

Researching livelihoods and  
services affected by conflict

# ‘We are all IDPs’

Vulnerability and livelihoods  
in Mugunga 3 camp, Goma,  
Democratic Republic of the Congo

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Gloria Nguya

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**Written by Gloria Nguya,  
International Institute of Social  
Studies (ISS, Erasmus University of  
Rotterdam)**

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**Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium**  
Overseas Development Institute (ODI)  
203 Blackfriars Road  
London SE1 8NJ  
United Kingdom

T +44 (0)20 3817 0031  
F +44 (0)20 7922 0399  
E [slrc@odi.org.uk](mailto:slrc@odi.org.uk)  
[www.securelivelihoods.org](http://www.securelivelihoods.org)  
[@SLRCtweet](https://twitter.com/SLRCtweet)

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Cover photo: An aerial view of camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), North Kivu region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. UN/2013 (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

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# About us



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**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](http://www.securelivelihoods.org/what-we-do)

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# Acronyms



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<b>CNR</b>	<i>Commission Nationale pour les Réfugiés</i>
<b>IRC</b>	International Rescue Committee
<b>IDP</b>	Internally displaced person
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>NRC</b>	Norwegian Refugee Council
<b>OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>SFCG</b>	Search for Common Ground
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund

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# Executive summary



Thousands of IDPs remain in many camps across North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This working paper explores the experiences of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the setting of Mugunga 3 camp in Goma through the livelihood framework. We challenge the assumption that IDP camps are places of passive vulnerability and demonstrate that IDPs are able to rebuild their lives by engaging in various trade activities, inside and outside of camps. Inside of the camp, residents developed livelihood strategies around three activities: namely, manual labour, petty trade and employment/entrepreneurship. Camp residents labelled as vulnerable by humanitarian actors were also able to make a living through participation in IDP associations, as well as programmes and projects set up by humanitarian agencies. The livelihoods approach to development recognises the range of people's coping strategies, differentiating between population groups to enable a fuller picture of IDPs breadth of experiences of the camps.

Combining life stories, in-depth interviews and field visits, this research initially interviewed 75 IDPs. It was important to select research participants who could be traced both in the camp and outside of the camp, as some had two residences. Interviews were conducted both inside the camp and also in the Goma neighbourhood (the Rusayo, Kibati and Kibumba groupings in Nyiragongo territory and Kitchanga grouping in Masisi territory), where many participants' worked.

In Mugunga 3, we identified three approaches camp residents with differing experiences of vulnerability took to ensure their survival in the camp:

**1** *Mutual dependency*: The first group relied on aid to survive and were dependent on aid providers. At the same time, agencies were dependent on this group to claim assistance to this group. Vulnerable residents had the advantage of being targeted by agencies, and could use their vulnerable status as the primary means to survive. Physical capital (the camp)

and social capital (strong networks with camp and organisation workers) formed the foundation of their livelihood approach.

- 2** *'Playing the vulnerability card'*: Less vulnerable camp residents often played, what we call, the 'vulnerability card' - seeking opportunities by utilising the vulnerability criteria set by agencies. Their livelihood approach was based on strong social capital.
- 3** *Exploiting camp organisational structure*: The camp organisation also played a part for some IDPs, whose approach relied on the IDP economy built within and around the camp, offering employment opportunities, and the use of aid as a valuable resource. This approach linked together physical capital (access to information), social capital (strong networks with NGOs, camp management and other staff members) and human capital (skills and knowledge related to the camp).

We suggest that policy-makers and other actors should consider the following factors when operating within IDP camps:

- *Vulnerability*: A prevailing lack of representation of IDP camp populations has influenced assistance to IDPs, and has resulted in a homogenised understanding of IDP experiences in camps. Our research found two categories of vulnerability among the camp residents. The first group – the vulnerable – was based on humanitarian actors' labelling, and the second group – less vulnerable – were split into camp and organisation workers and opportunity seekers. Those at the most at risk or who will be exposed to vulnerability after leaving the camp, tended to remain in the camps, whereas those who had wider networks or more resources moved out of the camps to rent houses, hold a job and rebuild their lives. More clearly defined recognition and identification of these different categories of vulnerable IDPs will help actors to meet the range of needs in the camps.
- *Diversity*: It is important to take into account the diversity of IDP camp residents to better address

questions such as needs or camp closure so that responses are not geared only towards one particular group. Donors and humanitarian actors are encouraged to further focus their assistance and protection of IDPs and investigate needs in the context of the diversity of the IDP population. In doing so, actors will respect the non-discrimination against IDPs enshrined in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

- *Keeping families together:* Whether they are considered a first or a last resort, IDP camps may be useful in allowing large families to stay together. Mugunga 3 offered an important element of physical capital for many families. In the camp, large families found a place to live together which allowed them

to better face the future without burdening their relatives. On the latter, although many respondents stressed the generosity of relatives and friends during displacement, it is also a difficult moment for hosts as well as for IDPs.

- *The meaning of the camps for residents:* Residents in Mugunga 3 understood the camps as a means to gaining shelter, with opportunities, privacy, a physical address and a place to keep families together. The camps also granted time to residents to recover, to organise and to begin plans to rebuild lives. Respondents reveal that IDP camps are not only places of assistance but sites where IDPs can use the camp space to rebuild, reshape and take back control of their lives.



# 1 Introduction

Since the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were introduced into the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1998, much research has been conducted to identify different types of IDPs depending on the type of environment in which they live (Cohen, 2004; Kalin, 1998). Of these environments, camp settlements are recognised as sites with limited security and poor living conditions (Brookings, 2013; Schuller, 2012), lacking in resources, such as the means for self-settlement and social ties to provide support (Brookings-LSE and Displacement, 2013; Bilak et al., 2016; Borton et al., 2005; Mertus, 2003). The general public's understanding of IDP camps is also mostly negative, relating to insecurity in neighbourhoods where the camps are located or based on preconceived notions about camp residents (Ferguson, 2010).

A great deal of research has described the dependency of IDPs in camps on long-term assistance (Bailey and Harragin, 2009: 2–3). Furthermore, some studies have found that camps undermine IDPs' coping strategies (Harrell-Bond, 1998) and even create (Horn, 2009) and encourage dependency (Kassam and Nanji, 2006). This research focuses on a specific group of IDPs – those who are the most at risk or who will be exposed to vulnerability after leaving the camp (Mertus, 2003). These vulnerable groups tend to remain in the camps, whereas those who have wider networks or more resources move out of the camps to rent houses, hold a job and rebuild their lives. This representation of IDP camp populations has affected assistance to IDPs and has resulted in a homogenised understanding of IDP camp experiences.

Other scholars have pointed to the advantages of camps and consider IDPs as agents, exploring camp residents' perceptions of their situation (Schuller, 2012) and their capacity to cope with insecurity and displacement (Adam, 2008). In various places (Turner, 2010) and in difficult locations, IDPs have shown a capacity for resilience, even when they have limited choices (Bøås and Bjørkhaug, 2014). However, there remains limited knowledge regarding the ability of IDPs to acquire and use various types of capital, including resources such as social relations, organisations (government agencies, NGOs, associations and private companies or power relations (De Haan and Zoomers, 2005).

There exists a wealth of literature exploring the experiences of refugees in a number of contexts and across different time periods. Studies of refugees were conducted in the aftermath of World War II

but IDP studies were not seen until as late as 1998, following the introduction of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. In comparison to refugees, we understand little about how IDPs view the purpose of camps.

About 50 IDP camps<sup>1</sup> are located in North Kivu. Mugunga 3, the setting for this working paper, was one of these camps. Much of the fieldwork for this study was conducted during a camp closure threat. On 31 July 2017, after many such threats, Mugunga 3 camp was finally closed (Okapi, 2017). Humanitarian agencies have often depicted Mugunga 3 camp and other IDP camps as places for the most vulnerable people, who would be unable to sustain themselves outside of a camp (MSF, 2014). In reality, and as this paper argues, a variety of people lived in the camp and although some IDPs were indeed heavily reliant on the camp, many IDPs also used the camp as part of a broader livelihood strategy that partly took place outside of the camp.

This study aims to contribute to the discussion about the diversity of IDP populations in camps by presenting research findings about the livelihood strategies of IDP camp dwellers, focusing on IDPs in Mugunga camp, which was under a threat of closure through much of the research period (July 2014–February 2015). This paper examines the differences among the categories of IDPs and the variety of uses and wider meaning these different types of residents had for the camp. We explore IDPs' different livelihood strategies, the heterogeneity of IDPs in terms of non-assistance sources of income, IDPs who are able to move out of camps and how they differ from IDPs with higher levels of vulnerability.

