

# Situational Analysis

## CODECO Violent Extremism Activities in Eastern DRC: Analysis of Vulnerabilities, Response, and Resilience

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**African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT)**

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# CODECO Violent Extremism Activities in Eastern DRC: Analysis of Vulnerabilities, Response, and Resilience

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## Summary

Multiple conflicts and Violent Extremism have escalated in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Over the years, lethal combinations of spiralling violence, vicious cycle of armed attacks against civilians and security have surged. The conflict which has caused a record high number of deaths, properties destructions, and hunger levels, is under-reported amidst total neglect triggering catastrophic humanitarian crisis that warrants urgent and immediate response collaborative efforts. The trajectory of the situation, if left to continue uninhibited, could overtime, develop into complex entrenched insurgencies and would be extremely difficult to dislodge. This analysis has revealed that violence in eastern DRC stems from long-standing issues that have been misaddressed, many of which are linked to land ownership, land control, access to precious minerals and other natural resources including cobalt and diamond, as well as oil trafficking. The poor resolution of local and regional conflicts as well as ill distribution of national income has been one of the hotbeds of tension that allowed entrenchment of range of foreign violent actors including the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) formerly known as Madina at Tauheed wau Mujahedeem (MTM), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) among others, as well as local violent extremist group including - Congo Development Cooperative (CODECO), Zaire, Movement of 23 March (M23), range of Mai-Mai and other community-based groups. Given the escalating violent atrocities, the DRC authorities need to urgently reinforce the protection of civilians in the territories affected by conflict especially in Ituri, North, and South Kivu provinces and ensure the security of displaced persons who are targets of these groups, one of them, CODECO which constitutes the subject of the present analysis. Obviously, the continuous killing of the leaders and members of CODECO militia group have not yielded the desired results, therefore, peaceful negotiations and dialogue between the government and the armed groups could be considered as a viable alternative in addressing violent extremism in the region. A Whole-of-Society approach that involves, amongst others, traditional leaders, community leaders, gatekeepers, community influencers, women and youth groups is a worthy pathway of eschewing violence and securing harmonious peaceful living and resilience in local communities.

## Introduction

Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been fraught with increased violent incidents, particularly Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu provinces, perpetrated by various armed groups. According to Pierre Boisselet (2021)<sup>1</sup>, about 122 non- state armed groups (NAGs) operate in eastern DRC (See Figure 1). The groups include the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) formerly known as Madina at Tauheed wau Mujahedeem (MTM), the Movement of 23 March (M23), Zaire, and the Congo Development Cooperative (CODECO) among many others. Despite the strong presence of Government Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC), and the troops of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO)<sup>2</sup>, instability and violence in the region have remained potent.

The Armed Group, CODECO, although not declared as a terrorist group, has become a major actor of violence occurring in Ituri province particularly in the Djugu territory, operating alongside the renowned terrorist groups, ADF and MTM/ISCAP and several non-state armed groups (NAGs) including CODECO's rival group, Zaire. CODECO's violent atrocities began as a land dispute

between members of the Hema<sup>3</sup> ethnic group and members of the Lendu<sup>4</sup> ethnic group. The violence has had a ripple effects on other communities with broader regional security implications. The group has perpetrated deadly attacks against members of the Hema ethnic group over a long period of time. Since 2020, the attacks have become indiscriminate and intense including launching devastating attacks on military targets, particularly FARDC<sup>5</sup>.

Given the deteriorating security situation, the government undertook some significant efforts to contain the violence and degrade the capacity of the NAGs. The efforts culminated in military operations by FARDC, and later followed by a joint operations with troops from Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) and MONUSCO. Despite these efforts, the intensity of the violence continued unabated. Under the circumstances, and owing to the operational incapacities of the multiple deployed contingents to stem the growing insurgency, there is a need to assess the threat that CODECO poses to the peace and stability of DRC, in particular the Ituri province. The analysis assesses the vulnerabilities of local communities festering the continuous atrocities by CODECO, the effectiveness of response generation efforts especially

<sup>1</sup> Kivu Security Tracker- Is the "State of Siege" a Step in the Right Direction?- Pierre Boisselet- 2021- Available at <https://blog.kivusecurity.org/is-the-state-of-siege-a-step-in-the-right-direction> , accessed 18 November 2022.

<sup>2</sup>United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo-. Background- 2021 – Available at <https://monusco.unmissions.org/en/background> , accessed 18 November 2022.

<sup>3</sup> The Hema are an ethnolinguistic group of about 160,000 members living in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, particularly in Ituri province. They are also present in Uganda.

<sup>4</sup>Lendu is an ethno-linguistic agricultural group residing in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo in the area to the west and northwest of Lake Albert, specifically in the Ituri region.

