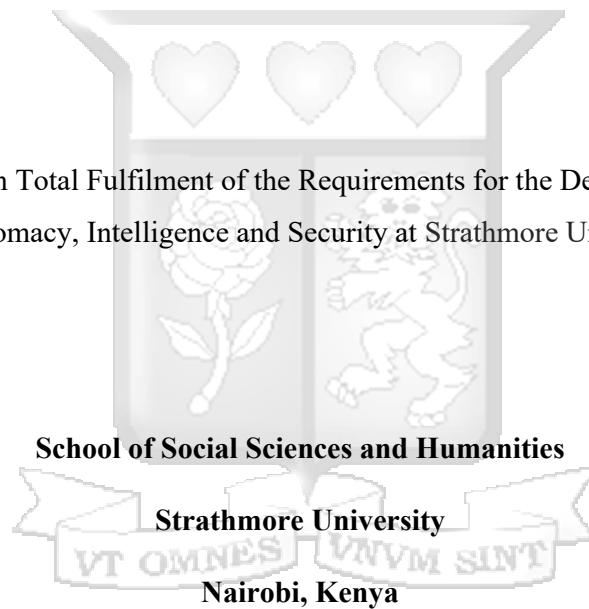


**The National Security Challenges of the Internal Displacement of Persons
in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo**

Mugangu Nkuba Christiane

114278

A Thesis Submitted in Total Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Art
in Diplomacy, Intelligence and Security at Strathmore University



June, 2025

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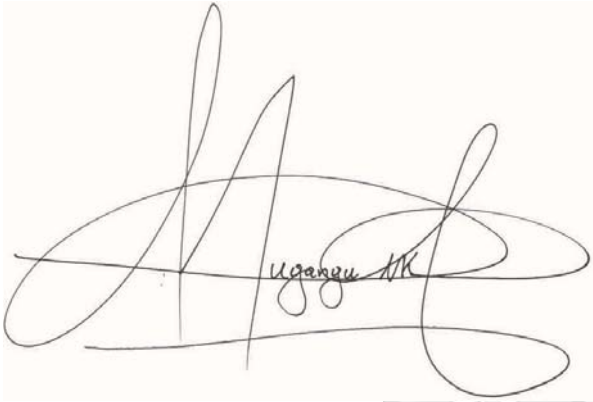
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Declaration

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Mugangu Nkuba Christiane

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light beige background. The signature is stylized and cursive, with the name 'Mugangu Nkuba Christiane' written in a smaller, more legible font below the main signature.

18th May 2025

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Abstract

Internal displacement of persons has a long historical precedent. Nevertheless, there has been little attention devoted to understanding the impact of this phenomenon on national security as it evolves. The objective of this study was to ascertain whether there is a connection between national security challenges faced by DRC and prolonged internal displacement. To this end, the study was guided by the following key objectives; to analyse the connection between IDPs and ethnic conflict, to assess whether there is a connection between IDPs and the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons and lastly to examine the nexus existing between IDPs, ethnic conflict and the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons. The research employed a descriptive research design. It was conducted in South Kivu (specifically Bukavu) and North Kivu (specifically Goma). The target population included government officials, staff of international organisations, representatives of civil society, members of religious organisations, leaders of community-based organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Open-ended questionnaires were used to collect the qualitative and quantitative data which were analysed respectively using statistical and thematic analysis techniques. The findings indicate that participants identified four main themes regarding the relationship between IDPs and ethnic conflict: the intersection of poverty and displacement, the shifting of responsibility, stereotypes and competition. Regarding the link between IDPs and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), participants highlighted insecurity, trafficking and recruitment. In examining the links between internal displacement, ethnic conflict and the proliferation of SALW, two main themes emerged: urban ethnic clustering leading to insecurity, and insecurity reinforcing ethnic grouping tendencies. The study employed rational choice theory and Cadinu and Rothbart's differentiation model to explain the underlying reasons behind the identified themes and the connections between them. The study recommends that a strategically informed national security plan should be implemented, incorporating elements of citizen security into state security and tailored to the specific security context of each province, city and district. This plan may begin with legislation defining IDP status, followed by registration and aid distribution in partnership with NGOs. Additionally, the integration component can include incentives for host communities, such as access to land, and be supported by nationwide cultural tolerance campaigns.

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List of Acronyms

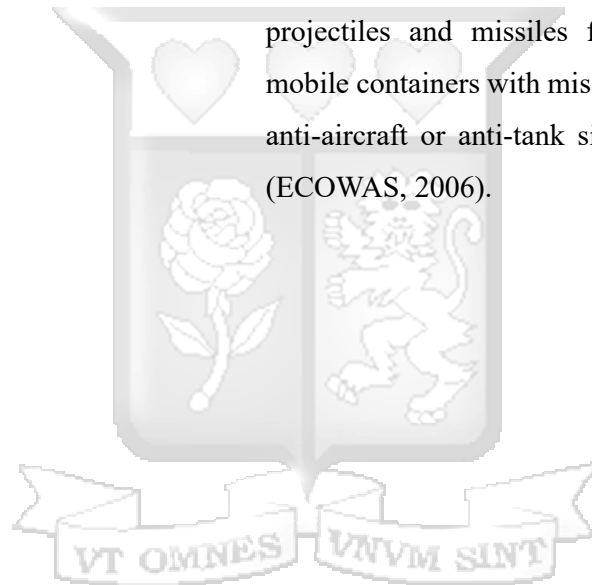
ADFL	Alliance Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo
AU	African Union
CNDP	Congress National pour la Défense du Peuple (National Congress for the Defense of the People)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EX FAR	Ex-Forces Armées Rwandaises
FARDC	Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo
FDLR	Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda
FIB	Force Intervention Brigade
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICISS	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IOM	International Organisation For Migration
LDU	Local Defence Unit
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
M23	March 23 Movement
MONUC	United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MONUSCO	United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo
R2P	Responsibility To Protect
RCD	Congolese Rally for Democracy
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Armies
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
UDPF	Ugandan People's Defence Forces
UNHCR	United Nations Refugees Agency
UNSC	United Nation Security Council



Definition of Terms

Crime	word used to refer to those activities that break the laws of the land and are subject to official punishment (Haralambos, Holborn, & Heald, 2004).
Ethnic conflict	a condition of disharmony between two or more ethnic groups resulting from hostile competition over certain divergent and incompatible values and interests. Such values and interests could revolve around culture, religion, economics, politics, etc. (Yecho, 2006)
Ethnic group	a group of people who share a unique and distinctive culture (Yecho, 2006).
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	persons or groups who have been forced to flee their homes suddenly or unexpectedly in large numbers, as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, systemic violations of human rights, natural or man-made disaster, and who are within the territory of their own country (Mooney, 2005).
National security	a dyadic framework that encompasses both the security of the state and the security of its citizens (Mwagiru, 2020).
Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)	The ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and other Related Materials of 2006 defines small arms as arms destined for personal use. This includes firearms and other destructive arms or devices, such as an exploding bomb, an incendiary bomb, a grenade, a rocket launcher, a missile, a missile system or a mine. Furthermore, the convention

stipulates that portable (light) weapons are designed for use by multiple individuals in a coordinated manner, encompassing heavy machine guns, portable grenade launchers, mobile or mounted portable anti-aircraft cannons, portable anti-tank cannons, non-recoil guns, and portable anti-tank missile launchers. This also includes rocket launchers, portable anti-aircraft missile launchers, mortars with a caliber of less than 100 millimeters, which are cartridges, munitions for small caliber weapons, projectiles and missiles for small arms, and mobile containers with missiles or projectiles for anti-aircraft or anti-tank simple action systems (ECOWAS, 2006).



