

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

*Attacks on schools, including widespread looting, damage or destruction of facilities, and fear of abduction and recruitment by armed groups contributed to children missing out on education, particularly in the eastern provinces.*⁶³⁵

CONTEXT

Recurring conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), exacerbated by the struggle to control mineral resources in the east and south, has left more than 5 million dead since 1997.⁶³⁶ A 2003 peace agreement integrated many former belligerents into a unified national army – the Congolese Army (FARDC) – and created a power-sharing government, but conflict continued in the east. Since then, the main protagonists have been the Congolese Army; the Hutu-led Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR); the Congolese Tutsi-led National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), which subsequently became a political party in 2009 and no longer exists as an armed group; several other armed ‘local defence’ groups known as the Mai Mai; and, from April 2012 to November 2013, the largely Tutsi-led rebel group M23. The Ugandan rebel-group the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) has also been fighting in the north since 2006.⁶³⁷

School closures in conflict areas, damage of educational facilities, fear of abduction by armed groups and widespread displacement have led to many children and young people missing out on education in the east.⁶³⁸

The country’s vast size and the remoteness of many of the places where attacks occur, combined with

ongoing insecurity, make it difficult to accurately monitor attacks. Many of the areas where they have occurred are not accessible by road, and armed groups are still in control. However, since the conflict began, significant incidents of forced recruitment from schools and along school routes, shooting or abduction of students and staff, sexual violence committed en route to and from school, looting and burning of schools, occupation of education buildings by military forces and armed groups, and persecution of academics have been documented.⁶³⁹

In 2011, gross primary enrolment in DRC was 105 per cent, gross secondary enrolment was 43 per cent and gross tertiary enrolment was 8 per cent.⁶⁴⁰ Adult literacy was 67 per cent in 2010.⁶⁴¹

ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS

Attacks on education during 2009-2012 mostly occurred in the eastern provinces, where rebel groups and the Congolese Army were active. From October 2008 to December 2009, the UN reported 51 attacks on schools by armed forces and armed groups.⁶⁴² In 2010, at least 14 schools were attacked,⁶⁴³ while in 2011 the UN recorded 53 incidents against schools and health centres.⁶⁴⁴ Of these, the FDLR was responsible for 21 cases of destruction and looting, and Mai Mai groups for six, but the Congolese Army and the Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-Nalu) were also responsible for some incidents.⁶⁴⁵

In 2012, the reported number of attacks increased significantly, due mainly to fighting between FARDC and M23 forces and the activities of other armed groups who took advantage of the security vacuum created by the army’s focus on the M23. At least 561 incidents of looting and damage, affecting 548 primary schools and 13 secondary schools in North

and South Kivu, were reported by local protection monitors – although the percentage damaged during targeted attacks or military use was not specifically indicated, and not all cases could be confirmed.⁶⁴⁶ As of March 2013, the Education Cluster had received 133 reports of schools affected by looting and damage in North Kivu in which the presence or activity of armed forces or armed groups was noted, including the Congolese Army, the FDLR, the M23 and several Mai Mai groups.⁶⁴⁷ During attacks on two schools in Haut-Uélé district in January 2012, 10 classrooms were set on fire by alleged LRA elements.⁶⁴⁸

ATTACKS ON SCHOOL STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL

Two incidents of attacks on students or education personnel were reported. On 4 October 2011, seven education workers belonging to the Banyamulenge ethnic group were killed near Fizi, South Kivu, in an ethnically-driven attack by Mai Mai Yakutumba fighters while on their way to lead a one-month teacher training programme;⁶⁴⁹ and on 13 November 2012, shots fired by soldiers and police reportedly killed four primary school students and injured nine others in Kantine during a student march.⁶⁵⁰

MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS

There was widespread military use of schools in 2012, particularly as temporary barracks or bases. Schools were occupied or used by the Congolese Army as well as the FDLR, Mai Mai groups and other militia.⁶⁵¹ In Katanga province, where confrontations between Mai Mai militias and FARDC were ongoing, some 64 schools were reported to have been occupied by armed groups as of March 2013.⁶⁵² Soldiers from the Congolese Army reportedly occupied 42 primary and secondary schools in Minova, South Kivu, and Bweremana, North Kivu, for

varying lengths of time⁶⁵³ from 20 November 2012 until at least 24 December, preventing at least 1,100 children from going to school.⁶⁵⁴ They used chairs and desks as firewood and looted offices and stores, seriously damaging a majority of the schools they occupied.⁶⁵⁵

