

# Humanitarian Effectiveness Field Visit Report

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## Democratic Republic of Congo

*Goma, North Kivu & Bukavu, South Kivu*

September - October 2014 Visit

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CDA Collaborative Learning Projects  
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**PRACTICAL  
LEARNING**  
*for*  
**INTERNATIONAL  
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### About CDA

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## Introduction

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CDA's mission is to facilitate collaborative learning promoting effective and accountable international engagements. One of CDA's priority areas is to support local people in driving their own development. By listening to nearly 6,000 people in over 20 countries who have received, participated in or observed international assistance, CDA's Listening Project gathered evidence on the cumulative effects of aid efforts and ideas to make international aid more effective. *Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid* summarizes this evidence and shares the experiences and feedback from local people on how to more meaningfully engage them in aid efforts with a wide range of policy-makers and practitioners.

With this in mind, this report summarizes a single field visit that focused on hearing a broad-range of local perspectives on humanitarian effectiveness. This visit was part of an action-research project funded by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Policy Development and Studies Branch (UNOCHA) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The goal of this visit, and the overall project, was to better understand local perspectives on the effectiveness of humanitarian action. This report and others in the series aims to feed into the larger conversation and recommendations for the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.

This report does not represent a final product of the project. While this report may be cited, it remains a working document. Specially, this report represents a snapshot of the context, at the time it was written, and represents the viewpoints of those who participated in the study. Broad generalizations cannot be made from a single report. Instead, this report is meant to contribute to the larger learning on what constitutes humanitarian effectiveness and how to improve it.

**How to read this report?** The data gathered for this report was done during one field visit; however, the original intent behind the visit was to produce two separate reports – one report centered on affected communities (including their perceptions related to effectiveness) and the other focused on civil society actors (including their perceptions related to effectiveness). This report combines the original two reports. The structure of this report, therefore, first provides the general context for Eastern DRC (Section II), and then has a section dedicated to the perspectives of affected communities (Section III), and then a section that includes the perspectives of civil society actors (Section IV).

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## Section I – Background on CDA in Eastern DRC

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The eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was chosen as a case for humanitarian effectiveness because of the protracted conflict and a long-term humanitarian intervention in the country, as well as a United Nations Peacekeeping Mission (which makes it a unique context). While the region has also experienced humanitarian action as a result of natural disasters that are complicated by the protracted conflict, the focus of the field mission was to focus on the humanitarian response as it related to the ongoing conflicts in the region. The findings in this report reflect desk research and in-country interviews and focus group discussions with a range of people who are affected by and engaged in current humanitarian responses in the eastern provinces of the DRC.

The CDA team in DRC included Program Manager, Sarah Cechvala and a Congolese independent consultant, Frederic T. Kama-Kama. The team spent 12 days in country, including five days in North Kivu (including inside and in areas surrounding Goma, Masisi, and Shasha) and six days in South Kivu (including Walungu, Ruzizi Plain, and Bunyakiri). Locations were selected in order to ensure that a broad-range of affected populations were included in the project. Specifically, the CDA team along with field partners selected the various locations to include those inside or near urban provincial capitals as well as those more remote and secluded villages. Proximity to cities was a concern for the CDA team, since humanitarian responses are vastly different between urban and rural locations in the DRC, due to poor infrastructure, armed groups, and other challenges relating to access.

The CDA team's primary aim was to listen to a broad range of perspectives on effectiveness. This report, however, focuses solely on the perspectives of affected communities and civil society actors. Based on desk-based research, the CDA team identified gaps in the current literature on the humanitarian response as it relates to the perspectives and experiences from these groups. While affected communities and CSOs were the primary focus of the field visit, the team did meet with other key actors, including international INGOs, UN agencies, local/national private sector representatives, humanitarian donors, provincial governmental officials, academics, and other researchers (both local and international), in order to supplement the findings and triangulate information.

The team used CDA's listening methodology, which includes semi-structured interviews with key informants and focus group discussions. Through approximately 47 individual interviews and 27 focus group discussions (which ranged between ten and 15 people) the

team reached an estimated 398 people in total. This process allowed the CDA team to listen and gather voices and perspectives from as many people directly affected by the conflicts and actively involved in the humanitarian responses as possible. The team asked each interviewee or focus group a series of open-ended questions based on a pre-established list developed for each constituency. The questions were adapted for each group based on analysis of anticipated knowledge, experience, and openness of the person or group being interviewed. A breakdown of interviews by constituency is displayed in Figure 1 (for the purposes of the focus group discussions the CDA team estimated roughly 13 participants).

STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED												TOTAL # OF INTERVIEWS		
Affected Community			Local/National NGOs			INGOs			UN Agencies			IND	FGD	Total (n)
Individual (IND)	FGD	Total	IND	FGD	Total	IND	FGD	Total	IND	FGD	Total			
28	20	288	7	4	59	3	1	16	2	1	15	47	27	398

STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED											
Donors			Government Officials			Private Sector			Other (Academics etc.)		
IND	FGD	Total	IND	FGD	Total	IND	FGD	Total	IND	FGD	Total
1	1	14	1	0	1	2	0	2	3	0	3

Figure 1: Breakdown of Individual Interviews & Focus Groups by Constituency in Goma, North Kivu and Bukavu, South Kivu

In DRC, the CDA team partnered with United Nations Office for the Coordination and Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) in Kinshasa, Goma, and Bukavu. The provincial offices supported the team by providing translators (in some cases translators were local UN OCHA staff), transportation, and assisted in arranging meetings with regional government authorities, civil society organizations, affected communities, and international aid agencies. Additionally, the CDA team worked with other partners, including: AIDES, Premiere Urgence, and other aid agencies that manage IDP camps, in order to organize visits to local affected communities.

Due to the limited time in country, the context in the DRC and the nature of the humanitarian responses there, the team experienced the following constraints:

- Interviews with IDPs and other people affected by the crises, host communities, and government officials were done with in some cases with translation – sometimes twice (local language to French and then to English) – provided by professional translators, UN OCHA staff, and representatives of international and

local non-governmental organizations. In these sensitive contexts, there is potential for professional, ethnic, and political biases on the part of the translators and the ethnic identities of translators could also have affected how interviewees responded.

- Access in the provinces varied greatly, and the CDA team had to travel in an UN OCHA marked vehicle when visiting all IDP communities. To this end, the CDA team always had to travel with UN OCHA staff, and, in some cases, with local or international NGO staff who may be providing the very support that the team was asking community members about. This raised some challenges regarding free and openness for local communities to discuss issues they are facing.
- Due to logistical challenges, the CDA team, in some community visits, was composed of only one team member, which limited to number of community members the team was able to speak with on an individual basis.

The CDA team extends a sincere thank you to everyone who gave their time to listen to and those who were willing to be interviewed by the CDA team as well as all the organizations that provided logistical and technical support to the team. This field report reflects the themes and patterns that came out of the conversations held by the team. It does not represent all perspectives about the broader effectiveness of humanitarian assistance in all of the DRC, but aims to highlight the issues that were consistently brought up by the people where the team visited.

## Section II – Background on the Humanitarian Context in DRC

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Characterized by 20 plus years of violent conflict, the eastern provinces of Democratic Republic of Congo have witnessed clashes between armed militias and the Congolese Government – and even the militaries of neighboring countries. While conflict in the region was vastly exacerbated in 1998 in the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda and the subsequent two Congo Wars,<sup>1</sup> issues of conflict and displacement have always been components of the region's historical fabric. Issues generated from a legacy of exploitation (particularly with regards to citizenship, identity, and land rights) have fostered a situation of cyclical displacement and conflict.<sup>2</sup> Since the beginning of the

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<sup>1</sup> Lischer. 2003.

