



GREAT LAKES

RVI Usalama Project: the Kinshasa conference

In the Congolese capital, politicians, government officials, military officers, diplomats and representatives of civil society debate the Usalama reports on Congolese armed groups with Rift Valley Institute researchers

Key points

- The RVI Usalama Project addresses the lack of detailed information about Congolese armed groups.
- The Institute has published fourteen reports and briefings on armed groups operating in the eastern DRC (including the Congolese national army, the FARDC).
- The documented failures of specific armed groups are more revealing than their successes.
- The M23, for example, despite early military victories, failed to mobilise the community it sprang from.
- The Raia Mutomboki started as a local self-defense force in response to insecurity, then became a cause of it.
- The challenge of reforming the FARDC is as much political as technical.
- Congolese civil society commentators stress the harmful role of multinational corporations, while RVI researchers stress national and regional dynamics.

Panel

Willy Mikenye, RVI Usalama Project Deputy Director and RVI Focal Point in Bukavu (Chair)

Jason Stearns, RVI Usalama Project Director

Judith Verweijen, Researcher at the Nordic Africa Institute and RVI Usalama Project researcher

Koen Vlassenroot, Director of the Conflict Research Group at Ghent University and RVI Usalama Project researcher

Introduction

This was a joint meeting organised by the Rift Valley Institute (RVI), the *Réseau pour la réforme du secteur de sécurité et de la justice* (RRSSJ), the *Centre pour la Gouvernance* (CEGO) and the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA). The meeting took place in Kinshasa on 4 November 2013, shortly after the military defeat of the M23 rebellion by the armed forces of the Congolese Government.

The meeting was opened by **Willy Mikenye**, RVI Usalama Project Deputy Director. He introduced **Nick Elebe**, Country Director of OSISA and **John Ryle**, the RVI Executive Director. John Ryle gave an overview of the work of the Institute, thanking the staff of the Usalama Project for their work over the past two years and expressing special gratitude to the Project Director, Jason Stearns, and the RVI Great Lakes Project Manager, Michel Thill. He also thanked the project's funders: Wynnette LaBrosse and Dick Matgen of the Open Square Project, and Federico Borello of Humanity United.

Aims and conclusions of the project

Jason Stearns, RVI Usalama Project Director, explained the questions that had guided the project and the broad conclusions reached after eighteen months of field work.

Two key questions lie at the core of the enquiry, he explained. First, why has the conflict in the east of the DRC continued despite multiple rounds of negotiations with armed groups, several military offensives and millions of dollars spent to end the violence? Second, are current initiatives to end the conflict tackling its root causes?

To understand the latter, he said, it had been necessary to develop a detailed understanding of armed groups. What, for example, drove the M23 rebellion? Local grievances or Rwandan interests? Why did 'General' Yakutumba desert from the

army in 2006 to create his own Mai-Mai and why does his group persist? The Usalama Project set out to address this lack of information. To date, it has produced eleven reports and three briefings on armed groups and related topics.

After highlighting various theories put forward to explain the persistence of conflict—i.e. state weakness, the role of Rwanda, pre-existing local conflicts and competition over natural resources—Jason Stearns outlined the Usalama Project’s principal findings.

First, the 2003-6 peace process, paradoxically, provided a cause of renewed war. The RCD—predecessor of the CNDP and the M23—stood to lose everything as a result of the peace process. It thus supported the creation of the CNDP in order to safeguard its interests.

Secondly, armed groups such as the CNDP/M23, the FDLR and the FNL have had a multiplier effect, leading other groups to take up arms either in defence against them or in support of them.

Thirdly, armed groups have progressively detached themselves from the local communities from which they emerged in the 1960s and 1990s, joining elite political and economic networks.

A fourth factor has been the militarization of politics and the politicization of the conflict as a result of electoral competition. Violence is now used as a tool by provincial politicians and businessmen to negotiate with the state over positions of power. And politicians use armed groups to mobilize votes during electoral campaigns.

Fifth and finally, the repeated integration of armed groups into the national army has weakened the latter, which has, until recently, been unable to oppose continued armed mobilization in the east.

CASE STUDY 1 CNDP and M23

Jason Stearns illustrated these findings with the example of the CNDP/M23.

The birth of the mainly Tutsi-led CNDP, he said, can be traced back to the period preceding the 2006 national elections. And the roots of the conflict as it persists today can be located in the 2003-6 transition period.

