



LRA CRISIS TRACKER

Midyear 2014 Security Brief
January–June 2014

PRINT VERSION

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Note: The LRA Crisis Tracker Midyear 2014 Security Brief is designed to be viewed online in an interactive format at <http://reports.lracrisistracker.com/en/midyear-2014/>. The design of this print version is more limited and is intended as a secondary copy for users with minimal internet access.

A publication of:

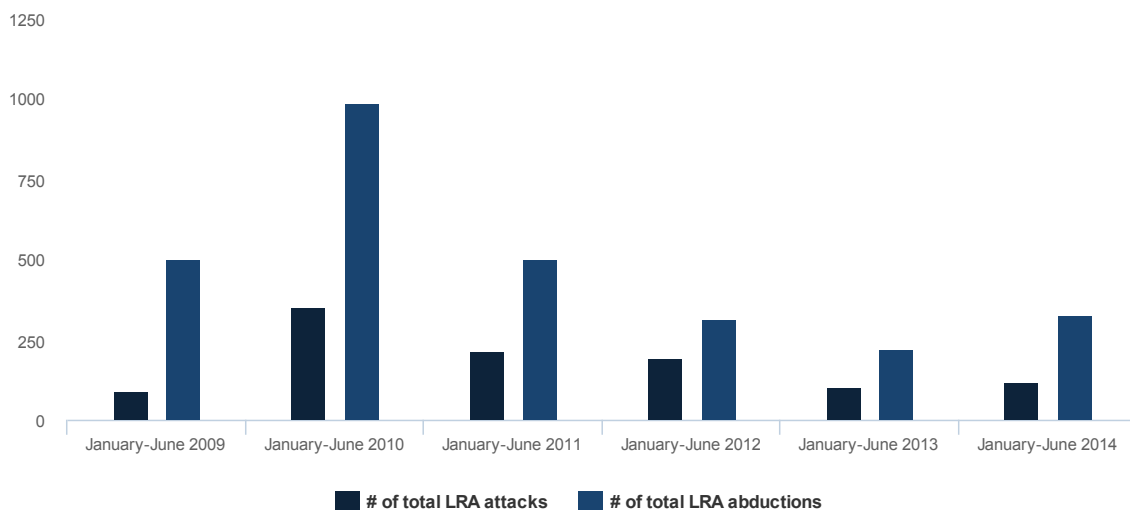


Executive Summary: LRA reverses downward trend in abductions

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) committed 57 attacks and abducted 184 people from April–June 2014 (Quarter 2 2014), a 5% drop in attacks and 28% rise in abductions from Quarter 1 2014. Overall, the group committed more attacks and abductions in the first six months of 2014 than it did in the first six months of 2013, reversing a three-year downward trend in LRA violence. Though levels of LRA violence remain far below their 2009–2011 peak, the total number of attacks and abductions across the Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo) and the Central African Republic (CAR) has stabilized over the past two years.

At more localized scales, trends in LRA violence vary widely. LRA violence west of Garamba National Park in northeastern Congo surged in the first half of 2014 and the group has already surpassed the numbers of attacks and abductions it committed there in all of 2013. However, no LRA attacks were recorded in communities south and east of the park that were once frequent targets of LRA raids.

In CAR, LRA attacks spiked near the towns of Nzako and Bakouma in Quarter 2 2014 after nearly a year of no reported LRA violence there. Further east, near the towns of Obo and Mboki, LRA attacks dropped significantly compared to Quarter 1 2014.



LRA attacks and abductions, 2009–2014

I. Congo: LRA attacks rise sharply in 2014

SUMMARY *LRA violence continued to surge in Congo's northeastern Haut Uele district, particularly west of Garamba National Park. The LRA abducted 153 Congolese civilians in the first half of 2014, more than doubling the number abducted in the first half of 2013 (72).*

In the first three months of 2014, LRA attacks in Congo were concentrated in the Niangara-Bangadi-Ngilima triangle, west of Garamba National Park. Since April, LRA attacks have shifted further west and north, towards the vicinity of Doruma and Masombo, near the border with South Sudan. From June 7–July 7, the LRA committed 11 attacks in this area, including large scale lootings of civilians traveling to and from the busy Nabiapay border market. Merchants and market-goers laden with goods and currency present easy targets for small, highly mobile bands of LRA forces that roam this sparsely inhabited area.