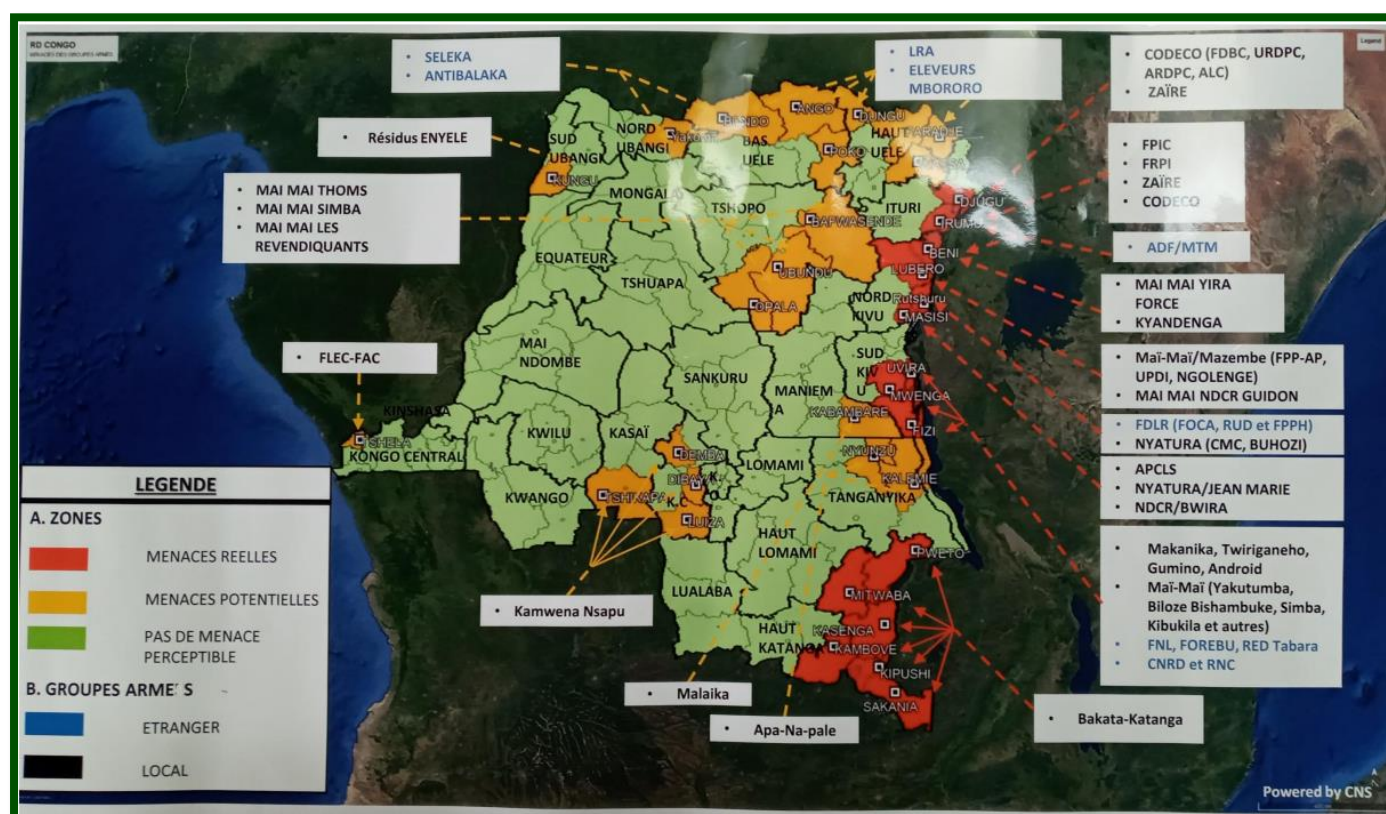
<sup>5</sup>Uppsala Conflict Data Program- Conflict Encyclopedia, Conflict Name: Hema – Lendu, Conflict Summary, Non-state Conflict- Available at <https://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/ucdp-conflict-encyclopedia/> , accessed 10 December 2022.



security reform policies aimed at combating violent extremism and terrorism implemented by the government DRC in the region, as well as provide key policy actions critical to achieving community resilience.

The rest of the analysis is sectioned as follows: Section two focuses on the background and history leading to the formation of CODECO as a NAG. The aim of which is to describe the background of its creation and evolution, as well as to analyse its current *modus operandi*. This is followed by section three, which by means of quantitative data, provides historical data trend on CODECO violent

atrocities and casualties for the last five years. Section four provides detailed analysis of vulnerabilities, responses and opportunity for community resilience. Specifically, the section highlights the initiatives undertaken by the Congolese government to degrade the capacity of the group, describe the main challenges confronting the response generation as well as opportunities for achieving community resilience. Finally, the analysis ends with section five which provides conclusion and recommendations for key policy actions capable of addressing the instability, and ultimately culminate into achieving peace, security, stability and development in eastern DRC.



**Figure 1:** Multitude of Armed Groups Operating in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with majority of them concentrating their Activities in the Eastern Provinces

## CODECO Militia Group: Background and Historical Perspectives

CODECO is an association of several groups of the Lendu ethnic group, farmers, operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, founded by Bernard Kakado<sup>6</sup> in the 1970s, as an agricultural cooperative with the aim of defending the Lendu people against the rival Hema ethnic group who are shepherds. Both ethnic groups are based in Ituri province<sup>7</sup>. Clashes between the two ethnic groups have traditionally been on land disputes. These disputes have

erupted several times in 1972, 1985 and 1996. The 1973 land law of DRC is considered an important source of the disputes. This is because, under the law, people could buy already inhabited property and then submit title to the land two years later when it becomes undisputed in court. This practice allowed families to be expelled from their fields of cultivation and their homes<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup>Bernard Kakado is a Congolese warlord, founder of the armed group Ituri Patriotic Resistance Force. He was arrested in 2007 and convicted on 9 August 2010 in Bunia by a military tribunal to life imprisonment for war crimes committed by his militia, including massacres in 2002 and other crimes in 2006 and 2007.

