Monitoring COVID-19 impacts in Eastern DRC | Results from 3rd Round High-Frequency Phone Survey[1] of Displaced[2]

Summary

Forcibly displaced populations more often needed health care, compared to host populations, but had similar access to treatment. While a larger share of children returned to school as of January 2022, those from forcibly displaced households continued to be less likely in school than children from host community families.

Forcibly displaced households continue to be more often employed, compared to host populations, with a slightly higher share engaged in agriculture. Yet, a larger share of the former group continues to report a decrease in income from agriculture.
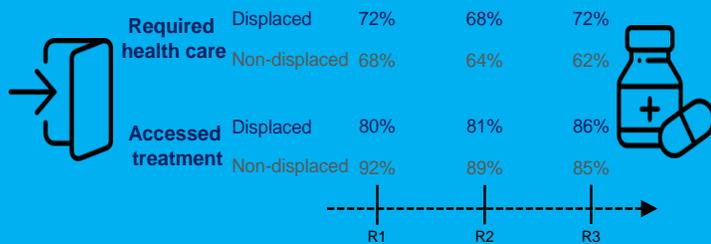
In addition, reducing food consumption continues to be prevalent, with both groups similarly relying on this coping mechanism. Food insecurity continues to be widespread, with a larger share of forcibly displaced populations self-reporting food insecurity. Despite this, a similar share of both groups reported having received food aid, which represents an increase among host populations.

Overall, forcibly displaced and host populations equally reported their livelihood, food security and social life was affected by COVID-19.

Majority of households reported telling stories and singing songs to their children. Simultaneously, both groups reported much less frequently to read books, naming, counting, or drawing, and taking children out of the house. Around 2 out of 10 households can be classified as suffering moderately severe or severe depression, with no differences between both groups. Yet, feelings associated with moderate to mild depression have been more frequently reported among forcibly displaced population members.
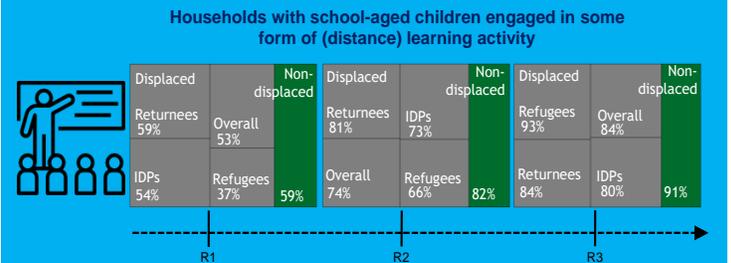
Access to food and medical supplies

Compared to hosts, forcibly displaced populations more frequently reported needing access to health care, while a similar share among both groups accessed the required treatment.

Required health care	Displaced	72%	68%	72%
	Non-displaced	68%	64%	62%
Accessed treatment	Displaced	80%	81%	86%
	Non-displaced	92%	89%	85%

R1   R2   R3

Schooling

Forcibly displaced populations less commonly reported that children had returned to school as of January 2022, compared to host populations.

Households with school-aged children engaged in some form of (distance) learning activity

Displaced		Non-displaced	
Returnees 59%	Overall 53%		
IDPs 54%	Refugees 37%	59%	
Displaced		Non-displaced	
Returnees 81%	IDPs 73%		
Overall 74%	Refugees 66%	82%	
Displaced		Non-displaced	
Refugees 93%	Overall 84%		
Returnees 84%	IDPs 80%	91%	

R1   R2   R3

Employment
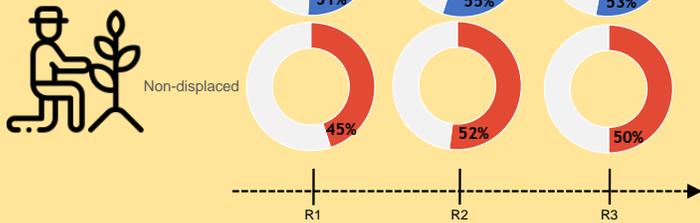
Forcibly displaced respondents were more often employed compared to host populations, and over half of households in each group engaged in agriculture.
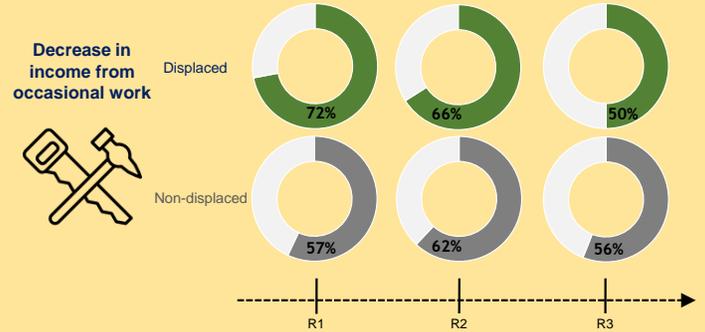
Employed population