<sup>2</sup> See: Autesserre 2008; Vlassenroot Raeymaekers 2009; and Huggins 2010.

conflict, however, over five million people have died – more than in any war since World War II.<sup>3</sup>

## **2.1. Background on Affected Communities in Eastern DRC**

The protracted nature of the conflict in the eastern region of DRC, particularly North and South Kivu has led to a situation of mass displacement. In September 2014, UN OCHA reported 861,287<sup>4</sup> displaced persons in North Kivu and 618,326<sup>5</sup> displaced in South Kivu. Displacement in the Kivus is most commonly generated by armed militias – either violent clashes against the FARDC<sup>6</sup> or conflict over territorial control by the 33+ armed groups in the region.<sup>7</sup> In North Kivu there are an estimated 255,328 persons living in camps<sup>8</sup> that are primarily managed by international and government agencies. In South Kivu, however, there are no camps, and displaced persons tend to stay with families in nearby communities, until the violence has subsided. This has generated a situation in which populations are constantly moving and returning in short spurts, and IDPs are not usually displaced for longer than five months.

The vast movement of populations has exacerbated long-standing historical problems such as land rights and issues of citizenship. The majority of the populations living in the Kivus are pastoralists and farmers, who have lived off the land for centuries. Throughout the entire country it is estimated that there are more than 3.5 million family-run farms, which operate on roughly five million hectares.<sup>9</sup> The country, however, has not exported food since 1960, and therefore food production is mainly for self-sufficiency purposes.<sup>10</sup> With the poverty level of roughly 71% for the entire country, and 75% of that for those living in rural areas, subsistence farmers in the eastern region struggle to survive.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the country's purchasing power has rapidly declined. According to current trends it is estimated that it will take until 2060 to get back to the level of production that the country had in the 1960's.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, affected communities not only face displacement due to conflict and long-embroiled tension over land, but also suffer from dramatic health and nutrition problems.

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<sup>3</sup> ECI. 2014.

<sup>4</sup> OCHA 2014 (a).

<sup>5</sup> OCHA 2014 (b).

<sup>6</sup> Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo – The Congolese military forces.

<sup>7</sup> Vogel 2014.

<sup>8</sup> OCHA 2014 (a).

<sup>9</sup> Smoes 2014.

<sup>10</sup> WFP 2009.

<sup>11</sup> IMF 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



## 2.2. Background on Civil Society (CSOs) and Local Organizations in Eastern DRC

The history of civil society is quite unique in the Kivus. South Kivu, Bukavu, is described as the birthplace of civil society in the DRC, since the region is home to the first civil society groups in the entire country. Established during the time of the Conférence Nationale Souveraine (CNS) in early 1990s from discontent and lack of government oversight in the region, civil society is still a newer phenomenon in the DRC. In fact, it is estimated that only 8% of CSOs were present in the eastern provinces prior to CNS in 1991, and more than 90% of CSOs were established in 1998 – with nearly 60% created since 2003.<sup>13</sup>

In the DRC, civil society provides the umbrella that hosts many of the local organizations whose objectives and missions cover a wide-range of issues. The Office for the Coordination of Civil Society (composed of elected officials) oversees its member's activities within a framework of ten sections. These sections range from human rights, media-relations organizations to women's associations and humanitarian local organizations.

It should also be mentioned that civil society in the Kivus has assumed a highly political role in the region. On one hand the political nature of the CSOs in the Kivus has galvanized a high level of civil participation in politics and social wellbeing. While, on the other hand, this engagement in political objectives has polarized civil society and situated them as biased actors, working against the current administration. For international humanitarian actors the CSO political agenda has clouded partnerships and collaboration, particularly due to the tension between the Congolese Government and civil society, which has left a narrow space for humanitarians to operate. While not all local organizations are considered political entities (including many of the humanitarian actors) many international actors and government officials raised concerns that LNGOs' close association with civil society implies they are not, in fact, entirely neutral entities.

In the Kivus, CSOs are usually small resources (both human and financial), but are also quite diffuse in their mandates. To this end, most CSOs in the Kivus depend on volunteer staff. One study suggests that in 2012, roughly only 20% of CSOs have over ten employees,<sup>14</sup> and nearly 20% of local organizations did not have any paid staff – meaning that approximately 20% of the CSOs are managed entirely by volunteers.<sup>15</sup> For many CSOs, this small staff size and dependence on volunteers is correlated to the limited

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<sup>13</sup> Gouzou 2012.

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted, that this study considers all CSOs operating in the Eastern Region of Congo, which includes humanitarian CSOs but is not limited to.

<sup>15</sup> Gouzou 2012.

operational resources available. The same study suggests that more than 40% of CSOs operate on a budget of less than \$10,000 a year, and 70% of this 40% are considered grassroots local organizations – as opposed to territorial or national organizations.<sup>16</sup>

## Section III – Affected Communities

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### 3. 1. Perspective on Aid Effectiveness in Eastern DRC

#### 3.1.2. Core Competencies in Response

At the time of crisis, affected communities (both displaced and hosting communities)<sup>17</sup> are generally the first to respond to their own needs. This response occurs before international and even local organizations are able to identify the immediate needs and develop the appropriate intervention. Due to the cyclical nature of the displacement and the longevity of the conflict in the Eastern provinces of the DRC, local communities have developed and refined locally driven mechanisms to cope with the continual displacement. These coping strategies place affected communities at the center of early warning systems and addressing immediate humanitarian-related needs. Affected communities engage in several primary coping strategies, which are outlined in more detail below.

#### 3.1.2. First to Respond

In many cases, we heard that affected communities are the first to raise the alarm regarding the potential of an upcoming crisis. This community-based awareness raising is commonly spread through word of mouth or through the local hierarchical structures – usually from grassroots to the village chef. Generally the information is then passed on to local government administration, local organizations operating in the area, and then to international agencies with active operations. Usually, however, the response from the “outside” (outside, meaning the response from actors other than the local communities) is delayed and commonly doesn’t meet the locally defined needs prior to, during, or after a crisis. This delay is largely due to slow response mechanisms by internationals, which include: limited operational presence in or access to remote regions, which is further

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<sup>16</sup> Gouzou 2012.

<sup>17</sup> In the eastern provinces a “hosting community” refers to those who house and usually support IDPs during a temporary period of displacement.

compounded by the limited mandate of MONUSCO (which may not allow for a rapid response) or the weak presence of Congolese Government throughout the Kivus.

If outside support is unavailable in the aftermath of an emergency, local communities have adopted a movement strategy (or “running to safety”) to cope with the immediate life-threatening crisis.

*We have developed mechanisms of helping each other because assistance is sporadic and it might be a while before it comes again.*

– Male IDP in South Kivu

Commonly, affected communities explained that their movement patterns were based on the presence of security forces (e.g., MONUSCO, the FARDC,<sup>18</sup> and provincial police forces) and opportunities provided by social networks, linking the displaced community and the community in the area of movement. These existing social networks are generally predicated upon ethnic similarities and, in some instances, the presence of families or friends in the host communities (though this was discussed much less than the level of security in a host community provided by the governmental or international forces).

### 3.1.3. Self-Reliance

Due to the chronic displacement in the east, along with the difficulty in accessing many of the remote areas (because of insecurity in many areas and poor infrastructure, particularly lack of roads), and the length in time to perform a needs assessment, develop programming, and acquire the funding, local and international organizations are usually not the first to respond. Even in places in North Kivu where there is a general encampment strategy, many IDPs explained that once displaced they had to address their own needs months prior to receiving support from international actors. Furthermore, while almost all IDPs explained that they could not survive without international support, the CDA team noted that affected communities had instituted a wide-range of mechanisms to respond to their most immediate needs in order to survive, months prior to any sort of humanitarian intervention.

In the aftermath of displacement in both North and South Kivu, most IDPs discussed how they develop, implement, and manage collaborative strategies to cope with their displacement and loss of access to their homes and land. The CDA team heard that IDPs create a collective labor force to access work, which is commonly shared among IDPs. Most commonly, in both North and South Kivu, the CDA team noted that IDPs find work farming the land of local community members, and in some instances, perform causal jobs, such as carrying food, luggage, or other items for host community members. As one

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<sup>18</sup> FARDC is Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo or the armed forces of the DRC.