The RCD, the Rwandan-backed rebel movement, which at that time controlled a third of the DRC’s territory, knew it would lose out in the elections ahead. (It ended up winning only 4% of the seats in the national assembly.) This triggered fears amongst the Congolese Tutsi elite and in Rwanda that political representation was not sufficient to safeguard their security and their political and economic interests. They needed to be protected by force. Hence, the RCD decided to back a small faction of its former members. This group had not integrated into the national army and had held on to its arms. In 2006, the group became known as the CNDP. The CNDP provoked mobilization on the part of other armed groups, who saw the CNDP as foreign intruders. These groups included PARECO, APCLS, Mai-Mai Yakutumba, Mai-Mai Lafontaine and Mai-Mai Kifuafula.

After the Rwandan and Congolese government signed a secret agreement in January 2009 to demobilize and reintegrate the CNDP, the latter finally agreed to a peace deal on 23 March 2009. The Rwandan government thus tried to free itself from the international pressure it had been subject to as a result of its support of the CNDP. Additionally, it aimed to protect its interests in the east through the ex-CNDP network within the Congolese army.

ARMED GROUPS AND THEIR ACRONYMS

ADF/NALU Allied Democratic Forces/National Army for the Liberation of Uganda

AFDL (*Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre*) Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire

APCLS (*Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain*) Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo

CNDP (*Congrès national pour la défense du peuple*) National Congress for the Defence of the People

FDLR (*Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda*) Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda

FNL (*Forces nationales de libération*) National Forces of Liberation

M23 (*Mouvement du 23 mars*) March 23 Movement

PARECO (*Patriotes Résistants Congolais*) Congolese Patriotic Resistance

RCD (*Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie*) Rally for Congolese Democracy

For Kinshasa, this deal was a way to dissolve the CNDP by scattering its fighters across the Congolese territory. But the Rwandan government's logic turned out to be the correct one. The CNDP's troops remained mainly in North and South Kivu and continued to rely on their networks there. The former CNDP thus managed to establish a parallel chain of command within the national army.

After the 2011 national elections, President Joseph Kabila proceeded to dismantle this parallel chain of command. The former head of the CNDP, Bosco Ntaganda, threatened by an ICC indictment, resisted. In April 2012, he deserted with a few hundred soldiers and created a new armed group, the M23, named after the failed 23 March 2009 peace agreement.

The internal dynamics of the M23 movement were a limitation: in the end its failures are more revealing than its successes. The M23 did not manage to mobilize its own community: it was drawn from a small part of North Kivu's Tutsi military. Historically several different communities were mobilised against President Mobutu under the banner of the AFDL, including the Katangans, the Rwandophones and the Banyamulenge, but each successive Rwandan-backed armed group's support base in the area has been smaller than the one before, from the RCD to the CNDP and finally the M23.

The M23 was therefore forced to enter so-called '*alliances contre nature*' with known anti-Rwandophone groups such as with Albert 'Fokka Mike' Kahasha, Mai-Mai Lafontaine and parts of the Raia Mutomboki. Yet they relied heavily on direct Rwandan military support, visible during each major military offensive in 2012. The principal cause of the M23's defeat is the withdrawal of Rwandan support.

CASE STUDY 2

Angry citizens: Raia Mutomboki

Koen Vlassenroot presented the case of the Raia Mutomboki ('angry citizens' in Swahili), a movement, which represents a new kind of armed mobilization. It is a response on the part of local communities to insecurity, particularly to atrocities committed by the FDLR. The Raia Mutomboki are often supported by customary chiefs and are made up of former armed group combatants, army deserters and youths, who organize themselves

through a *dawa* ritual that is thought by participants to provide invulnerability. They succeeded rapidly in pushing back the FDLR.

Today, the Raia Mutomboki is composed of a number of autonomous armed groups loosely united by their use of the same name and their ideology of self-defence. The different branches of this franchise (as it was termed in the Raia Mutomboki report) vary according to their leaders' ambitions and interests.

The Raia Mutomboki's roots go back to March 2005. On their way to the gold mining site of Kayoka in South Kivu's territory of Shabunda to sell food to the miners, some local traders were attacked and killed by the FDLR. This attack was an indirect result of the refusal of several Mai-Mai groups—as well as the FDLR—to integrate into the newly formed national army, the FARDC, which left a security vacuum in South Kivu's rural areas. At the same time, from 2004 onwards, the FARDC launched attacks against the FDLR, which provoked reprisal attacks against the local population. The formation of the Raia Mutomboki in March 2005 was a response to this local insecurity.