The exploration of the paths towards livelihoods deepens the understanding of how poor people not only access resources through material assets, but also draw upon non-material assets. This is in line with past work showing how poor people secure their existence in different ways that extend beyond their human capital (Wood, 2001).

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<sup>1</sup> Since 2013, the phrase 'IDP camps' has no longer been used in the DRC. The phrase was replaced by 'IDP sites' to describe the 'official camps' coordinated by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the 'spontaneous sites' coordinated by the International Organization for Migration.

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## 2 Background

The introduction of the actor-oriented perspective to development in the early 1990s signalled a shift in scholarly attention to how people construct their life histories and experience their lives. This perspective provided a new understanding of issues such as poverty, marginalisation and vulnerability by linking the microeconomic view of individual behaviour to the structural view of the political economy of development (Booth, 1994; Bourdieu, 1976; Giddens, 1979; Long, 1984; Nelson and Wright 1995; Pottier, 1993; Preston, 1996; Schuurman, 1993).

In contrast to structural, institutional and political economy approaches to development, the actor-oriented perspective engages with disadvantaged people's daily lives to better understand their decision-making. The actor-oriented approach reopened debate around people's choices in the organisation of their lives and about opportunities in uncertain environments, whereas other approaches, such as the household approach, are limited to analysing impoverishment. The actor-oriented approach was applied to many of the livelihood studies promoted by the UK Department for International Development in the late 1990s (De Haan, 2012, p 346). Considering social, financial, natural, human and physical capital, the livelihoods approach offers a lens through which to reflect on poor people's assets and to expand knowledge on how people act to gain access to resources (Chambers and Conway, 1992; Chambers and Thrupp, 1994; Ellis, 1993; Lewis, 1981; Schmink, 1984; Zoomers, 1999).

In contexts where people are forced to migrate and settle in camps, the livelihoods approach has highlighted some of the positive aspects of humanitarian aid. This approach recognises people's coping strategies (Bøås and Bjørkhaug, 2014; Horn, 2009; Jacobsen, 2002) and differentiates between population groups (Agier 2002; Jansen, 2011). This is in sharp contrast to the 'dependency syndrome' theory, which describes a situation where refugees live on handouts for a long period and lose their will and ability to work, earn an income and fend for themselves (Bakewell, 2003; Harvey and Lind, 2005; Kaiser, 2001; Kibreab, 1993). First used by Barbara Harrell-Bond in her work on refugees in Uganda, dependency syndrome refers to 'the real or apparent lack of support for each other, the refusal to cooperate under conditions where cooperation appears advantageous, and the prevalence of destructive and anti-social behaviour.' (Bishop and Hilhorst, 2010, p 187-188).

Scholars such as Utas (2005), challenge the dependency syndrome idea by pointing out that vulnerability, as one of the criteria used to identify camp residents in need of assistance, was displayed strategically by some people for the purpose of accessing aid. Other authors have described how the use of resources explains the success stories of some refugees during their stay in camps – social networks and solidarity are often cited as the resources refugees in camps draw on for support (Jacobsen, 2002). Indeed, remittances sent by relatives and friends allow refugee households to achieve security, invest in businesses and pay their children's school fees. Among researchers studying camp life, Horst and Lindley stressed the importance of remittances in camps to allow for families and friends abroad to assist their relatives (Horst, 2007; Lindley, 2005).

Agricultural and non-agricultural activities are also valuable resources for survival in camps (Pain 2005). Previously acquired skills and experience are valuable resources for people living in camps, allowing refugees to obtain day jobs or steady employment, to work for aid organisations, to access the market, to set up businesses, to engage in self-employment, or to supply educational or vocational training (Al-Sharmani 2004; Macchiavello, 2003; Sperl, 2001). Refugees also have the opportunity to use their skills, expertise or training by engaging in petty trade through activities such as buying or selling (e.g. household goods, firewood, charcoal, vegetables, prepared foods, cigarettes, clothing and clean water) or providing services (e.g. hair dressing, mechanic services, money transfer, language tutoring or interpretation, tailoring, clothing or shoe repair, and carpentry) (De Vries and Stone, 2004; Dick, 2002).

Yet instead of focusing on resources and resourcefulness among IDPs in camps in eastern DRC, studies have often focused on IDPs' vulnerability and their need for protection and assistance to survive. These studies highlight the experience of IDPs only in the context of malnutrition, security issues, the lack of integration in a neighbourhood or the threat of sexual violence (Keralis 2010; Mosely et al., 2010; Teff and Campisi 2010).

Likewise, in North Kivu, work on IDPs has concentrated on their victimhood, accepting the depiction of the IDP population in camps as needy, vulnerable and waiting for assistance (Büscher, 2016; Guha-Sapir et al., 2005; McDowell, 2008; Rudolph, 2014; Ryan and Keyzer, 2013).

An important distinction among IDPs in camps can be made between those who remain in the camps for extended periods of time and those who leave. Internationally, research has shown that IDPs who belong to the lower classes tend to stay in the camps, whereas those with more resources and/or wider social networks tend to move out of the camps (Horn, 2009; Mertus, 2003; Schrijvers, 1999). Staying in the camps is, therefore, considered a consequence of lacking the resources necessary to meet the basic needs of daily life, such as renting a house, educating children, getting a job or buying a plot of land – actions that can be achieved only by self-settled IDPs outside of camps.

The theory that the most disadvantaged groups remain in IDP camps, while those with more resources leave has yet to be fully applied in Central Africa, and the situation of IDPs in DRC represents a new context for research. There is a need to explore the differences in the vulnerability of IDPs in camps within this context, the meaning of camp life to these individuals and the factors affecting different subgroups of IDPs.

Focusing on IDPs in Mugunga 3 camp, the largest urban IDP camp in DRC, this study explores four questions regarding livelihood strategies, vulnerability and differentiation among different subgroups of IDPs:

- 1 How does vulnerability differ among IDPs in Mugunga 3 camp? (Section 5)
- 2 How do IDPs organise their livelihoods in Mugunga 3 camp? (Section 6)
- 3 How do IDPs imagine their future under the threat of the closure of Mugunga 3 camp? (Section 7)
- 4 What is the purpose of Mugunga 3 camp for different types of IDPs? (Section 8)



## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 The research setting

Mugunga 3 camp was established in 2007 as a displacement camp located 15 kilometres north-west of Goma, the capital city of the province of North Kivu. Situated in the Mugunga neighbourhood of Karisimbi<sup>2</sup> commune, the area is managed by a neighbourhood chief and his assistant, who represent the Congolese authorities and are appointed by the commune. As one of the first IDP camps in Goma, Mugunga camp welcomed the first group of IDPs in 2007.

Administratively, the camp was coordinated by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), with the administrative and the management support of the government's *Commission Nationale pour les Réfugiés* (CNR). A number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were also part of the management, providing for different needs of the IDPs in the camp. Depending on the budget and scope of their interventions, these NGOs worked as part of different clusters, such as health care, water or protection, contributing to the assistance of IDPs.

At the end of December 2017, there were 110 ongoing humanitarian assistance projects in North Kivu, and 16 of these were located in Goma and were active in Mugunga 3 camp before its closure, mainly in the clusters on protection, health and nutrition. Of the 60 institutional humanitarian actors present in North Kivu in this same year, 28 were international NGOs, 28 were national NGOs, two were United Nations (UN) agencies and two were Congolese governmental entities, and there were 15 humanitarian organisations active in the city of Goma (OCHA, 2017). Table 1 shows the organisations active in Goma by cluster.

Mugunga 3 camp was selected for this study because of several characteristics. First, the camp was located in an urban area and had easy access to National Road 2, which connects the city of Goma to the countryside. Secondly, it was the largest camp in an urban setting in DRC in terms of both geographical size and the number of IDPs sheltered. Mugunga 3 was named a *camp de consolidation* by humanitarian actors in 2009 because it housed particularly vulnerable groups of IDPs such as older people, disabled people, breastfeeding women

<sup>2</sup> Karisimbi is one of the communes of Goma city. It comprises the neighbourhoods of Kahembe, Murara, Bujovu, Majengo, Mabanga-Nord, Mabanga-Sud, Kasika, Katoyi, Ndosho, Mugunga and Virunga.

and victims of sexual violence.<sup>3</sup> According to the camp manager, there were 1,667 families and approximately 4,756 individuals living in the camp.

