The Case of Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

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FOREWORD

Since its foundation in 1997, the Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) has consistently highlighted the relationship between humanitarian agencies and affected populations as critical to the accountability and performance of the Humanitarian Sector, and the active participation of affected populations as fundamental to their self-determination and dignity.

Although ALNAP member agencies share an understanding of the right of affected people to have a say in actions affecting their lives, given the difficulties in the midst of an emergency, many questions remain as to how, when and with whom. The debate on participation in humanitarian action, albeit well intentioned, has been characterised by assumption and expectation, with too little supporting evidence and too little participation by members of the affected populations.

The global study on the consultation with and participation by affected populations in humanitarian action is the first major effort to seek answers and increase understanding through a direct focus on current practice in the field – eg, how do agencies and affected populations interact? what are the opportunities for participation? why are such opportunities lost? – combining researcher, practitioner, national and international perspectives in each of the study teams. However, participation is not a simple matter of methodology, it requires a willingness to share power, to recognise and respond to the rights of affected populations and to support self-determination proactively.

While not expecting simple answers, the Steering Group has high expectations of the Global Study, which aims to provide humanitarian agencies and their personnel with guidance, insights and reference points to help determine, in dialogue with affected populations, how to maximise participation in a given situation.

The DRC study is one of a series of six country studies and resulting monographs that, together with an extensive literature review, provide the basis for a Practitioner Handbook and Overview Book.

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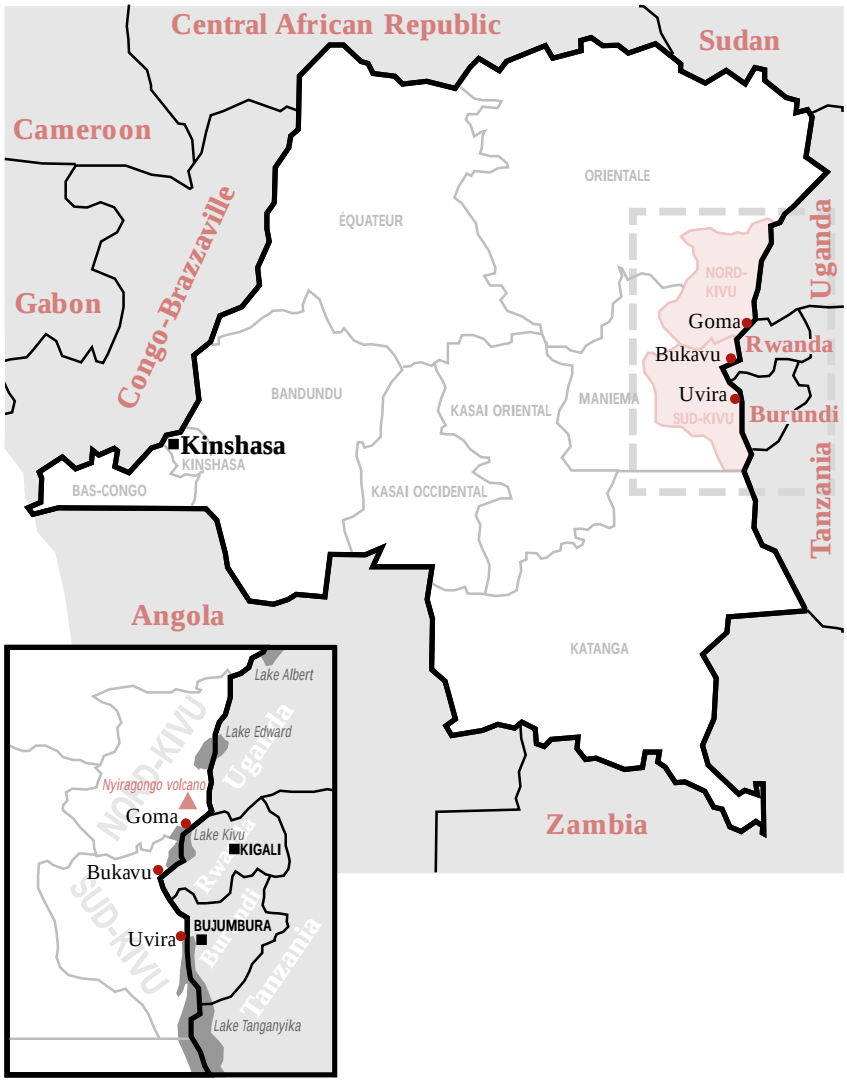
The research team

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



ACRONYMS

ACF	Action Contre la Faim (Action Against Hunger)
ACIPA	Action Citoyenne pour la Paix (Citizen Action for Peace)
AFDL	Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération Congo-Zaïre (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo)
ALNAP	Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance
ASRAMES	Association Régionale d'Approvisionnements en Médicaments Essentiels (Regional Association for the Supply of Essential Medicine)
BCSC	Bureau de Coordination de la Société Civile (Office for the Coordination of Civil Society)
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CCN 2002	Cellule de Crise Nyiragongo 2002 (Crisis Committee 'Nyiragongo 2002')
CECI	Le Centre Canadien d'Etude et de Coopération Internationale (Canadian Centre for International Studies and Cooperation)
CEPAC	Communauté des Eglises Pentecôtistes en Afrique Centrale (Community of Pentecostal Churches of Central Africa)
COPARE	Commission pour la Paix et la Réconciliation (Commission for Peace and Reconciliation)
COSA	Comité de Santé (Health Committee)
CRONGD	Coordination Régionale des ONG de Développement (Regional Coordination of Development NGOs)

DEC	Disaster Emergency Committee
DGDC	Directorate-General of Development Cooperation (Belgium)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire)
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Organisation
ESPD	Enfants en Situation Particulièrement Difficile (Network for Children at Risk)
EU	European Union
FAC	Forces Armées Congolaises (Congolese Armed Forces)
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
FHI	Food for the Hungry International
FLC	Front de Libération du Congo (Congolese Liberation Front)
GAA	Germany Agro Action
GISDG	Groupe d'Intervention pour la Santé et le Développement Global
GOTEC	Goal Team Consult
GRET	Groupe de Recherché et d'Échanges Technologiques
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschatft für Tecnische Zusammenarbeit
ICRA	International Centre for development-orientated Research in Agriculture
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JRS	Jesuit Refugees Service
MDM	Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World)
MERLIN	Medical Emergency Relief International
MLC	Mouvement de Libération du Congo (Congolese Liberation Movement)
MONUC	La Mission des Nations Unies pour la République Démocratique du Congo (United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo)
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation

NOVIB	Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PIDP-Kivu	Programme d'Intégration et de Développement du Peuple Pygmée au Kivu (Integration and Development Programme for the Pygmy People of the Kivu)
PLALUSI	Plate-forme de Lutte Contre le SIDA (Platform for the Fight Against AIDS)
RCD	Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (Congolese Rally for Democracy)
RCD-ML	Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie-Mouvement de Libération (Congolese Rally for Democracy-Liberation Movement)
REGIDESO	Régie de Distribution d'Eau (Local Water Authority)
REPAD	Réseau pour la Protection des Enfants des Zones Rurales (Network for the Protection of Children in Rural Areas)
SCF	Save the Children Fund
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SNEL	Société Nationale d'Electricité (National Electricity Board)
SOSINYI	Solidarité des Sinistrés de Nyiragongo (Solidarity for the Victims of the Nyiragongo Volcano)
UAC	Unaccompanied and Separated Children
UPC	Union des Patriotes Congolais (Union of Congolese Patriots)
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
URD	Urgence Réhabilitation Développement (Relief-Rehabilitation-Development)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAS	Volontaires Autochtones Solidaires (United Native Volunteers)
WFP	World Food Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Part 1 INTRODUCTION

Consultations with affected populations and their participation in humanitarian action now seem to be widely accepted as crucial to effective social targeting, resource utilisation, accountability, sustainability and impact. As such, the involvement of affected populations has become a central tenet of the policy approach of a number of humanitarian agencies. However, there remain wide variations in practice in regard to the role of affected populations in humanitarian work. This realisation prompted the Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance (ALNAP), to commission this Global Study, seeking to comprehend how participatory approaches can be established in crisis contexts.

Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was selected as a case study in order to gain better understanding of participation during a protracted and complex crisis, which is characterised by its strong ethnic component, a collapsed state, the presence of myriad international aid actors with diverse backgrounds, and the emergence of numerous Congolese aid organisations. Bukavu, Goma and Uvira were chosen as study sites for the following reasons: Rwandan people displaced in 1993 and 1994 settled there resulting in the presence of Congolese and international humanitarian actors and extensive ethnic diversity.

The study's basic hypothesis is that the participation of affected populations in humanitarian action is both feasible and beneficial in terms of project outcomes and long term social impact. In addition, the research team drew up a series of pertinent questions, such as: who should participate? Why is participation necessary? And how can it be achieved? High levels of insecurity and difficult access conditions added another challenging dimension to the research process.

Part 2 CONTEXT

The DRC is a vast country with a wealth of mineral resources. At the end of the 1980s, under the dictatorship of President Mobutu Sese Seko, the country plunged into an economic and political crisis that revived secessionist tendencies dating from the post-independence period. This situation threatens the unity of a state whose future was already uncertain due to its size, geographical topography and the diversity of its people.

Most of the fighting in the DRC can be traced to the eastern provinces. Ethnic demands and economic interests provoked an inter-ethnic and international complex conflict. Several efforts to restore peace are underway.

Since the Great Lakes crisis of 1994 (resulting in the mass displacement of the neighbouring Rwanda population), numerous international humanitarian actors and Congolese aid organisations have emerged in eastern DRC. Furthermore, in 2002, this multifaceted crisis was compounded by a series of natural disasters, notably the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano (Goma) and the Mount Mitumba landslides (Uvira).

Part 3 FINDINGS

The research reveals that participation is an attitude rather than a concept. Indeed, for international actors, participation is seen as a theoretical notion. Despite the various techniques and tools available, it is often difficult to initiate it. However, for Congolese aid actors – non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the local administration – participation implies that they are involved in humanitarian assistance alongside international aid bodies. Denominational organisations emphasise their long-term proximity to affected populations, giving them certain legitimacy. Finally, affected populations are less likely to define participation. When the subject is brought up, they mention neighbourly solidarity, while highlighting the need to adapt humanitarian assistance to their needs. Humanitarian organisations are viewed as a source of employment.

We examine the different forms of participation according to the type and phase of the (different) crises that affect the region – protracted and rapid onset crises.

Protracted crises

- In the remission stage, Congolese and international aid actors that have been present in the region for a long time provide most of the humanitarian assistance. Congolese aid actors, committees and other organisations created by affected populations play an important role.
- At the peak of the emergency, which rarely receives media coverage, affected populations become organised and, where necessary, move to areas where humanitarian assistance is available.

Rapid onset crises

- During the first few hours after the disaster (acute crisis) neighbourly solidarity plays an important function. Congolese NGOs assist as best they can.

- During the 'classic' emergency phase, international humanitarian actors take centre-stage. Few attempt to involve affected populations directly; lack of time is the reason most commonly given. Indeed, international humanitarian actors prefer to control distribution.
- The post-emergency phase bears similar characteristics to the remission phase of a protracted crisis.

The research team examined each phase of the project cycle.

- **Needs assessment** Participation is limited to consulting or informing affected populations. Surveys, interviews and censuses are the most commonly used tools.
- **Beneficiary targeting** Affected populations participate mainly through committees, which are often in the best position to identify beneficiaries. In many cases, humanitarian actors and donors impose pre-determined beneficiary-selection criteria, which restricts the input of these committees. Sometimes the selection process can have a political dimension.
- **Project design** Actors organise workshops, meetings and focus groups, and establish partnerships. At this point, standardised tools are of limited use and communication between aid actors and affected populations is of the utmost importance.
- **Implementation** Two forms of participation were observed during this phase: direct/individual participation and participation via organisations created by affected populations. In practice, this takes the form of materially motivated activities (like food-for-work) and the carrying out of specific tasks (such as providing the workforce).
- **Monitoring and evaluation** There were few examples of participation in relation to monitoring activities. Evaluators reference focus groups, meetings and interviews as the source of their information.

Part 4 CONCLUSION

In eastern DRC, participation is, for the most part, possible and has a positive and beneficial impact on humanitarian assistance. For Congolese organisations and affected populations, their participation depends on the context, the type of crisis and the project-cycle phase.

There appears to be uncertainty among humanitarian actors as to how certain factors impact on the participation of affected populations. What is for some an argument for participation is a constraint for others.

- Participation is often seen as a means of increasing the influence of humanitarian assistance. It can result in improved access to affected populations, geographically and culturally, ensuring, therefore, a more harmonised approach in a certain region, or a response that is more likely to continue in the long run. Participation is also presented as a matter of principle: populations must be involved in decisions that concern them.
- Meanwhile, other actors would prefer a reduction in participation (or its complete absence) in order not to compromise humanitarian assistance, either because needs are urgent (hence participation is a 'waste of time'), because they are too great (projects are too large and thus participation is not practical), or because affected populations do not possess the required skills. They contend that impartiality and neutrality would be compromised by the participation of affected populations in certain programmes, especially where there is lack of trust between the two constituents.

This difference of opinion illustrates the extent to which it is important for humanitarian actors and affected populations to comprehend fully the following factors:

- legitimacy (both of humanitarian actors and affected populations);
- access and security conditions; and
- impartiality and independence.

Part 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Aid workers in the field must:

- avoid hi-tech participatory techniques;
- take into account group maturity and forms of local organisation, and do not overlook other forms of participation as an alternative to the direct involvement of affected populations; and
- distance themselves from standardised beneficiary selection criteria and try to identify the real vulnerable groups.

Aid organisations must:

- develop methods for training humanitarian staff in participatory approaches during an emergency; and
- support or engage in activities that encourage communication between Congolese organisations and international aid actors.

Donors must:

- develop more flexible beneficiary- and sector-selection criteria.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The participation of affected populations in humanitarian action now seems to be widely accepted as crucial to effective social targeting, resource utilisation, accountability, sustainability and impact. Beyond operational considerations, participation in humanitarian emergencies is, for some, a fundamental right of citizenship, essential to survival, self-protection and self-actualisation. It is also a means by which humanitarian actors can demonstrate their respect for disaster-affected populations. As such, the participation of affected populations has become a central tenet of the policy approach of a number of humanitarian agencies.

However, there remain wide variations in practice. This realisation prompted ALNAP to commission this Global Study. Its core objectives are:

- to assess current consultation and participation practice in a range of emergency contexts;
- to identify examples of good practice;
- to highlight gaps or inadequacies in procedure and the contributing factors; and
- to improve understanding of participation and consultation practice.

This paper is part of a series of case studies from six countries which test the hypothesis that the active participation of crisis-affected populations in measures to assist them is both feasible and beneficial. It also provides the empirical (field) data for this global project, seeking to reveal the mechanisms through which the voices of affected populations can be enhanced within the international humanitarian system, while remaining alert to the difficulties of engaging them in such processes in emergency contexts.

The trend towards increased participation is underpinned by growing recognition that beneficiaries are not just passive recipients of humanitarian aid, but that they are also social actors with insights on their situation, and that they have competencies, energy and ideas that can be harnessed to improve their circumstances. As the primary stakeholders in humanitarian action, affected populations are thus situated at the centre of this Global Study, which attempts to understand how they perceive and interact with myriad governmental, international, national, local and other institutions that manage, regulate, influence and control the delivery of humanitarian assistance and protection. Wherever possible, successful participatory mechanisms and initiatives are identified and promoted.

In addition to the six country monographs and a *Handbook for Practitioners*, the wider issues revealed by the case studies, such as the inherent challenges and contradictions that exist in relation to attempts to instigate participative approaches, are discussed in an *Overview Book*, in which the results of the theoretical analysis and field research are compiled.

The six case studies have sought to capture the broad range of characteristics associated with emergency contexts[1].

The following monograph is organised in four chapters. The first presents the methodology employed in Bukavu, Goma and Uvira. The second provides a brief description of the geographical and social context of the eastern DRC, along with a historical assessment of the humanitarian situation. The third presents the study's findings. Chapter four analyses

them, with a focus on the factors that affect consultation with affected populations and their participation in humanitarian action.

