



PART OF A SERIES OF  
THEMATIC PAPERS  
ON THE DRC



# IDPs' decision-making in the DRC

Defining a framework to support resilience in humanitarian responses to multiple displacement

International Alert.





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April 2015

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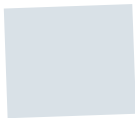
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Cover photo: A village chief speaks out in a meeting in Lweba, Fizi, South Kivu. He hosts displaced people in his home, having experienced displacement himself. Credit: M. Kesmaecker-Wissing, March 2015

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Norwegian Refugee Council  
Chemin de Balxert 7-9  
CH-1219 Châtelaine (Geneva)  
Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 799 0700 / Fax: +41 22 799 0701  
[www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)





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# 1

## Introduction

This is the first in a series of thematic papers that contribute to a project undertaken by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), International Alert and Climate Interactive to increase resilience in the context of multiple displacement.<sup>1</sup> The project aims to gather evidence and improve understanding of how multiple displacement impacts the resilience of those affected in order to improve humanitarian responses to the phenomenon.

Our analysis draws on data collected in Masisi and Uvira territories of North and South Kivu provinces in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) between September and December 2014. We carried out 1,275 surveys - 672 in Masisi and 603 in Uvira - 80 focus group discussions and 77 key informant interviews. The research forms the first part of a three-year project, and this paper sets out the insights gained.

We draw four main conclusions that will be explored further in our ongoing research:

- Any humanitarian response that seeks to promote resilience to displacement must be designed to improve the options available to those affected and support the choices they make.
- A more nuanced appreciation of the concepts of security, economic independence and social networks is a precursor to understanding and potentially guiding the decisions internally displaced people (IDPs) make.
- Humanitarian programming that aims to promote resilience to displacement must be based on an improved understanding of the interplay of the security, economic and social factors that shape IDPs' decisions.
- Responses must account for the ways in which individuals, families and communities juggle these factors, and their preferences and tolerance in terms of different types of displacement and solutions.



Meeting with women from host families in Katala, Masisi, North Kivu. Photo: IDMC/M. Kesmaecker-Wissing, March 2015

DRC has experienced forced displacement on a vast scale since the 1990s, both within and across its borders. As of December 2014, the country was home to around 2.7 million IDPs, of whom 1.47 million were living in the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu.<sup>2</sup> The level of armed violence in eastern DRC has decreased over time, from the regional wars of 1996 to 2003 to the transition to democratic rule in 2006 and since, but it remains high – the result of weak governance and the presence of various domestic and foreign armed groups with shifting agendas and criminal motives.

Localised and inter-communal conflict in the region often has an ethnic dimension, but it is primarily a struggle for the control of land and natural resources, and with it political and traditional power. Land is both a means of subsistence and strongly linked to identity, status and power. Political representation at the local level is directly linked to “ethnic territories”. There is a structural link between claims to land and claims to political autonomy and power.

Ethnic communities that lack local representation and autonomy have long made claims to land, which would give their chiefs more political power. Their claims are often resisted by neighbouring communities, and the result is violence.<sup>3</sup> The complex mix of state and non-state armed groups fighting over interlinked grievances has perpetuated a cycle of threat, trauma, retaliation and militarisation, and has ultimately left the civilian population chronically impoverished and vulnerable. Prolonged and multiple displacements have become commonplace.

### Weaknesses in the current humanitarian response framework

The humanitarian community has been working in the Kivus for more than 20 years, but it has struggled to provide the assistance and protection IDPs and other affected communities need to cope, particularly in the context of multiple and protracted displacement.<sup>4</sup> As noted in a recent evaluation of the humanitarian response in DRC, “the international community finds itself in a ‘no-man’s land’, neither operating in a traditional emergency context nor moving towards a more transitional setting wherein development actors could take over”.<sup>5</sup>

The response to displacement has been hampered by a series of structural challenges that have prevented a

more flexible and long-term framework for assistance. Responses are short-lived, they often come late – weeks or months after displacement has taken place – and they tend only to address particular needs at certain moments during displacement. Little if any attention is given to helping beneficiaries establish and maintain their resilience throughout displacement or to recognising its distinct stages and associated specific needs. Current interventions tend not to improve IDPs’ capacity to withstand future shocks.

The humanitarian community has so far been unable to fully unpick the push and pull factors that drive displacement in DRC. Without such a holistic concept of the “system” of displacement within which the range of impacts of a given intervention could be understood over time, it will ultimately do little to protect and improve resilience.

IDPs’ and host communities’ needs are both widespread and prolonged, but despite the often protracted and repeated nature of displacement, they are perceived primarily as a humanitarian issue. There are few efforts to involve the development or peacebuilding sectors, or to learn lessons from them. IDPs are rarely included in development interventions, despite the fact that the achievement of durable solutions requires not only humanitarian response during crises, but sustained engagement throughout the displacement process. A longer-term vision that also incorporates development and peacebuilding approaches is needed.

Within the humanitarian field, barriers to effective action have been created by sector-specific work streams. The cluster system has guided humanitarian interventions since its establishment in 2005, and most humanitarian organisations define their expertise and initiatives along sectoral lines. There are positive aspects to this approach. It ensures greater accountability for assistance delivery by advancing minimum standards for response by sector, which humanitarian agencies have committed to upholding. Such standards provide a yardstick against which donors, governments and beneficiaries can assess the humanitarian response to a crisis and react accordingly.