Finally, the camp arguably received more international attention, compared with other camps in DRC, in terms of humanitarian assistance and advocacy, including visits by US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton in August 2009; Hollywood actor, Ben Affleck in December 2010 and UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Kang Kyung-wha in September 2015.

The initial research plan was to investigate the motives for being in a camp, such as the presence of humanitarian assistance and the pull-push effect around it. However, the announcement that the camps around Goma would be closed presented a unique opportunity for examining other aspects of IDPs' livelihoods. It offered an opportunity for observing IDPs' organisation, decision-making and strategies regarding a future outside of the camp, and so the study focus shifted to differentiating between types of IDPs in the camp.

### 3.2 Data gathering and scope

During the first round of fieldwork (July–September 2014), spending time in the camp and talking with residents were important activities to reduce suspicions, build trust and disclose the researcher's identity. Some agencies, such as the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNHCR, hired students to survey the vulnerability of IDPs in the camp, and it was crucial to convey that this research was not part of such work for any of these agencies. The lack of a visible border between the camp and the neighbourhood meant that non-IDPs could easily be mistaken for IDPs, which could adversely influence the results of the research. Therefore, it was necessary to spend time talking with different people in the camp to establish who the real camp dwellers were, based on their stories about things such as their place of origin, their address inside or outside of the camp, their reasons for being in the camp and the duration of their stay. In total, 75 people were interviewed to identify real IDPs and to select a group of IDPs who were willing to share their stories.

After a one-month break, the second round of fieldwork commenced (October 2014–February 2015). A group of 40 IDPs (18 women and 22 men who were also part

of the first round) was selected on their willingness to share their stories of their current residence in the camp. It was important to select research participants who could be traced both in the camp and outside of the camp, as some had two residences. Some potential informants felt uneasy about telling their real stories and being honest about their lives while they were in the camp and so the sample was necessarily small to stay within time and budget constraints, also considering the number of in-depth interviews conducted with each respondent, the multiple visits made to each location and further triangulation to verify some of the stories.

In addition to the interviews in the camp, interviews were also conducted in the Goma neighbourhood (the Rusayo, Kibati and Kibumba groupings<sup>4</sup> in Nyiragongo territory and the Kitchanga grouping in Masisi territory) because many participants' livelihoods were located there.

### 3.3 Limitations

The researcher's position vis-à-vis the camp management workers and the research participants themselves was quite complex, which presented several methodological obstacles. First, the camp was well known for having been visited by many humanitarian aid workers, which shaped the camp's expectations of newcomers. For instance, IDPs often mistook the researcher for an NGO worker tasked with registering IDPs so that they could get assistance. Therefore, IDPs sometimes offered to submit to questioning, asked to be registered or recounted a sad story to get attention. Similarly, some NGO and camp management workers offered to join the research team or asked for jobs. The researcher's attitude was to remain friendly and open-minded to avoid raising suspicions that could affect the results of discussions. Overall, interaction with people in the camp helped with the triangulation of stories.

Interviewees frequently had expectations during the first round of fieldwork, particularly regarding compensation for their time or gaining access to services inside or outside of the camp. In dealing with these, it was important to avoid attracting too much attention or influencing the research participants' attitudes. There was a risk that the results could be affected by research participants making up stories. To overcome this risk, it was possible to begin the interviews by making an

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<sup>3</sup> This information comes from an interview with the Mugunga 3 camp administrator in Mugunga 3 camp.

<sup>4</sup> In DRC state administration, provinces are subdivided into territories, then collectivities, then groupings and finally villages.

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observation about a situation, which encouraged participants to talk freely about a small event, leading to more important information.

It was possible to take advantage of the environment of the camp, for example by buying products being sold by IDPs working as merchants, bringing a piece of cloth or a

pair of shoes to IDPs working as tailors or shoe menders, paying IDPs working as drivers for transport to Goma or a journey in the countryside, or offering to have photos of the research participants printed in exchange for an interview. This last tactic was the most productive, as many respondents were keen to have a memento of their time in the camp.

## 4 Organisation of Mugunga 3 camp and the categorisation of IDPs

Daily management of Mugunga 3 camp was the responsibility of CNR, with support from UNHCR. In addition, other organisations were also involved in assisting IDPs in Mugunga 3 camp. Assistance in Mugunga camp was provided entirely by organisations working under the cluster approach. Clusters are groups of humanitarian organisations – both UN and non-UN – involved in the main sectors of humanitarian assistance in DRC. In North Kivu, there were six clusters: nutrition; protection; education; food security; logistics; and water, sanitation and hygiene. The idea was to involve all humanitarian actors active in each sector to provide more efficient assistance in the camp, although some actors who were not part of a cluster also provided assistance to Mugunga 3 residents; these organisations provided assistance only during special periods (e.g. at Christmas) or to a specific group of residents (e.g. older people or orphans).

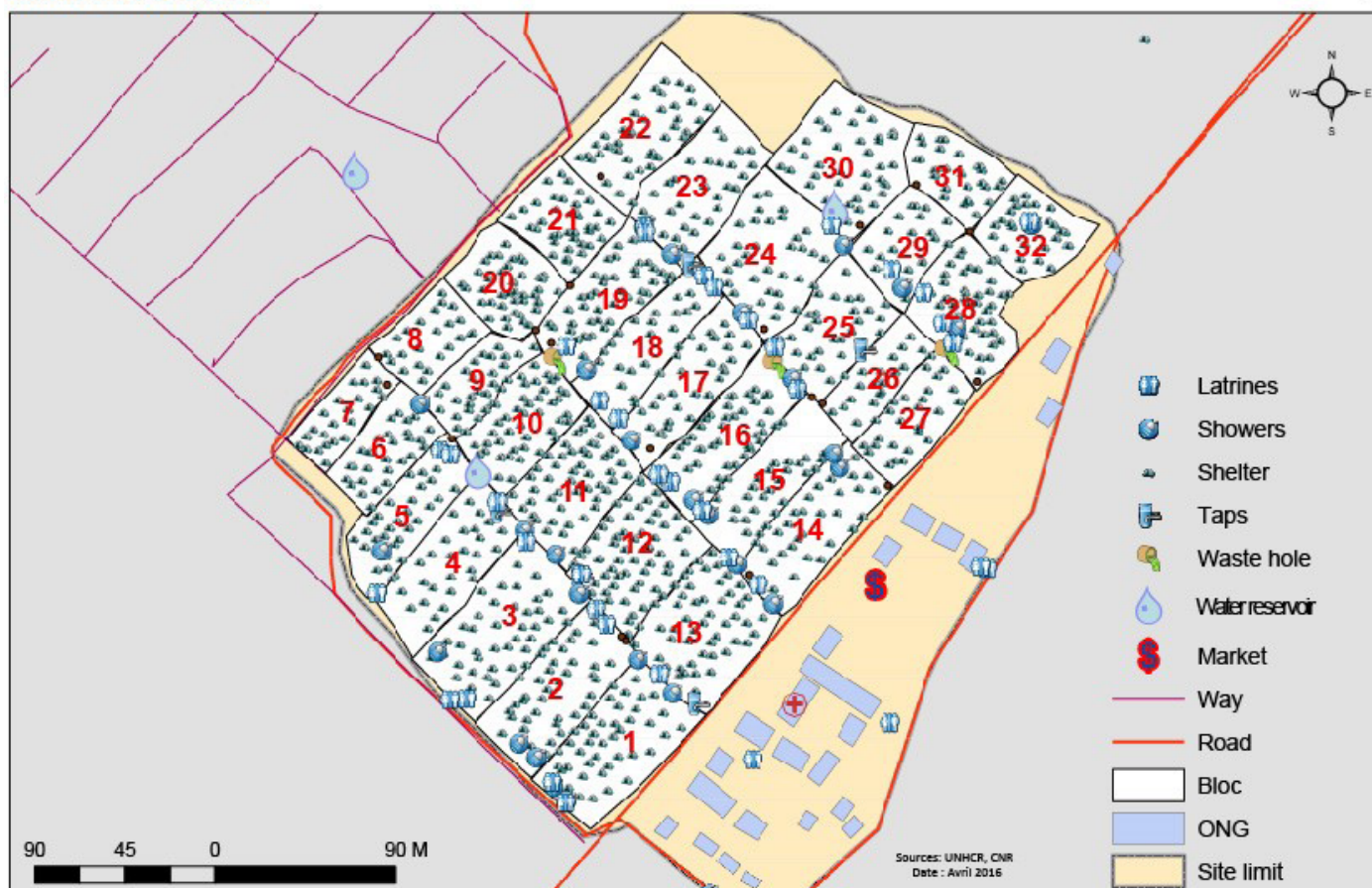
### 4.1 Types and frequency of assistance

The types of assistance available to Mugunga 3 camp residents were determined by the organisations providing the assistance. Assistance was available through the clusters to all residents of the camp in three main sectors: access to water, first aid medical care in the camp hospital and shelter (in the form of a tarpaulin bearing a UNHCR logo). In addition, further assistance such as food, cooking oil and soap were given to the most vulnerable camp residents – for example, older adults, breastfeeding women, victims of sexual violence, orphans, HIV-positive individuals and disabled people. The definition of vulnerability was not set; the number of criteria required to be considered vulnerable could be reduced or increased according to the humanitarian actors involved and the assistance available. Camp residents could also be part of specifically targeted IDP projects, for example, to confront issues related to unemployment or to empower young people. These projects were often limited to vulnerable people or their relatives. For instance, children could attend primary school for free at certain schools designated by donors, and older adults who were able to work could join associations that provided land to cultivate near the camp.

