

Gender, Violence and Politics in the Democratic Republic of Congo



Jane Freedman

GENDER IN A GLOBAL/LOCAL WORLD

GENDER, VIOLENCE AND POLITICS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Gender in a Global/Local World

Series Editors: Jane Parpart, Pauline Gardiner Barber
and Marianne H. Marchand

Gender in a Global/Local World critically explores the uneven and often contradictory ways in which global processes and local identities come together. Much has been and is being written about globalization and responses to it but rarely from a critical, historical, gendered perspective. Yet, these processes are profoundly gendered albeit in different ways in particular contexts and times. The changes in social, cultural, economic and political institutions and practices alter the conditions under which women and men make and remake their lives. New spaces have been created – economic, political, social – and previously silent voices are being heard. North-South dichotomies are being undermined as increasing numbers of people and communities are exposed to international processes through migration, travel, and communication, even as marginalization and poverty intensify for many in all parts of the world. The series features monographs and collections which explore the tensions in a “global/local world,” and includes contributions from all disciplines in recognition that no single approach can capture these complex processes.

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Gender, Violence and Politics in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Series Editors' Preface

Jane Freedman's *Gender, Violence and Politics in the DRC* adopts a gender lens to explore the ways gendered structures and relations of power have affected the experiences of women and men living in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), as well as the ways in which national and international politics and policies have helped to construct and reinforce these gendered relations. The book moves beyond a description and condemnation of sexual and gender-based violence in the DRC to interrogate the larger picture regarding the various struggles for women's rights and gender equality in the nation. Freedman draws on her research between 2008 and 2014, which involved interviews with both Congolese and international key informants, focus groups, observations in policy making fora as well as literature reviews, in order to understand the complex environment shaping gendered practices in the DRC during this period.

Freedman frames her analysis in the broad historical trajectory from pre- to post-colonial times. She concludes that colonial discourses and norms regarding gender, constructed in an oppressive colonial economic system, have played, and continue to play, an important role in gendered assumptions and practices in the DRC. This history has influenced women's experiences of conflict in the Congo, who, she argues, were not only victims, but also participants and combatants. She demonstrates that the impact of conflict on relationships between men and women has been deeply influenced by their relative economic, political and social positions over time. Consequently, Freedman argues that gender-based violence (GBV) cannot be explained merely as a consequence of war. She adopts a broader understanding of violence, which moves beyond rape and sexual violence to argue that the roots of GBV are situated in gender inequalities which must be understood and challenged if this violence is to be contained.

Freedman takes up the societal practices that buttress gender-based violence in the DRC, particularly the mechanisms that exclude most women from formal political and economic structures and leadership. She questions the effectiveness of recent efforts to improve women's access to political and economic institutions, and positions of leadership. In her final chapter, Freedman explores the potential of international actors and institutions, such as the UN peacemakers, the International Criminal Court and other actors such as international organizations and NGOs, to reduce sexual and gender-based violence in the DRC. She argues that these interventions have frequently had unintended and negative consequences, which have sometimes even intensified gender based violence in the DRC. The book concludes with reflections on possible ways forward, which will require more effective cooperation between international and local actors, and innovative

collaborative approaches. As such Freedman's analysis goes beyond the case study of the DRC and is useful for academics and practitioners interested in social, political and economic continuities pre- and post-conflict. *Gender, Violence and Politics in the DRC* contributes to the series' on-going conversations about gender, conflict, policy and change. It is a welcome addition to this debate and to the series.

Jane L. Parpart
Pauline Gardiner Barber
Marianne H. Marchand

Introduction

Returning from one of my first visits to the Democratic Republic of Congo, I boarded the plane at Kinshasa airport, my bag full of notes, and my mind busy trying to fit together all I had learned from interviews, meetings and observations. A Congolese man sat down next to me and started a conversation about my trip and what I had been doing in the DRC. When he learned about my research and interest in gender relations in the country he turned to me with a smile. ‘You have to understand’, he told me, ‘women in Congo are not like European women. Sometimes they are too strong and too dominating, and we men need to use some force to control them’. This comment could be seen at first sight to sum up attitudes towards women in the DRC, and the normalisation of male violence towards women. I had already heard from many men and women how tradition dictated that men should be the ‘master’ of the family and that their wives should remain subservient. Putting these types of remark together with media reports on male violence against women in the DRC, it would be easy to subscribe to a wholly pessimistic view of Congo as ‘the worst place in the world for women’, a country of unbridled patriarchy, where women have no rights and are dominated by men. On the other hand, I had also met many people and had many experiences during my research, which did not support this black and white view of Congolese society. Many women who were playing important roles in families, communities and public space, women who were defending their rights and making decisions, women whose economic activities supported not only themselves but their families and many other members of extended families. These contrasting and sometimes contradictory perceptions of Congolese women and men pointed to a more complex and multi-faceted picture than that which might be imagined if one took account only of some of the headline reports in the world media.

