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Democratic Republic of the Congo: The Situation of the Banyamulenge (2020 to March 2022)

April 2022



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This publication serves the specific purpose of collating legally relevant information on conditions in countries of origin pertinent to the assessment of claims for asylum. It is not intended to be a general report on human rights conditions. The report is prepared within a specified time frame on the basis of publicly available documents as well as information provided by experts. All sources are cited and fully referenced.

This publication is not, and does not purport to be, either exhaustive with regard to conditions in the country surveyed, or conclusive as to the merits of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Every effort has been made to compile information from reliable sources; users should refer to the full text of documents cited and assess the credibility, relevance and timeliness of source material with reference to the specific research concerns arising from individual applications.

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List of Abbreviations

CNPSC	Coalition nationale du peuple pour la souveraineté du Congo (National Coalition of the People for the Sovereignty of Congo)
CNRD	Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie (National Council for Renewal and Democracy)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FARDC	Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo)
FDLR	Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda)
FNL	Forces nationales de libération/Front national de libération (National Forces of Liberation)
IDP	Internally displaced persons
MONUSCO	Mission de l'organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo)
MSF	Médecins sans frontières (Doctors without borders)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSAG	Non-state armed groups
PNC	Police nationale Congolaise (Congo national police)
RED Tabara	Résistance pour un état de droit Tabara (Resistance for Rule of Law in Burundi)
UNJHRO	United Nations Joint Human Rights Office

1 Background and demographic information

1.1 The Banyamulenge

According to the Minority Rights Group International (MRG), an international NGO that campaigns for disadvantaged minorities and indigenous peoples, the population of the Democratic Republic of the Congo comprises several hundred ethnic groups. In the east of the country, in the South Kivu province ([see section 1.2](#)) along the Rwandan border, the Banyarwanda are found, a minority speaking Kinyarwanda, the language of Rwanda. Most of the Banyarwanda are Hutu, but a minority is Tutsi or Batwa. The Kinyarwanda-speaking Tutsi living in South Kivu started to speak of themselves as ‘Banyamulenge’ from the 1970s onwards (MRG, updated June 2018):

“One sub-group of the Banyarwanda today in DRC are for the most part descendants of Tutsi pastoralists who migrated to the area around Mulenge in what is now the province of South Kivu from Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania mainly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but some of them perhaps earlier.” (MRG, updated June 2018)

On the migration of the ancestors of today’s Banyamulenge, a 2013 report of the Nairobi-based non-profit organisation Rift Valley Institute (RVI) explains:

“According to most historians, the first substantial wave of these pastoralist peoples paused in the Rusizi Plain [...] then settled briefly in the Moyens Plateaux of Uvira on the north-western shore of Lake Tanganyika, around a hill called Mulenge. Although the name Banyamulenge (the People from Mulenge) began to be used by the end of the 1960s, it only gained widespread currency in the following decade [...]. [T]he community adopted the name to distinguish themselves from more recent Rwandan refugees and immigrants.” (RVI, 2013a, p. 13)

While some sources note that the term Banyamulenge (people of Mulenge) “has come to be used more generally to refer to Congolese Tutsi” (MRG, updated June 2018; see also RVI, 2013a, p. 11), others explain that the term in its narrow sense only applies to Tutsis of South Kivu, not to the Tutsi of North Kivu (HRW, October 2007, p. 9; Ntanyoma, 4 April 2022; see also IRB, 17 August 2015).

A 2007 report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) provides information on the numbers of Banyamulenge, stating that Kinyarwanda-speaking Congolese represent less than five percent of the total population of the country, and of those, Congolese Tutsi are only a small part, “numbering several hundred thousand” (HRW, October 2007, p. 9). The 2013 RVI publication describes the Banyamulenge as a relatively small community, referring to estimates from older sources ranging from 50,000 to 400,000 people (RVI, 2013a, p. 12).

In the early 1900s, a part of the Banyamulenge community spread to the highlands (Hauts-Plateaux) of South Kivu and claimed their own territory (RVI, 2013a, pp. 13-14). The Belgian administration started a reorganization of Uvira territory in 1912 and did not grant them an autonomous administrative entity, which led to the Banyamulenge being subject to chiefs of other ethnic groups and growing frictions (RVI, 2013a, p. 14):

“Tensions grew between Banyamulenge and their neighbours: the Bembe in Fizi territory, and the Fuliro, Vira, and Nyindu in Uvira territory. These tensions were in part fed by cultural differences. Along with the Banyamulenge’s pastoralist lifestyle and distinct history came different structures of authority, diets, norms of wealth and labour, and other social customs. For example, in contrast to other communities, the main source of wealth for the Banyamulenge is cattle. They hold manual labour in low esteem. Furthermore, their diet is largely based on milk, meat, and other cow products, and they exchange bridewealth in the form of cattle. These differences make marriages across ethnic lines rare. The Banyamulenge and other communities have influenced each other to an extent: the Fuliro took up cattle-keeping; Bembe and Fuliro missionaries played an important role in Christian proselytization among the Banyamulenge. But the Banyamulenge have generally remained socially and culturally aloof. This has caused frictions, with other communities interpreting this as the arrogance of traditionally wealthy cattle-owners. But well into the postcolonial era, the Banyamulenge were comparatively marginalized, with limited access to positions of local authority, land, or education.” (RVI, 2013a, pp. 12-15)

An analytical note by the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) of OHCHR and MONUSCO of August 2020 states that the Banyamulenge are caught in a long-standing intercommunal conflict with the ethnic groups of the Bafuliiru, Banyindu and Babembe (OHCHR/MONUSCO, August 2020, p. 2). In April 2021, the Kivu Security Tracker (KST), a joint project of the New York University-based Congo Research Group and Human Rights Watch, in a blog post states that the high and middle plateaus of the territories Fizi, Mwenga and Uvira, the main home of the Banyamulenge community, form an area that “has been volatile for some decades” with upsurges in violence since 2016 and even more since 2018 (KST, 13 April 2021). The post also describes the Banyamulenge as “historically marginalized and discriminated against” (KST, 13 April 2021).

On the history of discrimination of the Banyamulenge community, a 2021 article published on the website of Genocide Watch, a nonprofit organisation with the aim of predicting, preventing stopping and punishing genocides, briefly summarises:

“Although the Congo gained independence in 1960, the Banyamulenge faced continued persecution. In 1981, the government under Mobutu, who named the country Zaire, revoked their citizenship. In 1996, they faced expulsion and massacres. In what became the Congo Wars (1996-2003), Rwanda invaded Zaire to overthrow Mobutu and to stop attacks by genocidal Rwandan Hutu exiles. Initially, Banyamulenge allied with Rwanda along with other Rwandophones (groups originally from Rwanda). Since the wars, Banyamulenge have almost entirely opposed Rwandan-backed rebellions that Tutsis joined. However, all Rwandophones have become collectively associated with Rwandan invasions. [...] Self-styled ‘indigenous’ Mai-Mai militias still target Banyamulenge as ‘invaders’.” (Genocide Watch, 3 September 2021)

For more information on the 1996 massacres of Banyamulenge please refer to:

- Minorities at Risk Project: Chronology for Tutsis in the Dem. Rep. of the Congo, 2010
<http://www.mar.umd.edu/chronology.asp?groupId=49010>

The 2013 RVI report notes that from 1960 onwards the Banyamulenge several times were to gain political power but were subsequently confronted with discrimination on the part of other ethnic groups (RVI, 2013a, p. 16). On the more recent history of conflict involving the Banyamulenge in the eastern DRC, RVI writes:

“The Banyamulenge, a Tutsi community in the Eastern DRC, have despite their small size, been at the centre of many of the disparate conflicts in the eastern DRC for most of the past two decades. The initial 1996 invasion by a Rwandan-backed insurgent coalition that aimed to topple Mobutu Sese Seko [president of then Zaire, who was ousted in 1997; Encyclopaedia Britannica, last updated 10 October 2021] became known as ‘the Banyamulenge rebellion’, and the Second Congo War of 1998–2003 saw Banyamulenge take on top positions as rebel commanders and political leaders. During this period of nearly 20 years, the community has been stuck in a cycle of persecution and insurgency. Banyamulenge have been labelled by their neighbours as foreigners and fifth columnists operating on behalf of Rwanda. In response, many young Banyamulenge men have joined rebellions backed by Rwanda, creating a culture of soldiering and politics, and involving them in brutal counterinsurgency operations against local militias that have fuelled prejudice and conspiracies against the community as a whole. [...] [M]any Banyamulenge officers have attained influential positions in the national army [...] [and] the ties between Banyamulenge and Rwanda have frayed, with many in the community feeling that this alliance had only damaged relations with their neighbours.” (RVI, 2013a, p. 8)

For an analysis of the narrative of autochthony concerning Banyamulenge and Babembe, Bafuliiru and Banyindu communities please refer to pages 12-19 of the following publication:

- Verweijen, Judith, et al.: Mayhem in the mountains, How violent conflict on the Hauts-Plateaux of South Kivu escalated, April 2021
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/174098/1/05_GIC_Mayhem-in-the-mountains_WEB-2.pdf

In a 2021 letter from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the President of the Security Council (Group of Experts on the DRC), the roots and drivers of the conflict are described as complex and going “beyond ethnic tensions or intercommunity hostilities” (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 30). Other factors causing and contributing to conflict are access to resources and land, tensions arising from local governance, as well as clashes between (mainly Banyamulenge) herders and farmers (usually from other communities), and the looting of cattle (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 30). On the tensions between cattle herders and farmers, the 2013 RVI publication explains:

“[...] the practice of transhumance. This refers to the annual migration of cattle southwards to greener pastures, mostly in the secteurs of Ngandja and Lulenge in Fizi, at the start of the dry season. During transhumance, cows often trample the farmland of other communities. Following the outbreak of [...] [a] rebellion in September 1996, the refusal of cattle-owners to pay [...] customary tax to the chiefs of other communities made transhumance a catalyst of tensions. In response, Mai-Mai groups [local militia, see section 2.1.3] started to launch massive cattle-raids, as both symbolic and material attacks on the Banyamulenge.” (RVI, 2013a, pp. 24-25)

Even so, the matter of ethnicity was increasingly used as an excuse for violent actions by all sides (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 30). The Banyamulenge are confronted with strong anti-Banyamulenge sentiment by members of other communities, who often considered them Rwandans rather than Congolese (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 33).

For more detailed information on the history of the Banyamulenge please refer to:

- RVI - Rift Valley Institute: Banyamulenge. Insurgency and exclusion in the mountains of South Kivu (authors: Jason Stearns et al.), 2013a
<https://riftvalley.net/sites/default/files/publication-documents/RVI%20Usalama%20Project%208%20Banyamulenge.pdf>

1.2 South Kivu

South Kivu is one of 26 provinces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (CAID, undated). The province shares borders with the three states Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania and internal borders with the Congolese provinces of North Kivu, Maniema and Katanga. The province of South Kivu is divided into eight territories (territoire): Fizi, Idjwi, Kabare, Kalehe, Mwenga, Shabunda, Uvira and Walungu; furthermore, there is the capital of the province, Bukavu (MONUSCO, January 2015). Each territory is subdivided into sectors (secteur) or chefferies, those again are subdivided into groupements which are further subdivided into villages (CAID, undated).