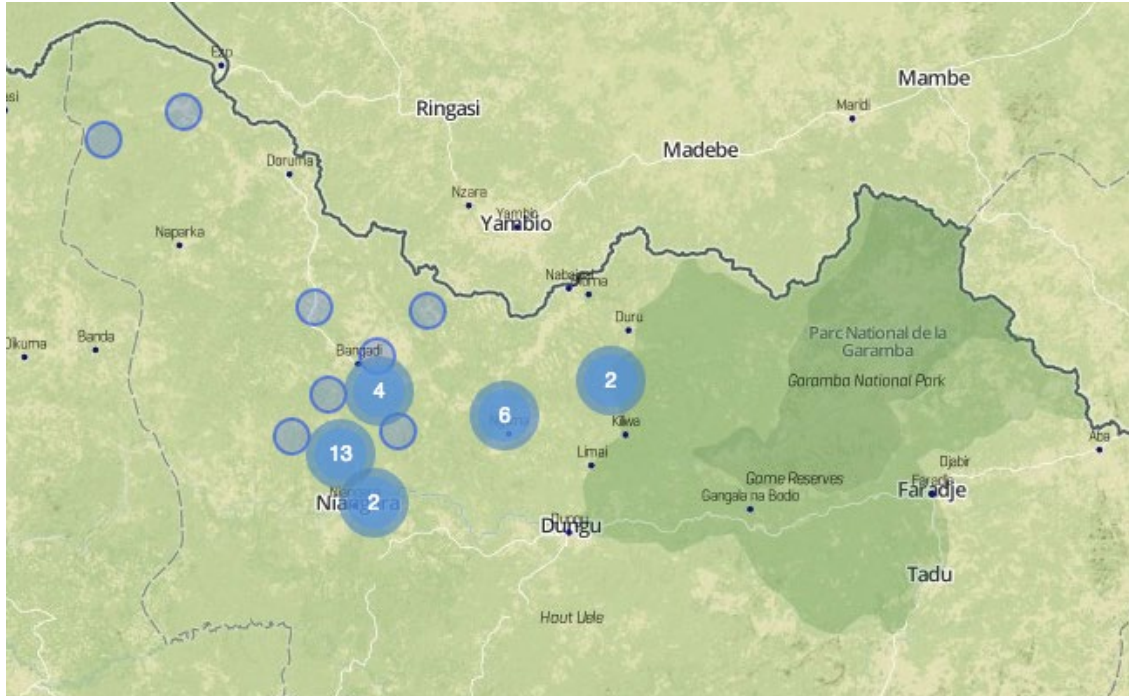
Overall, the LRA committed 44 attacks in Congo's Haut Uele and Bas Uele districts in Quarter 2 2014, up 13% from the 39 attacks in Quarter 1. LRA abductions in Congo rose 43%, from 63 in Quarter 1 to 90 in Quarter 2. The majority of these abductions lasted only a few hours or days, indicating the LRA is using most abductees only to transport looted goods and is not seeking to train new fighters. This trend, as well as a continued decline in the number of LRA killings in Congo, is consistent with a reduction in child abductions and large massacres in recent years as the group has attempted to deflect international attention from the crisis.

The overall increase in LRA activity in Haut Uele district masks the remarkable decline in attacks south and east of Garamba National Park, once an LRA stronghold. Several alleged LRA attacks were reported in this area in the first six months of 2014, but none met standards necessary to be recorded as an LRA attack by the Crisis Tracker.

