Researching livelihoods and
services affected by conflict

Defining and identifying IDPs outside of camps in South Kivu:

Challenges, contradictions
and consequence

Working paper 81
Gloria Nguya

June 2019

About us

The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) is a global research programme exploring basic services, and social protection in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Funded by UK Aid from the UK Government (DFID), with complementary funding from Irish Aid and the European Commission (EC), SLRC was established in 2011 with the aim of strengthening the evidence base and informing policy and practice around livelihoods and services in conflict.

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the lead organisation. SLRC partners include: Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA), Feinstein International Center (FIC, Tufts University), Focus1000, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Wageningen University (WUR), Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research (NCCR), Busara Center for Behavioral Economics, Nepal Institute for Social and Environmental Research (NISER), Narrate, Social Scientists' Association of Sri Lanka (SSA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Women and Rural Development Network (WORUDET), Claremont Graduate University (CGU), Institute of Development Policy (IOB, University of Antwerp) and the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS, Erasmus University of Rotterdam).

SLRC's research can be separated into two phases. Our first phase of research (2011 - 2017) was based on three research questions, developed over the course of an intensive one-year inception phase:

- State legitimacy: experiences, perceptions and expectations of the state and local governance in conflict-affected situations
- State capacity: building effective states that deliver services and social protection in conflict-affected situations
- Livelihood trajectories and economic activity under conflict

Guided by our original research questions on state legitimacy, state capacity, and livelihoods, the second phase of SLRC research (2017-2019) delves into questions that still remain, organised into three themes of research. In addition to these themes, SLRC II also has a programme component exploring power and everyday politics in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). For more information on our work, visit: **www.securelivelihoods.org/what-we-do**

Acknowledgements

Acronyms

AVSI	Association of Volunteers in International Service
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
IDP	Internally displaced person
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KAF	Kataliko Action pour l'Afrique
MERU	Ministère de l'Eglise du Christ au Congo pour les Refugiées et les Urgences
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RRPM	Rapid Response to Population Movement
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Contents

Executive summary

Through two decades of conflict and a complex humanitarian response, internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been at the core of assistance in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and have attracted generous funding and attention. However, little is known about how different actors translate and use the IDP label in assisting this population. Furthermore, the consequences associated with the label have not yet been addressed in terms of the future of IDPs in eastern DRC. As a setting where IDPs are assisted outside of camps, South Kivu provides an opportunity to better understand the application of the IDP label in the reality of service delivery to this group.

Research questions:

Based on multiple interviews, observations and focus groups involving actors and host communities concerned with IDPs, this study aims to provide insight into the multiple representation of the definitions of IDPs.

The study seeks to address three overarching research questions:

- How is the definition of IDPs constructed in practice?
- What are the challenges to applying the IDP label in South Kivu?
- How does the IDP label impact humanitarian assistance in South Kivu?
  - What are the consequences of assisting IDPs outside of camps with the use of the IDP label?
  - Is assistance to IDPs in line with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement?

Findings

Identifying IDPs outside of camps has been a challenge for development and humanitarian actors in South Kivu as they have no common operational set of indicators that would include or exclude people from service provision as IDP. Different agencies also have inconsistent approaches to identifying IDPs and are not transparent about the eligibility criteria for potential beneficiaries.

The study identifies three strategies used by actors in identifying IDPs: 1) formulating objective criteria to define IDPs, 2) relying on self-identification and local organisations and 3) paying less attention to the label. The three strategies were used to delineate who could be identified as 'real' IDPs or not. Once identified as an IDP, being eligible for aid was linked to three criteria: the severity of needs, the housing situation and location, and the time spent in a specific area.

The criteria used has consequences on the humanitarian and development assistance provided for IDPs in South Kivu, and the application of the Guiding Principle, namely: the battle over the number of IDPs in eastern DRC; the categorisation for policy purposes through the method of identification; and the expertise to identify the problem. The three consequences were often linked to the use a label in the humanitarian field. The three criteria were not in line with principles 14.1, 15.d, 18.1, 18.2, 22.a and 22.b of the Guiding Principles.

Conclusions and recommendations

Responsibility for the current situation regarding IDPs in South Kivu ought to be shared between government, humanitarian actors, and donors.

The government should take more responsibility for meeting IDPs' needs by reinforcing the role and responsibilities of the National Commission for Refugee during waves of displacement and by taking over the process of identification of 'real' IDPs and the selection of vulnerable IDP. In addition, the government should engage in more dialogues with non-humanitarian actors to facilitate the implementation of projects regarding IDPs in urban and rural areas. This type of dialogues would enrich knowledge about vulnerable groups in communities and to differentiate sub-groups such as IDPs.

Humanitarian actors should be more united regarding the the process for identifying IDPs. An appropriate step forward could be to address the problem of beneficiary list criteria for meriting aid through an inclusive and reflective discussion among the actors dealing with IDPs. A common set of criteria would enable actors to better face the process of identifying IDPs in urban locations. Another possibility would be establishing a shared organisation for the identification of IDPs. Currently, International Emergency and Development Aid plays this role, but some actors do not trust their identification system of IDPs. The new organisation should rely on the expertise of gatekeepers and other actors working with IDPs and non-IDPs to identify IDPs, including urban vulnerable people likely to be assisted.

Donors should be more persuasive in their promotion of the Guiding Principles as the rules of protecting and assisting IDPs. As responsible for funding projects and programmes targeting vulnerable group, they should be more pro-active in ensuring that IDP concerns are addressed through the funds they make available for this purpose. For instance, it is important to make sure that aid criteria for IDPs should include the act of *involuntary* displacement during a conflict.

1 Introduction

In August 2015, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) stated that 'most IDPs are hosted by families or host communities instead of staying in camps and therefore they are the first humanitarian actors in DRC'.[1] An Oxfam GB report on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) had already acknowledged this in 2008, stating that 70% of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in DRC lived with host families instead of in camps of the kind seen in Darfur and Uganda (Harver, 2008a). The report also highlighted several concerns regarding the likelihood of assisting a population that is blended with other populations and emphasised the debate around assisting IDPs through camps versus host communities.

The importance of such a discussion is rooted in the understanding of 'IDPs'. The way in which IDPs are identified has been challenged and revisited, motivated by the desire to improve the treatment of this group of people and to reduce discrimination. The identification of IDPs has been at the centre of controversies about whether assistance should be based around the camp setting, the criteria for and description of IDP populations, and the need to provide better assistance to those affected by forced migration in urban settings. Applying these debates to IDPs in DRC, the present study aimed to highlight and explain five problems with defining and identifying IDPs: (1) the disagreement about who should be counted as an IDP; (2) the consequent disagreement about how many IDPs there are; (3) the ineffective and scattered response, especially for IDPs in urban areas in non-camp settings; (4) the message conveyed by the use of the IDP label; and (5) the rights of IDPs.

The debate about whether IDPs should be assisted inside or outside of camps is ongoing. Those in favour of camps have highlighted that camps offer the possibility of facilitating the organisation of assistance, attracting international aid, monitoring and targeting beneficiaries, and distributing aid quickly and efficiently (Schmidt, 2003). However, those favouring assisting IDPs outside of camps argue for non-discrimination based on IDPs' settlement choices, respecting IDPs' preferences, enhancing IDPs' coping mechanisms and improving the host communities that support IDPs (Davies, 2012).

---

[1] Mamadou Diallo, Deputy Special Representative for the UN Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He also serves as the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Representative of the UN Development Programme (www.radiookapi.net/2015/08/19/actualite/societe/rdc-les-familles-congolaises-premier-acteur-humanitaire-dans-le-pays)

Based on the non-discrimination argument, assistance to IDPs outside of camps is widely recognised in many conflict-affected countries. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, of 173[2] monitored countries, at least 54 have few or no IDP camps. Acknowledging that IDPs are living in urban areas also directs attention towards urban forced migration and, correspondingly, works towards a durable solution in addition to addressing the humanitarian issues (Christensen and Harild, 2009; Kirbyshire et al., 2017; Tibaijuka, 2010; Zetter and Deikun, 2010).

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement that were first presented at the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1998[3] (see also Box 1) provide a broad definition of IDPs as those 'who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence', but this definition has drawn criticism as a 'catch-all term' that does not establish categories of persons confronted with very different situations (Hickel, 2001). The application of the Guiding Principles calls for the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian actors in their everyday work, challenging the methods of identifying the population of IDPs and underscoring the need for the inclusion of different actors during this process (Crisp et al., 2012).

The province of South Kivu in DRC provides a window on the effect of applying the IDP label outside of camps. After two decades of humanitarian assistance, many questions are being raised, such as how effective aid to IDPs is in the long term and how IDPs' lives can be improved. This humanitarian assistance has been provided without the existence of official IDP camps or the official registration of IDPs. Furthermore, there is a lack of accuracy in estimates of the number of IDPs. As the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre's website states: 'It is unclear whether the 1.4 million IDPs in DRC who were displaced at the end of 2008 are still living in displacement, whether they have achieved durable solutions or whether they have been displaced again since that time.'