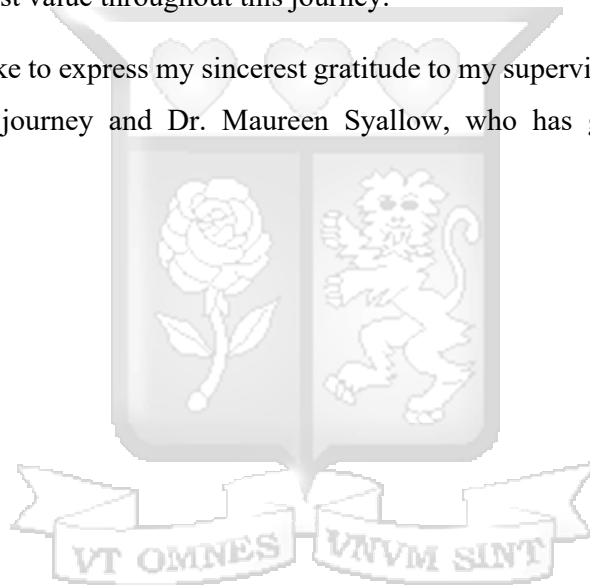
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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the internally displaced persons in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, both those who endure and those who have tragically passed. Despite the immense challenges they face, their resilience and determination to contribute positively to their communities is a testament to the human spirit. It is my hope that this work serves as a platform to amplify their voices.



Chapter 1: Introduction

The concept of "security" has its roots in one of the most fundamental instincts in human beings: the instinct for survival and continuity. Following the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the advent of modern states saw a shift in perspective with regards to the concept of security. The treaty assigned states the responsibility for the security of their citizens, which gradually became equated with the security of the state itself, as states sought to ensure their survival in a competitive international environment. This perspective gave rise to the realist view on national security (Tuncer, 2022).

The realist view of national security has been influenced by modernist political and sociological works of scholars such as Thomas Hobbs, Max Weber, Kenneth Waltz, among others. According to this view of national security, the *raison d'être* of a nation-state is the continuous provision of security through the creation of a professional security bureaucracy to manage external and internal threats to national security. Moreover, the scope of traditional national security is above all limited to physical, palpable threats within a geographically defined territory (Ripsman & Paul, 2010). However, the post-cold war era, marked by the emergence of new security threat - principally non-military threats, mostly posed by non-state actors such as organised criminal organisations, international terrorism, pandemics, national disasters, among others -, has not only challenged traditional view but has also created room for critical perspective on national security.

Scholars such as, Keith Krause, have argued that the protection of citizens from violence and the creation of conditions for economic and social well-being should be considered primary factors in defining what constitutes a national interest worthy of securitization (Krause, 2013). Building on this perspective, Anthony Giddens and Martin Shaw have suggested that national security threats can be articulated in ways that do not necessarily position the state as the sole referent object of security (Sørensen, 1996). However, as Barry Buzan and other Copenhagen School scholars have emphasised, despite the transnational nature of emerging threats, the state remains a primary security provider. This is due to its status as the preeminent societal entity with both the capacity to act and the legitimacy to mobilise and distribute resources to address these threats (Fjäder, 2014). In this context, Ken Booth adds further nuance by identifying economic collapse, ethnic rivalry and crime, among others, as critical focal points in the evolving post-Cold War global security agenda (Booth, 1991).

These debates on national security have highlighted a crucial factor in its conceptualisation: the necessity to expand the traditional scope of security to encompass the non-traditional dimensions of human security. Makumi Mwagiru defines national security as a dyadic framework that encompasses both the security of the state and the security of its citizens. This conceptualisation posits that these two perspectives are not mutually exclusive, but rather interdependent (Mwagiru, 2020). According to Makumi Mwangiru, the overarching objective of national security requires the integration of citizens' freedoms and rights within the broader context of state interests (Mwagiru, 2020). In theory, internal displacement of persons represents a significant national security concern, as it directly impacts citizens' ability to exercise their rights and achieve comprehensive development. This perspective aligns with Francis Deng's emphasis on the state's obligation to safeguard its population from severe rights violations, particularly noting that IDPs are often among the most overlooked groups (Deng, 1995). Particularly now that internal displacement of persons has reached crisis levels globally.

In 1992, the working definition of internally displaced persons was put forth to make reference to persons or groups who have been forced to flee their homes suddenly or unexpectedly in large numbers, as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, systemic violations of human rights, natural or man-made disaster, and who are within the territory of their own country. The two core elements of the concept of internal displacement are respectively the involuntary nature of the movement and the fact that this movement takes place within national borders (Mooney, 2005). According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre reports (2024), the global number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has increased from 71.1 million in 2022 to 75.9 million recorded by the end of 2023. Of these, 68.3 million individuals were displaced due to conflict and violence, while 7.7 million were displaced by climate-related disasters (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre , 2024).

In the Americas, an approximate of 2.8 million instances of displacement were recorded in 2023. A total of 2.1 million displacements were disaster-induced, with the highest rates observed in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, and Chile. A total of 637,000 individuals were displaced due to conflict and violence, with Haiti and Colombia reporting the highest numbers at 245,000 and 106,000, respectively (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre , 2024, pp. 83-94). In Colombia, where the issue of prolonged internal displacement is particularly severe, there have been a considerable

number of recorded instances of conflict over the utilisation and accessibility of scarce resources, particularly in impoverished neighbourhoods such as Suba and Ciudad Bolívar, situated on the peripheries of major urban centres like Bogotá and DC. These conflicts frequently take an ethnic dimension that reinforces already existing discriminatory attitudes within Colombian society (López, Arredondo, & Salcedo, 2011).

In the Middle East, around 5.4 million individuals were forced to flee their homes in 2023. By the end of the year, 15.3 million of IDPs had been recorded. Notable instances of conflict-induced displacement were noticed in Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, and Libya. Additionally, the number of disaster-induced displacements reached an unparalleled level due to floods, particularly in Yemen and regions that have already been affected by ongoing conflicts (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre , 2024, pp. 39-53).

In Syria, approximately 12 million individuals out of a population of 22 million are forcibly displaced. This is one of the highest ratios of refugees and IDPs globally, which is a cause of concern. The ongoing conflicts have resulted in considerable destruction of infrastructure that has significantly reduced the possibility of displaced individuals to return to their homes and normal lives. These individuals frequently contend with profound trauma resulting from ethnic, sectarian, and politico-religious cleansing. The accumulation of trauma over time can give rise to a profound sense of resentment and a desire for revenge, which may in turn contribute to the perpetuation of conflict and social division (Karasapan, 2017).

In 2023, the second-highest number of internal displacements globally was recorded in East Asia and the Pacific region experienced, where a total of 10.5 million displacements were observed. It is worth mentioning that of these, 9 million were disaster-related, with storms accounting for 53% and floods for 39%. The remaining 1.5 million displacements were attributed to conflict and violence, particularly in the Zamboanga Peninsula, Eastern Visayas, and Mimaropa in the Philippines, as well as seven regencies in the Aceh province of Indonesia (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre , 2024, pp. 55-67).