According to camp residents, a new bag containing soap, cooking oil, rice and flour had previously been given by WFP to all IDPs monthly, when the camp was first established in 2007. After several years, this bag was only given when a new wave of IDPs arrived at the camp or when there was a movement of people from one camp to another. Some humanitarian projects operating in the



Figure 1: Mugunga 3 IDP camp



camp had also previously offered additional food rations, such as lunches. This frequency of aid distribution was not observed during the course of the research. Instead, camp residents received a bag every two or three months, and the date of the food distribution was not announced in advance, to ensure that assistance only went to actual camp residents.

According to several CNR staff members, some IDPs were no longer camp residents because they had a residence outside of the camp in the surrounding neighbourhood. This influenced humanitarian actors to change the criteria for receiving food aid. For instance, WFP surveyed residents during the day and then returned in the evening to determine which families actually lived in the camp. A CNR staff worker explained that another approach was to place new residents in a large shelter for three months before they were eligible to receive kits for newcomers (containing a tarpaulin, food, etc.). During this period, the new residents did not receive aid and were not allowed to leave the camp. According to the same CNR staff worker, this strategy was meant to dissuade non-IDPs from registering at the camps, as they might have had the option of going elsewhere with better living conditions.

The difficulties of identifying actual camp residents were partly caused by the lack of biometric registration. Before biometric registration was introduced in Mugunga 3 camp in 2015, the camp management kept handwritten records of the number of IDPs living in the camp. Humanitarian actors also had their own record systems in place to count camp residents – for example, WFP had a system called *le fixing*, which assessed the vulnerability of residents and counted the number of vulnerable camp residents. In practice, WFP staff members surveyed families in the camp and then returned later in the week or month, without notifying the families in advance, to verify the numbers of families and individuals living under each tarpaulin and the numbers of specific types of residents, such as older people, breastfeeding women and their babies, and children. This information allowed WFP to quantify how much aid (such as flour, cooking oil and salt) would be made available for each family.

## 4.2 Categories of vulnerable IDPs

It was possible to establish two categories of vulnerability among the camp residents in Mugunga 3: the vulnerable and the less vulnerable. Within this second group, there

are two sub-groups: camp and organisation workers, and opportunity seekers.

#### 4.2.1 The vulnerable

The vulnerable group were those IDPs labelled as vulnerable and treated as such by organisations. Vulnerable individuals included older people, disabled people, victims of sexual violence, those who were HIV-positive, breastfeeding women, the war wounded, the chronically ill, children without parents, child soldiers and other such groups. The list would vary for different agencies but importantly, this group represented more than half of the population of Mugunga 3 camp residents because, as a *camp de consolidation* since 2009, the camp was particularly sensitised to vulnerable IDPs.

#### 4.2.2 The less vulnerable

The less vulnerable group comprised camp residents who were not classified as vulnerable because they did not fit into a particular group considered vulnerable or because, although they had been vulnerable when they arrived at the camp, they were no longer vulnerable. The group was largely made up of two categories, identified by this study as:

- *Camp and organisation workers:* The camp/organisation workers group was made up of residents working for the camp organisation or for aid agencies. Their jobs involved tasks such as the

supervision of food distribution; providing security in the camp; cleaning toilets; serving as members of IDP committees, focal points or chiefs of blocs<sup>5</sup> in the camp (as illustrated in Figure 1); and leading IDP associations. They might be paid for their work or they might receive in-kind payments, such as certain privileges in the camp.

- *Opportunity seekers:* Camp residents in the opportunity seekers group were directly or indirectly linked to a vulnerable person in the camp. This group included the relatives of vulnerable persons in the camp; people seeking opportunities, such as IDPs who moved to the camp from a city; civil servants; entrepreneurs (owners of bars, charcoal depots, restaurants, grocery shops, etc. in the camp); and those who worked outside of the camp. Depending on their backgrounds and the types of job available, they could have a variety of occupations, including working as teachers, washerwomen, police officers, waiters at neighbourhood restaurants or carriers of goods at markets.

The boundaries among the groups were permeable; some residents were both vulnerable and opportunity seekers. In some sense, residents had to move between these two groups to ensure that they continued to earn money and to benefit from the system. The categorisation of IDPs in Mugunga 3 highlighted the misperceived heterogeneity of residents and helped to determine how different groups of IDP were affected by their stay in the camp.

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<sup>5</sup> Blocs were comparable to neighbourhoods. Instead of houses, a bloc had shelters, which were numbered as a reference.

## 5 Reappraising vulnerability

The concept of vulnerability has typically been associated with concepts such as weakness, powerlessness, lack of resources and poverty. It has been used to understand and explain disadvantaged people's condition or situation in a given context, and the concept has been broadened to include the understanding of how people organise to face situations of scarcity and hardship (Delica-Willison and Willison, 2004). Despite these mainstream concepts of vulnerability, Mugunga 3 camp was not a place of resourceless residents; IDPs were able to organise their livelihoods and made plans when they were threatened by camp closure. In Mugunga 3 camp, 'vulnerability' was often mentioned during interviews by the research participants to explain certain realities or identify IDPs. One respondent explained that 'we are all IDPs', to include all camp residents, regardless of the differences in their situations. He believed that vulnerability should not be limited to a particular group of IDPs because all residents were vulnerable at some point because of their displacement.

However, being labelled as 'vulnerable' by humanitarian actors was often valuable in the camp and many residents understood the benefits of being labelled as 'vulnerable'. IDPs used three approaches to access resources in Mugunga 3 camp: mutual dependency and vulnerability in the camp, 'playing the vulnerability card' (presenting themselves as needy, victims or vulnerable) and exploiting the camp organisational structure. The dividing lines between groups taking one approach or the other were continuously shifting and indistinct, rather than fixed. Therefore, a camp resident could move between approaches to maximise his or her interests (De Haan, 2012; De Haan and Zoomers, 2005). Understanding and presenting vulnerability through the livelihoods approach enables a fuller view of residents' organisation of their lives in Mugunga 3 camp.

### 5.1 Mutual dependency and vulnerability in the camp

Many authors have interpreted the concept of power between two individuals, where power never completely belongs to one actor but is instead variable and repeatedly negotiated (Bebbington, 1999; Rowlands, 1997; Villareal, 1994). Even in situations of subordination, victims play an active role, using the room for manoeuvre available to them to try to improve their situation.

In Mugunga 3 camp, the labelling of camp residents as vulnerable by humanitarian actors had three distinguishing characteristics. First, residents of this

camp were already vulnerable because, since 2009, the camp was a *camp de consolidation* and targeted certain groups with a protected status. This vulnerability justified their assistance in the camp and guaranteed their right to claim assistance as long as the camp was open and assistance was available.

Secondly, camp residents labelled as vulnerable were dependent – on humanitarian assistance, and some had previously been dependent on relatives, friends, the government and other people's goodwill to survive in their communities. In cases where their dependency was a result of the conflict (such as people with injuries and victims of sexual and gender-based violence), some camp residents had relatives, friends or acquaintances who assisted them when they lived in the camp.

Thirdly, humanitarian actors and other structures helping vulnerable camp residents were in some ways dependent on the vulnerable group's existence because these actors sought to claim money on behalf of those who were vulnerable, and the camp offered an appropriate place to legitimise their claims.

## 5.2 Playing the vulnerability card

The population in Mugunga 3 camp included workers (women and men) and young adults (in and out of school). This group were not vulnerable, as they were not labelled as such by humanitarian actors; they were in the camp waiting for the end of conflict at their places of origin. However, they also sought to present themselves as vulnerable so that they could access resources. Their survival depended on this as most of the agencies' programmes did not offer assistance to people in their situation.

