



## Impact of conflict on agriculture, food security and livelihoods in Ituri

### Summary of the DIEM-Impact report (August 2023)

This summary presents the main findings and recommendations of the **DIEM-Impact report** published following data collection in Ituri in August 2023. Analysis of the 3 598 household interviews, 58 focus groups and geospatial data clarifies the impact of the conflict and violence on agriculture, food security and livelihoods. The analysis pays particular attention to the households' residency status as a factor of vulnerability.

### Context in Ituri

The context prevailing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is marked by more than 40 years of conflict and very high levels of insecurity. The activity of numerous armed groups is a catalyst for political, economic and social issues. The northeastern province of Ituri is no exception and is regularly the scene of some of the country's bloodiest clashes.

In 2023, the situation in the Djugu and Mahagi territories deteriorated, with attacks by armed groups intensifying at

harvest time. Djugu remains the epicentre of the crisis, leading to massive population displacement.

The presidential elections in December 2023 and the gradual withdrawal of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo could, in the near future, contribute to an increase in the number of displaced persons.

### Displacement

In 2022, 4 million people were internally displaced, 95 percent of whom as a result of conflict. These displacements are taking place against a backdrop of acute food insecurity. Ituri province is the most affected, with 1.7 million people currently displaced within its borders, representing between 24 and 30 percent of the province's population. Over 36 000 of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) are from North Kivu and the remainder are from Ituri province. In addition, 82 percent of the IDPs (1.4 million) reside in host households, 15 percent in sites managed by the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (*Groupe sectoriel pour la coordination et la gestion des camps*), and 3 percent in spontaneous sites across the province.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> IOM (International Organization for Migration). 2023. Displacement Tracking Matrix: RDC — Ituri: Suivi des mobilités 9 (mars 2023). In : IOM. Geneva. [Cited 12 October 2023]. <https://dtm.iom.int/operations/ituri>



## Main results

### Profile of the households surveyed

- 8/10 households headed by women.
- Average age of the head of household: 37.
- Average of three displacements per household.
- 53 percent are involved in crop production and 16 percent in both crop and livestock production.
- Main sources of income in the three months preceding the assessment: production and sale of food crops (35 percent), and daily wage on a farm and other occasional jobs (27 percent).
- Bunia, Mahagi and Djugu: a majority of IDPs mentioned day labour as the only source of income enabling them to obtain enough food to survive.
- 60 percent of the interviewed households reported a drop in income in the three months preceding the survey.
- The vast majority of IDPs earned their income from agriculture prior to displacement. 86 percent of IDPs and 75 percent of returnees reported lower agricultural livelihoods than before displacement.

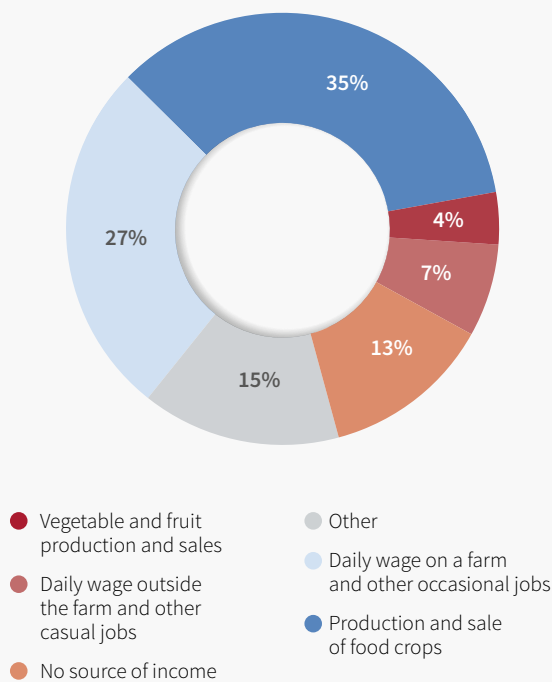
### Agricultural activities

- Main crops: cassava (39 percent), maize (20 percent), beans (13 percent).
- Crop production difficulties: 72 percent of crop producers.
- Plant diseases (71 percent), access to quality seeds (20 percent).
- Decrease in cultivated area compared to previous year: 55 percent of crop producers.
- Livestock production difficulties: 76 percent of livestock producers.
- Access to feed (46 percent), access to pasture (29 percent), theft of livestock (28 percent).
- Marketing difficulties: 60 percent of crop producers and 64 percent of livestock producers due, in particular, to rising transport and marketing costs and deteriorating transport routes.

### Land access modes and constraints

- Access to land and pasture more difficult for IDPs (30 percent) than for returnees (15 percent) and hosts (16 percent), especially in Bunia and Djugu.
- Main mode of access to land: rental (48 percent), inheritance (30 percent), concessions from customary authorities (15 percent).
- Main reasons limiting access to land: rent too high (57 percent), insecurity (12 percent), scarcity or unavailability of productive land (12 percent).