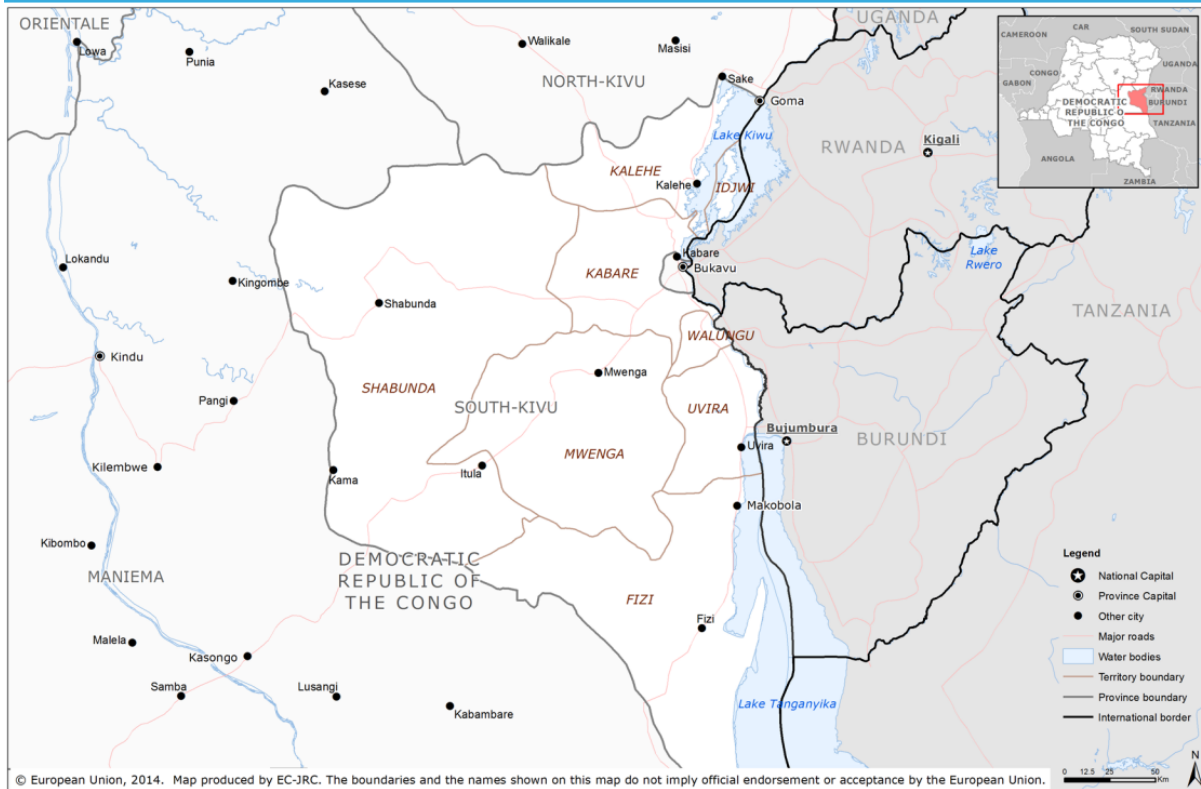
The province South Kivu has, as of 2015, approximately 5 million inhabitants and covers 64,851 km². The main languages are Swahili and French (MONUSCO, January 2015). In the territories of Shabunda and Mwenga the central basin begins. To the east, there is a vast plain, the Ruzizi Plain in the territories of Walungu and Uvira, and high plateaus (Hauts-Plateaux) that are prosperous in livestock farming, the so-called Itombwe plateaus (Tourisme RD Congo, undated). The 2013 RVI report provides information on the highlands (Hauts-Plateaux) inhabited by the Banyamulenge:

“The Banyamulenge inhabit the mountainous and sparsely-populated area of South Kivu known as the Hauts Plateaux. Previously called the Hauts Plateaux d’Itombwe, these highlands rise west of Lake Tanganyika to a peak altitude of 3,475 metres and embrace the *territoires* of Fizi, Uvira, and a small part of Mwenga. The traditional Banyamulenge homeland also extends into the median-range mountains known as Moyens Plateaux (Middle Plateau), where the elevation varies from 1,200 to 3,300 metres.” (RVI, 2013a, p. 12)

The 2021 letter from the Group of Experts on the DRC provides the following information about the current settlement areas of Banyamulenge:

“At the time of drafting, the Banyamulenge population was concentrated in two main locations, each protected by UN peacekeepers, at Minembwe locality and Mikenge IDP camp. Both locations hosted many Banyamulenge IDPs from the entire Hauts-Plateaux. Mikenge IDP camp hosted almost exclusively Banyamulenge IDPs who came from about 20 villages, since September and October 2019.” (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 301)

Democratic Republic of Congo – South Kivu Base Map



(Source: [European Commission, 2014](#))

For another South Kivu map with some more details please refer to map 2 in the following publication:

- RVI – Rift Valley Institute: South Kivu. Identity, territory, and power in the eastern Congo (author: Koen Vlassenroot), 2013b
<https://riftvalley.net/sites/default/files/publication-documents/RVI%20Usalama%20Project%2010%20South%20Kivu.pdf>

For a more detailed map of the territories of Uvira, Fizi and Mwenga please refer to:

- UN OCHA - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: Reference map of Democratic Republic of the Congo - South-Kivu Province: Territories, 29 May 2006
https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1212200/227_1162477053_uvira-fizi-mwenga-a1-1-v-2.pdf

A report of the Asylum Research Center (ARC) addresses some of the topics also covered in this compilation. The ARC publication covers the period between 6 August 2019 and 30 June 2021 and has a focus on the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri:

- ARC – Asylum Research Centre: Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); The situation in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri - Update, 26 July 2021,
https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2056656/DRC-COI-report_July-2021_ARC.pdf

2 Armed groups and security situation in South Kivu

2.1 Armed groups active in South Kivu

Radio Okapi, the United Nations radio in the DRC, in July 2021 reported that almost 50 armed groups are active in South Kivu, the most active ones in the territories of Uvira and Fizi in the Hauts-Plateaux (Radio Okapi, 7 July 2021). According to an August 2020 blog post by the Kivu Security Tracker (KST) there are at least three Banyamulenge armed groups active in the South Kivu Highlands: the Twirwaneho (alternative spelling: Twigwaneho), the Gumino (Ngumino) and “an armed group commanded by FARDC [DRC armed forces] deserter Michel Rukunda, aka ‘Makanika’” (KST, 31 August 2020). A more recent source, however, suggest that Makanika’s group has “eventually integrated into the Twirwaneho”, leading to a hybrid system with one branch of the Twirwaneho being under Makanika’s command while another branch is “not fully under his control, but collaborates with him” (Verweijen et al., April 2021, pp. 69-70). Armed groups of the Babembe, Bafuliiru and Bayindu include Mai Mai Ebuela Mtetezi, Mai Mai Mulumba, Mai Mai ‘Mupekenkya and Biloze Bishambuke (KST, 31 August 2020). Regarding the relationship between the groups, KST explains:

“These armed groups operate in broad coalitions, but there are regularly tensions and occasionally even clashes between groups that are supposedly on the same side.” (KST, 31 August 2020)

“A closer look at the Haut Plateaux reveals that intracommunity tensions are as common as intercommunity ones. Skirmishes occur between armed groups purportedly defending the same (Banyamulenge) community, such as between the Twigwaneho – now backed by renegade Colonel Michel Rukunda – and the Gumino, while succession conflicts within customary entities have pitted Fuliiru or Bembe against each other.” (KST, February 2021, p. 12)

For a comprehensive list of Raia Mutomboki, Mai Mai and other armed groups operating in Kivu provinces please refer to the annex (pp. 19-43) of the following report:

- KST – Kivu Security Tracker: The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo, February 2021
<https://kivusecurity.nyc3.digitaloceanspaces.com/reports/39/2021%20KST%20report%20EN.pdf>

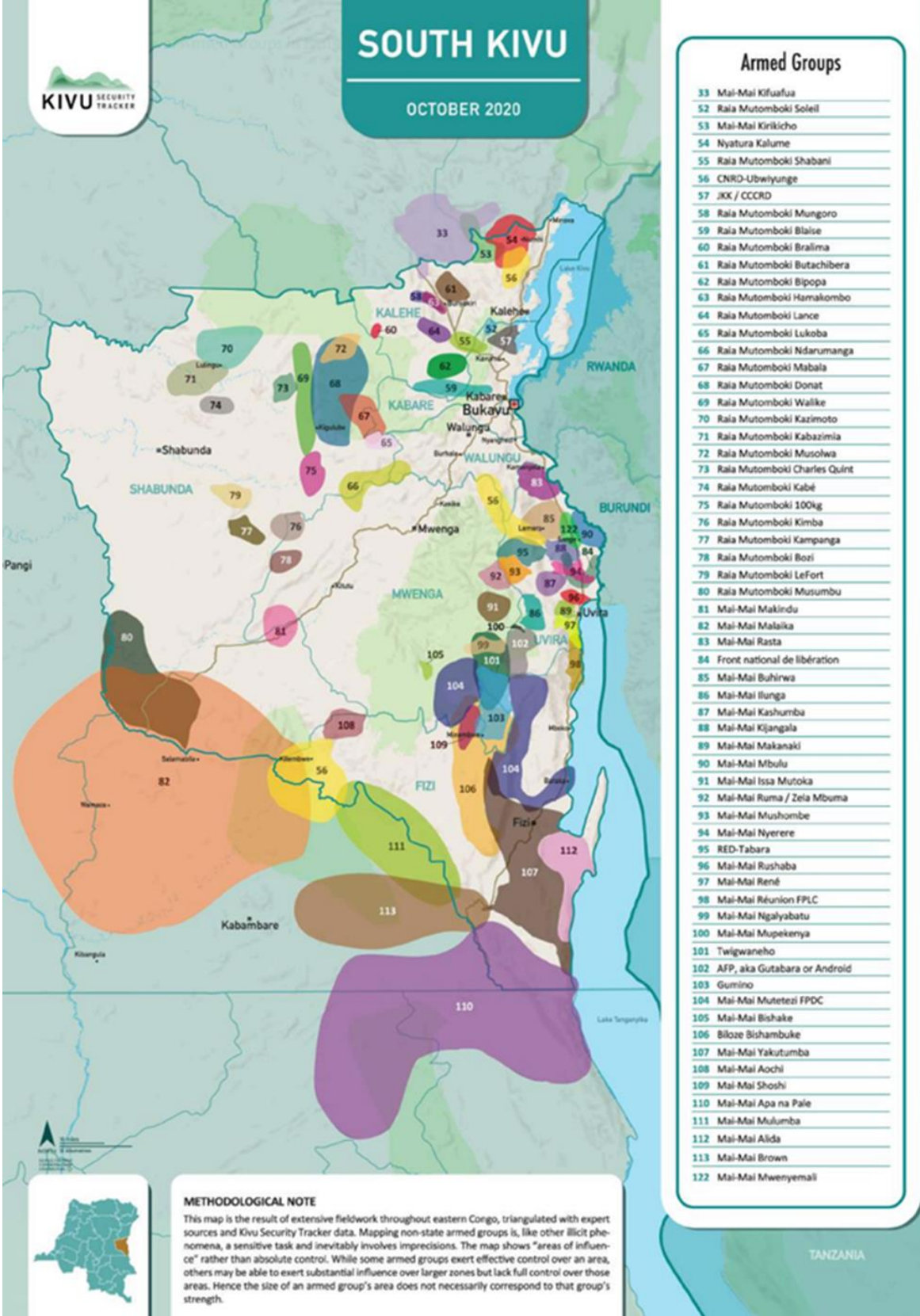
For brief information on the groups active on the Hauts Plateaux as of March 2021 please refer to:

- Verweijen, Judith et al.: Mayhem in the mountains. How violent conflict on the Hauts-Plateaux of South Kivu escalated, April 2021, Annex, pp. 105-109
https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/174098/1/05_GIC_Mayhem-in-the-mountains_WEB-2.pdf

USAID in July 2021 published an analysis of the relationship between armed groups and local communities in South Kivu:

- USAID – US Agency for International Development: Communitarization of the “armed group phenomenon” in South Kivu province, a socio-economic analysis, 9 July 2021
https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XKRR.pdf

In a February 2021 report on Armed Groups in Eastern Congo, the Kivu Security Tracker (KST) mapped out the areas where armed groups were active and exerted influence. According to the methodological note attached to the map, some armed groups have effective control over a particular area, while other groups have a significant degree of influence in the indicated area without having full control:



Source: [KST, February 2021, p. 6](#)

2.1.1 Twirwaneho (Twigwaneho)

According to the June 2021 letter from the Group of Experts on the DRC to the President of the Security Council, Twirwaneho means “let’s defend ourselves” in Kinyamulenge (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 30). The group was formed in 2008 for self-defence, to protect members of the Banyamulenge community from cattle-looting Mai-Mai groups in the area around Minembwe, in the Hauts-Plateaux. Initially the members were mainly Banyamulenge civilians, youth “who lived in their villages and mobilized whenever deemed necessary to protect their cattle and property” (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 94). In 2009, this self-defence group began to disband, but Banyamulenge formed a new group under the name Twirwaneho in 2015, in defence against Gumino, another armed Banyamulenge group that perpetrated attacks against civilians in the Bijombo area (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 268). The self-defence group gradually became an organised armed group (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 30) and according to KST, “the Twigwaneho ‘self-defense’ militias have become the Banyamulenge community’s principal armed movement, which has also been responsible for committing [...] many abuses against civilians belonging to other communities, leading to population displacement” (KST, 13 April 2021).