The relevance of the IDP label is also called into question in the South Kivu context because the process of identifying IDPs often happens in an environment of complex population movements, which can make the work of humanitarian actors difficult. According to 2015 statistics from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), of 322,300 IDPs in South Kivu, 96% lived with host families and 4% lived in temporary settlements (OCHA, 2015). The process of estimating the numbers of IDPs in South Kivu remains controversial among donors and other actors. For example, a USAID factsheet highlighted a reduction from an estimated 2.7 million IDPs countrywide in December 2014 to nearly 1.4 million by May 2015 – a decline of approximately 48% (USAID, 2015). Although it is unlikely that this shift in estimates reflects a real reduction in the number of IDPs, which number is correct and how the different estimations were produced remain open questions.

Linking the provision of assistance to IDPs outside of camps and the application of the IDP label, the present study aims to understand the consequences of identifying and assisting displaced persons in non-camp settings. After discussing the literature, describing the research methods used and providing a general introduction of the IDP situation in South Kivu, this paper presents two sections about identifying IDPs. The first of these analyses three strategies used by agencies in relation to defining IDPs (setting criteria, relying on local knowledge or self-identification, and paying less attention to the IDP label). The second analyses actual practices used to identify programme beneficiaries, which are usually based on rough criteria that are adjusted by those in charge of the programmes. This is followed by a discussion about IDPs' loss of claim-making capacity when displacement criteria are not used for assistance, how the IDP label may become more meaningful, and gaps in the meaning of the IDP label on the ground and in IDPs' rights as laid out in the Guiding Principles.

2   Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre: Global Figures 2015 http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-figures

3   Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2): www.ohchr.org/en/issues/idpersons/pages/standards.aspx

Box 1: The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

Since the recognition and the appointment of a Representative of the Secretary General on Internal Displacement in 1992, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2) were developed between 1993 and 1997 as the issue of internal displacement became increasingly recognised as a global human rights and humanitarian issue. The final document was presented to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1998 by the Representative of the Secretary-General on IDPs, Francis Deng.

The document, which is not legally binding, sets out 30 principles, including principles relating to protection from displacement, to protection during displacement, to humanitarian assistance, and to return, resettlement and reintegration. More than a restatement of existing human rights and humanitarian law, the Guiding Principles provide a framework for identifying protection needs and for planning, implementing and monitoring protection activities to be incorporated into domestic laws and policies (Kälin, 2005).

Responding to the absence of a document capable of responding to humanitarian and political and security crises, the Guiding Principles offered a broad understanding of protection, defining the internally displaced as all those of have left their homes involuntarily without crossing an international border, whatever the circumstances, and addressing the full range of rights that may be relevant – not just those limited solely to the survival and physical security of IDPs (Kälin, 2005).

The Guiding Principles have been a key plank in the development of normative standards on the issue of internal displacement, setting the stage for later standards such as the IDP Protocol of the Great Lakes Pact (2006) and the African Union's 2009 Kampala Convention. Internal displacement has also increasingly been recognised as a development issue, reflected in the inclusion of IDPs in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (paragraphs 23 and 29).

Despite the progress, the numbers of displaced have been rising for decades, with some states resistant to fulfilling their responsibilities toward IDPs, and many humanitarian development and senior UN actors not sufficiently engaged (GP20, 2018). In 2017, as the 20th anniversary of the Guiding Principles approached, an IDP stakeholder meeting led by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs identified four priority issues for an Action Plan on the issue: participation of IDPs, national laws and policies on internal displacement, data and analysis on internal displacement, and addressing protracted displacement and supporting durable solutions (GP20, 2018).

2 Background

Since the introduction of the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* in 1998[4], addressing IDPs' needs has remained a challenge. IDPs remain the responsibility of the affected state, which is in charge of providing protection and assistance for its population (Cohen and Deng, 2009). However, this duty is frequently not fulfilled, and IDPs are often trapped in the middle of an armed conflict or are targeted or abandoned by their own governments (Deng, 2006). These cases are considered an international matter because IDPs' human rights need to be protected, but IDPs do not have the legal status afforded to refugees and lack a UN agency dedicated to their case.

Assistance and protection provided to IDPs in camp settings have been widely studied. Indeed, focusing on camp settings remains a convenient approach for assisting those affected by forced migration because of the associated high level of accessibility of people in need. Unfortunately, camps remain linked to the idea of restricted freedom: 'It is a camp because we cannot leave when we want to' (Malkki, 1995: 139). Additionally, Black (1998: 4–7) argues that 'camps represent a poor solution for forced migration'. These arguments reinforce the idea of respecting individual choices when providing assistance (Hilhorst, 2015: 7).

In December 2011, a report of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General recognised the different choices made by IDPs, using the phrase 'IDPs outside of camps' to refer to 'IDPs who may live in a variety of settings or situations; they may be in urban, rural, or remote areas, renting, owning a housing, sharing a room, living with a host family, homeless, occupying a building or land that they do not own, or living in makeshift shelters and slums' (Global CCCM Cluster, 2014: 21). This report emphasised the role of humanitarian actors in considering this part of the IDP population, regardless of their location.

Indeed, although it is uncomfortable for many donors and humanitarian actors, it is now clear that the majority of IDPs live outside of camps, blending in with the rest of the population; this fact requires adapted approaches to providing IDPs with assistance and protection (Brookings, 2013). Additionally, previous studies have proposed that IDPs' preferences for living with host families are based on 'the perception of camps as crowded, insecure, unhealthy and associated with the violence and cholera

---

4   See Box 1

that plagued the camps along the border with Rwanda following the genocide. By contrast, a host family is seen as a source of security – physical, emotional, and even "spiritual"' (McDowell, 2008: 22).

Research in DRC has suggested that IDPs living outside of camps are more vulnerable than their host families and other residents, based on comparisons of the living conditions of different types of urban residents. In Goma, for instance, 'IDPs were more vulnerable than other residents across all quartiers of the city' (NRC, 2014). This had also been pointed out in a 2008 Oxfam report calling for more attention for both IDPs and host communities on the ground, noting that host communities' needs were often overlooked (Davies, 2012; Harver, 2008a).

On the whole, studies in DRC have advocated assisting IDPs outside of camps, referring to the large numbers of IDPs outside of camps and describing their reasons for making this choice (Harver, 2008a; IDMC, 2014). In addition, some studies have explored the significance of programmes targeting IDPs, seeking to improve IDP assistance or to call for action by exposing failures in this assistance (Bailey, 2014; Healy and Tiller, 2014; MSF, 2014; Rudolph, 2014).

Beyond the need for better assistance for those labelled as IDPs, there is still uncertainty regarding the relevance of such a label outside of camps. 'IDP' is not an objective title. Implicit in the definition of IDPs is the idea that they are clearly visible and distinguishable from the rest of a population. However, this idea is often exposed as unrealistic wherever the international community seeks to provide assistance. Many studies have already examined how the IDP label has been applied and how the label has determined tendencies towards exclusion or inclusion (Shacknove, 1985). For example, in Sri Lanka, IDPs were refused the right to work because they were not formally registered in their place of refuge (Brun, 2003).

Despite persisting questions around the IDP label, the *Guiding Principles* set a standard benchmark for IDP protection and assistance during displacement, return, resettlement and reintegration (Cohen, 2004: 465).

However, some research has identified gaps between the *Guiding Principles* and their implementation on the ground (Borton et al., 2005: 94). In the context of South Kivu, the *Guiding Principles* provide a lens to examine the respect of IDPs' rights because of the setting characterised by the assistance outside of camps and the difficult task of distinguishing IDPs from non-IDPs.

This paper begins by questioning the relevance of the IDP label in South Kivu, describing the patterns related to defining IDPs on the ground. It continues with an empirical examination of how an 'IDP' is socially constructed, an exploration of the process of identifying IDPs, an analysis of the discourse of assistance for IDPs outside of camps and a discussion of whether this discourse is in line with the *Guiding Principles*. Specifically, the paper addresses three research questions:

- How is the definition of IDPs translated and used in practice? (Section 5)
- What are the challenges to applying the IDP label in South Kivu? (Section 6)
- How does the IDP label impact humanitarian assistance in South Kivu? (Section 7)
- What are the consequences of assisting IDPs outside of camps with the use of the IDP label?
- Is assistance to IDPs in line with the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*?

3 Methods

This study was conducted as part of a larger project[5] in South Kivu province in both urban and rural areas. Starting in October 2013 and ending in April 2015, the research aimed to explore IDPs living outside of camps. As detailed in Tables 1 and 2, interviews, focus groups, and participant and non-participant observation were used to gather information from 65 participants.

