



What?

This research project investigated the impact of armed groups on governance structures at the national and sub-national level, in the eastern DRC. It developed RVI's Usalama Project, and was also supported by the ESRC-DFID Poverty Alleviation Research Grant Scheme on social networks and ex-combatants. The research analyzed armed groups' direct and indirect challenges to state authority and their own claims to public authority. Furthermore, it examined how the economic and socio-political power of armed combatants changes from wartime to peacetime, and how it is affected by different security sector reform processes. This research connected individuals' wartime experiences with their post-war trajectories and investigated the impact on political settlements and peace building processes, with a particular focus on gender.

How?

The project relied on extensive fieldwork in the eastern DRC, conducted with Congolese NGOs and their researchers. Three research teams engaged in fieldwork and conducted interviews with state authorities, customary chiefs, civil society leaders, UN staff and armed group actors themselves. The case study on the social mobility of armed combatants involved an innovative methodological mix of ex-combatant surveys, social network analyses, and semi-structured interviews. Social network analysis was conducted with a sub-set of survey participants to measure the impact of wartime social networks on post-conflict economic and social empowerment.

Why?

For those who work for a more stable DRC, it is important to understand how conflict can shape political settlements at the national and sub-national level. We were particularly interested in how governance structures are affected by armed group activity and how armed groups engage the state—its institutions, representatives and its very idea—and thus indirectly challenge the meaning of public authority, and how it is achieved. We were also interested in the role that DDR processes have played in the process. The research considered the ways in which this has incentivised proliferation of armed groups, but also affected individuals and their social networks and socio-economic activities.

Who?

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Key Publications

- [Cuvelier, J., & Bashwira, M.-R. \(2016\). *Women, Conflict and Public Authority in the Congo* \(PSRP Briefing Paper No. 13\). Nairobi: Rift Valley Institute.](#)
- [De Vries, H. \(2016\). *The Ebb and Flow of Stabilization in the Congo* \(PSRP Briefing Paper No. 8\). London: Rift Valley Institute.](#)

- Mathys, G., & Vlassenroot, K. (2016). *"It's not all about the land': Land disputes and conflict in eastern Congo* (PSRP Briefing Paper No. 14). London: Rift Valley Institute.
- Vlassenroot, K., Mudinga, E., & Hoffmann, K. (2016). *Contesting Authority: Armed Rebellion and Military Fragmentation in Walikale and Kalehe, North and South Kivu*. London: Rift Valley Institute.
- Verweijen, J., & Wakenge, C. I. (2015). *Understanding Armed Group Proliferation in the Eastern Congo* (PSRP Briefing Paper No. 7). London: Rift Valley Institute.
- Verweijen, J. (2016). *A Microcosm of Militarization: Conflict, Governance, and Armed Mobilization in Uvira, South Kivu*. London: Rift Valley Institute.
- Verweijen, J. (2016). *Stable Instability: Political Settlements and Armed Groups in the Congo*. London: Rift Valley Institute.
- Vogel, C., & Musama, J. (2016). *Recycling Rebels? Demobilization in the Congo* (PSRP Briefing Paper No. 11). London: Rift Valley Institute.
- Witt, F., & Balfe, K. (2016). *Civil Society, Conflict Transformation, and Peace Building – a Christian Aid Ireland Learning Paper* (PSRP Working Paper No. 4). Edinburgh: Global Justice Academy, University of Edinburgh.

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