

Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), located in the center of Africa, is a country with numerous natural resources such as: minerals, forests and water, which contributes significantly to the economic growth of the country. Nevertheless, for many years, the country has been plagued by a longstanding conflict that has progressed rapidly, causing a great deal of human suffering, migration and a huge humanitarian crisis. The conflict of DRC is a multifaceted and protracted one, with multiple armed groups fighting to control all of its natural resources and also for political power. In addition, the government has also been accused of abusing people's human rights leading to further deterioration of the situation. The Allied Democratic forces and the Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, and several other armed groups have also been accused of committing atrocities against civilians such as: massacres, rape, and forced migration. This affects primarily the Congolese people as many had to run away from their homes facing extreme harsh conditions and loss of loved ones. Also, people suffer from hunger, disease and lack of access to healthcare and education. Adding to this, the excess of violence has made it unable for aid agencies to deliver assistance for those who need it. Despite efforts made to address the crisis, progress has been slow, as the root cause of violence is still unresolved. The current government has struggled to maintain control over the country. The international community has begged for the disarmament and a cease to the fire of armed groups but efforts to achieve this lacked by lack of political control and resources

Definitions and key terms

Term 1

Aid Agencies: An organization that provides money, food, medicine, or other supplies in order to help people or countries that are suffering.

Term 2

M23: the main rebel group battling the Congolese army in eastern DRC.

Term 3

DRC: Short for Democratic Republic of Congo

Issue Overview

The Democratic Republic of Congo has been in a state of conflict for the last three decades, millions of people have been killed and approximately 6 million of others are implicated in migration due to the civil war (930,000 were registered as refugees in more than 20 countries) or in cross border conflicts.

More than 100 armed groups coexist unsettled in eastern Congo where the conflict has been raging for three decades. However the most renowned armed group is the M23 as they have killed almost 30 civilians in almost two months.

However, this escalating violence has already destroyed 22 health facilities across the country, destroying large stock of vaccines and different medicines. And over 160 schools were damaged or sacked for loot. Also, access to shelter, nutrition, and health by children is being affected leaving them unprotected and vulnerable to catastrophes such as abuse, violence and exploitation. For insance UNICEF has recieved more than 100 allegation of children rights violations including; rape, muerdders and attacks to schools and health centers only in the month of May.

Ways in which UNICEF has helped the children :

- Provided children numerous houses (aprox 100,000) with items such as cooking utensils, mats, tarpaulin, blankets and soap to quickly address the urgent necessities of displaced people in Mahagi, Djugu and Irumu.
- Vaccinate, together with the public health system more than 37,000 children under five as they suffered from measles .
- Gave access to education for approximately 50,000 children in Mahagi, Irumu and Djugu territories. “ Activities include identifying children outside the school system, organizing recovery programmes and remedial classes, providing psychosocial support for children affected by violence, building the capacity of teachers” (UNICEF, escalating violence in DRC, para 12).
- Identified 588 children who were separated from their families and helped 127 reunited with their families.
- Provided more than 24,000 displaced children and other vulnerable ones proffesinal psychosocial and recreational care activities in public spaces; provided around 100 children which most of them are rape victimis with holistic care.

Historical Background

When taking into account the genealogy of these armed groups most of their original leaders descend from Tutsi, North Kivu. M23 is an important force in the rebellion and it has been the insecure position of the tutsi community in North Kivu. due to multiple reasons. To begin with, the “divide and rule “ policies of the colonial state in 1885-1960 and the regime of Mobutu Sese Seko in (1965-1997). However, in the 1990s these regimes fueled existing problems between Kinyarwanda-speaking people and other eastern Congo communities by denying their citizen rights to the latter.

Second is the political propaganda that refers to all Kinyarwanda-speakers in eastern Congo as “immigrants” rather than “civilians” even though many of the Kinyarwanda-speaking people have been in DRC since before it was colonized.

Finally, many of the Tutsi economic elite have taken a great amount of land away from the local peasants, making them victims in their land-grabbing.

Major Parties Involved

Term 1

M23, short for ‘March 23 Movement’, was founded in April 2012, when armed groups formed part of the DRC political economy. At first armed groups were formed in order to defend themselves and atop the advancing of foreign armed groups. However, shortly after, armed mobilization became a goal itself in order to express political power, or to cope with the chaos. Today, more than 120 armed groups exist in eastern Congo. M23 became rapidly worldwide known as it occupied the city of Goma for 10 days in 2012. While these rebels held back and stopped after great international pressure they kept control of important strategic sites in Uganda. In addition to this, these rebels have challenged the Congolese and the UN peacemakers countless times, however in 2013 M23 was weakened, due to this they exiled to Uganda and Rwanda.