IDP in North Kivu explained, *"Before we received help, and even now, we work in the community's fields and earn money and women trade in the markets and we still do this."*

In many cases IDPs also discussed how they are able to pool resources (such as jobs, food, water, foreign aid, and money earned from informal and more formal work) among displaced community members in order to survive. Generally these shared resources are distributed equitably between displaced persons who inhabit the same host community or camp or those who shared in the labor. The CDA teams heard about these collective coping strategies from those who were able to cultivate large pieces of land for host community members and were able to appropriate some of the work to fellow IDPs. In all the communities visited, however, the CDA team heard that both hosts and IDPs make sure to support those identified as most vulnerable in the community, (usually disabled or elderly community members who may not be able to fend for themselves) and devise systems that ensure those persons are supported as they commonly are unable to work or fend for themselves.

The transference of traditional social structures from place of origin to displacement sites was discussed as a very common coping strategy among IDP communities. In some cases, when displaced, affected communities relocate to a host community together. In other instances, however, IDPs explained that they did not know their fellow IDP community



members prior to displacement. Yet, in both scenarios the CDA team heard that traditional governance and oversight systems were transferred and embedded into the new IDP community. Such structures include the local chef and administrators as well as a range of associations (for example the association for mothers, farmers, youth etc.) in order to safeguard the interests of their respective members. In South Kivu IDPs and returnees explained that they used the "Salongo System," which is lead by host communities, and is a traditional system that calls for the collective responsibility to care for community needs. Once a week, for example, everyone in the community voluntarily comes together to work on community projects such as repairing the road or cleaning latrines and the market. In addition to galvanizing respective community members to ensure that their needs are met (i.e. farmers have access to land and work, mother's received support from fellow mother's, youth had employment opportunities) these associations and community governance structures work to advocate for the larger community needs to local police,

government administration, and international and local organizations operating in the region.

From such discussions, the CDA team noted the concept of a hierarchy of advocacy in which the various actors feel they can advocate to the “level above” in the ladder. Affected communities, host communities, local organizations, civil society representatives, international organizations, UN Agencies, and even government officials all described the concept of the “ladder of advocacy” (see Figure 2) – though no actors directly used the term “advocacy ladder.” Instead this concept was discussed as a mechanism of communication and responsibility among all those responding to a humanitarian emergency. Delegating responsibility to the next actor in the chain of power was discussed as an effective advocacy tactic, to address not only the needs of the local community but also the overall root drivers of the conflict. It should be noted that the CDA team is unable comment on the actual effectiveness of this advocacy process due to time and other constraints of this project.

#### 3.1.4. Host Community Approach

Patterns of movement differ greatly for displaced persons in North and South Kivu. This distinction is predominately due to the international strategies implemented to manage and address the cyclical displacement situations. Generally, in North Kivu, when people are displaced they move into traditional camp settlements established by international and local humanitarian organizations. In South Kivu, however, there are no camps, generating a community-oriented approach to cope with the large cycles of displacement throughout the region. Meaning that displaced persons in South Kivu are commonly hosted (i.e. lodged, feed, supported, etc.) by local community members in areas are not immediately affected by the current crisis or violence. This community-driven coping mechanisms was explained by both affected and hosting communities as the only mechanism they have to address the movement of people. It should be noted that the host community approach was being implemented in some parts of North Kivu, including Shasha, which was visited by the CDA team. While the reason behind the differing approaches in North and South Kivu was not clearly articulated to the CDA team, through conversations it was noted that this strategy in South Kivu was closely linked to the local context, political motivations, and displacement dynamics in the region.

Affected communities who spoke with CDA explained that the hosting approach was developed organically by the local community and had become an expected practice by all communities in the region. Many IDPs, returnees, and host community members explained the strategy as “*African solidarity*,” which can be described as a union between

all Africans bonded by the shared burden of colonial oppression and collective struggles.<sup>19</sup> Yet, in many conversations the CDA team heard that the context of protracted displacement affects everyone, and therefore people host others because they know that one day they could be displaced too. As one female returnee in South Kivu explained, *"In DRC we encounter many reversal and repeat situations so how could we not support people when tomorrow you don't know what will be your situation and maybe tomorrow we will be displaced again. So, we help anyone because we have too been displaced."*

Hosting families and IDPs generally share resources, which include food, water, money earned for casual labor, and access to non-food items (NFIs), and other items provided by the humanitarian community. As one IDP woman in South Kivu explained, *"Where we live, we cannot eat alone."* Meaning that IDPs and hosting family's share provisions gained from work or provided by aid agencies. Overwhelmingly, the CDA team heard that there is no monetary cost for IDPs to be hosted, and in several cases however, we heard that IDPs identified their host based on the cost of the stay. In some cases, particularly in Ruzizi Plain in South Kivu, the team noted that IDPs do pay a small monthly rent in order to stay with host families. Money to pay rent was often earned through casual labor, resources shared among the IDP community (predominately for the most vulnerable), and in some occasions by friends or family members outside of the immediate area – usually living in the larger cities.

This large influx of people into the host community has further ramifications on the social structures such as infrastructure, available resources, and the labor markets. In some cases, the host community described IDPs as an additional labor force that can work on their farms and help with communal work (this was heard in Shasha in North Kivu). In other cases, however, the team noted that due to the protracted nature of the crisis and the continuous displacement, the labor force has become saturated, and casual labor opportunities have become highly competitive among IDPs, and in some cases among hosting families as well. Furthermore, the increase in number of dependents (due to the hosting of IDPs) has made resources such as food and water much more scarce. Resource scarcity, in some cases, is remedied by the additional aid provided by international agencies (who, in South Kivu, distribute to both displaced and host communities) and in other cases by the productivity of the increased work force. The scarcity of food, however, remains a serious challenge with the hosting approach.

It should be noted that these divergent strategies (encampment in North Kivu versus hosting in South Kivu) have also fostered quite distinct patterns of movement and

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<sup>19</sup> See more Maru 2013 and Kasanda 2013.

therefore humanitarian needs in the Kivus. In North Kivu, many affected communities explain that they had been displaced and living in camps for two or more years, and only plan to return to their areas of origin when security has been re-established. This encampment strategy in North Kivu, in part has established a long-term situation in which humanitarian intervention is consistently needed in the camps due to the lack of access to livelihoods and the sizeable uncertainty of the government's capacity to re-instate security in much of North Kivu.

In South Kivu, however, the reliance on local communities to host displaced families, has prompted short- (one to three days) to medium- (two to three weeks) term cycles of displacement, in which displaced communities are much more likely to return home within a five month period. Therefore, IDPs tend not to lose access to their places of origin or their traditional livelihoods. This approach may resolve some issues of dependence (which the CDA team noted in the three camps near Goma) and environmental degradation caused by camps.

## **3.2. Community Perceptions of Other Stakeholders**

### 3.2.1. Community Perceptions of the Government

*"Aid does not have an impact if the government does not respect its commitments to its people." – IDP in Ruzizi Plain*

Communities overwhelmingly discussed the root of the crisis as a governance issue, and placed the majority of frustration on the inability of the Congolese Government to uphold its responsibilities. Many community members felt that the government should protect its citizens from rebel groups (and to not be complicit in atrocities and attacks on citizens) and to provide basic services (including infrastructure, healthcare, and access to livelihoods). Unfortunately, the Congolese Government has proven to be relatively weak and corrupt, and in some cases lack any viable presence in certain regions of the Kivus, leaving large gaps in basic services.

#### **Box 1: Rebuild Hope for Africa (RHA) Case**

In Masiba, RHA lead a community-driven project to rebuild the road in the community. When the project was completed, however, the LNGO was forced to return the materials to the Congolese Government. In this case, the government claimed that it was responsible for the ongoing maintenance to keep the road usable. Yet, since the project's completion there has been no work on the road (by the government), which has started to deteriorate again due to the rain. The local community has requested that RHA help them take ownership and responsibility back from the government to manage the infrastructure that directly affects them; however, they have not heard a response from the government.

