Early warning | Information sharing | Material support | Negative coping strategies
Protection analysis | Self-protection outside of community protection structures

📍 **Democratic Republic of Congo**

The early-warning system in North Kivu

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Introduction

The community protection project is implemented in the territory of Masisi in North Kivu, where the security situation is volatile. It is characterised by the activism of armed groups and otherwise unidentified armed men. The different elements of these armed groups sporadically clash in most villages in the territory. The elements of the armed forces of the DRC present in the region attempt to re-establish the authority of the state by tracking down the militiamen. The otherwise unidentified armed men, for their part, make repeated incursions into different villages in the region. Following these events, several forms of human rights violations/abuse have been recorded in the entities of the Masisi territory, including arbitrary arrests, serious injuries, burglary, deliberate destruction of crops, kidnapping, extortion of property, killing cattle, arson, early marriage, looting, torture, forced labour, killings, rape and theft.

Community strategies before the implementation of the early-warning system

Having identified these protection risks in the communities, some inhabitants of the region shared information about the security situation with local authorities, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), civil society leaders, and journalists from various community radio stations. By sharing this information, community members became exposed to various protection risks (particularly killings and kidnapping) from the presumed perpetrators of the aforementioned crimes, especially because there was insufficient knowledge of the principles of monitoring and "do no harm".

Implementation of the early-warning system in the communities

The early-warning system is seen as a solution to exposure to protection risks by the community members who share security information with the various actors present in the area, since the information-sharing is carried out in a structured way that respects the standards of the monitoring process. The focal points apply the ideas learnt during the capacity-building sessions, sharing warnings by SMS (not by phone call) to facilitators/focal points at the territorial level. Once the information has been shared, they delete the messages shared with the facilitators and respect the principle of confidentiality. They are not authorised to call the facilitators to share warnings.

When implementing the early-warning system in the communities, we start by selecting the focal points of this system by community, according to the following criteria:

- Coming from the region originally (native, returnee, displaced, relocated);

- Knowledge of the general context of the region;

- Being driven by a desire to make a positive change to the problems of their local community;

- Having a sense of responsibility;

- Having a desire to research and analyse the protection situation in their area.

Similarly, those identified as focal points are obliged to scrupulously respect the basic principles of confidential monitoring of protection cases, namely:

1. "Do no harm";

2. Triangulation of information (three different sources of information);

3. Confidentiality;

4. Impartiality;

5. A human-rights-based approach;

6. Neutrality.

After the selection stage, capacity-building sessions are held for the focal points concerning the early-warning system. In order to enable the focal points to put into practice the lessons learnt during the capacity-building sessions, SOPROP provides them with communication units equivalent to $10 each month, i.e. 1,000 units each.

The focal points actively and regularly participate in the monitoring of protection incidents, as well as in analysis of the security context and trends of incidents in the operation zone. This contributes significantly to the advocacy activities undertaken in order to improve the populations' security.

The communication chain