The army's military offensives eventually pushed the FDLR back and with them their threat to the local population. Between 2007 and 2011, the Raia Mutomboki disappeared. In May 2011, however, a new army reform obliged army units deployed in Shabunda to join a regimentation process. This left the area once more without protection. The FDLR took advantage of the situation to re-establish its control in these areas, which in turn led to a new and much larger wave of remobilization of Raia Mutomboki forces throughout Shabunda.

In late 2011, the Raia Mutomboki franchise spread to Kalehe and Walikale in North Kivu. Despite the challenges posed by this expansion into new areas, where they encountered other armed groups, the movement expanded and was welcomed by the local population. The Raia Mutomboki's aims did not change: free the areas from the FDLR, protect the local population and ease the return of civilians to their previously FDLR-occupied homes.

Again, it was an atrocity committed by the FDLR, which was the turning point in the development of the group. The massacre of Kamananga in Kalehe in May 2012, which left 30 civilians dead, provoked a new wave of combatants to join the ranks of the Raia Mutomboki. The latter portrayed the incident as proof of the lack of security provided by the national army and the UN peacekeeping forces.

The Raia Mutomboki is thus a group which, despite having its origins in a remote rural area, has managed to extend its influence well beyond the territory of the ethnic group it springs from. It is a decentralized and ill-disciplined movement, and yet it has succeeded in pushing back the FDLR.

The key elements responsible for the Raia Mutomboki's success can be identified as follows: the group relies on large-scale mobilization, on customary power structures and on local traditions. These increase its capacity to rally support from local communities. Its simple ideology and use of local rituals are crucial in maintaining internal cohesion. At the same time, its rise is a consequence of the failed peace process, which led to security vacuums in rural areas. The lack of attention given to local governance reform in key issues such as land, identity and customary power has allowed the Raia Mutomboki to present itself as a legitimate substitute for the state.

But as the different branches get more involved in the resolution of local conflicts, internal disputes over local power and direct clashes with the Congolese army have increased. The various groups have started to impose taxes. Abuses against the local population have become more frequent. What started out as a local self-defence force and a response to insecurity, has, over time, become a cause of it.

CASE STUDY 3 FARDC: the armed forces of the DRC

Judith Verweijen gave a presentation on the Congolese national army and its impact on the conflicts in the east. The recent defeat of the M23, she argued, shows that considerable advances have been made in the FARDC, particularly in logistical support, command structure, military intelligence, discipline and motivation. She stressed, however, that the strengthening of the army's capacities is not a purely technical question. It is also—and maybe even predominantly—a question of political will.

Operational effectiveness is only one aspect of how an army functions. Others are the management of human resources and civil-military relations. An urgent question to be addressed is

the policy of the integration of armed groups into the ranks of the army.

The FARDC was established in 2003 after the signing of the Global and Inclusive Agreement. It was to be created through a large-scale reintegration process called *brassage*. This had some successes: eighteen integrated brigades were created, and a new command structure and organization was put in place—all with limited resources.

Nevertheless, the process encountered multiple difficulties. It occurred in a climate of mistrust between some factions, which did not hesitate to take up arms again to promote their own interests. These dissident factions played a double game. On the one hand, they formally committed to the integration process; on the other, they tried to manipulate it. Other factions refused to integrate altogether and remained active as armed groups.

These armed groups started to take the integration process hostage. The reason for this was that the fledgling national army was not immediately able, nor willing to put military pressure on the remaining rebel forces. Instead, it tried to convince the various groups' leaders to integrate in return for high ranks, and guarantees of non-prosecution and non-redeployment. This policy had negative effects: it made armed mobilization a tool for elites to gain positions of power in the army and provoked defections as unhappy ex-rebels simply deserted only to try to reintegrate under better conditions. Such behaviour led to high levels of frustration amongst loyal troops.

This said, not all the army's problems result from the integration process. Some date back to the rule of President Mobutu. When he took power in 1965, he faced a dilemma: on the one hand, he needed a strong army to defeat all secessionist movements and rebel forces then active in the DRC; on the other hand, he wanted to avoid creating an army strong enough to turn against him. Hence, in order to guarantee its loyalty, Mobutu divided the army, creating multiple parallel command structures and a number of elite units, which—in contrast to the rest of the army—enjoyed excellent training, equipment and salaries. He also tolerated senior officers' engagement in business.