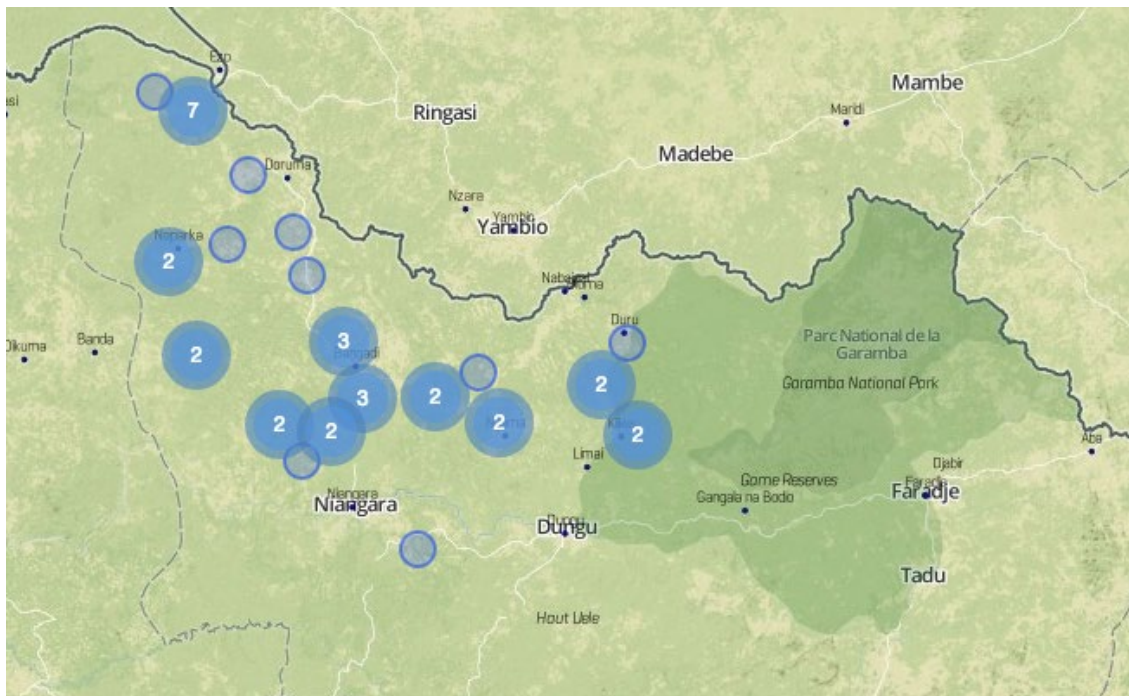
Congo: Shift in LRA attacks in Haut Uele | January 2014–June 2014

Click and drag the circle in the center of the map to see how LRA attacks in Haut Uele district shifted northwest between January 2014 and June 2014

January–March 2014



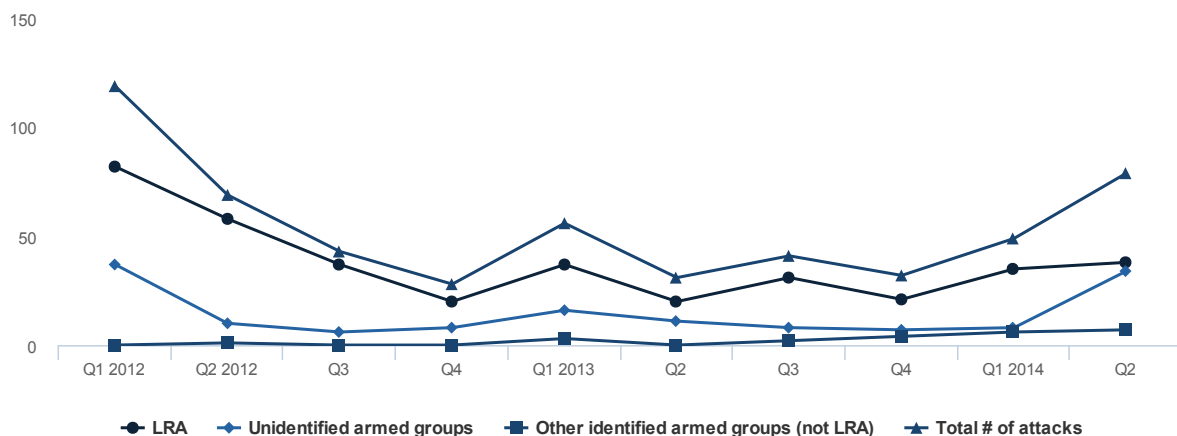
April–June 2014



II. Congo: Uptick in violence by unidentified armed groups

SUMMARY *The increase in LRA activity in Haut Uele district in 2014 has been accompanied by a 55% increase in the number of attacks committed by unidentified armed groups, from 27 attacks in the first half of 2013 to 42 attacks in the first half of 2014.*

