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## Press release

### **SOLIDARITES provides aid for displaced populations in East D.R. Congo**

Following the recent armed conflict around Goma and in eastern Kivu between the Congolese national army (FARDC) and general Laurent Nkunda's rebel forces (the CNDP or National Congress for the People's Defense), over 170,000 people have fled the fighting and are now scattered throughout the Petit Nord and Grand Nord Kivu regions. The majority of these whole family groups who have just been displaced again were already included in the 218,600 displaced persons recently counted by the North Kivu Population Movements Commission. They are continually on the move and are exhausted from walking for kilometres, from lack of food and water, and by constant insecurity. They urgently need shelter, food aid, access to drinking water, hygiene and sanitation. Specific solutions are essential to fight cholera epidemics, which are endemic to refugee camps areas.

SOLIDARITES, an international humanitarian aid organisation which has been working in D.R.C. for 8 years, with a team of 70 expatriate volunteers and 790 Congolese workers, is providing assistance to the most vulnerable displaced groups. Our Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) teams are very active in East D.R.C. and are currently present in Beni and Goma (the RRM programme is carried out in partnership with UNICEF and OCHA – UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). We are currently working in the following areas of North Kivu: Sake, Kibati, Rutshuru, Kanyabayonga and in the Birambizo health district.

In Sake, a multi-disciplinary needs assessment commenced on Monday November 3rd. We have observed the return of displaced populations. Our action to provide sanitation for a health centre treating cholera patients is due to start at the end of the week.

In Kibati, a multi-disciplinary needs assessment is in progress. The construction of emergency sanitation facilities has already commenced at sites where displaced families have grouped together. A vulnerability study is in progress in order to provide an appropriate response to the needs of new arrivals in terms of non-food goods.

In Rutshuru, a multi-disciplinary needs assessment is planned as soon as secure access can be ensured. Sporadic fighting has again blocked access routes to this area since Tuesday November 4th. There are no precise estimates of the number of families present around Rutshuru/Kiwanja, however there are indeed displaced families in this area and SOLIDARITES will attempt to reach them. In parallel, projects to consolidate water capacity and water facilities in these two towns will be carried out very soon by SOLIDARITES' teams, in order to improve the structural availability of water in these areas which regularly provide refuge for displaced populations.

In Kanyabayonga, on Monday November 3rd, SOLIDARITES' teams resumed the provision of drinking water using lorries (between 80 and 90m<sup>3</sup> of water per day) for recently displaced populations in this area. These new arrivals have swollen the ranks of the 3,700 families who had already taken refuge in south Lubero, to whom SOLIDARITES distributed non-food products last month. The displaced persons in this area came from Rutshuru, Kiwanja, Rubare, Kako and Kalengera. Sanitation activities and the distribution of protein-rich biscuits are due to commence at the end of the week. The distribution of essential items will also be planned if this does not place the displaced populations at risk from looting.

Finally, in Birambizo health district, a multi-disciplinary needs assessment will commence this Friday among 15,000 identified displaced families, security conditions permitting. Water and sanitation activities and distributions of essential commodities are planned in the coming days, according to the results of our assessments.

Despite the difficulties in reaching displaced populations and uncertainty about how the situation on the ground will evolve, the priority for SOLIDARITES' teams is to reach the most vulnerable groups and to provide a rapid response to their most urgent needs.

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**To find out more about SOLIDARITES: [www.solidarites.org](http://www.solidarites.org)**

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