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Democratic Republic of the Congo: food for over 50,000 violence-affected people in North Kivu

Geneva/Kinshasa (ICRC) – The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Red Cross Society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo today began to distribute food to 53,000 people who have fled their villages in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since mid-July. The villagers have been displaced by military operations pitting the Congolese armed forces against an armed group to the north-east of Lake Kivu near the border with Uganda. Most of the displaced have been taken in by host families in and near the city of Oicha; others have been accommodated in schools and churches.

"The people who fled their homes took little or no food with them. They are in a very precarious situation, as are their host families," said Alexandra Manescu, who heads the ICRC office in Béni. "Military operations are continuing, making access to fields difficult."

Two months ago, the area was still relatively stable, but all the villages along the 20-kilometre stretch of road between Oicha and Erengeti have now been emptied. The displaced villagers will receive rations containing 30 kilograms of flour, 10 kilos of beans, five litres of oil and 500 grams of salt.

"This emergency aid should meet their short-term needs," said Ms Manescu. "But if the security situation does not improve, other actions will certainly need to be taken."

Since the military operations began, the ICRC has helped the Congolese Red Cross to collect bodies, mainly of fighters. The ICRC has also transferred 11 casualties to Béni hospital, and delivered medical supplies to the Erengeti referral medical centre.

As armed conflict drags on in North Kivu, the ICRC reminds all parties that they must comply with the rules of international humanitarian law, including in particular those protecting civilians and civilian objects. Medical personnel, medical facilities, vehicles assigned to assist the wounded and sick, and humanitarian workers bringing aid to the population must be spared and protected.

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