1.2 THE EASTERN DRC CASE STUDY

1.2.1 Why eastern DRC?

Eastern DRC was selected as a case study in order to gain clearer understanding of participation during a complex emergency, which is characterised by its strong ethnic component, a collapsed state, the presence of a large number of international actors with diverse backgrounds, and the emergence of numerous local aid organisations.

A complex emergency with a strong ethnic component Eastern DRC is composed of the eastern Kasai provinces, Katanga, Kivu and Maniema, and is historically a conflict zone. The region is currently embroiled in a complex emergency, the causes of which are numerous, including a history of structural poverty and violent internal, international and inter-ethnic disputes, compounded by a series of natural disasters. Furthermore, in 1994, eastern DRC suffered the effects of the crisis in the Great Lakes, as numerous Hutu refugees fled to the area to escape the genocide in Rwanda.

A collapsed state Eastern DRC is far removed from the administrative centre (Kinshasa is more than 1,000 kilometres away and access is extremely limited). In 1996, an armed group, the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD), took advantage of this and invaded the Kivu provinces. It progressively took control of the main towns and production sites, before advancing on the remaining eastern provinces.

Presence of numerous international actors and the emergence of local organisations Since the Great Lakes crisis of 1994, the international

community has been very active in the Kivu provinces. Both the number of actors and the amount of funds allocated to emergency relief, protection and rehabilitation have increased greatly, generating, in turn, a hitherto unprecedented boom in local organisations (NGOs and others).

During 2002, eastern DRC also suffered its fair share of natural disasters, including the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano (Goma) on 17 January and the Mount Mitumba landslides (Uvira) on 6 February. These events resulted in the deployment of more humanitarian actors and the provision of additional funding.

1.2.2 Selection of the study sites

Eastern DRC is a good environment in which to study the participation of affected populations in humanitarian action. Three study sites (Bukavu, Goma and Uvira) were selected on the basis of the following criteria.

- the presence of a large number of Congolese and international humanitarian actors;
- these areas were affected by the mass displacement of Rwandan people in 1993–94
- towns and surrounding areas affected by the crisis; and
- ethnic diversity.

When these study sites were chosen, the team initially focused on understanding participation during a complex emergency. However, the following recent events have been incorporated into the analysis:

- the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano on 17 January 2002, resulting in mass internal displacement and migration to Rwanda;
- the Mount Mitumba landslides and flooding in Uvira on the night of 6 February 2002, forcing a large proportion of Uvira's population to flee to the outskirts; and
- strong winds in the area surrounding Bukavu, causing damage to many homes (2002).

Bukavu and the surrounding area

- The **capital of South Kivu**; located south of Lake Kivu.
- **Borders with Burundi and Rwanda**; hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees fled there in 1994.
- **Predominantly urban population**, which has increased dramatically due to the arrival of IDPs and refugees fleeing violence in rural zones.
- Large number of **international NGOs** based on the town's outskirts, as well as UN agencies and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
- There has been a surge in the number of **local organisations** (CBOs, NGOs and committees) and denominational organisation.
- **Decaying urban infrastructure**, dating from the colonial period.
- **Some domestic agricultural production** in surrounding area and even in the town centre.

Goma and the surrounding area

- **Rebel administration base**; is situated at the foot of Nyiragongo volcano, north of Lake Kivu.
- A **border with Rwanda**; hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees fled there between 1994 and 1996.
- Large number of **international NGOs and UN agencies** (mainly headquarters or logistics centres; few operational structures), as well as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, are present.
- **Frequent political / ethnic clashes** in the Masisi region, north of Goma.
- **Eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano** on 17 January 2002 caused the displacement of a large number of Goma's inhabitants.

Uvira and the surrounding area

- **Located in South Kivu**, on the shore of Lake Tanganyika; has strong trade links with Tanzania.
- A **border with Burundi**: regularly affected by the crisis in that country; it received large numbers of refugees between 1993 and 1994.
- **Frequent clashes** between the RCD and other rebel groups.
- Shortly after the **eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano**, severe flooding generated more disaster victims.

The region presents many elements to study due to the diversity of the situation, as well as to the variety of humanitarian programmes in existence (health, shelter, nutrition, food aid, agricultural rehabilitation, water and sanitation, and protection) and to the numerous international humanitarian organisations involved (from Belgium, Britain, France and the United States, for instance). And all of this in a territory where insecurity and limited access prevail, the state has collapsed, the economy is paralysed and regional interference runs high.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 Theoretical research framework

Definition of 'participation' In this case study, participation is understood as all of the ways in which affected populations are involved in humanitarian action.

Degrees of participation

7 **Local initiative**
Affected populations ask to participate and take the initiative. Humanitarian actors extend their support.

6 **Interactive participation**
Affected populations are involved in project assessment and decision making.

5 **Functional participation**
Affected populations have a role to play in a particular activity.

4 **Materially motivated participation**
Affected populations are involved in exchange for money or payment in kind.

3 **Consultation**
Affected populations offer their opinion, but they are not involved in decision-making.

2 **Information transfer**
Affected populations supply information but do not make decisions.

1 **Passive participation**
Affected populations are informed but not heard.

Types of programmes This research will focus on humanitarian projects, excluding development programmes, such as the provision of micro-credit.

Programme analysis criteria This study takes the five project-cycle phases as its basis: needs assessment, project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Beneficiary targeting, which belongs to the assessment phase, is examined separately, given its special features.

Measuring participation In order to identify different degrees of participation, this case study adopts the following scale proposed by the Groupe de Recherche et d'Échanges Technologiques (GRET).[2]

1.3.2 Hypothesis and research questions

The basic hypothesis of this Global Study is that the participation of the affected population in humanitarian action is both feasible and beneficial in terms of project outcomes and long term social impact. To validate this premise, it is necessary to observe the forms of participation that exist and to analyse their impact on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability/connectedness of humanitarian programmes.

In addition, the team drew up a series of research questions.

Participation: who?

- **Individual beneficiaries** Do an individual's characteristics – gender, age and social identity – impact on the process of participation?
- **Local institutions** What kind of institution participates in humanitarian action: traditional entities, post-socialist organisations, institutions created following structural adjustment or associations created to take advantage of the influx of humanitarian aid?

Participation: why?

- Is it simply to **facilitate the work** of NGOs (needs assessment and beneficiary selection) or to decrease project costs through beneficiary inputs or the involvement of cheaper local agents?
- Is it to **reduce the levels of insecurity** to which expatriates are exposed as a result of implementation through local partners?
- Is it to **respond to donor requirements** - enabling a paragraph on participation to be included in the project proposal?
- Does it result from consideration that the process of consultation and participation can **radically improve the short- and medium-term impact** of humanitarian action?
- Is it to **react to the specific demands** of the population?
- Is it to **have a long-term impact** on the vulnerability and capacity of affected populations?

Participation: how?

- **Respect for humanitarian values** Should the programme's efficiency be given priority over the principles of independence and impartiality?
- **What should be done if participation contributes to discrimination against certain groups?** How can we make sure that participation does not help particular groups to manipulate aid for their own benefit? How can conventional processes be reconciled with group survival strategies?
- **Security** How can we ensure that participants in the aid process are not subject to human-rights violations, segregation or another form of aggression as a consequence of their involvement?

Questions related specifically to eastern DRC

- How do international actors perceive Congolese humanitarian actors (such as CBOs, NGOs and committees)?
- Is participation feasible throughout all phases of the emergency and project cycle?
- In Bukavu, for instance, where Congolese NGOs are numerous,

how has civil society established itself, given the absence of state infrastructure and the presence of international aid? How have these relationships become institutionalised?

- In Goma, for example, following the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano, how have humanitarian actors organised themselves? In what way does this limit or encourage participation?
- How do participatory processes evolve in relation to the ever-changing crisis (complex emergency or natural disaster)?

1.3.3 Research methods

The research team

The team that carried out this study is multicultural (British, Canadian of Burundi origin, Congolese, French, North American, South American and West African) and multidisciplinary (with backgrounds in anthropology, management and rural economy, *inter alia*). The different points of view that stem from such diversity, combined with the active involvement of Congolese researchers, proved to be important assets when applying triangulation techniques to observations. Furthermore, the team's presence in the field over three distinct phases of the emergency enabled it to produce a dynamic analysis of the situation and to appreciate subtleties emanating from changing timeframes and project-cycle phases.

Study stages

Preparatory field trip (1–18 April 2002) The objective was to ascertain the terms of reference and to formulate the hypothesis and research questions. During this phase, study sites were selected and the Global Study and ALNAP were presented to the actors in the field. Various economic and security constraints were also identified.

First research field trip (August–September 2002) A team of four international and Congolese researchers visited numerous humanitarian programmes in the three study sites (Bukavu, Goma and Uvira) and met with members of the affected populations.

Second research field trip (11 April–3 May 2003) A team of three researchers conducted a second field trip in order to investigate certain issues further. The aim was to pinpoint specific participatory tools and to study examples of agricultural rehabilitation, water and sanitation, and shelter programmes.

The analysis is based on the findings of these field trips and on secondary sources of information. The team synthesised the data using triangulation techniques. Additionally, a seminar, which was held in Bukavu during the first field trip and which brought together various actors (including Congolese and international NGOs, coordination groups, CBOs and UN agencies), enabled the team to validate the initial results. Following this the research team drafted a provisional document, which was reviewed by the Global Study Steering Group.

Collecting information

Key documents were consulted in order to assess the context and to examine the issue of participation. However, the bulk of the study content derives from dialogue with a wide range of correspondents: local authorities; international humanitarian actors; local NGOs; disaster-victim groups; and individual members of the affected populations.

The following categories of affected populations were consulted for each context, and the same ones were employed when analysing participatory techniques:

- non-displaced communities;
- IDPs residing in camps;
- IDPs living with family or friends;
- IDPs who have returned to their original communities (returnees); and
- IDPs who have settled in a new region.

1.4 CONSTRAINTS

The following elements imposed certain constraints on the research.

Security Security conditions in eastern DRC were highly unstable. Care was taken when organising visits not to jeopardise the security of the interviewees. The research team carried out its work in the presence of a member of a Congolese or international organisation who knew the area well. However, this limited the team's movements and its access to the field. During the second field trip, furthermore, the team had to interrupt its investigation due to violent clashes in Uvira.

Access to the population The three study sites included the towns and the surrounding rural areas. The condition of the roads and the presence of armed groups and frequent checkpoints added considerable time and cost to a journey. Furthermore, setting up meetings is often a timely process, as means of communicating with the communities in question are often cumbersome for reasons given below.

Diversity of languages Several *'lingua franca'* are spoken throughout eastern DRC. Populations speaking various local languages, including Lingalo, Rwandan and Swahili, share the same territory; aid workers thus have to build 'linguistic bridges'. The team carried out interviews in English and French with international humanitarian actors, whereas interviews with affected populations and local bodies were conducted in Swahili, thanks to the presence of the Congolese researchers. When necessary, a representative of the population translated from Swahili into the local dialect.

Time factor One of the team's objectives was to observe different forms of community participation and to understand how participatory tools employed by aid actors are perceived. However, the time factor impacted significantly on the team's ability to build relationships with affected populations. Communities in distress are often isolated. Nonetheless, the

team ensured that meetings were organised well in advance and that it visited these communities several times.

Population fatigue During the interviews, it became obvious that a number of humanitarian actors, with or without project proposals, had already visited the communities. It would appear that some had even featured in documentaries. The research team had to cope with situations where community leaders were tired of being interviewed, photographed, measured and weighed; the community had lost confidence in the foreigners who come to see them.

The dynamics of the situation The complexity of the emergency and the rapid development of events meant that the field trips took place after relief activity had peaked. In many cases, therefore, coordinators who were present during the emergency phase had already left and those who remained (notably internationals) had arrived once the programmes were underway. As a result, the team relied on information from Congolese personnel who were on hand during the emergency phase, and on data from previous research exercises.

To overcome these constraints, the team held interviews with international and local actors and visited various operations with the support of Congolese organisations. This approach enabled it to access both remote communities and affected populations in the towns. Also, the team arranged meetings with families in their homes and visited programmes.

2 CONTEXT

2.1 COUNTRY PROFILE

2.1.1 Eastern DRC, trapped between wealth and conflict

The DRC is a vast territory (2,345,410 square kilometres) with a relatively small population (50 million). Situated at the heart of central Africa, it shares borders with Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and the Atlantic Ocean. For a long time, the DRC, formerly the Belgian Congo, was considered a potential great power in Africa. At the end of the 1980s, however, the country plunged into an economic and political crisis under Mobutu's dictatorship. This decline rekindled secessionist tendencies, which initially emerged immediately after independence in 1960, and now threaten the unity of the state.

An 'ecological scandal'

The topography of eastern DRC comprises rift valleys, lakes (Édouard, Kivu and Tanganyika), towering granite peaks (Ruwenzori, 5,119 metres), and volcanic formations, such as Nyiragongo, which lies at the centre of the Virunga mountain range. Dubbed the 'ecological scandal', eastern DRC boasts immense mineral wealth; its economy is based mainly on

mining. Prior to 1991, the main products were cobalt, copper, diamonds, gold and petrol, which various armies and rebel movements exploited to fund their war effort. Recently, coltan extraction has become an important activity.

Sharing the same crisis: one nationality, several identities

Myriad ethnic groups live in eastern DRC (including Babembe, Bafurero, Balega, Banyanga Banandé, Banyarwanda, Barundi and Bashi). However, these heterogeneous communities share the same language, Swahili, which originates in eastern Africa and has Arab and Bantu roots.

Eastern DRC has suffered a steady decline in terms of its political situation and its economy since the 1950s. This has had a profound impact on Congolese society. The gulf between the wealthy minority, closely linked to those in power, and the vast majority of the population that struggles for survival on a daily basis, has widened. Official economic sectors have collapsed, logistic and communication networks are strained, and the region has become separated from the centre. All of these factors have placed even greater emphasis on 'informal activities'.

Agriculture constitutes the region's main source of income: primary subsistence crops are maize, manioc and groundnut. Large expanses of the region are made up of palm-oil plantations and the high plateaux are ideal for livestock. Agricultural production is destined predominantly for domestic consumption. Other sources of livelihood are connected to mining activities.

2.2 THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS, PAST AND PRESENT

2.2.1 Conflict in eastern DRC

Most of the conflicts in the DRC can be traced to the eastern provinces. Conflicts between different ethnic groups in the early 1990s prompted a series of humanitarian programmes, notably those of the International

Box 1 Eastern DRC: a history of confrontation

The DRC is a vast country with significant economic potential, yet it is caught up in the longest war that Africa has known. Several neighbouring countries are involved for various reasons, such as border and regional security, control of resources and commercial networks, and even ethnic cleansing. This international conflict is compounded by internal disputes between the Kinshasa-based government, backed by the Congolese Armed Forces (FAC) and the rebel RCD government in Goma. Furthermore, inter-ethnic tensions are running high in this region, which has a history of extremely violent inter-ethnic relations.

Since October 1996, eastern DRC has been under the control of the RCD's armed forces. The Rwandan government allegedly backs the RCD. The other rebel group present in the area is the Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC), headed by Jean-Pierre Bemba. The MLC is based in Gbadolite, Mobutu's birthplace, and is allegedly supported by Uganda.

In an attempt to resolve the conflict, six countries (DRC, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Angola) signed the Lusaka Peace Agreement in July 1999. Consequently, in 2001, the UN deployed a peacekeeping force: La Mission des Nations Unies pour la République Démocratique du Congo (MONUC) (United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo). This process was greatly facilitated by the arrival of Joseph Désiré Kabila, who became president following the assassination of his father, Laurent Désiré Kabila, in January 2001.

Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). In April 1994, over a period of just four days, hundreds of thousands of Rwandans fled the campaign of genocide, led by their leaders and the army. Some one million Rwandan refugees remained in eastern DRC between July 1994 and November 1996.