Finding IDPs was a very difficult task. This category overlaps with other marginalised groups, such as migrants and the urban poor, and there is no official database of IDPs (White 2015: 6–7). After three months of fieldwork, I wondered, 'Where are the IDPs?' Furthermore, considering that, according to OCHA (2017a), there are 422,000 IDPs in South Kivu, I also questioned how organisations go about identifying IDPs.

3.1 Participants

Things started to fall into place after I began to interview actors involved in assisting both IDPs and non-IDPs. It was important to have a non-governmental organisation (NGO) platform to facilitate the work and my contact with different actors. The previous director of the international NGO Search for Common Ground[6] made it possible for me to interact with his co-workers and other NGO workers of different backgrounds involved in humanitarian assistance and to build a network related to my research interests.

Before starting the interviews, I identified several actors involved in providing assistance to IDPs and non-IDPs. Data were collected from humanitarian actors, local NGO representatives, civil society actors, local and national authorities, church leaders and members, ethnic association representatives and ordinary non-IDPs in the community. Table 1 presents an overview of the range of participants interviewed or observed, and Table 2 provides further detail on the organisational participants. Because IDPs lived outside of camps, this research approach was necessary to get collect reliable, clear and up-to-date data (Jacobsen and Cardona, 2014; Borton et al., 2005; NRC, 2008; JIPS, 2012). Three times each week, the Civil Society Office holds a meeting with different local and international NGOs based in South Kivu to reflect on issues in the province. At these

---

5   Gloria NGUYA, urban economic and livelihood of IDPs in eastern DRC, PhD study

6   Search For Common Ground is involved in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. In DRC, it is involved in bolstering the nation's maturing democracy, ending ethnic conflict, promoting gender equality and transforming the country into a peaceful one.

Table 1: Research participants and methods of data

Participant type	Number of actors	Organisation or position of participant	Method of data collection
United Nations actors	3	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	Interviews
Non-United Nations actors	11	Malteser International, Association of Volunteers in International Service, Norwegian Refugee Council, International Rescue Committee, Search For Common Ground, International Emergency and Development Aid, Caritas, International Medical Corps, Women For Women, Direction Du Développement et de la Cooperation-Suisse	Interviews, participant observation
Local NGOs	10	Bureau Diocésain des Œuvres Médicales, Kataliko Action pour l'Afrique, Foundation RamaLevina, Centre Ekabana, Alliance SUD, Réseau des Femmes Médecins pour le Développement Intégral (RFMD), Foundation Panzi, Mouvement des Femmes du Sud-Kivu, Association Paysanne de Développement Intègre, Ministère de l'Eglise du Christ au Congo pour les Refugiées et les Urgences	Interviews, participant and non-participant observation
Local authorities	3	Town Hall of Bukavu, neighbourhood chief, grouping chief	Interviews, focus groups, non-participant observation
Civil society	2	Agents	Interviews, participant observation
Churches	2	Small Christian Community, RAMOT Church	Interviews, focus groups, participant and non-participant observation
Ethnic associations	3	Solidarity of Bahavu, Mutuality for the Barega in South-Kivu and Maniema, Solidarity of Bashi	Interviews
Firms	1	Federation des Entreprises du Congo	Interviews
Urban poor people	30	Residents of poor neighbourhoods such as Panzi, Bilala, Bagira and Giyamba	Interviews, focus groups, participant observation
Total	65		

meetings, I had the opportunity to present my research at the beginning and the end of the fieldwork. These meetings were helpful in extending my network.

3.2   Data collection and analysis

The extended fieldwork period and the large amount of data collected required a tool to aid in the interpretation of the ideas expressed by the participants. NVivo software was used to organise the data and to help make sense of the information collected (creating codes and identifying patterns).

3.3   Limitations and other considerations

Because of security issues in some areas on the periphery of the city and in rural areas (Bunyakiri, Nindja and Lusenda), data were collected mostly during the daytime in participants' offices and houses and during their trips to their villages. Focus groups with non-IDPs, for example, were mostly conducted in the participants' neighbourhoods, where insecurity had to be considered, especially as on weekdays many participants were free only after work in the evening. It was therefore necessary to conduct data collection during weekends.

Gaining the trust of the interviewees was important during the fieldwork, as some pertinent details regarding their identity as IDPs did not emerge until a second interview or an interview in a different location. Hence, increased budget and time resources were often necessary to attain valuable answers and to respect the ethical principles of research. As a related point, I shared food and beverages with local authorities and non-IDPs during interviews instead of giving money, so as not to be mistaken for an NGO worker.

Notably, I did not include IDPs in my categories of participants; I refer instead to 'urban poor people'. Given the difficulties mentioned above, it was impossible to distinguish IDPs from non-IDPs. Therefore, I interviewed organisational representatives and urban poor people (see Table 1), many of whom claimed to be IDPs, and I posed questions about the perceptions of actors who work with IDPs instead of referring to their personal experiences.

Table 2: Names of organisations participating in the interviews

Actor	Type of intervention provided	Type of beneficiary population
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	Relief aid	Refugees, IDPs
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	Relief aid	IDPs, returnees, vulnerable people
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)	Advocacy	Vulnerable people, IDPs,
Malteser International	Relief aid	Vulnerable people, IDPs, returnees
Association of Volunteers in International Service	Relief aid	Vulnerable people, IDPs, returnees
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	Relief aid	Vulnerable people, IDPs
International Rescue Committee (IRC)	Relief aid	IDPs, returnees, vulnerable people
Search for Common Ground	Peace building	Armed groups, local authorities, national army
International Emergency and Development Aid	Identification of IDPs	IDPs, vulnerable people
Caritas	Relief aid	IDPs, returnees, vulnerable people
International Medical Corps	Health assistance	Vulnerable women
Women For Women	Assistance	Vulnerable women
Direction Du Développement et de la Cooperation-Suisse	Development aid	Local NGOs
Bureau Diocésain des Œuvres Médicales	Health assistance	Clinics
Kataliko Action pour l'Afrique (KAF)	Assistance to survivors of sexual violence	IDPs, vulnerable people
Foundation RamaLevina	Assistance to survivors of sexual violence	Women, men, children
Centre Ekabana	Assistance to abandoned children	Vulnerable children
Alliance SUD	Relief aid	Vulnerable people
Réseau des Femmes Médecins pour le Développement Intégral	Health assistance	Vulnerable women
Foundation Panzi	Assistance to survivors of sexual violence	Women
Mouvement des Femmes du Sud-Kivu	Assistance to survivors of sexual violence	Women
Association Paysanne de Développement Intègre	Assistance to farmers	Farmers
Ministère de l'Eglise du Christ au Congo pour les Refugiées et les Urgences (MERU)	Relief aid	IDPs, refugees, vulnerable people
Solidarity of Bashi	Relief aid	Vulnerable people
Solidarity of Bahavu	Relief aid	Vulnerable people
Mutuality for the Barega in South-Kivu and Maniema	Relief aid	Vulnerable people
Federation des Entreprises du Congo	Relief aid	Vulnerable people
Civil society	Advocacy	Vulnerable people

4 Understanding humanitarian assistance

in South KivuHumanitarian assistance in South Kivu has been provided mainly without IDP camps, with the goal of including more IDPs who prefer to live in host communities. This has required better coordination among humanitarian agencies because of the challenge of distinguishing IDPs from non-IDPs and the lack of official records. In 2006, the 'cluster system' was introduced to coordinate humanitarian assistance along thematic lines, such as education, health, or water and sanitation, to allow national and international agencies to better face crises and to assist the displaced.

4.1   Situation of IDPs in South Kivu

In 2016, there were an estimated 422,000 IDPs in South Kivu, representing 6% of the province's total population of 6.4 million (OCHA, 2017b). The province has the second largest number of IDPs in DRC, after North Kivu, and uprooted populations are located in all territories of the province except for Idjwi territory.

In response to violence and long-term conflict, three types of displacement may be seen in South Kivu.[7] The first is a pendulous displacement, where IDPs spend the day in their villages and hide in the bush in the evening. The second is a preventive displacement, where IDPs flee for short periods and return when it is safe. In this case, IDPs stay close to their homes to look after their properties and track the security situation. The last type of displacement is long-term displacement, where IDPs move further away for a long period of time, particularly when the violence is persistent. According to a 2009 *Médecins Sans Frontière* report, IDPs in eastern DRC travel from half a day to a day to reach a safe place, where they often have to wait several days while their vulnerability is evaluated before receiving assistance, as described in sub-section 4.2.

4.2   Local responses

As there are no IDP camps in South Kivu, host communities are the first humanitarian actors after the population movement. While awaiting assistance, IDPs rely on people's good will for shelter, food, land to cultivate and a safe place to stay (Lauten and Kesmaecker-Wissing, 2015; OCHA, 2014).