This governance vacuum has been filled by the myriad of international and local humanitarian actors operating in the Kivus. Aid agencies are, in many cases, the de facto providers of social welfare structures and have assumed the long-term role of the government. The CDA team heard many IDPs note this distortion in responsibilities, and acknowledge that the role that internationals are playing is fundamentally the job for their government. As one male IDP in North Kivu explained, "*Normally helping in an emergency is the responsibility of the government.*" Another female IDP further described the challenge with the internationals assuming the role of the government, "*The government is not providing and the humanitarians are tired of providing and need to go to other countries where there are real needs and where there are real emergencies, like Somalia or the Central African Republic.*"

In addition to providing basic protection and services, all communities described the primary role of the government in terms of establishing peace and security in order to allow IDPs to return home. All communities insisted that the role of the government was to re-establish security, dismantle and disarm rebel groups, and support the return of IDPs. While many did not have concrete suggestions regarding how the Congolese Government might best address these security challenges, the CDA team noted frustration by local communities regarding the capacity and responsibility of the government. Many IDPs described the government as "deaf" to their needs or a "non-existent" actor in the response. One female IDP in North Kivu explained, "*We need peace, and the government has the responsibility to restore peace so we can go home. We don't want to live like this.*"

Several community members pointed to more concrete strategies for the government to provide security, which included demobilization, disarmament, reintegration (DDR) approaches for dismantling of armed groups and developing a robust and sturdy platform for peace negotiations. In North Kivu many communities discussed land reform issues as integral to peace, and placed the government as central to identifying and generating a clear path forward for the re-establishment of security. In Masisi, for example, IDPs and civil society actors explained that a powerful and wealthy individual might own entire swathes of land, while the surrounding community has no access to land and therefore no ability to maintain a livelihood. The CDA team noted, however, that the gap in government structures and presence throughout the east is a critical factor for altering the situation and bringing an end to the need for outside interventions.

While communities most commonly discussed the lack of governmental presence, the Commission Nationale pour Les Réfugiés (CNR) was described positively by IDPs, as well as some international (including UN Agencies) and local organizations in North Kivu. CNR



works as the intermediary between the government and international humanitarian organizations, and was discussed as an effective mechanism within the Congolese Government. At present, CNR has a large presence in 49 camps and is managing 31 camps in North Kivu. Assuming this growing role, CNR is not only seen as a conduit between internationals and the government, but also attempting to maintain and uphold at least a portion of the government's responsibilities to provide for its citizens. Even with the blatant gaps in the government's presence and response to the humanitarian situation in North Kivu, CNR can perhaps be viewed as a step, though small, in the right direction for the government. As one UN official explained, *"It seems that humanitarians are opposed to the government. They always want to fight against it, but CNR shows that you can work effectively with the government."*

It should be noted that even with the overwhelming anguish over the lack of effective action by the government, the CDA team did hear that when governmental security apparatus are put in place, displaced persons tend to settle in those locations. The presence of FARDC, governmental police forces, and MONUSCO, however, more commonly signified the absence of militia forces than an added protection for community members. Furthermore, in some cases, we heard that government forces were also found to be complicit in attacks on communities, and therefore not necessarily seen as a guarantor of civilian security or protection.

### 3.2.2. Community Perceptions of INGOs/UN Agencies

With the high levels of insecurity, 30+ armed groups, and limited governmental intervention in the Kivus, communities were thankful for the support received from both local and international agencies. Aid agencies responding to crisis in both North and South Kivu commonly provide food, shelter, and non-food items (NFIs) to displaced communities, and in some cases to returnees and host communities – seen most specifically in South Kivu. In all discussions with communities, there was a strong sentiment that without foreign support, people would not be able to survive. As one IDP in North Kivu said, *"Without the internationals I would die."*

Over the past several years, however, aid agencies have limited the way in which they distribute aid, primarily due to lack of funding. World Food Program (WFP), for example, has changed its distribution methods and now provides only to those identified as "most vulnerable." Local communities (mostly in North Kivu), however, explained that the way WFP developed and implemented its selection criteria has posed real challenges to communal norms and structures. Specifically, local communities were not engaged in the selection process nor were local norms considered in classifying vulnerability. Several IDPs

explained that the new system had weakened, and in some cases, even devastated existing social structures and hierarchies. In Mugunga IX camp outside of Goma, for example, IDPs explained that traditional familial structures call for the youth to provide for the elderly. WFP's decision to distribute to the elderly, however, has engendered a situation where youth are abandoning their elderly family members (who are receiving aid) in order to fend for themselves, which is distorting family structures and leaving many elderly on their own.

Furthermore, this distribution method also does not consider that all community members generally share things equally per Congolese tradition (even in the direst of circumstances). In one instance, the team heard that while WFP distributed only to the most vulnerable in one camp (in Muganza III), the governor of Goma distributed the same amount equitably to everyone in another camp (in Muganza I, through the camp traditional leadership system), in order to highlight the problems with the WFP's policy. While people in the second camp received less, overall people told the CDA team that they were happier because everyone received something. As a female camp leader explained, *"...for us, it is not the amount that counts but the fact that we remain united and supportive of each other."*

Timeliness in assessment and response after a crisis was raised by IDPs as a priority for effective international response. Challenges with access and the lag time to perform needs assessments for international agencies, however, has also led a response time of about three months from crisis to intervention. Community members discussed how they are able to meet their needs given the delays in response from aid agencies. Generally, community members explained, the aforementioned coping mechanisms are instituted before internationals are present and continue through any foreign intervention. As one displaced male in North Kivu said, *"We collaborate with host community and work with them. They welcomed us. Originally they gave us a place on their land and food before the organizations came to help."*

Even with the challenges for an effective response, international humanitarians are still seen by affected communities as central to the response, and the most effective in meeting their needs. It should be noted that even though affected communities identified internationals as most important in the response, many listed themselves as second in ability to respond to their needs. The CDA team noted that affected people themselves are truly the most effective at meeting their needs – particularly as they often survive for months before any form of assistance is provided. The emphasis placed on internationals by affected communities, may have to do with their role in filling the gap created by limited government intervention, which was described by many affected communities.

All local communities described the role of internationals, not in terms of provisions and aid distribution, but more in terms of their capacity to advocate and affect broader social change. Local communities explained to the team that the primary responsibility of the international community is to address root drivers of the crisis and to push the government to develop and institute mechanisms for security and peace. The need for internationals to focus their attention on the underlying components at the core of the crisis in order to foster real, long-term change within the country was explained by affected communities as the most important, and yet missing component of the international response. As one community member from South Kivu stated, *"Even if you give me food and I eat it, I might be killed right after so the food is not enough. Peace must come first...Aid does not have an impact if the government does not respect its commitments to its people."*

Yet, after 20 years of foreign intervention, and no discernable long-term changes, several members of affected communities questioned the motivation and intentions

*We don't want the international community to help us forever. If we get peace we can find new ways to cope.*

– Female Returnee in South Kivu

of internationals. One Male IDP in North Kivu said, *"NGOs have an interest in staying here so they do not push the government to peace because most NGOs tell us that they will push the government. Almost eight years, and NGOs are asking the same questions and the finding the same answer. To push the government to change, but change doesn't happen."* Cyclical responses designed to address the consequences of the crisis and not the causes has led some community members to question the objective of foreign interventions. Several community members explained that if the internationals are not in the country to help the community, then maybe they remain in their communities for the long-term in order to keep jobs and businesses in operation.

### 3.2.3. Community Perceptions of Local Organizations

Affected communities in the Kivus had mixed responses on the effectiveness of local organizations. Positive and negative responses were primarily based upon which organization was being discussed. Many local communities, however, were able to point to at least one local organization that has been effective in meeting their needs. Overall, many local people ranked local organizations third in line of effectiveness – after internationals and then the local community. Situating local organizations among those most effective seemed to be derived from their continuous presence in communities and their ongoing communication with affected people. Often community members explained that the organization did not have the ability to provide any specific services, but it was their regular presence in the community that was seen as crucial in order to

accurately communicate needs to other actors (see Figure 1). As one IDP in North Kivu stated, *"Advocacy is their job and they're good at it."*

Cases of effective local agency response were discussed in both North and South Kivu, and were described as effective because of the time spent in the community and the comparative advantage this affords them with regards to understanding cultural norms. Knowledge of the local community can allow programs to be designed to address needs as defined by the community and to be informed by local perspectives of fairness and hierarchies. In this ranking of effective actors, an IDP from South Kivu explained, *"LNGOs are the second most effective because they are present and we experience their compassion. They are united and they do not discriminate which is their first strength."* Furthermore, engagement with community members in design and implementation of programs was also seen as a crucial factor necessary for an effective response (See Box 1).