So the weaknesses of the Congolese army have deep historical roots. However, the integration process has exacerbated those considerably. There are three key problems: first, the decline of promotion on grounds of merit as a result of the attribution of ranks to ex-rebels for political reasons. This policy has led to an inflation of the number of officers compared to rank-and-file soldiers, so that the army's structure resembles an inverted pyramid. Most of these officers do not have the proper qualifications, yet they are placed above well-trained and experienced officers. This causes tension and frustration.

A second problem is factionalism and the creation of parallel chains of command due to the existence of networks within the army made up of former members of the same armed group, or of soldiers coming from the same area and/or sharing the same ethnic origins. Their members do not listen to their formal commanding officer, but to the commander of their former armed group or unit, leading to the creation of parallel command structures. They are mobilized in pursuit of the interests of their informal leaders, not in the general interest of the army.

A third factor is the provincialization of the army. The army units deployed in both Kivu provinces consist mostly of soldiers born or based there for a long time. Many are former combatants of armed groups and have maintained their links with local elite networks, be they economic or political. They engage in local and regional business, intervene in political affairs, and may have links to armed groups.

In short, the unbalanced integration process of armed groups into the army has led to politicization, tribalism, and a lack of loyalty. This has compromised the FARDC in its task of effectively ending the crises in the east.

Considerations for the future

The second part of the conference investigated how the Usalama Project's research results could inform sustainable solutions in the future, with a view to ending armed group violence in the east, and reforming the Congolese national army.

'The policy of the revolving door—which allows integrated rebels to desert only to reintegrate again—has been a key force behind armed mobilization'

Jason Stearns discussed how to tackle armed groups from the top-down by underlining three key points. First, as armed groups are increasingly mobilized and used by elite networks as opposed to local communities, their support networks will have to be dismantled. The individuals behind armed groups are all too often widely known, but not much is done to bring them to justice. According to him, they will have to be arrested to end this culture of impunity.

Secondly, efforts to dismantle armed groups should focus on key rebel movements such as the M23, the FDLR, the ADF/NALU and FNL. Their final dismantling would considerably defuse the crisis in the east.

Thirdly, donors will have to give up their technocratic approach to the persistent violence in the east. While the UN peacekeeping force's mandate to safeguard the peace process during the transition gave MONUC a political role, after the 2006 elections, the

DRC was declared a post-conflict state and MONUC's approach shifted to a purely technocratic one, focusing on the stabilization of state capacities through the Stabilization and Reconstruction Programme for War-affected Area (STAREC) and the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy (ISSSS or I4S). But the conflict in the east was still on-going. To change this approach, a political engagement on behalf of the donors is required.

Koen Vlassenroot analysed the need to address armed groups from the bottom-up. He made four observations.

First, the number of armed groups has risen since the 2002 peace agreement, showing that this deal did not manage to resolve existing grievances around issues of land, failed army integration and demobilization.

Second, there is a vast diversity in interests, aims, strategies, and socio-economic embeddedness between one armed group and another. Some adopt state-like structures, others intervene in local justice, still others gain the support of customary chiefs by defending their local community, and yet others establish protection rackets, resembling criminal gangs.

Third, it is undeniable that in such contexts, in which the presence of the state is rare, these

groups constitute a form of privatized governance. However, these armed groups are not just local phenomena, but are—as described before—linked to regional elite networks.

Fourth, peace building efforts, instead of resolving existing grievances, have only exacerbated the conflict, while its root causes such as access to land and citizenship, ethnic coexistence and resource governance have barely been addressed.

These four points need to be taken into account to develop a comprehensive and multi-dimensional peace strategy. Each armed group needs to be addressed by a tailor-made approach, as some are a cause of violence and others a consequence of it. Tackling conflicts on the local level can only work if it is part of a larger peace process,

Koen Vlassenroot discerned three priorities to tackle these local conflicts.

First, grievances around land need to be reduced. A number of initiatives exist already, focusing on mediation, legal protection and assistance. While they have a positive effect on the individual level and in the short term, they have a limited impact on the structural causes of land conflicts. These can only be addressed if the collective and inter-communal aspects are taken into account. Such initiatives should go beyond the local and push for national land reform.