My first real interest in understanding gender relations in the DRC had been stirred by previous research I had carried out on the protection offered to women seeking asylum in Europe on the grounds of gender-based persecutions. During my research in Europe I met many Congolese women who were seeking asylum, and some who had been fortunate enough to be granted refugee status (these were unfortunately a lucky few amongst the mass of rejections handed out by the authorities in various European countries). These women’s stories were shocking in their recounting of the various forms of violence they had suffered both within the DRC and en route to Europe. But what was also striking was the way in which their narratives were shaped and reformulated by those seeking to help them to gain refugee status. NGOs and associations commonly trained the women to be the most persuasive possible in their appearances before immigration courts and

tribunals, and in doing so shaped their narrative into that of what could be termed the 'ideal victim' (Freedman, 2007), an innocent and vulnerable woman subject to horrific abuse at the hands of barbarian 'others' (in this case Congolese men from various armed groups). Stories which did not fit this narrative were rejected: they would never convince the immigration authorities to grant asylum. The NGOs and associations concerned were doing their best to help these women, but because of existing structures, policies and relations of power, this help meant ensuring that the women's stories conformed to a dominant narrative of victimhood. There are striking parallels between the way in which these women's narratives were shaped in order to present them as ideal victims who deserved protection under European asylum systems, and the ways in which women still living in the DRC and experiencing various forms of violence there are portrayed. In both cases there seems to be a dominant tendency to represent these women as merely 'victims', stripped of all agency as they are subjected to various forms of horrific violence. They are women who must be 'protected' from the men they live with (men who are often represented as 'barbaric' and 'savage'). But the forms of protection envisaged are framed not by the women themselves, but by outside agencies – NGOs, international organisations, politicians and international media. Rarely are the voices of Congolese women heard and truly listened to, unless it is to recount the details of their victimhood. Little or no attention is paid to their own political and social agency, and to the complex gender relations within which they live. Clearly there is gender violence and discrimination against women in the DRC, as in all societies globally, but Congolese women should not be defined by this. They are not merely victims of rape and sexual violence, nor are Congolese men merely perpetrators of such violence. The picture is more complex and deserves more attention.

This book is thus an attempt to move beyond these portrayals of women in the DRC as helpless 'victims' of domination and violence, and beyond portrayals of Congolese men as barbaric savages who subordinate and violate the women of their country. Clearly gender relations in DRC, as everywhere else, are far more complex than these rather stereotyped and simplistic representations of femininities and masculinities and of men's and women's social roles and relations, would lead us to believe. The history of the DRC and particularly the impacts of colonisation and its aftermath are also important to consider in order to contextualise and understand the ways in which gender relations in the contemporary DRC are structured. And the current international interventions – whether for purposes of resource extraction, development aid or peacekeeping – also have a role in shaping the experiences of men and women in the country. Thus the book will try and contextualise gender relations in the DRC within a historical, political and socio-economic context, in order to explore more closely various facets of women's and men's lives in the country.

Writing this book has been a challenge to me and has led me to question my own perceptions and beliefs about the DRC and about gender relations in the country, and to try and discuss and explain the new understandings that have emerged from