Subsequently, eastern DRC has been embroiled in violence. It is marked by ethnic demands, stemming from differences that existed before colonisation, that were 'neutralised' during the colonial period, and by economic interests, particularly mega development projects and the exploitation of rich mineral deposits. These two factors form the basis of a complex conflict that is both inter-ethnic and international in scope.

The conflict has affected all sectors of the Congolese population.

- In pastoral areas, pillaging has severely depleted livestock, which often represent the villagers' only source of income. The level of theft is high, and crops, herds of animals and houses are frequently set on fire. In certain villages, people have decided to raise small animals (guinea pigs, rabbits and poultry), which is cheaper and less likely to attract the attention of raiders.
- Married women and young girls are often the victims of individual and group rape. They are rejected by the community and are no longer eligible for marriage.
- Traditional leaders have fled, weakening the system of social regulation.
- Rates of school attendance are low for all ages, particularly for girls. In certain rural areas, boys and, especially, girls no longer dare to attend school, as warlords carry out regular raids in order to recruit boys as young soldiers and girls for other tasks.
- Young people, unable to find work in the villages, move to urban areas in search of employment. They join armed groups, seeing them as a source of livelihood.
- The US dollar is the local currency (the Congolese franc is severely devalued) and most banks no longer operate. The

population thus has no secure means of holding savings; cash is hidden in houses.

- Communication networks are no longer operating and many inhabitants rely on the infrastructure of neighbouring countries (Burundi and Rwanda).

In eastern DRC, the state is absent and populations have been left to fend for themselves. Since the economy has collapsed and work is practically non-existent, humanitarian actors are often perceived as a source of employment.

Conflict in spring 2003

This was an eventful period for the Great Lakes region. There were elections in Burundi, floods in Kenya, the start of another reconciliation phase in Rwanda, and laborious peace negotiations in the DRC. The province of Uvira in Kivu was recently the target of attacks by several rebel militias, which clashed with RCD troops. Bunia was also the scene of violent confrontations between different armed groups; an estimated 1,000 people were killed. As a result, it was decided to deploy a contingent of French troops. For aid workers, access to victims is limited and sometimes impossible. The number of civilian fatalities is on the rise.

Despite frequent clashes in certain parts of eastern DRC, a ceasefire agreed in December 2002 by the Kabila government and the main rebel factions continues to remain in effect.

Following the signing of a peace agreement on 17 July 2003, four new vice-presidents took the oath of office: the leaders of the two main Congolese rebel groups, Jean-Pierre Bemba (Mouvement du Libération du Congo) and Azarias Ruberwa (RCD); Z'ahidi Ngoma, representing the Congolese opposition; and Abdoulaye Yerodia, an ally of Kabila.

The new transitional government met for the first time on 19 July 2003 and drew up a timetable for the holding of free and fair elections before the end of 2004.

2.2.2 Eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano: a natural disaster in a conflict zone

Goma in North Kivu is the main base of the rebel government. The town, which spreads out at the foot of the Nyiragongo volcano, was founded in 1900. Subsequently, the size of Goma's population increased significantly; the town benefited from a spurt in commercial activity (its position on the shore of Lake Kivu places it at a commercial intersection) and in agricultural production (both traditional and due to the introduction of coffee plantations). In recent times, the conflict has severely impacted on the local economy. The presence of one million Rwandan refugees between 1994 and 1996 has had severe environmental consequences.

The Nyiragongo volcano erupted on 17 January 2002, destroying one-third of the town.

The humanitarian programmes were extremely varied, including: road reconstruction, food distribution, water and sanitation, healthcare, and the reconstruction of schools. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was responsible for the synchronisation of humanitarian aid (sector-related commissions were set up), notably assistance provided by international organisations. Denominational organisations and Congolese NGOs launched local initiatives.

2.2.3 Bukavu and surrounding area

The conflict has had a serious impact on Bukavu, the administrative centre of South Kivu. The invasion of RCD troops in 1996 and the ensuing violence prompted mass rural displacement. Bukavu's population has swelled: from 10,000 inhabitants in 1900, 350,000 in 1995, to 800,000 in 2003. Consequently, increasingly rural characteristics have been introduced in an otherwise urban setting (the growing of subsistence crops in the town centre, for example).

Bukavu was formerly an important urban centre, with roads connecting it to the south (Uvira), west (Mwenga, Shabunda and Walungu), north

Box 2 Eruption of Nyiragongo volcano

On 17 January 2002, between 09:00 and 10:00, the Nyiragongo volcano erupted. Lava flowed in three directions: the first stream cut off the road between Goma and Rutshuru and stretched towards the Rwandan border; the second crossed the 'Parc des Volcans' near Mugunga; and the third flowed towards Goma. Fortunately, it stopped at Kanyarutshina, six-to-seven kilometres short of Goma.

The general opinion was that Goma's 300,000 inhabitants were not in danger. However, between 17:00 and 18:00, Nyiragongo erupted again, this time close to Goma airport (one-to-two kilometres from the town centre). The lava flowed quickly towards the town, destroying the neighbourhoods of 'l'Office', Majengo and Virunga, as well as the town centre. Several fires started and a lava flow cut the town in half.

The following day, the volcano was still generating earth tremors and discharging lava. The inhabitants of the razed neighbourhoods and a sizeable proportion of people in adjacent areas were evacuated.

A lot of refugees moved to Gisenyi and Nyundo (12kms from Gisenyi) in Rwanda. The towns nearest to Goma took in large numbers of IDPs. The eruption ceased on 21 January and the tremors subsided. The displaced began to return to Goma. The authorities' attempt to evacuate refugees from Gisenyi and to direct them towards camps at Mudende and Nkamira had the negative effect of accelerating the process of return.

International organisations present in the field immediately distributed emergency relief and other international delegations began to arrive on the scene. The Régie de Distribution d'Eau (REGIDESO) and the Société Nationale d'Electricité (SNEL) (the local water authority and the national electricity board), in coordination with the European Community Humanitarian Organisation (ECHO), German Agro Action (GAA), the ICRC and Oxfam, carried out swift and efficient repairs to electricity, water and road infrastructure. Within 24 hours, electricity and water supplies had been reconnected, access routes were open again, and initial aid had been distributed.

(Kalehe, Katana and all of North Kivu), northwest (Walikale) and east (towards Rwanda). Of these routes, only the link between Bukavu and Rwanda remains viable. The deterioration and, in some cases, the destruction of the road network has cut Bukavu off from its domestic commercial partners (in regard to manufactured goods and agricultural produce) and has considerably reduced its strategic commercial advantage.

Consequently, the predominantly urban population can no longer rely on goods from the rest of the DRC. Instead, it has had to seek out new sources of livelihood – while, simultaneously, large numbers of IDPs have had to be assimilated. Historically, Bukavu has always been fertile ground for community-based initiatives. It is of no surprise, therefore, that it is host to the greatest number of Congolese NGOs and other social organisations, notably in the development sector.

2.2.4 Uvira: flooding in a region of conflict and violence

Uvira – bordering Burundi – and the surrounding area have suffered frequent clashes between the different armed groups (the RCD, the FAC and certain armed militias). The instability is almost certainly due to the town's proximity to neighbouring countries and its strategic commercial position on Lake Tanganyika. On the night of 6 February 2002, heavy rains fell on Mount Mitumba, a chain of mountains that rise up behind the town. The lay of the land was such that the rains set off an avalanche, forcing a large proportion of the population to flee to the outskirts of town. Among those affected were families that had already been displaced by the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano.

A few international organisations helped to evacuate the victims, and supplied drinking water and medicine. Local organisations, though, provided by far the greatest amount of emergency aid.

2.3 AID ACTORS IN EASTERN DRC

The research team met with a variety of humanitarian aid workers, including members of international and Congolese organisations and representatives of the local population. Documents and the accounts of eyewitnesses were also consulted. This approach enabled the team to get a sense of aid actors present in the field.

Box 3 Some of the international aid actors present in eastern DRC

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

- **Congolese Red Cross**
- **ICRC** International Committee of the Red Cross

United Nations agencies

- **FAO** Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
- **MONUC** La Mission des Nations Unies pour la République Démocratique du Congo
- **OCHA** United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- **UNICEF** United Nations Children's Fund
- **UNHCR** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- **WFP** World Food Programme

Donors

- **DGDC** Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (Belgium)
- **ECHO** European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office
- **Sida** Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
- **USAID** United States Agency for International Development

International NGOs

- **ACF** Action Contre la Faim ((Action Against Hunger))
- **ATLAS Logistique**
- **CARE International**
- **CARITAS Internationalis**
- **CECI** Le Centre Canadien d'Etude et de Coopération Internationale (Canadian Centre for International Studies and Cooperation)
- **Christian Aid**
- **FHI** Food for the Hungry International
- **GAA** German Agro Action
- **GTZ** Deutsche Gesellschatft für Tecnische Zusammenarbeit
- **IRC** International Rescue Committee
- **JRS** Jesuit Refugees Service
- **MDM-B** Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World) Belgium
- **MERLIN** Medical Emergency Relief International
- **MSF-H** Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) Holland
- **Oxfam GB** Oxfam Great Britain
- **SCF** Save the Children Fund
- **World Vision**

2.3.1 International aid actors

Due to the eventful history of eastern DRC, various international actors are currently present in the area, including UN agencies, international NGOs, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and donors.

2.3.2 Congolese aid actors

There are also numerous Congolese actors in eastern DRC, such as local NGOs, networks of denominational groups, NGO platforms[3], coordination groups and think-tanks, and local administration structures.

Local NGOs

Civil society, which includes various local development organisations, as well as denominational groups, plays an important role in Congolese community life. Below are a few of the local NGOs in the DRC:

- **ASRAMES** Association Régionale d'Approvisionnements en Médicaments Essentiels (Regional Association for the Supply of Essential Medicine). Involved in distributing pharmaceutical products;
- **PIDP-Kivu** Programme d'Intégration et de Développement du Peuple Pygmée au Kivu (Integration and Development Programme for the Pygmy People of the Kivu); and
- **VAS** Volontaires Autochtones Solidaires (United Native Volunteers). Based in the Kalongue region.

Box 4 Integration and development programme for the Pygmy people of the Kivu

The PIDP-Kivu is a human-rights and development NGO that aims to 'integrate the Pygmy people of the Kivu into a socio-economic development process'. It brings together committees made up of disaster victims, partner groups, and supervisors, advisors and representatives of Pygmy women's groups.[4]

Networks of denominational groups

Several denominational networks can be identified in the DRC, each with its own *modus operandi*, some more hierarchical than others. Some were founded a long time ago as part of the main Catholic and Reformed Churches; others are more recent, linked to Baptist Churches. Their main characteristic is their proximity to affected populations. Among the numerous denominational actors are the:

- emergency services of the Protestant Church;
- CARITAS-DRC; and
- Dioceses and parishes.

Platforms, coordination groups and think-tanks

Congolese NGOs coordinate their work via platforms so as to pool sector-specific information. The following networks were identified:

- **BCSC** Bureau de Coordination de la Société Civile (Office for the Coordination of Civil Society);
- **ESPD** Enfants en Situation Particulièrement Difficile (Network for Children at Risk);
- **REPAD** Réseau pour la Protection des Enfants des Zones Rurales (Network for the Protection of Children in Rural Areas);
- **PLALUSI** Plate-forme pour la Lutte contre le SIDA (Platform for the Fight Against AIDS);
- **COPARE** Commission pour la Paix et la Réconciliation (Commission for Peace and Reconciliation);
- **CRONGD** Coordination Régionale des ONG de Développement (Regional Coordination for Development of NGOs); and
- **Plate-forme Diobass au Kivu** (Diobass Platform in Kivu).

Local administration

Since 1996, RCD representatives have run the local administration. Operational networks, such as those responsible for healthcare (Comité de

Box 5 Office for the coordination of civil society

The first non-denominational development NGOs in the DRC were founded in the early 1980s, followed by the first regional federation of local NGOs in South Kivu in the early 1990s. A few years later, regional federations grouped together to form the National Council of NGOs in Zaire, a project piloted by civil-society actors in South Kivu.

In Goma, civil society set up a platform that brought together ten social organisations, known as the Bureau de Coordination de la Société Civile. The BCSC organises activities of general interest and its mandate exceeds the capacity of each separate structure. The four principal activities of the BCSC are:

- to act as spokesperson for all of its members;
- to campaign on behalf of its members;
- to coordinate the activities of its members; and
- to lobby the international community.

Santé (COSA)) and for education and agriculture (popularisers[10]), have been significantly weakened due to lack of resources.

2.3.3 Affected populations

Local populations are organised around a traditional system of leadership, which was largely restructured during the colonial period. Its main pillars comprise the *Mwami*, the traditional leader, and the Village Council, comprising heads of households or lineage. Social organisation varies enormously, depending on ethnic origin and the population in question.

Affected populations may or may not be organised. For instance, while CBOs and local committees represent individuals and families, these structures are weakened by, or even vanish as a result of, displacement and crisis.

Community-based organisations

Following the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano, disaster-victim groups were set up, and subsequently played a role in beneficiary participation (see the results section of this study). Among the various groups mentioned are:

- **CCN 2002** Cellule de Crise Nyiragongo 2002 (Crisis Committee 'Nyiragongo 2002')
- **SOSINYI** Solidarité des Sinistrés de Nyiragongo (Solidarity for the Victims of the Nyiragongo Volcano).

Box 6 Creation of SOSINYI

This association was created following the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano on 17 January 2002. Large numbers of Goma's inhabitants fled towards Rwanda; another group moved to Sake (DRC). The majority of the population that crossed the border began to return to Goma on 21 January 2002.

According to SOSINYI representatives, the immediate aid initiatives were disorganised. It was this lack of coordination, especially in regard to the identification of victims and the process of aid distribution, that prompted the population to organise itself. It required no more than three community meetings to establish a coordination network, to identify its mission and to garner the legitimacy necessary to represent the victims.

3 FINDINGS

The following chapters offer an appraisal of participatory practices in eastern DRC. First, it was necessary to determine what participation means to aid actors and to affected populations, and to understand how this perception impacts on relations between them. Second, participatory techniques, approaches and practices were studied according to the type of crisis. Third, participatory tools were identified in each phase of the project cycle. This provides a foundation for discussion of how applicable participatory techniques are in a particular context.

3.1 DEFINITIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF PARTICIPATION

Before describing what aid workers perceive as participation, the term needs to be placed in context. Although the word itself is not often used in eastern DRC, all actors refer to various means of achieving participation. **In eastern DRC, participation is an attitude rather than a concept.** This observation has an important bearing on the participation of affected populations.

Definitions of participation vary between aid structures. On the one hand, **international aid actors** in the field specialise in emergency relief, and are accustomed to rapid response. They have strong, close-knit teams and enjoy a high level of technical expertise. On the other hand, most

Congolese aid actors work in the areas of rehabilitation and development, especially in agriculture and education.

The arrival of Rwandan refugees in the area in 1994 prompted an influx of international actors and humanitarian programmes. Congolese aid actors did not have the necessary expertise in emergency relief. Given that the bulk of funding for emergency programmes was issued to international actors, almost exclusively, they implemented emergency-relief programmes. This marked the beginning of a **divide between Congolese and international aid actors**.

What impact does this division have on the participation of affected populations? How do affected populations perceive the participatory techniques of Congolese and international aid actors?

Some of the following views are precise transcriptions of what people understand by participation. Definitions diverge dramatically according to whether the person is an international or Congolese actor or a member of the affected population. Obviously, though, none of these definitions can be dismissed as incorrect. However, they all try to integrate participation into operational processes.

3.1.1 International aid actors

At a purely conceptual level, the analysis reveals that international actors share a common outlook on participation. Nevertheless, at the implementation level, participatory techniques differ according to the aid actor.

A theoretical outlook …

The importance of participation

To varying degrees, participation has become an important instrument for the international community. The mandates, charters and approaches of humanitarian actors often make reference to participation.

Box 7 Definitions of participation

According to the definition of the **GTZ,**[6] participation is a means of 'helping beneficiaries to look after themselves'. The **Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)** associates participation with equity and democracy. It is also seen by Sida as a means of 'maximising efficiency'.