The local response is enacted by three groups. The first is local people, who may be linked to the IDPs by friendship or kinship ties. They assist with shelter, food

---

7   Interviews with actors working with IDPs.

or land to cultivate. The second is the local authorities (chief or administrator of a village), who are often involved in advocacy in cases of misunderstanding between IDPs and non-IDPs, for example. The third consists of local organisations (churches, civil society, local NGOs, the media, ethnic associations, etc.), who are often involved in IDP advocacy.

4.3   International responses

International actors have been visible in terms of providing emergency relief commodities; food assistance; health care and medical services; water, sanitation and hygiene; and in supporting economic recovery activities. From 2006 to 2015, US$893 million in humanitarian assistance was allocated to assist vulnerable people in South Kivu. Of this, 53% was channeled through UN agencies, 37% through international NGOs and 10% through national NGOs. This assistance is reported to have helped 68.8 million people, but the results have not been broken down to show how many IDPs were reached (OCHA, 2016). Indeed, humanitarian actors are never clear about their approach here, and beneficiaries are targeted based on vulnerability rather than IDP status (OCHA, 2012: 36).

IDPs are provided with international protection and assistance under the Rapid Response to Population Movement (RRPM) programme, which aims to address the needs of IDPs, returnees, vulnerable host populations, and people affected by natural disasters and large-scale epidemics. The programme was launched in 2004 to respond to emergency crises in complex situations of population movement, such as providing assistance in areas with security issues or physical obstacles (e.g. bad road conditions or areas accessible only by plane). Through a partnership of the UN OCHA, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and two other international NGOs (Association of Volunteers in International Service [AVSI] and the International Rescue Committee [IRC]), four topical areas are covered by the RRPM programme: water and sanitation services and structures, non-food items and shelter materials, health support and emergency education. With $286.9 million allocated from 2006 to 2015 (OCHA, 2016), the RRPM has been the most important mechanism of humanitarian emergency assistance, as detailed in Table 3.

Reviewing the data in Table 3, it is interesting to contrast the availability of information on the total number of people reached with the lack of information related to

Table 3: Allocation of funds and people reached by the DRC Humanitarian Fund 2006-2015

Item	Allocation (in millions of USD)	Percentage of people reached
Multi-cluster	149.4	
Food security	145.2	12.4
Water, sanitation, hygiene*	109.9	23
Logistics	95.9	12.7
Health*	85.1	32.2
Coordination	81.8	
Non-food items and shelter *	62.8	12.4
Nutrition	59	3.3
Protection	57.7	0.6
Education*	31.8	2.5
Early recovery	15	1
Telecommunications	0.06	
Total allocation, 2006–2015	893.66	

*part of the Rapid Response to Population Movement programme

IDPs reached. One explanation for this is the difficulty of targeting only IDPs in Bukavu because of the cost of identifying them, which could be higher than a simple assistance project, as some humanitarian actors participating in the present study revealed. Additionally, the type of assistance provided to IDPs in Bukavu was mainly food or non-food assistance given over a short period to avoid assisting non-IDPs. More importantly, humanitarian actors developed other approaches that focused on assisting a whole neighbourhood community, such as rebuilding a market, repairing a water fountain or giving vocational training to poor people.

Regarding the number of projects allocated to assist IDPs in DRC, according to the International Aid Transparency Initiative online database, of 6,842 projects receiving funding in 2018, 115 targeted IDPs (IATI, 2018). Most IDP projects were related to updating records on IDPs, the RRPM programme, emergency health assistance and related efforts. The same database reported that Bukavu city has had 33 projects mainly linked to capacity building and reconstruction.

Reviewing the existing programmes in DRC reveals that the large number of IDPs does not translate into targeted programmes for this population or reports that provide clear and accurate numbers of IDPs that have

been reached. Multiple factors have led to this situation, including the lack of surveying capacity, the lack of official records on IDPs and the cluster system, which does not include an IDP focus under one specific cluster.

Further, as will be demonstrated below, actors have different conceptions of what constitutes an IDP and different approaches to using the IDP label in practice.

5 IDPs as a social construct

This section addresses the question of the social construction of IDPs. All of the research participants were part of the construction of the social reality of the 'IDP' as they interacted with and labelled IDPs in different ways. Based on the interviews I conducted, I identified three different strategies used by different actors in defining IDPs: formulating objective criteria to define IDPs; relying on self-identification and local organisations; and paying less attention to the label.

5.1 Strategy 1: Formulating objective criteria to define IDPs

The first strategy is based on the idea that IDPs can be defined using objective criteria, such as location or inclusion based solely on vulnerability. The amount of time spent in a location was sometimes used as an important objective criterion for defining IDPs. A Caritas staff member explained that the longer an IDP stayed somewhere, the more likely it was that 'he or she finds responses within the community'.[8] Time spent in a location was already considered through the RRPM, as the programme would only assist IDPs who had been displaced for fewer than three months (Harver, 2008a: 12), and an IRC staff member highlighted this as a 'humanitarian rule'.[9]

However, other actors did not consider the 'duration of displacement' criterion, instead of using other criteria such as the location where IDPs lived or took refuge. Actors relying on the criterion of location type focused mainly on the idea that IDPs living in 'urban areas' were less vulnerable than were those living in rural areas. Some actors expressed a preference for assisting IDPs in rural areas with large numbers of people in need, but rural areas were generally not attractive environments for large numbers of IDPs. As an AVSI staff member clarified, 'IDPs would rather stay in places with churches, a FARDC [*Forces Armée de la République Démocratique du Congo*] position or a multi-ethnic city such as Kalehe centre, Uvira or Bunyakiri.'[10] An NRC staff member highlighted that their interventions were only tailored to rural areas, although the demarcation of rural and urban areas is blurred in many places in South Kivu.

Finally, inclusion based solely on vulnerability was an idea stressed by actors in charge of IDP assistance in the RRPM and representatives of UNICEF, the IRC and AVSI. A

---

8   Interview with a Caritas staff member in Bukavu.

9   Interview with an IRC staff member in Bukavu.

10 Interview with an AVSI staff member in Bukavu.

UNICEF staff member explained this during an interview: 'I can come in a village and select a non-IDP [resident of the village] to be eligible … because the displaced criterion does not entitle a right to the assistance.'[11] The IDP label, linked to the criterion of being displaced, was no longer seen as a reason to provide assistance. There was a contradiction between the obligation to assist IDPs or returnees and actually providing assistance to non-IDPs, because the assistance is supposed to be reserved for displaced people. Correspondingly, UNICEF and some humanitarian actors no longer assist IDPs because of their displacement status (Harver 2008b: 15).

Expressing another viewpoint, an AVSI staff member stressed that 'it is very important to assess the severity of the vulnerability'[12] before assisting people associated with the IDP label. In this way, assistance to vulnerable IDPs in urban areas could be justified, as humanitarian actors based their choices on gauging vulnerability. However, this type of thinking was not supported in an interview with the abovementioned UNICEF staff member, who stated 'poverty is not a humanitarian target but a development one'.[13]

5.2 Strategy 2: Relying on self-identification and local organisations

The second strategy for identifying IDPs uses self-identification, as well as local organisations' and authorities' judgment. Many international organisations work with local organisations and rely on local organisations' knowledge and criteria to identify IDPs. The Protestant Church in charge of Humanitarian Affairs (*Eglise du Christ au Congo*-MERU) explained that more than the criterion of vulnerability was necessary because anyone could mislead them by pretending to be in need at any time to receive assistance. According to a MERU staff member, to avoid confusion, MERU agents in charge of identifying IDPs in Bukavu, for instance, could 'ask the origin of the person'[14] to verify his or her vulnerability.

This staff member further explained that 'someone in need won't travel a long distance to reach a place like Bukavu'.[15] The longer the distance travelled to reach the city, the less likely the person could be considered a vulnerable IDP because of the assumption that a person who could pay for his or her transport had enough resources to live. In contrast, some NGO representatives considered the choice to live in urban areas to be 'an expression of despair or an emotional shock or wound'[16] from experiences during the conflict. Making a related point, a *Kataliko Action pour l'Afrique*[17] staff member explained that some IDPs did not want to return to their villages because of 'atrocities they saw or [because] they were victims during [the] conflict'.[18]

The Civil Society Office served as a platform for advocacy for many NGOs working in different sectors, such as human rights, sexual violence, rural development and conflict, and as an intermediary between 'state' and 'society' in DRC. According to one Civil Society Office board member, 'the humanitarian community does not have interest in IDPs in town',[19] although he also explained that the city was full of IDPs. Interestingly, this person defined IDPs as 'people who fled because of human disaster such as witchcraft'.[20] Put simply, the Civil Society Office held the view that many more people had been forcibly displaced than were recognised by the humanitarian actors and that improvements could be made in addressing IDPs' concerns. Civil Society Office board members also maintained that many humanitarian actors were not interested in humanitarian intervention in Bukavu, which tallied with the abovementioned finding that agencies tended to focus their interventions in rural areas.