Timeline of Events

- 1994, April- July: The genocide in neighboring Rwanda sparks a mass exodus of Hutu refugees into the DRC. Many of the refugees were members of the Hutu militias responsible for the genocide, and they began to launch attacks against the Tutsi minority in the DRC.
- 1997 August 2 : Laurent-Désiré Kabila takes power in the DRC after overthrowing Mobutu Sese Seko. Kabila is backed by Rwanda and Uganda, but relations quickly sour and both countries invade the DRC, setting off the First Congo War.
- 1998: August 2: Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe intervene on the side of the DRC, while Rwanda and Uganda back various rebel groups. The conflict quickly becomes a regional war involving multiple armed groups and foreign powers.
- 2001 July 10: A peace agreement is signed in Lusaka, Zambia, but it fails to bring an end to the fighting.
- 2003 April 19: A new peace agreement is signed in Sun City, South Africa, but again, it fails to bring an end to the conflict.
- 2004 February 24: The UN mission in the DRC, known as MONUC, is established to help stabilize the country and support the peace process.
- 2006 July 30: The first democratic elections in over 40 years are held in the DRC, but the results are disputed and violence erupts in many parts of the country.
- 2008 August 28: Fighting breaks out between the Congolese army and rebel groups in the east of the country. The rebel group known as the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP), led by Laurent Nkunda, captures the city of Goma.

- 2009: Nkunda is arrested in Rwanda, and his deputy, Bosco Ntaganda, takes over the CNDP.
- 2012 November 20: The M23 rebel group, made up of former CNDP fighters, launches an offensive in eastern Congo and captures Goma. The group is accused of receiving support from Rwanda, which Rwanda denies.
- 2013 March 28 : The UN Security Council authorizes a new intervention brigade within MONUC with a mandate to use force to neutralize armed groups in the east of the country.
- 2014 November 5: The M23 is defeated by the Congolese army and UN forces, and the group announces that it is disbanding.
- 2017 August: Violence in the Kasai region of the DRC escalates, with clashes between government forces and the Kamwina Nsapu militia resulting in thousands of deaths and the displacement of over a million people.
- 2018 January 10: Elections are held in the DRC, and Félix Tshisekedi is declared the winner. However, the results are disputed, and there are allegations of fraud.
- 2021 and ongoing: Violence continues to plague the eastern DRC, with numerous armed groups operating in the region and ongoing clashes between the army and various militias.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

The DRC has been a member of the UN since 1960 and has a really active role in it participating in the making of relevant and important decisions. It's because of this that the United Nations has been protecting civilians and trying to consolidate peace in DRC. MONUSCO took over the UN peacemaking operation from the first of July 2010. This mission authorises all necessary means to be carried out in order to protect civilians, humanitarian personnel and human rights defenders under threat of violence and to support the government in achieving peace and for all. In total, 18,278 people were deployed in DRC as of June 2022 among which: 2,900 are civilians, 160 are military professionals, 12,800 are troops and 400 are UN volunteers. Also, some countries such as Pakistan, India, Bangladesh have significantly helped the DRC in terms of military (Appendix I). Adding to this, the UN also contributed in the following aspects.

1. MONUC/MONUSCO: The UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) was established in 1999 to help enforce the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and the withdrawal of foreign troops from DRC in 2010 the MONUC was changed by the MONUSCO (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo).
2. Peacekeeping operations: The UN has also helped enforce peace and stability. These operations were aiming to protect civilians, disarming armed groups and supporting the Congolese government in its efforts to promote peace and security.
3. Political Support: The UN has also monitored human rights violations and provides support to victims of abuses, this is known as the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office.
4. Humanitarian Assistance: These aims to help the people that have been affected by conflict, displacement and poverty. This includes food aid, medical care and shelter.

Possible Solutions

The Democratic Republic of Congo has been plagued by violence for decades, with various armed groups operating in the country, as well as political and ethnic tensions. Some possible solutions to address the escalation of violence in the DRC include:

1. Conflict resolution and peace negotiations: Efforts to resolve conflicts through peaceful negotiations can help reduce violence in the DRC. The government of the DRC, along with

- international organizations and neighboring countries, could initiate peace talks with the various armed groups operating in the country
2. Disarmament and demobilization of armed groups: Disarming and demobilizing armed groups can help reduce the level of violence in the DRC. The government could offer incentives, such as job training and education, to encourage armed group members to lay down their weapons and return to civilian life
 3. Strengthening the rule of law and promoting human rights: Promoting respect for human rights and strengthening the rule of law can help address the root causes of violence in the DRC. The government could increase its efforts to address corruption, promote accountability, and ensure that justice is served for all
 4. Addressing the root causes of conflict: Addressing the root causes of conflict in the DRC, such as poverty, inequality, and political exclusion, can help reduce violence in the long term. The government could implement policies to promote economic development, improve access to education and healthcare, and ensure that all groups have a voice in the political process
 5. International support: International organizations and neighboring countries could provide support to the DRC government to address the violence in the country. This could include financial and logistical support for peace negotiations, as well as technical assistance to strengthen the rule of law and promote human rights

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Appendix I

Top ten military contributors (as of June 2022)