In order to compensate for the weaknesses of a sector-based approach, there have been significant efforts to establish multi-sectoral responses and ensure that “cross-cutting” concerns ranging from gender issues to environmental degradation are addressed. Faced with having to prioritise which interventions are most needed

across sectors, however, the humanitarian community in DRC has struggled to weigh the options against each other and respond with appropriate sector-based interventions. It lacks a framework to evaluate which response or series of responses is likely to have the greatest overall impact in addressing the negative consequences of displacement.

The humanitarian sector has tended to assume that IDPs move once to a location that is reasonably secure, where they stay until they are able to return to their places of origin, integrate locally or settle elsewhere in the country. Responses are largely based on this assumption, and as such do not address the needs of people forced to flee a number of times.<sup>6</sup> Nor do short-term, reactive interventions take into account that, in many cases, durable solutions are not immediately apparent or available.<sup>7</sup> Many if not most people who flee conflict will remain displaced for years, and they need to recover their basic necessities, capital assets and their social and psychological wellbeing each time they are forced to flee again.

### A shift in thinking: Understanding the 'system' of multiple displacement in DRC

The majority of civilians in the Kivus have made decisions that have allowed them to survive conflict and displacement, and often without significant humanitarian assistance. Efforts by the humanitarian community to increase coping capacities and improve the resilience of individuals and communities affected by displacement, must first recognise that they have already shown substantial resilience to the myriad shocks they have faced.

Resilience, however, is not a static concept but rather a continuum that ranges from a person surviving the shocks they face to their ability to adapt to the changes brought about in ways that improve their situation. Humanitarian interventions should seek to build on the strategies that communities have already developed to cope with displacement in order to progressively improve resilience in the face of repeated shocks.

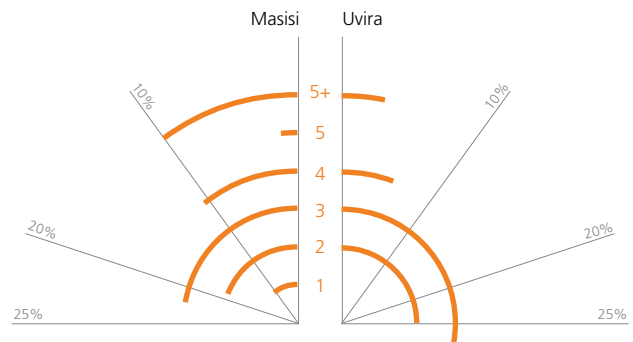
In order to do so, there is a need to better understand the many interlinked factors that influence IDPs' decision making, and the way in which those factors change over time. Forced displacement will continue as long as there is conflict in eastern DRC, but a clearer understanding of the drivers behind IDPs' decisions at the individual, family and community level should enable humanitarians to better support their choices about when, how and where to move, and respond to the needs that arise from their displacement.

## Displacement in the Kivus

As Michael Cernea describes, displacement physically removes people from their homes and land, leading them to seek refuge with host communities, in formal camps or informal sites and settlements.<sup>8</sup> It depletes communities' physical assets, such as household items, agricultural equipment and seed stock, which in turn further impoverishes those affected by restricting or eliminating livelihood options and sources of income. It also interrupts schooling and can lead to the long-term loss of educational opportunities.

At the individual level, displacement often has direct psychological impacts as a result of the violence or losses experienced. At the community level, it reduces social cohesion and leadership, and shared services and inter-community assistance previously available to vulnerable and marginalised members may no longer be so. Such impacts tend to become more pronounced with each displacement, rendering IDPs who have been displaced a number of times over a protracted period increasingly vulnerable to negative long-term outcomes.

**Graph 1: Question: How often have you been displaced?**



Host families and communities also experience successive waves of impoverishment with each influx of IDPs. They are often already extremely vulnerable themselves, and the additional burden of hosting IDPs can have a significant impact on their ability to sustain their livelihoods and further reduce their access to basic services. Each influx of IDPs adds to the pressure on a host community's increasingly scarce resources, and raises the risk of tensions between them.

Displacement takes many forms in North and South Kivu, but for the purposes of this research it can be grouped broadly into three categories - short-term and short distance; long-term and long distance; and pendular. Each is associated with a different range of risks and opportunities in terms of IDPs' physical safety, economic security, livelihoods, social networks and assets. Factors that affect their resilience are also likely to vary significantly from one type of displacement to another.



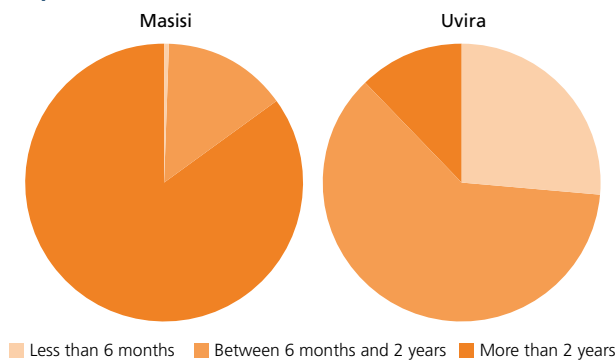


Hail storm at the displacement camp in Kibabi, Masisi, North Kivu. Photo: IDMC/M. Kesmaecker-Wissing, March 2015

Short-term displacement tends to last for a few weeks or a month at the most, and generally takes place over relatively short distances from IDPs' places of habitual residence. Unless further incidents take place or the fear of renewed violence is high, IDPs tend to move back fairly quickly to their homes or the places from which they have just fled. Such displacement often goes unnoticed or at least unverified, because by the time humanitarian organisations are ready to deploy, the people in question have already moved on.