Despite the weakness of the state's role in assisting IDPs, some local authorities showed interest in the IDP situation. Some Bukavu neighbourhood chiefs said that there were no longer IDPs living in their neighbourhoods: 'We do not have IDPs, as life is difficult here'.[21] This

11   Interview with a UNICEF staff member in Bukavu.

12   Interview with an AVSI staff member in Bukavu.

13   Interview with a UNICEF staff member in Bukavu.

14   Interview with an MERU staff member in Bukavu.

15   Interview with an MERU staff member in Bukavu.

16   Interview with a KAF staff member in Bukavu.

17   Local NGO under the Trust Fund for Victims in charge of victims of conflict linked to psychological rehabilitation, medical service referrals and material support.

18   Interview with a KAF field staff member in Bukavu.

19   Interview with a board member of the Civil Society Office in Bukavu.

20   Interview with a board member of the Civil Society Office in Bukavu.

21   Interview with a local chief in Ndendere, Bukavu.

same neighbourhood chief stated that people living in Bukavu should not be labelled as IDPs because only migrants – not IDPs – could afford the cost of living in Bukavu; those who remained in Bukavu came from wealthy families and should therefore not be considered IDPs. In contrast, in a poor neighbourhood of Bukavu, a neighbourhood chief acknowledged a wave of IDPs in his neighbourhood, describing them as the poorest of the community and in a 'situation of loss'.[22] The two views show how the neighbourhood where IDPs settle matters for IDP assistance. For local authorities, IDPs who settle in wealthy neighbourhoods come from wealthy families, have resources and are not in need of assistance, whereas IDPs who settle in poor neighbourhoods lack resources and are in need of assistance.

Church leaders have also been very much involved in the conflict situation in eastern DRC, providing initial assistance to some of the IDPs scattered across Bukavu. These leaders stressed their involvement in the assistance of IDPs upon arrival. In his house in Bagira, a church leader responsible for assisting vulnerable people at a small community-based church said that it was necessary to be very cautious towards people labelling themselves as IDPs when they are not introduced by a member: 'In our community-based organisation, our members often present issues at the end of the service and bring out [an] IDP or someone in need of assistance'.[23]

Although some programmes relied on local agencies, the agencies themselves, such as NGOs and churches, often used criteria that were similar to those of external donors to adjust their programmes. However, in practice, these local agencies often drew more upon their knowledge of the personal histories of people to determine eligibility for assistance.

Assistance to IDPs also followed ethnic lines, as ethnic associations were involved during waves of displacement in some areas. 'When there is a need for assistance in our countryside during conflict, members will contribute to assist our community members',[24] explained a member of Solidarity of Bashi.[25] A representative of another ethnic association, Solidarity of Bahavu, elaborated on providing assistance to some displaced members of

their community in need, including 'persons displaced due to justice'.[26] Solidarity of Bahavu acknowledged that many displaced persons had land issues in the Kalehe territory when they returned home and then had to stay in other villages, fearing hostility or threats to their lives. Local groups such as ethnic associations, *cirika* (catholic community-based churches) and other local associations thus sometimes tended to set their own criteria, as they could differentiate levels of suffering in their communities. However, most local groups (NGOs, churches, and actors engaged with the non-IDP part of the humanitarian process in a host community) relied heavily on international actors to adjust these criteria because these groups funding came from external donors and they did not have funding to survey IDPs.

As part of host community, non-IDPs were an important group in this research because they were often host families or members of communities where many IDPs settled. According to some non-IDPs, IDP status was associated with the idea of vulnerability and dependence: after displaced people were able to make a living and live independently, they were no longer considered IDPs. During a focus group with members of a Small Christian Community in a house in Bagira, several ideas behind what it means to be an IDP were explained using interesting anecdotes. As one participant said, 'Once, I bought some wooden boards from a man who arrived here as an IDP. Now he owns the wooden boards shop and still has a house in this village ', and another participant added, 'to tell the truth, we cannot call them IDPs because they are settled and integrated in the community'. The story revealed that an IDP was someone poor and needy, and changing circumstances in this person's life ultimately affected his or her IDP identity. Additionally, being able to live independently called into question the person's IDP status because IDPs were not thought of as skilled; being skilled might cause an IDP to be labelled as an economic migrant instead.

5.3   Strategy 3: Paying less attention to the IDP label

Some humanitarian actors interviewed said that they were not interested in the IDP label because their humanitarian principles were purely needs-based. For

---

22   Interview with a local chief in Panzi, Bukavu.

23   Interview with a church leader of a small community-based church in Bagira, Bukavu.

24   Interview with a representative of Solidarity of Bashi in Bukavu.

25   Interview with a representative of Solidarity of Bashi in Bukavu.

26   Interview with a member of the Solidarity of Bahavu in Bukavu.

example, Doctors Without Borders and the International Committee of the Red Cross provided assistance in accordance with their charters or principles, prioritising acting without differentiating between different categories of people in need on the ground.

To sum up this section, Table 4 describes how different actors who participated in this study identified IDPs. For each type of actor, the 'Strategies for defining IDPs' column presents the process for identifying IDPs in terms of the verification of their stories, places of origin and documents related to their movement. The next column describes characteristics motivating assistance for each type of actor involved in assisting IDPs. Notably, the characteristics motivating assistance are associated with the vulnerability of both non-IDPs and IDPs. The final column, which is linked to the criteria for meriting assistance, summarises the criteria used to determine whether assistance was merited. The table highlights some stark differences between approaches. Some actors (e.g. UNICEF and the IRC) excluded IDPs in urban areas, whereas others did not (e.g. Doctors Without Borders and the Red Cross). Some put a time limit on how long IDPs could receive assistance (ordinary non-IDPs and church leaders), but others did not (Civil Society Office). A last important difference relates to IDPs' geographic origins. For some (e.g. AVSI), this was an important element for determining vulnerability, but this was not the case for other actors (e.g. local authorities).

The differences in the 'Strategies for identifying IDPs' column of Table 4 show that the definition of IDPs is operationalised differently by several agencies, such as the UNHCR, UNICEF, IRC and AVSI, have dropped displacement from their definitions at policy level. The history of violence and forced displacement mattered less in most approaches than did the current level of vulnerability; as a result, programmes intended for IDPs could be used for different people. The question of who is an IDP was therefore relegated to the background in many approaches, even for programmes that focused on IDPs. This raised questions about the actual targeting and identification of beneficiaries in programmes: using the vulnerability criterion, there would always be many more people to assist than there were available resources, and the allocation of aid appeared arbitrary to the study participants.

Table 4: Process of labelling someone as an IDP

Type of actor working with IDP	Strategies for defining IDPs	Situation for assistance	Criteria for meriting assistance
Humanitarian actors: the United Nations, the International Rescue Committee, Malteser International, Association of Volunteers in International Service, the United Nations Children's Fund	**Strategy 1: Formulating objective criteria** Collaborative approach Vulnerability survey Snowball technique Triangulation of sources	Critical level of vulnerability; Number of IDPs; Reason for displacement; No assets (land, clothes, kitchen utensils, etc.); Physical aspect (big families, number of people living in a house); Staying with host families; Location (not in urban areas such as Bukavu); Time spent in the area (no assistance after three months)	Severity of the need; Time spend in the host community (no assistance after three months); Location
Humanitarian actors: Doctors Without Borders, International Committee of the Red Cross	**Strategy 3: Paying less attention to the IDP label** Principles or charters	No difference between IDPs and non-IDPs	Armed conflict
Local NGOs	**Strategy 1: Formulating objective criteria** Collaborative approach **Strategy 2: Relying on self-identification and local organisations** Self-identification National identification card (carte d'électeur)	Armed conflict; People with health reasons for moving; Non-physical aspect (trauma, lack of social network)Place of origin (not from far away); Budget	Severity of the need (physical and psychological); IDP's final destination
The Civil Society Office (platform for different NGOs)	**Strategy 2: Relying on self-identification and local organisations** NGOs involved in IDP projects	Armed conflict; Human-made disaster	Inclusion of those displaced because of the practice of witchcraft
Local authorities	**Strategy 2: Relying on self-identification and local organisations** Identification card Census of the population Newcomer in a neighbourhood Neighbourhood chief Self-identification	Movement because of conflict; State of loss; Dependency; People without national identification cards; IDP's job (conveyer of goods or rubble, maid, worker at a building site, etc.); Location; Time spent in the area	Severity of the need; IDP's final destination
Church leaders	**Strategy 2: Relying on self-identification and local organisations** New member of the community Letter from a church leader Visiting needy people	Staying at someone's house with the intention to return; Movement because of conflict; No family Needy people; No assets; Location; Time spent in a location Conflict; Justice issues or land issues; Ethnic ties	No family; Staying with host families; Severity of the need
Ethnic associations	**Strategy 3: Paying less attention to the IDP label** People from the same ethnic group Member of the association	Conflict; Justice issues or land issues; Ethnic ties	Severity of the need
Urban poor	**Strategy 3: Paying less attention to the IDP label** Neighbour Companion (church or workplace) Acquaintance	IDP's job; No assets; Location ; Time spent in the neighbourhood	Severity of the need; Staying with host families

6 The identification of IDPs meriting aid: Contradictory selection processes

Section 5 has shown that a significant number of organisations do not consider the 'IDP' label to be important in determining support. Furthermore, those organisations that do make use of the label have very different ways of defining and providing support to IDPs. The complexities of defining IDPs as a category frames a vast population of urban poor as potential beneficiaries of IDP programmes. The question then becomes how the selection process produces the final list of recipients in view of the programmes' small resource bases and the vastness of the urban poor population.

