



### Profiles of Communities in the Eastern Province of Thisland (Northeast District)

#### Murelle

##### Demographics

- Almost one million people live in and around Murelle, the largest city in Northeast district. The population is more ethnically diverse than surrounding towns. It is estimated 100,000 IDPs are currently living in Murelle. Additional details below.

##### Infrastructure

- Murelle has many multi-level buildings and is home to many national and international non-governmental organization (NGO) sub-offices.
- Most households have running water and electricity (although there are sporadic power outages), and most roads are paved.
- Mobile phone coverage is good.

##### Economics and Livelihoods

- The primary sources of employment in Murelle are agriculture (21%), services (20%), quarrying and manufacturing (18%), commerce (18%), construction (14%), and public sector employment (6%). Unemployment rates are high. Many work in the informal sector.

#### Tamdu

##### Demographics

- Tamdu is a town 90km southwest of Murelle. Approximately 30,000 people live in the town, with 20,000 people living in the surrounding rural communities. It is estimated 5,000 internally-displaced persons (IDPs) are currently living in Tamdu. Additional details below.

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## Infrastructure

- Tamdu has mostly single-level buildings made of concrete. Around 60% of households have a private latrine.
- There is a mix of paved and dirt roads.
- Infrastructure (electricity, water, and roads) has been deteriorating in recent years.
- There are commercial buses and shared taxis available between Tamdu and Murelle, but transportation costs have been increasing. Only around 6% of households have their own vehicle.
- Mobile phone coverage is good in Tamdu but more limited in outlying areas.

## Economics and Livelihoods

- The primary sources of employment in the Tamdu area are agriculture (44%), quarrying and small-scale manufacturing (18%), and commerce (11%).
- Most people in the surrounding rural communities farm grain, vegetables, and simberri trees (for their sap production), grown for subsistence and local markets.

## Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

### Demographics

- Since the conflict began in Western Province five years ago, an estimated 342,000 people have fled to the northeast (Eastern Province), where nine informal IDP settlements and three formal IDP camps now exist. Fear of continued attacks in Western Province have kept many IDPs from returning.
- Many of the displaced are in densely populated informal settlements (30%) or formal camps (15%), while others reside within host communities in urban areas like Murelle (55%).
- The IDP population is mostly from the same ethnic group, but they speak at least five different languages. The IDP population is generally of a different ethnicity than people in Murelle and Tamdu.
- There is a high percentage (26%) of female- and child-headed households in the displaced population.

### Infrastructure

- Camps initially consisted of tent shelters, although in many cases IDPs have improved these or made them more permanent. Settlements mostly contain shelters that are poorly constructed of branches and plastic sheeting or mud and zinc coated iron.
- Shared taxis run along the major roads connecting the settlements and camps to the city of Murelle, but transportation costs have doubled since HxNy.
- To date, IDPs have been one of the most vulnerable groups for communicable diseases, including measles, cholera, and HxNy, because of overcrowding,

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poor access to handwashing facilities, sanitation and hygiene, and limited resources to protect themselves from disease.

### **Economics and Livelihoods**

- Prior to displacement, many IDPs were farmers and agricultural laborers.
- Many IDPs work in the informal sector, generally as small traders or casual day-labourers in agriculture or construction. Employment discrimination is widespread.

### **Relationship Between Host and Displaced Communities**

- Many long-term residents in Northeast District blame IDPs for adding pressure on limited resources and services and see them as a source of infectious disease spread. Many are not willing to continue hosting IDPs if they do not receive extra support from the government to do so.
- The mayor of Tamdu claims they have not received promised compensation for the land that was given to create Settlement #1 and blames political figures in Murelle for pushing for IDPs to be hosted in the region rather than nearer to Murelle.

## Social and Cultural Considerations

Social science research data from late last year indicates widespread suspicion about the government. Religion plays a major role in the daily lives of both IDPs and host communities, and respected religious leaders are consistently cited as trusted sources of information by all groups. Perceptions about health among some IDPs and local communities tend to be rooted in religious and cultural beliefs rather than biomedical science.

Documented lessons learned from the HxNY outbreak indicate that two-way dialogues emphasizing respectful listening helped establish trust with both IDP and host communities and gave greater consideration to community priorities. Direct interaction with community and religious leaders, response volunteers, community members, and elders was also important. The local realities of livelihood activities and customs that make up the fabric of daily life should be addressed and integrated into interventions. These efforts require a degree of logistical flexibility, and allocating additional resources is critical to ensuring hard-to-reach populations are served.