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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

IDPs pay an unacceptable price

As of September 2010, there were more than 1.7 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the vast majority of them in the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu. Most fled their homes to escape fighting between rebel groups and the Congolese armed forces supported (in some cases) by the UN, while others are victims of direct attacks and violence perpetrated by the warring parties.

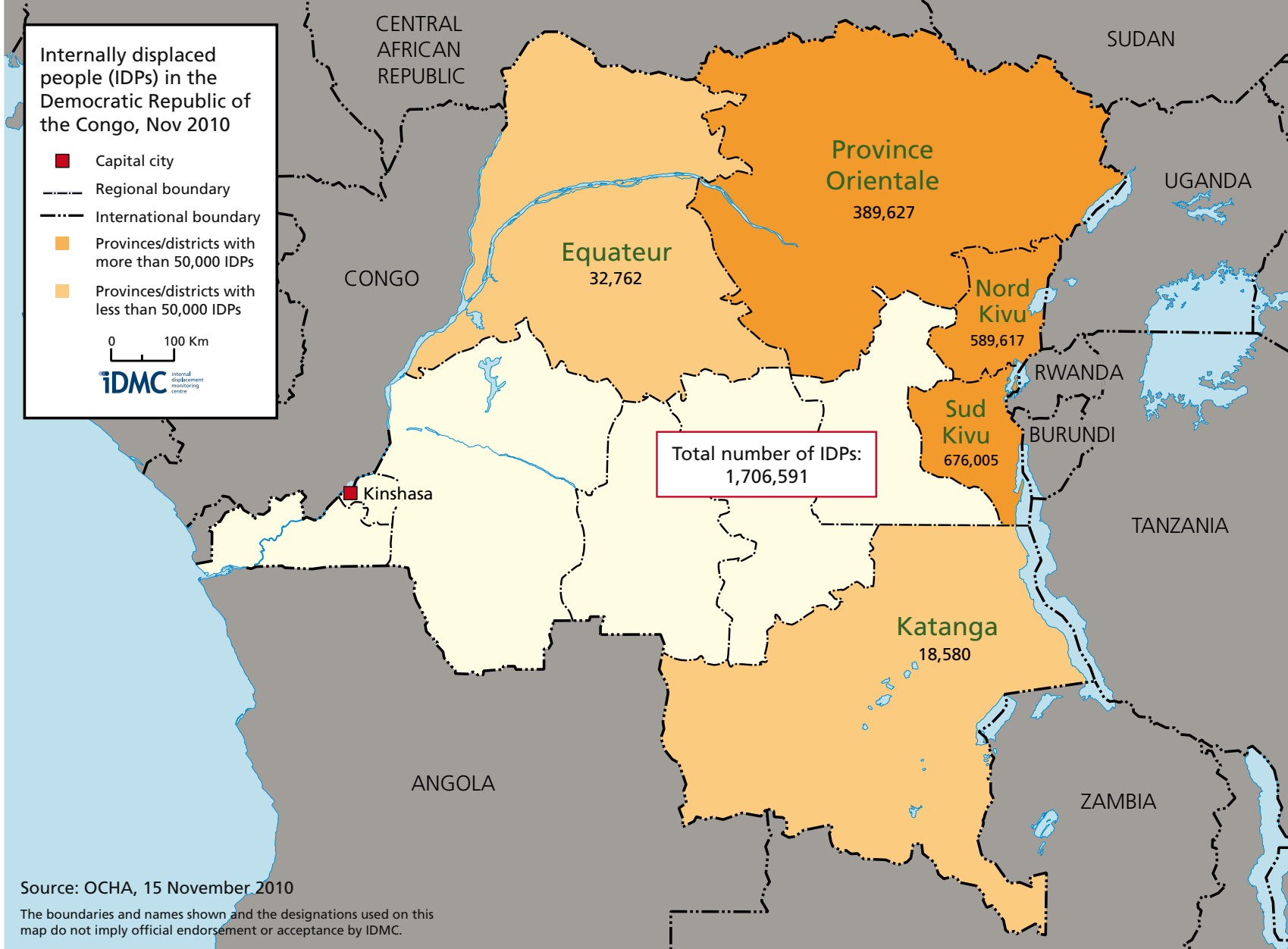
Some 5.4 million people have died since 1998 as a result of a series of complex conflicts in DRC that also involved neighbouring states, according to a 2008 estimate by the International Rescue Committee.