**Figure 1. Main sources of income in the three months preceding the survey**



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**Source of all figures:** FAO. 2023. The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Impact of conflict on agriculture, food security and livelihoods in Ituri – DIEM-Impact report, November 2023. In: *FAO Data in Emergencies Hub*. Rome. [Cited 12 October 2023]. <https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org>

### Intercommunal relations

- Only 5 percent reported that relations between communities are bad. This rate rises to 6 percent in Aru and 10 percent in Mahagi where the interviewed host households reported intercommunal conflicts over land and IDP conflicts over debt repayment.
- According to the interviewed households across all the territories, in the event of a land-related conflict (uncommon according to those surveyed), a peaceful solution can be found by the customary authorities, the village chief or the concerned parties themselves.

### Exposure to conflict and insecurity

- 54 percent of the surveyed households said they had been exposed to insecurity or conflict in the 12 months preceding the assessment.
- Exposure to insecurity varied according to the gender of the head of household (men: 58 percent; women: 51 percent), residence status (returnees: 45 percent; IDPs: 36 percent; host households: 2 percent) and territory (66 percent in Bunia, Irumu and Mambasa; 41 percent in Djugu; and 26 percent in Aru).



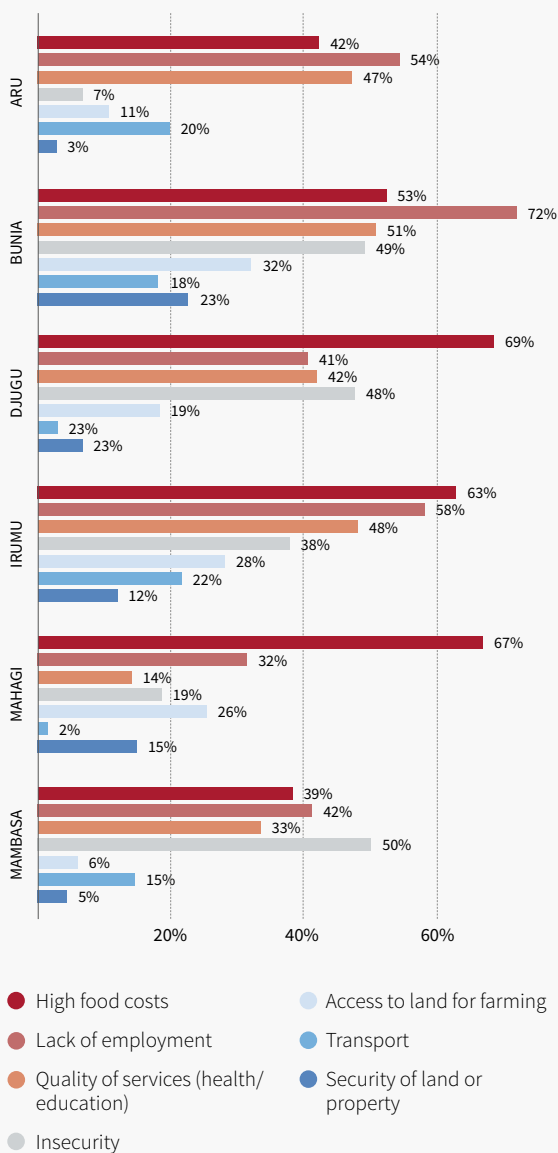
### Main factors limiting household quality of life

- High cost of food (55 percent of respondents), lack of jobs (49 percent), low quality of services (38 percent), insecurity (33 percent, but 42 percent for returnees).

### Impact of conflict on household health, nutrition and quality of life

- Reduced availability of food (63 percent), difficulty accessing drinking water (39 percent), reduced/no access to sanitary facilities (27 percent, but 43 percent in Bunia and 48 percent in Djugu).
- Factors limiting the availability of food: access to fields (54 percent), field abandonment (53 percent), damaged or lost crops (35 percent), death or loss of livestock (27 percent).

**Figure 2. Main factors limiting the respondent households' quality of life**



### Food security

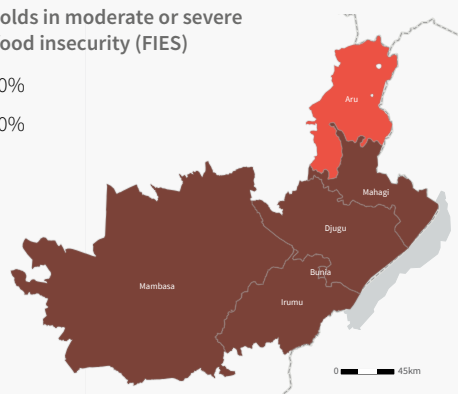
#### Prevalence of recent moderate or severe food insecurity (Food Insecurity Experience Scale)

- 81 percent of Ituri households are moderately or severely food insecure.
- Mahagi:** 91 percent
- Irumu:** 89 percent
- Bunia:** 88 percent
- Mambasa:** 82 percent
- Aru:** 54 percent
- 60 percent of households in Ituri are severely food insecure.