my research and interviews, both formal and informal, with different people from across the country. Going back to my initial experience and discussion with my neighbour on the plane returning from Kinshasa on that first trip to the DRC, I questioned myself many times as to whether I, as an outsider, a European woman coming from my own life as an academic and researcher, could possibly hope to understand or to attempt to explain gender relations in the country. Was it too presumptuous of me to think that I could analyse and write about the position of men and women and relations between them, relations which were complex and rooted in years of specific history? On many other occasions, following this first discussion on a plane, I was reminded of my exteriority, and told – sometimes gently and sometimes more forcefully – that as an outsider, I just could not understand what was going on in the DRC and how relations between men and women in the country were shaped and understood by the Congolese themselves. Other interlocutors questioned even my use of the term ‘gender’ to describe the roles and norms associated with masculinities and femininities, and the relations between men and women, arguing that ‘gender’ was a Western concept which had no utility for the Congolese or for analysing the situation in the DRC. These discussions brought me to question my own use and meanings of the term, and of concepts such as gender equality, women’s rights or empowerment. Located in this somewhat ‘uncomfortable’ position of an outsider seeking to understand a complex set of gender relations, I have not fully resolved these questions, and nor do I believe that it is possible to do so. Inscribing my research and my analysis within a feminist epistemology of situated knowledge (Harding, 1986; Harraway, 1988) I acknowledge the limitations of my ability to understand the complex experiences of women and men in the DRC, and I also acknowledge the ways in which my experiences and position as a researcher have influenced the process and the results of research. As Stanley and Wise point out:

Whether we like it or not, researchers remain human beings complete with all the usual assembly of feelings, failings, and moods. And all of those things influence how we feel and understand what is going on. Our consciousness is always the medium through which the research occurs; there is no method or technique of doing research other than through the medium of the researcher. (1993: 157)

I do not pretend therefore to ‘speak for’ women in the DRC, nor to recount their experiences from anything other than the perspective of an outsider, and I realise that the process of the research and the ways in which I have understood and analysed my research is closely linked to my own situation. However, by listening to and relating the experiences of women and men in the DRC, and by trying to contextualise these within a historical, political and socio-economic framework, I hope to move beyond some of dominant existing narratives on Congolese women as mere ‘victims’ of violence, and to explore further and in

a more nuanced fashion gender relations within the DRC and the experiences of Congolese women and men.

A Short History of the Democratic Republic of Congo

It would be difficult to understand gender relations in contemporary DRC without some kind of understanding of the history of the country, although this history is so complex that it is impossible to do it justice in a short introduction such as this. Whilst scholars have written extensive volumes on the history of the DRC, its colonisation and struggles for independence, and the causes of its current conflicts, in this introduction I will limit myself to a rapid (and admittedly somewhat sketchy) outline of what may be considered as some key points necessary for the contextualisation of my arguments concerning gender, politics and violence in the country. Much has been written about the corrupt, violent and for some hopeless nature of politics and society in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In an article in 2000 as conflicts raged, René Lemarchand, a well-known scholar and writer on the DRC, described the country as on the ‘road to hell’ (Lemarchand, 2000). Of course, this description has been contested, as have been the claims that DRC is a prime example of a ‘failed state’,¹ however it is clear that it is a country facing several severe and over-lapping structural challenges which can be brought together to explain both the crises that it has traversed and the uncertainties which still persist concerning its future stability and peace.

The current conflicts in the DRC are notoriously complex, resulting from a multiplicity of inter-connecting causes including (in no order of priority or importance) struggles for control of natural resources, local land disputes, ethnic tensions, regional conflicts with neighbouring states, political violence and corruption, and the list goes on. The relative importance of these various causes and the way they interact changes over time and also varies between different regions of the DRC, with one cause being more important in certain regions than others, which makes analysis and understanding of the conflict even more difficult. Indeed, one Congolese interviewee, a professor of ethics in Bukavu who had spent a long time studying the conflicts, told me that he himself did not fully understand the situation: ‘You think you’ve understood and worked out what’s causing the violence, and then something else happens and you realise that you don’t really understand at all’.² When even Congolese researchers admit to not fully understanding the ongoing conflicts in their country, it might perhaps be seen as foolish for an outsider to attempt to explain the situation of the DRC. However, in guise of some background information to help to contextualise my arguments

1 The very concept of ‘failed states’ has come under much criticism because of its supposedly Western centred and colonialised view of what a successful state should look like.

2 Interview, Bukavu, June 2013.

about the nature of gender relations and the links between gender, politics and violence in the DRC, I will attempt to present a short analysis of the historical background, and the current causes of conflict in the country.