Displacement peaked in 2003, with an estimated 3.4 million people forced from their homes, most of them in the east of the country. A further one million people were displaced during 2009, while a similar number are reported to have returned home over the past two years.

The killing and rape of civilians continues at a horrifying rate in eastern DRC, and the protection of IDPs and other civilians remains an urgent concern. Following mass rapes of villagers in North Kivu in late July and early August, and attacks on UN peacekeepers, the UN mission is currently implementing a major internal review of its protection programmes.

A number of national and international organisations are attempting to meet the needs of IDPs and returnees. An effective response has been hampered, however, by the army's ill-disciplined military operations against rebel groups, vicious attacks on the civilian population and the illegal exploitation of DRC's vast natural resources by all parties to the conflict.

National elections are scheduled for November 2011.



Source: IDMC

More maps are available at www.internal-displacement.org

Background to displacement and recent developments

Between 1996 and 1997, and again between 1998 and 2003, DRC suffered two major wars. Civilians bore the brunt of the violence, as rebel groups with links to neighbouring states competed for control of large areas of eastern DRC. Of the estimated 3.4 million people forced from their homes by the end of the second conflict, many returned home following the withdrawal of foreign armies and the establishment of a transitional power-sharing government in mid-2003.

In 2006, Joseph Kabila was elected president in the country's first multi-candidate vote in over 45 years. Most internally displaced people (IDPs) were unable to vote, either because of the security situation or because they had lost their electoral cards or had them stolen by armed groups (OCHA, 15 August 2006; NRC, April 2006). The next national elections are scheduled for November 2011.

Despite these political milestones, violence and displacement have continued as the government fights militias in a bid to re-establish its authority across the east of the country. In 2004, General Laurent Nkunda left the Congolese army and created the National Congress for the Defence of the People (*Congrès national pour la défense du peuple*, or CNDP). The group's stated objective was to protect the country's Tutsi minority, concentrated in North Kivu, against the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (*Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda*, or FDLR), a Hutu force that included some of the perpetrators of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

In January 2008, the government signed a cease-fire agreement in Goma with 22 armed groups, including the CNDP and local Mai Mai militia groups operating in North and South Kivu. The governments of DRC and Rwanda also made joint commitments to disarm the FDLR in a separate agreement signed in Nairobi in November 2007,

but the group remains active in the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu.

An estimated 5.4 million people died as a result of conflict in DRC between August 1998 and April 2007, the majority of them of infectious diseases, malnutrition, and neonatal and pregnancy-related conditions (IRC, 11 January 2008).

Latest displacement and return movements

The vast majority of DRC's 1.7 million IDPs are to be found in North and South Kivu. At least 325,000 people abandoned their homes between January and June 2010 (OCHA, 6 July 2010), adding to the estimated one million who were displaced during 2009. Around one million people are also reported to have returned home over the past two years (OCHA, 13 October 2010; 14 October 2010).

Most IDPs have been displaced several times, and with communities increasingly unable to cope with the influx of people, several hundred thousand IDPs in North Kivu have built makeshift settlements, or taken refuge either in dilapidated buildings or in camps managed by international NGOs under the coordination of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The percentage of IDPs in North Kivu in formal and informal camps increased from five to 35 per cent in 2008, but that figure fell to 16 per cent in 2010. The rest live with host families or in the forest (Unicef/CARE, 27 April 2008; OCHA, 13 October 2010). It should be noted that estimates of IDP numbers may vary considerably, given that there are no common procedures or methods of analysis among the organisations gathering data, and very limited resources dedicated to data management (OCHA, September 2010).

