In eastern Congo, as areas of violence shift, new people are displaced while others, previously displaced, are able to return home. During displacement some people live in camps while others live with family or friends or under rental arrangements commonly referred to as ‘host families’. Collection of data in a camp is relatively easy but data collection among host families – where resident and displaced populations cannot easily be distinguished – is much more difficult, and DRC’s complex displacement patterns make it yet more difficult to arrive at correct and coherent figures. For example, there are ‘commuting’ IDPs, people who shuttle regularly between different locations, including their homes and camps. And there are multiple displacements where, if not detected, agencies run the risk of multiplying by the number of displacements rather than counting the displaced individuals. Further challenges include differing methodologies, unknown sources of information, and lack of adjustment for births and deaths.

In order to deal with these challenges, the Commission for Population Movements (CMP) was launched, led by OCHA. The CMP works in cooperation and collaboration with many of the humanitarian actors and agencies to compare and consolidate data. Discrepancies and data shortages continued, however, and in 2008 an innovative project was launched to address this information shortage: the Data Centre for IDPs.

The Data Centre, run by UNOPS, is located in Goma and monitors the provinces of South and North Kivu. The project is funded by UNHCR as part of the agency’s CCCM (Camp Coordination and Camp Management) responsibility but all UN agencies are encouraged to be partners in the project – and any humanitarian agency can request data from the Centre. On a technical level the project works in direct cooperation with and support of the provincial authorities, the camp managing agencies (local and international) and UNHCR in providing for the needs of IDPs. The Centre aims primarily to:

- undertake individual registration of camp-based IDP populations, including new arrivals, departures, births, deaths, etc
- maintain an up-to-date and real-time database that allows for population tracking and the production of disaggregated data on IDP populations
- manage population movements from, to and between IDP camps by ensuring individual documentation, such as Voluntary Return Attestations, etc
- produce accurate beneficiary lists for assistance purposes, taking into account family size, special needs, and vulnerability criteria such as defined by the humanitarian community in DRC
- help develop a strong humanitarian data analysis capacity within the framework of the Congolese government’s stabilisation plan for eastern DRC (STAREC)
- ensure individual registration of Congolese refugee returnees in order to facilitate verification in the countries of asylum and to assist UNHCR North Kivu in planning for protection and assistance activities

Laura Jacqueline Church

Effective provision of aid and protection for those displaced in eastern DRC requires reliable data – which the new Data Centre in North Kivu is helping to provide.

Laura Church

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Civil society in the context of the Kivus has developed separately from its European and North American counterparts as a hybrid of deeply entrenched patrimonial associations, transnationally controlled NGOs and small local associations. It is important to take these realities into account when designing mechanisms for civil society inclusion in a peace process.
Challenges of protection

Emma Fanning

Local protection committees in North and South Kivu are tackling – with some success – a range of protection challenges.

Since June 2010, Mukungu village in Kalehe, South Kivu, has welcomed 1,150 displaced households fleeing FDLR attacks during military operations in the area. A battalion of the national army arrived recently; they have set up checkpoints demanding a fee, do not speak any local language and have moved in with local families unasked. Forced labour and arbitrary arrests are widespread. Meanwhile, locals cannot farm fields near the forest as FDLR soldiers rape women who try – and have killed men who accompany them. The local community takes in IDPs but they warn that resources are limited.

Life in many communities in eastern DRC seems a constant negotiation between different threats. Communities report looting, theft, rape, forced labour, murder, abductions, burning of houses and destruction of fields; even in areas where the state retains some control, communities are vulnerable to illegal checkpoints, taxation, arrest and extortion. Perpetrators include the myriad of armed groups but also those who should protect: members of the national army (FARDC), police, local government and customary chiefs.3

Humanitarian response in this context faces many challenges. How do we address such a range of abuses? How do we prioritise when often the whole population is vulnerable? How do we avoid discrimination and stigma within communities? How do we avoid promoting dependency?

In trying to address these questions, Oxfam works with local protection committees in 33 communities across North and South Kivu. During annual protection assessments from 2007 to 2009, communities identified key barriers to their protection as a lack of information about national and international laws, difficulty in approaching military and civilian authorities, and lack of knowledge about where to refer victims of abuse. Since then Oxfam has worked with local partners to:

- ensure the transparent election of local protection committees
- support communities to identify protection threats, analyse risks and implement activities to combat threats
- train community members and authorities on laws and human rights, and how to raise awareness of these locally
- improve relations between community members and authorities
- provide basic information about local referral services.

A recent review of progress suggests – tentatively – that, with flexible support and information to bolster local initiatives and local capacity, communities can find ways to address a range of issues. Results have been varied, with outcomes