Secondly, it is crucial to invest in inter-communal reconciliation. Here also, multiple initiatives have been taken. The *'barzas'*, a state-funded local space for reconciliation through dialogue, are an example. However, the participants are not always legitimate representatives of their communities and sometimes the *'barzas'* themselves have a role in conflict. While locally driven initiatives tend to be more representative, it is important that such efforts for dialogue include genuine leaders from the various communities. Donors should provide well-coordinated and coherent support for them and avoid competition between initiatives.

Finally, Koen Vlassenroet argued, the success of any political strategy in the east depends on an accountable state. Besides the strengthening of local capacities, investment in accountable and transparent state institutions is essential.

Judith Verweijen addressed the question of how

to reform the Congolese army. The army, she said, is a very complex institution. She limited herself to two dimensions. The first was the management of the integration of armed groups. The DRC is not the only country in which such a policy has been pursued on an ongoing basis, she said. As the cases of Burundi and South Africa show, it can work if well managed and limited to one-off integration.

But good management has been lacking in the DRC, where, for example, no strict conditions have been imposed on candidates for integration. If this integration policy is to continue, it needs to be improved, especially by guaranteeing promotion based on merit and the training of newly integrated troops.

Negotiations with armed groups have taken mostly place behind closed doors, she noted. This makes it

'Armed groups have become detached from local communities, which have lost the control they once had over them.'

difficult for the national assembly or other bodies to control the process. Therefore, deals should be made more transparent. Moreover, the issue of impunity needs to be addressed. While taking into account the short-term benefits of amnesty to reach peace, it is

not a sustainable policy in the long run: impunity jeopardizes government credibility and sends the message that starting a rebellion is rewarded. The challenge thus consists of convincing rebel leaders to abandon their arms without rewarding them with amnesty.

Another point is that integrated troops need to be well distributed as much within specific units as geographically. Such a gradual process of redeployment would counter the creation of parallel chains of command. But, she argued, it might well be best to abandon the policy of integration in the long run and pursue alternatives for dismantling armed groups through DDR or decentralized peace conferences, which are able to address the unique character of each armed group.

A second dimension is the politics of human resources and especially social conditions. Reforming the army needs to start simultaneously from the top and from the bottom. Real benefits to the rank-and-file are crucial to successful reform. These include improving the living standards of soldiers and their families, salaries, and access to health services and social benefits such as paid leave. The current state of affairs leads spouses and families to join the soldiers at the front where

they live in miserable conditions. Soldiers old enough to retire but without pensions pose another difficulty. These aspects are crucial in order to increase troops' motivation and loyalty to their superiors. Army reform should be implemented throughout the army and all should benefit from it.

Jason Stearns made three points on army reform to be considered by donors. Donor efforts tend to focus on specific army units such as battalions. These may be well-trained but, once reinserted into the overall army command structure, their impact is limited. An exception is the EU advisory and assistance mission for security reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (EUSEC), which has worked on improving the command structure. Nevertheless, better coordination between the Congolese government and donors is needed.

A second range of initiatives has focused on mobile tribunals operating in South Kivu prosecuting alleged perpetrators of sexual violence. Despite some success, their impact is limited to the duration of the funding period of such projects. These and similar initiatives need to be institutionalized. The donor community needs to better coordinate their efforts in army reform and to increase their funding for it.

Jason Stearns concluded by emphasizing that the Usalama Project's aim was not to offer political recommendations, but to foster a debate on the issues round armed groups and the national army.

Discussion

Hon. François Kasende Kandolo, President of the Defence and Security Commission of the National Assembly thanked the Rift Valley Institute, its Usalama Project and researchers for their work, which, he said, will allow the members of parliament to legislate for a lasting peace.

Hon. Juvénal Munubo, member of the Defence and Security Commission and Rapporteur of the sub-commission on the army, asked for similar research to be conducted on the factors responsible for the defeat of the M23. On the issue of army reform, he identified constraints, starting with the lack of financial means. An oversight mechanism would also be required similar to the one already established for the police to increase the transparency of the reform efforts and facilitate the tracking of progress.

In reference to armed groups, he observed that some were not included in the Usalama Project, such as the Nyatura, APCLS, and Mai-Mai Cheka. Dismantling these and other armed groups would require an improved process of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR). Other aspects of the peace process also needed to be strengthened, such as the protection of civilians: 'Do you not think,' he asked, 'that if the FDLR is not tackled, it will remain a pretext for Rwanda to intervene in the east and be a cause for counter-mobilization against them?'