Displaced		Non-displaced	
Men 77%	Overall 73%	Men 67%	Overall 62%
Women 68%		Women 57%	

Displaced		Non-displaced	
Men 71%	Overall 70%	Men 68%	Overall 64%
Women 68%		Women 60%	

Displaced		Non-displaced	
Men 75%	Overall 72%	Men 72%	Overall 66%
Women 67%		Women 60%	

R1   R2   R3
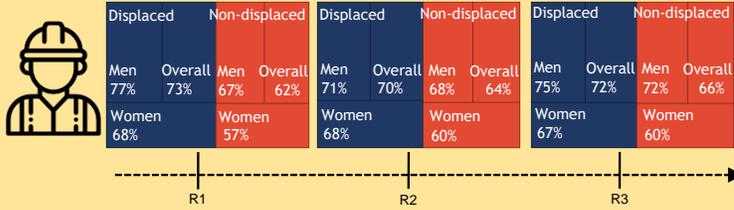
Households engaged in agriculture

Displaced: 51%, 55%, 53%

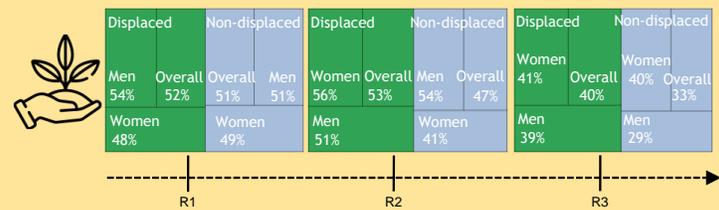Non-displaced: 45%, 52%, 50%

R1   R2   R3

Household revenue sources

A smaller share of forcibly displaced populations reported a decrease in income from occasional work, compared to host populations.
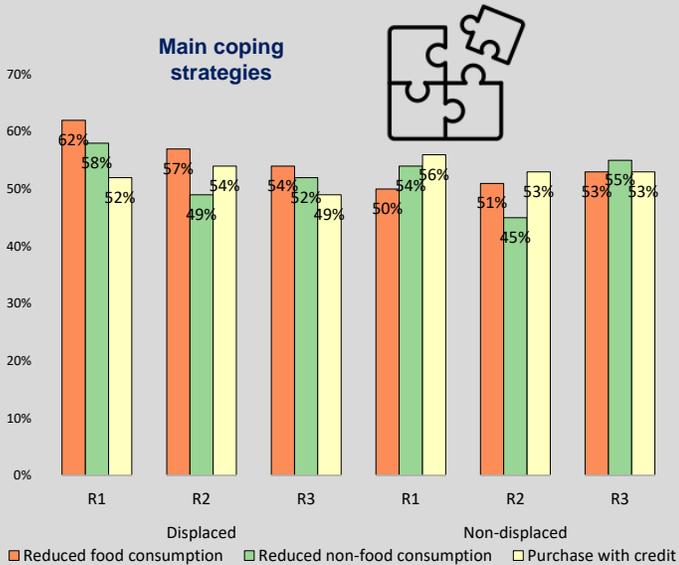
Decrease in income from occasional work

Displaced: 72%, 66%, 50%

Non-displaced: 57%, 62%, 56%

R1   R2   R3

Decrease in income from agriculture

Displaced		Non-displaced	
Men 54%	Overall 52%	Overall 51%	Men 51%
Women 48%		Women 49%	

Displaced		Non-displaced	
Women 56%	Overall 53%	Men 54%	Overall 47%
Men 51%		Women 41%	

Displaced		Non-displaced	
Women 41%	Overall 40%	Women 40%	Overall 33%
Men 39%		Men 29%	

