are facing "crisis" levels (IPC Phase 3) and 6.7 million people are facing "emergency" levels (IPC Phase 4) of food insecurity. An additional 41 million people are in a "stressed" state with high risk of slipping into food insecurity if not adequately assisted (IPC Phase 2).

• In urban areas, the main key drivers of food insecurity are the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic for instance on cross-border trade, limited access to employment and household income, and food prices increase. In Kinshasa, currently more than 1.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and protect their livelihoods. Further, the cities of Kindu, Beni, Kananga, Kaleme, Mbuji Mayi, Uvira and Gemena are also in a crisis situation (IPC Phase 3) with between 20% and 40% of the populations in IPC Phase 3 and above. In total, 4.6 million people (21% of the analysed population) residing in urban areas require support to address serious household vulnerability, improve food consumption and dietary diversity, and reduce reliance on negative coping strategies.

• COVID-19: as of 31 March, there are 28,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases in the DRC, including 745 deaths. The main province affected is Kinshasa with a total of some 20,000 cases. The Government curfew (9 pm to 5 am) declared since mid-December remains active until further notice. Movements are only allowed on exceptional basis (health and travels). Due to the lack of relevant testing capacity in the country, there is no evidence of the Covid-19 variants or mutations in DRC until today.

• Ebola: as of 31 March, WHO has confirmed cumulative 11 Ebola cases (including 5 deaths) in North Kivu. However, it has not reported any new case for twenty-nine consecutive days. If no new occurrences are recorded in the next 34 days, the epidemic will be declared over. WFP will closely monitor how the situation evolves on the ground and will continue to provide support to post-Ebola affected communities for the time being. UNHAS continues flying to Butembo twice a week to support the organizations working to contain a possible resurgence of the Ebola Virus.
Disease in the east of the country.

WFP Response

• Under the new Country Strategic Plan 2021 - 2024, WFP continues with its large-scale assistance, targeting 8.7 million people with food and nutrition assistance throughout 2021.

• Overview: In 2021, WFP has already reached 2.1 mi people with either in-kind, cash, or Nutrition food assistance. Throughout March alone, WFP assisted some 959,000 beneficiaries.

• General Food Distribution in-kind and cash-based transfers: in March, in-kind distributions reached 459,000 beneficiaries. For cash-based transfers, however, problems in the registration of the beneficiaries delayed the March distribution plans - regardless, WFP reached 213,000 beneficiaries in the DRC. The monthly targets for April have been reviewed accordingly to accommodate this new scenario.

• Nutrition activities: a total of 191,000 beneficiaries were reached by Malnutrition treatment activities. The Tanganyika region had the highest number of beneficiaries: 64,000. Another 77,400 people were reached by Malnutrition prevention activities. Most of the beneficiaries were in the regions of Kasai and Kasai Central: 45,300 in total. Additionally, baseline surveys for the prevention of acute malnutrition are in progress in all the sub offices with a focus on the new health zones.

Food and Nutrition Assistance

• N’sele project launch: the official launch of the social safety net project in N’sele on the outskirts of Kinshasa took place on Thursday 18 March in the presence of a US delegation headed by the Ambassador Mike Hammer, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) DRC’s Development Director Ms Juliette John, and the DRC’s Minister of Social Affairs, Ms Rose Boyata. The project, implemented jointly by WFP and UNICEF, aims to help compensate families who lost their jobs or who were prevented from carrying on with their small-scale trading activities as a result of COVID-19 and the measures put in place to curb its spread. The US Ambassador, the FCDO Development Director, and the DRC Minister of Social Affairs delivered a keynote address, interacted with project beneficiaries, and took a series of questions from journalists. A total of 9,780 Households have already received their first round of cash assistance, while another 10,000 Households are expected to receive assistance in the following weeks.

• Assistance for CAR refugees: the 2021 Inter-Agency Refugee Response Plan (RRP) for the Central African refugees (CAR) in the Democratic Republic of Congo was launched on 17 March 2021 online. WFP and 15 other RPP partners are appealing for USD 69 mi to assist 92,000 new CAR refugees and close to 100,000 host community members in 2021. The food/WFP component in the appeal amounts to USD 9 million.

• In North Kivu, through its partner World Vision, WFP reached about 22,600 displaced people and vulnerable host families with 61 MT of food on the Kaleme-Pinga axis (Beni territory). The Goma office reached 78,000 people with in-kind food assistance. In April, plans are underway for a seasonal CBT assistance for about 120,000 targeted beneficiaries in the health zones previously affected by the 10th Ebola outbreak.

• In South Kivu, WFP, in partnership with its partners Christian Aid and AIDES, distributed 119 MT of food to 9,100 beneficiaries displaced, returnees and host families in Abala, Lumanya and Kichula (Fizi territory – “moyens plateaux”) and Kalonge (Kalehe territory) to cover food needs. The Bukavu office achieved 188,000 beneficiaries considering all transfer modalities – in-kind, CBT, and nutrition activities.

• In Kasai, in-kind food distributions for the reporting period reached 55,000 conflict-affected persons in Nyanga and Kitangua health zones. The Tshikapa office reached almost 153,000 people across all emergency types of food assistance during March.