Our research shows that short-term displacement is much more common in Uvira than Masisi territory, possibly because Uvira and South Kivu more generally have been much more affected than North Kivu by the activities of smaller armed groups and local defence forces such as the Mai-Mai.<sup>9</sup> Such groups tend not to have the capacity to carry out sustained offensives, meaning that IDPs are likely to be able to return more quickly. Masisi, in contrast, is affected by larger armed groups that frequently shift alliances and clash regularly and often for extended periods of time.

**Graph 2: Question: How long have you been displaced?**



The humanitarian community is more familiar with long-term, long distance displacement, which tends to be more prevalent in North Kivu. In Masisi and Rutshuru, it is the most common form encountered in spontaneous displacement sites and in camps run by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Many long-term IDPs receive information about their places of origin and express the intention to eventually return, but most have no access to them during their displacement. The humanitarian community has been criticised for concentrating too much on the needs of long-term IDPs, and even more so for focussing its interventions on displacement camps and sites where beneficiaries are more accessible.<sup>10</sup>



Young displaced men in Katale, Masisi, North Kivu. Photo: IDMC/A. Pagot, March 2015

Pendular displacement is common throughout the Kivus, and is perhaps the dominant form in large parts of South Kivu. It can be short or medium term, and is characterised by IDPs returning to their places of origin during the day or intermittently to farm or maintain other livelihoods. It is important to note that pendular displacement is not a viable option for all community members displaced from the same place. It frequently involves significant risks, because those who engage in it move daily in and out of areas known to be insecure and in some cases where fighting is still taking place.

It is often only men who shuttle back and forth between their place of displacement and origin, though in some cases it is deemed safer for women to do so. Ethnic linkages or tensions with the groups fighting in a given area also contribute to determining whether or not pendular movements are a viable option.

The majority of displacement in the Kivus is reactive, but many people also flee pre-emptively to avoid anticipated shocks. Preventative displacement tends to be short-term and short distance, and is often referred to as “running for the bush”. It is a first response to an expected attack, but if the threat materialises and results in prolonged fighting, preventative displacement can become long-term. People

caught up in such situations tend to move on from the bush in search of other more stable places of refuge.

Large-scale preventative displacements tend to take place in response to rumoured or officially announced offensives by armed groups, including government forces, or as a result of rising tensions within a community that may lead to attacks by local defence militias. Targeted attacks on a community can also drive preventative displacement. In Uvira, the massacre of 30 people in June 2014 led other community members to flee to a neighbouring village to wait out the possibility of further violence. Preventative displacement is observed regularly in the Kivus, but most IDPs interviewed for our research did not think it would have been an option for them, nor did they identify it as a strategy that might help them to avoid conflict.

Many IDPs and members of host communities in the Kivus have experienced more than one type of displacement, and some have experienced two types at the same time. A long-term IDP may secure access to land in their place of refuge, and then undertake pendular movements back to it when displaced for the second time. Others may take measures in pursuit of durable solutions, including through post-displacement migration. As such, any response to IDPs' needs must take into account the ways in which individuals, families and communities move across these categories, and their preferences and tolerance for different types of displacement.

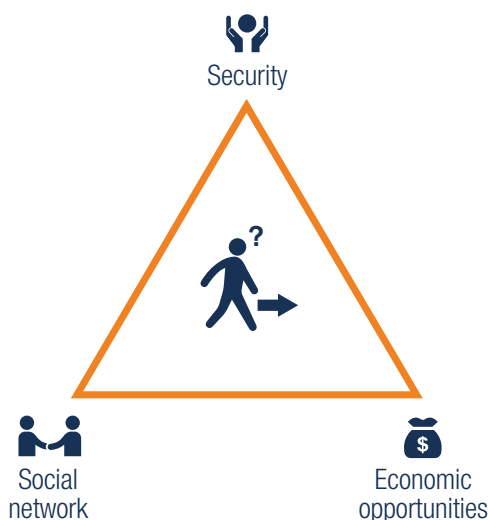
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## Decision drivers: How do IDPs choose to move?

Resilience to displacement is built from various sources at both the individual and community level. If vulnerability is defined as the propensity to experience loss or damage as a result of exposure to hazards, in this case primarily external threats of violence, resilience can be seen as the ability to absorb a major shock by resorting to temporary coping mechanisms and to recover within a reasonable timeframe.<sup>11</sup> In DRC, displacement is both a coping mechanism and a shock in and of itself, which can lead to deepening vulnerability and impoverishment.<sup>12</sup> As such, resilience must be understood both in terms of the underlying ability to recover from the effects of conflict, and decision making that mitigates the risks inherent in displacement itself.

Our research in Masisi and Uvira suggests that decision making about displacement involves the interplay of three broad concerns - individual and family security; economic opportunity and ability to maintain livelihoods; and the strength of social networks. As one displaced woman told a focus group discussion in Burungu, Masisi territory: "The factors that determine where we go to are, first of all, the security situation in the place we go to. After you first move, you can think about where to find your family and where you can be employed to work in someone else's fields." Programming designed to improve IDPs' resilience must be based on an understanding of how individuals, families and communities balance these three factors when choosing how, when and where to move.