Many of the problems and challenges facing the DRC today may be seen to have their roots in the colonial past of the country and the slave trade, which destroyed the large kingdoms, many with sophisticated structures of governance, which had occupied the territory in previous centuries (Stearns, 2011). The Congo was affected by the slave trade from the sixteenth century onwards, with several million slaves being exported by European and Arab slave traders. The coming of this trade also led to wars between rival kingdoms hoping to benefit from the traders, and to sell members of their rivals as slaves to increase their own resources and power.

Belgian colonisation of the Congo began in the nineteenth century, and King Leopold II of Belgium quickly claimed the rich state as his own personal property, winning international recognition for his Congo Free State in 1885 at the Berlin Conference (Brausch, 1961; Gondola, 2002). King Leopold's rule was brutal. He used the Congo for production of rubber, creating a system of forced labour during which millions of Congolese were killed, mutilated or died from starvation and disease (Stearns, 2012). King Leopold finally handed control of the Congo over to the Belgian Government in 1908, when the country was renamed the Belgian Congo, but this change of control did not radically improve the situation of the Congolese people. The Belgian colonial administration was still primarily focused on gaining maximum profit from extraction of Congo's natural resources and invested little in development of the country or support to its population. As Stearns argues 'By the time they were forced to hand over power, the Belgians had set the new nation up to fail' (Stearns, 2012: 7).

The Belgian authorities created a colonial state which was lacking in qualified personnel to take over the administration, and also where the roots of conflict over land and ethnicity had been laid. The land appropriations of the colonial state created multiple local struggles for land which can be seen as remaining as one of the causes at the roots of today's conflicts (Autesserre, 2010). The Belgian authorities declared that all uncultivated land was the property of the state, and thus native Congolese were allowed access only to dramatically reduced areas of land, with the rest being distributed amongst Belgian settlers or transformed into national parks. Access to land has always been crucial in the Congo, where many are subsistence farmers, and this access is necessary to enable a person to feed his or her family. Land is also a means of gaining the social capital necessary to assimilation into the local community (Autesserre, 2010: 131). So the restrictions on land ownership led to conflicts which have had a continuing impact on the DRC today. In addition, the Belgian authorities fuelled ethnic divisions in the Congo to consolidate their control. Whilst political citizenship was granted only to Belgian residents of the Congo, 'ethnic' citizenship was granted to indigenous Congolese based on their membership in a local ethnic community (Autesserre, 2010: 130). 'For most Congolese, one's identity as a member of a specific ethnic

or tribal group thus became the basis for receiving national rights as a citizen, in addition to remaining the key factor for access to land, wealth and political, social and economic power at the local level' (Autesserre, 2010: 130). The Belgian authorities also supported the movement of thousands of people from Rwanda to Congo to work in mines and plantations. These 'Banyarwanda' were often favoured by the Belgians in access to positions of relative political and economic power, thus creating ethnic tensions which again have a continuing impact today. Ethnic tensions were also exploited by the Belgians to combat the national independence movement at the end of the 1950s (Gounden and Mbugua, 2007), as they sought to divide national opposition to their colonial regime. Tensions between those of Banyarwanda descent and other indigenous Congolese continue until today. The Banyarwanda and their descendants were granted citizenship by Mobutu under a 1972 law, and are thus officially Congolese, but are still regarded as outsiders by some. Indeed during my research there were several occasions when interviewees pointed to the supposedly harmful customs of the Banyarwanda and their negative impact on Congolese society. The genocide in Rwanda and influx of Hutu refugees after 1994 only served to exacerbate these existing tensions, which Mobutu also stoked as a backlash against the democratisation movement and opposition to his authoritarian regime in the early 1990s (Gounden and Mbugua, 2007).

Congo's independence came in 1960. At that time, the Belgian administration's planned industrialisation had placed the country in what could be seen as a strong position in terms of industrial output and structures (Reno, 2006). However, the colonial administration's refusal to educate or train Congolese nationals meant that there were remarkably few trained or expert Congolese to take over the national structures. By the time of independence in 1960, there were only 16 university graduates among the indigenous population (Stengers, 1982).

Belgium was forced into granting independence to the Congo by a wave of strikes and riots in Leopoldville, the then capital, which led to real fears of a major colonial war. While granting independence, however, Belgium was unwilling to give up control over the country's mineral resources, and there was almost immediately violence after the June 1960 independence, as Belgian soldiers supported a secessionist administration in the province of Katanga, and Congolese troops mutinied against their Belgian generals. In 1961, Congo's first Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba was assassinated, and Joseph Mobutu, an army sergeant took power, and went on to rule the country for 32 years.