R1   R2   R3

Coping strategies

Forcibly displaced populations and host populations equally reduced food consumption, while nearly half of both groups also reporting reduced non-food consumption and buying on credit.
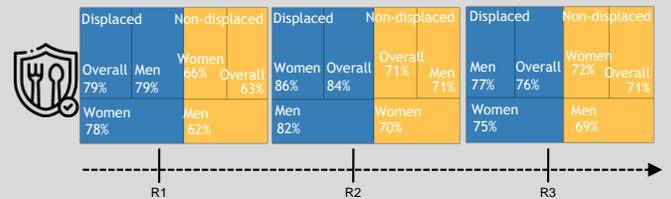
Main coping strategies

Displaced:
- R1: 62%, 58%, 52%
- R2: 57%, 49%, 54%
- R3: 54%, 52%, 49%

Non-displaced:
- R1: 50%, 54%, 56%
- R2: 51%, 45%, 53%
- R3: 53%, 55%, 53%

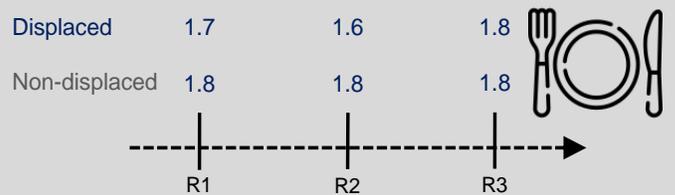Legend: ■ Reduced food consumption ■ Reduced non-food consumption □ Purchase with credit

Food security

Almost 8 out of 10 forcibly displaced households were food insecure, compared to 7 out of 10 households among host populations.
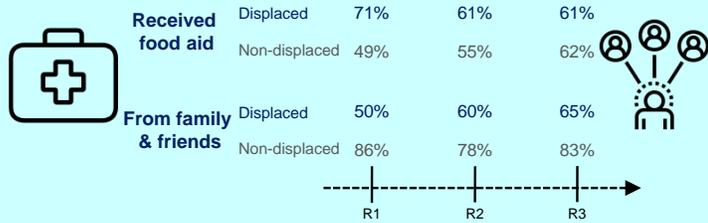
Food insecurity

Displaced		Non-displaced	
Overall 79%	Men 79%	Women 66%	Overall 63%
Women 78%		Men 62%	

Displaced		Non-displaced	
Women 86%	Overall 84%	Overall 71%	Men 71%
Men 82%		Women 70%	

Displaced		Non-displaced	
Men 77%	Overall 76%	Women 72%	Overall 71%
Women 75%		Men 69%	

R1   R2   R3

Number of meals consumed by adults per day

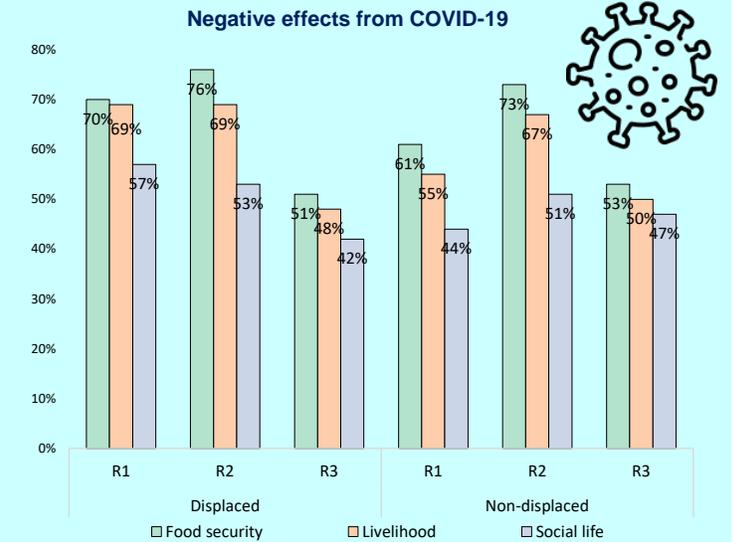|	R1	R2	R3
Displaced	1.7	1.6	1.8
Non-displaced	1.8	1.8	1.8

Assistance from government and other sources

6 out of 10 forcibly displaced households received food aid, mainly from family.

		R1	R2	R3
Received food aid	Displaced	71%	61%	61%
	Non-displaced	49%	55%	62%
From family & friends	Displaced	50%	60%	65%
	Non-displaced	86%	78%	83%

Perceived negative effects

Forcibly displaced households equally frequently reported their livelihood and food security to be affected by COVID-19, compared to host populations.