<sup>7</sup> AllAfrica - Congo-Kinshasa: Ending the Cycle of Violence in Ituri – 2020 - Available at <https://allafrica.com/stories/202007150784.html>, accessed 07 November 2022.

<sup>8</sup> University of Pennsylvania - African Studies Center - RDC: IRIN Focus on the Hema-Lendu conflict - Ali B. Ali-Dinar – 1999 – Available at [https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Hornet/irin\\_111599b.html](https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Hornet/irin_111599b.html), accessed 07 November 2022.

The conflict escalated when members of the Hema ethnic group tried to extend their properties on lands already occupied by the Lendu people, with forged land titles in collaboration with local authorities<sup>9</sup>. However, the presence of various armed groups, the easy availability of weapons, the war-torn economy are considered key factors that have favoured the rapid escalation of the conflict, given that the hard-hitting parties stopped using bows and arrows and

began to use modern weapons, including AK-47 and other similar grade of assault rifles<sup>10</sup>. Additionally, the weak capacity of the FARDC to contain the violence, the volatile political situation in the country, and the continued clashes between Hema and Lendu even extended to other ethnic groups created multiple latent security problems that have since threatened the peace and stability of the region.



**Figure 2: Commanders of the armed group URDPC/CODECO walk through the village of Linga on January 13, 2022, in Ituri Province, North-Eastern DRC. Picture Credit: AFP - ALEXIS HUGUET**

Following the Ituri conflict of 1999-2003<sup>11</sup>, Kakado began to organize armed operations before joining the Ituri Patriotic Resistance Front<sup>12</sup> (FRPI). This is how CODECO ceased to exist as an agricultural cooperative group and became a NAG. The longstanding feud between Lendu and Hema communities led to thousands of deaths between 1999 and 2003 before an intervention by an European peacekeeping force dubbed “*Operation ARTEMIS*”<sup>13</sup>. In the mid-2017/2018, the group resumed attacks in Djugu, under the leadership of Justin Innocent Ngudjolo<sup>14</sup>, who had begun using the name CODECO, to describe the militia, despite its connection to the Nationalist and Integrationist Front, another rebel group in Lendu. The resumption of the group’s attacks in 2017/2018 is attributed to the ituri regional government’s failure to adhere to ceasefire

agreements with the group, which was to grant amnesty to CODECO troops<sup>15</sup>. The terms of the agreements were not respected and negotiations stopped. CODECO members were subjected to poor living conditions and food shortages. This situation gave rise to the uprising that culminated in the resumption of violent extremist actions.

In mid-2020, large-scale attacks were reported, and many civilians were killed. The FARDC were forced to intervene and on March 25, 2020, Ngudjolo was killed in a confrontation with the security forces in the village of Mokpa and with his death the group was divided into several factions. Current factions include CODECO/Alliance for the Liberation of the Congo (CODECO/ALC), led by Justin Maki Gesi, Lobo da Montanha and

<sup>9</sup> ibid

<sup>10</sup> ibid

<sup>11</sup> pt.dbpedia.org/resource/Conflito\_of\_Ituri. Accessed 2022.10.06.

<sup>12</sup> Voice of America (VOA)- UN Accuses Lendu of Mass Killings of Hema in DR Congo's Ituri Province- Lisa Schlein - 2019 - [https://www.voanews.com/a/africa\\_un-accuses-lendu-mass-killings-hema-dr-congos-ituri-province/6170782.html](https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_un-accuses-lendu-mass-killings-hema-dr-congos-ituri-province/6170782.html), accessed 18 November 2022

<sup>13</sup> Radio France Internationale (RFI)- Local militia in DR Congo launch second deadly attack in a week-2023- Available at

<https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20230120-local-militia-in-dr-congo-launch-second-deadly-attack-in-a-week>, accessed 26 March 2023.

<sup>14</sup> Congo Profond- Ituri: Justin Ngudjolo, rebel leader of CODECO, wounded and arrested by FARDC - Bishop Mfundu - 2020 - Available at <https://cogoprofond.net/ituri-justin-ngudjolo-chef-rebelle-de-codeco>, accessed 10 April 2023