Return has not always been durable. In September 2009, Congolese authorities said that some areas where it claimed to have driven out the FDLR were safe for IDPs to return. According to Human

Rights Watch, “five official camps around Goma, housing some 60,000 IDPs were closed and emptied almost overnight” and residents were “under official pressure to leave as the authorities sought to demonstrate that [the military operation] Kimia II had created security conditions conducive to return” (HRW, 14 September 2010, p.8). Many people, however, found their land still occupied. Renewed clashes forced some to flee again soon after their arrival.

In contrast, the majority of returning IDPs in North and South Kivu in 2010 said they had encountered an improved security situation, and that they had been able to repossess their former homes (OCHA, 13 October 2010; 14 October 2010).

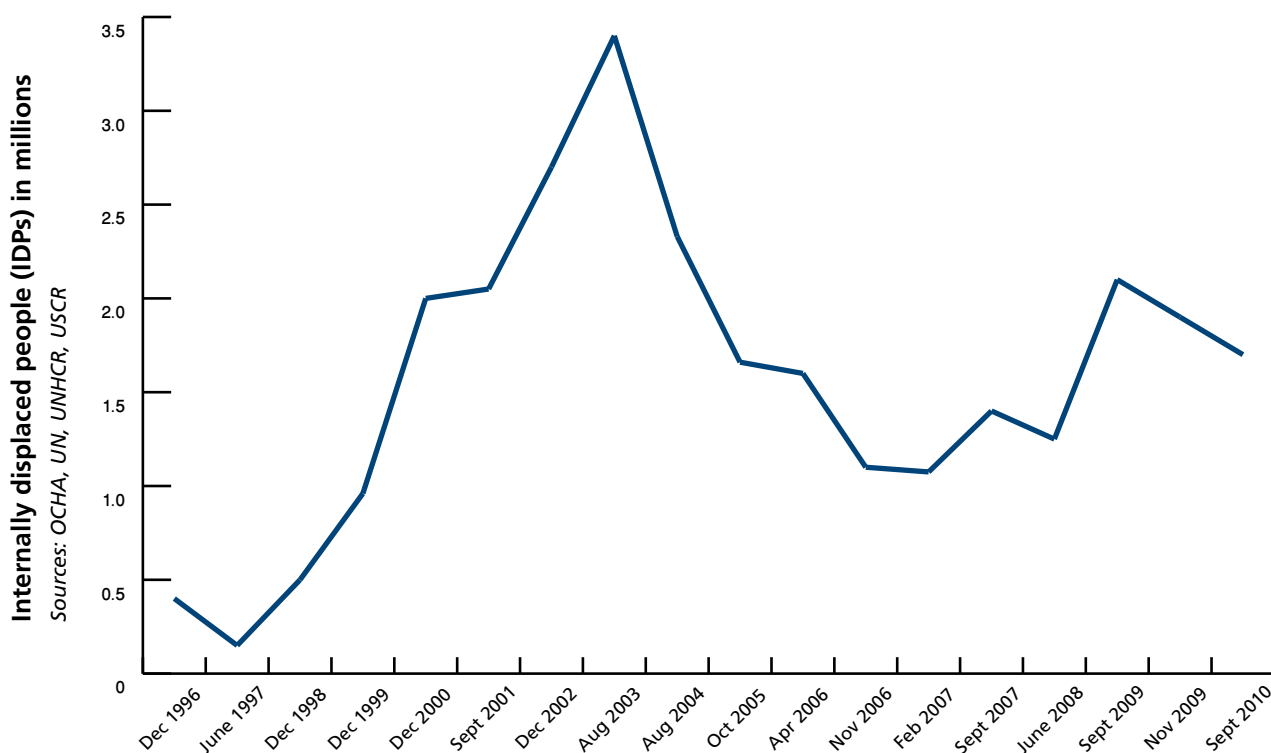
North and South Kivu: military operations and revenge attacks

The security situation across both provinces remains highly volatile (OCHA, 6 October 2010, “Kivus”). An improvement in relations between

the Congolese and Rwandan governments in early 2009 led to a joint operation (Operation Umoja Wetu) against the FDLR in North Kivu. The Congolese army then led Operation Kimia II against the FDLR in both provinces, with logistical support from the UN peacekeeping mission in DRC. It also clashed with Mai Mai militias, and both rebel groups responded with widespread attacks on civilians, which prompted massive displacement.