Mobutu's rule led to what might be called a collapse of the DRC's state structures (Lemarchand, 2001). His personalised and corrupt rule can be said to have paved the way for country's collapse (Stearns, 2012). He used the judicial and institutional system left in place by the Belgian colonial government but attempted to condense all powers under his own personal rule, and helped himself freely to the State's resources (Gondola, 2002). Mobutu introduced a one party system, creating his own Popular Revolutionary Movement (*Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* or MPR), and coerced the Congolese people into joining this party. The MPR was fused with the administrative structure and the state itself (Gondola,

2002). This system brought Congo to the brink of collapse, dependent on foreign aid for its survival. As Reno argues: 'By the mid-1980s it appeared as though state institutions in Congo were experiencing a total collapse' (Reno, 2006: 49). Mobutu was becoming increasingly paranoid, and more distrustful of his own government and army, and was more and more dependent on foreign support from his Cold War allies and from foreign mercenaries. He relied increasingly on 'loans' that did not have to be repaid and corrupt business deals involving Congo's rich mineral resources (Braeckman, 1992). As his power began to fail in the 1990s, Mobutu began to provoke and exploit ethnic tensions in order to divide his associates and potential rivals and provoke competition amongst them to defend their resources (Reno, 2006). In 1990 Mobutu announced the end of the one party state and a move towards multiparty democracy (Gondola, 2002), allowing the creation of a multitude of opposition and pro-government parties to be formed. Thus by the mid-1990s there were a range of local tensions and disputes brewing over ethnic divisions and land rights, which served to stoke and multiply the conflicts that began following the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

The recent conflicts in and involving the DRC – which have been described by some as 'Africa's First World War' by virtue of the numerous African States which have been involved at some time or another and the huge number of people killed,³ injured or displaced by the conflicts – are often explained as a result of the consequences and spill over of the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, and the subsequent political and population shifts in the region. A more nuanced view might see the Rwandan crisis as a catalyst rather than as the sole cause of the recent conflicts in the DRC and its region. As Prunier argues: 'The Rwandese genocide and its consequences did not cause the implosion of the Congo basin and its periphery. It acted as a catalyst, precipitating a crisis that had been latent for a good many years and that later reached far beyond its original Great Lakes locus' (2010: xxxi). When Paul Kagame's Rwandan Patriotic Front gained power in Kigali following the genocide in Rwanda, about two million mainly Hutu refugees moved into the East of the DRC to avoid retribution for their role in the genocide of the Tutsi's and persecution from the new Tutsi government. In the generalised violence and unrest which ensued, the Rwandan and Ugandan governments gave support to Laurent Kabila's armed group, the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo, to advance from Rwanda into Congo. An anti-Mobutu coalition consisting of the Rwandan, Ugandan, Angolan and Burundian governments as well as South Sudanese rebel forces was formed, which supported and armed the rebel groups led by Kabila. A full scale conflict took place between September and November 1996, with the rebels eventually proving victorious in May 1997, toppling Mobutu and installing Kabila as the new leader of the DRC.

Following Kabila's victory, he very soon fell out with his former allies in Rwanda and Uganda, for various reasons, including the dismissal of Rwandan

3 An International Rescue Committee report released in 2008 estimated that 5.4 million people had died because of the conflicts since 1998 (IRC, 2008).

military advisers from his forces, and his alleged support of Rwandan rebel groups in the Eastern DRC. A new rebel movement, the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD), came together with the support of Rwanda and Uganda, and launched an attack on the DRC government in August 1998. Kabila called for help from friendly governments in the region and Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia decided to provide his regime with troops in return for mining contracts. Thus the conflict soon enlarged to involve many of the countries in the region. At the same time the rebel movements fighting against Kabila's government split and created various splinter groups. Jean-Pierre Bemba, created the Congo Liberation Movement (MLC), and the RCD split into two, and then three smaller groups. As a military stalemate emerged, the various groups were brought to the negotiating table by international pressure, and a ceasefire was eventually signed in Lusaka in July 1999. The ceasefire agreement included a promise to hold a national dialogue between conflicting factions and the creation of a UN peacekeeping force (the MONUC, later MONUSCO).⁴