The letter from the Group of Experts on the DRC speaks of a “core-group” within the Twirwaneho that was established by Michael Rukunda, alias Mekanika, a FARDC deserter. This core group is backed by a civilian base acting as a reserve group (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, pp. 30-31). Verweijen and colleagues note that the “Twirwaneho remain subject to internal quarrels, with tensions between Mekanika’s group and the ‘old’ Twirwaneho, parts of which are said not to be fully under Mekanika’s command”. The source emphasises that the Twirwaneho “have tried to portray themselves as a civil self-defence movement”, while “Mekanika’s image and approach are decidedly more military” (Verweijen et al., April 2021, p. 76). The core group’s headquarters is based in Nyamara, and Mekanika has been the leader of the group since 2020. Furthermore, the group has a spokesperson and coordinator by the name of Kamasa Ndakize (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 30, p. 270). The June 2021 letter from the Group of Experts on the DRC reports that the objective of the Twirwaneho leadership is “to protect the Banyamulenge community from attacks by other armed groups and militias which are, in Mekanika’s words, seeking to ‘exterminate’ them. Mekanika and Kamasa also reported that they considered that both Congolese authorities and MONUSCO failed to protect them” (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 270). The core group of the Twirwaneho recruited almost exclusively within the Banyamulenge community (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, pp. 30-31). Michael Rukunda allegedly was not the only FARDC defector joining the Twirwaneho, a western diplomatic source cited by KST reported that in 2021 “at least six officers and 20 soldiers are reputed to have left the FARDC in 2021 to join the Twigwaneho” (KST, 23 March 2021).

2.1.2 Gumino (Ngumino)

According to KST, the name Gumino derives from “stay here” in Kinyamulenge and is an umbrella term for armed Banyamulenge mobilization in the territories of Uvira and Fizi in the Hauts Plateaux. The Gumino built on previous armed Banyamulenge groups and KST names Nyamusharaba Shaka as the group’s leader. The Gumino armed group is known for fighting against various Mai Mai groups in the north of Fizi (KST, February 2021, p. 40). In 2018 Gumino

committed abuses against civilians and traditional chiefs of other communities, which further deepened the “mistrust and discrimination” against the Banyamulenge community (KST, 13 April 2021). Gumino is smaller than Twirwaneho, but Nyamusharaba Shaka contested Makanika’s leadership, and the two groups clashed in November 2020 (KST, 23 March 2021). The Group of Experts on the DRC explains the relationship between the Gumino and the Twirwaneho:

“Although there is often a confusion between the Gumino and Twirwaneho groups, both assimilated to the Banyamulenge community, the two armed groups are distinct. The significant transfer of Gumino combatants to Twirwaneho over 2019 and 2020 contributed to this confusion. Albeit distinct, several sources have mentioned that there existed a loose collaboration between Twirwaneho and Gumino, or at least some of their combatants, especially during attacks against the Banyamulenge population by Mai-Mai groups.” (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 268)

2.1.3 *Mai Mai groups*

A 2008 article of the New York Times provides the following background information on the Mai Mai groups:

“The movement started decades ago when Congolese communities formed militias to protect themselves and tapped into local customs as a way to inspire the fighters. The term ‘mai mai’ refers to maji, the Kiswahili word for water, because many of the Mai Mai fighters grease themselves up with a mixture of palm oil and holy water before stepping on the battlefield. [...] In 1998, when Rwanda backed a rebel group that nearly overthrew the Congolese government, the Mai Mai teamed up with Congolese government forces to fight the Rwandans. That conflict, which drew in armies from half a dozen neighboring countries, ended in a stalemate, and eastern Congo has been plagued by armed groups and insecurity ever since. Many of the Mai Mai militias in other parts of Congo have agreed to disarm. But in eastern Congo, the Mai Mai seem increasingly restless.” (NYT, 20 November 2008)

Jason Stearns, director of the Congo Research Group, in an interview with The New Humanitarian (TNH) in March 2006 gave a brief insight in the history of the Mai Mai groups:

“[...] the Mayi-Mayi have existed in eastern DRC since [...] the 1960s. The militias reappeared in force in 1993 in North Kivu, from which they spread to the rest of the east. The Mayi-Mayi was a local defence force against the predation of Mobutu’s army and the influx of soldiers of the Forces armées Rwandaise (known as the ex-FAR) and ‘Interahamwe’ militiamen from neighbouring Rwanda in 1994. [...] [T]hey are the result of a power void, which made communities arm their youth for protection. [...] Like any militia, the larger the Mayi-Mayi became, the more problems they had with supplies. As a result, they started preying on villages and imposed harsh taxes in markets and along trade routes. [...] The Mayi-Mayi soon became a force in itself and went beyond its initial function of community protection. [...] [T]hey were a very poorly structured force [...]. [...] because of this poor organisation, some Mayi-Mayi have become complicit in gun-running and gold smuggling, linking up with other militia like the FNL [Forces nationales de liberation] in Burundi” (TNH, 16 March 2006)

The different Mai Mai groups are known by the names of their leaders USHMM, 22 July 2021), for example there are the Mai Mai Yakutumba, founded by William Amuri, whose alias name is Yakutumba, or the Mai Mai Kashumba, led by a man named Kashumba (KST, February 2021, p. 38, p. 41). For the South Kivu Hauts-Plateaux, the Group of Experts on the DRC found the following concerning active Mai Mai groups:

“The Group identified around a dozen Mai-Mai self-defence and armed groups linked to the Babembe, Bafuliiru, Banyindu and Bavira communities active in the Hauts-Plateaux. Those groups fragmented, multiplied and operated in several fluid coalitions for years, including with armed groups from outside the Hauts-Plateaux. They often described themselves as being the ‘autochtones’.” (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 31)

An August 2020 publication by the UNJHRO on the human rights situation in the highlands of Mwenga, Fizi and Uvira territories states that the two main Mai Mai factions are the Mai Mai Ebuela and Biloze Bishambuke. It also mentions the Mai Mai Yakutumba, but observes that it is involved “to a lesser extent” (OHCHR/MONUSCO, August 2020, p. 5). The Group of Experts on the DRC in its June 2021 publication reports that the Mai Mai Yakutumba are one of the most active armed groups in South Kivu, but also in the neighbouring provinces Maniema and Tanganyika (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 29). The group Mai Mai Ebuela was created in 2016 by Kitungano Kibukila, also known as Ebuela or Mtetezi:

“Ebuela’s group operated mainly in Fizi and Mwenga territories and progressively became one of the most powerful Mai-Mai groups in the area, attacking and clashing mainly against Gumino and FARDC while conducting cattle-rustling and illegal taxation activities. Several sources reported regular attacks by Mai-Mai Ebuela against Banyamulenge civilians as well as inflammatory discourse against them by Ebuela, including in videos.” (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 280)

Under the umbrella ‘Biloze Bishambuke’ several Bafuliiru and Banyindu self-defence groups are operating in the Hauts-Plateaux and Moyens- Plateaux. The Biloze Bishambuke does not have a defined leadership and it was not clear to the Group of Experts on the DRC which groups exactly were a part of this coalition. Those groups however, “were often reported to have attacked civilians, particularly from the Banyamulenge community, and regularly clashed against Gumino and Twirwaneho” (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 282).

Mai Mai Yakutumba approximately comprised between 400 and 600 armed combatants in 2021. Yakutumba established new headquarters north of Kipupu in order “to be closer to military operations against Banyamulenge armed groups in the Hauts-Plateaux” (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 29). Other active Mai Mai groups in South Kivu are, among numerous others, Mai Mai Ilunga, Mai Mai Kashumba, Mai Mai Mahoro, Mai Mai Mushombe (KST, February 2021, pp. 19-43). An example for a Mai Mai coalition is the Coalition nationale du peuple pour la souveraineté du Congo (CNPSC) and the ‘Biloze Bishambuke’. The leader of the Mai Mai Yakutumba, William Amuri Yakutumba de facto controlled the CNPSC coalition of several Mai Mai groups to maintain control over the territory (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 29).

2.1.4 *Raia Mutomboki*

A 2013 Rift Valley Institute publication on the Raia Mutomboki (sometimes referred to as Mai Mai Raia Mutomboki) provides the following information on this militia that had started in South Kivu's Shabunda area (RVI, 2013c, p. 11):

“In 2011, a new kind of mobilization emerged in rural areas of the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The Raia Mutomboki (‘Outraged Citizens’) was a grassroots response to rampant insecurity, in particular to the abuses perpetrated by the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR, Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda), a largely Rwandan Hutu rebel group. Supported by customary chiefs, former militia members, and army deserters, young people rallied around the idea of dawa, magical medicines and amulets that they believe makes them invincible, and quickly drove the FDLR out of many of their former strongholds. [...] However, while the Raia Mutomboki began as self-defence forces, they have in many places evolved into a brutal and abusive militia killing hundreds of civilians and setting up illegal tax schemes.” (RVI, 2013c, pp. 8-9)

KST lists numerous Raia Mutomboki groups active in the Kivu provinces (KST, February 2021, pp. 32-36).

2.1.5 *Foreign armed groups: RED Tabara, FNL, CNRD*

On the presence of foreign armed groups in South Kivu the August 2020 publication of UNJHRO notes:

“Foreign armed groups actively participate in hostilities, including the Burundian armed groups RED-Tabara and FNL-Nzabampema. Their participation, although limited, confirms the active presence of foreign armed groups in South Kivu. These groups have links with the Ngumino and allies or the Mayi-Mayi groups, even if the Burundian groups are normally located further north, in the Ruzizi plain. If the conflict spreads, there is a significant risk that their involvement will increase.” (OHCHR/MONUSCO, August 2020, p. 5)

RED Tabara - Résistance pour un état de droit

The Résistance pour un état de droit (RED Tabara) is a group of Burundian rebels active in South Kivu. KST notes on the background of this armed group:

“[...] [T]his was the first Burundian group to set up a rear base in the eastern Congo following the re-election of Burundian President Nkurunziza in 2015. [...] [V]arious RED-Tabara recruits benefitted from military training in Rwanda before crossing into the Ruzizi Plain. Increased international scrutiny over their recruitment and training in Rwanda, as well as their involvement in conflicts in the Ruzizi Plain, weakened the RED-Tabara. Nonetheless, its presence prompted the Burundian army to subcontract Congolese militias to fight them. RED-Tabara has been able to launch several operations into Burundi since 2015, including into Cibitoke and Gatumba in 2018 as well as Kibira in 2019.” (KST, February 2021, p. 39)

The June 2021 report by the Group of Experts on the DRC observes that the “RED-Tabara had around 300 combatants, all Burundian citizens, located north-west of Uvira, an area that

constituted their rear base” (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 35). Burundian authorities accuse Rwanda to support the RED Tabara. In a coalition with the Mai Mai Yakutumba, the Mai Mai Ebuela Mtetezi or Biloze Bishambuke, the RED Tabara “committed many abuses against Banyamulenge villages, setting them on fire and looting their cattle, thereby forcing them to live in a few enclaves, such as Minembwe” (KST, 13 April 2021). A January 2022 article in the French newspaper *Le Monde* describes the RED Tabara as the most active of the Burundian rebel groups. The article speaks of 500 to 800 Tabara rebels, significantly more than the UN Security Council (see above), and adds that the group is growing stronger. The article also states that the RED Tabara are accused of being responsible for a series of attacks having taken place in Burundi since 2015 (*Le Monde*, 6 January 2022).