Figure 1: How IDPs choose to move



### Security

The most cited driver of displacement in the Kivus is insecurity caused by armed conflict. Its causes and consequences, however, and perceptions of insecurity related to conflict vary, and they are rarely analysed in the framework of promoting resilience. Ninety-eight per cent of IDPs interviewed in Masisi and 90 per cent in Uvira said they had fled conflict, but they have often moved to places where the threat of further conflict and the likelihood of having to move again are high. IDPs who engage in pendular displacement also accept security risks in returning periodically to their place of origin.

**“ At the time we are fleeing, the first reflex is to run to the village or place where bullets are not popping, a place from which you have good memories from the last time you were displaced there, where you have friends, family members, members of your congregation ...**

- Male IDP, Nyakabere, Uvira

In both cases, the decisions taken strongly suggest that when seeking to support IDPs' and host communities' capacity to cope with displacement, humanitarians need a more accurate understanding both of the way in which they perceive and define insecurity, and the push and pull factors that can shift their perception or definition.

Low intensity armed conflict is an ongoing concern in both Masisi and Uvira. Several armed groups are active in Masisi, and regular outbreaks of violence occur. These are either the result of competition for the control of territory, which often has an ethnic dimension; or of military operations that push groups into new areas, where they clash with others already established there. The main armed groups operating in Masisi are Nyatura,<sup>13</sup> ACPLS<sup>14</sup> and FDLR.<sup>15</sup> Others primarily concentrated in Walikale territory also have an impact in some areas of Masisi, including Raia Mutomboki,<sup>16</sup> NDC-Cheka,<sup>17</sup> Guides-MAC<sup>18</sup> and FDC.<sup>19</sup>

A number of armed groups are also active in Uvira, and on the Rusizi plain long-standing inter-ethnic conflict between the majority Bafuliiru and other groups such as the Barundi has increased since July 2013, causing

displacement. FDLR causes regular displacements on the Moyens plateaux towards Mwenga territory.

IDPs surveyed during our research were found to have been displaced more frequently and for longer periods in Masisi than in Uvira. Seventy-four per cent in Masisi said they had fled their villages three or more times, compared with 34 per cent in Uvira. Sixty-three per cent in Masisi said they had moved at least three times since their initial displacement, compared with 47 per cent in Uvira.

Eighty-seven per cent of Masisi respondents said they had been displaced for two years or more, and fewer than one per cent for less than six months. In Uvira, only 9.4 per cent said they had been displaced for two years or more, and 62 per cent for between six months and two years.

As would be expected, most respondents in both territories said that their initial decision to flee was taken to avoid imminent harm. As one displaced woman from Sange, Uvira, put it: "When you flee from an atrocity, there is no need to know if where you are going there is a friend or a family member because the direction to take depends on security."

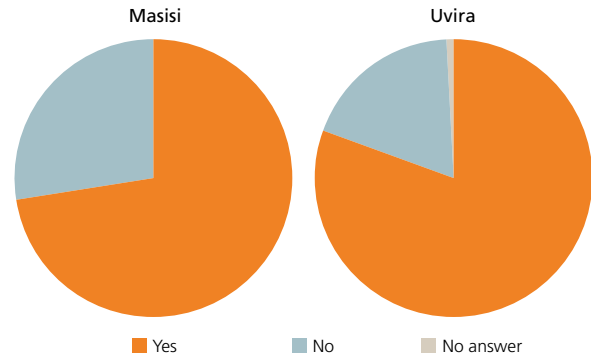
Few IDPs, however, feel that they find the security they seek when they flee, given their comments during focus group discussions. Across both territories, 77.5 per cent of survey respondents said they had "only sometimes" or "never" felt secure in their places of refuge over the past month. Very few said they had been directly affected by armed clashes or fighting, but 62 per cent said they had suffered theft or physical threats before their displacement, and 57 per cent during it. This suggests an undercurrent of criminal insecurity that affects IDPs and the general population alike.

Participants in focus group discussions said that increased theft is seen as inevitable in areas affected by displacement, particularly the stealing of produce from fields near places where IDPs are concentrated. A health worker in Bweremana, Masisi, suggested that the discontinuation of humanitarian assistance may be a factor: "Assistance no longer comes for the displaced and that makes the host community suffer. When [the displaced] have nothing left to eat, our fields become theirs. They steal our produce more and more."

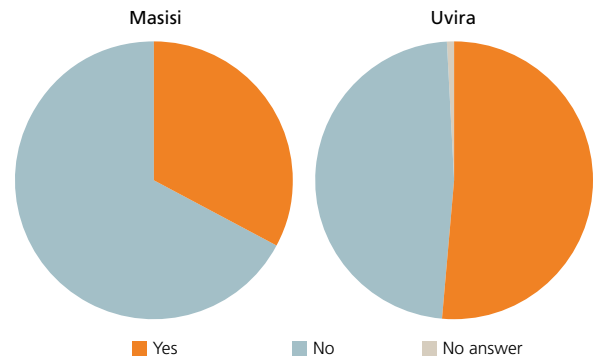
Focus group discussions and survey results also suggest that security is a significant factor in IDPs' decisions about whether or not to return to their places of origin. Seventy-three per cent of respondents to our quantitative survey said that a guarantee of security would do most to encourage them to go home. That said, 75 per cent of respondents reported having experienced security incidents before their displacement, far exceeding the

39 per cent who did so in their places of refuge. This may be because their places of refuge are genuinely safer, but it may also be that IDPs are more careful in taking measures to prevent security incidents, given the experiences that led to their displacement and the fact that they are in a less familiar environment.