Despite the ceasefire and peace agreement, conflicts continued. Between 1999 and 2003 up to 14 foreign armies were actively involved in the conflict, supporting one rebel group or another. Conflicts and violence were particularly serious in the Eastern provinces of the country where the government had little or no control. Laurent Kabila was assassinated by one of his own bodyguards in 2001, in circumstances which are not fully understood, and his son Joseph took over as president. Under the new leadership of Joseph Kabila, negotiations and progress towards a peace agreement re-started, and an Inter-Congolese Dialogue began, bringing together the leaders of the various armed groups to try and reach a settlement for a coalition government for the future of the country. The Dialogue began in April 2002 and led to the signing of several agreements, including the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement on the Transition in the Democratic Republic of Congo (or Sun City Agreement) in 2002, which agreed to the formation of a power sharing government and the holding of elections. Agreements were also signed between the DRC and Rwanda (Pretoria Agreement, 2002) and the DRC and Uganda (Luanda Agreement, 2002), which entailed the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Congolese territory.

A Transitional Government was installed in June 2003, with Kabila remaining as President, and four vice-Presidents from different factions. The Transitional Government managed to reunify the DRC and finally organised a referendum on a new constitution for the country in 2005 and legislative and presidential elections in 2006. Whilst for some the holding of elections and installation of a new elected government under President Kabila signalled the end of the conflict and the start of a period of post-conflict reconstruction in the DRC, in fact conflicts have been on going, particularly in the Eastern regions of the country. As already mentioned, the causes of these conflicts are multiple and complex, and as such it is almost impossible to provide an overarching explanation for the continued fighting.

4 For more details on MONUC and MONUSCO see Chapter 6.

Many of the conflicts arise from local disputes, although they may be fuelled or supported by national or international actors and their strategies. In regions that have been the hardest hit by the fighting, local populations have also organised their own self-defence militias, which has added another level of complexity to the multitude of armed groups operating in these regions.

A second set of presidential and legislative elections were held in December 2011. But although Congolese democracy may be argued to have been ‘consolidated’ by the holding of these second set of elections under seemingly democratic conditions, there were significant questions asked over the results of these elections, which saw Joseph Kabila re-elected as president, beating both his old rival Etienne Tshisekedi and a new challenger Vital Kamerhe. The result was disputed by opponents, and Kabila’s support had clearly been eroded since 2006, particularly in the East where his promises of peace and security remained unfulfilled (Vircoulon, 2011). Opponents had also been particularly unhappy about a revision of the Constitution in January 2011 which replaced a two-round presidential election with a one-round election, thus favouring Kabila who faced a divided opposition, but one which may have been united in opposition to him during a second round of voting if the old system had remained in place.

Despite relative stability in the rest of the country, conflict continues in the East, and particularly in the North and South Kivu Regions. The M23, a new armed group named after the 23 March peace agreement between the DRC government and the rebel groups, emerged in the region in April 2012. This group constituted of ex-soldiers who had been members of the CNDP and had then been integrated into the FARDC (official Congolese army) following the previous peace agreement, mutinied because of their claims that the government had failed to comply with the terms of this agreement of 2009. Joseph Kabila’s announcement that he intended to arrest General Bosco Ntaganda, a leader of this group, in order to deliver him to the International Criminal Court, provoked a new round of fighting and hostilities between the M23 and the government forces.

The conflict between the M23 and the government forces in the East of the DRC added another layer of hostilities on to an already unstable and violent situation. During a research trip to North Kivu in 2013, a local UN informant provided me with a list of 39 armed groups known to be operating in the area. And this figure includes only the known armed groups, and not the many splinter groups, village self-defence groups etc. who all contribute to the fighting. These many militias and armed groups have continued various local conflicts which combine with the ‘main’ combat between the M23 and the government forces. The conflict with the M23 also has an international dimension as the DRC government has accused neighbouring countries, Rwanda and Uganda, of supporting the M23 and providing them with arms, and there have been reports of Rwandan and Ugandan troops being found within Congolese territory. In December 2013, the M23 finally signed a peace deal with the Congolese government after prolonged negotiations in Kampala, Uganda. But this agreement has not put an end to the violence in the Region. In January 2014, for example, the Congolese army started an operation