Operations against the FDLR continued in North and South Kivu in 2010, and some rebel fighters have disarmed and demobilised. Many remain active, however, and FDLR fighters operating in collusion with other groups such as the Mai Mai were recently reported to have reoccupied several areas of North Kivu, and to have increased attacks on civilians (UNSG, 8 October 2010). Tens of thousands of people also fled South Kivu for Katanga province in 2010 (OCHA, 15 November 2010), and in September FDLR violence caused the displacement of some 18,000 people in just a few days

Fig 1. Fifteen years of forced displacement in DRC



(OCHA, 12 October 2010). The International Crisis Group notes: "Despite three successive operations conducted by the Congolese army, the latest one Amani Leo in 2010, the humanitarian situation in the Kivus has deteriorated, and instances of extreme violence have multiplied" (ICG, 16 November 2010).

Army operations against the Allied Democratic Forces/National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU), a Ugandan rebel group primarily based in the Beni territory of North Kivu, resulted in the temporary displacement of up to 100,000 civilians in June 2010, some of whom have since returned (UNSG, 8 October 2010).

Upper and Lower Uele districts, Orientale province: LRA terror attacks

Since mid-2008, Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has attacked communities in DRC, killing and abducting civilians and looting in reprisal for military operations against it. The LRA has caused significant displacement not only in DRC but in Central African Republic (CAR) and Southern Sudan as well. The group's campaign of terror is reported to have intensified, with recent attacks in all three countries. In a village of Upper Uele district of Orientale province, 21 people were killed and 2,500 displaced in September 2010. Another 2,000 people fled the district capital in fear of further attacks. As of October 2010, the LRA was reported to have killed 2,000 people, abducted more than 2,600 and displaced over 400,000 across the region (UNHCR, 15 October 2010). The armies of Uganda, DRC and Southern Sudan have launched offensives against the LRA in Upper Uele, but these operations have consistently failed to adequately protect civilians, who have been subjected to brutal revenge attacks (Oxfam, 6 October 2010). Following an assault by Ugandan troops in December 2008, the LRA killed more than 865 civilians in a matter of weeks, often hacking their victims to death with machetes and axes or breaking their skulls with wooden clubs (HRW, 16 February 2009).

Equateur province: inter-communal clashes

Internal displacement occurred in Equateur province for the first time in several years at the end of 2009. Fighting broke out in late October when armed members of the Enyele community attacked ethnic Munzayas over fishing and farming rights in the Dongo area. An estimated 100 people were killed in the clashes, and many others reportedly drowned as they tried to cross the river into Republic of Congo (RoC). Some 200,000 people fled, taking refuge in schools, churches or with host families within Equateur, or seeking safety across the border in RoC and CAR. Clashes flared again in April 2010, and an attack on the town of Mbandaka caused renewed displacement. Many of those who fled have said they do not want to return for fear of further violence (OCHA, 6 October 2010, "Equateur").

Main protection issues

The killing and rape of civilians continue at a horrifying rate in eastern DRC, and the protection of IDPs and other civilians remains an urgent concern. Members of both the army and rebel groups also continue to commit other human rights violations and abuses including sexual exploitation, abduction, forced conscription of children, looting, plundering of crops, illegal taxation and general harassment. According to Human Rights Watch, during 2009 "government and rebel forces deliberately attacked civilians ... chopping them to death by machete, shooting civilians dead while they fled, and burning them in their homes" (HRW, 14 December 2009). Many IDPs are based in remote areas, making them more vulnerable to abuses. In January 2010, armed attackers raided two IDP camps in Masisi, North Kivu (IRIN, 8 February 2010).