Child recruitment and sexual violence at, or en route to or from, schools

A range of armed groups and the Congolese army have recruited children and some of the recruitment has taken place at schools. In April 2009, schools in the northern Masisi-Walikale border zone were temporarily closed in response to threats of recruitment by Mai Mai forces.⁶⁵⁶ Ongoing recruitment of children and threats of re-recruitment, including from schools in Masisi and Rutshuru territories in 2010 by former CNDP elements integrated within FARDC, were also documented.⁶⁵⁷ In November, ex-CNDP FARDC members who refused to leave North Kivu despite government orders reportedly visited schools and demanded lists of recently demobilized children.⁶⁵⁸ Between 19 April and 4 May 2012, M23 rebels forcibly recruited at least 48 boys around Kilolirwe, Kingi, Kabati and other locations on the road to Kitchanga, in Masisi, North Kivu province, according to Human Rights Watch; some of them were recruited at schools or on the way to or from school.⁶⁵⁹ On 19 April 2012, near Kingi, Masisi territory, M23 forces rounded up at least 32 male students at Mapendano secondary school.⁶⁶⁰

At least one incident of sexual violence was perpetrated on the road from a school. On 25 June 2009, a Congolese army colonel in South Kivu allegedly raped a 15-year-old girl on her way back from school, and forced her to follow him on his redeployment after he learned she was pregnant – although she eventually managed to escape.⁶⁶¹

ATTACKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

There were two reported incidents involving higher education. In January 2011, university students protesting insecurity on the campus of the University of Kinshasa, following the murders of two of their classmates, clashed with police. The university administration reported three deaths resulting from police gunfire, though police said there were only injuries, and several buildings and vehicles were looted or set on fire.⁶⁶² Student protests over tuition fee increases in April 2011 also resulted in the damage of administrative buildings and the deaths of a science student and a security guard.⁶⁶³

ATTACKS ON EDUCATION IN 2013

Destruction, looting and occupation of schools⁶⁶⁴ and the presence of unexploded ordnance in and around schools⁶⁶⁵ continued in 2013, as did the threat of recruitment from schools and along school routes in eastern DRC.⁶⁶⁶ As of late September, the UN had documented at least 49 attacks on schools and health facilities by armed groups.⁶⁶⁷ From 15 February to 18 March, the UN verified some six attacks on schools and hospitals during fighting in North and South Kivu and Orientale provinces.⁶⁶⁸ In March, UNICEF reported that 18 schools had been systematically destroyed in Katanga province.⁶⁶⁹ A joint investigation by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and local authorities in the Kamango area, Beni territory, North Kivu, found that the armed group ADF had ransacked 11 schools in July alone, destroying school furniture; the group had attacked at least one school in the preceding months.⁶⁷⁰ It also found that a FARDC integrated brigade had temporarily occupied five schools, burning the furniture as firewood.⁶⁷¹ During clashes between armed groups in North Kivu on 27 September, witnesses reported the kidnapping

of dozens of children and three teachers after their school was burned down.⁶⁷²

University students and police clashed on at least two occasions, one of which reportedly resulted in casualties.⁶⁷³ In March, violence broke out at the Institut Supérieur de Développement Rural in Lubao, where students began protesting after a regional administrator allegedly made derogatory remarks about them on a local television channel. The police claimed that warning shots had been fired on the second day of protests but a student representative said that the police had opened fire on the protesters, some of whom were throwing stones, and had killed two students and wounded at least five others.⁶⁷⁴

ENDNOTES DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

⁶³⁵ This profile covers attacks in the period 2009-2012, with an additional section on 2013.

⁶³⁶ Insight on Conflict, “DR Congo: Conflict Profile,” last updated August 2011.

⁶³⁷ See “DRC: Who’s who among armed groups in the east,” IRIN, 15 June 2010; and “Briefing: Armed groups in eastern DRC,” IRIN, 31 October 2013.

⁶³⁸ See, for example: US Department of State, 2009 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Democratic Republic of the Congo (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 11 March 2010); and Ndiaga Seck, “In conflict-torn eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, children displaced by war get a chance to continue their education,” UNICEF, 19 December 2012.

⁶³⁹ See Brendan O’Malley, *Education under Attack 2010* (Paris: UNESCO, 2010); and Brendan O’Malley, *Education under Attack* (Paris: UNESCO, 2007).

⁶⁴⁰ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), “Education (all levels) Profile – Democratic Republic of the Congo,” UIS Statistics in Brief (2011). The figure is higher than 100 per cent because gross enrolment means the total number enrolled, regardless of age, as a percentage of the age cohort.

⁶⁴¹ The World Bank, “Literacy rate – Adult, total,” The World Bank Data (2010).

⁶⁴² UNSC, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2009, S/2010/369, 9 July 2010, para 42.

⁶⁴³ UNSC, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/65/820–S/2011/250, 23 April 2011, para 89.

⁶⁴⁴ UNSC, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/66/782–S/2012/261, 26 April 2012, para 37.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁶ Information provided by a UN respondent, November 2012; interview with Eastern DRC Education Cluster Coordinator on 18 March 2013; information provided by Human Rights Watch on 6 November 2013.

⁶⁴⁷ Information provided by the Eastern DRC Education Cluster on 6 April 2013.

⁶⁴⁸ UNSC, Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of children and armed conflict affected by the Lord’s Resistance Army, S/2012/365, 25 May 2012, para 37.