'The problem of the FDLR,' he said, 'needs a definite solution. But is the solution only a military one? Could a global agreement marked by a rapprochement between Kigali, Kinshasa and Kampala not lead to something good? I think it could.'

In reply, **Jason Stearns** agreed that there is a need for further studies on armed groups, some of which had to be left out of the Usalama Project due to its limited scope. On the question of the FDLR, he agreed that this group would have to be the next one to be tackled after the M23, and not just in military terms—even if negotiations with Rwanda on this topic are almost impossible. But there were other alternatives, such as allowing its leaders to go into exile, as the majority of them are not wanted by the ICC. As for talks between Kigali, Kinshasa and Kampala, this was proposed by the US Special Envoy Russ Feingold who argued for ending the Kampala talks and focusing on regional talks in order to tackle the root causes of the conflict in the east.

Omar Kavota, lawyer and spokesperson of North Kivu's civil society, asked if the Usalama reports shed light on the role of Uganda in the conflict in the east? He wanted to know if the ADF/Nalu would be the subject of research, as it has increased its activity in North Kivu and allegedly has links with al-Shabab. **Hon. Anselme Enerunga**, MP in the National Assembly, worried similarly that on top of all the existing conflicts, there is now a risk of terrorist organisations spreading in the east. Omar Kavota enquired if the Usalama Project's research also evaluated the impact of the various military offensives of the Congolese army and the UN peacekeeping force on the civilian population. He asked if, now that the intervention brigade is deployed, MONUSCO's blue helmets, which were not engaged in fighting, could not be withdrawn and the funds for them reallocated to the reform of the Congolese army.

Addressing the question on Uganda's role, **Jason Stearns** said that the first Usalama Project report had collected evidence of Ugandan support for the M23 in 2012. It remained an important question, which deserves further research.

On the impact of the military offensives, **Judith Verweijen** said that on the one hand, they caused a humanitarian catastrophe and did not always manage to weaken the armed groups. (The FARDC did not have the logistical capacity to occupy the conquered territory and this was subsequently retaken by armed groups, who committed reprisal attacks against the population as soon as the army had left.) On the other hand, in the case of the FDLR, the offensives did manage to push them out of mining sites and weaken them considerably. Whether this military success was worth the humanitarian consequences is open to discussion. The operations thus showed that the protection of civilians has to be fully integrated from the beginning into the operational planning of military offensives. Although a civil-military unit has been established in 2011, its members have not yet been fully included in operational planning.

Alpha Mukadi, a journalist with Congo Web TV, asked Judith Verweijen to clarify the conditions under which armed groups could be integrated into the army so that they did not desert only to renegotiate for better terms.

Judith Verweijen pointed to other countries in which integration policies worked better, saying that in these cases, the army closed its doors after the first wave of integration. In the DRC, she said, this door has been left open for much too long. It is this policy of the revolving door, which allows integrated rebels to desert only to reintegrate again, that has been one of the factors behind armed mobilization in the east. Another condition could be that each armed group has to give up its arms caches. Most negotiation deals feature no such provisions.

Several participants raised the question of the role of multinational corporations in the conflict in the east. **Jonas Tshombela**, coordinator of the Nouvelle Société Civile, **Chantal Faïda**, analyst and member of North Kivu's civil society based in Goma, and **Julienne Lusenge**, President of Beni and Bunia-based SOFEPADI, an organisation

focusing on women's rights, wondered why they had not been mentioned as drivers of the conflict during the presentations. **Julienne Lusenge** stressed that there is evidence of their complicity in the conflict. **Chantal Faïda** demanded that the companies be listed and brought to justice, while **Jonas Tshombela** noted the large amount of weapons in circulation in the region, despite the fact that no central African country manufactures arms. **Daniel Ruiz**, senior political affairs officer with MONUSCO, asked why there are no more comprehensive economic analyses of the conflict in the east, going beyond the UN Group of Experts reports, and identifying those who profit from the war. **Fabien Lumbala**, a journalist with Télé50, wondered if the Usalama Project had suggestions for putting an end to the complicity of multinationals in the conflict in the east.

'As soon as each Congolese pays his taxes the government will have the means to reform the army.'