Note on Methodology: In June 2014, the LRA Crisis Tracker team did an extensive review of its dataset on armed group attacks on civilians in LRA-affected areas. The perpetrator of each attack is now categorized as either the “LRA,” an “unidentified armed group,” or an “other armed group.” “Unidentified armed group” is used for attacks for which sources do not provide enough details to accurately identify the perpetrator. The assailants in these attacks could be rogue security forces, poachers, Mbororos, LRA, or a different armed group. “Other armed group” is used for attacks for which there are enough details to definitively identify the perpetrator as an armed actor other than the LRA. Incidents of abuses against civilians in which state security forces are clearly identified as the perpetrator are recorded separately and not included in these three categories.



Attacks against civilians in LRA-affected areas of Haut Uele district, 2012–2014

As LRA attacks in Congo have become less violent in recent years, it has become more difficult to distinguish attacks by the LRA from attacks by bandits, rogue security forces, and poachers. Consequently, the rise in attacks by unidentified armed groups in Haut Uele could indicate increased predation on civilians by any of these actors, including the LRA. In contrast, the number of attacks in Haut Uele committed by other armed groups - clearly identified as an actor other than the LRA - has remained extremely low in recent years.

Despite the difficulty in identifying perpetrators, reporting trends clearly indicate both a rise in LRA and overall armed group violence against civilians in Haut Uele, with the total number of attacks in the first half of 2014 the highest since early 2012. LRA forces were responsible for over half of these attacks, and possibly more depending on how many incidents categorized as unidentified armed group attacks were actually committed by the LRA. This trend demonstrates the continued threat that LRA rebels pose to Congolese communities, both as perpetrators of violence and as contributors to an atmosphere of lawlessness that encourages other armed groups to attack civilians.

Recent reports indicate that local security forces in Haut Uele have done little to mitigate the intensification of armed group violence in Haut Uele. Many Congolese civilians feel that Congolese military (FARDC) and UN peacekeeping (MONUSCO) forces frequently fail to take advantage of actionable intelligence to pursue armed groups and are able to deter attacks on only a handful of major towns. FARDC troops have also been implicated in abuses against civilians in Haut Uele in 2014, including rape, extortion, and torture.