In the Philippines, where displacement occurs in waves caused either by disaster or conflict or a combination of both, the efforts made at all level of governance to prioritise addressing the issue is a remarkable illustration of the government's commitment to protecting its displaced citizens. Initiatives such as the national development plan for 2023 to 2028, which includes the provision

of assistance to IDPs in the context of peace-building and reconstruction efforts, have enabled the government to contain displacement and mitigate its associated vulnerabilities. These measures are designed to prevent displaced individuals from becoming involved in or contributing to the broader conflict crisis in the country (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre , 2024, p. 67).

In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) reached a record 19.5 million in 2023, representing 42% of the global total. It is estimated that 13.5 million of these individuals were displaced due to conflict, with the highest figures reported in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The remaining 6 million instances of displacement were caused by natural disasters. By the conclusion of 2023, the combined impact of conflict and disasters had resulted in 34.8 million individuals being forcibly displaced on multiple occasions across the region (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre , 2024, pp. 21-37).

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the persistent activities of armed groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have resulted in a significant displacement of populations, with an estimated 6.9 million individuals displaced across the country. Of these, 5.9 million are situated in the most severely affected provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, and Tanganyika as of October 2023. There seem to be a considerable propensity for conflict between host communities and IDPs in DRC. This could be attributed to the existence of underlying social inequalities pertaining to access to resources and services. The potential for this tension to escalate is heightened by the ongoing increase in displacement resulting from persistent conflicts (International Organization for Migration, 2024).

The recurring theme of internally displaced persons being entangled in conflict and escalated violence is deeply rooted in the history of DRC. In the aftermath of the first Congo war (1994-1996), ethnic tensions between native population and the Bayamulenge, as well as other Kinyarwanda-speaking Congolese escalated. The latter were alleged to be concealing Rwanda's involvement in the smuggling of weapons in the country through their camps (McCalpin, 2002). The suspicion surrounding the IDP camps in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was further reinforced as military operations increasingly targeted these areas. This was amid accusations that the camps were not only sheltering opposing combatants but also serving as their operational bases. One of the most brutal attacks was targeting the Kirumbu camp, where an estimated of 500 IDPs were killed (Amnesty International, 1997).

In 1996, the Democratic Republic of Congo witnessed a new surge in internal displacement, largely attributable to inter-ethnic conflict, with the most significant impacts observed in the provinces of Katanga and North Kivu. Three years later, the Ituri conflict between the Hema and Lendu communities resulted in the displacement of an even greater number of individuals along ethnic lines. These recurring ethnic conflicts in parts of the DRC are closely tied to conflict-induced internal displacements that have deepened the identity crisis- a legacy of the colonial era which fostered and exploited ethnic divisions for control (Pinduka & Nhema, 2020).

By 2 August 1998, according to the UNHCR, there were over two million IDPs, a significant number of whom had been displaced due to the actions of the government and non-state armed groups (NSAGs). The rapid spread of violence was exacerbated by the general accessibility of Small Arms and Light Weapons, facilitated through diverse supply chain that included military personnel and informal door to door salespersons. This high demand for SALW is attributable to several factors including the lack of human security, limited educational opportunities and insufficient access to sustainable employment during this specific period (Houten, 2010).

Despite political efforts to re-establish stability in the country, the number of IDPs reached a new record of approximately 3.4 million in 2002 (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Coincidentally, between 2000 and 2003, the Control Arms Campaign estimated that over 200,000 deaths were the direct result of SALW. The deaths that were identified as an indirect side effect of conflict, including malnutrition, infectious diseases and overcrowded refugee camps, could also be connected to the misuse of SALW (Houten, 2010).

By October 2008, all IDP camps in the North- Kivu were closed. At the time, the availability of settlement options for IDPs was further constrained by the outbreak of sporadic ethnic conflicts. Apart from the Kivu provinces, other provinces such as Kasai oriental, Equateur (former province), and Northern Katanga counted several thousands of displaced people due to conflict related to the distribution, use and access to natural resources (Pinduka & Nhema, 2020). Additionally, the incapacity of host community to cope with the ever-growing influx of people and the growing intercommunity competition over the scarce resources and aid fund have created an environment conducive to more violent conflicts between groups (Forced Migration Review, 2011).

It is true that by 2010, the Congolese government, now firmly in power, appeared to signal a return to normalcy, with over 1.1 million internally displaced persons attempting to return to their homes.

However, despite these efforts, the number of remaining displaced persons was overwhelmingly significant, indicating that internal displacement had become a humanitarian crisis in its own respect (Human Rights Watch, 2010). In fact, the internal displacement of persons, by itself, had become the cause of conflict over the scarce resources due to urban overcrowding, weak water, widespread insecurity and tensions that have undermined the country's economic development and human security (Forced Migration Review, 2011).

A study conducted in 2010 by the Groupe de Recherche et de l'Information sur la Paix et la Sécurité (GRIP) revealed that approximately 300,000 illicit arms were in circulation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), primarily due to heightened armed violence driven by territorial and ethnic conflicts (Seiwoh, Fabry, Nantes, & Pineda, 2020). This finding is consistent with the analysis presented in the Global Overview 2012 report by the Norwegian Refugee Council/Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (NRC/IDMC), which examines the dynamics of internal displacement in the DRC. The report highlighted that in Eastern DRC, particularly in the Kivu provinces, protracted and repeated displacement has significantly eroded social cohesion, exacerbating inter-ethnic tensions. These tensions have, in turn, fostered a thriving market for opportunistic illegal economies, perpetuating a destructive cycle of violence and instability (Norwegian Refugee Council & Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2013).

In the period between July 2016 and March 2017, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) documented violent confrontations between the Bantu and Twa ethnic groups in Tanganyika province. These clashes resulted in the destruction of 400 villages and the displacement of 557,000 individuals. OCHA emphasised that these identity-related clashes illustrate a fundamental inadequacy in addressing the underlying causes and challenges of internal displacement (Groleau, 2017). The complex and evolving nature of displacement in the DRC suggests that each instance is shaped by specific and distinctive factors. These factors are frequently intertwined with the challenges associated with displacement, perpetuating a cycle of vulnerability and tension (Pinduka & Nhema, 2020).

In 2018, the Small Arms Survey estimated that approximately 945,784 unregistered firearms were in circulation through Tanganyika, North-Kivu, Sud-Kivu and Ituri- province notorious for hosting the majority of internally displaced in eastern DRC (Seiwoh, Fabry, Nantes, & Pineda, 2020). Particularly in Ituri, the situation between 2018 and 2019, has been characterised by an

unprecedented escalation of ethnically targeted attacks that somehow seemed to worsen with the influx of more internally displaced and the availability of SALW in the region (Global Shelter Cluster, 2018).

According to Africa Organised Crime Index, there is a considerably higher prevalence of weapon ownership in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in comparison to the western region (ENACT, 2023). This disparity is closely linked to the alarming levels of insecurity in the east. From January to September 2023, the United Nations recorded nearly 150,000 protection violations against civilians, including abduction, assault, and extortion, a staggering 41% increase compared to the same period in 2022 (United States Agency for International Development, November 2023). The widespread insecurity in Eastern DRC has resulted in an increasing number of civilians turning illicit small arms and light weapons for self-defence, while others exploit them for malicious purposes such as looting, armed robbery and other violent crimes (Opongo, 2017).

