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More must be done to overcome obstacles in providing aid – UN official



Assistant Secretary-General Catherine Bragg (right) on a visit to the DRC in June 2011

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Aid workers and peacekeepers face a range of security and logistical challenges as they assist the most vulnerable, but there are steps they can take to improve the plight of those in need, a senior United Nations relief official stressed today.

“Among humanitarian partners we need to revisit our analysis of security, and seek ways that allow us to stay, rather than to leave,” Catherine Bragg, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, told a news conference at UN Headquarters.

“When we do that, when we have more access, we can gain better understanding and more information on humanitarian needs and then provide the life-saving assistance,” she said.

Earlier this month, Ms. Bragg visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where violence, displacement, deep poverty and fear continue to affect millions of civilians in areas such as North Kivu, South Kivu or Orientale provinces.

An estimated 1.7 million people are internally displaced in the DRC as a result of conflict, most of them with great needs. Even in areas not affected by conflict, humanitarian indicators are alarming and call for assistance, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)).

“The Democratic Republic of Congo is a vast country and part of the problem for both people on the ground who need aid and for the humanitarians trying to get to them is that it is simply very difficult to move from one place to another,” she stated.

The places where people need help the most are increasingly in very remote areas, including in the Kivus, in Province Orientale, and in Province Equateur, she noted.

“I am particularly concerned that thousands of people live in fear of attack by armed groups, who kill maim, rape, kidnap, loot and burn down houses,” she said. “Those who flee are in the most remote areas, often living in isolated communities. This remoteness makes them even more vulnerable as bringing aid is a logistical challenge.”

Around 1.2 million people remain displaced in North and South Kivu due to attacks and insecurity. “These displacements too are occurring in the more remote areas where access is difficult because of insecurity but also because there are few roads,” said Ms. Bragg.

In Bunia, she was told by aid workers and peacekeepers about the challenges they face in trying to provide aid and protection as insecurity prevents them from reaching around 30 per cent of the people who need help.

“But what I saw in parts of eastern DRC also shows that the situation is evolving,” Ms. Bragg stated. “The return of 600,000 people to their homes in South Kivu is a testimony to the massive humanitarian enterprise that has managed to address, and continues to address, humanitarian needs.”

She added that more involvement from the international community will also help bring stability to people. This can include expanding stabilization efforts and development initiatives, particularly in remote areas, and assisting the Government in increasing local administration and police in remote areas.

In addition, the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC ([MONUSCO](#)) and the humanitarian community should replicate the good practice that has emerged in the past few years that have helped stabilize the situation in parts of the Kivus, she added.

“As humanitarians, we cannot end the suffering of the people, but we have to continuously do more to limit it,” Ms. Bragg stated.

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