FNL - Front National de Libération

The FNL-Nzabampema, short for Front National de Libération, is led by a former Burundian army officer by the name Aloys Nzabampema and “operates mostly out of the Ruzizi Plain and the Moyens Plateaux of Uvira territory, with occasional incursions into Burundi. Nzabampema has been regularly accused of child recruitment and his group is a major player in terms of cattle theft in the Ruzizi Plain” (KST, February 2021, p. 37). The Group of Experts on the DRC observed in its June 2021 report:

“During the reporting period, Burundian armed group FNL, led by ‘Chief of Staff’ Aloys Nzabampema, was based across Uvira and Mwenga territories, which constituted its rear base. On 24 October 2020, FARDC took over the FNL headquarters in Naombe village, in Mwenga territory, and the FNL position in Nyaburunda, in Bijombo groupement, Uvira territory. Consequently, FNL combatants took refuge in Nabombe forest and maintained positions in Mushule, in Katala groupement, Uvira territory, returning to Nyaburunda forest at the end of February 2021.” (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 35)

CNRD - Conseil National pour le Renouveau et la Démocratie

According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), the Conseil National pour le Renouveau et la Démocratie (CNRD) was formed in May 2016 and “presented itself as a Rwandan political opposition party in exile based in the DRC. [...] CNRD presented their goals as working for the rights of Rwandan refugees” (UCDP, undated). In 2019, the CNRD suffered serious losses and several leaders of the group were arrested or killed. The leader of the CNRD, Colonel Wilson Irategeka, disappeared in 2019. The group operates in the territory of Kalehe but has been almost completely dismantled following operations of the DRC and Rwandan armies against them (KST, February 2021, pp. 33-34). Based on several sources, the country report of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs of October 2021 provides the following information concerning the CNRD:

“In late November 2019, the FARDC undertook an operation against the CNRD in the territory of Kalehe. This operation led to the dispersal of CNRD fighters and dependents of the group. Six hundred dependents fled to a temporary MONUSCO base. In December 2019, the FARDC repatriated several hundred Rwandan CNRD fighters and nearly 1,500 dependents to Rwanda. Between March and June 2020, CNRD activities in Kalehe territory

increased again. About 100 CNRD fighters were also spotted on the Ruzizi Plain in Uvira territory. With the FARDC's reduced troop deployment in South Kivu, the CNRD also had more room to actively recruit. This happened particularly among young people in the Kalehe territory." (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 2021, p. 45; working translation from Dutch)

A publication by Judith Verweijen and colleagues on the conflict in the Hauts-Plateaux notes that as of March 2021 the CNRD is based in the Hauts-Plateaux, but not implicated in fighting (Verweijen et al., April 2021, p. 105).

2.2 Security situation in South Kivu 2020-2022 *(in reverse chronological order)*

Among other sources, curated data provided by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)¹ was used in this section and filtered by violence against civilians, riots and battles between January 2020 and March 2022 in South Kivu province. Information from other sources has been added.

2.2.1 Security situation in South Kivu 2022 *(January to March)*

Between January and March 2022 ACLED recorded 152 incidents of violence against civilians, riots and battles (71 battles, 25 riots, 56 cases of violence against civilians) in the province of South Kivu, with a total of 323 people killed (ACLED, 7 April 2022). The incidents with the highest recorded fatalities listed by ACLED are the following:

Between 2 and 4 February 2022, 33 Red Tabara/FNL militiamen were killed in clashes with the armed forces on the plateaus of Uvira territory (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 24238; ID 24270; ID 24271). The Burundian army clashed with a coalition of RED Tabara and Mai Mai on 26 and 29 January in Uvira, which led to around 40 and 12 people killed, respectively (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 24160; ID 24157; ID 24210). Most people died from incidents around 11 January 2022 (between 19 December 2020 and 3 February 2022), when "the Burundi armed forces killed at least 67 civilians, set on fire 17 villages and looted cows from pastoralists in Uvira territory" (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 24188). On 4 January 2022, Twirwaneho Makanika ambushed the FARDC in Uvira and Mwenga, resulting in 13 people being killed (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 23893; ID 23895).

The Bukavu-based online newspaper La Prunelle mentions in March 2022 that the number of fatalities in South Kivu in February 2022 was 51 compared to 20 people killed in January 2022 (La Prunelle, 7 March 2022).

¹ ACLED collects data on reported conflict events in selected countries, the DRC among them. ACLED researchers collect event data from a variety of sources and code them by date, location, agent, and event type. Most of the data collected by ACLED is gathered based on publicly available, secondary reports. It may therefore underestimate the volume of events. Fatality data particularly is vulnerable to bias and inaccurate reporting, and ACLED states that they use the most conservative estimate available.

2.2.2 Security situation in South Kivu 2021

In 2021, ACLED recorded a total of 759 incidents of violence against civilians, riots and battles in the province of South Kivu (355 battles, 117 riots, 287 cases of violence against civilians), with a total of 758 people killed (ACLED, 7 April 2022). La Prunelle reports in January 2022 that in 2021 394 people were killed in South Kivu province and adds that this number has increased compared to 2020. Furthermore, in 2021, 547 houses were attacked by armed bandits and 379 cases of abduction have taken place (La Prunelle, 10 January 2022).

The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a report on the Democratic Republic of the Congo in October 2021. Largely based on UN Security Council sources of 2020 and 2021, this report includes a summary of major security events in the DRC in the period January 2020 until September 2021. For the year 2021 (January-September) the report of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs summarises security-related issues as follows:

“In 2021, clashes between armed groups from different communities in the highlands of South Kivu led to an increase in violence. On 1 January 2021, more than fifty civilians were killed in Bijombo. Five hundred households were displaced. From 8 April 2021, confrontations took place between the Ngumino and Twigwaneho on the one hand and Mai-Mai groups on the other. The Mai-Mai groups were reportedly supported by RED-Tabara fighters. The violence spread from the highlands to the midlands and the Ruzizi plain. These areas had not been affected by the violence before. Between 9 and 24 April 2021, armed groups killed at least ten civilians and set fire to seventy villages.” (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 2021, p. 43; working translation from Dutch)

“Between 1 April 2021 and 23 April 2021, 73 people were killed [in Kalehe, UN Security Council, 21 June 2021, p. 5] by violence from Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki groups and alleged Nyatura elements. Fifteen thousand households were displaced. In the border region of South Kivu, Maniema and Tanganyika, the security situation deteriorated due to the presence of Twa militias and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale. Following reports of increased sexual violence by these groups, MONUSCO established a temporary base with the aim of deterring the groups.” (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 2021, p. 45; working translation from Dutch)

“Between June 2021 and September 2021, the number of confrontations between the FARDC and the Twigwaneho increased and led to a deterioration in the security situation.” (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 2021, p. 43; working translation from Dutch)

A report by the UN Secretary-General on developments between 18 September to 30 November 2021 depicts the security situation in the province South Kivu for this period:

“Security conditions deteriorated severely in the northern part of South Kivu, around Shabunda town and along the border with Maniema Province. As illegal mining intensified, Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki groups moved into the area and perpetrated attacks against civilians. Attacks in Lulingu in early October triggered the displacement of approximately

1,500 households from 22 villages in the Nduma and Matamba areas. A counteroffensive launched by FARDC against two Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki groups dispersed internally displaced persons across 16 villages. Violence against civilians continued in the southern part of South Kivu, in the Hauts Plateaux and Moyens Plateaux of Uvira, Mwenga and Fizi territories. Attacks by Mai-Mai elements on Birindiro, which was the last remaining inhabited hamlet in the Marungu area, displaced its population, which sought protection from MONUSCO and received humanitarian assistance at Kahololo. Between 13 and 16 October, several villages in the Bibokoboko area of Fizi territory were ransacked and burned, displacing some 10,000 people towards Baraka, Lusenda and other villages. MONUSCO dispatched a standing combat deployment in support of FARDC, while humanitarian actors provided assistance to the displaced persons. Between 2 and 3 November, at night, unidentified armed individuals attacked multiple FARDC and Congolese National Police positions in Bukavu. FARDC, the Congolese National Police and MONUSCO immediately responded to the incident, in which two FARDC personnel and one member of the Congolese National Police, as well as six assailants, were killed. Thirty-six individuals were detained in connection with investigations into the incidents.” (UN Security Council, 1 December 2021, p. 4)

A security monitoring report by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and INTERSOS, a humanitarian organisation with headquarters in Rome, summarises the security situation in October 2021 for the province of South Kivu as follows:

“The security and protection context remained volatile during the month of October 2021 as a result of the activities of foreign and local armed groups and men. These activities take the form of clashes between armed groups, incursions into villages and ambushes of civilians, and attacks on the positions of the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC). The search for resources and the control of entities are the main motivations of the various Mai-Mai and Raiya Mutomboki factions. Massive population movements have been noted, along with human rights violations. A total of 760 violations were collected and documented during the period covered by this report. In contrast to the month of September, during which 1,188 violations were recorded, there was a decrease of 428 violations. [...] Despite this downward trend, armed groups remained very active in the territories of Fizi, Mwenga and Uvira. This activism has resulted in clashes between armed groups on the one hand, and between the FARDC and these groups on the other. This precarious security context has led, among other things, to massive movements of the population towards presumed secure areas.” (UNHCR/INTERSOS, 30 November 2021, p. 1)

For October 2021, La Prunelle reports at least 40 people killed in South Kivu. Additionally, 51 houses were attacked, 42 cases of kidnapping were counted, as well as 19 cases of mob justice (La Prunelle, 13 November 2021). The same source reports that in November 2021 at least 36 people were killed in South Kivu. The city of Bukavu was the most affected with 8 cases followed by the territory of Uvira which recorded 7 people killed (La Prunelle, 7 December 2021). According to La Prunelle, in December 2021 at least 31 people were killed in South Kivu and at least eleven mob justice cases have been recorded alongside at least 16 kidnapping

cases. In addition, 55 houses were attacked by armed bandits during the same period (La Prunelle, 7 January 2022).

2.2.3 Security situation in South Kivu 2020

For the year 2020, ACLED recorded a total of 649 incidents of violence against civilians, riots and battles in the province of South Kivu (297 battles, 98 riots, 254 cases of violence against civilians), with a total of 757 people killed (ACLED, 7 April 2022). The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports the following regarding the security situation in South Kivu in 2020:

“In South Kivu there is (inter-ethnic) violence between armed groups from the Banyamulenge community (Twigwaneho, Ngumino) on the one hand and armed groups from the Bafuliru, Babembe and Banyindu communities (Mai-Mai groups) on the other. In addition, foreign armed groups are active in South Kivu, including the Rwandan Conseil National pour le Renouveau et la Démocratie (CNRD) and the Burundian groups Résistance pour un État de Droit - Tabara (REDTabara) and Front National de Libération (FNL). In total, 50 to 80 armed groups are active in South Kivu. At the end of 2019, the security situation in South Kivu deteriorated significantly. MONUSCO reported risks of violence spreading to neighbouring provinces. This trend continued in 2020. The Kivu Security Tracker recorded an increase of about one hundred incidents of violence in 2020 compared to 2019. Violent confrontations between armed groups and those between armed groups and the army also increased in number, as did the number of deaths resulting from the violence.” (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 2021, pp. 38, 41; working translation from Dutch)

“Inter-ethnic violence continued in South Kivu between the Banyamulenge and the Bafuliru, Babembe and Banyindu. As a result of that violence, the security situation in the highlands of South Kivu deteriorated in the territories of Fizi, Uvira and Mwenga. The security situation was characterised by attacks and counterattacks by militias on civilians. In these areas, the Ngumino, Twigwaneho and Mai-Mai groups fought against each other, with targeted violence against civilians based on their perceived ethnic affiliation. The Banyamulenge were particularly victimised by Mai-Mai groups, while the Bafuliru, Babembe and Banyindu were victims of the armed Banyamulenge groups, the Ngumino and the Twigwaneho. Mai-Mai groups were sometimes supported by Burundian groups. Members of the FARDC also collaborated with Mai-Mai groups in attacks on Banyamulenge villages and in cattle raids. In the Minembwe area, thirty civilian deaths were caused by inter-ethnic violence between January and June, according to a report by MONUSCO. In Bijombo in Uvira territory, weekly fighting between Twigwaneho militia and Mai-Mai fighters took place between March and June 2020. In late April 2020, clashes between the FARDC and Mai-Mai groups took place in the Minembwe area over several days, resulting in an unknown number of casualties. An unknown number of people were killed. Former FARDC Colonel Michel Rukunda, alias Mekanika, consolidated his control over the Twigwaneho and led several attacks in the Kamombo area (Mwenga territory) between June and September 2020. Six civilians died and fifteen schools and seven health posts were destroyed. Many members of the Babembe, Bafuliru and Banyindu communities fled. In late July 2020, there was a further increase in violence in the highlands of South Kivu. The trigger was cattle theft by a Mai-Mai group, followed by a retaliatory attack by the

Twigwaneho on Kipupu. Several sources spoke of a large-scale bloodbath and claimed that more than 200 people had been killed in the attack on Kipupu. A joint mission of the Congolese government and MONUSCO established on 29 July 2020 that fifteen civilians had been killed in the attack, including the local village chief. According to an RFI article, quoting a speech by a local representative, eighteen people were killed, and more than two hundred went missing. The security situation in the highlands of South Kivu deteriorated between September and November 2020 due to ongoing inter-ethnic strife. The highlands of the Fizi, Mwenga and Uvira territories, including the Bijombo, Mikenge and Minembwe areas, were the most insecure areas in South Kivu with 131 attacks against civilians between September and November 2020. In these attacks, 38 civilians were killed and 22 injured. The situation deteriorated further following the official appointment of a member of the Banyamulenge community as mayor of Minembwe. This led to demonstrations by the Babembe, Bafuliru and Banyindu communities and ultimately to the suspension of the establishment of the Commune de Minembwe. In Bijombo, IDPs continued to be targeted by opportunistic attacks by armed militias. In five targeted attacks on IDPs, eight civilians were killed and wounded, mostly women. There were also 18 cases of rape and sexual violence. Four humanitarian workers were kidnapped in Fizi territory. In late December 2020, sexual violence escalated in northern Shabunda after clashes between different Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki factions.” (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 2021, pp. 42-43; working translation from Dutch)