1.1 Problem Statement

As of the end of 2023, half a million people had to flee their homes, raising the number of IDP across DRC from the 6.2 million recorded in 2022 to nearly 7 million- which is the highest number of displaced people in Africa (Human Rights Watch, 2023). The International Organisation for Migration's report on DRC's countrywide displacement (October 2023) indicates that this surge of new displaced people in Goma is considerably straining the limited resources of the host communities, which already hosted 874,000 IDPs as of late October. The provinces of North Kivu, Ituri, Tanganika, South Kivu, and Kinshasa account for the majority (87%) of current displacement in DRC, with North Kivu having the highest number of internally displaced persons (2,300,163) followed by South Kivu (1,356,376), Ituri (1,630,535), Kinshasa (392,281), and Tanganika (350,462). The remaining 21 provinces account for the remaining 13%.

An analysis of the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) reveals that conflict sustains internal displacement. Based on this assumption, current assessments of the effect of internal displacement frequently utilise a uniform explanatory framework to analyse both its past and present challenges. Furthermore, these analyses tend to prioritise assessing the immediate effects on the displaced populations and host communities, rather than considering the broader implications for national security such as social cohesion, national unity, and identity.

This approach reinforces the idea that internal displacement and its challenges will dissipate with the conclusion of hostilities and the implementation of humanitarian initiatives. However, current assessment of DRC's security environment reveals that internal displacement of persons somehow persists in tandem with ethnic conflicts, and the availability of small arms and light weapons (Never Again Rwanda , 2024). Although these elements are frequently linked directly to the ongoing conflict in DRC that initially gave rise to them, it remains to be seen whether there is a long-lasting connection between them that extends beyond the context of the conflict itself.

1.2 Study Objectives

The principal objective of this research is to ascertain whether there is a connection between national security challenges faced by DRC and prolonged internal displacement. The specific Objectives are:

- i. To assess whether there is a connection between internally displaced persons and ethnic conflict in eastern of DRC;
- ii. To evaluate the connection existing between internally displaced persons and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in eastern DRC;
- iii. To examine the nexus between internally displaced persons, proliferation of Small Arms Light Weapons and ethnic conflict in eastern DRC

1.3 The Scope

This study is within the 2013-2023 period. The choice of 2013 as entry point is influenced by the fact that this was the year in which the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) was deployed by the UNSC in Eastern DRC, more precisely in Goma with the objective of preventing the expansion of M23, disarming them in order to protect civilians, and safeguarding state authorities while creating a space for stabilisation activities.

The research sites are situated in South Kivu and North Kivu. In the South Kivu, the quartier of Panzi and the commune of Kadutu will be the focus of this research because of their peripheral position and their high population density. These characteristics will facilitate access to IDPs from a diverse range of sites of origin, living outside camps (Jacobs & Patrick Milabyo Kyamusugulwa, June 2018). In the North Kivu, the Mugunga 3 camp located in the Mugunga neighbourhood in the Karisimbi commune will be investigated as well because of its location in an urban area which

will grant access to IDPs residing both within and outside camps (Nguya, We are all IDPs: Vulnerability and livelihoods in Mugunga 3 camp, Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2019).

1.4 Justification

Although a rights-based approach to addressing internal displacement is the optimal methodology, evidence-based research is indispensable for effectively informing policymakers of the situation's realities. The challenge of IDPs is frequently regarded as an inconsequential by-product of conflict, anticipated to dissipate with the conclusion of hostilities and the implementation of humanitarian initiatives. This perception is reinforced by the majority of existing research, which tends to emphasise on these aspects in its recommendations.

Recurring internal displacement, whether experienced for the first time or multiple times, can create conditions that perpetuate instability and exacerbate broader societal and political challenges. The objective of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of internal displacement as a dynamic and evolving phenomenon. By widening the scope of analysis, the study aims to identify how internal displacement contributes to the emergence of new patterns of insecurity, which may persist through ongoing cycles of displacement, further complicating efforts to achieve stability and peace.

From a policy-making perspective, the research offers valuable insights into the significant threat that the connection between national security challenges and internal displacement may pose, highlighting its far-reaching implications for stability and governance. By examining the complex and evolving nature of displacement, the study could inform more effective policy responses that address not only the immediate humanitarian needs of displaced populations but also the longer-term socio-political and security challenges that come along with internal displacement of people.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

Early in the study, it became clear that contacting 44 people, including IDPs, would not be feasible due to the recent resurgence of a new branch of the M23 armed forces, which has escalated into violent confrontations with state forces. As a result, the researcher decided to target a minimum of 22 participants via WhatsApp and email. To ensure the quality of the data, the researcher approached organisations with access to IDPs and made a concerted effort to include fieldworkers

or volunteers who could provide unfiltered accounts of their experiences. Additionally, open-ended questionnaires were used to allow participants to provide detailed responses, and follow-up contacts were made to seek clarification where necessary.

Another challenge that emerged during the analysis process pertained to a technical malfunction experienced by ATLAS.TI, which resulted in its unavailability. Following consultation with the company, it was established that the duration of the repair process was uncertain. In the event that time was a critical factor, the company recommended that an alternative software be sought. Consequently, I proceeded to acquire Nvivo in an effort to minimise any potential delays. Despite its lesser known status than ATLAS.TI, it had the advantage of performing text analysis queries on textual data in English, French, German, Spanish or Simplified Chinese.



Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This section presents theoretical frameworks that will inform the study. It will also examine the existing literature that have explored the connection existing between internal displacement, ethnic conflict, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Rational Choice Theory

The relationship between human behaviour and crime can be traced back to the seventeenth century, a period characterised by a significant shift in philosophical thinking, moving away from a religious understanding of criminality towards a more naturalistic perspective. In his work, *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes established the foundations of classical criminology that counts two main theories which are the rational choice theory and the deterrence choice theory (Beaudry-Cyr, 2015).

My research project is particularly interested in the concept of rational choice theory, which is rooted in the Hobbesian right of nature (*jus naturale*). This principle acknowledges the intrinsic human tendency towards self-preservation, which frequently overrides considerations of its impact on others. Hobbes proposed that in the absence of a social contract, individuals would act primarily to preserve their own lives, which he believed would result in a state of perpetual conflict (Hobbes, 1960).

Building on the ideas of Hobbes, Cesare Beccaria further developed rational choice theory, emphasising that individuals make decisions based on a conscious effort to minimise pain and maximise pleasure. This implies weighing the costs and benefits of their actions, and making choices that are believed to provide the greatest personal advantage. An analysis of the costs and benefits involved is crucial to an understanding of rational choice theory within the framework of classical criminology. However, the theory does not fully account for the willingness to participate in or commit a crime (criminal involvement) and the willingness to commit certain types of crimes (participation in criminal events) (Beaudry-Cyr, 2015).

This is a gap that Cornish and Clarke addressed by introducing the concept that criminal behaviour is the result of the interaction between human agents and the circumstances in which the decision

to commit a crime is made. According to Cornish and Clarke, criminal involvement is based on factors such as moral codes, previous learning experience and personal experience with crime. Conversely, the decision to perpetrate a specific criminal act is based on contextual and situational factors such as immediate need for money, perceived costs and benefits of crime (Cornish & Clarke, 2014).

In “Displacement, Violence and Vulnerability: Trafficking among Internally Displaced in Kenya,” Radoslaw L. Malinowski, Shirley N. Otube, Anni Alexander, and Abel M. Mogambi were able to develop a model that identified a certain number of factors increasing the vulnerability of IDPs to human trafficking based on a variety of situational factors. This model provides evidence of the functionality and soundness of this modern approach to rational choice in the field of criminology (Malinowski et al., 2016).