For certain international aid actors, particularly UN agencies and emergency-relief NGOs, participation is perceived as a theoretical notion. Several actors have at their disposition techniques that allude to participation throughout the project cycle (such as participatory needs assessment and participatory monitoring and evaluation methods). International aid actors, though, emphasise the difference between theory and practice. In reality, they say that participation is severely compromised by constraints in the field, notably lack of time (the urgent nature of the population's needs and the imperative of presenting a project to donors, for example) and by limitations in terms of access (high levels of insecurity and remote or constantly moving populations, for instance).

… Various characteristics

Participatory operational methods vary with each actor

A UN agencies and offices

In eastern DRC, for UN agencies and offices (OCHA, WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF), participation implies coordinating humanitarian action. For **OCHA**, for example, participation is **coordinating aid during the emergency, recruiting local staff** for positions of responsibility in the organisation, and creating a **humanitarian 'advocacy' department** and opening **regional offices, close to populations in distress**.

Organisations like **WFP**, **UNICEF** and **UNHCR** offer a more **consultational interpretation** of participation – that is, requesting information from affected populations. Similarly, for these organisations, participation implies **evaluating programmes that directly involve**

affected populations and certain Congolese organisations. Thus, participation is seen as a **means of 'auditing' humanitarian action in order to assess the quality of the programme**.

UN bodies attach increasing importance to collaborating with local and international organisations, maybe as a result of their experience of implementing emergency relief in Goma. 'Care and attention must be taken to ensure efficient collaboration between actors … the disaster victims must not be excluded from collaboration efforts … They must be involved in the implementation and fine-tuning of humanitarian action, as well as assessing and monitoring the work carried out in order to avoid repeating mistakes and to maximise results'.[7]

B Donor agencies

For donor agencies interviewed in eastern DRC, during an emergency phase, participation is often interpreted as coordination between aid actors in the field (assisted by sector-related commissions (established by OCHA) for instance) and donors, in order to develop harmonised strategies and to

Box 8 Participation as defined by international actors

In general, participation is
- a theoretical notion;
- a tool to improve quality and to gain access to populations; and
- an ensemble of participatory techniques and methods that should be used throughout the project cycle.

For **UN agencies**, participation is
- coordination between humanitarian actors;
- recruiting local personnel;
- a means of advocacy; and
- consultation.

For **'non-operational' NGOs**, participation is
- using tools like surveys.

For **'operational' NGOs**, participation is
- a large percentage of personnel being Congolese;
- a long-term presence in the field, and thus knowledge of the context;
- depending on local networks or setting up new local networks; and
- capacity building.

ensure that state organisations can maintain relief efforts. Donors see participation as a **means of 'social control'**, since the population is encouraged to react to the choices of humanitarian actors. **Participation is considered to be an efficient investment**, as it enables funds to be released opportunely for priority emergencies.

C International NGOs

On the one hand, the larger emergency-relief organisations, with extensive logistics networks, the ability to mobilise significant amounts of funding and specialised personnel, and which operate very specific programmes in the field, often have **poor participatory approaches and long-term vision**. The most common techniques employed by these structures involve consulting affected populations (via surveys) and informing them of humanitarian programmes. Some Congolese aid actors refer to them as 'non-operational' NGOs.

On the other hand, some international aid organisations have, over time, established social links with affected populations and organisations. This type of structure associates 'participation' with the **number of local personnel** recruited, how effectively the **popularisers' network** is incorporated into programmes, **number of years in the field** and the **proportion of expatriate coordinators** who are settling in the region. Some Congolese aid actors refer to them as 'operational' NGOs.

In the majority of cases, these operational organisations have developed strong partnerships with Congolese aid actors, employ reliable staff and have adopted **capacity-building strategies from the development sector**. Organisations were set up in the area to carry out development programmes, but they have since been obliged to implement emergency relief. These organisations often have difficulty calling themselves 'international' actors (foreign), as their staff is mostly Congolese. Examples include CARITAS-DRC and FHI-DRC.

During a workshop to analyse humanitarian aid, a group of Congolese NGOs discussed definitions of 'operational' and 'non-operational' international actors. The distinction, which is intentionally provocative,

reveals the gulf between international and Congolese aid actors in eastern DRC. As noted above, participation is a key factor in this definition.

3.1.2 Congolese aid actors and the public sector

A Congolese NGOs

For Congolese NGOs, **participation means being involved in humanitarian action**. They feel removed from emergency strategies, which, in their view, have been 'monopolised' by international aid actors. They believe that the latter have greater (if not complete) access to funding that is released for the crisis, and that Congolese structures are obliged to work with international aid actors due to limited resources.

Certain local structures were disappointed by previous attempts to cooperate with international aid actors. **They feel that they were 'used' for particular tasks** (such as supplying information or conducting activities that were compromised by poor security conditions and restricted access) **without participating in others** (such as defining funding priorities, general management and programme design).

Congolese NGOs, often development-based ones, emphasise that it is of fundamental importance to involve affected populations in humanitarian action. They see participation as setting up committees, teams to carry out participatory needs assessments, participatory planning, and involving popularisers and animators' networks in the implementation phase. In this regard, their standpoint is similar to that of the 'operational' international NGOs.

Can the presence of local personnel in international aid organisations be considered a form of participation?

During the research, it became obvious that many Congolese hold functional posts and positions of responsibility in international aid organisations. Some international aid organisations consider this to be a form of participation, since Congolese staff know Congolese aid actors and understand the context and the culture, and are thus able to point out

certain needs that would otherwise go unnoticed. This interpretation of participation is unfounded. At best, the presence of national staff in international organisations represents a way of keeping a record of programmes that have been established, and could facilitate continuity, counterbalancing the high turnover of international staff.

It appears, however, that international NGOs prefer to recruit individuals (often from Congolese organisations) rather than to contract Congolese aid organisations. Local organisations are weakened as a result; sometimes they cease to exist. This is the complete opposite to what a participatory approach is supposed to achieve.

B Denominational organisations

Denominational organisations have developed participatory strategies and play a fundamental role in administering social services – education and healthcare – long since abandoned by the state administration.

They are assured a role on village committees and communicate directly with traditional authorities and other local entities. In certain cases, denominational organisations have a humanitarian-aid department, running operations in a similar way to Congolese aid actors. For these actors, participation is the representation of affected populations through local committees.

Actions are set up with and by local committees, or by specific committees created for this purpose. The population's opinion is, therefore, represented in the action. These organisations (denominational structures and local committees) have developed strong relationships and well-established networks.

Denominational organisations, such as CARITAS-DRC, appear to place fewer demands on donors than non-denominational Congolese NGOs. This may be due to the fact that they have 'captive donors' that finance programmes according to the organisation's religion. Funding policies are more flexible as they are built on trust.

When participation by affected populations is suggested, denominational organisations talk about the importance of the **'"legitimacy" of one's acts'**. For them, a **'bottom-up' methodology is more likely to reflect the needs of the community.** Furthermore, **denominational and non-denominational organisations, closely linked to churches, are composed of 'potential beneficiaries',** since their members live in the crisis zones.

C Coordination organisations, emergency committees and think-tanks

For various reasons, Congolese aid actors have set up several coordination and discussion groups (such as the BCSC, CCN 2002 and the CRONGD). These groups emphasise the need 'to get to know each other', 'to combine efforts when voicing demands', and 'to improve the emergency techniques and skills of Congolese aid organisations'.

Certain coordination structures, such as emergency committees, have a specific mandate and hence a limited lifespan, while others are more permanent. Some groups, including the Plate-forme Diobass au Kivu (Diobass), focus on technical aspects, research, communication and promoting discussion platforms.

Coordination structures are concerned with collaboration, representation and reinforcing the influence of Congolese aid organisations in relation to international aid organisations. In their opinion, the latter are taking up too much space.

For these bodies, **to participate is 'to be together', to formulate one's demands in concert, and to coordinate, in order to identify one's place in the DRC humanitarian debate. For their members, coordination structures represent a means of participating in humanitarian action.**

In eastern DRC, initiatives aimed at improving participation already exist. The Diobass, with the support of Oxfam Belgium, instigated one of the most interesting ideas, involving seminars. It gave rise to the following points.

Discussion on 'How to build the negotiating capacities of Congolese organisations in relation to emergency relief policies'[8]

Diobass, in conjunction with a group of (mainly Congolese) NGOs, set up workshops in order to discuss operations run by Congolese and international aid actors in response to the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano. The discussion generated the following conclusions.

A place in emergency relief

For Congolese aid actors, participation means **true involvement in aid,** which, in turn, implies emergency-relief expertise and skills. **Congolese aid actors are demanding a role in the coordination of emergency aid,** which is often dominated by international organisations.

The need to **build bridges between international and Congolese aid actors** was often highlighted. However, one important observation was that examples of dialogue and collaboration between Congolese and international aid actors were particularly scant. 'Is it not possible for emergency aid, with its priorities of speed logistics, transit … to encourage dialogue and collaboration in potentially valuable local initiatives?'[9] The discussion group proposed that the presence of a mediator or coordinator, using capacity-building activities for Congolese aid actors, might solve the problem.

Participants' expectations of discussion workshops organised by the Plate-forme Diobass

1. To develop a methodology for **true involvement** in emergency relief and humanitarian assistance.
2. To provide an opportunity to discuss **what can be improved** in emergency interventions.
3. To be sufficiently equipped to **build the capacities** of Congolese NGOs as far as interventions are concerned.
4. To reinforce **collaboration** between different actors.
5. To set up an observatory to **bridge the gap between international and Congolese aid actors**.
6. To promote synergy.
7. To develop a new approach to **increase awareness amongst UN agencies and international NGOs**.
8. To initiate a programme of cooperation to unite the two provinces (North and South Kivu).
9. To draw up an improved definition of the **relationship between assistance and those who are to be assisted**.
10. To identify and analyse the causes of **poor collaboration between actors**.
11. To define a new formula enabling affected populations to fully benefit from aid.
12. To strengthen synergetic interventions in sustainable development.
13. To communicate the workshop's recommendations to different actors.
14. To highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the various participants via self-evaluation.
15. To share experience amongst actors and consolidate collaboration.

Continued

Congolese aid actors believe that international aid actors have a skewed or at least an incomplete vision of the population's needs. The involvement of local organisations is seen as the way to correct this.

A need for collaboration

With regard to the strengths and weaknesses of actors in the field, the following points were made.

- International humanitarian actors find it 'difficult to collaborate with Congolese NGOs during rehabilitation (…) because they do not take advantage of (local) capacities and underestimate civil society' and show little 'interest in making (their) mandates and working methods more accessible'.
- Similarly, Congolese authorities have 'trouble collaborating with other aid actors [Congolese and international]' and 'their coordination policies are incoherent'
- Local coordination groups are 'extremely effective at mobilising populations'. It was suggested, however, that they could 'collaborate more with other actors' and resist the temptation 'to be a jack of all trades'.

Following on from these comments, the participants formulated ways of improving **collaboration**, giving rise to the following recommendations: 'devising a framework for cooperation, popularising mandates, defining and harmonising the various actors' intervention strategies'. Organising further experience-sharing opportunities, such as seminars and workshops, was also flagged, as well as boosting lobbying strategies. However, the priority of Congolese aid actors is to 'learn more about potential donors', to be introduced to donors by international aid actors, and to strengthen 'local negotiation skills with donors'.

Congolese aid actors demand a role in the process of identifying the needs of affected populations. They carried out field trips to assess emergency aid supplied following the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano, uncovering some mistakes that had been made in the targeting process ('One should also take into consideration poor families who shelter victims') and in the design process ('The disaster victims were not consulted as to what type of shelter should be built').

D Local authorities and other local administrative organisations

For over 40 years, the eastern DRC administration has operated autonomously of the central government in Kinshasa. The conflict that has affected the region since 1996 has merely accentuated this tendency. The rebels run local government (administration, resources, commerce and trade), although salaries are no longer paid to civil servants, who often carry out their duties voluntarily.

The infrastructure that existed prior to the crisis is disintegrating. The network of **'popularisers'** (linked to the Ministry of Agriculture) no longer receives a salary, and the **health committees** (run by the Ministry of Health) have scant resources for medical centres and hospitals. The **parents' committee** (Ministry of Education) administers a system whereby each child attending school pays a fee, which is then pooled to cover the wages of educational staff.

These various committees and informal networks are, in theory, set up via a system of participation by representation, either directly or indirectly. Some members are elected from the neighbourhood or village (local and traditional authorities and church representatives). Decisions are taken during meetings; committee members represent the opinion of the population.

Two definitions of participation emerge.

- For the authorities in power, participation is an obligation for those **responsible for the community's needs**. In an emergency situation, participation entails **highlighting needs and expressing one's views about response strategies (displacement, refugee sites) and beneficiary selection**. Similarly, participation implies 'being taken into account' by international aid actors in eastern DRC.

- For local civil servants (health committees, educational staff and popularisers), participation implies **belonging to committees** and, above all, **that international aid actors** in the field **involve**

these committees and their members in project implementation.

For these actors, one of the main elements of participation concerns how much influence they have in relation to international aid actors. Participation is a means of confirming their role in local administration.

Box 9 Participation as defined by Congolese actors

For **Congolese NGOs**, participation is:
- being involved in emergency relief, alongside international actors;
- collaboration and cooperation between local actors, and with international organisations; and
- use of development-type participatory tools.

For **coordination groups**, participation is:
- a negotiating process that gives local organisations a certain authority *vis-à-vis* international aid actors;
- a way of representing the common interests of civil society; and
- a means of harmonising programmes implemented by different actors in the field.

For **denominational organisations**, participation is:
- a full-time presence in the field, alongside disaster victims;
- permanent involvement of the population in humanitarian action, via committees; and
- hearing the population's view, as voiced by committee representatives.

For **local authorities** and the **local administration**, participation is:
- coordination and management of resources and humanitarian action to help the region's population; and
- the involvement of existing committees (health, parents, water) and popularisers' groups.

3.1.3 Affected populations

A Traditional leadership systems

Traditional communities in eastern DRC are fairly rigid social structures. They are based on one central figurehead, the village leader, who is surrounded by several other local powerbrokers.

The 'Bami' (plural of *Mwami*, a Kirwandais term frequently used in the region) are the village leaders, whose position is sometimes hereditary. The village leaders convene the village councils, often made up of lineage or clan leaders, according to ethnic group. Finally, witchdoctors, traditional hunters and magicians have a potent yet discrete influence on the village-leadership system. On arriving in a village or a refugee camp, humanitarian actors are often presented to the *Mwami* and the village council, which theoretically represent village opinion and are essential to understanding 'requirements and requests'. Discussions are sometimes very intense; they are often characterised by submission to the prevailing local authority.

B Disaster-affected populations and CBOs

Often when a natural disaster has occurred, affected populations rally together and set up organisations to represent them. However, this rarely happens in conflict situations. In Goma, an association was created in order to bring together victims of the Nyiragongo volcano, namely SOSINYI. It is worth noting that this body emerged during a period of conflict. Its initial objective was to request that aid be adapted to the specific and short-term needs of the population – that is, those generated by the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano.

> For SOSINYI, participation constitutes an objective in itself. This organisation helps disaster victims to seek better representation in the teams that establish humanitarian programmes. Indeed, SOSINYI emerged when affected populations complained that beneficiary selection had not taken them into account and that, hence, participation was unsatisfactory.

The demands voiced by disaster victims (members of SOSINYI) justify the creation of such an organisation. The question is what role will the organisation play after the crisis, once the demands linked to the disaster have been met? How will it strengthen its position? Where will it find legitimacy? What new definition of participation will it take onboard?