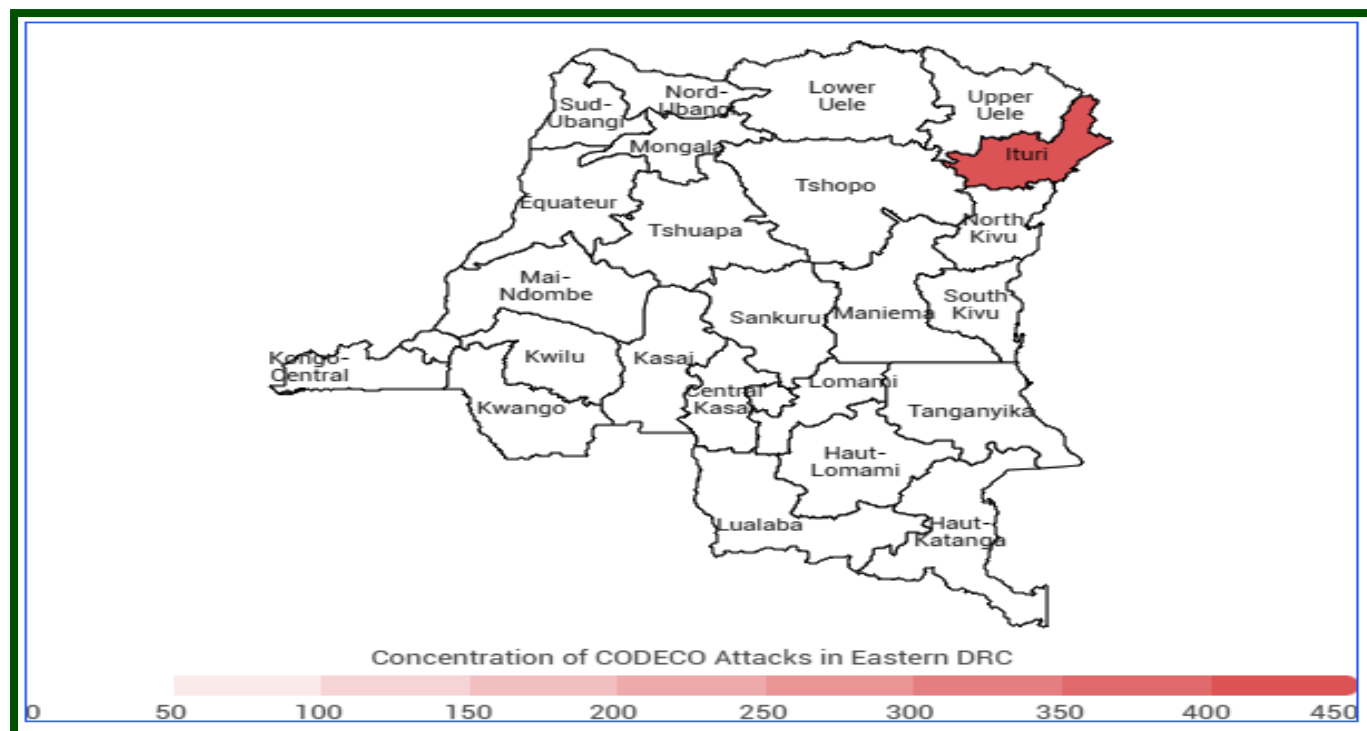
<sup>15</sup> ibid, 12



CODECO/Sambaza. Despite efforts in recent times to address the security situation, CODECO attacks have continued relentlessly, causing catastrophic humanitarian crisis in DRC. The CODECO and Zaire militia group have often fight for control of gold mines in the Ituri province, without worrying about civilian casualties. The **Zaire militia** describes itself as a self-defence group whose mission is to protect members of the Hema community against attacks from the CODECO militia representing the

rival Lendu community<sup>16</sup>. The continued attacks and counter attacks by these rival groups, and with its attendance consequences on the civilian population in local communities within the Ituri province has solicited international attention, and calls for efforts to stabilise eastern DRC have been intensified.

## Historical Data Trends of CODECO Attacks



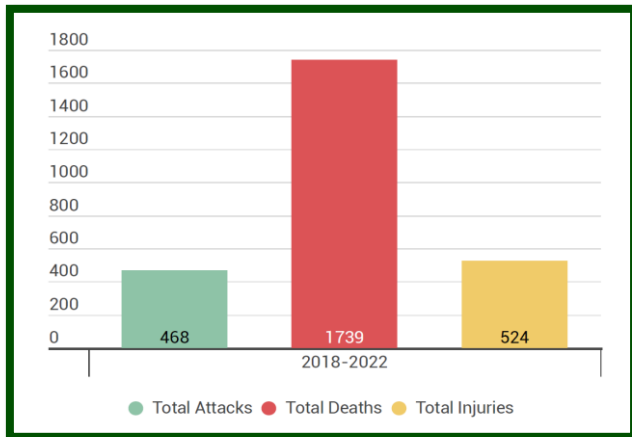
**Figure 3: CODECO's armed attacks and violence have been concentrated in Ituri province, particularly within the Djuku Territory with occasional attacks in North Kivu, but also claimed responsibility for attacks that took place in South Kivu.**

After a decade of lull, the deadly conflict mostly in the Ituri province between Hema and Lendu resumed in late 2017, causing more than 1.5 million people to flee their homes. In five years, several thousands of civilians and security forces alike have been killed in attacks perpetrated mainly by CODECO and other NAGs. Indeed, according to the Africa Terrorism Database hosted by the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), approximately 1,739 people have been killed and 524 injured from a total of 468 attacks (See Figure 4) perpetrated by CODECO militia group between 2018 and 2022 inclusive. From the historical data trend, 2020 recorded the highest number of casualties caused by the group, as 564 people were killed from 137 attacks (See Figure 5). Civilians continue to bear the brunt of the groups attacks, majority of the group atrocities 65% targeted civilians (See Figure 6).