My research as well offers a valuable opportunity to test and further refine this contemporary approach to rational choice theory, which incorporates elements of situational choice theory – a subsidiary framework of rational choice. By conceptualising IDPs as rational actors who engage in a continuous cycle of planning, adaptation, and information evaluation, the study seeks to uncover the motivations driving their decisions. Building on this assumption, the factors that could motivate IDPs to participate in the proliferation of arms, either as part of the supply chain or as contributors to demand, will be identified.

2.1.2 Differentiation Model

The situational nature of crime prompts the question of what conditions creates a conducive environment for criminal activity. This is where the field of intergroup conflict theory becomes relevant. The theoretical framework of intergroup conflict is derived from the field of social psychology, which in turn is based on the study of intergroup relations (Ellis, 2010). The intergroup conflict theory of interest is Cadinu and Rothbart’s differentiation model. The model proposes that conflict serves to accentuate the centrality of group identities, whereby the act of belonging to a group influences the way individuals perceive and interpret their surroundings. Consequently, members are driven to view their in-group in a more favourable light, frequently ascribing negative characteristics to the out-group, thereby reinforcing the distinctiveness of these opposing identities (Cadinu & Rothbart, 1996).

The empirical research presented in the article “Ethnicity and Conflict: Theory and Facts” by Joan Esteban, Laura Mayoral, and Debraj Ray offers valuable insights into this phenomenon. The study demonstrates that pre-existing ethnic divisions exert a significant impact on the prevalence of social conflict. They distinguish between two forms of ethnic division: polarisation and fractionalisation, each of which affects the nature of conflict in a different manner. Esteban, Mayoral and Ray posit that ethnic polarisation is likely to intensify conflicts when public goods, such as political power or religious hegemony, are contested. In contrast, ethnic fractionalization is more likely to intensify conflicts in contexts where private goods, such as looted resources, infrastructure, or government subsidies, are at stake. This distinction serves to substantiate existing intergroup conflict theories by underscoring the intricate relationship between ethnic group identity and the diverse instrumental cognitive processes driving conflict.

The research project I am currently undertaking provides an opportunity to advance the theoretical framework of the differentiation model by testing and further contextualising its application. In particular, this study will apply the model to analyse the influence of ethnic-based in-group tendencies on the involvement of IDPs in conflictual situations, either as a source of conflict or as participants in ongoing disputes. By examining this connection, the intricate interplay between internal displacement and ethnic conflict might just be established in a manner that is reflective of the historical, geopolitical, and current realities of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

2.2 National Security Challenges and Internal Displacement

In “Security, Displacement, and Iraq: A Deadly Combination”, Elizabeth Ferris examines the intricate interconnection between internal displacement and security in Iraq, with a particular emphasis on the ramifications of extensive displacement on the country's domestic security. The Iraqi security environment is characterised by a steady flow of refugees and widespread internal displacement, which have significant consequences for the stability of the nation. Ferris posits that internal displacement is a significant contributing factor to the ethnic and sectarian polarisation of Iraq, which in turn increases the vulnerability of IDPs to violence, kidnapping and exploitation by militias. As the number of IDPs continues to grow, there is an accompanying increase in the demand for large-scale displacement camps. However, this situation gives rise to significant security challenges. The high unemployment rates that prevail within these camps create an environment in which IDPs are particularly susceptible to recruitment by militant groups, thereby

further destabilising the region. Furthermore, the absence of economic prospects and social assistance renders these displaced populations more susceptible to involvement in criminal activities such as looting and banditry, which contribute to the prevailing insecurity of the country (Ferry, 2007).

In “A Critique of the Legal Framework for Arresting the Threat of Internal Displacement of Persons to Nigeria's National Security”, Jude O. Ezeanokwasa, Uwadineke C. Kalu, and Francis Ejike Okaphor evaluate the efficiency of Nigeria's National Policy on IDPs. The study underscores that internal displacement in Nigeria represents a significant national security threat, as it gives rise to environments conducive to religious indoctrination and the acculturation of extremists. The displacement of populations, particularly in areas affected by conflict, renders them more susceptible to manipulation by extremist groups such as Boko Haram, who exploit the lack of stability and security to recruit and radicalise individuals. (Ezeanokwasa, Kalu, & Okaphor, 2018).

In “The Impact of Internal Displacement on National Security”, Aliana Totten posits that internal displacement can exert considerable pressure on nations, heightening the risk of both internal and external strife. The study demonstrates a significant impact of disaster-induced displacement on the likelihood of future interstate conflict, particularly among neighbouring states facing similar displacement challenges. Totten emphasises that when multiple states in a region are affected by large-scale displacement due to natural or man-made disasters, it can intensify existing tensions between these states, leading to heightened competition for resources, security concerns and the potential for conflict. The displacement of populations, often resulting in economic instability and social strain, becomes a catalyst for broader geopolitical instability, not only within the affected state but also in the region, increasing the likelihood of external disputes (Totten, 2021).

In “Environmental Induced Internal Displacement: A New Challenge for Human Security vis-à-vis Internal Security—A Literature-Based Appraisal”, Mithilesh Narayan Bhatt investigates the connection between internal displacement, domestic security, and environmental insecurity in India. The study draws attention to the fact that the rise in the number of individuals who have been internally displaced due to environmental factors places considerable strain on already limited resources. This pressure results in some IDPs resorting to survival crimes, such as burglary and banditry, both against the host communities and among themselves (Bhatt, 2013).

In “Compensation and the Human Security–Insecurity Matrix in Forced Displacement. Experiences from the Tokwe Mukosi Displacement in Zimbabwe”, Lloyd Nhodo, Roselyn Kanyemba, Stephen Hardline Basure, Charles Dube investigate the relationship between compensation for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and various forms of insecurity in Zimbabwe. The study emphasises that the postponement of compensation for land and other assets owed to both the victims of displacement and host communities serves to exacerbate insecurity. The government's failure to provide timely and adequate compensation results in protracted legal and illegal battles, which serve to perpetuate and generalise the insecurity in the affected regions. The delayed compensation process has a detrimental impact on the ability of those affected by displacement to rebuild their lives. It prolongs their suffering and inhibits their access to necessary resources, thereby exacerbating tensions and conflict between the state, IDPs, and host communities. Furthermore, it contributes to a cycle of insecurity that can easily spill over into broader instability, perpetuating a vicious cycle that hinders efforts to restore peace and stability in the affected regions (Nhodo, Kanyemba, Basure, & Dube, 2022).

In “People without homes: displacement and the security situation in Africa”, Bukalo Adeyemi Oyeniyi examines the intricate interconnection between recurrent conflict, displacement, and national security in the African context. The study employs the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as a case study to elucidate the phenomenon of internal displacement in countries affected by conflict, whereas Nigeria is used as a point of reference to examine the dynamics of displacement in countries experiencing relative peace. The research indicates that the recurrence of conflict in Africa is frequently associated with unresolved issues of internal displacement, which continue to exacerbate tensions and instability. Oyeniyi concludes that internal displacement represents a significant national security imperative that has yet to receive the full attention it merits as a factor perpetuating security challenges across the continent. The study posits that in order to effectively address the socio-economic, political, and security issues that arise from internal displacement, it is imperative to prioritise and address these issues with urgency at both the national and regional levels (Oyeniyi, 2007).

Research in this area has successfully linked internal displacement to ethnic and sectarian tensions, recruitment into criminal or extremist groups, resource pressures and wider state instability. However, the focus has tended to be on the threats that internal displacement amplifies, rather than

on internal displacement itself as the primary destabilising force. My research sought to fill this gap by shifting the focus and examining how internal displacement functions as a driver of instability, capable of disrupting development and undermining national cohesion, rather than simply being seen as a consequence or amplifier of pre-existing threats.