Commanders of government soldiers and rebel fighters have let their subordinates commit widespread sexual violence as a means of attacking the fundamental values of communities, scar-

ing the civilian population into submission and punishing them for allegedly supporting enemy forces, or simply to provide troops with gratification. Members of an armed militia raped more than 300 women and girls between 30 July and 2 August 2010 in the Walikale region of North Kivu (UN News Centre, 14 October 2010).

According to an Oxfam survey, sexual violence increased dramatically after military offensives against the FDLR began in 2009 (Oxfam, 14 July 2009). The UN reported a steep rise in sexual violence in South Kivu for that year (UNSC, 30 June 2009; IRIN, 3 June 2009), and according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), a total of 8,300 women reported that they had been raped in the Kivus in 2009. The figure for DRC as a whole was 15,000 (UNSC, 15 October 2010), but real numbers are likely to be much higher as many victims of sexual violence are ashamed or unable to come forward. Thousands of women have also been abducted and kept as slaves by armed groups.

The forced recruitment of children continued in eastern DRC in 2010. Most of the child fighters rescued from rebel groups and the army were reportedly re-recruited later (UNSG, 8 October 2010). In 2008, Unicef reported that internally displaced children in North Kivu, particularly those separated from their families, were at particular risk of being recruited, and also of being raped and exploited (UNICEF, 14 November 2008).

Members of both the army and rebel groups have reportedly been involved in the illegal exploitation of natural resources including gold, coltan and diamonds, and the smuggling of goods and weapons, contributing to further human rights violations, insecurity and displacement (UNSC, 29 November 2010; GW, 20 July 2009).

Since 2003, the government has sought to integrate some militias into the ranks of the army, but the process has been marred by corruption and

conflicts between soldiers that often reflect local ethnic divisions.

In 2008, the UN Security Council (UNSC) sought, through Resolution 1807, to freeze the assets of perpetrators of forced displacement and serious violations of international law in DRC and to ban them from travelling abroad. The UNSC, noting with great concern the persistence of violations against civilians including killing and displacement, renewed these and other measures until November 2011 through Resolution 1952.

Basic needs

Access to basic necessities for IDPs and other vulnerable people in eastern DRC has deteriorated over the past year. The vast majority of IDPs and returnees have no access to health centres and schools, or to clean water, food, seeds, tools, clothes or building materials. Many IDPs have been unable to farm, and those that have risk having their crops plundered. The protracted conflict and the displacement it has caused have been identified as the main causes of food insecurity in the eastern part of the country (OCHA, 6 October 2010, "Kivus"). With health care services in a state of collapse, their precarious living conditions and lack of access to clean drinking water mean IDPs are particularly vulnerable to infectious diseases such as cholera, measles and bubonic plague.

National response

Measures adopted by the central government and provincial authorities have fallen far short of meeting IDPs' needs. The government has made the Ministry for Solidarity and Humanitarian Affairs responsible for IDPs, but it has had no impact and there has been no legislation to further its aims. The government has ratified the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in Africa's Great Lakes region, which came into force in June 2008, and in doing so committed to incorporate the Guiding Principles on Internal

Displacement into national law. It also signed the Kampala Convention on IDPs in 2009. A UN report submitted to the Human Rights Council in 2010 found, however, that the Congolese government had neglected its responsibilities to protect and assist IDPs and returnees (UN HRC, 8 March 2010, paragraph 111).

International response

According to a recent evaluation of the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO)'s actions in DRC, "although protection is presently recognised as the first priority, the overall response from the international community, despite its scale, is far from responding to the magnitude of the needs" (DARA/ECHO, 19 October 2010).

The role of the UN peacekeeping mission

MONUSCO, the largest UN peacekeeping mission in the world with more than 18,000 troops, is authorised under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to use all necessary means to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence (UNSC, 28 May 2010). It is also mandated to monitor compliance with the UNSC arms embargo on armed groups operating in eastern DRC.