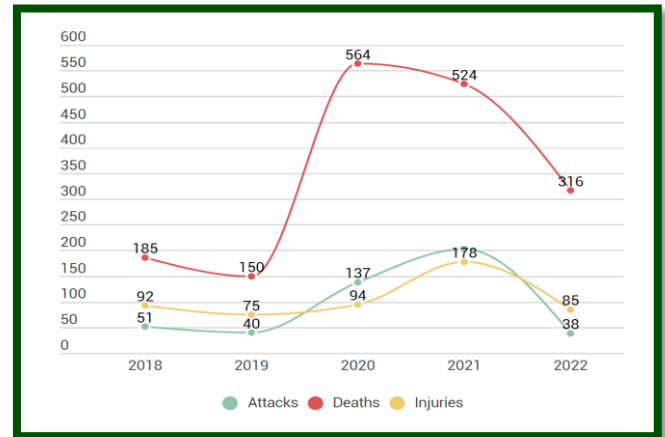
These attacks resulted in the massive displacement of people and caused destruction to lives and properties.

The data further shows that, Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) constituted the majority of means used by CODECO to carry out its attacks. Approximately 79% of all attacks by the group from 2018 to 2022 were carried out using SALW (See Figure 7). In terms of casualties, while a total of 1,119 civilians have been killed by CODECO representing 64% of all deaths caused by the group in the last five years, more than 250 security forces including FARDC soldiers and deployed troops of MONUSCO have also been killed within the same period (See Figure 8). Once again, 2020 recorded the highest civilians deaths, as 426 civilian were killed in 2020 and 305 killed in 2021 (See Figure 9).

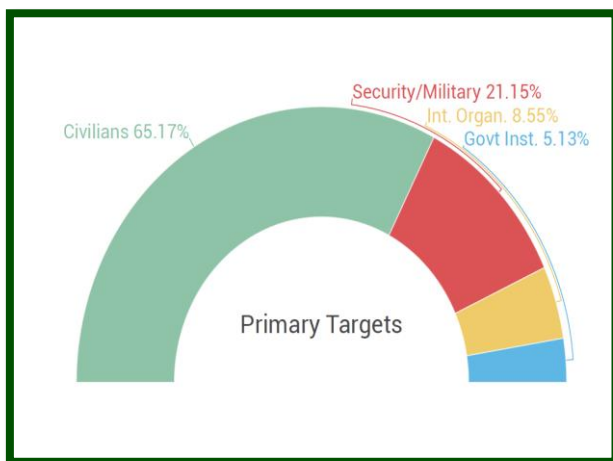
<sup>16</sup> TRT World - Zaire militia blamed for new massacre in DRC's volatile east - 2022 - Available at <https://www.trtworld.com/africa/zaire-militia-blamed-for-new-massacre-in-drc-s-volatile-east-59526>, accessed 11 April 2023



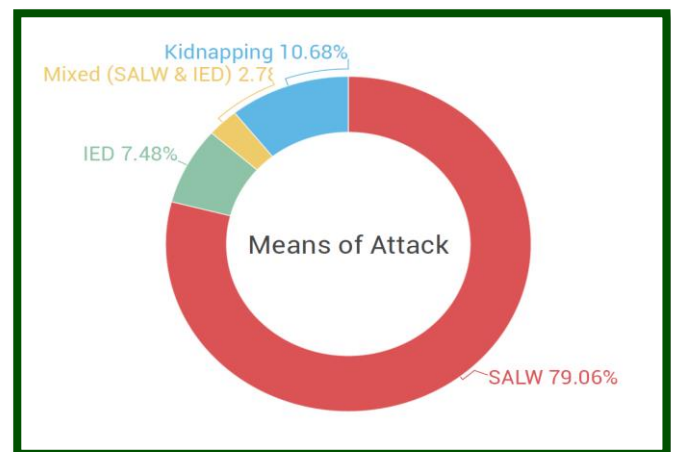
**Figure 4: CODECO Attacks and Deaths (2018-2022)**



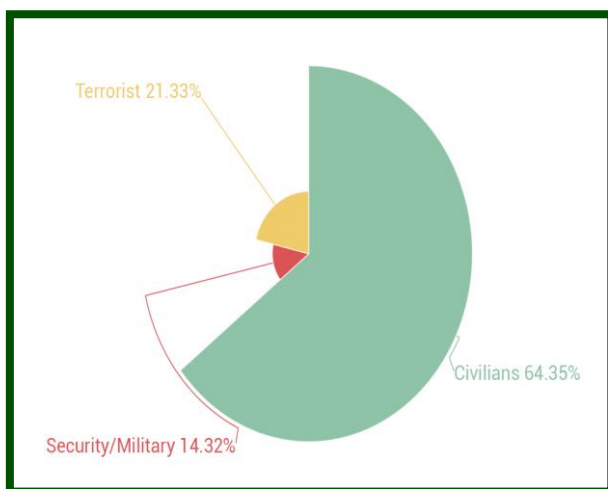
**Figure 5: CODECO Attacks and Deaths Trend (2018-2022)**