Despite the differences in approaches among organisations, they all tend to consider three main criteria when determining which people to assist as programme recipients. Notably, the displacement criterion has again disappeared from the selection process.

6.1 The severity of the need

First, the severity of the need was a prominent criterion among research participants for designating someone as a beneficiary of an IDP support programme. As explained above, some actors relied on a vulnerability survey to identify beneficiaries of assistance. A field staff member of the IRC noted that 'the household survey gives a score to assess the vulnerability of the household',[27] allowing the organisation to establish the possessions of the household. Because of the costs involved in identifying IDPs, some actors relied on triangulating information from other sources or an assessment made by agents in charge of the vulnerability survey during their work. Other actors considered psychological factors an important aspect of the severity of the need. These might include the experience of trauma or violence during the conflict. Such psychological factors required special assessment. 'We have *pair encadreur* [social workers][28] who are very well aware of girls' situation or who have contacts with gatekeepers in poor neighbourhoods,'[29] remarked a *Réseau des Femmes Médecins pour le Développement Intégral* staff member, explaining their assessment of the severity of needs among potential beneficiaries.

6.2 The housing situation and location

The severity of the need was also linked to a second

---

27   Interview with a fieldwork staff member in Lusenda groupment, Fizi territory, South Kivu.

28   NGO workers who are very close to gatekeepers in poor neighbourhoods and are known for their subtle skill at keeping secrets or avoiding the embarrassment or distress of beneficiaries.

29   Interview with an AFBD staff worker in Bukavu.

criterion, namely the housing situation, which was another essential factor. Indeed, when an organisation was referred to an IDP, they expected to find them living with a poor host family. While visiting some poor families, the leader of the poverty commission of a Small Christian Community pointed out an IDP family who used to receive assistance. They were no longer receiving assistance because 'they are renting a house'.[30] Renting their own house was considered proof of the family's capacity to make a living on their own. In the same vein, some actors took the position of the host in the community into account. An AVSI fieldworker noted, 'someone who stays with a village chief is in a better condition because the chief has enough resources'.[31] Ultimately, the IDP label was applied only when the host was poor in their community.

It is generally assumed by agencies that urban areas attract IDPs with resources, whereas rural areas attract IDPs without resources. However, in some ways, this idea was challenged by the present findings. As the leader of a local NGO explained while giving details about the population increase in some vicinities of Bukavu, such as the Mushununu area in Panzi, 'Some IDPs do not want to go back to their villages because they are still insecure'.[32]

6.3   The time spent in a specific area

A final important criterion was the time spent in a specific area after IDPs fled from their places of origin. Although this criterion was very much related to displacement, it precluded any displacement of longer than three months' duration in a specific area. Unlike IDPs in camps, who keep their IDP identity regardless of the amount time spent in the camp, those living outside of camps tend to lose their IDP identity after a certain amount of time. A Foundation Rama Levina staff worker insisted that 'the end of displacement occurs when IDPs have been able to adapt in an environment through some activities such as

petty trade, carrying goods or cultivating'.[33] Similarly, non-IDPs mentioned 'integration'[34] through processes such as marrying in Bukavu, buying a plot of land or making a decent living as important in determining the end of being labelled an IDP.

Overall, these three criteria depicted a process in the identification of IDPs to receive assistance that was in accordance with the organisations' expertise and principles. However, the criteria were very broad and might apply to many more people than could actually be assisted by the organisations. When recounting stories during assistance distribution activities, some people reported that local gatekeepers, such as church members, local authorities or local NGOs, sometimes identified people they knew as beneficiaries, rather than the most urgent cases. During a field trip to Bunyakiri, I met a woman who explained possibilities for getting on the list of beneficiaries: 'Sometimes it is people with bad intentions who write lists of beneficiaries and, in that case, they write their children's names instead of victims … and other people buy tokens to receive aid although they are not on the list of beneficiaries.'

The main consequence of displacement being dropped from the selection criteria was that assistance could also be given to non-IDP members of host communities, which may not be the intended purpose of assistance for IDPs outside of camps. Although this may go against the objectives of the programmes, many agencies did not see it as a problem because they feared that insisting on displacement as a criterion would lead to social tension with the host population. In this way, non-IDPs remained part of the humanitarian process. Another reason why agencies considered this acceptable is that they acknowledged that the urban poor carry the same burden as 'real' IDPs in their area and hence should also be assisted.

---

30   Interview in Kahalhe area in Bukavu.

31   Interview with an AVSI fieldworker in Bukavu.

32   Interview with a Centre Ekabana staff worker in Bukavu.

33   Interview with a fieldwork staff worker of Foundation RamaLevina in Buakvu.

34   Focus group in Bilala neighbourhood of Bukavu.

7 Discussion of the findings

In a context with a significant number of IDPs and humanitarian actors responsible for assisting them, some contradictions remain regarding the IDP label in Bukavu. This section analyses findings based on the discourse on assisting IDP in their host communities and asking whether the assistance provided confirms to the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.

7.1 Consequences of assisting IDPs outside of camps while using the IDP label

The discussion about the IDP label and its effects must include the work of researchers such as Horst, Malkki and Zetter, who described the link between labelling and the type of discourse in the field of forced migration (Horst, 2006; Malkki, 1995; Zetter, 1991). Their work on labels reveals that it is essential to analyse the negative side of the label, although labelling gives meaning, justifies the actions of donors, and has great importance for the people who are assisted. Originally, labels are formed from concepts that are not only influenced by social reality but also have an impact on the general discourse within that reality and thus on actions (Horst, 2006: 12). In other words, the label is part of the discourse aiming to describe or to create an image of those who are labelled and to categorise the labelled group for policy purposes, such as giving assistance or setting up a project or a programme.

Humanitarian actors are increasingly in favour of assisting IDPs in host communities, and these actors work to change how assistance is provided to reflect this approach (Culbertson et al., 2016; Furst Nichols and Jacobsen, 2012). However, some issues have been raised regarding such assistance. Three of these issues, related to the number of IDPs, the identification process and the scope of assistance, will be analysed. These issues correspond to critiques on the use of the IDP label in the forced migration field, namely regarding the image conveyed, classification for policy purposes and the expertise required to identify IDPs' problems (De Voe, 1981; Horst, 2006).

7.1.1 The battle over the number of IDPs in eastern DRC

As noted above, there is a lack of clarity regarding the actual number of IDPs in South Kivu and in Bukavu because of how the IDP label is defined and applied. Ideally, the number of IDPs should be a starting point for planning different programmes to assist IDPs, such as the RRPM programme, ensuring the selection of the best

mode of assistance.

There has, however, been complete disagreement regarding the number of IDPs in South Kivu. Indeed, some actors have openly referred to estimates of the number of IDPs as 'not accurate, numbers are overlapping'[35] or called for the 'control [of estimates of the] number of IDPs because of the lack of precision, as some data are out-of-date or returnees are not reported by some actors'.[36] Concerns regarding the number of IDPs in DRC have even been voiced in a report evaluating counts of IDPs worldwide (Borton et al., 2005: 100). For DRC, the report mentioned that there was 'disagreement among international staff as to who should be counted as an IDP', stating that, 'in general, numbers are viewed with scepticism' and concluding that 'few organisations trust each other's number, or any number. Since funding and targeting are based on numbers, this is unsettling.'

Thus, humanitarian actors use different estimates of the numbers of IDPs, and the issue has become even more complex because the 'DRC government has declared that the crisis has been exaggerated, and for this reason boycotted an international pledging conference of the UN to assist millions of people displaced and hungry' (Keaten and Mwanamilongo, 2018). The disregard of Congolese authorities is not only a recent phenomenon, as is shown in how the South Kivu government dealt with a demonstration by displaced people in Bukavu in April 2009 (Reliefweb, 2009): In response to 600 people, allegedly displaced from Mwenga and Shabunda territories, taking to the streets asking for assistance, the governor of the province said that aid agencies should harmonise their lists because the number of IDPs was exaggerated.