Some affected communities were aware of the minimal financial capital and resources that LNGO's have available to support them. Such financial and resource limitations have fostered an environment where the effectiveness of local organizations is highly dependent on internationals. An IDP from North Kivu explained, *"CSOs also depend a lot on INGOs because they cannot support themselves and they don't have the skills."* Another IDP said, *"...there are a few LNGOs that help but they are not strong enough and don't have funds to support us."* On the other hand, many local communities could not differentiate between local and international actors. IDPs explained that international and local organizations usually ride in the same cars and have similar interventions, and this contributed to the confusion in distinguishing between actors.

#### 3.2.4 Community Perceptions of Other Actors

Outside of the traditional government, INGO, and LNGO response, several other actors were identified by local communities as important for an effective response. Churches were discussed in many communities as an actor that, even with limited means, provided some support. The CDA team noted that the church's role was commonly supplementing the assistance provided by agencies or providing a safe haven for affected people. Some IDPs discussed how the church offered free meeting space, clothes, and in some cases land for the displaced to live on. In Masisi, in North Kivu, and Bunyakiri, in South Kivu, community members initially took refuge in churches at the time of crisis. Engaging its network of members, utilizing its land, and its role in providing protection and sanctuary were raised as the core abilities of the church during a crisis. It should be noted that the CDA team was unable to meet with any church officials during the visit, due to scheduling and limited time in the field.

MONUSCO was discussed by affected communities predominately in South Kivu. In Ruzizi Plain, MONUSCO's peacekeeping forces were described as ineffective at providing security during humanitarian emergencies. While some community members thought things had improved since the massacres in September 2014,<sup>20</sup> several male IDPs were highly critical of MONUSCO's role and presence in the community. Ranking MONUSCO as the least effective at reaching their stated responsibility to provide security to the community. As one community member stated, *"They are the least effective. They did nothing when people were being killed the first time and again the second time, so what do they do?"* Another IDP further explained the general frustration and tension between local communities and MONUSCO. *"They're nothing for us. They only came to help when the people were being buried."*

In Bunyakiri (in South Kivu) however, more positive discussions emerged with regards to MONUSCO's effectiveness and ability to uphold its responsibilities. In this context, IDPs and community members suggested that MONUSCO's presence had established some semblance of security for the community and the peacekeepers were working to reinforce the state's security structures. Beyond providing general security in the village, however, MONUSCO also implements development projects, such as building the local administration offices and houses for police officers, reconstructing the prison, and repairing roads. IDPs discussed these efforts as effective, though some did critique the lack of follow-up on long-term projects.

Finally, friend and familial networks outside of the region and country were not discussed as components that play a role in the response. Some IDPs suggested that if there were means to communicate with family members outside the area that they would most likely provide support. Generally, communication and the lack of existing mechanisms to receive outside funds were hindrances to diaspora support. There was, however, discussion of family members in the more immediate region, either in a nearby city or village supporting displaced family members (by hosting displaced family members, providing rent to pay hosts, or giving food or clothing).

### **3.3. How Affected Communities Define Priority Elements of an Effective Response**

Community members made the following recommendations regarding the priority elements for an effective response to the situation in the Kivus:

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<sup>20</sup> For more see: <http://www.undispatch.com/violence-congo-ethnic-cattle-raid-political-struggle/> or <http://www.france24.com/en/20140911-video-democratic-republic-congo-deadly-conflict-ruzizi-plain>

1. **Addressing the Bigger Picture.** Peace and security needs to be established by the government, with support from international organizations. Communities indicated that they are ready and willing to return to their places of origin and rebuild their lives; however, security is the pre-eminent need. Addressing the causes of the crisis, including governance, land reform issues, and demobilizing the armed groups, as opposed to simply addressing the consequences, would reduce the cyclical nature of the response and allow for a long-term, sustainable situation. International agency's responses to the consequences of root problems have established a ongoing pattern for response. If internationals do not change this, they are willingly binding themselves to the same interventions for years on end. CDA noted that many local community members and national agencies called for the international community to play a role in advocating to the government to address structural issues at the root of the long-term crisis.
2. **Responding to the Real Need.** Understanding the context in which outside actors are responding, and ensuring that the local community is engaged in decision-making processes, in order to identify gaps and needs was discussed as critical to effectiveness. Understanding cultural norms, hierarchies, existing structures and networks will further ensure an effective response.
3. **Timeliness and Local Engagement to Set Priorities.** During emergencies, a timely response that includes the engagement of the local communities is essential, particularly in South Kivu where displacement often occurs in very short periods of time.

## Section IV - Civil Society in North and South Kivu, DRC

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### 4.1. Civil Society's Perspective on Aid Effectiveness

Coordination of the local NGO networks, particularly in South Kivu, falls within the umbrella of the Civil Society Forum (comprised of ten sections). The section of the Forum focused on humanitarian interventions is called the forum for national organizations. Both North and South Kivu have a national forum, which convenes and coordinates local actors operating in the humanitarian sphere.

In South Kivu, however, the primary mechanism for LNGO coordination is called Cadre de Concertation de ONG Nationales (CCONAT).<sup>21</sup> This forum provides a convening platform through which national organizations discuss their efforts in order to reduce the

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<sup>21</sup> National NGOs Coordinating Group

redundancy of efforts and to identify challenges and collective solutions to humanitarian emergencies. CCONAT primarily works as a coordination mechanism in which national organizations share and discuss pertinent information about recent violence, population movements, and updates on projects and initiatives.<sup>22</sup>

CCONAT also operates as a peer evaluation mechanism, which monitors the capacities of members and the contracts they acquire in order to ensure the quality of member's work. While not always described as effective, this system of peer monitoring was developed in order to stifle the sizeable international and governmental criticism of LNGO technical expertise and capacities. National NGOs, in general, suffer from the perception (by internationals and some local communities) that their activities and mere existence is self-interested. A perception of acting as self-interested entities has emerged from incidents where NGOs have taken contracts (with international agencies) and do not implement them, or do not have the technical expertise or capacity to implement. Such negative critiques have hampered national organizations' ability to operate effectively and in collaboration with internationals, which, in some respects, has clouded the sector's reputation and ability to operate effectively or sustainably.

This peer evaluation system within CCONAT was further developed in order to identify and register members, which has also been a challenge for national actors. While most international agencies work through local organizations, many LNGOs are not registered with the provincial umbrella of CCONAT and this has posed significant challenges to the collective accountability of national NGOs. Many NGOs told the team that they wanted to establish a vetting mechanism for local organizations, which would put forth a validation criterion for LNGOs. In their view this would allow for a more systematized process for developing partnerships with internationals, and would assist in ameliorating the negative perceptions often associated with working with LNGOs.

In North Kivu, the Forum for National NGOs (FONAHD) also exists as a convening and coordination mechanism for national NGOs. While FONAHD's objectives are similar to that of CCONAT, its mechanisms for coordination are rather distinct. Established in 2010 in partnership with UN OCHA, FONAHD was OCHA's attempt to bring together all national humanitarian organizations operating in North Kivu, in order to clarify roles and mandates between organizations. One of FONAHD's efforts to delineate roles has been

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<sup>22</sup> It should be noted that in South Kivu there is a coordination mechanism for national development organizations as well called CRONGD. Unfortunately, due to political affiliations, the group is not seen as effective or influential. In fact several discussed CRONGD as CCONAT's competitor and not collaborator or co-convenor with whom they should work in tandem. Finally, CRONGD was discussed far less effective due to the higher funding levels for humanitarian work, which has dramatically diminished the need and capacity for development actors.

by modeling themselves after the UN Cluster System with OCHA working as the convener. Coordination meetings between local agencies based on sectorial expertise, which has allowed members to feel as if they can effectively discuss and manage very sector specific interventions. Members of FONADH often use this platform to ensure coordination between LNGOs for rapid responses occurs and local needs are identified and passed on to international actors. Many local NGOs described their strength in terms of their ability to respond first and generate a contingency plan to sustain the population until a more robust international intervention can be established.