In 2009, the UN adopted a system-wide strategy for the protection of civilians in DRC, drafted by MONUSCO's predecessor MONUC and UNHCR. The document attempts to coordinate the efforts of the mission's military forces and police with those of humanitarian and human rights agencies to improve access to aid, address the special protection requirements of vulnerable groups including IDPs, create an environment conducive to IDPs' sustainable return and reduce their total number. Despite these efforts, the UN Secretary-General's special representative in DRC has said that it is impossible to ensure full protection for all civilians, given that armed groups operate in many, widely dispersed areas and often move among the civilian population (UNSC, 15 October 2010).

The UN Security Council's change of mandate from MONUC to MONUSCO in May 2010 (UNSC, 28 May 2010) reflects the DRC government request for MONUC's drawdown and a progressive shift towards post-conflict stabilisation and consolidation (UNSC, 28 May 2010).

Humanitarian coordination

Since 2006, UN agencies and international NGOs have worked to make relief efforts more effective by coordinating their response in "clusters". The protection cluster (led by UNHCR) and the re-integration and community recovery cluster (led by UNHCR and UNDP) are particularly relevant to IDPs. Together with MONUC, the protection cluster developed a handbook for peacekeepers detailing measures for the protection of IDPs and other civilians (MONUC, 2009). According to an in-depth evaluation of the cluster approach in DRC, their introduction was particularly successful in the east of the country, the main geographic area for improved humanitarian response. One major weakness, however, is that for the most part decision making and the coordination of resources takes place at the national level (Binder A, de Geoffroy V, Sokpoh B, April 2010).

The humanitarian community has issued annual Humanitarian Action Plans (HAP), which are funded through a multi-donor mechanism called the Pooled Fund, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and bilateral donors. In 2010, the UN and the government launched two transition plans for eastern DRC: the Stabilisation and Reconstruction of Former Armed Conflict Areas in Eastern Congo (STAREC) and the International Security and Stabilisation Support Strategy (I-SSSS) (DRC, June 2009).

Providing assistance

Humanitarian agencies have struggled to respond to the emergency needs of IDPs and other vulnerable people in the context of ongoing military operations and increased attacks against their staff. Some 120 security incidents involving

humanitarian organisations were reported in DRC during the first half of 2010, twice the number reported during the same period in 2009 (UNSG, 8 October 2010). Insecurity has also prevented agencies from carrying out comprehensive needs assessments and providing assistance to IDPs in remote areas. The sheer size of the country, the absence of roads and the wide dispersal of IDPs also hamper the delivery of support.

A Rapid Response to Movements of Populations (RRMP) mechanism managed by Unicef and OCHA provides emergency assistance, based on vulnerability criteria, to IDPs and their host communities, returnees and populations affected by sudden-onset disasters (OCHA, 8 July 2010). In February 2009 the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and its partners set up a data centre for IDPs in camps in North Kivu in an effort to better target assistance (<http://www.dc4idp.org/htdocs/>). As IDPs and other vulnerable people have to declare and negotiate their aid quotas with the warring factions in order not to be attacked, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and its partners distribute food parcels small enough to allow beneficiaries to conceal their assistance, a complicated and costly system. Several international organisations, such as the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) and UNHCR, carry out emergency mediation on land and early reconciliation, essential to the success of IDPs' return (DARA/ECHO, 19 October 2010).

Note: This is a summary of IDMC's internal displacement profile on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The full profile is available online [here](#).

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About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring conflict-induced internal displacement worldwide.

Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based Centre runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries.

Based on its monitoring and data collection activities, the Centre advocates for durable solutions to the plight of the internally displaced in line with international standards.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre also carries out training activities to enhance the capacity of local actors to respond to the needs of internally displaced people.

In its work, the Centre cooperates with and provides support to local and national civil society initiatives.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at www.internal-displacement.org.

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