**Figure 3. Food insecurity prevalence**

Households in moderate or severe recent food insecurity (FIES)

- 40–60%
- 60–80%



#### Food consumption score (FCS)

- Only 10 percent of households have access to a varied diet.
- 64 percent have an average score and 26 percent a low score.
- Very little difference according to residency status: 91 percent of host households, and 95 percent of returnees and IDPs have an average or low FCS.

#### Coping strategies

- Very few differences according to household residency status.
- Significant differences between territories, partly explained by disparities in assistance received.



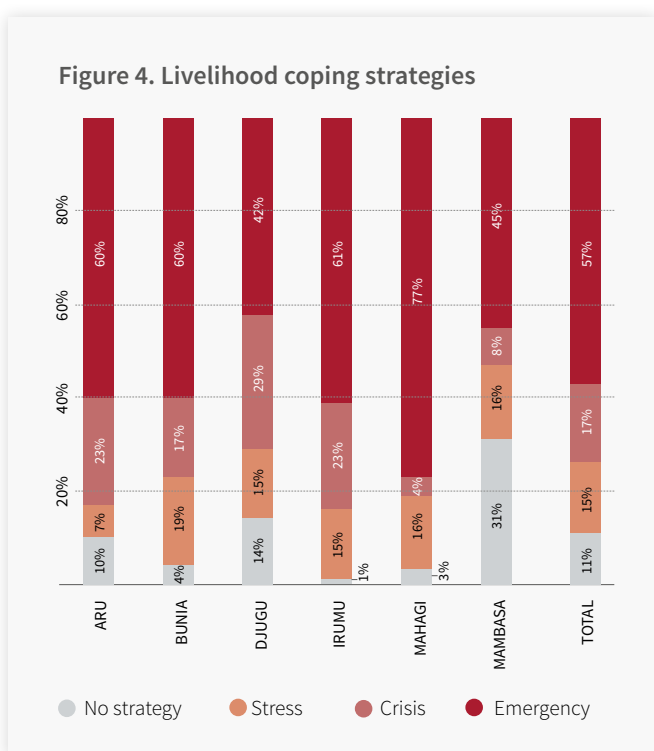




## Needs

- 96 percent of surveyed households reported the need for assistance in the six months following the survey.
- Cash (72 percent), food (71 percent) and inputs for crop production (41 percent).

- Homogeneity of needs according to household residency status and territory.  
**Mambasa:** distribution of food more in demand than cash  
**Aru:** particular interest in crop production training (34 percent) and marketing support (27 percent)



## Recommendations

### Conflict sensitivity

- Adopt a conflict-sensitive approach through contextual analysis, identifying conflict dynamics and key players to minimize negative impacts.
- Adopt adaptive programming, including budgetary flexibility, to anticipate and adapt to contextual changes (insecurity, natural disasters, etc.).

### Targeting

- Vulnerability and food insecurity rates are very similar between different household categories, and therefore cannot be the only targeting criteria: prioritize a localized geographic approach in areas exposed to insecurity and conflict (Irumu, Mahagi and Mambasa territories).
- The context analysis should also help to inform the targeting strategy and avoid creating intra and intercommunal tensions, and not limit targeting to vulnerability and food insecurity criteria alone.



- Involving communities in targeting criteria can help reduce the risk of tensions between those who have benefited from assistance and those who have not.

#### Coordination with humanitarian and governmental actors, and local authorities

- Engage with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN and governmental actors on provincial return policy and necessary conditions (security, access to services, means of production). Support customary and local authorities in the management of returnee families, and access to land and housing.

#### Gender

- Detailed gender analysis to better identify women's vulnerabilities.
- Provide a framework for monitoring and protecting women and girls, who are often victims of gender-based violence and exposed to insecurity when accessing fields.

#### Secure access to land

- Strengthen advocacy with local and customary authorities to enable secure and affordable access to productive land for displaced and returnee households, as well as the most vulnerable households.

#### Livelihoods and support for agricultural production

- Distribution of agricultural livelihood kits to returnees to support livelihoods.
- Develop a programme of conditional or unconditional cash distribution to facilitate access to land and agriculture despite the high cost of land rental.
- Support community-based access to markets and agriculture, particularly for displaced people.
- Identify displaced people who have lost their livelihoods, and support them with appropriate and sustainable income-generating activities.



- Continue assistance in Mambasa territory – where food insecurity has significantly decreased – and extend it to other territories affected by conflict and insecurity (mainly Irumu and Mahagi).

#### Conflict management

- Support awareness-raising on customary conflict management mechanisms between displaced and host communities, and collaborate with NGOs that have a peace mandate to articulate activities related to customary conflict management.

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