“Continued insecurity in the territories of Fizi, Mwenga and Uvira resulted in a high concentration of FARDC in these areas. This was at the expense of the deployment of FARDC soldiers in other areas of South Kivu. Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki groups were therefore able to move more freely in the territories of Kalehe, Mwenga, Shabunda and Walungu. By the end of 2019, this was already leading to a deterioration in the security situation and an increase in extortion of civilians. This trend continued in 2020 and 2021. In 2020, in seven of the eight territories in South Kivu, there were threats, (livestock) theft, destruction of homes and attacks against civilians by armed groups. In Kalehe, the limited deployment of the FARDC led to ongoing activities and recruitment of and by armed groups. In Shabunda, there was an increase in violence, including sexual violence, by Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki groups. Clashes between different Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki factions also took place in Shabunda in late December 2020. On the Ruzizi Plain, local gangs and Mai-Mai Kijangala were active in cattle thefts, the imposition of illegal taxes and attacks on villages.” (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, October 2021, pp. 44-45; working translation from Dutch)

2.3 Involvement of Rwandan and Burundi militaries in the conflict in South Kivu

The 2020 publication by the UNJHRO on the human rights situation in the highlands of Mwenga, Fizi and Uvira territories between February 2019 and June 2020 confirms operations of the Burundian army against the RED Tabara in South Kivu (OHCHR/MONUSCO, August 2020, p. 5). Burundian authorities accuse Rwanda of backing the RED Tabara militants (KST, 13 April 2021), but the UNJHRO could not confirm Rwandan army presence in connection with the rebel group between February 2019 and June 2020:

“The UNJHRO was able to confirm information received from several sources relating to the operations of the Burundian army in the Ruzizi plain against the RED-Tabara group. However, the involvement of the Burundian army in the attacks against the Ngumino or the Banyamulenge could not be confirmed. Several credible sources also reported the presence of Rwandan soldiers, integrated or active alongside the RED-Tabara, which the investigations carried out have not yet been able to confirm.” (OHCHR/MONUSCO, August 2020, p. 5)

In April 2020, civil society groups in South Kivu reported movements by members of the Burundian army south of Uvira. These reports were followed by media reports claiming the Burundian troops had retreated from the DRC (UN Security Council, 29 September 2020, pp. 2-3). Several news sources report Burundian forces in South Kivu from December 2021 onwards (RFI, 5 January 2022; Africa News, 5 January 2022; Le Monde, 6 January 2022). For example, the French news and radio station RFI, relying on local sources, writes in a January 2022 article about the presence of Burundian forces in Uvira:

“‘Burundian forces entered (the district of) Lemera on Sunday, 19 December,’ the Lemera area’s chief, Edmond Simba Muhogo, said. ‘They were estimated to number more than 380 troops, and they were clearly commandos. They came through the centre of Lemera... and went on to attack the Burundian rebels,’ he said. Lemera lies in the territory of Uvira in South Kivu province, which borders Burundi. The troops are currently deployed in the Congolese districts of Bijojo and Bibangwa, the chief said. The rebel group is the RED-Tabara, a force estimated to number between 500 and 800 men that has a rear base in eastern DRC and has been accused of a string of attacks in Burundi since 2015.’” (RFI, 5 January 2022)

Spokesperson for the Burundian army Colonel Floribert Biyereke in January 2022 denies any Burundian army operations in the DRC in an interview with Iwacu, a Burundian newspaper (Iwacu, 7 January 2022). According to RFI in February 2022, fighting between the Burundian army and the RED Tabara in South Kivu has continued since mid-December and has caused more than 80,000 people to flee their homes (RFI, 5 February 2022).

Several sources report presence of Rwandan soldiers in North Kivu province in October 2021 (DW, 21 October 2021; Radio Okapi, 20 October 2021a; RFI, 19 October 2021). Reports on Rwandan army presence in South Kivu could not be found.

2.4 Conflict-related displacement in South Kivu

A report on humanitarian needs in the DRC, published by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) in December 2021, provides information concerning the total population of internally displaced persons (IDP) in the DRC. According to the report, 95 percent of displacement is due to armed conflict, 80 percent of IDPs are women and children and most are staying with host families, 12 percent stay in sites. The report lists South Kivu as one of the most affected provinces in 2021, after Ituri and North Kivu, and provides the following numbers for South Kivu: 345,000 people were displaced in the period September 2020 to February 2021 and further 203,000 were displaced from March to August 2021 (UN OCHA, December 2021, p. 22). The UN OCHA report also provides numbers of people who returned to the province of

South Kivu: 155,000 persons returned in the period September 2020 to February 2021 and further 70,000 persons returned in the period March to August 2021. The majority of returns are linked to an improvement in the security situation that allows IDPs to move back to their area of origin (UN OCHA, December 2021, pp. 23-24). According to UNHCR as of 31 January 2022, 1,225,424 internally displaced people lived in the province South Kivu (UNHCR, 18 February 2022).

2022

For 2022 the following illustrative incidents and information on displacements in South Kivu province could be found. This does not claim to be an exhaustive list:

UN OCHA reports in February 2022 ongoing population displacement for the Fizi Plateaux in the beginning of 2022: on 23 January 2022 almost 3,000 people moved from villages in the Fizi area and are currently staying with host families. Until 4 February 2022 their number increased to more than 10,000 people. In Bibokoboko centre, the resurgence of heavy fighting in mid-February raised fears of new waves of displaced people. Around 20 people died in clashes between a coalition of armed groups and the Congolese military. 7,500 displaced persons were already present in the Fizi Plateaux. The same publication also reports on clashes taking place in the Moyens-Plateaux of Uvira from 2 to 5 February, and on 13,000 persons being displaced within South Kivu. A few days earlier another approximately 8,000 persons were displaced due to clashes of armed groups in the neighbouring Hauts-Plateaux and fled to the town of Uvira and the Ruzizi plain. These IDPs added to more than 35,000 displaced already present in the plain (UN OCHA, 28 February 2022, p. 1).

In January 2022 UN OCHA reports:

“On 5 January, violent clashes resumed between armed groups in the Hauts Plateaux of Uvira city, South-Kivu province, forcing around 15,000 people to flee. Many of the newly displaced had already been forced into displacement in May 2020, following armed violence in the region. The upsurge in violence in South-Kivu and the consequent large-scale military operations to track down non-state armed groups (NSAG) increases further population displacement risk in the province, which is already hosting over 1.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).” (UN OCHA, 13 January 2022)

In a publication covering 1 to 28 January 2022, UN OCHA announced nearly 8,000 displaced persons due to persistent violence in the Hauts-Plateaux of Fizi and Mwenga caused by clashes between armed groups and the Congolese military. The displaced moved to neighbouring localities and many of them are staying with host families, while others took refuge in public spaces like churches or schools (UN OCHA, 31 January 2022).

2021

An interactive data tool on IDPs and returnees provided by UN OCHA shows 571,500 displaced persons in the province South Kivu for the year 2021. The UN OCHA data tool also records 332,200 returns for the same time period. The territories most affected by displacement were

Kalehe (210,100 persons displaced), Fizi (155,900 persons displaced), Mwenga (79,900 persons displaced), Shabunda (60,300 persons displaced) and Uvira (44,700 persons displaced) (UN OCHA, November 2021).

For the year 2021, the following illustrative incidents and information on displacements in South Kivu province could be found. This does not claim to be an exhaustive list:

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reports clashes between the Raia Mutomboki and the FARDC in the territory of Kalehe from 13 to 14 December 2021. These clashes caused massive displacement within Kalehe territory and left 7,789 individuals displaced (IOM, 15 February 2022).

For November 2021, UNHCR reports 3,259 displaced households in South Kivu province, among them 16,295 persons displaced from Shabunda (UNHCR, 1 January 2022, p. 9).

In October 2021 armed groups remained very active in the territories of Fizi, Mwenga and Uvira, resulting in clashes between armed groups on the one hand and clashes between armed groups and the FARDC on the other hand. This precarious security situation led to massive population movements towards presumably secure areas. In addition, population movements from North Kivu to the Hauts-Plateaux of South Kivu were observed (UNHCR/INTERSOS, 30 November 2021, p. 1). Radio Okapi refers to an interview by the deputy Moïse Nyarugabo (himself of Banyamulenge origin, Verweijen et al., p. 21), who spoke of an attack on 15 October 2021 in Bibokoboko, due to which thousands of Banyamulenge had to flee from their villages (Radio Okapi, 20 October 2021b). An information note by UN OCHA seems to refer to the same incident and speaks of 15,000 displaced people as a result of the crisis in Bibokoboko [Fizi] from mid-October to mid or end of November 2021 (UN OCHA, 2 December 2021, p. 1). An UNHCR/INTERSOS report covering October 2021 states that 6,352 households were displaced in October 2021 (UNHCR/INTERSOS, 30 November 2021, pp. 7-8).

According to UN OCHA, violence in the Ruzizi zone continued during September resulting in more than 2,600 people being displaced (UN OCHA, 1 October 2021, p. 1). UNHCR and INTERSOS also reported on violence in the Ruzizi zone during September, describing a clash between the FARDC, the Mai Mai coalition and a Burundian militia in the Rukobero hills of Uvira on 9 September 2021, which led to the displacement of around 182 households from Rukobero. In Shabunda territory the situation in September deteriorated because of activities of Raia Mutomboki and Mai Mai groups, due to clashes related to the management of mining sites. Clashes on 28 September 2021 in Mupoke, on 13 September 2021 in the mining areas of Nkuba and Buzumbula and on 15 September 2021 in Kanyama led to the displacement of 97 households, 69 households, about 128 households and 163 households respectively (UNHCR/INTERSOS, 29 November 2021, pp. 5-6).

For the whole of South Kivu province and the month of September, the UNHCR/INTERSOS report lists 1,786 displaced households (UNHCR/INTERSOS, 29 November 2021, pp. 7-8).

UNHCR and INTERSOS report that on 22 August 2021 after an incursion by an armed group some 187 households were forced to move from the Buzumbula mining area in Shabunda territory to the countryside (UNHCR/INTEROS, 28 November 2021, p. 5). For the whole South Kivu province, the same report states that 1,627 households were displaced in August 2021 (UNHCR/INTEROS, 28 November 2021, p. 7).

For June 2021, UN OCHA reported displacement in the Nundu zone, but does not provide numbers (UN OCHA, 14 July 2021, p. 1). It does provide numbers for the total of the South Kivu province, though, within the timeframe January to June 2021: 181,967 persons were displaced in the first half of 2021 (UN OCHA, 14 July 2021, p. 2).

For May 2021, UN OCHA observes the displacement of nearly 24,000 persons in the Hauts-Plateaux of Uvira, due to clashes between armed groups that have broken out since the end of April (UN OCHA, 1 July 2021).

For April 2021, UN OCHA reports more than 2,700 persons were displaced in Walungu territory, resulting from military operations of the Congolese army against armed groups (UN OCHA, 12 May 2021, p. 1).

In March 2021, clashes between the FARDC and armed groups led to displacement in the Hauts-Plateaux of Itombwe and Bijombo, and the Moyens-Plateaux of Uvira are mentioned by UN OCHA, but no numbers are provided (UN OCHA, 31 March 2021, p. 1). It does note that 103,120 persons were displaced in South Kivu from January to March 2021 (UN OCHA, 31 March 2021, p. 2).

UNHCR and INTERSOS report the forced displacement of hundreds of households following an attack of villages in the Rusizi plaine, Uvira, by a Mai Mai/RED Tabara coalition on 16 March 2021. In Shabunda, Raia Mutomboki and Mai Mai groups looted livestock and burnt down 42 houses, triggering the forced displacement of around 920 households. Furthermore, Mai Mai elements ambushed civilians on 13 March and looted their property, leading to 108 households displaced (UNHCR/INTEROS, 20 April 2021, p. 4).