**Graph 3: Question: Did you experience insecurity prior to displacement?**



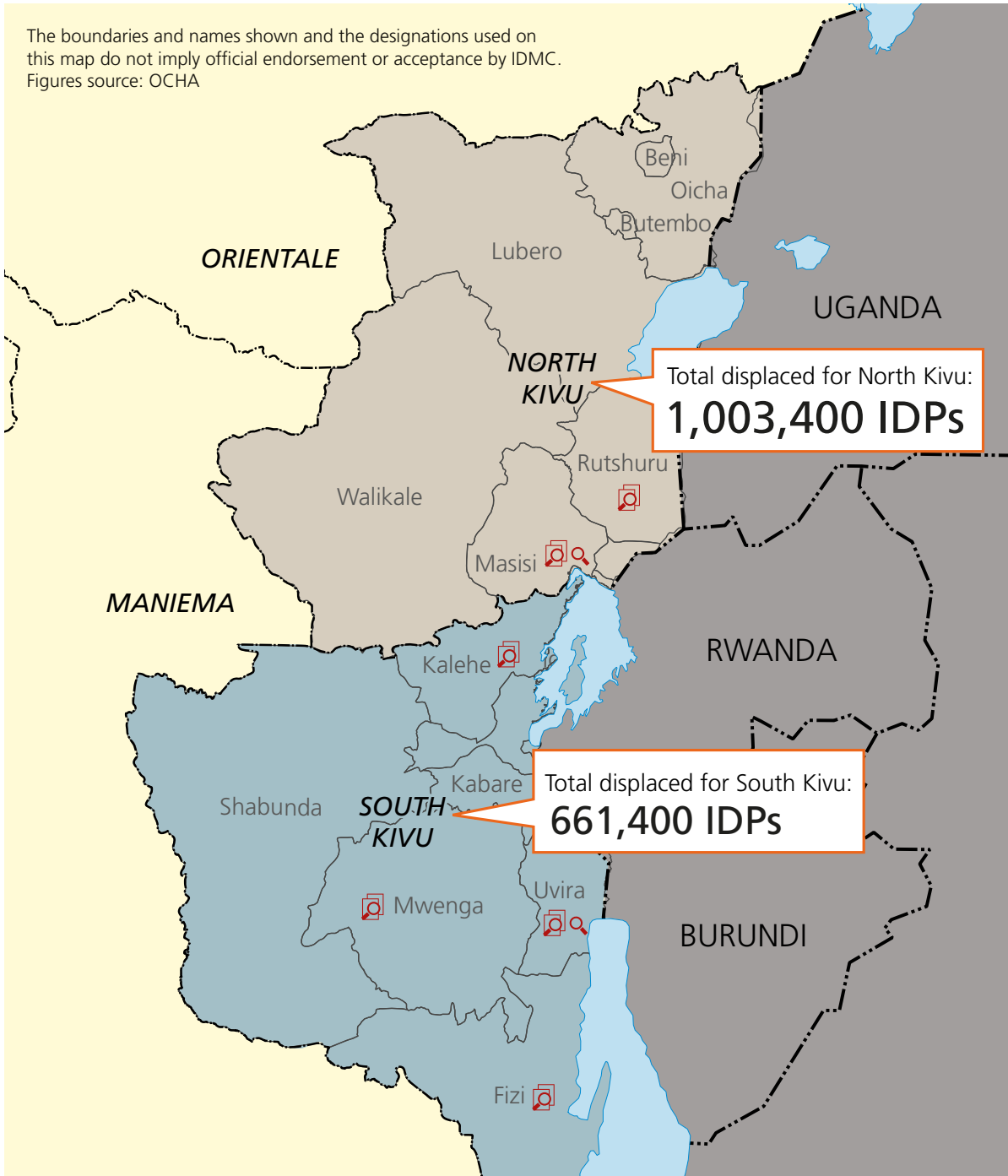
**Question: Have you experienced insecurity in your place of refuge?**



Our research indicates that beyond their initial flight from imminent threat, IDPs' decision-making about their security is influenced as much by issues of familiarity and social networks as it is by their pure physical safety. In other words, people tend to feel safer if they are close to people they know and that they are more likely to find protection in such circumstances than in a place where they know no one.

The seriousness and duration of the threat that initially causes displacement is likely to have a significant impact on how far IDPs flee. Sustained attacks by larger armed groups are more likely to drive people further from their places of origin. Our research, however, suggests that economic and social issues influence their choice of destination and the length of their displacement as much as pure security concerns.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IDMC. Figures source: OCHA



Total displaced for North Kivu:  
**1,003,400 IDPs**

Total displaced for South Kivu:  
**661,400 IDPs**

**IDPs and project research activities in the Kivu** As of 31 March 2015

- Capital
- International boundary
- Provincial boundary
- Territorial boundary
- Territories which the project focuses on
- 🔍 Territories used by the research for first paper
- North Kivu
- South Kivu

## Economic wellbeing and opportunity

Concerns about access to livelihoods are fundamental to decision making about displacement in the Kivus. Farming is the main source of livelihoods in Masisi and Uvira, making land most families' primary capital asset. It is also IDPs' main source of income. Seventy-one per cent of respondents across both territories said agricultural labour had been so during the previous week.

Displacement denies IDPs access to their own land and hampers their ability to cultivate that which may be available in their places of refuge. The extent to which they are able to continue to farm depends on a number of factors, including the time they had to prepare for displacement, how far they flee, the number of times they are displaced and for how long. Given, however, that agricultural activities are by nature long-term, multiple displacement represents an enormous challenge to their being able to maintain their livelihoods.