> Currently, SOSINYI's participatory techniques are associated with participatory democracy, such as meetings, voting, and the establishment of working parties. Members are given an identity paper on which 'The bearer has the right to humanitarian aid' is written.
>
> On the one hand, those members interviewed confirmed that, since SOSINYI supplies these identity cards, it ensures a certain level of access to aid. Furthermore, it is apparent that, when the aid dries up, disaster victims will no longer see any reason to belong to SOSINYI and its involvement will diminish. On the other hand, the leaders of SOSINYI see the organisation as an opportunity to develop a more 'citizen'-based approach to participation and are thus trying to extend its activities into the long term.
>
> The discussion about notions of citizenship is for the moment in its early stages and it will be interesting to follow its development.

SOSINYI brings together populations regardless of ethnic group: what unites them is the disaster. Is it possible for a multi-ethnic organisation to exist beyond the emergency phase, in a context that is characterised by inter-ethnic conflict? How can one integrate participatory techniques that do not discriminate against certain groups?

C Population in general

The vast majority of people in eastern DRC can be considered, at least from time to time, to be victims of disaster, especially members of the

Box 10 Participation as defined by traditional leaders and CBOs

For **traditional leaders**, participation implies:
- that they are responsible for expressing requirements and demands.

For **CBOs**, participation is:
- belonging to groups that make decisions on how to distribute aid;
- validating action mechanisms (especially beneficiary selection) so as to avoid repeating mistakes; and
- being consulted.

region's poorest communities. Most inhabitants have suffered the effects of conflict and/or natural disasters directly or indirectly.

Families and individuals have become extremely vulnerable due to these crises and humanitarian actors now blend into the landscape. When a humanitarian actor approaches an individual, the conversation quickly turns to requests for money or work, prompted by high levels of unemployment and the fact that basic needs are not being met. At first glance, participation is not an immediate concern.

Persistent violence and widespread human-rights violations have severely weakened (and often destroyed) the social fabric of eastern DRC. Meetings of elders and village leaders have ceased to take place, families have been scattered, and groups that remain intact have become increasingly vulnerable.

When asked their opinion on participation, it became apparent that **populations do not have much confidence in humanitarian actors in general**. They make references to unfulfilled promises and programmes that do not address their most urgent requirements.

> In Ihuzi and Kalehe (near Bukavu), the Pygmy population (a community living in a conflict zone) was very reserved when the research team arrived with a *muzungu* (white person). They

> displayed distinct lack of trust and were extremely ill at ease, as a result of countless visits by humanitarian workers.
>
> 'They come and weigh us and measure us but they don't give us anything (…) they talk about giving us houses and other things, but then they leave, never to return. Some even come to film us and take photographs.'
>
> The mere presence of foreigners has a negative impact. 'Once you have gone, we know that the price of flour will go up as all the other communities have seen you and they will think that you have given us something.'

While populations readily specify that aid could be better adapted to their needs, **they do not necessarily make a connection between participation and the appropriateness of aid**.

> In Goma, families housed in neighbourhoods near the market were interviewed. 'The materials for building shelters were very limited (…) the aid workers could have given us equipment to make the house more secure and to stop animals from coming in.'

Complaints were raised about how poorly aid was adapted to needs. But demands for participation or at least consultation were not spontaneous.

When natural disasters occur or when the emergency peaks, one form of participation that is often mentioned is **solidarity.** This was observed during displacement in Goma and Uvira, where families took IDPs in and allowed them to construct shelters on their property.

> In Goma, an elderly couple let disaster victims shelter on their land and in their home. 'Before, I lived with my husband, a retired civil servant. Four families now shelter in our home, which consists of two rooms and a latrine:

- a father with his two children in one bedroom;
- two families have built their shelters in the back garden; and
- this woman [pointing to someone present at the meeting], her husband and their two children were given temporary shelters by an NGO, which they put up in front of my house.'

'No-one gave us anything. My husband and I share all our food with the others. Same for the electricity.'

'This will continue until they can rebuild their houses.'

Another request is for humanitarian actors to recruit Congolese personnel.

In Goma, in an area where disaster victims have erected temporary shelters, a disaster victim was asked about the

Box 11 Participation as defined by affected populations

- Solidarity is a form of population involvement, especially in the first few days after an emergency;
- recruiting Congolese personnel is not a form of participation (although some humanitarian actors believe it to be so); and
- some populations have lost confidence in humanitarian organisations, especially international aid actors, which means they are unlikely to become involved in participatory action

Finally, it would appear that, for the population in general, participation is not a priority. Frequently, affected populations prefer participation by representation rather than direct participation. And they are often accustomed to receiving aid without being required to participate, which leads to assistantship and a wait-and-see attitude.

> importance of participating and of being consulted by humanitarian actors. 'What I really want is to be able to work (…) humanitarian aid is never adapted to what we need, so I prefer to work in order to be able to buy things myself.'

Those employed (or seeking employment) do not make a direct link between working and ensuring that aid is adapted to needs. Nevertheless, it would appear that these requests, which some international aid actors qualify as participatory, really only satisfy employment needs.

Participation is a vague term. In order to illustrate this, the next section examines the different forms of participation that can be found in practice.

3.2 PARTICIPATION AND TYPE OF CRISIS

Several types of crisis can be identified in eastern DRC. First, the whole region is affected by a complex and diverse emergency in which massacres, displacement and other outbursts of 'small-scale' emergencies are punctuated by periods of relative 'calm'. Second, the region also suffers from rapid onset crises, notably natural disasters, which are unpredictable and cause major damage.

This section examines factors behind the complex emergency in eastern DRC, as well as the forms of participation identified in different crisis situations and project-cycle phases. Protracted crises, long-running emergencies and a natural disaster, such as in eastern DRC, may occur in any one zone at any given time. For the sake of clarity, the following classification was adopted in the analysis. It is by no means an attempt to oversimplify a situation; separating one emergency from another is very complicated.

Protracted crisis

1. Remission or 'stable' period
2. Peak of Acute Crisis or small-scale emergency

Natural disaster or rapid onset crisis

1 Acute emergency (the first few hours)
2 'Classic' emergency phase
3 Post-emergency (leading to rehabilitation)

For each study site, does the type of crisis affect the form of participation?

This section also highlights participatory strategies for the various emergency phases.

3.2.1 Protracted crisis

Protracted crises experience periods of relative 'calm', marked by absence of clashes and massacres, *inter alia*. This calm is interrupted by armed confrontations, displacement, pillaging and other 'small-scale' emergencies. Areas of the DRC have been caught up in a protracted crisis for over ten years now.

A Periods of relative stability

During periods of relative calm, Congolese and international aid actors that have been present in the field for a number of years carry out the bulk of humanitarian work. Rehabilitation and development operations are conducted in very specific areas. Should the need for emergency relief arise, these same actors try to respond. International emergency-relief organisations without a history in this area rarely intervene, unless to support local action by means of food aid, food-for-work, and by supplying tools (hoes) and fertiliser.

Congolese aid actors hold the view that emergencies interrupt rehabilitation and development operations. Emergency action by actors already in the field attempts to smooth over events and to re-initiate the development process that was in train before the crisis hit. This explains the Congolese aid actors' concern about the longer-term impact of emergency action and about the negative effects that it might have on existing development programmes.

> Some humanitarian actors, for example, distribute tools and seeds to limit the damage caused by crop pillaging. In the same situation, other actors would have focused on distributing food.

In this case, therefore, **participation has the same characteristics as it does in a development context**. The presence of development actors in the field means that a network is already in place, guaranteeing their legitimacy in relation to the population. When small-scale emergencies manifest, participation occurs via development committees.

> In response to the conflict-induced emergency, the FHI decided to set up a food-security programme in the town of Kalémi. Present since 2001, the FHI works with church networks to ensure that the population obtains minimum food supplies.
>
> Implementation began with a standard **food-security survey** of potential beneficiaries (approximately 4,000 houses). This revealed the need to build a bridge and to distribute seeds in Kongolo.
>
> The FHI also set up a housing reconstruction project with **Food for Work** supplied by the WFP. The FHI worked with **village committees** (made up of agronomists, women and community denominational organisations), which were also responsible for beneficiary selection. Builders from the village conducted the construction work.
>
> In addition, an agricultural programme was initiated, also coordinated with village committees. Thirty-five agronomists from the national popularisers' network provided **technical assistance.** These agents received a **bonus** of $50 per month from the FHI and a bicycle to get from one village to another.

Does this context have a place for citizen participation?
In more or less stable complex emergencies, certain actors have begun to employ the term 'citizen participation' and to utilise the ideologies

attached to it. In South Kivu, however, this is rare, and is often proposed by international development actors or human-rights campaigners.

Some actors, especially denominational groups, believe that emergency actions, which are carried out in relatively 'stabilised' situations, constitute a means of progressing towards peace. This implies setting up participatory programmes with the aim of bringing together various social entities, such as neighbouring ethnic groups.

Some initiatives have even adopted a transnational approach, such as Action Citoyenne pour la Paix (ACIPA) (Citizen Action for Peace) supported by the CECI, which is present in the Great Lakes region (Burundi, DRC, Rwanda).

B Peaks of acute crises in complex emergency situations

During protracted crises, such as in eastern DRC, acute emergency situations rarely make the headlines. Populations are remote or access to them is fraught with difficulties (or they are in hiding). In such circumstances, the international logistics infrastructure is fairly ineffective.

Box 12 Citizen Action for Peace[5]

The ACIPA project aims to 'contribute to peace in the Great Lakes region, and in particular in Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC', through:

- a peaceful resolution of the conflict;
- citizen participation;
- respect for human rights and a fight against exclusion; and
- access to diversified, non-partisan peacemaking information.

It seeks to support local organisations in each country, and, in doing so, to establish partnerships.

It is interesting to note that one of the 'priority strategies' drawn up by the ACIPA for South Kivu is citizen participation. Yet this theme has not been replicated in other parts of the DRC that also benefit from the programme.

Cars, planes and trucks cannot get through and emergency relief cannot be provided.

In eastern DRC, the emergency does not often manifest in towns, but, rather, in the surrounding areas: villages are pillaged, armed groups commit atrocities, crops are destroyed, populations are malnourished and the conflict prevents them from accessing aid. **In order to cope with the emergency, affected populations set up committees – such as women's groups – and move from danger areas in order to reach humanitarian actors**. They participate in humanitarian action by **coordinating meetings with humanitarian actors** and by **transporting food to affected villages that are inaccessible**.

> While the situation in Bukavu remains stable, in Kalongue (near Bukavu) a small group of people has become IDPs. They have lost their crops, their livestock has been stolen and they are no longer able to satisfy their basic needs. In order for assistance to reach them, Congolese aid actors distribute supplies provided by international organisations. **Several families, women's groups and village authorities asked a Congolese NGO, the VAS, to help them**.
>
> The WFP has food supplies for these people. But since its trucks are unable to pass through the forest to deliver the food, the population has to come to it.
>
> The same applies to community leaders who want to attend a project meeting. During the rainy season, communication becomes even more complicated. Despite all of these problems, the VAS teams succeeded in establishing the programmes.

This example is representative of a large number of programmes that have been set up in Bukavu, and, above all, in the surrounding area. The participation of affected populations is achieved with the support of

Congolese NGOs. This type of intervention is possible in communities already known to Congolese actors, where a relationship has developed. Nevertheless, the question regarding what strategy to adopt for vulnerable groups who do not have regular contact with a humanitarian actor before the peak of the crisis remains valid. How can these affected populations become involved?

In areas where access is difficult and affected populations are not involved aid itself is compromised.

3.2.2 Rapid onset crisis

Occasionally, natural disasters or other rapid onset crises occur in complex emergency environments. In this case, the impact of the disaster can be felt in addition to problems associated with the complex emergency.

The initial emergency phase, known as 'acute emergency', sees the deployment of first aid. A few days later, a second phase, the 'classic' emergency phase, which lasts longer and is theoretically more structured, attempts to find solutions to shortages of shelter, water, food, and healthcare. During the final phase, 'post-emergency', infrastructure rehabilitation commences. In this chronological analysis, it is not easy to identify the time lapse between phases.

A Acute emergency phase: the first few hours

At first, humanitarian aid is based on **solidarity**. **Adjacent neighbourhoods and villages** readily welcome IDPs and share their food with them. Next, Congolese NGOs in the neighbourhood respond (with limited means) by collecting donations (food, water and other items) from the population in general and sometimes from businesses and other sources. Participation is effectively voluntary; Congolese aid actors mobilise their staff to help out. During this time, international NGOs and UN expatriates are swiftly evacuated from the area and transferred to Rwanda, as in the case of the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano.

Box 13 Acute emergency following the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano

During the first few days after the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano, families in neighbourhoods and villages adjacent to the affected zone received disaster victims and assisted them.

The day the volcano erupted (17 January 2002), the ESPD network called on its staff to identify unaccompanied children among the IDPs. The ESPD, which represented the Provincial Council for Children, took care of them.

The initial response of CCN 2002 included collecting donations for disaster victims and distributing them in the reception areas.

When an emergency arises, **the international NGOs that are already present** (at least those that are able to release funds or other resources rapidly) reshuffle their programmes in order to establish rapid-response units and to conduct a needs assessment. In these circumstances, **participation occurs via existing networks (if applicable) and available organisations**. However, this remains the exception rather than the norm.

> German Agro Action is based in Goma, although it does not carry out any programmes in the town. It is active in several sectors, mainly agriculture. Projects are directed primarily at improving access, which affects agricultural production. The GAA has thus specialised in road reconstruction, which might aid agricultural projects.
>
> Following the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano, the GAA rebuilt three main roads that had been covered with lava. Funds were released immediately, enabling the work to be carried out quickly. The **participation of the population was not required** (it was too soon after the disaster). This reconstruction work was very good for the community:

neighbourhoods were made accessible again. The roads are still in good condition today, albeit that it was 18 months ago.

The GAA also distributed 20,000 litres of water per day and 300 tonnes of food for one-and-a-half months. Its good knowledge of needs and of the area ('the needs were obvious and complex techniques were not necessary for someone who knows the area well'), as well as sufficient quantities of available emergency stocks ('all our stock was released'), meant that its response was swift. Generally, the GAA works **in partnership with neighbourhood committees** in order to draw up lists and with local NGOs to assist distribution. The urgent nature of the situation, meant that there was little local participation in the initial distribution.

Like the GAA, other international organisations also reacted speedily, but with little local participation. Urgency was the most common explanation for this.

In this phase, the role of the Congolese Red Cross and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in general was very important.

B 'Classic' emergency phase

Often, natural disasters induce a massive influx of humanitarian actors. In the DRC, international organisations took the lead during this phase, following a few days of 'coordination' in Rwanda. Congolese NGOs henceforth took somewhat of a backseat, due mainly to lack of funding and to international aid actors' lack of confidence in them.

To encourage the participation of Congolese NGOs during the emergency phase, two participatory strategies came into being: coordination activities between international and Congolese aid actors, excluding the affected population; and the participation of affected populations in emergency-relief programmes.

Coordination
Several coordination activities were carried out by different units:

- the BCSC crisis unit (Office for the Coordination of Civil Society), set up by members of Congolese civil society

Box 14 The Bureau de Coordination de la Société Civile (Office for the Coordination of Civil Society)

On 17 January 2002, while the Nyiragongo volcano was erupting, the BCSC called an extraordinary session of its members – due to its role in coordination, advocacy and lobbying. Its objective was to observe the disaster and to construct an emergency response. Following this meeting, the BCSC created a crisis unit with the following mandate:

- to monitor all aspects of the disaster;
- to garner support locally and internationally in order to meet basic needs; and
- to survey displacement or migration, especially in regard to those who left the territory.

To determine the challenges facing disaster victims, six **technical commissions** were set up within the crisis unit: transport; health; temporary shelter; habitat and security; communication; and food. Each commission was headed by a president, and comprised between four and six members. Whereas the main duties were reserved for civil society in general, an ad-hoc committee drew up practical details enabling the BCSC to intervene in the field.

Coordination of emergency relief by OCHA
OCHA was in charge of coordinating the emergency-relief efforts of international humanitarian organisations, although it invited local NGOs to participate in meetings. General **coordination meetings** were held every week, at which actors exchanged information. **Sector-related commissions** were established, enabling actors to develop a synchronised approach to emergency relief and to 'divide up' zones affected by the disaster.