## **4.2. Civil Society's Core Competencies in Response**

### 4.2.1. Contextual Knowledge & Geographical Presence

National organizations are highly connected to the local community, and are also commonly members of affected communities. Given the protracted and repetitive nature of humanitarian response in the Kivus, national actors usually have at one point or another been affected or had family members affected by the conflict. One member of FONADH explained, "*LNGOs work with our own and this means we are assisting our friends who have been displaced.*" This deep personal understanding of the context and conflict, often provides national organizations with a more nuanced understanding of several factors, including: where and how to respond, what way to provide support to the local community, and how best to access those most vulnerable.

One of the primary advantages that local actors have over internationals is the speed in which they are able to respond to an emergency. Timeliness was something that many local organizations pride themselves on, primarily because of the lag time of the international response. For internationals the general timeline from crisis to intervention takes roughly three months, which in a context like Eastern Congo, is just enough time for the community to either return to their homes (most commonly seen in South Kivu) or be displaced again. This inability for internationals to respond quickly (either due to issues of access, inadequate information about the emergency/what occurred, what an appropriate intervention would look like, and, in some cases, long needs assessment and decision-making process<sup>23</sup>) illuminates the significance of the local actor's role and ability to respond. Generally, due to the contextual knowledge, existing presence, developed relationships with the local community, and relative ease of access (in comparison with internationals) local actors are able to be at the site of an emergency far faster than any other outside response.

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<sup>23</sup> In IDP camps around Goma, many interlocutors referred to this situation as INGOs operating in air-conditioned offices in town while IDPs languish in their places of displacement.



Timeliness also raises issues of access to affected populations during a crisis. In the Kivus there is very limited infrastructure (in many situations there are virtually no roads connecting the provincial capitals to the more remote regions) and a highly volatile and often quite dangerous landscape, which makes accessing the most vulnerable challenging for all humanitarian actors. Local actors' complete immersion in the context often gives them the ability to access those more difficult locations. This access is commonly because of existing relations with and presence in the communities that have been displaced and sometimes extensive experience negotiating access with armed groups. Along with a generally slower response, international agencies are also often seen to respond to emergencies that are "easier" – either logistically or for security reasons. This commonly leaves those most vulnerable, in remote regions, without assistance, and therefore local actors, to some extent, have assumed the role of responding in the more difficult areas when they are able and have the appropriate resources.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to their ability to respond quickly and often in the hardest to reach regions, local organizations' contextual dexterity also helps them to understand and identify the real needs of the community. This ability to assess the needs of the community and design appropriate responses around those is predominately seen in situations where the international response or approach did not match the community need. In Shasha in North Kivu, for example, international assistance has been sporadic and does not necessarily cover the immediate need of the community – internationals generally provided periodic food aid and assistance with non-food items. Community members in Shasha, however, have been displaced for over a year and explained to the team that the local agencies that responded with alternative dispute resolution trainings (to improve host community and IDP relations) and longer-term initiatives that addressed gaps in livelihood have been more effective in meeting the actual needs of the community. One local actor explained that it is in this longer-term vision for the community that local organizations are able to see, understand, and then respond to.

Several local actors further explained that they understand that the local communities are resilient and have been responding to their own needs for decades. The CDA team heard several local organizations express their goals as attempting to reinforce existing structures or provide guidance and oversight to ensure that the transfer of existing social structures occurs in displacement situations. Often, local organizations are unable to provide material support – i.e. food or non-food items. Their ability to effectively intervene, however, is instead seen with their constant presence in the community – many visiting their home communities daily or establishing their offices within the communities.

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<sup>24</sup> For more see: Healy and Tiller. 2014.

This affords them with the ability to provide insight that they can then communicate to other actors within the system (for more see Information Gathering and Disbursement). As one member of FONADH explained, *“Affected communities have their own capacities and we are conscious of their own power. We work to raise people’s awareness first for themselves, but there are few actors that play the role of local empowerment.”* This sentiment was furthered echoed by the Federation of Economic Operators (FEC) of North Kivu for whom, *“The Kivus have one asset that nobody can take away: the people themselves.”*

#### 4.2.2. Community Mobilization

*We are better placed to respond to the situation, as we have better knowledge of the situation and are less demanding. Unfortunately, we are limited by our means.*  
– CCONAT Member

In several cases, local organizations are active in galvanizing community members, either through trainings, empowerment initiatives, or by local engagement in decision-making processes. Mobilizing the

community to engage in long-term sustainable processes and to incorporate their vision and ideas into programming decisions was discussed as important to local organizations and a factor that sets them apart from other actors. This participatory approach was described as relatively easy for local organizations primarily because of the aforementioned characteristics – ease in accessibility, comfort with the community, and profound contextual experience and knowledge. While many local organizations discussed the imperative nature of local engagement, it should be noted that the CDA team only heard a few stories, in which this type of engagement (between LNGO and local community) occurred. Limited resources and the lack of capacity were expressed as the primary reasons as to why there were only few examples of this model in practice.

Engagement in programmatic decision-making was described at multiple levels from design, implementation, and evaluation. Rebuild Hope for Africa (RHA) in South Kivu, was one such organization that directly discussed its engagement with the community in Masiba during their road rehabilitation project. RHA’s community engagement was also verified by and discussed with much appreciation within the Masiba community. The local community determined the need for the RHA’s road rehabilitation project, and the community’s voice and perspectives were then included in all phases of the project. Community members were even employed to help with the actual road construction. RHA deemed the success of the project on their ability to work closely with the community (with whom they had existing relationships) and their capacity to navigate the challenges of the region – both security and accessibility-wise. Unfortunately, after the

road was completed, the Congolese Government, per a requirement in the contract with RHA, forced RHA to relinquish its role in the follow-up and evaluation process of the road. This left many community members disillusioned with the process. Several community members suggested to the team that they wanted to manage and address the projects in their community, but the government removed any ability for them to do so by taking the tools and claiming that they have the oversight responsibility (see Box 1).

#### 4.2.3. Information Gathering and Disbursement

Many local organizations discussed their role as information gatherers who then can advocate to the international actors and government about the specific location and need of those affected by an emergency. Several local actors further discussed their role in information gathering as not only in the aftermath of the displacement situation, but also in order to provide early warning indicators of upcoming conflict or displacement scenarios. This ability to generate an early warning for other actors was explained as the primary reason for the creation of several local organizations. As one member of CCONAT explained, *"We live in a conflict prone situation. Many local NGOs are a result of the need for early warning and early response in their local context."*

Communicating the information gathered in the field is generally done via internal networks within individual LNGOs and then through partnerships between LNGOs and international agencies, or through coordination meetings with local actors and then disseminated upward within OCHA inter-cluster meetings – which several local organizations take part in. These communication channels allow local organizations to present the findings heard at the community-level with the broader humanitarian community in order to exact a faster response.

Many local organizations explained that their capacity to gather information was due to their consistent presence operating in communities. Several LNGOs, however, expressed that this is an area that needs improved systems for communication and response times by both internationals and local actors. As one member of CCONAT explained, *"We see our role more in terms of early warning, thanks to our structure that goes to the grassroots. We also carry out some preventive measures such as basic solidarity and conflict management as a result of displacement. However, it is also important to admit that we have not been so effective on this."* With the capacity to markedly expedite response times, several local actors expressed to the CDA team that there was room for the international community to bolster their capacities in order to refine their efficiency.