The case of Maman Dorcas fell into this category of individuals. As she explained:

***When my kid was malnourished, I had to go to Keshero to get food for malnourished. After my son recovered, I started to go to Nzulu, where I was receiving food rations two times per month. In Nzulu, I was doing maciri [tricks, cheating]. I was doing it at three places including in the camp where I was living. That's how I started my petty trade.***

This illustrates how those who were not labelled or no longer considered vulnerable gained access to resources. Some residents reported that they had tried to increase the likelihood that they would be labelled 'vulnerable' by

camp officials, as they knew that the resources that they would receive as a result of this official categorisation could help their families.

## 5.3 Camp organisation: employment and aid as resources

An IDP economy existed in Mugunga 3 camp, built around the resources of employment and aid. First, employment could be inside or outside of the camp. Employment in the camp included a variety of jobs such as IDP association supervisors, workers involved in agency projects or programmes, personnel related to the organisation and management of camp life, and IDP committee members. Camp residents with these kinds of jobs were often in touch with people outside of the camp, particularly NGO workers, local authorities and other influential persons, allowing them to broaden their networks. The small number of camp residents working outside of the camp had positions as teachers, washerwomen or maids. These positions were accessible to camp residents who had good networks (social capital) and access to information in the camp (physical capital).

The second type of economy was built around aid as a valuable resource. Camp residents with access to some form of assistance could convert that assistance into cash or small business ventures. This helped camp residents facing food insecurity during their stay and improved their living conditions.

Camp residents employed in the camp and those who used aid as a resource tended to be less vulnerable compared with those working outside of the camp, because their paid jobs and receipt of assistance in the camp could be dependent on the camp's existence. Therefore, these camp residents had many reasons to support the camp remaining open because their livelihoods were directly linked to its continuation.

Differentiation of vulnerability of the IDPs in Mugunga 3 camp showed how access to resources differed for different groups. It also revealed how different groups of IDPs in the camp used their vulnerability as an asset. The divisions between the groups were not clear, as some residents were vulnerable and also worked in the organisation of the camp. Importantly, the most vulnerable group operated through power relations, seen through mutual dependency, and the less vulnerable group used social relations and the camp organisation more to their advantage, in addition to power relations.



## 6 Making a living in the Mugunga 3 camp

Considering the differences in vulnerability experienced by IDPs explored in Section 5, and the effect this had on livelihood aspirations, we now analyse the three key mechanisms relating to means of survival for those IDPs who were in the camp in Goma: manual labour, petty trade, and employment and entrepreneurship. This section also examines IDPs' attitudes towards making a living while they were in the camp and differentiates between types of IDPs in terms of survival strategies. All names were changed to protect respondents' identities.

### 6.1 Manual labour

For many IDPs living in Mugunga 3 camp, manual labour was very important. Manual labour involved farming, raising livestock, carpentry, sewing and carrying water in the neighbourhood. Farming work was available in the areas surrounding the camp. Baba Shobole<sup>6</sup> was the first secretary of the IDP committee in the camp, who also worked as a farmer and as a tailor in the camp. Instead of being part of an IDP association in charge of farming in the area surrounding the camp, he rented land that he was allowed to farm in exchange for '5,000 Congolese francs [approximately \$5.50] at the end of each year'.<sup>7</sup> He had 'three plots of land where I grow cassava, sweet potatoes and beans', with the help of his wife. His oldest son, who was a teacher in Kinshasa, also supported the family in the camp.

In contrast to Baba Shobole, Baba Shaba<sup>8</sup> arrived at Mugunga 3 in 2009 with five children, having left one child behind. He often received assistance, and he explained that he did not pay for the land his wife cultivated:

***A Jesuit congregation bought older people some land to cultivate'. Because of his age, Baba Shaba was mostly involved in raising and selling small livestock. In his shelter, there were three ducks and five ducklings, and Baba Shaba said, 'I bought one duck which bred the rest. Once, we received flour from an NGO, which I sold to buy one duck ...] It cost \$7.***

Manual labour contributed to IDPs' survival and distinguished some camp residents as seeking other sources of making a living to become less reliant on humanitarian assistance. It was mostly the vulnerable who were involved in manual labour activities, which were

<sup>6</sup> Male IDP interviewed in his house outside of Mugunga camp.

<sup>7</sup> 1 USD = 910 Congolese francs.

<sup>8</sup> Male IDP interviewed in his house in Mugunga camp.



Credit: Mugunga 3 camp. Gloria Nguya, 2016

largely supported through projects of agencies and IDP associations to help vulnerable residents remain active and autonomous. Manual labour activities also played a significant role in organising the lives of camp residents, linking these activities with their previous lives in their villages of origin. Activities such as farming, breeding cattle, carpentry, repairing shoes and transporting water provided a valuable means of survival to the camp residents and their families, allowing them to produce goods or services to sell. But manual labour success depended on additional access to forms of capital.

In the context of the livelihood framework, Baba Shobole could be considered a less vulnerable resident – his position as a secretary in the IDP committee (human capital) gave him an opportunity to access information and to acquire a sewing machine (physical capital), opportunities that many residents did not have. He also started to network with non-IDPs outside of the camp (social capital) to gain access to plots of land (natural capital) so that he could have available stock regularly (financial capital). Finally, his son also periodically sent money to support the family (financial capital). Ultimately, this respondent's activity could be seen as a

small commercial enterprise, intended to be a means of subsistence.

In contrast to Baba Shobole, Baba Shaba was vulnerable because his situation was linked to gaining access to a plot of land to cultivate (natural capital) through an IDP organisation based in the camp (physical and social capital). He had some ducks, which were his financial capital in times of shortage but his livelihood strategies were highly dependent on aid.

## 6.2 Petty trade

For some IDPs, Mugunga 3 camp offered an opportunity to develop petty trade activities inside the camp to expand in the Mugunga neighbourhood and in Goma city. These activities included income-generating revenue activities around Virunga Park and in the camp market.

In front of her table in the camp where she sold salt, soap, matches, cigarettes, sugar, milk and other items, Maman Dorcas<sup>9</sup> explained:

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<sup>9</sup> Female IDP interviewed in the camp

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***Those items belong to me. There was an organisation that used to fund income-generating revenue in the camp. We got our name registered, and we started to learn how to bake bread with the International Emergency and Development Aid<sup>10</sup> organisation. At the end of the training, participants received \$30 for starting up a small activity. Since then, the chef of the organisation often comes to check on the activities. That's why we keep it running.***

She later acknowledged the impact of other types of assistance (food rations) on her business capital. Indeed, aid was described as a valuable resource that ensured residents were able to maintain trade activities when they were in need of cash. According to some residents, aid items such as flour, cooking oil and tarpaulins were easy to sell because of high demand, and selling these items provided cash rapidly to maintain a business. This goes some way to explaining why some residents always negotiated to be on the lists of aid beneficiaries in camps, and might have exaggerated their vulnerability to remain eligible.

Other trade activities were carried out at the camp's large market. When he was not working in the security division of the camp during food distributions or night monitoring, Imana<sup>11</sup> 'was carrying firewood from [Virunga] park and selling it in the market of the camp'. This was a lucrative job, as he explained: 'I can earn \$20 per day for one bag of firewood'. Other market-based petty trade included handling produce, such as beans, potatoes and other vegetables; a local drink called *mandale*; clothing; cooked meals and shoes could be sold at the market. The market was particularly animated on the day people returned from Virunga Park carrying firewood and charcoal before loading their *thsukudu*<sup>12</sup> to sell in Goma.

Different types of petty trade activities required different sources of income to start the business. Some residents relied on organisational programmes to assist them as beneficiaries, others relied on aid assistance materials that could be sold, and others received funding from their relatives, friends or other individuals who wanted to support them. As residents of the camp, opportunity seekers could be creative in surviving through various petty trade activities.

Though vulnerable people could also engage in these activities after receiving funding to create income-generating revenue, most of those engaging in these types of activities were opportunity seekers. Involvement in petty trade activities also varied by the individual's level of vulnerability. Vulnerable people were more attached to the camp, its organisation and aid assistance activities inside of the camp. The camp was an available space (natural capital) to sell aid assistance (physical assistance) and to get credit from organisations' programmes (financial capital). In contrast, less vulnerable people maintained attachments outside of the camp (natural capital) to start their businesses, such as buying firewood in the park or crops from villages. Additionally, they established networks with their buyers (social capital) so that they could maintain their activities when they were not able to pay. Finally, access to information (physical capital) was another key to their activity. Imana benefited from this, explaining that the park was not always a safe area because firewood buyers were sometimes robbed on the way there but knowing other firewood sellers helped in this situation.