2.3 Internally Displaced Persons and Ethnic Conflict

In “Ethnic inequality and Forced displacement”, Moritz Henricke and Tilman Brück investigated the relationship between ethnic inequalities in education and intensity of displacement during violent conflict, especially within the context of the 2010 Kyrgyzstan conflict. The research findings highlighted that local inequality in education between educated ethnic majority, the Kyrgyz, and less educated minorities, Uzbeks, reinforced ethnic spatial segregation or polarisation that increased the likelihood of forced displacement on the Uzbeks. It also indicates that disparities in education between the more educated ethnic majority, the Kyrgyz, and the less educated minority, the Uzbeks, have contributed to the intensification of ethnic spatial segregation and polarization. Consequently, this has heightened the likelihood of forced displacement among the Uzbek population, who bear the greatest burden of conflict and are more susceptible to being targeted (Henricke & Brück, 2022).

In “The Ethnic Factor in Internal Displacement of Populations in Sub-Saharan Africa”, John O. Oucho provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of ethnicity in the internal displacement of populations in sub-Saharan Africa during and after the colonial period. The article highlights the significant challenges to peace, stability and development posed by ethnic conflict leading to internal displacement. The consequences of population displacement are far-reaching, ranging from the disruption of established lifestyles and traditions to the exacerbation of ethnic partisanship in the political sphere and the increased strain on resources (Oucho, 1997).

In “Exiles in Their Own Home: Conflicts and Internal Population Displacement in Nigeria”, O. Okechukwu Ibeanu conducts an in-depth analysis of the growing problem of internal displacement in Nigeria. The paper identified military rule, crude oil exploitation and ethnicity as the main socio-economic and political drivers of conflict induced displacement. All these elements seem to stem from state-sanctioned violence targeting specific ethnic groups inhabiting oil rich land. The resulting cycle of violence escalates as the affected groups retaliate, not only against the state forces but also against other ethnic groups perceived to be favoured (Ibeanu, 1999).

In “Ethnic Federalism, Conflict, and Displacement in Ethiopia’s Metekel Zone”, Tirsit Sahledengil and Desalegn Amsalu provide a critical analysis of the extent to which ethnic federalism has contributed to conflict. The study underscores that the Metekel Zone has become a focal point of conflict and subsequent displacement primarily because of the divisive environment created by the federal system and the opportunistic politicians who use it to garner support from one community at the expense of others. This study is commendable for its comprehensive consideration of the role of inter-state insurgencies and regional powers in exacerbating intrastate conflict and displacement (Sahledengil & Amsalu, 2023).

In “Internal Displacement in the Kenyan Context: Challenges of Justice, Reconciliation and Resettlement,” Charles Cleophas Makau Kitale, examines the actions of the state in relation to justice, reconciliation, and resettlement, and offers an assessment of their effectiveness. The study examined the situation of IDPs subsequent to the intervention of the state and other civil society justice and reconciliation actors in the aftermath of the post-election violence. The findings indicated that the inability of the state to rein in politicians from ethnic politics, and the inadequacy of the other actors’ efforts to accelerate reconciliation and resettlement, had intensified resentment between neighbouring communities and IDPs, who may resort to violent means if the situation deteriorates further. Furthermore, efforts to promote reconciliation at the grassroots level, where they are most effective, remain fragmented and disparate, with no discernible pattern of replication across the country (Kitale, 2011).

In “Movement, home and identity: dilemmas of urban internal displacement in Kampala, Uganda”, Camilla Våset Møllerop investigates forced migration practices in the protracted conflict induced displacement of northern Ugandan, focusing on the interconnection existing between movement, home and identity in the urban context. The research highlighted that although there are blurry lines existing between reactive and proactive migration and different generation experienced a sense of belonging to their new environment differently, in this case, one thing remains the same. The decision to migrate from the rural northern Uganda to the urban Kampala, in the initial phase was mostly resulting from close links to co-ethnics in order to maintain a sense of continuity (Møllerop, 2013).

In “Displacement and Ethnic Reintegration in Ituri, DRC: Challenges Ahead,” Johan Pottier examines the local context of the IDP situation amidst the ethnic conflict between the Hema and

Lendu in Ituri. He concludes that applying Deng's notion is ineffective, as the integrated national army, representing the state, is a major human rights violator. Additionally, international actors lack legitimacy due to ineffective IDP protection strategies, particularly in Bunia, leading to suspicion. This distrust extends to ethnic groups, reinforcing segregation and reviving historical conflicts. Pottier argues that addressing ethnic reintegration should be prioritised by focusing on IDPs' security concerns related to ethnicity. It requires that host communities should be compensated, inter-ethnic solidarity should be promoted, historical grievances should be addressed, and a collective national memory should be fostered through shared experiences and reconciliation efforts (Pottier, 2008).

In "Population Movement and Its Impact on Power Conflicts in Kivu in DRC," Daniel Kayeye Balezi critically examine the intricate relationship between population movements and power conflict in the regions of South and North Kivu. These regions have experienced prolonged periods of instability and unrest. Balezi's research identifies inter-ethnic conflicts and natural disasters as the primary drivers of these population movements. Furthermore, the study emphasises that the most significant catalyst for conflict is population movement associated with land distribution issues, which gives rise to widespread pillage, property destruction, and other severe criminal activities (Balezi, 2020).

In "Identités territoriales et conflits dans la province du Sud-Kivu, R. D. Congo," Bosco Muchukiwa presents an in-depth analysis of the complex interrelationship between interethnic conflict and the state's land distribution policies in Fizi, Kalehe and Uvira, regions known for their land-related interethnic conflicts. Muchukiwa posits that these tensions can be traced back to the colonial era, during which traditional land tenure systems of ethnic groups were disrupted. However, since independence, the post-colonial government has exacerbated the situation by persistently struggling to rectify these disruptions, often failing to allocate land equitably between indigenous communities, who have legitimate claims to their ancestral lands, and the population displaced by colonial logistics, or privatisation of community land, who have legitimate right to access land as compensation for their losses. He attributed this failure to the separation of ethnic identity and land - both crucial elements of the cultural fabric of affected communities - in most strategies designed to address the issue. This disconnection undermines the social contract between the state and its citizens, creates distrust of official institutions, and drives communities to rely on

ethnic-based defence mechanisms that are prone to escalating into violence (Muchukiwa Rukakiza, 2016).

In “Urbanising Kitchanga: Spatial Trajectories of the Politics of Refuge in North Kivu, Eastern Congo,” Gillian Mathys and Karen Büscher analyse the historical and political dynamics shaping the urbanisation of Kitchanga, an urban agglomeration formed by the concentration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. The paper argues that a spatial analysis of broader geographies of war, displacement and ethnic mobilisation is essential for understanding the spatial politics of refuge in North Kivu. The research highlights that the influx of IDPs and refugees from different ethnic backgrounds, left to fend for themselves, exacerbates tensions with host communities and generates political struggles over Kitchanga. This issue is further complicated by the transformation of the region into a permanent urban agglomeration, necessitating a shift from customary governance to a more formal administrative framework (Mathys & Büscher, 2020).

