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DRC: Rapid Response Mechanism in South Kivu faces funding crisis

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23 May 2012, Minova: IDPs gather in front of a building provided by local health authorities. Each night the building provides shelter for some 100 displaced families. Credit: OCHA-Bukavu/Philippe Kropf

Halfway through 2012, the main UNICEF-OCHA programme to help displaced people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has nearly exhausted its financial resources.

The humanitarian crisis in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is characterized by huge movements of internally displaced people (IDPs) who have been uprooted from their homes by armed attacks or the threat of violence. South Kivu Province is the most seriously affected, with over 856,000 people internally displaced by the end of March 2012.

One of the most important ways of helping these IDPs is through the Programme for Rapid Response to Movements of Population (RRMP)—a fund jointly managed by OCHA and UNICEF. In 2012, the RRMP planned to help 1.2 million people who were newly displaced or returning home after displacement in North Kivu, South Kivu, Province Orientale and Katanga. The plans included programmes to provide water, shelter, sanitation and hygiene items, basic household supplies and emergency education. Resources were allocated according to the estimated IDP figures, UNICEF's funding priorities and the [Humanitarian Action Plan](#) for DRC.

However, six months into the year, this vital programme is running out of cash, while IDPs are in urgent need of aid.

"The RRMP has demonstrated that it is a critical response tool," says Florent Méhaule, OCHA acting Head of Office in South Kivu. "We don't know what the rest of the year holds. Every effort must be made so that there is no gap in funding."

Most of those displaced in South Kivu fled their villages with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Generally they do not find refuge in camps, but stay with host families who are often distant relatives. These temporary arrangements can stretch family resources to the limit, and the RRMP takes this into account.

In Kalehe, the RRMP caters to about 100,000 people living in 19,000 households through its NGO partners International Rescue Committee and the Italian-based Fondazione AVSI. These organizations targeted some 150,000 people with aid distributions in February and planned more for this month, but this will push the programme towards bankruptcy. In Fizi and Shabunda, some 35,000 IDPs and 65,000 returnees also need help. An estimated US\$2.5 million is urgently required to meet basic needs for the rest of this year.

The RRMP is supported by a consortium of donors, which in 2012 include the Pooled Fund, ECHO, and the Governments of the United States, Sweden, Canada and Japan. The programme can also receive funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund. The RRMP provided basic household goods, emergency education, and sanitation and hygiene support to nearly 1.5 million people in 2011 in eastern DRC.

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