Negative effects from COVID-19

Displaced:
- R1: Food security 70%, Livelihood 69%, Social life 57%
- R2: Food security 76%, Livelihood 69%, Social life 53%
- R3: Food security 51%, Livelihood 48%, Social life 42%

Non-displaced:
- R1: Food security 61%, Livelihood 55%, Social life 44%
- R2: Food security 73%, Livelihood 67%, Social life 51%
- R3: Food security 53%, Livelihood 50%, Social life 47%

Legend: ☐ Food security ☐ Livelihood ☐ Social life

Child development

Forcibly displaced households more often declared telling stories, singing songs and reading books to children, compared to host populations.

Activities with children aged 2-10

Displaced
- Telling stories 77%
- Singing songs 74%
- Reading books 45%

Non-displaced
- Telling stories 70%
- Singing songs 67%
- Reading books 35%

Mental health

At least 1 out of 5 forcibly displaced and host households declared experiencing some sign of mental health issues.

Signs of mental health issues

Displaced
- Tired 33%
- Sad 30%
- Concentration issues 23%
- Sleep issues 31%
- No interest in things 23%
- Eating issues 22%

Non-displaced
- Sad 36%
- Sleeping issues 31%
- No interest in things 28%
- Tired 36%
- Concentration issues 24%
- Eating issues 23%

Box: Survey Methodology

DRC CO

The DRC CO High-Frequency Phone Survey (HFPS) calls individuals from the social registry in Eastern DRC that was built up by the Social Protection and Jobs (SPJ) program and managed by Fonds Social de la RDC (FSRDC) across different sites in Eastern DRC. The social registry is comprised of individuals showing up to the public lotteries of the program. With those selected through the public lottery becoming beneficiaries of the SPJ-FSRDC project. The program remunerates beneficiaries U$3 per day for their participation in community works, which is announced prior to the public lottery. As a result, the selection mechanism ensured that only individuals from poor and vulnerable populations participated in the lotteries – who were willing and able to carry out work for respective daily wage. The SPJ-FSRDC program collected phone numbers during public lotteries. Hence, the current panel survey by the DRC Crisis Observatory was able to select from a pool of vulnerable and poor populations residing in Eastern DRC who showed up to the public lottery AND provided a phone number to MARTA (Monitoring Automated for Real Time Analysis). MARTA recorded a total of 68,558 respondents across Beni (including Kalunguta), Bunia, Goma, Lubero, and Komanda, 51,007 of which provided a phone number, out of which the Crisis Observatory successfully contacted 1,453 respondents (716 women and 737 men) in R1.

In R7, 1,448 were successfully interviewed. In this sample, without stratification, 311 were forcibly displaced. An additional survey was collected, mimicking the same survey instrument, but with focus on forcibly displaced, including sampling strategy, R1-displaced. The social registry counts 376 refugees, 6,501 internally displaced and 1,145 returnees. As part of R1-displaced, 126 refugees, 898 internally displaced, and 403 returnees were successfully interviewed in R7. In R8, 1,445 were successfully interviewed, and separately with 163 refugees, 879 internally displaced, and 399 returnees as part of R2-displaced. Similarly, in R9, 1,441 were successfully interviewed, with 139 refugees, 911 internally displaced, 389 returnees as part of R3-displaced separately.

Interviewers followed a protocol of calling a potential respondent at least six times in three days, with at least one hour between two calls to ensure that those less likely to pick up their phones on a first try would not be systematically left out, yielding potentially biased results. The presented survey results are strictly based on the sample of respondents who answered the survey. The HFPS is therefore illustrative of forcibly displaced population in urban and peri-urban areas in Eastern DRC, most notably those of Goma, Beni, Bunia, and Lubero.

The HFPS entailed household-level and individual-level questions comprising modules on socio-demographic, health, education, employment, revenue, (social) assistance, shock coping strategies, attitudes, insecurity as well as knowledge and behavioral questions regarding and in response to COVID-19. In the coming rounds, the DRC Crisis Observatory will be calling the same beneficiaries and eligible individuals to the extent possible to follow the evolution of their welfare across crisis, resilience, and recovery.

Data collection parameters

- Data collection period:
    - Round 1-displaced Oct 29–Nov 16 2021; Round 2-displaced Nov 29–Dec 12 2021; Round 3-displaced January 5–15 2022.
    - Round 7 Oct 29-Nov 16 2021; Round 8 Nov 29 – Dec 12 2021; Round 9 Jan 5-15 2022.
- Average duration of interviews: 30-35 mins.