### 6.3 Employment and entrepreneurship

The last group of activities was related to employment and entrepreneurship inside and outside of the camp. A lack of skill and the low availability of jobs meant that most IDPs had little preference regarding jobs, which included work as agency workers, teachers, bartenders, pastors and washerwomen. Other residents we met during field research, engaged in entrepreneurship activities inside and outside of the camp, such as owning a charcoal depot, a restaurant or a bar.

Experiences of employment and entrepreneurship were varied and some IDPs were afforded more autonomy than others, depending on the work they were engaged in and the support community. For example, Papa Christian used to be a farmer in his village in Kibati in Nyiragongo. At the time of the research, he owned a firewood depot in the camp market, which could contain up to 30 bags at one time, 'Some days, I sleep in the depot, and others days I sleep in my shelter. For each bag of firewood, the customer pays 200 Congolese francs (approximately \$0.219) a day'. Before the conflict, Papa Kasole was a

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<sup>10</sup> International Emergency and Development Aid is an international NGO whose mission is to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable people by combatting the underlying causes of poverty so that people can become self-sufficient and achieve their full potential.

<sup>11</sup> Male IDP interviewed in Kanyararutchini/Nyiragongo territory.

<sup>12</sup> Wooden chariot used to convey goods in Goma.

pastor at his church in Mokoto in Masisi territory. He was assisted by his church community to continue his role within the camp: 'The big church helped pastors in many ways. For example, they build a church for you in order for you to keep doing your job. They did it for me, and I have a church in the camp'.

Other residents worked for organisations in the camp, and most of the jobs obtained by camp residents inside the camp were linked to NGO work. After being involved in various activities in Rutshuru centre camp and Kanyarutshinya camp, Maman Sophie acquired a job working for an organisation in Mugunga camp: 'I have my own association, and I'm the focal point for gender-based violence, president of the association and a worker on the hygiene committee in the camp'. Papa Sami was a member of the IDP committee in Mugunga camp and explained his role was 'trying to set up an association in charge of returnees'. As workers for the camp, these residents had certain benefits, such as a salary or additional support from agencies.

Some IDPs were able to find employment opportunities outside of the camp. Maman Gemima's used to be a farmer and a motorcycle taxi driver. After they arrived in Goma in 2013, he explained: 'I found a job at Soleil as a bartender'. Being a washerwoman outside of the camp provided a daily or weekly payment, depending on the place of the work, such as a house or a hospital. For example, Maman Vianney 'was working three time per week in a hospital' to supplement her income, and spent

the other days farming. Finally, a smaller number of IDPs found jobs directly related to their previous experience. Papa Koko came from the Itongo grouping in Rutshuru territory, where he was a physics teacher but had given up his job because of illness and the conflict, which began in 2010. After a short stay in Bulengo camp, camp administrators moved him to Mugunga 3 camp, where he could receive better treatment. He described his work after this move:

***I noticed a school near the camp and went to ask for a job. I got it, and it was a good start. Unfortunately, it was not well paid: I was receiving \$20 (per month), and there were not many pupils. Only 60 pupils for the entire school. Then I quit and went to Institut Melita 8e Communauté des Églises de Pentecôte au Congo, where I'm currently teaching.***

Employment and entrepreneurship were important ways for Mugunga camp residents to organise their lives. Agier (2002), Jansen (2011) and Peteet (2005), Mugunga camp could be considered a space of opportunity. This group of employees and entrepreneurs was made up of less vulnerable camp residents who benefited from resources such as previous skills (human capital), networks inside and outside of the camp (social capital) and access to information (physical capital). Those who worked for the camp or agencies and entrepreneurs in the camp, found ways to make a living and support their families' survival inside and outside of the camp.



## 7 Planning for the future under the threat of camp closure

Three months into the fieldwork, authorities announced the closure of many camps to persuade residents to return home. This event shifted the nature of the interviews. Without knowing whether Mugunga 3 camp was on the list of camps to be closed, residents responded to the threat seriously. This made it possible to broaden the research and to visit respondents' planned destinations, in the event that the camp was closed.

On 2 December 2014, IDPs living in Kiwanja IDP camp in Rutshuru had been suddenly forced to leave the site, and their makeshift shelters were burned to the ground (Spindler, 2014). The camp was shut down following a decision by the provincial cabinet, exposing some 2,300 residents to potential lawlessness, banditry and sexual violence against women perpetrated by militia groups operating in the area (NEWS CENTRE, 2014). According to the governor of North Kivu province, 'We found several weapons ... It was a place where crime was developed ... We found 10 weapons in three months'. The mayor of Kiwanja added that there were 'cases of banditry reported in this camp', with residents 'caught after committing crimes', and that a man was even 'lynched by people in surrounding communities when he was caught looting' (IRINNEWS, 2014).

Because it was believed that Mugunga camp was targeted for the next wave of closures during the second round of the fieldwork, it was possible to observe and track the attitudes of Mugunga 3 camp residents under this threat. Four distinct strategies emerged among the research participants: returning home, joining a camp in the countryside, staying in Goma and undecided.

### 7.1 Returning home

Despite the presence of armed conflict in some parts of North Kivu, facing the threat of camp closure, some IDPs considered returning to their hometowns. Nicole<sup>13</sup> arrived at Mugunga 3 camp during the violence between the *Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple*<sup>14</sup> and the Congolese army in 2008. During her displacement, she worked for an orphans' association funded by AVSI International in Kanyarutshina IDP camp and was later employed by the same organisation in Mugunga 3 camp when she arrived. After Kanyarutshina camp was attacked, its IDP residents were relocated to different

<sup>13</sup> Female IDP interviewed in Mugunga 3 camp.

<sup>14</sup> The *Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple* (National Congress for the Defence of the People) is an armed political militia established by Laurent Nkunda in the Kivu regions of DRC in December 2006.

camps in Goma. Nicole was relocated to Mugunga 3 camp, where she taught literacy courses to older people, funded by HelpAge International, until late 2013. At the time of her interview, she was waiting for a UNHCR returnee convoy to Rutshuru, and said 'I want UNHCR to see me with those returnees, introducing myself like someone in charge of my association. Then I may get funding supporting returnees'. Her experience highlighted opportunities for IDPs to work for NGOs. Nicole's 'plan B' was a job offer letter to work at the central prison in Rutshuru, where she had worked for an NGO.

Maman Junior's<sup>15</sup> case was somewhat different. Before the conflict, she had worked at the Nyiragongo territory office. When I arrived in Kibumba, the main city in Nyiragongo territory, she provided an introduction to me as a guest in the city at the territory office of visitors. During the journey to Kibumba, she asked about the prices of vegetables destined for Goma's markets. She explained she was planning to set up her business of selling their family crops in Goma if she could not resume her previous job.

In contrast to Maman Junior, Papa Andre<sup>16</sup> continued his previous job at the *Division de l'Economie* in Nyiragongo territory, where he was in charge of market taxes throughout his displacement. After arriving at Mugunga 3 camp in 2008, Papa Andre became a member of the council board of elders and continued his earlier job while in the camp.

IDPs intending to return home consisted of less vulnerable people, such as agency workers and civil servants waiting for the opportunity to return to previous jobs. Agency workers, in particular, had acquired new skills related to camp life, such as working for agencies to create new ideas for establishing IDP associations.

## **7.2 Joining a camp in the countryside**

For some IDPs, relocating to a camp in the countryside was another alternative. In 2009, Papa Paul<sup>17</sup> came to Mugunga 3 camp from Bulengo camp in Goma. In September 2008, camp management asked IDPs to leave Bulengo camp and to return home, but Papa Paul

was relocated to Mugunga 3 camp because he needed to receive tuberculosis treatment. Although he had relatives in Kitshanga in Masisi territory, he wanted to stay in a camp because of the visibility this allowed: 'It is easy for me when I'm in a camp. It is my physical address. Also, issues are easy to solve when you are an IDP staying in a camp'. Papa Paul's 'issue' was related to a document confirming his position as a teacher in Kitshanga that was issued by the Office of Catholic Schools in Congo to enable him to easily find a job in Goma.