III. CAR: Nzako–Bakouma area remains hotspot of LRA activity

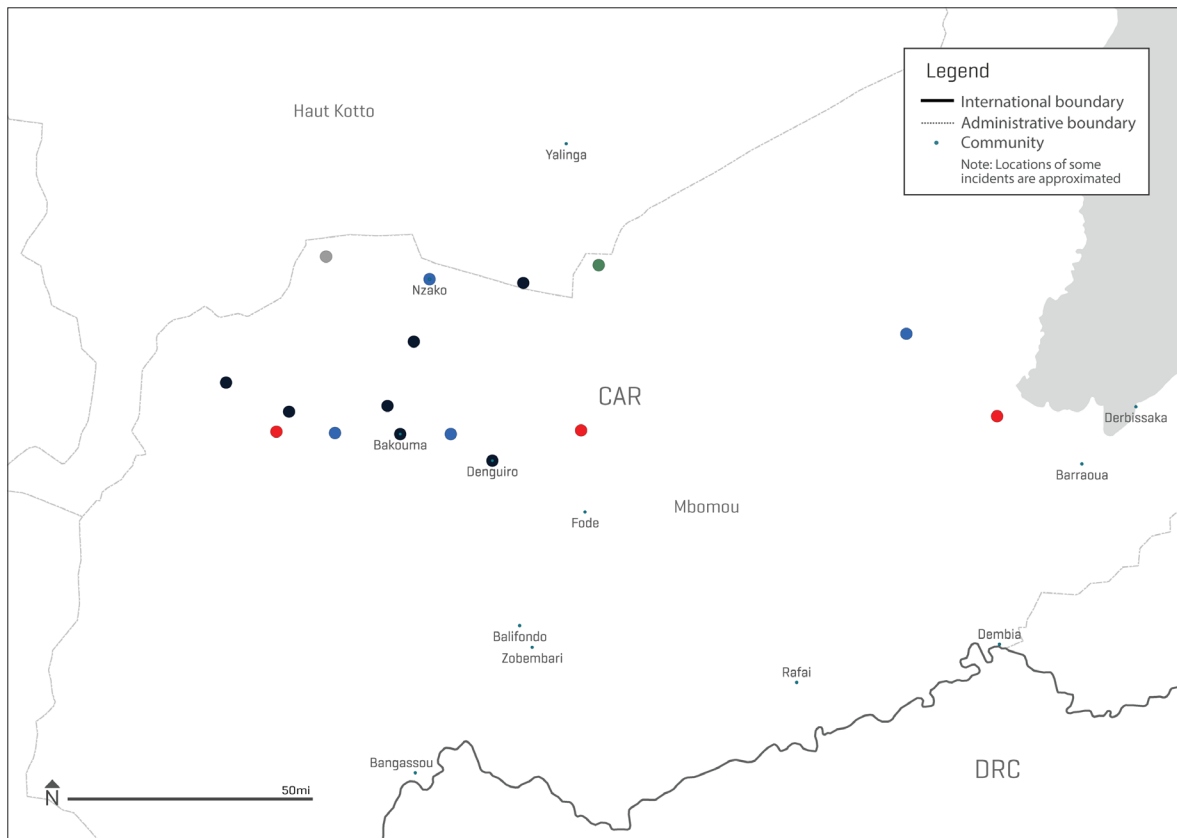
SUMMARY *LRA activity in the Nzako–Bakouma area of the CAR has surged in the past year, including the defection of LRA combatants, large-scale LRA attacks, and collaboration between LRA commanders and Seleka representatives. Ugandan military troops have pursued LRA forces in the Nzako–Bakouma area, attacking LRA groups several times and even clashing with Seleka forces.*

In early 2010, the LRA committed its first attacks near the towns of Nzako and Bakouma in the CAR's Mbomou prefecture, an area known for gold and uranium mining just west of the vast, forested Chinko River Basin. The group committed bold and large-scale attacks there in 2011 and 2012, taking advantage of the lack of Central African military or Ugandan military presence in the area.

LRA activity shifted in mid-2013, with the group halting attacks on civilians and instead making contact with Seleka representatives and civilians in remote mining sites near Nzako. In late 2013, Seleka forces facilitated the transfer of medical and food supplies to LRA groups east of Nzako after they claimed to be interested in a mass defection. Though no large groups ever surrendered, seven Ugandan LRA fighters defected near Nzako in the first half of 2014. In April 2014, LRA forces resumed attacks on civilians in the area, likely to resupply basic goods and possibly to retaliate against communities helping LRA combatants to defect.

As LRA activity in the Nzako–Bakouma area has intensified, Ugandan troops have steadily built up their presence there and in the neighboring Chinko River Basin, attacking LRA groups several times. The Ugandan military's presence has brought them into close proximity to Seleka troops, with tension over Seleka's continued support to the LRA bubbling over into a clash between the two forces in late June 2014.

CAR: LRA-related activity near Nzako and Bakouma | November 2013–June 2014



Red dot: Ugandan military forces have clashed with LRA groups several times near Nzako and the Chinko River Basin, most notably killing LRA commander Sam Kangul and at least four other fighters in November 2013.

Black dot: LRA forces have attacked civilians near Nzako and Bakouma on at least seven occasions in 2014, abducting over 100 people. Several of these raids occurred at small-scale mining outposts.

Blue dot: Seven Ugandan LRA fighters defected near Nzako in the first six months of 2014, while Ugandan forces captured another in April.