- the Provincial Crisis Unit, part of an initiative launched by the local authorities; and
- the coordination of emergency relief, implemented by OCHA.

Although they share the same objective – coordination of emergency action – these structures each utilise a different approach. The **coordination groups** and crisis units worked side-by-side as emergency relief was distributed: some saw this as an opportunity to promote their role as a local authority; others focused on coordinating international emergency relief; and some called for the direct involvement of Congolese aid actors in emergency action. However, there was **little evidence of collaboration and synergy** between these three 'coordination' groups.

Thanks to OCHA's coordination efforts, international humanitarian organisations were able to prevent duplication of tasks and to standardise the type of housing kit and food to be distributed. Similarly, water and sanitation organisations divided up the zones of intervention, while the ICRC responded to urgent water requirements. In fact, this approach was applied to all sectors, including health (rehabilitation of medical centres) and education (reconstruction of schools and extensions to existing schools).

However, certain aspects concerning the participation of affected populations were not well harmonised. **Efforts were made to harmonise content, but the way in which aid should be implemented was overlooked. One such example is the means by which humanitarian actors reward populations and people involved in their projects.**

> Some players use the 'cash-for-work' system, others use 'food-for-work', while still others pay a proportion of expenses and distribute tools necessary for carrying out assigned task (bicycles or hoes, for example). However, when people from different projects compare their experiences, those who participate in unpaid actions start to demand cash in return for their efforts. In time, this could compromise the continuity of the initiative.

> Above all, it could raise expectations about pay and sometimes lead to the belief that, 'in order to participate, I must be paid'.

The overriding weakness of coordination efforts was the uneven representation of Congolese and international NGOs in OCHA commissions. Few Congolese actors were present at meetings. Since they do not carry out many large-scale humanitarian programmes, furthermore, they had few actions to 'coordinate'.

Participation techniques

During the emergency, several intervention strategies were devised. Yet, very few aid actors talk about involving affected populations directly. Time and urgency are the most common explanations.

International aid actors prefer to control distribution (a condition imposed by certain donors or one that is self-imposed). In this case, examples of cooperation with local actors or of the direct involvement of affected populations are almost non-existent. Indeed, **their involvement is limited, for instance, to supplying information,** erecting shelters (or paying someone to do this for them), and finding a place to put their shelter. **Beneficiaries are almost always excluded from targeting and project design**.

Box 15 Recommendations for national and international NGOs, following discussion workshops run by Congolese NGOs[12]

- Involve beneficiaries in the planning and implementation of activities.
- Involve IDPs in humanitarian-aid management.
- Humanitarian-intervention strategies should be made more flexible in order to take into account the reality of the situation on the ground.
- Ensure that categories for aid beneficiaries are realistic.

'Disaster victims did not participate in any way in aid management …'[11]

During the emergency, CBOs and Congolese NGOs tried to find their place. The NGOs felt ostracised; they testify that international aid actors did not take their points of view into account. CBOs formed a united front to demand a role in the aid efforts, especially in checking beneficiary lists and managing complaints. The local authorities tried to become more involved in the aid effort and to provide advice. As for the affected populations, they concentrated on satisfying basic needs and finding a means of subsistence.

C Post-emergency phase

Once the emergency is over, development-type actions are launched, including the reconstruction of schools and health centres. In eastern DRC, coordination initiatives that were set up in the emergency phase were extended; players had more time on their hands and fewer imperatives.

In this phase, **international aid actors called on existing local structures, such as the various committees** (denominational, community, health). Often these structures were part of the public administration – like COSA – and were operating with a seriously depleted level of resources. In other cases, international aid actors helped to set up structures within the affected population. Similarly, appeals were often made to traditional authorities and church representatives.

> In Goma: Atlas Logistique called on **parents' committees** to reconstruct damaged schools following the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano; Médecins du Monde set up programmes via **health committees** (under the auspices of the ministry of health); and Oxfam created **water and sanitation committees** for its rehabilitation programmes.

Engaging these structures in aid work allows affected populations to become involved, aiding the rehabilitation of existing committees, and

Participation and the type of crisis

Protracted crises Congolese aid actors and international humanitarian actors that have been present in the area for a long time assume the main role.

- In the **remission phase,** development-type projects are implemented. As a result, the following techniques are employed: participatory planning, participatory needs assessment and participatory targeting. In addition, committees are set up and the local organisation is reinforced.
- During the **peak of the emergency** – occurring throughout protracted crises – access constraints are accentuated and logistics become redundant. Populations organise themselves in order to gain access to aid (committees are set up, representatives are chosen, and, in some cases, populations move to where humanitarian actors can reach them).

Rapid onset emergencies The bulk of aid is distributed by international humanitarian actors (international NGOs, UN agencies and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement).

- During the **first few hours,** emergency-relief activities centre on neighbourly solidarity.
- During the **'classic' emergency phase**, coordination structures are created in order to standardise the programme's content; by contrast, harmonisation is often neglected. Affected populations become involved in certain tasks and reply to questionnaires and take part in surveys and interviews. Similarly, disaster-affected populations become organised, establishing committees or CBOs to claim a role in the aid process.
- The **post-emergency phase** is fairly similar to the aforementioned remission phase. Existing committees are reconstituted, other committees are set up, and participatory techniques typical of development emerge.

establishes a link with development operations that had been suspended because of the emergency.

When new structures are set up, as in the case of Oxfam, other actors or the affected population usually use them to carry out further programmes.

It appears that the type of crisis and the emergency phase determine who supplies aid (or at least who plays the co-ordinating role) and the extent of participation.

3.3 PARTICIPATION DURING THE PROJECT CYCLE

In order to establish an analytical framework, two main variables have been identified: the project phase; and the degree of participation. For the first, we used the phases defined in the Project Cycle Management Handbook.[13] In order to examine different degrees of participation, the 'Types of participation in development projects'[14] presented in the theoretical research framework was adopted.

Project cycle

- Needs assessment
- Beneficiary targeting
- Project design
- Implementation
- Monitoring and Evaluation

3.3.1 Needs assessment

Humanitarian aid actors contend that there are two main reasons to involve affected populations in this phase: identifying requirements and understanding the context. Affected populations become directly involved by **supplying information**, which is analysed by the various players, and by **validating information supplied by humanitarian actors**.

Traditional needs assessment in emergency situations

Often, emergency organisations rely on more or less standardised methods, such as surveys, interviews and censuses, to assess needs. This is certainly true for emergency efforts carried out in Goma. Gaining access to the greatest number of potential beneficiaries is what is at stake. The fact that humanitarian programmes were absent from Goma before the disaster meant that external actors employed conventional emergency techniques: **an exploratory mission, a census and observation. In this case, the participation of affected populations is limited to supplying information, and is frequently non-existent**.

Needs assessment with the direct participation of affected populations

Other organisations, which have been present in the field for a long time, working in less urgent domains, have developed various approaches that involve the local population. Oxfam, for example, has trained a team made up of Congolese staff that works on projects throughout the country and is used to applying participatory techniques. Its responsibilities involve **carrying out an exploratory mission, coordinating meetings in the field for each neighbourhood and establishing links with local actors**. It has also taken existing reports into account.

> Oxfam in Goma: 'We have adopted a **study carried out by local actors**, which targets opinions voiced by Goma inhabitants, in order to find out what they want, need and expect from the emergency response'.[15]

Similarly, **following discussions with communities** that had suffered attacks by the Maï-Maï militia, a Congolese organisation based in Uvira identified families who needed to have their houses rebuilt.

Needs assessment with the participation of a Congolese NGO

When a player has developed a relationship with a population over a long time and employs participatory techniques, carrying out another **formal needs assessment** prior to intervention might not be of much value.

Actors that are in the field on a permanent basis, with local networks, will know immediately what populations require and can thus act more swiftly.

> The VAS, a Congolese NGO working with the Kalongue community (Bukavu area), was able to identify needs and the damage caused by displacement immediately, thanks to its continuous presence in the field. **It already knew the population, local leaders and the traditional authorities, and had up-to-date information**. A survey is redundant. 'We know that they all became IDPs and that they need food'.

> **For the PIDP-Kivu, carrying out a needs assessment for the pygmy populations of Kalehe (Bukavu area) would have been pointless.** 'We know what we need, after all the PIDP expresses Pygmy community's needs, for the Pygmy people, by the Pygmy people. It would be like talking to French people about France.'

Supplying information

Often international humanitarian bodies call on Congolese aid actors to supply information on the local context, the region and access conditions. The latter rarely appreciate this form of involvement if no cooperation follows.

Is a needs assessment irrelevant if the response has ended?

One of the greatest limitations of emergency programmes that are financed according to pre-defined objectives is the needs-assessment phase. Important problems can arise at this point.

> On the outskirts of Bukavu, the Ihusi Pygmy population (Kalehe) has been living in difficult conditions for many years. The PIDP-Kivu made contact with it and instigated a process of definition and identification of needs, utilising participatory techniques. The following priorities were established:

1 **Health** health centre/dispensary for children and childbirth;
2 **Education** school for children, who are currently obliged to travel long distances;
3 **Habitat** houses frequently pillaged.

Six years later, the PIDP was selected as a candidate for the USHIRIKA (meaning communion in Swahili) programme (see box in conclusion), which focuses on the Ihusi communities. Its intervention was shifted towards water and sanitation, however, because health, education and habitat are not covered by the USHIRIKA programme.

3.3.2 Beneficiary targeting

This sensitive stage of the project cycle often provokes debate on whether it is relevant to involve affected populations. **In complex environments** or situations where issues of legitimacy and neutrality are crucial, **selecting those who will benefit from aid becomes extremely 'political'.**

Participation in the needs-assessment phase

7	**Local initiative** Adopt the needs assessment carried out by a Congolese aid actor.
6	**Interactive participation**
5	**Functional participation**
4	**Materially motivated participation**
3	**Consultation** Interview the affected populations. Neighbourhood meetings. Interview traditional and local leaders.
2	**Information transfer** Survey, census, general questionnaires.
1	**Passive participation** Observation in the field during exploratory field trips.

The selection process is not one in which affected populations participate directly. In this phase, participation occurs via group leaders, committees or CBOs.

Delegation of selection to committees

Some players delegate beneficiary selection to local committees. According to these actors, this offers the advantage that populations are responsible for the choices made (a means of social control). The risk is that certain vulnerable groups will probably not be selected, notably when several ethnic groups are targeted or when particular groups are prejudiced against (such as single mothers).

A key factor is the legitimacy of the committee conducting the selection. If it is made up of representatives of all religious entities, men and women, and official and traditional authorities, for example, then the risk of omitting certain groups is slight. Another important factor is that the process and the results must be transparent. And there must be an opportunity for appeal.

> CARITAS-DRC (Bukavu): 'The main body available for coordinating our programs is the "Parish Educational Council". The council is comprised of representatives of the local church, educators and laypeople from the community.'

> In the case of a reconstruction programme in Muberure and Lubirizi districts (Uvira), since there were not enough resources to satisfy the needs of all of the disaster victims, village headmen identified the families most in need.

Voluntary targeting

For certain actions, **the choice of beneficiaries is left to the population**. This approach is most applicable when the decision implies some kind of commitment by the beneficiaries.

In the case of the agricultural rehabilitation programme for the displaced communities of Kalongue (Bukavu), set up by the VAS, 'the smallholders were chosen by the smallholding community'.

The objective of the project is to allow smallholders to replant crops and to build-up their livestock by means of a rotating credit system. Given that the majority of the population is short of food, the first smallholders to benefit from this project are responsible for planting crops. They 'repay' their debt by making their grain and animals available to their neighbours.

So, the initial beneficiaries must not eat either the grain or the animals that were given to them.

During a public meeting names are put forward to determine who should benefit from the scheme. Some of the smallholders withdrew because they felt that they could not meet the commitment. Those present at the meeting selected the beneficiaries, while bearing in mind that the most vulnerable families should not be chosen for the programme.

One of the aspects that enabled this initiative to work was the close-knit nature of the community.

In this example, those who want to become involved, can. Beneficiaries who put their names forward publicly commit themselves, therefore, to generating results.

For this method to be truly efficient, selection criteria must be fully understood and accepted by the population - the same applies to those making the commitment. Nevertheless, this system cannot be implemented if everyone has the same needs and priorities, as this could generate tension and other problems.

Can targeting in emergency situations be participatory?

Emergency action, especially when it involves large numbers of people in very unstable environments, utilises traditional selection methods, which are rarely participatory. For humanitarian actors, it is difficult to apply participatory methods, which require a minimum of stability, when the affected population is constantly on the move.

> There was a large amount of aid to distribute among Goma IDPs. Although selection appears simple (all of those who have lost their houses are beneficiaries, for instance), in reality, the IDPs first moved towards Rwanda, then to Bukavu, Gisenyi, Goma and surrounding areas. Since they had no place to settle and they did not want to move far from the towns, they stayed in areas adjacent to the disaster zone.
>
> The targeting system chosen by humanitarian actors relied on information supplied by authorities in the reception area rather than by those responsible for the disaster zone. However, the former may not be in the best position to identify IDPs. Furthermore, other interests related to their neighbourhoods might have influenced the way in which the lists were drawn up.

Amidst this complexity, local players and local authorities try to become involved. Humanitarian actors, though, would rather maintain their independence and limit their contact with them. Consequently, Congolese aid actors question the validity of targeting by international organisations without consultation.

> In Goma, SOSINYI emphasised problems concerning the beneficiaries of projects set up in Goma (following the volcanic eruption) by international humanitarian actors. It requested that it be involved in validating beneficiary lists.

Participation in beneficiary targeting

7	**Local initiative** Local committees select delegate. Beneficiaries put their names forward. Population confirms the choice.
6	**Interactive participation**
5	**Functional participation**
4	**Materially motivated participation**
3	**Consultation** Humanitarian actor makes selection after consulting authorities.
2	**Information transfer** Humnanitarian actor makes selection. Population merely informed.
1	**Passive participation** No targeting (acute emergency).

But the 'a priori' concept of a 'vulnerable population or group' is also a constraint. Can aid actors be certain that the criteria for vulnerability standards remain valid?

3.3.3 Project design

The involvement of affected populations in project design takes place via workshops and meetings. When there is a Congolese actor that has sufficient expertise to run the project, partnerships, for instance, can be set up, allowing the local player to have a greater impact on the design of the programme. Nevertheless, participation rarely occurs when priorities are predefined and the financial details have already been agreed.

Partnership between international and Congolese NGOs

As previously stated, if a Congolese humanitarian actor is present with the necessary experience, certain international aid actors will delegate the programme design to them.

In the Uvira region, a Congolese NGO designed a reconstruction programme in Muberure and Lubirizi.

A partnership between an international and a Congolese NGO offers certain advantages, but there are also risks. The main benefits are that aid will be better adapted to needs and that the emergency response will be quicker off the mark. However, problems may arise when there is insufficient trust between partners. The emergency requires a rapid response, yet, for a successful partnership, clearly defined rules must exist and mutual respect must be nurtured (which takes time).

In Bukavu, the ESPD network, with its experience of managing centres for children, its expertise and its qualified staff, was given responsibility for designing the Transit Centre for Unaccompanied Children in Bagira project and the way that it would be run.

A partnership was set up between the ESPD network and UNICEF. The former had sole responsibility for designing and implementing the activities of the centre, but international partners controlled the administrative management. Management problems arose, perhaps due to the insufficient amount of time spent establishing a partnership framework (the contract was drawn up unilaterally) and also because of the fact that this was the ESPD network's first experience of partnership.

Workshops and focus groups

In certain cases, participation means that the programme will be more appropriate for the target population and better adapted to individual requirements. So, the humanitarian actor proposes 'preset solutions' to the population, which then adapts them through workshops and focus groups. This simplifies the task in hand and speeds up the process.

In Goma, World Vision consulted the population prior to designing the school that was to be rebuilt. Based on its advice,

walls between classrooms were strengthened in order to reduce noise.

When Oxfam was preparing a water and sanitation project in Goma, the population participated by identifying water points, as well as by highlighting other details concerning how the programme would be run.