Older people without relatives were a group who also preferred to go to another camp if Mugunga 3 camp was closed. A case of an IDP who was extremely reliant on camp assistance is Tate Dieudonne,<sup>18</sup> who was a very old man from Walikale. Once, the vice president<sup>19</sup> of the IDP committee in Mugunga 3 camp described Tate Dieudonne as 'one of those who does not have relatives who visit him. Very often, we see other older persons being visited by their relatives, but Tate Dieudonne has no one'.

Most of the residents planning to join a camp in the countryside were vulnerable IDPs, as described above. Two respondents wanted to remain in a camp because they did not have relatives to rely on or did not want to burden their relatives, and one respondent wanted to make use of the visibility and opportunities provided by the camp.

## **7.3 Undecided**

For several reasons, some residents had not yet made up their minds about what to do following the camp closure. The IDPs in this group already had a means of survival in the camp and were still considering their future plans. In addition, most of them were civil servants waiting to get back their work

Baba Jean<sup>20</sup> came to the camp in 2009. With another IDP, he set up an income-generating activities association linked to agriculture and livestock in the areas surrounding the Mugunga 3 camp. After seeking support, 'an NGO assisted us and we received cabbage, leek and bean seed', and this association was still running at the

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<sup>15</sup> Female IDP interviewed on the way to her new residence in Kibumba.

<sup>16</sup> Male IDP interviewed in Mugunga 3 camp.

<sup>17</sup> Male IDP interviewed in Mugunga 3 camp.

<sup>18</sup> Tate is a Swahili word meaning grandfather or grandmother.

<sup>19</sup> Female IDP interviewed in Mugunga 3 camp.

<sup>20</sup> Male IDP interviewed in Mugunga 3 camp.

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time of the interview. Baba Jean also remained hopeful that he could return to the job he previously held in Masisi before the conflict, but he explained: 'I was a senior civil servant at Bufamando post office in charge of the Mutonge grouping. When I went back there, someone had already replaced me. When the personnel manager is a Hutu, Nande or Hunde, he will hire his brothers'.<sup>21</sup>

IDPs who were undecided about their future plans were typically less vulnerable people, including those working for NGOs. Another characteristic of this group was that they had held jobs in their places of origin before the violence, to which they hoped to return.

## 7.4 Staying in Goma

Surprisingly, the majority of the research participants (29 IDPs) plan to stay in Goma if the camp is closed. This raised questions regarding their future residences and their inherent vulnerability. Among those planning to remain in Goma, four types of IDPs emerged: those planning to join a relative, those planning to look after someone else's house, those planning to rent a house and those planning to buy a plot of land.

### 7.4.1 Joining a relative

A number of IDPs (6 out of 40 respondents) plan to live with relatives in Goma if the camp is closed. However, this option is not without its problems. Those planning on joining their families would become dependent on their relatives, thus recreating the same types of dependent relationships that existed in the camp, whereby older people relied on the assistance from humanitarian agencies and other residents.

### 7.4.2 Looking after someone else's house

Despite having relatives in Goma, six respondents did not plan to join them, as they had another arrangement to stay in Goma. Maman Gisho<sup>22</sup> was a widow who fled Shabunda territory in South Kivu and found refuge in Bukavu. Her adult children were living in Goma and in 2013, she decided to join them. When she arrived in Goma, she learned that her son was dead and her daughter was married to a soldier. After living with her daughter during a period of illness, she found shelter in Mugunga camp in September 2013. She was interviewed

at her new residence outside of the camp, where she explained that the house belonged to 'one of my son-in-law's friends, who took me here and asked me to watch after his house until I get money to go back to South Kivu'. When asked why she was not staying with her daughter, she responded, 'I cannot stay at my son-in-law's house; he is a soldier'. It is possible that her daughter was not actually married to the man or that the house did not have enough rooms.

Looking after someone's house was not an easy arrangement to find, and some residents explained that they had to pay to look after someone else's house near the camp. Some people from Goma city owned plots of land near the camp that they had not yet settled on because of insecurity or lack of water and power. Some of these land owners made arrangements with camp residents instead of hiring a guard for the land. Whereas others were reluctant or even suspicious of people, particularly men, looking for such an arrangement.

### 7.4.3 Renting a house

Renting a house in the Mugunga neighbourhood or elsewhere was an option for research participants who had sufficient resources to pay rent. Of the 40 research participants, four were able to rent a house outside of the camp in the event of camp closure, and different patterns were observed among these individuals.

Maman Abigael<sup>23</sup> arrived at Mugunga camp in 2013, along with her children and husband, and chose to rent a house in the Mugunga area. The house seemed to be recently acquired and was almost empty. She said that she was renting the house because they planned to return to Rutshuru, but 'I don't want to interrupt my children's schooling ... and one is in their last class before going to university'.

Renting a house as a camp resident was not a common option because it required the ability to pay a monthly rent. All four of the research participants who had resources to rent were less vulnerable IDPs working for agencies in the camp. Additionally, they also had second jobs in the city, for example as motorbike taxi drivers, to cover their families' costs.

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<sup>21</sup> Here, 'brothers' refers to people from the same ethnic group.

<sup>22</sup> Female IDP interviewed at her residence outside of the camp.

<sup>23</sup> Female IDP interviewed at her new residence in the Munganga area.

**Table 1: Future plans and livelihood approach among Mugunga 3 camp residents**

Group	Assets	Strategies for making a living	Livelihood framework	Destination in case of camp closure
<b>Labelled as vulnerable by humanitarian actors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vulnerability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aid assistance</li> <li>Selling aid assistance</li> <li>Subsistence activities (farm, livestock etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical capital: camp (resources from humanitarian actors)</li> <li>Social capital: bonding network with people sharing a same sense of identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joining a camp in the countryside</li> <li>Joining a family member in Goma</li> <li>Looking after someone else's house in Goma</li> <li>Buying a plot of land in Goma</li> </ul>
<b>Less vulnerable: opportunity seekers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Playing the vulnerability card (maciri: trick or cheating)</li> <li>Being part of an IDP association</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Petty trade</li> <li>Entrepreneurship</li> <li>Employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social capital: Bridging network with people beyond a shared sense of identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Returning home to the countryside</li> <li>Looking after someone else's house in Goma</li> </ul>
<b>Less vulnerable: camp and organisation workers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being part of an IDP committee</li> <li>Being part of an IDP association</li> <li>Being part of a camp organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commercial activity</li> <li>Firewood activity in the park</li> <li>Working for a non-governmental organisation</li> <li>Working for a camp organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical capital: access to information</li> <li>Social capital: Linking network to people further up or lower down of a social ladder</li> <li>Human capital: skills and knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Returning home to the countryside</li> <li>Undecided</li> <li>Looking after someone else's house in Goma</li> <li>Renting a house in Goma</li> </ul>

#### 7.4.4 Buying a plot of land with or without a house

The final group was made up of IDPs who bought a plot of land in Goma, usually near the camp. There were 15 research participants in this group. The first of these was Tate Marc,<sup>24</sup> whose situation illustrated the common lack of information required, including land registry, title and certificate. In the shade under a tree on his plot of land, 80-year-old Tate Marc told his story of land conflict with another man who claimed to be the owner of the same plot. Tate Marc had purchased the land and obtained a 'token' from the *chef de groupement*<sup>25</sup> as proof that he was the owner but he still needed a document signed by this same person. According to his story, 'The other man<sup>26</sup> said that he bought this house from the owner and received a token, while the native [a third person] confirmed that this token arrangement did not occur in

this area during the period stated by the man'. Tate Marc was determined to keep his plot and his house. He had two lawyers, but said that it was difficult because his adversary was bribing everyone.

Baba Kasole, the pastor, was the only research participant who bought a plot of land (in the Keshero area) and had an official document of ownership. During an interview, he explained the situation:

***Yes, nowadays there are cheaper plots, but that is not buying, as it is said. It is the chef who offers plots for free. The 200 United States dollars you give is a recognition, and the plot does not have legal papers except a letter given by the chief ... It is not enough because you can be evicted any time.***

<sup>24</sup> Older male IDP interviewed at his new residence in the Rusayo neighbourhood.

<sup>25</sup> Chief of a grouping.

<sup>26</sup> The man who was in conflict with the older IDP.

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On the whole, most camp residents who bought a plot of land in Goma were labelled as vulnerable people – older adults, victims of sexual violence, disabled people and the war wounded. Since many humanitarian actors targeted vulnerable residents in Mugunga, some local authorities of neighbourhoods started to sell plots of land to Mugunga 3 camp residents as part of efforts to assist IDPs. As a result of the threat of camp closure and camp residents needing to find a place to live, a number of residents ended up buying plots of land close to the camp. However, there were many complaints regarding the lack of information about land acquisition in Goma with some camp residents reporting of problems with the previous owners of the land they occupied, and failing to receive appropriate documentation for their properties.