Green dot: In November 2013, Seleka leader Michel Djotodia claimed Joseph Kony was near Nzako and was willing to surrender. Working through Seleka commander General Damane, he facilitated the transfer of supplies to the LRA. Defectors in early 2014 reported that LRA rebels and Seleka representatives regularly maintain contact and trade for food and other supplies.

Grey dot: Ugandan troops clashed with Seleka forces for the first time near Nzako in late June 2014. A Ugandan military spokesman claimed 12 Seleka troops and one Ugandan soldier were killed during the clash.

IV. Background

SUMMARY *This section contains more information about the LRA Crisis Tracker, including the methodology used to verify reports of LRA activity. It also includes information about The Resolve LRA Crisis Initiative and Invisible Children.*

About the LRA Crisis Tracker

Data reflected in this brief was collected as part of the Invisible Children + The Resolve LRA Crisis Initiative LRA Crisis Tracker, a geospatial database and reporting project which aims to track incidents of violent conflict in areas of Central Africa affected by the Lord's Resistance Army. Through publication of regular reports and open-source sharing of collected data, the LRA Crisis Tracker aims to help overcome the current deficit of relevant and timely information related to the LRA crisis and to support improved policy and humanitarian responses.

In the interest of continually strengthening the LRA Crisis Tracker dataset, The Resolve and Invisible Children welcome new sources of current or historical reports of LRA activity. To contribute information to the LRA Crisis Tracker project, please contact The Resolve at paul@theresolve.org.

Further resources

For a real-time, geospatial look at LRA activity, or to download the data found within this brief please visit the LRA Crisis Tracker Map at: LRACrisisTracker.com.

The Resolve LRA Crisis Initiative

The Resolve LRA Crisis Initiative is a Washington D.C.-based advocacy organization seeking to move US and international political leaders to take the actions needed to see a permanent end to the violence of the Lord's Resistance Army in central Africa and justice to LRA-affected communities.

Invisible Children

Invisible Children is an international NGO working to help permanently end LRA violence and assist affected communities in East and Central Africa by expanding community-based early warning systems, engaging potential LRA defectors and affected communities through FM radio, and supporting the rehabilitation of formerly-abducted persons.

LRA Crisis Tracker Methodology

1. Data Collection

Report sourcing:

- HF radio operators in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic
- Civilians report activity to HF radio tower operators
- Over 70 HF radio operators call the Dungu and Obo hubs twice daily to report armed group activity
- Activity is entered into a spreadsheet and then sent to data coders
- UN and NGO reports
- News and media outlets
- Civil society contacts in local communities
- Government sources
- Field research conducted by Resolve and Invisible Children staff

Sourcing coverage: LRA Crisis Tracker Database team members make every effort to obtain data from all LRA-affected regions. Due to the remote nature of LRA-affected areas, the sourcing infrastructure available to project administrators is uneven across the geographic area of concern, and data included in the Database is often of better quality in areas with higher NGO and news agency traffic. The LRA Crisis Tracker Database does not claim to be a comprehensive record of all LRA or related incidents in the region, but team members make every effort to fill in areas where the data may not be easily accessible.

Note: The majority of the information gathering systems are located in Congo, leading to a disproportional amount of LRA reports from DRC. In upcoming months both Invisible Children and CRS, funded by USAID, will expand information gathering systems in CAR, hoping to improve access to information in the region.

1. Data Entry

Database entry: Reports are divided between a team of coders from both Invisible Children and Resolve. Coders determine if the source is reliable or unreliable (See section 4.2.B of the Codebook, Determining the Reliability of a Source). Before an incident is reported, the coder reads through other incidents in the same time range and checks for duplicates.

Verification rating: After an incident is categorized, each incident is given a Verification Rating, which rates the team's confidence in the details of the reported data. Each incident is given a rating of "1" through "5," with "1" being the most unreliable and "5" being very reliable. The rating is based on the trustworthiness of the source, confidence in the identity of the actors involved in the incident, and the degree of detail given in the source report. A verification rating of "2" through "5" is considered adequately verified to be reported publicly, and therefore is included in statistics and analysis (Codebook section 4.2A).