According to the same source, the situation in Itombwe Sector in Mwenga was marked by the inter-communal conflict between the Banyamulenge and Bembe. An incursion of armed elements into the village of Kashindaba on 18 March resulted in the burning of 50 houses, the looting of livestock and forced displacement of about 174 households. On 17 March, clashes between the Gumino armed group and the Mai Mai coalition from Bembe-Fuliru-Nyindu communities forced around 15 households into displacement (UNHCR/INTEROS, 20 April 2021, p. 5).

2020

The interactive data tool by UN OCHA shows that 326,300 people were displaced in the province South Kivu in 2020 and 207,800 were able to return. The territories most affected by displacement were Kalehe (103,800 displaced persons), Fizi (92,100 displaced persons),

Mwenga (45,700 displaced persons), Shabunda (40,200 displaced persons) and Uvira (22,800 displaced persons) (UN OCHA, November 2021).

For the year 2020, the following illustrative incidents and information on displacements in South Kivu province could be found. This does not claim to be an exhaustive list:

In December 2020, two Raia Mutomboki groups clashed in Shabunda territory and violence caused 343 households to flee. In the Itombwe sector of Mwenga territory inter-community conflict persisted and dozens of households were forced to move. In total 7,736 persons were forced into displacement in December 2020 in South Kivu province (UNHCR/INTEROS, 27 January 2021, pp. 4-5, 7).

In September 2020, armed groups, among them Gumino/Twirwaneho and RED Tabara clashed with another armed coalition of Biloze Bishambuke Mai Mai in Fizi territory, resulting in the displacement of 66 households, according to a UNHCR and INTEROS monthly protection report covering September 2020. In Shabunda territory, a Raia Mutomboki armed group attacked three villages and caused about 612 households to flee. The Mwenga territory was again affected by the fighting of Bembe-Fuliiru-Nyindu Mai Mai groups on the one hand and Gumino/Twirwaneho militias of Banyamulenge origin on the other hand. On 8 September 2020, the Mai Mai Yakutumba launched an offensive attack against the Gumino/Twirwaneho coalition, which caused a rapid deterioration in the humanitarian situation and displaced civilians to Minembwe in Fizi territory (UNHCR/INTEROS, 23 October 2020, pp. 5-6). In total, UNHCR reports 8,717 individuals or 1,766 households displaced in South Kivu in September 2020 (UNHCR/INTEROS, 23 October 2020, pp. 9-10).

In July 2020, Shabunda was affected by activities of a coalition by a Mai Mai group and Raia Mutomboki. Due to their activities 2,000 households were displaced. In the Hauts-Plateaux of Uvira intercommunal conflicts was perceptible. After an attack on Kipupu (Mwenga territory) by Gumino/Twirwaneho militiamen, some households in the Banyamulenge community of Uvira were beginning to empty the area for fear of reprisals from the Mai Mai. 33 Banyamulenge households were headed towards Fizi on 25 July 2020. In Mwenga territory (UNHCR/INTEROS, 20 August 2020, p. 4). In July 2020, approximately 3,216 households were displaced in South Kivu (UNHCR/INTEROS, 20 August 2020, p. 8).

For June 2021, UNHCR and INTEROS report displacement in Fizi territory as a consequence of inter-community conflict between members of the Bembe and the Babuyu community, leading to reprisal acts of armed groups associated with each community. This violence led to 8 killed civilians, more than 300 burnt houses and around 586 displaced households (UNHCR/INTEROS, 16 July 2020, p. 4). For the whole of South Kivu province and the month of June 2020, UNHCR and INTEROS report 1,752 displaced households or 9,212 internally displaced individuals (UNHCR/INTEROS, 16 July 2020, p. 7).

For May 2020, UNHCR reports cases of mob justice as well as the resurgence of the inter-community conflict between the Banyamulenge and the Babembe-Bafuliro and Banyindu coalition in Fizi territory. On 15 May 2020, three people accused of witchcraft were attacked

and killed by the local population of Kilembwe, in the Basimbi groupement, in the Lulenge sector. A displacement of about 250 households resulted from this incident. In Mwenga territory on 28 May 2020, Mai Mai César militiamen attacked IDP sites mostly inhabited by Banyamulenge. The FARDC and Monusco coalition responded to the situation, causing displacement of around 20 households. In the month of May 2020 2,278 households were recorded displaced in South Kivu (UNHCR/INTEROS, 22 June 2020, pp. 4, 6, 8). The Rwandan Newspaper Taarifa reports more than 1,400 Banyamulenge families on the move after being displaced by clashes between the FARDC and armed groups in the high and medium plateaus of Fizi. Those families allegedly were hiding in the bush or public institutions such as schools or churches, others in host families (Taarifa, 9 June 2020).

UNHCR and INTEROS report the displacement of 563 households in Kalehe territory in April 2020, due to clashes between FARDC and the CNRD (UNHCR/INTEROS, 14 May 2020, p. 7). For April 2020 and the whole of South Kivu, UNHCR and INTEROS report 1,611 households displaced by conflict-related incidents (and an additional 7,600 households displaced by natural disaster in Uvira) (UNHCR/INTEROS, 14 May 2020, p. 9).

REACH, an initiative of two humanitarian NGOs and the UN satellite application programme, assessed the humanitarian situation of the Hauts-Plateaux in March 2021, including information on IDPs, and provides a map that shows the main population movements in these areas on page 3 of this publication:

- REACH Initiative: Suivi de la situation humanitaire - Hauts-plateaux, Province du Sud-Kivu, République démocratique du Congo (RDC) - mars 2021, 27 May 2021
<https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/suivi-de-la-situation-humanitaire-hauts-plateaux-province-du-sud>

2.5 Conflict-related displacement from North Kivu and Ituri into South Kivu

UN OCHA, on the website of the interactive data tool on internal displacement and return, also provides resource data in the form of MS Excel files. According to the most recent file, updated on 16 December 2021, the following could be found on IDPs displaced from North Kivu to South Kivu:

In 2020, a total of 2,074 households or 11,631 individuals were displaced from North Kivu due to armed conflict or intercommunal conflicts over landownership and residing with South Kivu host families. Almost all of these IDPs were displaced from Masisi territory (1,968 households or 10,936 individuals), a few fled from the territories of Walikale, Rutshuru or Beni. For the largest part they were staying with communities in the territory of Kalehe (2,014 households or 11,312 individuals), only a few stayed in the territories of Idjwi, Uvira, Walungu or Kabare, or in the provincial capital Bukavu (UN OCHA, last updated 16 December 2021).

In 2021, a total of 7,704 households or 39,320 individuals were displaced from North Kivu due to armed conflict or intercommunal conflicts about landownership and residing with South Kivu host families. As in 2020, most of these IDPs were displaced from Masisi territory (7,641 households or 38,989 individuals), a few originated from the territories of Nyiragongo or Oich or from the provincial capital Goma. For the largest part these IDPs of North Kivu origin moved

to Kalehe territory (7,647 households or 39,027 individuals), only a few found shelter with host families in Fizi or Kabare (UN OCHA, last updated 16 December 2021).

In several of the UNHCR/INTEROS monitoring reports on the security situation in South Kivu and Maniema, information on people fleeing the province of Masisi in North Kivu to Kalehe territory in South Kivu could be found:

UNHCR/INTEROS reported population movements from North Kivu to South Kivu, Kalehe territory, for October 2021. The Hauts Plateaux of Kalehe territory (groupements Mubugu, Ziralo and Buzi) were not only affected by activities of armed groups during October 2021, but also by clashes taking place in the groupement Ufamandu in the neighbouring province of North Kivu. Massive population movements, 357 displaced households, fleeing from North Kivu to Kalehe were reported during the period from 25 to 30 October 2021. These displaced households are in the localities of Lulere, Bushugulu (in Charamba) and Bulembwe in (Mianda) in the Ziralo groupement, but also in the localities of Kavumo and Numbi centre in the Buzi groupement. They live with host families and have not received any humanitarian assistance (UNHCR/INTEROS, 30 November 2021, p. 4). In August 2021, 18 displaced households were recorded in Kalehe, coming from North Kivu, Ufamandu (UNHCR/INTEROS, 28 November 2021, p. 7). For the month of March 2021, UNHCR/INTEROS reported approximately 269 households having arrived in Kalehe. Following clashes between FARDC and Mai Mai elements in the Bufamandu groupement of Masisi territory in North Kivu, the displaced fled to the groupement Ziralo in Kalehe territory since 29 March (UNHCR/INTEROS, 20 April 2021, p. 5). UNHCR/INTEROS lists 460 displaced persons, or 70 households, as internally displaced from North Kivu to Tchigoma in the groupement Mubuku in the Kalehe territory, caused by clashes between the FARDC and a Mai Mai coalition on 29 September 2020 (UNHCR/INTEROS, 23 October 2020, p. 9). For July 2020 UNHCR/INTEROS report about 350 households displaced from Walikale territory, North Kivu to the South Kivu territory Kalehe, groupement Kalima (UNHCR/INTEROS, 20 August 2020, p. 8). For May 2020 UNHCR/INTEROS report that approximately 1,427 households displaced from the villages of Lulere, Kisha, Kalamo and Bushungulu in North Kivu arrived in the Ziralo groupement of Kalehe. The reason for the movements were clashes between the FARDC and a Mai Mai group in the Masisi territory of North Kivu (UNHCR/INTEROS, 22 June 2020, p. 6).

According to a UNHCR monitoring report for November 2021, the province of Ituri is the most affected by internal displacement in the DRC (UNHCR, 1 January 2022, p. 3). However, only sparse information on IDPs moving from Ituri to South Kivu could be found. According to the above introduced data file provided by UN OCHA and updated on 16 December 2021, 60 households or 390 individuals displaced in March 2021 from Ituri were staying with host families in South Kivu. 13 households or 85 individuals displaced in June 2021 from Ituri were staying with host families in South Kivu and further 13 households, or 84 individuals displaced in September 2021 from Ituri were staying with host families in South Kivu. All of those were displaced due to intercommunal conflicts over landownership in the territory of Mahagi (Ituri) and moved to the South Kivu territory of Kalehe (UN OCHA, last updated 16 December 2021).

3 Attacks against Banyamulenge in South Kivu

For this section ACLED's curated data for the DRC was used, filtered by South Kivu province and incidents between 2020 - 2022 and searched for the term "Banyamulenge".²

ACLED reports the following incidents targeted towards or afflicting Banyamulenge in South Kivu within the reporting period of this compilation:

2022

"On 5 January 2022, a group of rioters attempted to lynch a Banyamulenge citizen in Kavimvira (Uvira, Sud-Kivu). The PNC managed to save the victim. (Source: Twitter)" (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 23901)

2021

"On 9 December 2021, a group demonstrated against the attacks by Ngumino of people in the village of Lweba, 12 km from Baraka city (Fizi, Sud-Kivu). During the demonstration, rioters killed a FARDC soldier (who is from the Banyamulenge community). The soldier was in an ambulance with a colleague when he was killed (assumed off duty). (Sources: Kivu Times; La Prunelle; Actualite)" (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 23609)

"Around 5 December 2021 (as reported), a Mayi Mayi militia attacked the villages of Marango and Iruma, near Minembwe (Fizi, Sud-Kivu). During the attacks, the group killed 1 Banyamulenge civilian. (Source: Twitter)" (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 23571)

"On 1 December 2021, a Mayi Mayi group attacked a vehicle carrying humanitarian/aid workers in Mongemonge (Fizi, Sud-Kivu). The vehicle was delivering assistance to displaced people in Bibogobobo from Baraka. They also stole goods in the vehicle. 4 people were killed from the humanitarian vehicle (including the driver, his assistant and two people). Some of the victims were part of the Banyamulenge community. (Sources: La Libre Afrique; AFP; SOS Medias; Actualite)" (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 23499)

"On 16 November 2021, the Mayi Mayi Biloze Bishambuke killed 3 FARDC and injured 2 others while they were attacking Banyamulenge pastoralists in Baraka (Fizi, Sud-Kivu). 64 cows were recuperated. (Sources: Actualite; AFP)" (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 23290)

"On 14 November 2021, the Mekanika and the Twirwaneho-Ngumino clashed against the Yakutumba/Biloze Bishambuke at a refugee/IDP site in Mikenge or near Mikenge, in Bibalo-Mbili (Mwenga, Sud-Kivu). During the clashes, at least 5-8 people were killed and 7-12 were injured, mainly women/elderly/children. 12-15 houses were burnt down. The next day, the

² ACLED collects data on reported conflict events in selected African and Asian countries, the DRC among them. ACLED researchers collect event data from a variety of sources and code them by date, location, agent, and event type. Most of the data collected by ACLED is gathered based on publicly available, secondary reports. It may therefore underestimate the volume of events. Fatality data particularly is vulnerable to bias and inaccurate reporting, and ACLED states that they use the most conservative estimate available.