⁶⁴⁹ HRW, *World Report 2013: Democratic Republic of the Congo* (New York: HRW, 2013); Tim Adams, “How the teachers of hope I met in the Congo were brutally killed,” *The Guardian*, 15 October 2011; and HRW, “DR Congo: Awaiting Justice One Year After Ethnic Attack,” 4 October 2012.

⁶⁵⁰ “Nord-Kivu: les forces de l’ordre accusées de meurtre de 4 élèves à Kantine,” *Radio Okapi*, 13 November 2013.

⁶⁵¹ Interview with Human Rights Watch researcher, 23 January 2013; Information provided by a UN respondent, November 2012; UNSC, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/66/782–S/2012/261, 26 April 2012, para 37; UNICEF, “UNICEF Democratic Republic of the Congo Monthly Situation Report – 15 February to 18 March 2013,” 18 March 2013; and UN Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Report of the UN Joint Human Rights Office on Human Rights Violations Perpetrated by Soldiers of the Congolese Armed Forces and Combatants of the M23 in Goma and Sake, North Kivu Province, and in and around Minova, South Kivu Province, from 15 November to 2 December 2012, May 2013, para 24.

⁶⁵² UNICEF, “UNICEF Democratic Republic of the Congo Monthly Situation Report– 15 February to 18 March 2013,” 18 March 2013.

⁶⁵³ Information provided by Human Rights Watch on 6 November 2013.

⁶⁵⁴ MONUSCO and UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Report of the UN Joint Human Rights Office on Human Rights Violations Perpetrated by Soldiers of the Congolese Armed Forces and Combatants of the M23 in Goma and Sake, North Kivu Province, and in and around Minova, South Kivu Province, from 15 November to 2 December 2012, May 2013, para 24.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ UNSC, Letter dated 23 November 2009 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to

resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2009/603, 23 November 2009, para 327.

⁶⁵⁷ UNSC, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/65/820–S/2011/250, 23 April 2011, para 85.

⁶⁵⁸ US Department of State, 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Democratic Republic of the Congo (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 8 April 2011), 44.

⁶⁵⁹ HRW, “DR Congo: Bosco Ntaganda Recruits Children by Force,” 15 May 2012.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁶¹ UNSC, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, S/2010/369, 9 July 2010, para 37.

⁶⁶² “RDC : affrontements entre étudiants et policiers à Kinshasa,” Radio France International, 13 January 2011.

⁶⁶³ Jane Marshall, “DR CONGO: Inquiries into violence after fees hikes,” University World News, Issue No: 77, 8 May 2011.

⁶⁶⁴ “RDC: L’ONU condamne fermement les attaques de groupes armés contre des écoles et hôpitaux,” UN News Centre, 25 September 2013; Save the Children, Attacks on education: The impact of conflict and grave violations on children’s futures (London: Save the Children, 2013), 13; and Stéphanie Aglietti, “Flash point city still on edge after Congo rebel retreat,” Agence France-Presse, 4 September 2013.

⁶⁶⁵ Jesuit Refugee Service, “Democratic Republic of Congo: unexploded ordnances in schools, students at risks,” 27 March 2013.

⁶⁶⁶ “Nord-Kivu : élèves et enseignants désertent les écoles à cause du recrutement des groupes armés à Mpati,” Radio Okapi, 22 January 2013.

⁶⁶⁷ MONUSCO, “Martin Kobler, head of MONUSCO strongly condemns attacks on schools and hospitals,” 25 September 2013.

⁶⁶⁸ UNICEF, “UNICEF Democratic Republic of the Congo – Monthly Situation Report, 15 February - 18 March 2013,” March 2013.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁷⁰ MONUSCO, “Martin Kobler, head of MONUSCO strongly condemns attacks on schools and hospitals,” 25 September 2013.

⁶⁷¹ “RDC: L’ONU condamne fermement les attaques de groupes armés contre des écoles et hôpitaux,” UN News Centre, 25 September 2013.

⁶⁷² Médecins sans frontières, “Democratic Republic of Congo: Violence against civilians strongly denounced,” 1 October 2013; and information provided by Human Rights Watch on 6 November 2013.

⁶⁷³ “DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO: Clashes between students and police hit province,” University World News, Issue No: 106, 16 March 2013; “Mbuji-Mayi: une bagarre entre étudiants et élèves fait 2 blessés,” Radio Okapi, 1 March 2013; “Kasaï-Oriental : la police disperse une manifestation des élèves à Lusambo,” Radio Okapi, 4 March 2013; and “Kasaï-Oriental : 2 morts dans des échauffourées entre policiers et étudiants à Kabinda,” Radio Okapi, 2 March 2013.

⁶⁷⁴ “DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO Clashes between students and police hit province,” University World News, Issue No: 106, 16 March 2013; “Kasaï-Oriental : 2 morts dans des échauffourées entre policiers et étudiants à Kabinda,” Radio Okapi, 2 March 2013.