

Thousands in DR Congo's restive Kasais to benefit from UN food and nutrition efforts, but challenges remain

20 December 2017 – Against the backdrop of severe hunger as a result of conflict in central Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations emergency food relief and food security agencies are stepping up their response to assist more than 100,000 people.

“These [interventions will not only protect vulnerable people](#), but help revive agricultural production and boost social cohesion in communities affected by the crisis,” Claude Jibidar, the head of the UN World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) operations in the country, said Wednesday.

Together with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)), WFP will distribute fortified maize meal, legumes, fortified vegetable oil and iodized salt, as well as cash, 18,000 households – whether displaced, returnee or host families – across DRC's Greater Kasai province.

In particular, children aged 6-59 months, and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers will be provided with special nutrition supplement treatments for three months.

On its part, FAO will supply vegetable-growing kits – hoe, rake, spade, watering can, and vegetable and fruit seeds – to allow families to eat for two months and sell what they don't consume.

“We are able to ramp up our efforts and work closely together to prevent people, including young children, from dying of hunger and malnutrition,” added Alexis Bonte, the acting head of FAO programme in the country.

Also on the cards is trainings on raising guinea pigs as a source of protein; processing and marketing bamboo for firewood, utensils, baskets, canoes and fishing equipment; and setting up vegetable gardens near women's associations and health centres.

The programmes will be rolled out in partnership with the country's Ministry of Agriculture and local non-governmental organizations.

Resources required for the efforts have been made available through a \$10 million funding assistance provided by the Government of Belgium.

'Tragedy' felt by Congolese people 'demands' greater solidarity

However, despite the initiative, the humanitarian crisis in the region continues to grow and become more complicated.

Across the strife-torn Kasai region, formerly a rich maize-growing region, more than 3.2 million people suffer from severe hunger and there is

widespread malnutrition among children.

The conflict has also driven over a million people from their homes and farmlands.

“The tragedy experienced by the Congolese people demands greater solidarity,” said the two UN agencies, underlining the need for lasting peace that allows everyone “to grow their own food, rebuild their livelihoods and secure a more prosperous future.”