• In Kasai Central and Oriental, March in-kind food distributions have been completed in both provinces. The Kananga office reached some 59,000 people with in-kind food assistance. Meanwhile, access and security challenges in the beneficiary registration process have postponed the March cash distributions, which will continue through April to reach the revised targets with 67,000 beneficiaries planned for April.

• In Tanganyika, March in-kind distributions have finished. In total, the Kalemie office reached 104,000 beneficiaries. Cash distributions have also been completed; 67,000 beneficiaries were assisted. At last, 82,000 beneficiaries have been reached in March for Malnutrition treatment and prevention activities.

• In Ituri, CBT distributions have been affected by liquidity issues and mobility concerns due to the security conditions in the area. Alternatives to reach these areas by plane are under evaluation but procedures to enable this solution will likely delay assistance. Despite of the challenges, in March, the Bunia office reached some 34,000 beneficiaries with cash assistance, another 69,500 with in-kind food distributions, and 13,400 beneficiaries receiving malnutrition prevention and treatment activities.

• Treatment and prevention of acute malnutrition reached 268,000 beneficiaries in the month of
March. Additionally, all offices engaged in the planning and undertaking of baseline surveys for the prevention of acute malnutrition. The nutrition unit in collaboration with the M&E unit launched digitized process monitoring for implementing partners to strengthen oversight and follow-up on the implementation of the activities. At last, a few health zones remain difficult to reach due to broken bridges and dilapidated roads, including: Ankoro in Kalemie, and Fizi, Uvira, Nyangezi and Nundu in South Kivu.

Supply Chain

- The Matadi port operations are severely affected by constraints resulting from COVID-19 restrictions. Large congestion has been affecting operations of all operators in the port. For WFP, over 500 containers have been blocked in the port, affecting mainly distributions in the Kasai region. Discussions with several providers have provided re-assurance that all possible means are put in place to quickly dispatch the containers to Kinshasa and additional transporters have been identified / contracted to increase the capacity. However, it is expected that 3-5 months will be needed to entirely clear the backlog; hence, alternatives are under consideration to divert April and May planned arrivals, including to Pointe Noire in the Republic of Congo.

Clusters and Common Services

Food Security Cluster (FSC)

- Some 8.1 million beneficiaries were reached by the FSC actors with emergency food security assistance in 2020, out of which 2.9 million received cash assistance and 5.2 million received in-kind food assistance.

Logistics Cluster

- The Logistics Cluster continues to coordinate the management of the Logistics Portal for COVID-19, designed to help with the ordering and importing of COVID-19 response items, including medical kits and to provide a common logistics service in Goma and Kinshasa (intra-regional warehousing and transportation) to humanitarian actors working in the COVID 19 pandemic response. To benefit from this service, humanitarian actors should complete this form and send it to: DRCongo.ClusterCargo@wfp.org.
- The Logistics Cluster produces regular information management products, aiming to provide the humanitarian community with timely and accurate information to support operational decision-making. The latest products, including maps, advocacies and alerts on physical access constraints and air routes can be viewed and downloaded here.

UN Humanitarian Air Service

- Throughout March, UNHAS operated 906 flights, moving 74 MT of cargo, and transporting 4,296 passengers in DRC.
- Several domestic air operators started reusing the Mahagi airstrip in the Ituri province, which was closed for fixed wing aircrafts due to the ongoing runway rehabilitation works. UNHAS is now preparing to resume its regular operations in Mahagi. Until now, only UNHAS’s helicopter occasionally landed in Mahagi with advance notice.
- On 17 March, UNHAS DRC had its first general User Group meeting. The participants discussed topics such as finance, flight cancellations, and communication in general.

Bilateral Service Provision (BSP)

- To further extend its services (if requested to do so by partners), WFP aims at also becoming a licensed operator in the handling of pharmaceutical products that are temperature controlled. Therefore, work is ongoing by BSP for the preparedness of the potential implementation of Temperature Sensitive Logistics communally used for cold chain. Further feasibility studies are being carried out to ensure BSP readiness to provide this service to partners if requested/demanded.

Resilience activities

- In addition to the L3 operation, WFP is implementing multi-year resilience programmes in eastern DRC (North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika) and north west DRC (North Ubangi and South Ubangi) jointly with FAO and UNICEF, with collaboration being explored with UNFPA and UNHCR. Resilience building activities have been scaled up in 2020, benefitting around 517,500 people in the five provinces. The three agencies plan to further expand resilience activities to the Kasai region in 2021 as part of the Nexus approach.
- The resilience programme in DRC is increasingly following an approach based on the triple nexus promoting links between humanitarian action, development, and peace – thereby seeking to address immediate needs while simultaneously reducing needs in the longer term. Activities place emphasis on economic, social, technical, and financial interventions to revitalize local economies and livelihoods. Capacity strengthening provided to smallholder farmers helps stimulate economic recovery, through improved agriculture productivity, enhanced literacy, and livelihood diversification to strengthen food security and nutrition.
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