Existing research has examined how internal displacement deepens ethnic divisions, disrupts identities, fuels land-related tensions and stresses host communities. It often links displacement to existing drivers of conflict, such as resource competition and political manipulation. My research aimed to build on these findings by examining how internal displacement not only exacerbates existing conflicts, but also creates new ones in eastern DRC where identity and ownership are closely tied to both land and ethnic and social affiliation

2.4 Internally Displaced Persons and the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

In “The Dangers of Displacement: Vulnerabilities to Trafficking within Georgia IDP Population,” Kelsey Willingham sought to identify specific trends and risk factors applicable to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Georgia and globally. He proposes that prolonged poor social and economic conditions, in conjunction with a dearth of awareness regarding trafficking and a proclivity to migrate, engender an environment that exacerbates the vulnerability of IDPs to internal and cross-border human trafficking. The research findings indicated that internally displaced persons (IDPs) are more vulnerable to human trafficking than the general population. Willingham proposes the establishment of enhanced collaboration between state and non-state actors, with the objective of facilitating improved access to information and resettlement solutions.

Moreover, he underscores the importance of establishing secure livelihood prospects to diminish the appeal of migration (Willingham, Fall 2009).

In “No Refuge: The Crisis of Refugee Militarisation in Africa”, Robert Muggah presents a detailed analysis of the significant issue of weapon availability in protracted refugee situations. The case study chapters of the book present empirical and field-based evidence that demonstrates the connection between weapon proliferation and prolonged internal displacement in Africa (Muggah, 2006).

In the chapter entitled “Protection Failures: Outward and Inward Militarisation of Refugee Settlements and IDP Camps in Uganda”, Muggah identifies the formation and subsequent development of home guards, civilian militias and local defence units, which operate under the supervision of the Ugandan People’s Defence Forces (UPDF), as the primary drivers of weapon proliferation. These militias are frequently organised along ethnic lines, which fosters ethnic antagonism and operates with minimal government oversight. Additionally, the unrestricted accessibility of automatic weapons has resulted in a notable increase in illicit weapon ownership, facilitated by the actions of dormant armed actors and their host communities. The situation is further complicated by the presence of heavily armed tribes in neighbouring Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Southern Sudan. The common ethnic ties between these tribes facilitate the undeterred flow of arms in the region.

The already tenuous security situation for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees is further exacerbated by the continued presence of the Ugandan People’s Defence Forces (UPDF). The Ugandan People’s Defence Forces’ (UPDF) actions, undertaken to confront threats posed by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and Karamoja raiders, are somewhat contradictory. Their strategy entails curtailing food accessibility to weaken the LRA, which concurrently restricts food access for internally displaced persons (IDPs) confined within camps. Moreover, attempts to foster self-sufficiency among displaced populations by arming them have effectively transformed IDP settlements into buffer zones against rebels.

In “Conflict, Arms and Militarisation: The Dynamics of Darfur’s IDP Camps,” Clea Knan aimed to gain insight into the internal dynamics of IDP and refugee camps in Darfur and along the Chadian border. This understanding was sought with a view to developing strategies for mitigating the negative impacts of these camps and reducing the presence of arms and armed actors. The

research highlighted that despite the Darfur Peace Agreement and ongoing political negotiations, armed movements continue to fragment and shift allegiances, while sub-conflicts between the government and tribal groups persist. Those displaced by the conflict are forced to navigate complex allegiances and negotiations within a hostile environment. As a result, they gradually transform their camps into strategic sites for political and economic activities, which are part of their self-defence strategies. However, this increases the risk of SALW proliferation (Khan, 2008).

In “Crisis of Banditry and the Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria: A Political Economy Approach,” Ochi Ijeoma Brigid, Ortindi Boniface, and Arinze Emmanuel Okonkwo critically analysed the intricate relationship between internal displacement and banditry in Nigeria. The research findings indicate that banditry, a phenomenon with historical roots predating the establishment of Nigeria as a political entity, is predominantly perpetuated by youths from herding and farming communities, as well as local criminals. These actors exploit a critical security environment characterised by the availability of SALW, poverty, systemic corruption and high unemployment rates, thereby exacerbating the country’s instability. The study demonstrates that the additional hardships imposed by banditry significantly exacerbates the vulnerability of affected populations, particularly IDPs, to engaging in illegal means of sustenance (Brigid, Boniface, & Okonkwo, 2022).

In “Displacement, Violence and Vulnerability: Trafficking among Internally Displaced in Kenya,” Radoslaw L. Malinowski, Shirley N. Otube, Anni Alexander, and Abel M. Mogambi examine the relationship between internal displacement and human trafficking, with a particular focus on the factors that increase the vulnerability of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to trafficking. The research identified three key factors: the experience of violence during displacement and the proximity to main highways and trading centres. The study demonstrates that the vulnerability of IDPs can be either increased or decreased depending on the combination of these factors under specific conditions (Malinowski et al., 2016).

In “An Assessment of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation and Fragility Situation”, Elias Opongo examines the complex relationship between the proliferation of SALW and state fragility in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and the implications for human development and livelihoods. The study identifies several manifestations of fragility in the country, including the presence of armed groups, peacekeepers, IDP camps, ungoverned spaces

and humanitarian agencies. This fragility is attributed to weak governance, protracted conflict, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and economic and social exclusion as key drivers of state fragility. Additionally, the role of politicians in funding proxy armed groups that illegally import weapons from neighbouring conflict-ravaged countries was also a key theme (Opongo, 2017).

In “Addressing the Demand for Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo”, Kirsten E. Van Houten comprehensively identifies the multiple factors driving the demand for SALW in the DRC. The study outlines a range of contributing factors, including pervasive insecurity, weak governance structures, complex regional politics, historical and cultural legacies, and socio-economic determinants. It also highlights the elements that facilitate the supply of these weapons, such as corporate support for armed groups to control mineral resources and the strategic arming of factions by neighbouring states such as Rwanda and Uganda to further their geopolitical interests (Houten, 2010).

Existing research highlights how internal displacement contributes to the proliferation of small arms, the rise of illicit survival strategies, and the transformation of camps into hubs for self-defence or political activity. These dynamics, combined with the presence of armed groups, peacekeepers, humanitarian actors and ungoverned spaces, create a broader ecosystem of fragility. My research aimed to examine how this ecosystem, shaped and sustained by internal displacement, undermines state security and fuels long-term instability, particularly through the availability and circulation of arms in eastern DRC, which is in a perpetual state of non-peace.

2.5 Nexus between Internally Displaced Persons, Proliferation of SALW and Ethnic Conflict

In "Youth Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons and Conflicts in 21st Century Africa", Babayo Sule, Ibrahim Kawuley Mika'il, and Mohammed Kwarah Tal investigate the relationship between the increasing number of young people, the spread of SALW, and armed conflict in Africa. The authors posit that the rapid growth of the youth population, coupled with the mismanagement of resources and the prevalence of corruption, gives rise to an environment in which the pursuit of personal gain supersedes the collective interest in public welfare. This dynamic, in turn, gives rise to the emergence of ethnic-based armed groups that serve as conduits for the proliferation and trade of illegal SALW. In such contexts, resorting to criminal activities

and violence becomes a viable survival strategy for many young people, thereby further intensifying the cycle of insecurity and conflict (Sule, Mika'il, & Tal, 2024).

In "Examining the Causes of Inter-Communal Conflict in Warrap State," Lual Malueth Lual examines the underlying causes of inter-ethnic conflict in Warrap State, situated in central South Sudan. The research findings indicate that disputes over land, pasture, and water points, as well as revenge killings and cattle raiding, have resulted in unparalleled levels of displacement in the region. It is further observed that the incidence of violent conflict has increased in line with the growing demand for illicit SALW, which are being employed by communities as a defensive measure. The proliferation of SALW has intensified the conflict, exacerbating both the scale of displacement and the broader security challenges in the area (Lual, 2023).