The battle over the number of IDPs in DRC takes place in an environment where it is important to maintain a certain image. Many researchers (Barnett and Weiss, 2008; Hilhorst, 2018; Malkki, 1996; Slim, 2003) see conveying messages as one of the main attributes of a label, serving to attract public opinion to a crisis and to advocate for funding on behalf of victims. Depending on the type of conflict, messages such as pictures and numbers are often used to create feeling in public opinion. DRC has been in conflict for more than 20 years, the country is among the poorest the world, and other conflicts such

as those in Syria and Yemen also require donor funding. In this context, IDP numbers have been an important tool for raising awareness and funding among donors and for increasing effectiveness during conferences and fundraising events, and the aid community publicises high figures for the number of IDPs, which are contested by the national government. The two parties have different interests: the international community uses people's vulnerability to raise funds, and the DRC government seeks to direct funding towards other purposes. This politicisation of the number of IDPs means that the actual number of IDPs and the assistance they receive remain unclear.

7.1.2 Categorisation for policy purposes: method of identification

The second issue is the identification process, which calls attention to IDPs' needs. The process of identifying IDPs is an important issue because different types of actors identify IDPs in different ways, which creates challenges in terms of tailoring programmes for IDPs' needs and ensuring that IDPs will benefit from assistance. Researchers have previously found that the label of 'IDP' is stigmatising (Borton et al., 2005: 104; Gupte and Mehta, 2013). I found that 'IDP' was a claim-making label, and being identified as an IDP provided a marginal advantage because it made people eligible for a small gesture of aid. This calls into question the usefulness of the IDP label in a context where displaced people receive less consideration or are not associated with the vulnerability linked to conflict because humanitarian actors do not see displacement as a concern necessitating assistance.

The process of identification is also a powerful discourse used to justify and legitimate actions on the ground. As mentioned above, acknowledging the number of victims of the conflict in eastern DRC can give organisations a justification for their work, and the identification or categorisation of beneficiaries has one policy purpose: justifying humanitarian action on the ground and maintaining humanitarian assistance for IDPs. Humanitarian organisations must keep the identification process while assistance is ongoing to maintain their role of distributors of aid, of donors, givers or charitable workers.

---

35 Interview with an AVSI staff member in Bukavu.

36 Interview with a Caritas staff member in Bukavu.

7.1.3 The expertise to identify the problem: The scope of assistance

Defining the scope of humanitarian assistance required for displaced persons in South Kivu faces the challenge that it is now more problematic than ever to assert the existence of IDPs in the province. The main programme targeting population movement, RRPM, has deliberately abandoned the criterion of displacement, as stated in their description of IDPs. In practice, many organisations receiving funding for IDPs select beneficiaries based on criteria that no longer include displacement. In other words, assistance intended for IDPs has been directed towards people based on their vulnerability, regardless of whether they are displaced or not. Some organisations, such as UNHCR, UNICEF, ICR and AVSI, use their funds for IDPs to provide more generalised aid based on vulnerability.

In addition, it has been acknowledged that some people took advantage of the system and cheated to be entitled to assistance. To deal with this issue, some organisations have overlooked the situation of displacement, although donors have been funding humanitarian assistance on the basis of number of victims of the conflict. Vulnerability (in terms of the composition of the family, number of children and income) has become central in the criteria to identify beneficiaries, and it tends to be overlooked that some people have also taken advantage of this criterion by pretending to be vulnerable.

7.2 Is assistance to IDPs in South Kivu in line with the *Guiding Principles*?

Although it remains important to follow the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, current practice in terms of defining IDPs in DRC does not appear to adhere strongly to these guidelines. The *Guiding Principles* address a number of rights of IDPs during and after their displacement, with the goal of providing them with better support (Deng, 1999). This section of the paper focuses on challenging the different criteria used in relation to Principles 14.1, 15.d, 18.1, 18.2, 22.a and 22.b of the *Guiding Principles*, which are described below.

The criteria described by participants in the present study were in opposition to Principles 14.1, 15(a) and 18.2, which refer respectively to IDPs' (1) liberty of movement and freedom to choose their place of residence, (2)

right to seek safety in another part of the country, and (3) access to essential food and potable water, basic shelter and housing, appropriate clothing, essential medical services and sanitation. Because the criterion of displacement no longer granted access to assistance during the identification process, IDPs could not fulfil these basic vital needs.

Furthermore, contrary to Principle 18.1, which refers to IDPs' right to an adequate standard of living, IDPs who were able to make a living in the area where they sought refuge lost their IDP status. The problem is that not that all IDPs should be assisted in the same way – it is true they differ in terms of both resources and vulnerabilities – but that there is no long-term strategy for how to assist the IDPs who are most in need. In an interview, a UNICEF worker commented, 'I've asked during a meeting with humanitarian actors [about] the need to study IDPs' need in Bukavu ... because of our accountability commitment',[37] referring to a concern about work with vulnerable IDPs in the long term.

Finally, Principle 22.1 (a and b) refers to IDPs' rights to freedom of thought, conscience, religion/belief, opinion and expression, and rights to seek opportunities for employment and to participate in economic activities. The findings of the present study indicate that IDPs' capacity to act and make their own free choices were not sufficiently supported, as they were considered IDPs (and therefore eligible for assistance) only when they were in need and in a dependent situation.

Returning to the initial question asked in this section (Is assistance in Bukavu in line with the *Guiding Principles*?), there is a need to better address IDPs' needs while respecting their rights, choices and freedoms. Without blaming particular actors, the reality on the ground in South Kivu challenges the discourse on assisting IDPs outside of camps. Additionally, the *Guiding Principles'* definition of IDPs is difficult to incorporate in humanitarian regimes capable of addressing IDPs' needs because it is challenging to use the displacement criterion to convey a representation of the suffering, powerless and neediness that are often used by humanitarian organisations.

---

37   Interview with a UNICEF staff worker in Bukavu.

8   Conclusions

This working paper has discussed the relevance of the IDP label in Bukavu, South Kivu. The aim has been to increase understanding of the way in which actors identify IDPs in relation to the ongoing debate about whether IDPs should be assisted inside or outside of camps, at a time when the phenomenon of IDPs living outside of camps is becoming more widely recognised.

The identification of IDPs outside of camps has been a challenge to actors in South Kivu, where the phrase 'IDP' is socially constructed and used to mean different things by various humanitarian agencies. Importantly, there is no consensus on the methods for their identification among actors. Whereas some exclude IDPs from receiving assistance in urban areas (e.g. UNICEF and the IRC), others do not (Doctors Without Borders and the Red Cross). Despite these differences, I identified three main strategies used to identify IDPs: formulating objective criteria, relying on self-identification and local organisations, and paying less attention to the label.

Different agencies also have dissimilar tactics for identifying IDPs who merit aid for inclusion on their beneficiary lists during the identification process, revealing inconsistencies among the actors working with IDPs in South Kivu. In the various approaches applied, three criteria were repeatedly seen in how agencies select individuals or families for inclusion on their lists of recipients: severity of the need, housing situation and location, and time spent in the area. Unfortunately, the use of these three criteria has been detrimental to the overall process because the criterion of displacement has almost disappeared. Furthermore, these criteria apply to the majority of people living in urban areas of South Kivu, making the assistance process something of a lottery.

In view of the discourse on humanitarian assistance in the host community and given the three criteria commonly used on the ground, assisting IDPs outside of camps remains problematic. Because there are contradictions regarding the number of IDPs in South Kivu, the identification process and the scope of the assistance, it is necessary to reconsider the discourse on assistance to IDPs outside of camps. In this context, it is important to recognise that reports of the numbers of IDPs are not reliable, the identification process has become a claim-making tool and the scope of the assistance neglects IDPs in favour of non-IDPs.

Additionally, the three concerns - regarding the image conveyed, classification for policy purposes and the expertise required to identify IDPs' problems - have

had two main consequences for the discourse on the humanitarian assistance of IDPs. The first consequence is related to the idea of the bureaucratic humanitarian regime being reinforced by the use of the IDP label. This regime is often criticised for justifying humanitarian work through the use of labels that convey an image of vulnerability, a categorisation process that suits policy purposes and a need for humanitarian actors' expertise in identifying and solving problems. The second consequence is that the assistance provided to IDPs in Bukavu may not be in accordance with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Taken together, these findings support the discourse on humanitarian aid

arguing that there are differences in how actors deal with policies and translate them into practice and highlight that the criterion of displacement may not convey a strong message of suffering.

Responsibility for the current situation regarding IDPs in South Kivu ought to be shared among government, humanitarian and donor actors: the government should take more responsibility for meeting IDPs' needs, humanitarian actors should be more united regarding the operationalization of the definition of IDPs and the process for identifying them, and donors should be more persuasive in their promotion of the Guiding Principles.

