

[New Year could bring more misery to children in DR Congo's restive Kasai region, warns UNICEF](#)

12 December 2017 – New Year could bring more misery to children in DR Congo's restive Kasai region, warns UNICEF. In the coming year, severe acute malnutrition could claim the lives of more than 400,000 children under the age of five in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's volatile Kasai region, the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) warned Tuesday.

"This [nutrition crisis and food insecurity](#) in the Kasai region follows the displacement of thousands of families who have been living for months in very harsh conditions," said Tajudeen Oyewale, the acting head of UNICEF in the African nation, in a news release underlining the scale of the catastrophe.

"The true scale of the problem is becoming clear as people are returning home in some areas where the security situation has improved and health services have started functioning again."

According to estimates, at least 750,000 children across the Kasai region are acutely malnourished and some 25 health zones are in a situation of nutritional crisis – a state when the severely has exceeded emergency thresholds.

The dire situation is primarily the result of over 18 months of insecurity and violence that has resulted in displacement of over 1.4 million and has severely reduced agricultural production with some two-thirds of households not to work their land to grow crops.

The level of food insecurity is not expected to improve before June next year as the planting seasons for crops which would have been harvested by then has already been lost.

Making matters much worse is the "devastation" of health facilities, according to UNICEF.

Approximately 220 health centres have been destroyed, looted or damaged, access to treatment for communicable diseases as well as care for the children severely malnourished extremely difficult.

"Guaranteeing access to basic health and nutrition services to returning populations is essential to help malnourished children survive and thrive," said Mr. Oyewale.

In response to the crisis, UNICEF and partners provided therapeutic nutritional care to more than 50,000 children aged between 6-59 months in the region this year. However, lack of resources has severely impacted aid delivery.

With just days remaining in the year, the UN agency has received a mere 15 per cent of the funds it required for 2017.