But is this method truly participatory? Or is it a means by which humanitarian actors can 'validate' their intentions? How should one apply these methods without falling into the manipulation trap?

Standards that limit participation

Standards - concerning ration quantities and materials, for instance - which are set by international aid actors, often prevent programmes from being adapted to the specific needs of affected populations. If these constraints are not discussed with the beneficiaries, they can provoke incomprehension and rejection.

In regard to the Transit Centre for Unaccompanied Children in Bagira, the ESPD defined and distributed food rations from the outset of the emergency. The WFP allocated funds to the programme, but insisted that rations conform to its standards. As a result, they were reduced by 50%. The children threatened to leave the refugee centre. The ESPD network had to top-up the rations with its own funds.

When faced with such constraints, participation counts for very little. **Communication is essential** if the community is to appropriate the programme.

3.3.4 Carrying out the programme

Humanitarian action can be implemented either by committees or directly by the affected population. In the first case, action is organised

Participation in project design

7	**Local initiative** Delegate design to local partner as part of a partnership between international and Congolese NGOs.
6	**Interactive participation** Set up 'open' workshops and meetings. Design delegated to Congolese NGO as part of a partnership.
5	**Functional participation** Focus groups, workshops and 'pre-structured' meetings.
4	**Materially motivated participation**
3	**Consultation** Affected population is consulted, but the project must be adapted to pre-defined donor criteria.
2	**Information transfer** Affected population is informed about what will be done. Affected population is informed about changes made to project design.
1	**Passive participation** Project is designed by humanitarian actor.

during committee meetings that might call in some of the affected populations. In the second case, humanitarian actors ask the population to become directly involved, on their own initiative or as the result of pressure from local leaders. When partnerships between Congolese and international aid actors are established, the former may be entirely responsible for implementing the project.

Participation for material benefits

It is during the execution phase that the economic aspects of the context most effect participation, especially when participation is linked to material reward. As mentioned earlier, humanitarian actors are seen as an important source of employment. The direct involvement of affected populations in humanitarian aid is, therefore, often motivated by money.

> Following a socio-economic study, the Save the Children Fund (SCF) chose to introduce a 'cash-for-work' strategy in Goma.

> Oxfam (in Goma) pays a token amount to committee members.
>
> In Kalemi (Bukavu area), the FHI gives each populariser a bicycle so that he/she can travel from project to project.

This form of participation, unless it is employed with care, might compromise other organisations that choose not to 'pay for involvement', or do not have the means to do so.

> 'We do not pay the educational staff of the schools we are rebuilding, whereas the United Nations and other international NGOs do. The reward that our staff receive is not financial but abstract. We adopt a development approach and yet when one gives in return for participation, there is a risk of assistantship to the detriment of development.'[16]

Participation in project implementation

7	**Local initiative**
6	**Interactive participation**
5	**Functional participation** Committees, women's groups and other bodies have specific functions. Affected populations fulfil technical tasks. Logistical support (transport material, provide lodging and food for recruited technical staff).
4	**Materially motivated participation** Food-for-work. Cash-for-work. Paymentm supply tools and means of transport.
3	**Consultation**
2	**Information transfer**
1	**Passive participation** Population is not involved in humanitarian action.

During the research, the difficulty of maintaining committees (road maintenance, health centres or schools) was frequently mentioned. People become involved in training sessions and setting up the action in return for financial benefits (a salary or cash-for-work) or payment-in-kind (food-for-work, food-for-training, for instance). When the NGO withdraws, especially in areas with limited access, some structures lose their impetus. How can actors overcome this?

Carrying out tasks

Populations can also participate by providing labour for specific tasks. This mainly involves transporting tools and materials, maintenance, and providing lodging for programme technicians. In some cases, it is not possible to delegate tasks because neither the Congolese aid actor nor the affected population has the necessary expertise.

> The JRS conducted repairs on a school in Bugari (Bukavu area). Building technicians undertook the construction, while parents and children, respectively, transported materials and water.
>
> In Goma, Atlas Logistique carried out repairs to primary schools in Goma. The process was launched following discussions with the parents' committee and with the school's management. Stonemasons were members of the community, women transported water to the site, and the parents' committee drew up lists of people who were to perform other tasks.
>
> The Muberure and Lubirizi communities (Uvira area) transported wood and water and made bricks, for example, with which to rebuild their houses. 'They didn't want to receive assistance without having contributed themselves.'

Evaluation of an international NGO's programme carried out by a local organisation

Goal Team Consult (GOTEC) (a Congolese organisation) was asked to 'evaluate the socio-economic impact of the reconstruction of the Sake–Masisi trunk road and other interventions in favour of populations of this region undertaken by German Agro Action (GAA)'.[17]

Among the various approaches utilised in the evaluation were focus groups and interviews (using a questionnaire). Those asked to attend the focus groups were people 'who had a certain influence in the community leadership, notably local development committee members, traditional authorities and political-administrative authorities, teachers, nurses, health centre workers, church ministers, etc.'[18]

Evaluation carried out by head office

Oxfam carried out an evaluation of its actions following the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano.[19] Criteria included the use of participatory techniques and the results of participation. Coordination and cooperation with other organisations were also subject to review.

'The primary sources (for the evaluation) were notably interviews (…) with partners and beneficiaries, (which were carried out) in the field with key participants (such as public health promoters, supervisors, health committees, volunteers, nurses and civil servants from the health zone (zone de santé), discussion groups, informal interviews with beneficiaries and site visits.'

Evaluation carried out by the donor

The Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation (NOVIB) funded the VAS, a Congolese organisation working with the Kalongue community. When the programme was complete, a NOVIB commission visited the Kalongue authorities, as well as officials and organised groups. One of the members of the evaluation team spoke fluent Swahili and was thus able to communicate directly with the population.

Participation in project evaluation

7 **Local initiative**

6 **Interactive participation**
Evaluation and self-evaluation workshops.

5 **Functional participation**

4 **Materially motivated participation**

3 **Consultation**
Focus groups, interviews, meetings with the population.

2 **Information transfer**
Surveys, questionnaires.

1 **Passive participation**

3.3.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

Aside from the work carried out by the committees, monitoring is rarely a participatory process. In general, it is controlled directly by humanitarian actors. As for evaluation, only a few examples were observed, of which the following three involved the setting up of focus groups, and the organisation of meetings and interviews with the population.

4 CONCLUSION

The research conducted in eastern DRC reveals the advantages and the limitations of using participatory approaches in a protracted complex crisis. It highlights the importance of understanding the context when adopting a participatory approach and, indeed, when choosing how to apply it. In certain situations, the implementation of participation strategies becomes extremely complicated.

Field work allowed the team to: validate the hypothesis and research questions; draw up a general framework of the different forms of potential participation as per context and phase in the project cycle; and identify ways in which participation can be hindered or distorted.

4.1 VALIDATION OF THE HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In eastern DRC, participation is more an attitude than a concept. International aid actors are attached to pre-defined notions, often closely linked to humanitarian principals. As for Congolese aid actors, local authorities and other kinds of local organisation, **the issue of participation is related to power**, to reaffirming one's position in the region, or in a specific area, and to establishing one's legitimacy. Last but not least, populations display a certain passiveness in regard to participation, or at most they demand that aid should be better adapted to their needs.

4.1.1 Hypothesis: is participation possible? Does it have a positive impact on aid and its consequences?

The eastern DRC case study presents various responses to these fundamental questions.

1 The feasibility of applying a participatory approach is heavily influenced by **the culture, experience and expectations of the spokesperson**:

- Congolese NGO;
- CBOs;
- village committees, denominational groups and traditional authorities; and
- local authorities.

Who should participate? What is the composition of the affected population? Should one work directly with the affected population or through existing organisations? **Why** will they want to participate? What are their reasons for participating, or choosing not to?

2 The case study illustrates that the forms of participation by affected populations vary in relation to **three elements pertaining to the project**:

- type of crisis and phase;
- project-cycle phase; and
- technical sector.

These elements determine '**how**' participation will occur in emergency contexts.

3 It is apparent that, in certain contexts, even if participation is possible, it is not always advisable. **Three key factors** determine whether participation is possible and what form it will take:

- legitimacy;
- security of humanitarian staff and the population and access to zones and affected populations; and
- the risk of compromising impartiality and independence.

4.1.2 Who should participate?

Congolese aid actors that intervene in emergencies mainly specialise in development, notably agricultural development. They rarely have much experience of emergency relief, which is carried out, to a large extent, by **international aid actors**. As a result, Congolese NGOs and administrative structures demand greater involvement in this type of action.

By contrast, **affected populations** are staking less of a claim to a role in emergency relief, probably due to social fragmentation caused by the conflict.

1 Victims of natural disasters

- **Those on whom the disaster has a direct impact** Gradually, the population restructures itself, but the process is not mature enough to induce demands for participation. Furthermore, survival is the priority of affected populations and they are unlikely to seek involvement unless there are material benefits (see 'The risks linked to participation' below).
- **Host families and/or villages** This group is rarely involved in humanitarian action, but it is the one that takes care of disaster victims.

2 Victims of a complex emergency (as a result of conflict)

- **Migrating populations and IDPs** For this group, social structures become severely weakened, thus reducing its ability to participate. Humanitarian actors inform it of their programmes and ask for information relative to the project. Sometimes, materially motivated participation and other forms of involvement in implementation occur. Also, humanitarian actors ask members of the group to organise themselves in committees and other such bodies.
- **Populations that remain in their villages** Traditional leadership structures play an important role, as do community

groups. Most of the time, humanitarian actors approach these structures in order to secure participation. Access is very limited, reducing the possibility for populations to become involved in humanitarian action. But, in certain cases, the population overcomes this constraint by moving away from isolated areas.

4.1.3 Why participate? Why use participatory techniques?

Several reasons appear to encourage the use of a participatory approach.

1 Geographical access to affected populations

- International aid actors rely on the participation of Congolese aid actors to access isolated populations, or those that are cut off due to security conditions.
- Congolese aid organisations and some international aid actors, which have been in the region for many years, try to encourage affected populations to participate in order to guarantee the continuity of the response when access is restricted.
- The displacement of affected populations across dangerous or inaccessible areas in search of aid is a form of participation motivated by survival.

2 Cultural access to affected populations

Access is, therefore, central to the question regarding what motivates participation. For some actors, access is still a purely geographical issue – it means reaching affected populations. **Yet, access should also imply cultural aspects, which are just as vital. In reality, 'cultural access' is omnipresent in relations between populations and international aid actors.** From the moment that Congolese populations are obliged to speak French or Swahili, rather than their mother tongue, with the *muzungu*[20] who arrive, there is an access problem.

3 Harmonising the response

For international actors, participation through coordination leads to greater harmonisation of approaches in the field, especially in relation to rapid onset crises. While this harmonisation takes place in the technical domain (type of house, kits to distribute, dividing up of zones) it should also include the choice of participatory techniques, especially when food-for-work and cash-for-work methods are employed. This would mean that programmes that are unable to offer materially motivated participation are not prejudiced against.

> A Congolese development actor testifies: 'We distribute seeds in liaison with local organisations. A contract based on a common agreement was drawn up. When [international aid actors] arrive, they distribute seeds for free, from one season to another. How can we ensure that our action is sustainable? How should we set up a permanent smallholders organisation?'[21]

4 Concerns over durability and the long term

Development actors carry out actions that involve participatory techniques because local capacity building is one of their objectives. Linking relief programmes to development efforts is a major concern for them, especially in relation to a long-running emergency when there is continuous interaction between the various responses.

5 A question of principle

To participate is one's duty. Humanitarian actors, particularly those who have signed the codes of conduct of the International Red Cross and the Red Crescent, have adopted humanitarian principles that include participation. Employing participatory techniques is a means of applying humanitarian principles.

6 A question of balance

Congolese aid actors participate in order to make their voices heard, to gain influence and to be part of the response. For them, participation is a way of securing a place in humanitarian action.

Participation is in itself a dialogue. To strengthen this process, **it is important, if not essential, to ensure that Congolese aid actors are more involved, to provide a meeting place, and to support discussion and coordination initiatives, which are set up in the field**.

7 Recruitment

Recruiting Congolese personnel (rewarded with salaries or payment-in-kind) is seen by some Congolese and international NGOs to be a form of participation. Meanwhile, for affected populations, it is no more than a means of survival (a source of employment). 'Being part of a team which supplies aid' and 'participating' is interpreted differently, depending on the speaker.

4.1.4 What are the reasons for not participating?

Research revealed cases of non-participation. It is important to investigate the reasons why affected populations refuse to participate in some humanitarian actions, and why some international or Congolese humanitarian actors do not apply participatory techniques.

1 A question of trust

Lack of understanding between international and Congolese aid actors can often be explained by lack of trust. International actors prefer not to involve Congolese NGOs due to the large number of organisations already present in the field and bad past experience.

> An international aid actor testified that he prefers to work directly with the populations. A few years ago, a programme

ran into difficulties because a Congolese aid actor did not respect the conditions specified in a partnership agreement.

In eastern DRC, lack of trust is often linked to poor knowledge of the numerous Congolese and international aid actors in the field. International organisations need reliable sources of information on Congolese aid actors. Similarly, Congolese organisations repeatedly ask for information on the mandates, missions and objectives of international aid actors. The plate-forme Diobass au Kivu and OCHA are carrying out work to fill this gap. Other actors are asked to do the same.

2 Humanitarian principles

One of the main concerns of international organisations is remaining independent and impartial. Actors avoid collaborating with Congolese structures that are seen as connected to the conflict.

But Congolese organisations and affected populations are also concerned with cultivating a neutral image. Thus, they avoid becoming involved in a partnership with any actor that might associate them with a party to the conflict.

A small association of NGOs in Bukavu explains: 'It seems as if there is always a political agenda attached to aid. In fact, we sometimes feel like we are working with people without having the least idea what their intentions are'.

3 The urgent nature of needs

Aid actors argue that the urgent nature of the situation, particularly when lives are at risk, limits participation. During the acute phase of an emergency, participation between Congolese and international aid actors is largely reduced, as it is difficult to find time for formal participation processes. It is at this point, though, that spontaneous organisation occurs, such as neighbourly solidarity and local voluntary efforts, far removed from participatory techniques.

Is it logical to 'waste one's time' consulting populations when basic needs are of the utmost importance? One actor certified that: 'it would be unacceptable to carry out a participatory needs assessment when people are dying around us'. But is this position justified, given that international humanitarian interventions often occur once the acute phase of the emergency has ended?

4 Pre-defined strategy

During certain stages of the project cycle, especially programme design and beneficiary targeting, participation is reduced due to conditions imposed by donors (standards and beneficiary profiles, for instance). This leads to problems like inappropriate responses or to the distribution of aid to populations unaffected by the emergency.

5 Survival

The greatest concern of affected populations is survival: trying to find food, erecting or searching for shelter, and looking for employment or a source of income. In such a context, affected populations do not see participation as a goal, but, at most, a means of attaining their objectives.

6 Security issues

Security is considered both an argument for participation (access to populations) and a constraint, both by humanitarian actors and the population. It is impossible for affected populations to be involved in an action that might endanger their lives. Humanitarian aid actors cannot implement relief efforts in areas that do not fulfil minimum security conditions.

> Some Congolese organisations tried to negotiate with international bodies on the matter of carrying out actions in inaccessible areas. But the response was always the same: 'We cannot send funds or aid into areas that we are not able to monitor'.

7 A question of expertise

One factor that reduces the participation of **Congolese aid actors** in humanitarian action is that the majority **lacks the technical expertise** needed in specific emergency contexts. These actors are predominantly development based, working primarily in the area of agricultural development. This constraint may be justified in relation to the design and implementation phases of highly technical programmes, yet it does not carry weight in regard to other phases of the project cycle and integrated approaches.

International aid actors, meanwhile, are either unconvinced by, or **have not received sufficient training in, or information on,** the importance of participatory practices.

8 Wide-reaching programmes and the extent of needs

The more ambitious the programme, the less participatory it tends to be. When needs are urgent, population movement is complex, and programmes target several thousand, or perhaps even tens of thousands, of dispersed disaster victims, humanitarian actors find it difficult to employ participatory approaches.

