

DRC: Picking Up the Pieces After M23's Withdrawal Caelin Briggs Refugees International
– Blog 18 January
2013 This

week, an RI team will depart for North Kivu Province in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where more than 500,000 people have been displaced by fighting since April. The mission comes shortly after the fall of the provincial capital of Goma, and with 130,000 people now displaced in Goma and its environs, there could not be a more important time to visit the region.

North Kivu has been the site of near-constant conflict since April 2012, when a group of soldiers defected from the Congolese army and formed a new rebel group known as M23. The rebels and army engaged in violent clashes across the province, displacing hundreds of thousands of people.

Although Goma is now back under government control and a fragile ceasefire is in place, the humanitarian fallout from the recent violence continues. Conditions in nearby IDP camps are extremely harsh, and the security situation – both in the camps and the surrounding areas – is highly volatile.

This RI mission seeks to understand and highlight some of the most important issues affecting these vulnerable populations. In particular, we will focus on two key areas: the protection support available to IDPs and conflict-affected communities, and the humanitarian response to the recent surge in displacement.

RI is particularly concerned about the welfare of displaced Congolese in Masisi and Rutshuru territories, where humanitarian access was cut off for much of November and December. An estimated 250,000 people were displaced in Masisi in the span of just one month, and 60 percent of those individuals ended up not in organized camps, but with host families. Unlike eastern DRC's many formal displacement camps, these host communities rarely receive outside protection and assistance. International monitors often overlook these areas, and there is a real risk that their situation could worsen dramatically without anyone even noticing. RI is committed to ensuring that humanitarian needs in these areas are not ignored.

As an overarching theme, Mary Hersh, our senior advocate for women and children, will also be looking at the specific challenges women face in North Kivu – especially given the high levels of sexual violence associated with this ongoing conflict. (...)

The fighting of the past few months is, unfortunately, just the most recent phase of a much larger conflict – a conflict that over 20 years has killed an estimated five million people and produced more than 2.4 million IDPs. RI has followed this conflict closely since its earliest days, and we continue to do all we can to bring to light the needs of civilians in eastern DRC. With this mission, we hope to produce practical recommendations that can improve the protection and

assistance those civilians receive.

Read

[full post](#)

.