FARDC managed to free the civilians that had been abducted (it is unclear whether clashes took place). Banyamulenge, Bafuliru, Babembe, and Banyindu civilians were attacked. The group later denied its involvement in the event. Community displacements were triggered. (Sources: 7 Sur 7; Actualite; Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo; La Prunelle; Twitter; Radio Okapi)" (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 23277)

Between 13-14 October 2021, Mai Mai Bishambuke and allies attacked civilians in the territory of Fizi, in several villages, among them of Lulimba and Kavumu and Bibogobogo. Sources suggest between 3 to several dozen people were killed. Incidents were reportedly intended to prevent the Twirwaneho coalition from expanding their territory. Homes were burnt, cows were looted, particularly from the Banyamulenge community. Displacements were triggered. "Subsequent sources suggest it is unclear whether Twirwaneho forces took part in these clashes or whether this was an attack against the Banyamulenge community." (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 22821; ID 22819; ID 22811; ID 22812; ID 22813). Around 14 October 2021, more than 1,200 people, particularly women, children and the elderly from the Banyamulenge community, fled to Baraka (Fizi) (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 22860).

"On 29 September 2021, a mayi mayi group (faction unknown) clashed with another mayi mayi group (faction unknown) who had kidnapped 4 women (3 of whom are part of the Banyamulenge community and 1 of the Bafuliro community) in Mugarore village, near Lusenda, Tanganyika sector (Fizi, Sud-Kivu). The hostages were released after the clashes. Casualties are unknown. (Sources: SOS Medias; La Prunelle; Election-Net)" (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 22639)

"On 17 September 2021, a group of Bafuliro people barricaded (through unspecified means) and burnt tires in Lemera (Uvira, Sud-Kivu) to demonstrate against a meeting, which was organized by a Bafuliro chief, to find common ground with the Banyamulenge community following the violent demonstrations of 9 September in Uvira city. The Bafuliro also stand against what they say is the imposition of a new Banyamulenge chief in the area. The FARDC intervened in the event to protect members of the Banyamulenge community, who were being attacked by the group. (Source: Kivu Times)" (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 22506)

"On 9 September 2021, young people of the Bavira ethnic group barricaded roads and burnt tires along the RN5 road in Uvira (Uvira, Sud-Kivu) to demonstrate against the installation of a groupment leader in Bijombo. Sources suggest the said leader may be from the Banyamulenge community. Acts of vandalism and burning of property were also committed against a Banyamulenge Church. The PNC dispersed the group by firing shots in the air. (Sources: La Prunelle; Twitter; Kivu Times)" (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 22385)

"Looting: Around 8 September 2021 (from 5 - 10 September), the FARDC looted several members of the Banyamulenge community during a weapon inspection operation in Bijombo (Uvira, Sud-Kivu). 22 people were detained and held in a trench that was dug in Uvira city called 'Bureau 2', many of whom were later released. 7 are reportedly still held captive. (Sources: Rwanda News Agency; SOS Medias)" (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 22415)

“Property destruction: Around 20 August 2021, the FARDC burnt several houses, a school and sanitation centre, all of which belonged to the Banyamulenge community, in the village of Kamombo (Fizi, Sud-Kivu). The incident comes around 6 days after the FARDC/Ebu-Ela conquered the village from Makanika's Twirwaneho/Ngumino. (Source: Twitter)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 22295)

“On 22 July 2021, the FARDC killed 3 Biloze Bishambuke combatants in the locality of Kichanga (Fizi, Sud-Kivu), after they were caught stealing 12 cows from Banyamulenge pastoralists. 1 weapon was recovered as well as the stolen cows. (Sources: Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo; La Prunelle)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 21938)

“On 14 July 2021, the FARDC clashed against a Mayi Mayi militia in the village of Kihanama, near the MONUSCO base of Mikenge (Mwenga, Sud-Kivu). One civilian was killed and 40 cows stolen. 3 pastoralists from the Banyamulenge community were rescued. (Sources: La Prunelle; MONUSCO)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 21855)

On 29 May the Ngumino/Twirwaneho and Mai Mai Yakutumba in coalition with other Mai Mai groups clashed in Mwenga territory in several (Banyamulenge) villages. “Overall, 5-8 people were killed and 6-9 were injured. 27 people were abducted (10 women, 14-15 children and 2 men); 19 were released by the MONUSCO on 2 June in Masango. The Mayi Mayi coalition burnt houses and stole cows.” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 21460; ID 21463; ID 21464; ID 21465; ID 21467; ID 21468; ID 21469; ID 21470)

“On 24 April 2021, a Mayi Mayi group (faction unknown) in coalition with the Red-Tabara carried out an incursion against Banyamulenge civilians in Rurambo (Uvira, Sud-Kivu). Community displacements were triggered. (Source: Twitter)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 21147)

“On 22 April 2021, a Mayi Mayi group (faction unknown) killed 1 Banyamulenge pastoralist in the village of Katobo (Uvira, Sud-Kivu), after the pastoralist attempted to stop the armed group from looting his cows and those of his neighbor. The Mayi Mayi group reportedly stole 26 cows. (Sources: Twitter, Kivu Times)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 21092)

“On 14 April 2021, 2 FARDC elements beat and injured a Banyamulenge woman in the village of Kabingo (Fizi, Sud-Kivu). (Source: Twitter)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 20920)

“On 9 April 2021, the FARDC clashed against a Mayi-Mayi group (faction unknown) in the village of Bibokoboko, located in the territory of Fizi (Fizi, Sud-Kivu), after the armed group reportedly looted more than 60 cows from Banyamulenge pastoralists. During the clashes, 3 armed pastoralists attempted to chase down the Mayi-Mayi group, causing confusion for the FARDC, who fatally shot them. (Source: Kivu Times)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 20844)

“On 3 April 2021, the Mayi-Mayi Kashumba attacked the Twigwaneho in Ndeggu village (Uvira, Sud-Kivu), after the Twigwaneho raided the village. This clash follows the killing of a Banyamulenge woman two days earlier, on 1 April. The Mai-Mai Kashumba pushed out the Twigwaneho from the village. (Source: Kivu Security Tracker)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 20860)

“On 16 March 2021, the Mayi-Mayi (Ilunga), Rene, Makanaki, Kashumba and Red-Tabara (under the leadership of Gisiga) killed 4 Banyamulenge civilians in the villages of Kageregere, Gocheni, Rwikubo and Kahundwe, located in the territory of Uvira (Sud-Kivu), where they also set houses on fire and looted cows, goats, and sheep. (Sources: Kivu Times; SOS Medias; Kivu Security Tracker)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 20619)

“Around 15 March 2021 (month of), a Mayi Mayi group (faction unknown) and the Red-Tabara killed 4 Banyamulenge civilians (1 woman and 3 men) in the village of Kahololo (Uvira, Sud-Kivu). They also set 3 villages on fire. (Source: Twitter)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 20657)

“Property destruction: Around 27 January 2021 (as reported), Mayi-Mayi militiamen (unidentified group) looted Banyamulenge pastoralists in Bwegera village (Uvira, Sud-Kivu). The assailants slaughtered several cows before fleeing when they saw that the FARDC had been alerted. (Source: Twitter)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 20144)

2020

“On 25 December 2020, suspected Mayi-Mayi Biloze Bishambuke armed men abducted 4 Banyamulenge herders in Bwegera (Uvira, Sud-Kivu). 3 of the victims were freed a few hours later. (Source: Twitter)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 19867)

“On 28 October 2020, the FARDC clashed with Mayi-Mayi Biloze Bishambuke militiamen in Kalingi village (Mwenga, Sud-Kivu). The state forces intervened rapidly and recovered more than 300 cows the Biloze Bishambuke men had just stolen from Banyamulenge pastoralists. No fatalities and/or injuries reported. (Source: Actualite)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 19199)

On 9 September 2020 Mayi-Mayi Mutetezi militiamen led by Kibukila (Babembe and Bifuliru ethnic groups) clashed with Banyamulenge ethnic militias led by Makanika (Ngumino, Twiganeho and Android) in Fizi territory and/or in Mwenga territory. “[...] following simultaneous attacks at various villages by the Mutetezi. Overall, 18 Banyamulenge fighters were killed and 41 injured. 1 Mayi-Mayi Mutetezi was killed and 2 were injured. At least 800 cows were stolen by the Mayi-Mayi assailants, who drove the Banyamulenge out of the village.” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 18679; ID 18681; ID 18682; ID 18687; ID 18692)

“On 8 September 2020, Mayi-Mayi Kibukila militiamen and other allies (Babembe and Bifuliru ethnic groups) carried out simultaneous attacks targeting Banyamulenge people in various villages including Kabingo (Fizi, Sud-Kivu). Overall, 5 Banyamulenge civilians were killed in these and in other villages. Fatalities coded across 3 events. (Sources: Twitter, Actualite)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 18667; ID 18673; ID 18676)

“On 21 July 2020, an unidentified armed group shot and killed 2 Banyamulenge pastoralists in Malinde village (Fizi, Sud-Kivu). No more details were reported. (Source: Fizi Media TV)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 17939)

“On 19 June 2020, the FARDC clashed with Mayi Mayi Rene militiamen during a military offensive against these rebels in Katango hills, 10 Km from Uvira town (Uvira, Sud-Kivu).

The army killed 5 Mayi Mayi and recovered weapons and ammunition. This militia was reportedly preparing an attack against Banyamulenge herders. (Sources: 7 Sur 7; La Prunelle)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 17558)

“On 13 June 2020, Mayi-Mayi militiamen clashed with 3 FARDC soldiers who were escorting a group of Banyamulenge pastoralists near Lulimba village (Fizi, Sud-Kivu). The clash took place after the rebels had ambushed the group, resulting in 1 FARDC killed. The soldiers managed to drive the rebels out and protect the pastoralists. (Source: Actualite)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID17521)

“On 11 June 2020, Mayi Mayi militiamen of the Rene faction clashed with FARDC soldiers escorting a group of Banyamulenge pastoralists with 364 cows in Lwanga village, near Baraka (Fizi, Sud-Kivu). The clash took place after the rebels had ambushed the group, resulting in 1 shepherd killed. Seven cows were also killed. The FARDC drove the rebels out. (Source: Actualite; La Prunelle)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022)

“On 31 May 2020, the Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke clashed with an unidentified Banyamulenge Ethnic Militia in the villages of Kangwa, Cakira, Karunga, Kabara and Kamombo (Fizi, Sud-Kivu). Thirteen Banyamulenge fighters were killed and 2 captured. On the Mayi-Mayi side, 2 were killed and 1 wounded. Five of the fatalities were reported in Cakira village (coded separately). Two civilian women were also wounded. The clash was prompted by ethnic and land-use tensions during the transhumance period. (Source: Kivu Security Tracker)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 17469)

“On 29 May 2020, the FARDC chased and clashed with Mayi Mayi (Rene) and Mayi Mayi (Reunion) militiamen near Makobola (Uvira, Sud-Kivu) after the rebels had abducted 14 Banyamulenge herders and their 250 cows. The army managed to free the herders and recovered 178 cows. No fatalities and/or injuries reported. (Sources: Kivu Security Tracker; 7 Sur 7; La Prunelle; Fizi Media TV)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 17270)

“On 19 April 2020, Mayi Mayi militiamen (Biloze Bishambuke) clashed with Twiganeho Ethnic Militia men in Kivumu (Fizi, Sud-Kivu). The Mayi Mayi abducted 3 Banyamulenge women and 1 man, killing a further 3 civilians in the village of Kivumu (Fizi, Sud-Kivu), including 2 women. The women were raped before being killed. (Sources: 7 Sur 7; La Prunelle; Twitter)” (ACLED, 7 April 2022, ID 17054)

The Eastern Congo Tribune, a blog on the eastern provinces of the DRC by R. Delphin Ntanyoma, himself born in Minembwe in the territory of Mwenga, in March 2020 published the following on the destruction of Banyamulenge villages:

“Besides Rurambo and Bibogobogo (small localities), the rest of the traditional Banyamulenge homeland equivalent to an area estimated around 4-5,000 km² [...] has been destroyed. As you read this blog post, the remaining Banyamulenge community are now rounded up and face regular attacks. Hundreds have died while a large number have fled towards neighboring countries. [...] Organized attacks as well as raiding all cattle have served as a strategy to cut them from all sources of provision and starve them. [...] By early February 2019, Minembwe comprised roughly 100 large villages and 150 small ones. [...]