## 4.3 Challenges for LNGO Effectiveness

### 4.3.1. Other Stakeholders' Perceptions of LNGOs

*“Desire for international funding has weakened the capacity of local organizations. Originally, LNGOs’ were integral in accessing difficult regions where internationals were unable to access. Overtime, however, the LNGO community has mushroomed and has generated an incentive structure for local organizations to profit from International collaboration. While seeking funding, LNGOs have weakened their own internal capacities and effectiveness, as they have fractured their mandates and roles to mirror the sector that currently has funding.” – International Expert in Goma*

Over the past decade, the humanitarian landscape in North and South Kivu has experienced a mushrooming of local humanitarian organizations. In North Kivu alone, one UN official explained that there are roughly 400 local organizations operating in the region. This massive influx of local organizations is largely due to the longevity of the humanitarian response and the cyclical nature of international intervention. The requisite for local partnerships by donors has further expanded the number of local organizations seeking partnerships and funding, many of which do not have the necessary technical expertise. The crowded sector has led to high levels of competition among local organizations for sub-contracts, and in many cases this has expanded the mandates of local organizations to surpass both their physical and technical capacities. One Think Tank Expert in Goma explained, *“Local organizations are the first victims of foreign intervention. Most of them are sub-contractors to internationals and in this role, you cannot be the master of your own plan...The one who pays is the one who dictates what you do.”*

This environment has generated a situation of limited funding options for local organizations, as they are operating in a highly saturated market and funding for humanitarian interventions in eastern Congo is already quite restrained due to donor fatigue. With the high constraints on funding and the expansive number of LNGOs vying for financial capitol, many international actors described the intentions of local actors as self-interested. In one situation the CDA team heard an international expert explain that many local organizations simply modify their mandates to mirror the sectorial areas in which donors are funding. Creating a situation, for example, where a local organization with technical understanding in WASH (water, sanitation, hygiene) will alter its mission to include gender-based violence, in order to respond to a sub-contract. Such instances were discussed as common, and have left many local organizations with diffuse mandates and limited concrete capacities to respond to the community requested intervention. As

one expert in Bukavu explained, *"The LNGOs are a club of friends. They often change a paragraph in their mission in order to fit where the international funding is."*

Competition for international financing has also further affected the way local organizations see themselves and their work. During conversations with LNGO representatives, the CDA team noted that their role was often described as more of a trade rather than a service. As one LNGO representative explained, *"There are so many NGOs but there are no means - INGOs should do their best to support LNGOs financially there are responsibilities and tasks that we are doing but we do not have enough money."* Several international experts explained that this distortion in purpose and role by LNGOs has, in some ways, affected the way they discuss aid and also how they design and implement their programming. Deciphering the local organizations' intention and mandate is also further clouded by the fact that many organizations are small – sometimes with only one or two individuals who might also be linked to other organizations in order to maximize funding and visibility opportunities. Such circumstances have dramatically bridled trust between international and local organizations, since their financial means and organizational objectives can be highly obfuscated.

Trust between INGOs and local organizations has also been hindered by accusations by INGOs that LNGOs have inflated figures such as the number of the IDPs and/or the size of the required assistance, in order to make personal gains. In Bunyakiri, for example, the local community discussed this issue and explained that LNGOs tend to only employ their "own" (usually described on ethnic lines) or include relatives, friends, and those who offer bribes on beneficiary lists even when they are not part of the immediately affected community. Instances such as these have hampered trust and confidence by internationals in the ability of local actors to operate impartially in their objectives or programs. A government official described civil society actors in the following way, *"Civil Society is the monster that comprises all sorts of opportunistic actors."* Furthermore, this lack of moral accountability to the government and international actors also raised concerns of LNGOs' capacity to be accountable to local populations.

It should be noted that the aforementioned perceptions are highly generalized, and therefore do not describe all LNGOs operating in the Kivus. In both North and South Kivu the CDA team heard of several local humanitarian actors who were highly effective and efficient in their operations. The CDA team noted that these organizations seemed to be slightly larger in size and have cultivated practical technical experience over a number of years. Past work for international actors was described as a commonality among the leadership in many of these local organizations. This knowledge and existing relationships

(with UN agencies and other INGOs) also has further granted some of these LNGOs greater access to funding opportunities.

#### 4.3.2. Local Organizations' Perceived Challenges

Even with the vast criticism of local NGOs by government and international actors, there are several challenges and misconceptions that impede LNGO's ability to be effective in this context.

Limited funding is the primary concern we heard from local actors. Several complained that while they were able to gather information and perform an initial assessment there is usually little to no follow-up by internationals in terms of concrete, funded projects. One member of CCONAT stated, *"We are happy meeting with internationals, because our role is crucial. Nevertheless...we are normally forgotten when the funds come."* The inability to access international funding is also related to partnership protocols and operational processes required by international actors. Several LNGOs discussed these standards as far too rigid, and therefore, often eliminates their candidacy. Furthermore, some claimed that this inflexibility also affects LNGOs' ability to respond to the "real" communal need, which comes from a contextual understanding, and is not driven by a top-down foreign policy or standard of practice.

Funding issues also relate to the saturated market of local organizations operating in the Kivus. International agencies discussed challenges related to distinguishing effective and reputable LNGOs from those that are operating out of self-interest and financial motivations. The vast number of local organizations also generated complaints regarding the duplication of efforts between local organizations and between local and international organizations. Even with the aforementioned coordination mechanisms (FONADH and CCONAT) the immense number of local actors has made it difficult for these mechanisms to identify and coordinate all the response efforts. The CDA team noted that this is most likely due to lack of clear communication between member organizations. One member of CCONAT explained, *"Where it goes wrong is when INGOs enter into a partnership with local NGOs without informing us [CCONAT] and when it does not work they lump blanket blame on all local NGOs."*

#### 4.4. Civil Society's Perception of International Community

In eastern DRC, the actions of international actors were commented on by all local agencies. Some described the positive attributes of the international presence, and to that end discussed the pertinence of a long-standing commitment by the international

community to the context. On the other hand, many other local organizations' had sharp criticisms regarding the manner in which the international community formulates its interventions and the international humanitarian system operates in general.

#### 4.4.1. Contribute to the Stability

Local organizations noted that the mere mere existence of the international community contributes to the larger stability of the region. The presence of international operations in a village or region was described as a perceived signifier of stability and security by civil society, affected communities, and even armed groups, in some cases. Several LNGOs explained that this feeling was related to the fact that internationals tend to not operate in the most challenging regions. When an international agency establishes programming in a given community it often raises the flag to many (including local communities, LNGOs, MONUSCO, and sometimes armed groups) that things in that area had subsided, and stability had returned. Stability was also seen from the actions and programs developed by internationals, which can include longer-term infrastructure and medical support. Often, when the international agencies assume some of the functions of the Congolese Government, they are seen as contributing to the sustainability of a community in the long-term. Introducing programs to a community also has the benefit of jobs and livelihood support, which are commonly described as synonymous with stability.

#### 4.4.2. Essential in Information Sharing & Convening Power

Civil society actors discussed the role of the international actors as crucial in convening – this was discussed particularly in South Kivu. UN OCHA's ability to bring together local actors was discussed as essential for an effective response in the region. While LNGOs felt that their comparative advantage related to their ability to gather information, it was noted that their capacity to share and disseminate this information had a lot to do with the international coordinating mechanisms.

#### 4.4.3. Limited Capacity Transfer

Limited capacity building efforts by international agencies was raised as a major concern for LNGOs. The CDA team noted that many local agencies felt as if the international community was not supporting the growth of their technical capacities. Instead, many local organizations felt as if international agencies merely saw them as local implementers and sub-contractors who had access to challenging regions and relationships with communities that internationals were unable to acquire. Yet, while local actors thought of

these attributes as important, many felt that there was also the added need for internationals to build the capacity of locals so they could take over the interventions in the longer-term. In conversations with civil society actors, very few were able to discuss tangible examples of capacity transfers from international to local organizations. One CCONAT member explained, *“Instead of emergency driven programs, INGOs should orient the community into the project development with support from national organizations.”*

With the chronic and cyclical nature of the crisis in the east and the 20 years of international intervention, many local actors expressed a frustration with the inability for the international actors to plan an exit strategy. Many felt that such an exit strategy should focus on infusing technical expertise and resources into local organizations so that they can continue to support the growth and development of communities. Many local actors explained that while the internationals will eventually leave, they (LNGOs) will always be there; therefore it is critical that the internationals invest in local abilities. Often, LNGOs described the international community as seeing local organizations as sub-contractors, which leads them to not engage local actors beyond the specific contract. Instead of building the capacities of locals, many explained the international actors are leaving a technical vacuum, which will be quite hard to fill when the internationals leave.