The threat of camp closure allowed us to observe some insightful responses from the camp's residents that revealed their decision-making process as well as various options depending on their circumstances. Table 1 shows the range of future plans and livelihood approaches among Mugunga camp residents participating in this study.

As shown in Table 1, the least vulnerable group, made up of camp and organisation workers, could access information because they had strong networks with people such as NGO personnel, camp managers and police officers. They also established strong networks outside of the camp. Other groups had to rely on this group to gain access to resources and acquire information. The least vulnerable group were the only group who were able to rent homes; they were able to diversify their means of survival and were well prepared for the future.

Opportunity seekers, along with those labelled as vulnerable by humanitarian actors, had to establish strong networks with camp and organisation workers. This group did not have access to information such as the day of food distribution, the day NGO workers would come to verify camp residents, which names were included on the list of beneficiaries, the hospital in charge of IDPs in town or the name of an NGO staff member who could help them. Based on the differences in planned destinations and livelihood strategies described earlier, Section 8 explores the different perspectives camp residents had on the purpose of Mugunga 3 camp.



## 8 The purpose of Mugunga 3 camp

Displacement camps have been strongly condemned by some researchers for encouraging passivity and hopelessness (Schmidt, 2003). The views IDPs had on the purpose of displacement camps largely fell into two categories:

- 1 To provide shelter, with opportunities, privacy, a physical address and a place to keep families together; and
- 2 To grant time to recover, to organise and to rebuild lives.

### 8.1 Providing shelter: opportunities, privacy, a physical address and keeping families together

Shelter in the camp was important for several reasons. The first was to give camp residents (whether they were newcomers or not) opportunities within the camp without fear of rejection. This was especially important for less vulnerable camp residents, who sought opportunities and support for activities linked to petty trade and entrepreneurship. Camp residents also understood Mugunga 3 in terms of shelter; it gave IDPs much needed privacy, which was particularly important for vulnerable people such as older adults and victims of sexual violence. Giving camp residents a physical address meant that it was possible for cases (appointments) to be followed up, and for people to be easily found in Goma.

Finally, and most importantly, the camp provided a place to keep families together when it would not otherwise have been possible. Keeping a whole family together, including four or more children, parents, cousins and other relatives was not easy. As Baba Shaba<sup>27</sup> described: 'I cannot stay at my brother's place with my family. Otherwise, I may bring troubles to his family. A brother or a friend cannot keep a family for two years'. Cohabitation was often stressful, had the potential to cause conflict and could lead to families splitting up.

Overall, the camp was an important element of physical capital<sup>28</sup> for many residents, offering infrastructure for residence and a place where IDPs could achieve their livelihood goals.

<sup>27</sup> Male IDP interviewed in Mugunga camp.

<sup>28</sup> The camp, offering secure shelter, is an example of basic infrastructure.

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## 8.2 Time to recover, organise and rebuild

Life in the camps was cheap because residents did not pay for water, healthcare, food or rent. This enabled camp residents to acquire a plot of land whatever their livelihoods strategies. Trauma<sup>29</sup> clarified three essential details of her life in the camp – namely, a place to stay, access to basic services and an opportunity to get cash. In addition to physical capital, Trauma could sell her aid assistance to acquire financial capital.

In dealing with their displacement in relation to their vulnerability in the camp, many residents' first step was recovering from the conflict. The camp provided a physical place and a network where residents could process their losses, share their feelings with other IDPs and begin restoring their lives. This step was particularly important for vulnerable people because of their physical

condition on arrival to the camp. The second step was the organisation of a life in the camp, including making a living, finding schools for their children, paying visits to their home villages to assess the possibility of return and planning for the future. The final step was the rebuilding of their lives. At this stage, acquiring assets such as land in Goma was a sign of a local integration.<sup>30</sup>

By relying on their individual resilience and available support outside of the camp, 15 respondents from the less vulnerable group thought that they would become independent one year after leaving the camp. It took camp residents approximately six years to rebuild their lives from the establishment of the camps in 2007, and many residents used the camp as a place of transit - reshaping their lives before facing new challenges outside of the camp.

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<sup>29</sup> Female IDP interviewed in Rusayo.

<sup>30</sup> Local integration is one 'durable solution' to displacement besides returning to the place of origin and resettlement in another place.

## 9 Conclusions

This working paper challenges the assumption that IDP camps are places of passive vulnerability. Using the livelihood framework, we reflect on how the camps can be sites where IDPs can utilise scarce resources to rebuild and reshape their lives. The key findings from Mugunga 3 camp are:

- Contrary to mainstream concepts of vulnerability, we found that residents of Mugunga 3 camp were not passive or resourceless because they were all engaged in various activities, inside or outside of the camp, to ensure their survival.
- Inside of the camp, residents developed livelihood strategies around three activities: manual labour, petty trade and employment/entrepreneurship.
- Camp residents labelled as vulnerable by humanitarian actors were able to make a living through participation in IDP associations, as well as programmes and projects set up by humanitarian agencies.

We also differentiated between three main types of camp residents taking different approaches to survival in the camp, and their experience of vulnerability:

- 1 *Mutual dependency and vulnerability in the camp:* Vulnerable respondents had the advantage of being targeted by agencies, and they could use their vulnerable status as the primary means to survive. Physical capital (the camp) and social capital (strong networks with camp and organisation workers) formed the foundation of their livelihood approach.
- 2 *'Playing the vulnerability card':* This approach was often used by less vulnerable camp residents seeking opportunities, and their livelihood approach was based on strong social capital (strong networks with camp and organisation workers). Here, IDPs used their agency to strategise regarding their livelihoods, including seeking access to aid by utilising the vulnerability criteria set by agencies.
- 3 *Exploiting the camp organisational structure:* This approach relied on the IDP economy built within and around the camp, which offered employment opportunities, and the use of aid as a valuable resource that allowed residents to work to generate cash and pursue business activities. This approach linked together physical capital (access to information), social capital (strong networks with NGOs, camp management and other staff members) and human capital (skills and knowledge related to the camp).

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In terms of future destinations planned during the camp closure threat, most of the research participants decided to stay in Goma despite the high costs of living. Residents labelled as vulnerable by humanitarian actors had four options: joining their relatives, looking after someone else's house or buying a plot of land. Less vulnerable respondents who worked for agencies or were involved in the camp organisation had the option of renting in Goma city because they were paid for their work in the camp.

For many years, camps have been considered places for vulnerable people, and this assumption may have influenced the assistance and protection of IDPs. We highlight the following key considerations for policy-makers and practitioners working with IDPs in camps:

- *Vulnerability:* We found two categories of vulnerability among the camp residents. The first group – the vulnerable – was based on humanitarian actors' labelling, and the second group – less vulnerable – were split into camp and organisation workers and opportunity seekers. Recognition and better identification of differing vulnerability experienced by IDPs will help to better address needs and aspirations.
- *Diversity:* It is important to take into account the diversity of IDP camp residents to better address questions such as needs or camp closure so that responses are not geared only towards one particular group. Donors and humanitarian actors

are encouraged to further focus their assistance and protection of IDPs and investigate needs in the context of the diversity of the IDP population. Only in doing so will actors respect the non-discrimination against IDPs clearly enshrined in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

- *Keeping families together:* Whether they are considered a first or a last resort, IDP camps may be useful in terms of allowing large families to stay together. Mugunga 3 allowed families to remain together, which was an important element of physical capital for many respondents. In the camp, large families found a place to live together which allowed them to better face the future without burdening their relatives. On the latter, although many respondents stressed the generosity of relatives and friends during displacement, it is also a difficult moment for hosts as well as for IDPs.
- *The purpose of the camps for residents:* Residents in Mugunga 3 understood the camps as a means to provide shelter, with opportunities, privacy, a physical address and a place to keep families together; and the camps granted time to residents to recover, to organise and to begin plans to rebuild lives.

Future research could focus on the same group of IDPs' lives after camp closure to gain more insight on the networks, livelihoods and quality of life of camp residents outside of camps and increase understanding of IDPs' access to resources outside of the camps.

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**Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium**  
Overseas Development Institute (ODI)  
203 Blackfriars Road  
London SE1 8NJ  
United Kingdom

T +44 (0)20 3817 0031  
F +44 (0)20 7922 0399  
E [slrc@odi.org.uk](mailto:slrc@odi.org.uk)  
[www.securelivelihoods.org](http://www.securelivelihoods.org)  
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