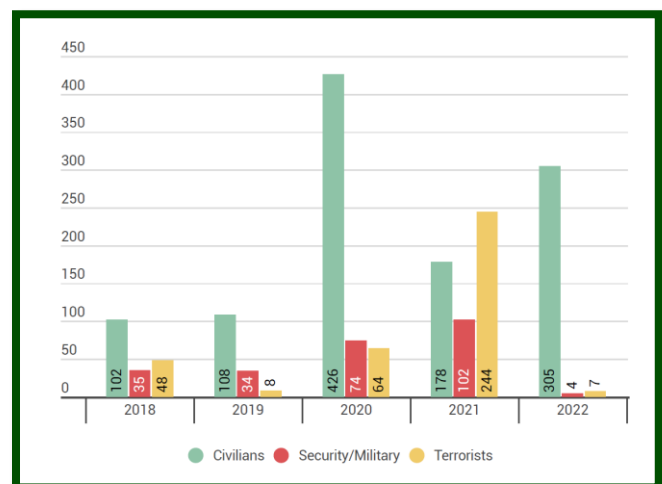
**Figure 6: Targets of CODECO Attacks (2018-2022)**



**Figure 7: Means of Attack by CODECO (2018-2022)**



**Figure 8: Category of Deaths caused by CODECO (2018-2022)**



**Figure 9: Trends in Category of Deaths caused by CODECO (2018-2022)**

## Analysis of Vulnerabilities, Response, and Resilience.

Undoubtedly, the current violent extremism activities in eastern DRC stems from long-standing unresolved conflicts, which are linked to land ownership, land control, access to mineral and other natural resources, as well as oil trafficking between the members of the two ethnic communities. The situation remains unresolved and has been one of the hotbed of tension with other non-state armed actors exploiting the vulnerabilities<sup>17</sup> <sup>18</sup>. This is a clear case of the nexus between inter-communal clashes/violence and violent extremism. Long protracted ethnic and community violence have the tendency to degenerate into Violent Extremism and Radicalisation that Could Lead to Terrorism (VERLT). This situation manifests in the case of CODECO. Prior to its transformation into a NAG, CODECO was a peaceful agricultural cooperative. With its change, the movement was reorganized under different leaders and became violent committing massive massacres and war crimes<sup>19</sup>.

One key vulnerability factor is the groups desire to attack mineral rich areas. The attacks unleashed by the group suggest a growing threat especially in gold exploration areas. The selective choice of attacks in mining areas aims to instil fear within the population and thus destroy the activity of

artisanal exploitation of gold, thereby affecting local economic activities, livelihood, and community resilience of the local population. This situation has impoverished many of the inhabitants in Djugu and other surrounding communities.

Clearly, the group's boldness to perpetrate recurrent attacks in mining areas is as a result of lack of security forces' capabilities to control the group's level of progression. The group's ability to penetrate mining areas demonstrates not only their effective operational strategies, but also their boldness in challenging the operational capability of local defense forces and security forces alike. The inability of the security and defense forces to protect the local population from CODECO's attacks have made the people vulnerable, including those in IDPs and refugees camps. For example, on 08 March 2023 CODECO combatants attacked IDPs Camp on Kilo-Mission in Djugu territory of Ituri province which led to the deaths of 16 civilians, most of whom were displaced persons who had taken refuge in a Catholic church. Attacking civilian IDPs in a place protected by the Geneva Convention is unacceptable and constitutes a war crime exposing its authors to national and international pursuits.



**Figure 10:** A Catholic Church Displaced Camp located on Kilo-Mission in Djugu territory of Ituri Province which was attacked on March 8, 2022 which led to the deaths of 16 civilians. Picture Credit: The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO).

<sup>17</sup> ibid, 7

<sup>18</sup> Militant Wire - CODECO: The DRC's Lesser-Known Insurgent Force Continues to Fight On - Scott Morgan – 2022 - Available at

<https://www.militantwire.com/p/codeco-the-drcs-lesser-known-insurgent>, accessed 6 November 2022,

<sup>19</sup> [allafrica.com/stories/202007150784.html](https://allafrica.com/stories/202007150784.html). accessed 25.10.2022.



The pitiless atrocity is evidence of the brutal scale of violence in Ituri, which preys on already vulnerable population including children and women. On 2 February 2022, at least 60 people, including 15 children, were killed during an attack as part of series of violent assaults on civilians in the area. CODECO armed men attacked the Plaine Savo Camp in Ituri province, in the east of the country, with machetes and guns<sup>20</sup>. The camp is home to 24,000 people who had left their homes and sought safety

from violence. Following the attack they moved to the nearby UN peacekeeping mission, Monusco. Plaine Savo is populated by families – vulnerable families – who have fled similar violence with their children and are only seeking the right to live in peace. The violence in Ituri is estimated to have displaced more than 13,000 people in last quarter of 2022 alone, with most living on assistance from local communities and disrupting food security.