References

Bailey, S. (2014) *Evaluation of ECHO-funded cash and voucher food assistance in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. Kinshasa: European Community Humanitarian Aid Office

Barnett, M. and T. G. Weiss (2008) *Humanitarianism in question: Politics, power, ethics*. Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press

Black, R. (1998) 'Putting refugees in camps' *Forced Migration Review 2*. Oxford: University of Oxford Refugees Studies Centre

Borton, J., Buchanan-Smith, M. and R. Otto, R. (2005) *Support to Internally Displaced Persons: Learning from experience*. Stockholm: SIDA

Brookings (2013) *Under the radar: Internally Displaced Persons in non-camp settings*. Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement. Washington DC: The Brookings Institution

Brun, C. (2003) 'Local citizens or internally displaced persons? Dilemmas of long term displacement in Sri Lanka' *Journal of Refugee Studies* 16(4): 376–397

Christensen, A. and Harild, N. (2009) *Forced displacement: The development challenge*. Washington DC: World Bank

Cohen, R. (2004) 'The Guiding principles on internal displacement: An innovation in international standard setting' *Global Governance* 10(4): 459–480

Cohen, R. and F.M. Deng (2009) 'Mass displacement caused by conflicts and one-sided violence: national and international responses' in *SIPRI Yearbook 2009: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*: 15–38. Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute SIPRI

Crisp, J., Morris, T. and Refstie, H. (2012) 'Displacement in urban areas: New challenges, new partnerships' *Disasters* 36 Suppl 1: S23–42 (http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7717.2012.01284.x)

Culbertson, S., Oliker, P., Baruch, B. and Blum, I. (2016) *Rethinking coordination of services to refugees in urban areas managing the crisis in Jordan and Lebanon*: RAND Corporation

Davies, A. (2012) *IDPs in host families and host communities: Assistance for hosting arrangements*. Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

De Voe, D.M. (1981) 'Framing refugees as clients' *International Migration Review* 15(1): 88–94

Deng, F. (1999) 'Guiding principles on internal displacement' *International Migration Review* 33(2): 484–493 (http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2547706)

Deng, F.M. (2006) 'Divided nations: The paradox of national protection' *The Annals of the American Academy* 603(1): 217–225 (http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0002716205283019)

Furst Nichols, R. and Jacobsen (2012) *Refugee livelihoods in urban areas: Identifying program opportunities*. Somerville, MA: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University

Global CCCM Cluster (2014) *Urban displacement and outside of camp: Desk review*. UNHCR, IOM, NORCAP/NRC

GP20 (2018) 20th Anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: A Plan of Action for Advancing Prevention, Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People 2018-2020. 23 May (http://globalprotectioncluster.org/_assets/files/20180523-gp20-plan-of-action-final.pdf)

Gupte, J. and Mehta, L. (2013) 'Disjunctures in labelling refugees and oustees' in J. Moncrieffe and R. Eyben (eds) *The power of labelling: How people are categorized and why it matters*: 64–79. London: Earthscan

Harver, K. (2008a) *Out of site: Building better response to displacement in the Democratic Republic of Congo by helping host families*. Oxfam International

Harver, K. (2008b) *Study on Food security, livelihoods and relations among host families and IDPs in South Lubero, North-Kivu*. Oxfam

Healy, S. and Tiller, S. (2014) *Where is everyone? Responding to emergencies in the most difficult places*. London: Médecins Sans Frontières

Hickel, M.C. (2001) 'Protection of internally displaced persons affected by armed conflict concept and challenges' *International Review of the Red Cross* 83(843)

Hilhorst, D. (2018) 'Classical humanitarianism and resilience humanitarianism: making sense of two brands of humanitarian action' *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 3(1): 15 (http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/s41018-018-0043-6)

Horst, C. (2006) *Transnational nomads: How Somalis cope with refugee life in the Dadaab camps of Kenya*. New York: Berghahn Books

IATI (2018) *Dataset on humanitarian projects in DRC*. International Aid Transparency Initiative, 22 April (http://preview.iatistandard.org/index.php?url=https%3A//github.com/AidData-WM/public_datasets/raw/master/iati/iati_1.04_DRC-AIMS_GeocodedResearchRelease.xml)

IDMC – Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2014) 'Democratic Republic of the Congo: Multiple crises hamper prospects for durable solutions'. Geneva: IDMC and Norwegian Refugee Council

Jacobsen, K. and Cardona, I. (2014) *Guidance for profiling urban displacement situations: challenges and solutions*. Geneva: Joint IDP Profiling Service

JIPS – Joint IDP Profiling Service (2012) Profile at glance: Democratic Republic of Congo North-Kivu. Geneva: JIPS

Kälin, W. (2005) 'The role of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement' Protecting and assisting the internally displaced: the way forward. Forced Migration Review special supplement, October.

Keaten, J. and Mwanamilongo, S. (2018) 'Congo boycotts pledging conference, says crisis exaggerated' AP News, 13 April

Kirbyshire, A., Wilkinson, E., Le Masson, V. and Batra, P. (2017) *Mass displacement and the challenge for urban resilience*. London: Overseas Development Institute

Lauten, B. and Kesmaecker-Wissing, M. (2015) *IDPs' decision-making in the DRC: Defining a framework to support resilience in humanitarian responses to multiple displacement*. Geneva: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and Norwegian Refugee Council

Malkki, L.H. (1995) *Purity and exile: Violence, memory, and national cosmology among Hutu refugees in Tanzania*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Malkki, L.H. (1996) 'Speechless emissaries: Refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization' *Cultural anthropology* 11(3): 377–404

McDowell, S. (2008) 'Internal displacement in North Kivu: Hosting, camps, and coping mechanisms'. UNICEF and CARE DRC

McNamara, D. (1998) *Guiding principles on internal displacement*. Washington DC: UN High Commissioner for Refugees

MSF – Médecins Sans Frontières (2014) *Everyday emergency: Silent suffering in Democratic Republic of Congo*. Amsterdam: MSF

NRC – Norwegian Refugee Council (2008) *Guidance on profiling Internally Displaced Persons*. Geneva: NRC and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

NRC – Norwegian Refugee Council (2014) *Living conditions of displaced persons and host communities in Goma, DRC*. Goma: NRC

OCHA (2012) *Plan d'action humanitaire 2011: Rapport d'activit*és. OCHA

OCHA (2014) 'Behind the lens: In South Kivu, DRC, hope and generosity embodied' OCHA website, 19 December (www.unocha.org/country/top-stories/all-stories/behind-lens-south-kivu-drc-hope-and-generosity-embodied)

OCHA (2015) 'Sud-Kivu: Aperçu Humanitaire - Septembre 2015'. OCHA (www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/democratic-republic-congo/infographic/carte-sud-kivu-aper%C3%A7u-humanitaire-septembre-2015)

OCHA (2016) 'DR Congo: Humanitarian Fund 2006-2015', 10 June (https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/10_years_of_hf_en.pdf)

OCHA (2017a) 'Democratic Republic of Congo: Internally displaced persons and returnees (as of 31 December 2017)'. Kinshasa: OCHA (www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/drc_factsheet_trim4_2017_en_07022018.pdf)

OCHA (2017b) Republique Democratique du Congo: un mois au Sud-Kivu', 21 April (https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ocha_sk_chaque_mois_au_sud-kivu_mai2017.pdf)

Reliefweb (2009) 'RD Congo/Bukavu : les déplacés de Mwenga et de Shabunda dans la rue pour dénoncer l'indifférence de l'autorité provinciale' 26 July (https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/rd-congobukavu-les-d%C3%A9plac%C3%A9s-de-mwenga-et-de-shabunda-dans-la-rue)

Rudolph, M. (2014) *Assessing the humanitarian response to chronic crisis in North Kivu*. Goma: MercyCorps, World Vision, Search For Common Ground, Fonds Social pour la Republique Democratique du Congo

Schmidt, A. (2003) *FMO thematic guide: Camps versus settlements*. Oxford: Refugees Studies Centre

Shacknove, A.E. (1985) 'Who is a Refugee?' *Ethics* 95(2): 274–284

Slim, H. (2003) *Marketing humanitarian space: Argument and method in humanitarian persuasion*. Geneva: Center for Humanitarian Dialogue

Tibaijuka, A. (2010) 'Apdating to urban displacement' *Forced Migration Review 34*. University Oxford: Refugees Studies Centre

USAID (2015) Democratic Republic of Congo-Complex Emergency. USAID/OFDA bulletins appear on the USAID (http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/working-crises-and-conflict/responding-times-crisis/where-we-work)

White, S. (2015) *Now what? The international response to internal displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Washington DC: The Brookings Institution

Zetter, R. (1991) 'Labelling refugees: Forming and transforming a bureaucratic identity' *Journal of refugee studies* 4(1): 39–62

Zetter, R. and Deikun, G. (2010) 'Meeting humanitarian challenges in urban areas' *Forced Migration Review 34*. Oxford: Refugee Studies Centre

Cover photo: In DRC, women refugees rebuild lives, with determination and hope. Photo: UN Women/Catianne Tijerina

International
Institute of
Social Studies