

## 'Don't turn a blind eye' to dire situation of children in DR Congo's Kasai region – UNICEF

7 August 2017 – The world must not turn a blind eye to the dire situation of children and families in the Grand Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) said today, stressing that nothing can justify terrible acts of abuse against women and children.

“Children and women tell us of terrible acts of abuse. Many children have been recruited by armed forces, drugged and caught in the violence. Nothing can justify these actions,” said Marie-Pierre Poirier, UNICEF Regional Director for West and Central Africa, in a statement.

Over the past 12 months, more than 1.4 million people – including 850,000 children – have been forced from their homes, and their lives turned upside down by widespread acts of extreme violence. More than 200 health centres have been destroyed, and one in four health centres is no longer functioning normally. An estimated 400,000 children are at risk of severe acute malnutrition.

Children have lost a year of education, as hundreds of schools have been targeted and looted, teachers killed or fled for safety. Teachers are not able to go to work, while parents are scared to send their children to school.

She urged all parties to the conflict to protect children, end grave violations against children, and preserve schools and health services.

“Humanitarian actors must have unhindered humanitarian access to affected populations so that we can reach all those in need of assistance,” she said.

UNICEF is responding to the escalating humanitarian needs, “but unless this violence stops, our best work will never be enough,” she said. “The lives of many thousands of children are at risk.”