**Figure 11:** Displaced people at the UN Monusco peacekeeping mission in Ituri province, in the north-east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Picture Credit: AFP- Alexis Huguet.

Amidst the vulnerabilities and the escalating insecurities, some preventative response generation efforts have been undertaken by the DRC government and other development actors. On 27 March 2018, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution UNSR 2409 that extended the mandate of MONUSCO in DRC, including its intervention brigade and also authorised a troop ceiling composed of 16,215 military personnel, 660 military observers and team officers, 391 police officers and 1,050 members of police units formed. MONUSCO's strategic priorities at the time were to contribute to the protection of civilians; support for the implementation of the Agreement of 31 December 2016 and the electoral process<sup>21</sup>. Despite this effort, MONUSCO has not been able to maintain control of the approximately

10,730 kilometres of Congolese borders, through which armed groups move and which the minerals that fuel the conflict are exported. In June 2019, Zaruba Ya Ituri (Storm Ituri) operations were launched on the territory of Djugu with about 20,000 soldiers<sup>22</sup>.

In August 2020, the CODECO declared a ceasefire and suspended the attacks<sup>23</sup>, but shortly thereafter, in mid-2021, violence resumed which forced the DRC government to declare a state of siege in the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri. President Félix Tshisekedi installed an emergency regime, state of siege; resulting by putting of the military and police in charge of the provinces of Ituri and North Kivu. In the course of this process, civil authorities were replaced

<sup>20</sup> The Guardian- Calls for security crackdown as 60 are killed in DRC camp violence- 2022 - Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/feb/02/calls-for-security-crackdown-as-60-are-killed-in-drc-camp-violence>, accessed 26 March 2023.

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Peacekeeping – MONUSCO Fact Sheet – 2023 - Available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/monusco>, accessed 18 March 2023.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, 1

<sup>23</sup> The East African- Militia in Eastern DRC agrees to stop attacks – 2020 – Available at [www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/rest-of-africa/militia-in-eastern-drc-agrees-to-stop-attacks--1924256](http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/rest-of-africa/militia-in-eastern-drc-agrees-to-stop-attacks--1924256), accessed 25 October 2022.

by the military and police, including governors, deputy governors, provincial assemblies, local authorities and civil courts were suspended<sup>24</sup>. The President further appointed FARDC Lieutenant Generals **Johnny Nkashama Luboya** to Ituri province and **Constant Kongba Ndimba** to North Kivu province as military governors. Both, in the past were involved in rebellions. Johnny Nkashama was the head of military intelligence at the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) in the early 2000s and Constant Kongba was known as the "plank cleaner", in reference to the particularly violent operation led by the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC) in Ituri in the early 2000s<sup>25</sup>. The changes were intended to give full control and authority to the Congolese Army in the two provinces, since the deterioration of the security situation was imminent and the desire to end the armed group's atrocities was urgent.

Following the fight against extremist actions on 30 November 2021, eastern DRC recorded joint operations between the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) with some 1,700 Ugandan army soldiers deployed on Congolese territory throughout the operational maneuvers, the troops had the support of the Ugandan army's military aviation during the offensives, as well as the support of troops from the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) <sup>26</sup> <sup>27</sup> with about 17,000 troops. Shortly after the DRC joined the East African Community (EAC) block in March 2022, in June the regional bloc took a decision to deploy its regional Standby Force, the Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF), for the first time since its inception, to stabilise the situation in the Eastern DRC. In August, Burundian contingent under the EASF was the first to arrive in DRC and in September, President Felix Tshisekedi announced imminent arrival of Kenyan forces under same EASF arrangement.

While the militaristic kinetic deployments are underway, some non-military initiatives have also been implemented, such as the Murhesa ceasefire process, community dialogue in the high and middle plateaus of South Kivu and the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) program<sup>28</sup>. The DRC President appointed Emmanuel Tommy Tambwe Rudima to the post of National Coordinator of the new Disarmament, Demobilisation, Community Reintegration and Stabilization (P-DDRCS) Program. The program seemed vital to put eastern DRC on the path to peace. But just like previous attempts this also failed<sup>29</sup>.

Additionally, barely a month after the DRC assumed membership of East African Community (EAC), the

Congolese government commenced peace talks on 23 April 2022 in Nairobi, with representatives of armed groups operating in the country. The peace talks with armed groups was aimed at cessation of hostilities against security personnel and local communities. Despite the peace talks, CODECO attacks continued unabated. In July, the group killed four civilians at Nzebi village; in August, 31 civilians were killed in the attacks in Djugu territory; in September a total of 80 civilians were killed in Mbidjo, Mongbwalu, and Blanquette villages all located within the Djugu territory; and 25 people were killed by the group in December in Walendu Watsi and Usigo villages in the Ituri Province.

The response to the security threats have been fraught with numerous challenges, which if not addressed could see a growing trend of the security crisis in the near future with a significant increase in violent attacks, particularly in the provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. These provinces are the confluence zones of the various armed groups including the ADF, MTM/ISCAP, CODECO's rival group, Zaire and M23 among others. The simultaneous attacks by ADF and M23 within the same theatre being operated by the CODECO also add to the difficulty security forces face in stabilising the region.