Jason Stearns stressed that multinational corporations do indeed have a role in the conflict. For example, they have a

responsibility to keep their supply chains free of conflict minerals, with which they do not always comply. However, while minerals are a key factor in the continuation of the conflict in the east, they do not lie at its origin. If multinationals wanted to exploit the resources from the east, they would do so not through artisanal mining, but through industrial mining, as happens in Katanga where they are directly involved in illegal business with the Congolese government. For industrial mining to occur in the east, companies require political stability. As long as this is absent, only a few of them will be ready to operate in the Kivus.

He agreed that numerous individuals are profiting from the conflict but argued that a distinction should be made between those who indirectly profit and those who directly instigate and perpetuate the conflict. He concluded by saying that the work of the UN Group of Experts identifies those who profit from the conflict, while the Usalama Project reports analyse its root causes. In that sense, they complement each other.

Koen Vlassenroot added that there are initiatives which aim to establish transparency and due diligence in the supply chains of international companies, some of which are supported by the companies themselves. The EU is in the process of implementing legislation with similar aims.

Judith Verweijen mentioned that in the case of the pyrochlor mine in Lueshe, North Kivu, two foreign mining operators competed for access, each negotiating with a different network within the army. In the case of the Mukungwe gold mine in Walungu, South Kivu, two different FARDC units were mobilised by civil parties to gain access to the mine. However, those parties were not multinational corporations, but local families, one that of a customary chiefs and the other that of the alleged owners of the land. This shows that the dynamics of the militarization of conflict were the same regardless of the nationality of the mobilizers. In South Kivu, the majority of the mineral economy is regional, she said. Trade is done with Burundian and Tanzanian businessmen, not with multinational companies. The latter stand at the end of the supply chain, which gives them an indirect, but not a direct role in the violence in the eastern DRC.

Hon. Anicet Teganyi, MP for Walungu in the Provincial Assembly, informed the audience that in the case of the Mukungwe gold mine, an agreement was reached between the Congolese government and the two families, which gave the mine to the Canadian mining company Banro. Walungu's authorities were not involved in this agreement. There are more than 10,000 artisanal miners working in that mine. Teganyi feared they would now join armed groups to make a living.

Chantal Faïda asked whether groups such as Raia Mutomboki claiming to defend local communities and protect civilians from abuses perpetrated by the FDLR and other groups, had positive aspects.

Koen Vlassenroot said that in the conflicts from the early 1990s, such as the Masisi War in 1993, armed groups emerged as a substitute for state protection. Despite some political manipulation, such groups could in general claim a high degree of legitimacy. Where the state is not present, they may fill the void. However, the means by which they provide security causes problems. They have become increasingly detached from local communities, and the latter have lost the control they once had over them.

Paulin Cimanga, lawyer and RRSSJ's representative in Kasai Oriental, said that the need to include armed groups in the integration process or exclude them from it could be reconciled with the maintenance of the authority of the state and the principle of impunity.

Judith Verweijen confirmed that this tension between integration and impunity causes a dilemma: how can armed groups be motivated to lay down arms without offering them the prospect of not being persecuted? In an ideal case, rebels who have committed serious human rights violations would be excluded. But in practice, this remains a challenge.

Mick Mutiki, RRSSJ's representative in South Kivu, asked if reforming other parts of the security sector would be necessary in order for effective army reform to take place.

Judith Verweijen agreed that army reform could not take place without taking into account other aspects of the security sector such as the police and the judicial system.

Hon. Gilbert Ngongo, MP in South Kivu's provincial assembly, called upon the donors present to support the Congolese government in its efforts to strengthen state authority and end the conflict.

Noel Obotela Rashidi, head of the *Centre d'études politiques* at the University of Kinshasa, confirmed Judith Verweijen's analysis. The social conditions of Congolese soldiers were miserable and needed to be improved, he said. It was difficult to find reliable statistics on the army. He asked the Hon. Kasende Kandolo why the government was not capable of providing the army with the means to assert national security.

Hon. Kasende Kandolo responded that as soon as each Congolese paid his taxes the government would have the means to effectively reform the army.

Zaurati Nasibu, Focal Point in Kinshasa for the Life and Peace Institute, asked for an explanation of the waning support of the Banyamulenge for Rwandan-backed armed groups.

In conclusion, **Jason Stearns** said the increasing difficulty Rwanda was experiencing in mobilizing armed groups in North Kivu was due to the fact that the province's Rwandophone community feels it has been exploited by the Rwandan government.



Credits

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