[Following attacks since 13th June 2019] there remain less than 12 villages sheltering more than 120,000 people while surrounded by armed groups. The region has been destroyed while the national army has largely stood accomplice for the sake of preying from looted cows but also making business by selling ammunitions.” (Eastern Congo Tribune, 20 March 2020)

4 Humanitarian situation of Banyamulenge in South Kivu

UNOCHA in February 2022 published an overview of the humanitarian situation in South Kivu, covering the year 2021:

“The province of South Kivu has seen an upsurge in security incidents since March 2021, particularly in the Hauts-Plateaux of Fizi, Mwenga, Uvira and in the territory of Kalehe. This context of insecurity has had a negative impact on the humanitarian sector and exacerbated the vulnerabilities of the population. The province has 1.7 million people in need, i.e., 21% of the total population, and almost 1.3 million internally displaced people. Other indicators are just as alarming: food insecurity affects 1.3 million people, particularly in the territory of Shabunda, where 10% of the population is in the emergency phase. Severe acute malnutrition affects more than 64,000 children under the age of five.” (UN OCHA, 15 February 2022)

The Kivu Security Tracker (KST) in an April 2021 blog post explains that due to numerous abuses against Banyamulenge villages, burning houses and looting cattle, the Banyamulenge community is forced to live in a few enclaves, such as Minembwe (KST, 13 April 2021). The June 2021 letter from the Group of Experts on the DRC also reported that the Banyamulenge population was concentrated in two main locations, Minembwe and Mikenge IDP camp, “the Mikenge IDP camp hosted almost exclusively Banyamulenge IDPs who came from about 20 villages, since September and October 2019” (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p. 301).

A September 2020 article co-authored by R. Delphin Ntayoma in Bliss, a blog by the International Institute of Social Studies Research Institute of Erasmus University Rotterdam, reports that the “civilian Banyamulenge stuck in Minembwe since March 2019 are now completely surrounded” by Mai Mai rebels and Burundian opposition rebel groups like the RED Tabara (Bliss, 11 September 2020). The source continues:

“There are an estimated 125,000 to 150,000 people in tiny ‘safe areas’. They are now starving. All humanitarian agencies have left Minembwe, even MSF [Médecins Sans Frontières], claiming it is unsafe to work there. With local roads almost impassable, almost everything has to be flown in. The Rector of the local Eben Ezer University, Lazare Sebitereko, suggests aid organizations are afraid to help Banyamulenge civilians despite their evident vulnerability because of the stigma against this group as ‘Hamitic’ or ‘Tutsi’ outsiders, among the majority communities in Eastern Congo, who define themselves as ‘Bantu’ or indigenous.” (Bliss, 11 September 2020)

Another blog post of March 2020 by the Eastern Congo Tribune describes the situation as follows:

“Since 2019, thousands of local populations have been forced to move from their localities (all villages burnt down completely) and had to concentrate in few localities. [...] Minembwe Centre (120,000 displaced), Bijombo (20,000) and Mikenke (2,000). Most of these IDPs have no longer access to their farming fields while local herders have seen most of their cattle looted by armed groups [...]. Beside these inhuman tactics of impoverishing locals while forcing them to concentrate, most of these localities sheltering IDPs are regularly attacked by militias comprising locals and foreigners. Consequently, locals are dying of hunger and starvation. Due to inaccessibility of roads, there is limited humanitarian assistance provided by local NGOs and the support of diaspora relying only on expensive airlift transport.” (Eastern Congo Tribune, 20 March 2020)

According to the same blog post, the remaining Banyamulenge community is rounded up in “a type of ‘concentration-like camps’, besieged localities, that are even hard to flee from. In Minembwe, in a zone of roughly 10-12 km², less than 12 villages are remaining, sheltering more than 120,000 people. The Minembwe local population can only access farming land within this zone and IDPs “are facing acute hunger and diseases whilst there is limited humanitarian assistance” (Eastern Congo Tribune, 20 March 2020). The situation for the IDPs in Mikenge is described as such, that even if they go to collect wood or fetch water, they rely on the protection of the UN peacekeeping mission MONUSCO. For Bijombo the blog post describes a humanitarian crisis and assumes a well-planned strategy of starving Bijombo locals:

“IDPs in Bijombo have nowhere to buy basic products such as salt or soaps. Their farming fields are largely in localities controlled by Maimai; implying that hunger is the last enemy to destroy them.” (Eastern Congo Tribune, 20 March 2020)

4.1 Food security

In May 2021 the Food Security Information Network (FSIN), founded by the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC), an alliance of humanitarian and development actors, published the Global Report on Food Crises 2021. The report notes that together with five other provinces of the DRC, South Kivu is home to the largest number of people in food insecurity crisis or even in food insecurity emergency in the DRC (FSIN/GNAFC, 5 May 2021, p. 131). The same publication found that:

“In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 3.3 million children were suffering from wasting. There were pockets of high wasting prevalence (above 10 percent) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Greater Kasai, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika provinces) [...]” (FSIN/GNAFC, 5 May 2021, p. 37)

REACH, an initiative of two humanitarian NGOs and the UN satellite application programme, assessed the humanitarian situation in the Hauts-Plateaux, including the areas of Minembwe and Itombwe (including Mikenge), by means of interviews between 10 and 31 March 2021, with key informants, selected for their recent and detailed knowledge of the localities (REACH Initiative, 27 May 2021, p. 1). According to the interviewees, the majority of the population of Minembwe did not have access to sufficient food in February 2021. Market trade was affected by conflict and led to a serious impact on food security in the area. Poor access to food in Minembwe was accompanied by significant changes in the eating habits of most of the

population. In particular, the part of the population previously accustomed to consuming maize meal, beans, potatoes, vegetables, milk and sometimes meat was forced to consume food in very reduced quantity and variety, leading to cases of malnutrition, mostly among children but also among some adults (REACH Initiative, 27 May 2021, p. 6). Strategies to cope with the lack of food frequently included reducing the quantity of portions and frequency of meals. Several key informants considered the frequency of meals to be two per day before the start of the violence in 2019, compared to generally one meal per day at the time of data collection, or even less. (REACH Initiative, 27 May 2021, p. 7)

All key informants in Minembwe reported that the majority of the population did not have access to safe water and that the arrival of IDPs had put great pressure on existing water sources (REACH Initiative, 27 May 2021, p. 9).

4.2 Humanitarian access

An Information note by UN OCHA for South Kivu and Maniema, covering June 2021, reports that following the kidnapping of seven Congolese soldiers on 15 June, eight international NGOs working in Minembwe region decided to evacuate their personnel to Bukavu and had to end their activities in the region (UN OCHA, 14 July 2021).

Already mentioned above, the March 2020 blog on the situation in Minembwe, Bijombo and Mikenge states that there is only limited access to humanitarian assistance for the Banyamulenge provided by local NGOs. Due to the inaccessibility of roads, the community relies on support of the diaspora and expensive airlift transport (Eastern Congo Tribune, 20 March 2020). In an April 2022 e-mail response, R. Delphin Ntanyoma confirmed that the situation has not changed since then:

“Since recent violence erupted in Minembwe (2019), the Banyamulenge are besieged up until now. The only way to get out of Minembwe or Mikenge/Mikenke is by flight. The Banyamulenge cannot move out of these tiny localities further than 2 kms. This has been the case for the Banyamulenge in Bibokoboko [...] but also those in Bijombo. The difference between Bijombo/Bibokoboko and Minembwe/Mikenge is, that the latter localities have UN peacekeeping bases (movement can be arranged through their helicopters) while [for] the former [that] is practically impossible. MONUSCO has recently [...] established a base in Bibokoboko). [...] It is hard to state what makes international NGOs to not provide humanitarian support, but reasons put forward are remoteness and violence, though discrimination of the Banyamulenge plays a great role in this failure to support.”
(Ntanyoma, 7 April 2022)

4.3 Access to healthcare

According to the REACH Initiative report published in May 2021, access to health care in the highlands was limited due to extensive destruction and looting of health infrastructure between 2019 and 2021. Some key informants in Minembwe also stated that functional health facilities lacked drugs and medical equipment. The estimated walking time in February 2021 to the nearest health facility was more than 45 minutes in 46 percent of assessed locations in Minembwe (REACH Initiative, 27 May 2021, p. 8). In Itombwe and Minembwe some key

informants also reported that community affiliation could influence access to care (REACH Initiative, 27 May 2021, p. 8). In Mikenge health facilities were destroyed in 2020, what wasn't destroyed fell victim to looting. Attacks on medical staff in August 2020 in Mikenge were also reported (REACH Initiative, 27 May 2021, p. 7). Access limitations between some health areas and the Mikenge hospital were reported, particularly problematic for pregnancy complications, leading to high risk of death on the way to the hospital (REACH Initiative, 27 May 2021, p. 8). Concerning healthcare, in his April 2022 e-mail response R. Delphin Ntanyoma states:

“Besides Banyamulenge diaspora support, I can state that there has never been humanitarian support in these regions/localities. There are healthcare facilities with irregular support by some international organizations such as Medecins du Monde, but not as one would expect.” (Ntanyoma, 7 April 2022)

4.4 Economic situation and livelihoods

The Global Report on Food Crises 2021, relying on several sources, notes that due to ongoing insecurity and following displacement movements of large populations, livelihoods were disrupted during the agricultural season in late 2020. Crops were destroyed or looted by armed groups and the people were prevented from accessing their fields (FSIN/GNAFC, 5 May 2021, p. 133). Additionally, heavy rainfalls in August and October 2020 in South Kivu destroyed large areas of agricultural lands together with food reserves and harvests (FSIN/GNAFC, 5 May 2021, p. 40). REACH Initiative reports concerning the humanitarian situation in the Hauts-Plateaux that in about 40 percent of assessed locations in Minembwe, livelihood activities had been significantly disrupted in February 2021 (REACH Initiative, 27 May 2021, p. 7). Another REACH publication that provides an overview of the humanitarian situation in South Kivu for the period April to June 2021, explains:

“Most of the economic activity in South Kivu is driven by agriculture, which is the primary means of subsistence for the population. Agriculture is most often practised on small plots of land using basic techniques and equipment. [...] people working in agriculture face many barriers. The most frequently cited obstacles in the locations surveyed were lack of livelihoods (88%), destruction of fields by insects, animals or disease (56%), followed by soil fertility (17%) and insecurity (17%), with no significant change over the period. In general, lack of livelihoods is an inherent problem in the province as a whole, and has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the disruption of global trade. Insecurity was a barrier to access to food and water. Insecurity was a barrier to farming, particularly in Itombwe (82%, 18/22), Minembwe (67%, 8/12) and Hauts-Plateaux (52%, 14/27) [...]. This is partly due to the persistence of conflicts in the Highlands region that continue to affect access to fields and the looting of crops or livestock.” (REACH Initiative, 2021, p. 7)

5 The Situation of Banyamulenge in North Kivu and Ituri

ACLED does not report any incident from January to 7 April 2022 in North Kivu province including Banyamulenge. For the years 2021 and 2020 ACLED recorded one incident involving Banyamulenge in North Kivu for each year:

“On 23 January 2021, Nyatura militiamen (under the CMC) shot and killed 1 Banyamulenge woman in Mudugudu village, near Bishusha (Rutshuru, Nord-Kivu). Reportedly, the killing was ethnic-driven. (Source: Twitter)” (ACLELED, 7 April 2022, ID 20110)

“On 3 November 2020, a prominent Banyamulenge businessman was shot and killed by unidentified gunmen in Goma city (Goma, Nord-Kivu). Around 18 January 2022, 6 suspects connected to his killing, and another attack that took place on 22 February 2021 near Kibumba (coded as another event), were arrested by the authorities. (Source: La Libre Afrique)” (ACLELED, 7 April 2022, ID 19256)

For the Ituri province ACLELED does not list any incident involving Banyamulenge (ACLELED, 7 April 2022). In an April 2022 e-mail response R. Delphin Ntanyoma explains:

“There are few Banyamulenge families in Ituri, around 5-10 as far as I know. Those living in North Kivu are mostly based in Goma city and many have fled South Kivu. Those in Goma have similar challenges of being assisted because of the complexity of humanitarian governance.” (Ntanyoma, 7 April 2022)

No further information could be found on the situation of Banyamulenge in North Kivu or Ituri within the reporting period (2020 to March 2022) of this compilation.

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