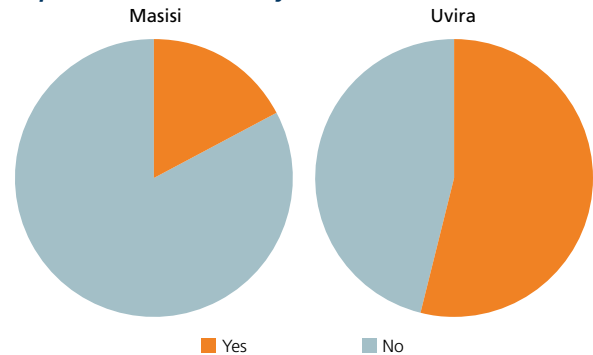
Agriculture remains fundamental to household economies during displacement, but its role changes and particularly when displacement is long-term and long-distance. Forty-two per cent of host families own livestock, compared with only 12 per cent of IDPs, suggesting that animal husbandry is a much less viable livelihood in displacement. IDPs said their livestock had often been sold, stolen or killed in the early stages of their displacement.

“ **[IDPs] are well accepted, in that the host community views them as cheap labour**

- Health centre nurse, Bweremana, Masisi

Pendular displacement is largely a livelihoods strategy, but when it is no longer considered a viable option, IDPs are often forced to switch from cultivating their own land, be it rented or owned, to working as day labourers on other people's farms for money or in lieu of food. This is particularly evident in Masisi, where only 17 per cent of the IDPs we surveyed said they had access to land. Of those who did, 48 per cent said they had to walk for more than an hour to reach their fields, compared with 29 per cent of host families who had to cover similar distances. In Uvira, the figures were 85 per cent and 72 per cent respectively.

**Graph 4: Question: Do you have access to land?**



IDPs with transportable assets that enable them to purchase or rent land or establish other economic activities in their places of refuge are generally in a better position to deal with the effects of displacement. The president of a local association in Burungu, Masisi, said that IDPs “chop wood to produce charcoal. At the moment, they undertake occasional work, such as cultivating for others or transporting charcoal to be self-sufficient. They suffer because occasional jobs became rarer every day.”

Our research revealed a clear distinction between day labour dynamics in Masisi and Uvira. In some parts of Masisi, particularly in areas around camps, a semi-organised market has been established, whereby people wanting to work gather early in the morning to be picked. The young and healthy and those whose have their own tools are picked more often.

No such market was observed in Uvira, most likely because shorter-term displacement has not allowed for one to evolve. Many more of the IDPs we surveyed in Uvira, 54 per cent, also had consistent access to land. Those without access are left to ask neighbours, friends and other village contacts for job opportunities.

It was widely reported that pay rates for day labour, both in agriculture and other areas, fall in places where IDPs' take refuge. This is true for both IDPs and their hosts, though the latter are less affected. An influx of IDPs also adds to pressure on local food stocks, which often causes prices to rise. In one focus group discussion, participants said the pay rate for day labour of 1,500 Congolese francs (\$1.62) in areas not affected by displacement dropped to 1,200 francs for host community members and 700 for IDPs in their places of refuge.

Such depreciation obviously creates a serious problem for IDPs, who are forced into exploitative relations with employers, but for host communities the availability of cheap labour can be to their short-term benefit, given that it reduces employers' overheads. The IDPs best placed to cope with the challenges displacement creates in terms



Displaced women living with host families in Kibabi, Masisi, North Kivu. Photo: IDMC/A. Pagot, March 2015

of livelihoods tend to be the small minority who have transportable assets or adaptable skills.

Seventy-four per cent of the IDPs we interviewed in both Masisi and Uvira said that earning money was more difficult than it had been before their displacement, and 98 per cent said it had become increasingly difficult over time. Eighty-eight per cent said they had had trouble meeting their food needs during the previous week, compared with 36 per cent who said they would have had trouble before their displacement. Only 12 per cent said they were able to save money occasionally, and 81 per cent said they had gone into debt.

If the humanitarian community hopes to improve IDPs' resilience, it will have to give serious consideration to ways of supporting better livelihood opportunities during displacement. To do so effectively, it will need to venture much further into the development sphere and gain greater insight from it in terms of programming, in order to inform humanitarian interventions that contribute to longer-term outcomes.

## Social networks<sup>20</sup>

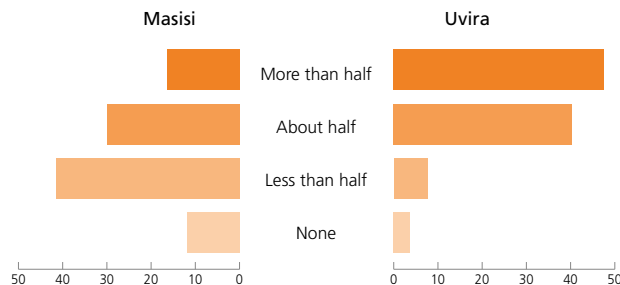
Coping strategies that prioritise physical security tend to carry different risks and lead to different outcomes than those that prioritise livelihoods. IDPs and host communities will always seek to address both in their choices, but in DRC they often face a trade-off between the two. The third side of their decision-making triangle concerns their social resources<sup>21</sup>.

Social networks appear often to be the decisive factor in determining which coping strategies IDPs adopt, and our initial research also suggests that they form an essential component of resilience to displacement. The longer and more often IDPs are displaced, however, the more their social networks tend to unravel, often hastened by the depletion of their other resources. If humanitarians hope to foster community members' interdependence and their ability to support each other in coping with the effects of displacement, they will need to do more to prevent this from happening.