LRA Actor Verification rating: To distinguish between LRA and other armed group attacks, the Crisis Tracker Codebook has a list of LRA Indicators and Non-LRA Indicators. If after reviewing the indicators and other available evidence the data coder determines that the perpetrator of an attack was likely the LRA, the incident is given an LRA Actor Verification rating, 'Low,' 'Medium,' or 'High,' to measure the likelihood of the perpetrator being LRA. (Codebook section 4.2C.) If after reviewing an incident the coder determines that the LRA was not the perpetrator and the perpetrator is unknown, Actor 1 is marked as 'Armed Group' and the incident is not mapped.

3. Data Review

Initial review: Each report is reviewed by a second data coder to catch human errors and duplicate reports. Coders look for incidents that are alike in detail, and have a relatively close time frame and location. These incidents are then investigated to ensure that they are not duplicate reports.

Expert review: IC and Resolve staff with field experience review sensitive incidents immediately and review all incidents every three months. Should this staff member feel an incident was misreported, the incident is corrected and potentially unmapped. External LRA and regional experts are consulted as necessary.

4. Data Mapping & Sharing

Data mapping: After an incident is entered and approved to be mapped, it appears on the LRA Crisis Tracker website. Only incidents involving the LRA or persons formerly abducted by the LRA and given a Verification rating of '2' or higher are mapped.

Data sensitivity: Sensitive information such as specific sources, names, information on security forces, and personal information about minors is not shared publicly.

Data sharing: Data is regularly sent to UN agencies and humanitarian practitioners for comparison and collaboration.

5. Data Revamp

As the database grows and policies are updated to reflect best practices, data coders revisit and "revamp" the data when needed.

With the establishment of the HF Radio Network and expanded reporting mechanisms in the region, incident reporting has become more detailed and the database has been adapted to reflect this. Fields including information on age and gender of victims, and goods looted have been added since the beginning of the database. Coders periodically revisit all incidents and reports to include the new details and fields.

6. Data Analysis & Reporting

Crisis Tracker staff analyze data for trends and patterns in LRA activity. For instance, coders look for trends in the age and gender of abducted persons, net recruitment (total abductions- total returnees), and increases in a certain type of attack. Coders also look for new traits and patterns in LRA activity.

Specific areas and provinces are also analyzed for increases or decreases in number and type of attack.

After analysis has been completed and reviewed, it is reported in various Crisis Tracker reports.

Definitions

Attack:

An incident is considered an "attack" in the Brief if LRA activity results in one of the following human rights violations on one or more civilians: violence resulting in death or injury, sexual or gender based violence, abduction, or looting. For detailed definitions of these human rights abuses, please refer to section 4.5 of the LRA Crisis Tracker Map Methodology and Database Codebook v1.6.

Killing:

An incident is regarded as a "killing" if there is a violent act that results in the death of an individual who is not known to be associated with an armed group or security force. Civilian deaths resulting from injuries sustained from an attack are considered a "killing." Also, if a civilian is killed while in LRA captivity, it is considered a "killing" if it occurs within one week of the initial abduction. For a detailed explanation of incidents that are categorized as a "killing," please refer to section 4.5.1 of the LRA Crisis Tracker Map Methodology and Database Codebook v1.6.

Abduction:

An incident is regarded as an "abduction" if it involves one or more persons taken hostage against their will by the LRA for any period of time, including civilians who are abducted and released or escape in the same day. A short-term abduction is considered any abduction that is 72 hours or less in duration. This does not necessarily mean that abductions that are not short-term are long-term as there may not be a report of the abducted person's return. For a detailed explanation of incidents categorized as "abductions" or "short-term abductions," please refer to section 4.5.2 of the LRA Crisis Tracker Map Methodology and Database Codebook v1.6.

Returnees:

A "returnee" is considered anyone who escapes, is released, is rescued, or defects from LRA captivity. It also includes all LRA members who are captured. For a detailed explanation of data relating to returnees, please refer to section 4.5.2 of the LRA Crisis Tracker Map Methodology and Database Codebook v1.6.

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A publication of