There is, however, an opportunity to achieving community resilience, which lies at the heart of the DRC authorities' ability to effectively combine combative measures with preventative approaches. While the various military deployments could prove beneficial in combative situations, a more inclusive Whole-Of-Society approach comprising the key actors involved in the conflict should be vigorously pursued as a viable alternative to achieving lasting peace and security. The greatest disadvantage of multiple intervening forces is lack of coordination that often leads to prolonged unresolved conflict. The ability for the deployed troops to make an impact in a seemingly saturated environment depend largely on effective coordination with all deployed troops, and the need to secure the buy in, trust and confidence of the local population. Obviously, the killing of leaders and members of CODECO has not yielded the desired results, therefore, peaceful negotiations and dialogue between the government and armed groups should be considered as a viable alternative to addressing violent extremism in the region.

The insecurity in eastern DRC could persist despite the state of siege, if adequate measures are not urgently rolled out. The current security situation which is alarming, is however neglected and under reported. The worrying insecurity trend is becoming increasingly uncontrollable due to the activity of the armed groups. The daily struggle of the local population to find some dignity must be prioritised.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*, 1.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>26</sup> MONUSCO was established on July 1, 2010 with the mandate to protect civilians, humanitarian personnel and human rights defenders from the threat of violence by armed rebel groups. In addition, support the DRC government in peace-stabilizing and peace-building efforts.

<sup>27</sup> Defense Web - Armed rebel groups still a major threat in the DRC – SANDF Major - Justin Cronje - 2020 - Available at

[www.defenceweb.co.za/joint/diplomacy-a-peace/armed-rebel-groups-still-a-major-threat-in-the-drc-sandf-major/](http://www.defenceweb.co.za/joint/diplomacy-a-peace/armed-rebel-groups-still-a-major-threat-in-the-drc-sandf-major/), accessed 09 November 2022.

<sup>28</sup> Kivu Security Tracker - Does the new disarmament and demobilization program stand a chance of success - Reagan El Miviri - 2021 - Available at <https://blog.kivusecurity.org/does-the-new-disarmament-and-demobilization-program-stand-a-chance-of-success/>, accessed 10 April 2023.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*

Vulnerable local population particularly women and children need to be protected. Despite the commitment of the authorities, resolving the insecurity situation in the region remains a daunting task. However, with political will,

commitment, and support from the international community; peace, stability, community resilience, and development could be realised in eastern DRC.

## Conclusion

The security situation in the DRC continue to deteriorate in the presence of multiple intervening forces, that include the Congolese Force (FARDC), Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF), SADC Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) and United Nations Stabilization Mission (MONUSCO), that aim to assist in the fight against growing violence in eastern DRC. The policies to prevent violence have not yielded the expected outcome. The strategies in the fight against violent extremism unleashed by the CODECO militia appears unsuccessful, mainly due to the securitisation and militarisation of the affected region, rather than addressing the fundamental root causes and social problems of the local population. The kinetic militaristic approaches if combined with local community-based violent extremism prevention initiatives could help defeat CODECO. While there is the need to do more to support counter-insurgency operations underpinned by actionable intelligence in order to improve security and stability, a human security response approach should inform military concepts of operation. Ensuring future stability will require far more than a purely military approach. Placing emphasis on kinetic militaristic strategies to counter violent extremism will not be sufficient unless they are conducted in tandem with addressing the

fundamental root causes underpinning CODECO's violent atrocities.

Indeed, the vulnerabilities in eastern DRC stem from the fact that the government bets more on militarized actions than on the search for social solutions that are at the basis of the crisis. The operational inability of the deployed troops to contain the insurgency, which is experiencing an increasing trend, demonstrate the resilience of CODECO. Given that the combative security policies aimed at countering the violent extremism implemented by the DRC Government have not been fruitful, it may be necessary for the mobilization and integration of civil society, especially of the dismembered groups so that the military route serves to balance peacekeeping. The government will also need to root out corruption in the DRC army, better train security forces for action, mobilize sufficient resources to strengthen the army's presence in the region, and cut off intelligence from armed groups. It should also identify all strongholds of active armed groups and conduct well-coordinated operations to weaken, degrade, and eradicate the footholds the group currently operates.





# African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism

## ABOUT THE ACSRT/CAERT

The African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) was established as a structure of the African Union in 2004. The decision to establish the Centre was taken in 2002 as part of the AU Plan of Action to Prevent and Combat of Terrorism. Its primary role is to assist AU member States build their Counter-Terrorism capacities. Its mandate includes the conduct of research, analysis and studies on the terrorism situation and terrorist groups in Africa, maintaining a terrorism database, centralizing information on terrorism and sharing this with AU Member States. The Centre conducts assessment missions to various AU Member States in order to ascertain their Counter-Terrorism capability and compliance with International Legal instruments and then provide advice on what needs to be done. In its capacity building effort, the Centre conducts seminars, workshops and training sessions in various aspects of Counter-terrorism for Member States and facilitates the drafting of their Counter-Terrorism legislation, strategies and Plans of Action in accordance with human rights requirements.



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