#### 4.4.4. Proportionality of Spending

*Funds are given for a specific activity but beneficiaries do not have access to it. INGOs spend money in an unreachable way, meaning that it does not reach the beneficiaries in a good way...There is so much overhead.*  
– FONADH Member

There was a sharp critique regarding how internationals spend the limited funds received from donors. Many local organizations commented on the gap between the cost of INGOs to operate and the amount of money that is distributed to

affected communities. Many local actors commented on the large price tags on international operations (from staff costs to logistical and administrative needs) and the relatively limited amount of spending that is transferred to both local communities and civil society organizations. Some experts described the large overhead and limited engagement with the field as sustainment of international presence. In the words of one think tank expert in Goma, *“We don't have much to show for the over 20 years presence of INGOs. If they continue to do things in the same way by taking the lion share of the funds mobilized for their own operation, then they will be here for another 20 years, since this has become a business for them.”*

Critics of the continued INGO presence referenced the INGOs as self-serving and focusing on growing the industry and business as opposed to meeting the needs of the affected



communities. In Goma, many LNGOs and some local community members described this self-sustenance and glorification by noting that many INGOs publish reports about their interventions while funds generally only benefit their overheads and rarely have an impact on the communities in need. In the words of IDP in Bulenga camp, *"Nothing much is transferred to the community. Projects end up in air conditioned offices."* In Bukavu, a member of CCONAT went further and compared the annual salary of an executive officer of an INGO with the support provided to local NGOs, *"The annual salary of an executive officer of an INGO is equal to annual support provided to five local NGOs at the average value of USD \$25,000 per local NGO."* Local communities and LNGOs also drew comparisons between the cost of operation of MONUSCO and support offered to IDPs.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4.4.5. Context Specificity

*"If you don't master the context and the politics, then you will implement the same thing over and over again."* – Local Organization Representative in Masisi

Local actors described how rigid international standards, processes, and protocols can deteriorate existing social structures. In some cases, LNGO representatives suggested that these structures exacerbate existing tensions or generate more conflict within communities. Some local communities, for example, perceive WFP's standards to be unnecessarily constraining and lack consideration for traditional solidarity. Many (INGOs, LNGOs, and community members) that the team spoke with, felt that these protocols have impeded WFP's effectiveness. In Mugunga I camp near Goma, an IDP took issue with WFP's distribution based on its interpretation of vulnerability, *"For instance, WFP distributes drinking water only to the elders, arguing that it can provide the approved ratio of two liters per day per person to only the most vulnerable. But as a community, we prefer to share a glass of water to survival another day together than to discriminate on the basis of approved ratio!"*

LNGOs explained that international actors commonly respond and miss the longer-term needs of the community which are just as essential as those deemed "life saving." Assessing the long-term needs in a community and planning accordingly for the realities on the ground was noted as more important than the operationalized protocols, which internationals tend to focus on. Many local actors felt as if this was one of the biggest challenges for the effectiveness of international actors.

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<sup>25</sup> LNGOs and local communities often confused projects implemented by humanitarian actors and MONUSCO.

#### 4.4.6. Slowness in Response

In the context of eastern DRC, a pronounced criticism of INGOs made by locals is the length of time it takes internationals to respond to a crisis. As previously explained, this region is known for cyclical and chronic displacement, therefore, the longer a response takes the less apt it will be at addressing the acute needs of the community. Commonly, the CDA team heard that the international response could take up to three months from crisis to intervention, which is generally due to logistics and assessment protocols. This timeline, however, was described by most local organizations as inefficient because in that timeframe many IDPs have returned home (particularly in South Kivu) and it is within those first three months that the most important needs should be addressed.

#### 4.5. Civil Society's Perception of the Congolese Government

As civil society actors have assumed a more political role, a clear tension has emerged between the government and CSOs. Several people the team spoke with explained that civil society, particularly in South Kivu, has taken up an opposition role to the government in Kinshasa. CSOs' perceptions about the role and responsibility of the government should therefore be considered through this lens.

Most LNGOs described the Congolese Government as ineffective and absent from the context. Local organizations described the government as heavily dependent on international organizations to support the population both during a crisis, and for general long-term basic needs and services. The government's inability to plan and manage the situation was directly linked with poor leadership and was discussed by CSOs as a detrimental factor. As one local organization representative explained, *"In many Third World countries, issues of development are not physical but rather governmental, with the issue of leadership being one of them. As a result, DRC doesn't even have a significant long-term development policy on which to base action."*

Additionally, many (CSOs, INGOs, and community members) discussed the corrupt nature of the government as a large impediment to effective action in the context. Many LNGOs explained that security forces are not paid; and are therefore highly unreliable. Furthermore, LNGOs suggested that the government taxes both local and international humanitarian organizations in an inconsistent manner, which makes it challenging to have accountable and transparent operations. Even though many actors described the government as virtually ineffective, almost all local organizations noted that the government is an essential actor who can foster change. Advocacy campaigns directed at

the government was noted to be imperative in order to drive a more robust governmental response to the crisis in the east.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4.6. How Civil Society Defines Priority Elements of an Effective Response

CSOs raised a number of elements that they consider necessary for an effective response. They are listed in order of prevalence.

- 1. Addressing the Bigger Contextual Challenges.** The need to address the root drivers of the chronic emergency in the Kivus was discussed by all CSO actors. Many explained that in order to reduce the redundancy of action and response and create long-term peace and stability, internationals as well as national actors must account for the long-term problems in the region. Shortsighted action was most commonly described by LNGOs as fundamental for effective action and stability throughout the region. As one Local NGO in Masisi explained, *"In this context internationals should be promoting locally-driven initiatives, because when the INGO is not there the local organization will still be here to take of it, and can remain autonomous at the same time."*
- 2. Addressing Development Needs in Tandem with Relief Efforts.** CSOs noted that without long-term development considerations, humanitarian action in the Kivus would be doomed to repeat. An effective response cannot simply address an emergency, but also has to address the key drivers of the crisis in order to not repeat the cycle. One FONAH member explained, *"Humanitarian assistance might be done, but it does not happen with development activities and things remain the same way. That's why we have been having the same interventions for ten years because INGOs do not engage local actors either."*
- 3. Knowledge Transfer.** All local actors discussed the exigent need to transfer technical capacities and knowledge from international to local actors. LNGOs described this as a paramount role for international actors. Bolstering local capacities could reduce the international responsibilities in the region and boost the long-term sustainability of effective action. Integral to knowledge transfer is also resource transfer. Many LNGOs described not only the need for enhanced

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<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that while the larger government apparatus was seen by most local organizations as ineffective, several discussed positive interactions and work with Commission Nationale pour Les Réfugiés (CNR). CNR is a conduit between internationals and the government, and also an entity, which attempts to maintain and uphold at least a portion of the government's responsibilities to provide for its citizens. At the time of this visit, CNR was reportedly present in 45 camps, 31 of which it was directly managing in North Kivu. Even with the blatant gaps in the government's presence and response to the humanitarian situation in North Kivu, CNR can perhaps be viewed as a step, though small, in the right direction for the Congolese Government.

technical capacities, but also the resources to implement technical programs. Additionally, another suggestion was to institute better coordination mechanisms between local organizations and international agencies in order to remove the duplicity of efforts and structures. This may also improve trust and between international and local actors.

- 4. Access.** The ability to reach vulnerable populations was described as a priority in effective action. In the Kivus, there are many remote regions that are challenging to access due to insecurity and limited infrastructure. Improving, not only the ability for all actors to access these regions, but also influence the willingness of many international actors to implement in those regions was discussed as important for an effective response, and for aiding those most in need.
- 5. Timeliness of the Response.** Especially given the short-term nature of displacement (most commonly seen in South Kivu), the quickness with which humanitarian actors are able to respond is essential. While a timely response was discussed in this document as the comparative advantage for local organizations, the limited means with which they are able to respond often hinders an effective response by LNGOs.
- 6. Placing Local Communities at the Center of Response.** Civil society actors explained that those who were the most effective in their work, are those who comprehensively engage local communities in the identification of needs and then the subsequent design, development, implementation, and monitoring/evaluation of their programs. Putting local communities at the center of the response may also help programs to recognize the distinct contextual factors, social structures, and cultural values in the places in which interventions occur so as to not erode existing structures.

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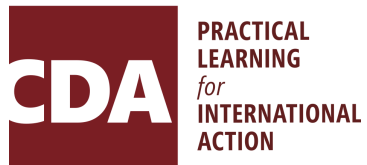
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