Solidarity among extended family and community members is a defining feature of displacement in the Kivus, based largely on the awareness that a host today may be-

come an IDP tomorrow and the expectation that goodwill will be reciprocal. Displacement mapping also shows that IDPs often choose their place of refuge based on family links and ethnic ties to their host community.

**Graph 5: Question: How many people from your village have been displaced to the same location as you?**



Perhaps even more significant, however, is the extent to which communities appear to stick together when they are displaced. Of the IDPs we surveyed in Masisi and Uvira, 60 per cent said that “about half” or “more than half” of the people from their home villages fled to the same location. Our research also suggests it is less common for village leaders to take refuge in the same place as other community members, but that they are still often recognised as holding significant authority. They are also still expected to resolve problems that arise among their community members during displacement.

IDPs’ integration into community associations, political organisations and religious groups in their places of refuge can also be a significant source of support. Focus group discussions often cited churches as facilitating links between displaced and host families. They encourage their members to become hosts and mobilise the community to contribute food, clothes and essential household items. IDPs often join church choirs and committees, enabling positive dialogue and the strengthening of their support structures.

Our research revealed that IDPs had much more difficulty establishing connections with organisations linked to income, such as agricultural and credit associations. This was the result of their not having been in the area long enough to gain the trust of association members, their inability to pay into the group, and uncertainty on the part of the associations as to whether the IDPs would stay in the area for long enough to make their membership beneficial to the host community. Improving IDPs’ involvement in such associations would help them to integrate with their host community. Access to financing – whether via existing associations or the establishment of new ones – would provide them with additional resources in their efforts to recover from the shock of displacement.

Significant attention has been given to the strength of ethnic ties in the Kivus and the advantages and disadvantages they carry for IDPs, but our research shows that the main threat to their social networks is host communities’ decreasing willingness over time to continue supporting them. When displacement is short lived, as is the case in Uvira, host communities play an important and unquestioning role in providing shelter and food. A representative of a women’s committee in Nyakabere, Uvira, said: “We have no problems, we live on good terms with them. We empathise with them and we do work together, such as cultivating or petty trade. If a problem arises, we get together to solve it.”

As displacement becomes more prolonged, however, as in the case of Masisi, the initial goodwill tends to dissipate and hosts try to find ways of covering their costs and loss of assets or “encouraging” IDPs to move on. The introduction of rent payments was one lever respondents referred to. Host communities’ resources, whether they be food and clean water or shared social amenities such as schools and healthcare facilities, diminish the longer and more often they take in IDPs. The quality of some of their most valuable assets, such as their land, also degrade over time with overuse.

**“ As long as the displaced are not here for a long time, everything seems to work. But the longer they are here, the more host families tire of taking care of them and supporting the weight of two families**

- Youth leader, Luberizi, Uvira

In terms of humanitarian responses that encourage resilience to displacement, there is great potential in the maintenance, establishment and strengthening of social networks. It has been recognised for some time that such efforts are important in counteracting the disruptive effects of a disaster,<sup>22</sup> and this has led to displacement camps being organised in ways that keep communities together. Community-based programming is also a reflection of this understanding. Its full potential, however, has not been fully explored and as such is underexploited in efforts to improve IDPs capacity to cope with displacement. Some interventions have focused on improving communities’ social cohesion, but very few have linked such efforts to the broader goal of improving resilience.



# 4

## Conclusion

Increasing resilience to displacement relies on understanding the complex and largely context-specific interplay between the security, livelihood and social concerns that influence IDPs' decision-making. Each element can both drive displacement and draw people to particular places of refuge. Insecurity is frequently cited as the primary reason for displacement, but the level of insecurity an individual or family is willing to accept, and how that trades off against their other concerns, play a key role in determining where they flee to and when.

If an IDP can continue to work their land, they are likely to be able to better support their family, a factor that will impel them to stay as close to it as possible for as long as possible, even if doing so implies reasonably high levels of insecurity. Land in areas hosting large numbers of IDPs often becomes degraded with overuse, which may push some to move again to places where they can better support themselves, even if they are less safe.

Social networks create safety nets that improve IDPs security and provide economic opportunities, drawing them to places where they exist. Social tensions may push people to flee as a preventative measure, and to avoid places that might otherwise be considered safe and economically viable.

Unpicking these concepts would enable humanitarians to better understand the balance between often competing push and pull factors; design interventions that improve

the resilience of IDPs and their hosts, and avoid those that unintentionally undermine it; and ultimately support their efforts to achieve durable solutions to their displacement.

### Implications for policy and practice

- Responses to displacement that aim to help people affected by displacement become more resilient to shocks should address the push and pull factors that shape IDPs' decision making in terms of security, economic opportunities and social networks, based on a more nuanced understanding of how individuals, families and communities balance the three factors.
- IDPs' criteria in terms of security, economic opportunity and social networks change over time and with each new displacement, and humanitarian interventions must take such change into account.
- Humanitarians can support resilience by helping to improve the choices available to people affected by displacement. This can only be achieved in collaboration with IDPs and host communities themselves, in order to ensure that interventions are aligned with their needs and priorities, and that impacts are sustainable in the long term.
- Greater attention must be given to ways in which responses can build on communities' existing protection mechanisms, decision-making processes and other positive coping strategies.