4.1.5 Participation, how?

In eastern DRC, the application of participatory techniques depends on the type of crisis and the project-cycle phase. The sector is also an influencing factor, especially when the programme requires skills that the affected population does not possess.

The following list focuses on participatory techniques used throughout the project cycle and according to the type of crisis and phase. However, by no means should it be considered a comprehensive checklist for use in the field. In any case, the most remarkable characteristic of these participatory techniques is their simplicity.

- Interviews, meetings and focus groups, in order to pool information and to consult with the populations.
- Workshops, informal meetings and committees, in order to assign functions.
- Formal and informal partnerships with local structures (Congolese NGOs and entities that have emerged from local administration), in order to delegate tasks and, to a lesser extent, decision-making.
- Capacity-building mechanisms.
- Use of needs assessments and project designs by organisations already present in the area.

Two of these tools have been adopted from the development sector and warrant more in depth analysis: partnership and capacity building.

A Is partnership possible during an emergency?

Establishing partnerships between international and Congolese aid actors has proved to be an effective way of responding to the emergency, especially at the height of an acute phase of a complex emergency. The following two examples illustrate how a partnership is an efficient means of supplying emergency relief, but how it can also be a source of complications.

> The ESPD network worked in partnership with UNICEF to set up the Transit Centre for Unaccompanied Children in Bagira (in Bukavu region). It appears, though, that there was not enough time to discuss the protocols that were signed, highlighting just how difficult it is to establish effective partnerships in emergency situations. Furthermore, according to surveys, although operational aspects were successfully delegated to ESPD, fund management was not, due to lack of local expertise in this field.
>
> When the Kalongue population was displaced (in Bukavu region), the VAS worked in partnership with the NOVIB.VAS

> animators gave the emergency alert effectively: needs were rapidly identified, monitoring was carried out by a Congolese aid actor, and costs were kept low thanks to the fact that a network of animators was available and in place. Similarly, the VAS had already earned the population's trust and confidence, which greatly facilitated the actions. NOVIB sent one of its staff immediately to assess the damage and thus funds were released straight away for the response.

It is hard to imagine how an international aid actor could have achieved all that NOVIB did without a Congolese partner. One of the advantages of this project was the network of animators, which visited the disaster area regularly and could cope with access constraints. When the project was complete, the VAS network continued to visit the region and to monitor the action. The technical expertise of VAS staff ensured that the project was adapted to the needs of the population.

The above example illustrates that existing local networks can help to improve access and, furthermore, that they have skills that can be put to use. **Partnership can, therefore, be considered not only a means of carrying out humanitarian action, but also a way of strengthening the management capacities of local actors. Meanwhile, thorough understanding of the actor's technical expertise and the technical requirements of the programme is essential**. Setting up a partnership is a process that requires time and, above all, confidence between partners.

B Emergency response or building capacities?

The following is one of the questions most frequently asked by humanitarian actors: 'Is capacity building possible during an emergency?' **The USHIRIKA project,** implemented by the IRC, provides an example of how this can be achieved. Its aim is not to supply humanitarian aid, but rather to build local capacities in an emergency context – although activities carried out in the field are specifically related to the emergency.

Box 16 Participation during the IRC USHIRIKA capacity-building programme

Objective to build the capacity of Congolese actors by financing an emergency project. USHIRIKA partners set up the entire project; the IRC provided back up in order to improve their management capabilities.

- **Programme** Projects are to last a maximum of six months and have a total budget of $25,000. Promotional activities were carried out, notably by radio, so that Congolese aid actors could submit their funding proposals.
- **Partner-selection process** A commission made up of international and Congolese actors, and specialised technicians, selected USHIRIKA programme partners. During the partner-selection process, the commission was looking to include: Congolese aid actors with varying organisational structures; a mixture of ethnic groups; and sectors that had been pre-defined by the programme.
- **Implementation** Congolese partners were responsible for carrying out the projects. Each project was subject to a contract or convention, which was signed by the partner and the IRC.
- **Monitoring** Three committees carried out monitoring: financial follow-up; local capacity building – training programmes were set up to cover weak points; and operational follow-up.
- **Evaluation** Continuous assessments were conducted, as well as a final evaluation via a workshop.

Programme results were deemed positive in terms of capacity building. USHIRIKA partners became better prepared to face an emergency and to carry out this type of programme.

Results in terms of emergency response were less clear-cut. Pre-defined lists do not always cover a population's real emergency needs. How can one juggle the two objectives of capacity building and responding to emergency requirements? **Maybe one needs to be more flexible in terms of sector choice and to eliminate representation criteria by zone, in order to meet priority requirements**.

This type of programme is innovative because of its upstream approach. The effects of capacity-building activities, which prepare Congolese aid actors for emergency-relief management, will become apparent during the next emergency. Structures benefiting from capacity-building programmes will demonstrate their emergency-management skills when the next emergency or rapid onset crisis breaks out, if emergency funds are allocated to them.

The eastern DRC clearly illustrates the indistinct boundaries separating relief and development. Humanitarian action carried out during this long-running complex emergency bears both emergency and rehabilitation characteristics. Congolese aid actors are interested in long-term impact, while donors finance emergency relief. Food aid and non-food distributions are accompanied by, *inter alia*, seed distribution, rotating credit systems, follow-up committees and training programmes. Can one say that the emergency is over in Bukavu and its surrounding areas, when people are still without housing and some do not have access to food? That Goma is not in a phase of reconstruction when infrastructural rehabilitation programmes exist? Or that eastern DRC has not entered the development phase if the majority of Congolese aid actors has been working in agricultural development for years?

The various ways in which populations become involved in decisions related to implementation and learning processes demonstrate the importance of the participation debate.

4.2 KEY FACTORS THAT IMPACT ON THE PARTICIPATION OF AFFECTED POPULATIONS

For all of the various types of crisis affecting eastern DRC, the conflict is the main preoccupation of populations and humanitarian actors alike. It affects both the form and the degree of participation. The most important issues highlighted in this study, such as access to populations, the security of the population and humanitarian staff, the question of impartiality, and the quest for legitimacy, are relevant throughout all phases of a complex crisis.

4.2.1 Legitimacy

In a complex crisis, one of the most troublesome issues concerns the relationship between participation and power and interest. Who represents whom? This is a central theme in a scenario where a large number of actors are seeking legitimacy.

Populations ask themselves whether by participating they are being manipulated by a certain actor, whether their participation means that they will then be associated with a particular group, or whether by participating in a project, commission or committee they risk their own lives or those of their family.

For CBOs, meanwhile, **participation is a way of gaining legitimacy**. The more people they involve, the more legitimate their role as 'representative' or 'spokesperson' becomes. For them, participation implies getting people involved, having a good turn out at meetings, being able to say: 'We are legitimate because the population calls on us to represent it'.

International aid actors gain legitimacy via their mandates, which is not the case for Congolese aid actors. The large number of Congolese NGOs in the field makes it difficult for international aid actors to differentiate between them and to choose a 'legitimate' Congolese partner.

Participation in humanitarian action is also a matter of legitimacy for local authorities in terms of running affairs in the occupied zone.

4.2.2 Access and security

Carrying out humanitarian action often raises the question of access. How can aid convoys reach disaster victims if the terrain is inaccessible? What should be done in the rainy season? How can aid reach those under siege? Some humanitarian actors often call on other organisations and affected populations in order to reach disaster victims. Others refuse to intervene if expatriates or international NGOs are absent.

When faced with access problems, several strategies are applicable.

- International aid actors turn to Congolese aid bodies and community organisations.
- Congolese aid actors call on community organisations, committees and other existing groups.
- Populations devise methods of 'moving to where the aid is'.

Participation is, therefore, a means of ensuring that aid is distributed in areas with limited access (by means of partnership or by working with committees and community groups). Frequently, **restricted access creates a need for participation**. However, access and security problems are also seen as limitations, preventing the implementation of participatory practices, and sometimes even jeopardising the programme itself.

4.2.3 Impartiality and independence

The eastern DRC is all the more complex due to the large number of ethnic groups and the wide diversity of political actors and parties to the conflict. When the moment to participate arrives, humanitarian actors and affected populations alike ask themselves questions like: **'Is this actor independent and impartial? Is this action neutral in relation to the**

dynamics of the conflict? Is there a link between this actor and a group that is believed to be involved in the conflict?'

For international actors, remaining 'independent and impartial' is of the utmost importance. This factor often restricts participation, especially in regard to cooperation with Congolese aid actors. Before selecting a Congolese partner, it is essential for international aid actors to identify any possible ties with the warring parties and to check transparency. Abiding by humanitarian principles, though, prevents international actors from building partnerships with certain Congolese aid actors or public administration structures. **Respect for impartiality and independence is often achieved to the detriment of the most important of principles, that of humanity**.

For affected populations, participating in a committee or benefiting from a humanitarian programme can have political implications. For example, coordinating a committee might make a leader stand out and thus put his/her life in danger.

Although the subject of politics is always avoided in eastern DRC, the majority of key participation issues is directly linked to risks associated with conflict and aid.

4.2.4 The risks linked to participation

1 Commencing a dialogue

Although humanitarian programmes always seek to respond to the needs of affected populations, each humanitarian actor has a specific technical field of expertise and often donors have exact budget lines. In this sense, commencing a real dialogue might reveal inconsistencies between a population's priorities and an actor's ability to respond to them. **Actors must raise this problem with the population or seek more flexible alternatives, even with other organisations**.

2 Delegating responsibility without adapted monitoring

It has been pointed out that recruiting Congolese personnel is sometimes considered to be a form of participation. In a weak economy, however, delegating responsibilities to Congolese personnel without adequate monitoring presents certain risks. The disparity between salaries and the amounts of money handled, contrasted with the needs of the local population, may provoke certain frustrations, plus corruption, mis-appropriation of aid and other problems.

The recruitment of Congolese staff as a form of participation requires precision. **While it can help international actors to understand better certain cultural aspects and the context, it is by no means a substitute for 'real' delegation of power, which can be achieved through partnerships**. Recruited persons are obliged to adhere to the cultural norms of the structure that has hired them. In addition, recruitment often results in the removal of key staff from Congolese organisations, weakening their structure and capacity building.

3 Assistantship / wait-and-see policy

Inappropriate participation strategies, including those that try to dress up proposals to fit the requirements of donors, can cause problems in the long run, such as assistantship and a wait-and-see attitude. When populations become accustomed to aid and to certain forms of participation, they overlook or reject participatory humanitarian action, which demands greater investment of time, effort and resources.

4 Participation as a criterion for selection

Participation in itself can be a means of selection, or even discrimination. Actors may implement a programme because a population actively participates, rather than because their needs are greater.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Acute complex emergencies are generally thought to be contexts where the constraints on participatory techniques greatly outweigh their advantages. However, **it is the responsibility of humanitarian actors to open up the debate on 'who should participate' and 'how'.**

Use of participatory techniques

The use of participatory methods is strongly recommended, although care must be taken to avoid excessive technocracy. **Similarly, humanitarian actors must reassess the pertinence of participatory techniques**. The use of participatory tools is not necessarily a guarantee of participation by the population. Tools that are badly designed, incorrectly implemented or too complicated, can be used to manipulate people (or as a means of justification to donors). Participating populations are easily dazzled by hi-tech procedures, which may lead to communication problems. People invited to workshops, focus groups or meetings may be afraid of appearing ignorant or less 'knowledgeable' than expatriates, or they may simply not dare to contradict them out of respect. So, in the long term, **simplicity**, **humility** and **listening** are the most effective techniques. **Humanitarian aid actors should not hesitate to adopt traditional forms of dialogue and participation** - they are often more effective than standardised tools.

But simplicity, humility and listening pertain to individuals rather than to humanitarian organisations. To increase the savoir-faire of humanitarian staff, therefore, **training in participatory approaches in emergency contexts should be provided**.

Direct participation and participation by representation

'Who should participate?' Should affected populations participate directly, without an intermediary? Or should one consult and involve the organisations that represent them?

The answer to this question is relative to the local context. **Ideally, participation means that populations become directly involved in the process. But certain cultures are not accustomed to this approach**, preferring that leaders and representatives (community groups and others) take the decisions. **Consequently, it is important not to overlook other forms of participation that do not directly involve affected populations**. The danger associated with participation by representation is that minorities might be omitted (certain ethnic groups and those low down in the local hierarchy). If one ignores the fact that certain groups will not participate without their leaders, this might cause friction within existing social structures and organisations. **Hence, the maturity of groups and the forms of local organisation must be considered**.

Definition of 'affected population'

Although it seems obvious that affected populations are the victims of an emergency or a natural disaster, **all preconceptions regarding the definition of affected populations should be discarded**. Observations from the DRC show that some families that sheltered victims became considerably weaker and more vulnerable, and, in turn, became affected populations themselves. Do humanitarian projects take them into account?

Similarly, the use of standardised categories for certain vulnerable groups (women, elderly people, children) may well obscure complex realities, such as discrimination against ethnic groups, certain regions, particular activities, religious belief or political sympathies. **It is highly recommended to distance oneself from standardised categories and try to identify truly vulnerable groups**.Vulnerable groups should

not be standardised, since even people who have power in an area can become victims or can be discriminated against by another group.

Donor policies

Donors are regularly requested to display greater flexibility: in the allocation of funds for activities related to the participation of affected populations, even in emergency contexts; in the definition of programme implementation deadlines and in the definition of beneficiary selection criteria.

The choice of partner to assist with the participation of affected populations

Some international NGOs prefer not to involve public administration structures in their programmes, out of concern for impartiality. Yet, these networks can help to simplify the participation of affected populations. Furthermore, involving the local administration would contribute to the durability of aid work and strengthen local structures, which might take over the project once the conflict has ended. It is advisable, therefore, **to examine ways in which these actors can be involved in the efforts of international aid actors**, while taking care to respect internal constraints, the project and the organisation's mandate.

It would be useful to **develop ways of getting to know existing Congolese aid organisations**. The initiative of the Plate-forme Diobass au Kivu and OCHA to establish a reference centre for local organisations could eventually overcome one of the most important obstacles to partnerships and other forms of participation by Congolese NGOs.

Finally, there is no simple solution to improving the participation of affected populations in humanitarian action in eastern DRC. However, the culture and the history of the Great Lakes region, existing power relationships, and the complexity of the relationship between ethnic groups and inter-ethnic tensions are essential to understanding fully what determines the form and the degree of participation.

Notes

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3 Congolese NGOs coordinate their work via 'platforms'.

4 Pamphlet on the PIDP-Kivu.

5 'Popularisers' (or 'vulgarisateurs') are in charge of conveying information relative to a specific domain to the rest of the population. In the DRC, the majority of popularisers work in agricultural development.

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7 Jean-Marie Rusimbuka, (June 2002) Representative of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) Conference in Bukavu.

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9 Plate-forme Diobass au Kivu, (June 2002), ibid. p. 5.

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[11] Plate-forme Diobass au Kivu, (November 2002) L'aide d'urgence et de réhabilitation: Comment renforcer les capacités de négociation des organisations locales face aux pratiques des aides d'urgence, Rapport final, (Bukavu, DRC : Plate-forme Diobass au Kivu), p. 4.

[12] Plate-forme Diobass, Kivu, (November 2002). ibid.

[13] ECHO (2002) 'Project Cycle Management Handbook'. Brussels: European Commission.

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[15] Winder Y., R.Mutiko and S. Ferron (2002) Oxfam GB's Emergency Response. Evaluation Report, Goma: DRC: OXFAM, p. 5.

[16] Interview with development actor.

[17] Endanda.K, L. Kasereka et al. (2003) Etude de l'impact socio-économique de la réhabilitation de la route Sake-Masisi, (Goma, DRC: GOTEC (Goal Team Consult) Inc.).

[18] Endanda.K, L. Kasereka et al. (2003) ibid.

[19] Winder Y., R.Mutiko and S. Ferron (2002) ibid.

[20] Swahili word meaning 'white person'.

[21] A Congolese development organisation.

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