Displaced women finish their meeting with a dance in Katala, Masisi, North Kivu. Photo: IDMC/M. Kesmaecker-Wissing, March 2015

## Notes

1. For more information on the project, please see <http://goo.gl/kM5gDL>
2. OCHA, December 2014
3. International Alert (2010), *Land, power and identity: Roots of violent conflict in eastern DRC*
4. For the purpose of this project, “protracted displacement” is taken to mean displacement which has lasted for an extended period of time without progress towards durable solutions. It includes situations in which IDPs have stayed in one place, and those in which they have been displaced repeatedly.
5. Stacy White, *Now What: The International Response to Internal Displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, p.26
6. This project uses the following definition of a person who has suffered multiple displacement: A person who has been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes, places of habitual residence or places of refuge more than once, especially as a result of, or in order to avoid armed conflict, generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.
7. As described in the IASC Framework for Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, a durable solution is achieved when IDPs no longer have specific assistance and protection needs linked to their displacement, and can exercise their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement. It can be achieved through (1) sustainable reintegration in their place of origin, (2) sustainable local integration in areas where IDPs take refuge, or (3) sustainable integration in another part of the country.
8. Michael Cernea, *Impoverishment Risks, Risk Management, and Reconstruction: A Model of Population Displacement and Resettlement*, 2000
9. “Mai-Mai” is an umbrella term generally used to refer to local defence militias that can range in size from fewer than 100 to more than 1,000 fighters. The groups were initially formed to protect local communities and land from invading, and particularly foreign, armed groups. The Mai-Mai have no unified command and control structure, and they tend to align themselves with a range of other domestic and foreign armed groups.
10. Tiller, Sandrine and Sean Healy. MSF. (July 2013). Analysis of the Emergency Response Capacity of the Humanitarian System, Case Study 2.pg 11
11. For the purposes of this paper, “recovery” refers to the re-establishment of similar living standards, not necessarily a return to the exact lifestyle prior to the shock, or an improvement in previous lifestyle – in line with IASC’s durable solutions framework, which includes the three settlement options of return, local integration and relocation.
12. As Michael Cernea explains in *Impoverishment Risks, Risk Management, and Reconstruction: A Model of Population Displacement and Resettlement* (Beijing, 2000), impoverishment can be understood as a loss of natural, human, social and human-made physical capital. There are nine risks or processes that cause IDPs’ impoverishment: landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalisation, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to common property and services, social disarticulation and the loss of education opportunities.
13. Nyatura is a loose structure of primarily Hutu armed groups prevalent in southern Masisi territory.
14. The Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo (*Alliance des Patriotes pour un Congo Libre et Souverain*, APCLS) is a predominantly Hunde group, formed largely as a result of discontent over land allocation in Masisi.
15. The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (*Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda*, FDLR) is a group almost exclusively made up of ethnic Hutus fighting Tutsi rule and influence in the region. There are three major FDLR factions, FDLR-FOCA, FDLR-RUD and FDLR-SOKI. FDLR-FOCA is the most notorious, with some of leaders linked to the Rwandan genocide.
16. Raia Mutomboki, which translates as “outraged citizens”, is a loosely affiliation of groups initially established to resist FDLR. It originally emerged in Shabunda, South Kivu, but is now present throughout the Kivus, particularly in Kalehe, southern Masisi and Walikale territories.
17. Nduma Defence of Congo (NDC-Cheka) is a primarily Nyanga group formed officially to protect their communities against FDLR-FOCA in western Masisi and Walikale territories of North Kivu. It is notoriously violent and has significant links to illicit mining.
18. Initially part of the Congo Defence Forces (*Forces de Défense Congolaise*, FDC), FDC-Guides is a splinter group made up of former local guides used by the DRC military (*Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo*, FARDC) in its operations against FDLR. It is a predominantly Hunde group that aims to protect and maintain control over parts of Masisi territory.

19. FDC is made up of former guides and porters used by FARDC in its operations against FDLR. The group split from FARDC when Bosco Ntaganda mutinied from the army. It has remained loyal to Ntaganda and is mainly present in southern Walikale territory.
20. Social networks were touched upon in our research in Masisi and Uvira, but the issue was not fully fleshed out. Further detailed research into the ways in which social networks support resilience to displacement is planned for 2015.
21. This report defines social networks as connections based on ethnic or religious identity, bonds with extended family or other members of the community, and links with social institutions and governance structures.
22. Omer, Haim and Nahman Alon (1994), The Continuity Principle: A Unified Approach to Disaster and Trauma, *American Journal of Community Psychology* 22(2) pp.273-286



# About IDMC

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement. For the millions of people worldwide displaced within their own country, IDMC plays a unique role as a global monitor and evidence-based advocate to influence policy and action by governments, UN agencies, donors, international organisations and NGOs.

IDMC is part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), an independent, non-governmental humanitarian organisation.

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre  
Norwegian Refugee Council  
Chemin de Balexert 7-9  
CH-1219 Châtelaine (Geneva)  
Tel: +41 22 799 0700, Fax: +41 22 799 0701

[www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)



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Norwegian Refugee Council  
Visiting address: Prinsen gate 2, 0152 Oslo  
Mailing address: Postboks 148, Sentrum  
Oslo, Norway 0102  
Tel: +47 23 10 98 00  
Fax: +47 23 10 98 01

[www.nrc.no](http://www.nrc.no)

 [facebook.com/norwegianrefugeecouncil](https://facebook.com/norwegianrefugeecouncil)  
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International Alert  
346 Clapham Road, LONDON SW9 9AP  
United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7627 6800  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7627 6900



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