In "Ethnic Conflict and the Rise of Criminality: A Study of Southern Taraba State", Garba Mbove Joshua examines the relationship between ethnic conflict and the increase in criminality in Taraba State, Nigeria. The study highlights the role of ethnic conflicts, when coupled with ethnic-motivated political campaigns, in the proliferation of SALW. These, in turn, fuel violent armed conflict and impose significant socio-economic costs, including widespread internal displacement. Furthermore, the research indicates that those who have been displaced, lacking the resources to sustain themselves, are increasingly resorting to criminal activities such as kidnapping, robbery, or joining predatory gangs. These actions serve as a coping mechanism in the absence of formal support systems, thereby further exacerbating insecurity and instability in the region (Joshua, 2014).

In "The Nexus Between Ethnic Politics and Ethnic Conflicts: The Case of Ethiopia", Tadese Biru Kersmo examines the nexus between ethnic politics and ethnic conflict in Ethiopia. The study underscores that the politicisation of ethnicity has intensified ethnic security dilemmas and amplify grievances, potentially precipitating violent conflicts. Additionally, the social disintegration that results from this situation, coupled with the widespread displacement of individuals and groups, has created an environment conducive to an arms race. The proliferation of weapons further fuels the perpetuation of ethnic conflicts. This dynamic not only serves to exacerbate violence but also serves to perpetuate a cycle of insecurity and displacement across affected communities (Biru, 2021).

In "Illicit Proliferation and Use of Small Arms and Light Weapons and Human Security in East Africa: A case study of Kenya, Joseph Kinyanjui Gikonyo posits that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has had long-lasting effects on the East African region, particularly in Kenya. The research highlights the manner in which ethnic clashes, which have resulted in significant displacement, have created an environment conducive to the proliferation and misuse of illicit weapons. The use of these weapons has resulted in the loss of numerous civilian lives and has contributed to the perpetuation of insecurity, particularly in Nairobi County. The availability of illicit arms has intensified the difficulties associated with maintaining peace and stability, thereby exacerbating the human security crisis that has beset the region (Gikonyo, 2015).

In "Dynamics of Conflict and Displacement in the East African Region", Khoti Chilomba Kamanga argued that while conflict is often regarded as the primary catalyst for internal displacement, insufficient attention is given to the potential of displacement itself to perpetuate further violent conflict, thereby maintaining a vicious cycle. To address this gap, Dr. Kamanga investigates the magnitude of displacement in three countries of interest – Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda – along with the causes and consequences of such displacement. He highlighted the complex link between IDPs and refugees, with a particular focus on the latter, and the proliferation of illicit trade of SALW (Kamanga, 2009).

In "Assessing the Challenges of Armed Groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo", Ibrahim Steven Ekyamba examines the factors that motivate non-state armed groups in the Kivu region to resist complying with disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes. The study demonstrates that long-standing grievances, particularly those pertaining to ethnicity and unresolved crises, serve as the primary motivating factors behind this resistance. The unresolved issues in question serve to perpetuate the availability and misuse of SALW, which in turn contribute to the displacement of thousands of people each year and sustain the prevailing insecurity in the region (Ekyamba, 2022).

In " Central African Republic: The Contagion of Identity-Linked Sectarian Violence, Internally Displaced Populations, and Small Arms Proliferation", Wendy Isaacs-Martin ascribes the sustained socio-civil disintegration in the Central African Republic (CAR) to the proliferation of SALW. The author suggests that the widespread availability of SALW has resulted in low-level fighting, which in turn has led to an increase in internal displacement across the country. Moreover,

the politics of exclusion have created an environment conducive to the formation of hostile identity groups along ethnic lines, which in turn has resulted in the eruption of full-blown ethnic conflicts. This vicious cycle of violence and displacement serves to exacerbate the socio-political instability in CAR, thereby rendering the achievement of lasting peace challenging endeavour (Isaacs-Martin, 2021).

Most research in this category has effectively demonstrated how ethnic conflict, driven by resource mismanagement, historical grievances and widespread inequality, creates conditions that increase the demand for arms. Some studies include internal displacement only as a by-product of this relationship - presenting it as a factor that exacerbates an already fragile security environment. Others focus on the complex links between refugees and the illicit arms trade, often side-lining IDPs. My research sought to shift the focus by examining the aftermath of internal displacement and assessing whether it directly contributes to ethnic conflict and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW).

2.6 Empirical Review

Different scholars have assessed the impact of internal displacement differently. Some focused their assessment on the immediate impact of internal displacement on the displaced themselves. In “Everyday Justice for Internally Displaced in a Context of Fragility: The Case of the Democratic Republic of Congo,” Carolien Jacobs and Patrick Milabyo Kyamusugulwa investigated the primary categories of justice concerns that IDPs are facing and the strategies used to address these concerns. Their research revealed that the concerns IDPs are facing are not distinct from those faced by refugees in Kenya and other parts of Africa. The only discernible difference is that these concerns appear to be more prevalent among the IDPs. Furthermore, the necessity to examine injustice during and after displacement was emphasised in order to gain deeper insight into the socio-legal dimensions of internal displacement.

Tadele Akalu Tesfaw, in “internal displacement in Ethiopia: a scoping review of its cause, trends and consequences”, provides an in-depth analysis of the socio-economic and psychological impacts of internal displacement in Ethiopia. It identifies key challenges faced by displaced communities, including the degradation of living conditions, the loss of identity and property, inadequate housing, and limited access to basic services such as food, water, education, and healthcare. Furthermore, Tesfaw underscores the social disarticulation, marginalisation, and

discrimination that exacerbate the vulnerabilities of displaced populations (Tesfaw, 2022). Narrowing the scope to children and women, Nasreldin Atiya Ramtalla (2018) examines the particular effect of the discrimination and marginalisation stemming from internal displacement of women and children in Sudan. The research identifies child homelessness, an increase in women-headed households, elevated school dropout rates, and food insecurity as the most urgent issues affecting this category of vulnerable people.

Expanding the topic to a regional perspective, a study conducted by Rita Shackel and Lucy Fiske (2017) examines the transformative effects of displacement in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, and Uganda. The findings demonstrate that displacement reorganises conventional social roles and relational dynamics, both during and after conflict-induced displacement. Such disruptions frequently serve to exacerbate pre-existing inequalities, particularly in the case of marginalised groups, thereby perpetuating cycles of vulnerability. However, on the same topic of the impact of internal displacement on women, a study done by John Lekan Oyefara and Bamidele Omotunde Alabi (2016) offers a contrasting view of the gendered effects of internal displacement. While acknowledging the considerable socio-economic challenges faced by women, the findings suggest that, in some regions of Nigeria, women demonstrate greater economic and emotional resilience than men during displacement.

Other scholars focused their attention on the impact of internal displacement on host communities. Juan. S. Morales, in “the impact of internal displacement on destination communities: Evidence from the Colombian conflict”, highlighted highlights the adverse economic implications of internal displacement on destination communities, notably in the form of declining wages. Although this impact seems to be temporary, it has a particularly adverse effect on low-skilled women, for whom the consequences persist over time (Morales, 2018).

Similarly, Robert Muggah, in “Researching the Urban Dilemma: Urbanization, poverty and Violence”, identified the challenges posed by the rapid influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) into low- and middle-income urban areas. Such developments give rise to a number of challenges, including an increased strain on already limited resources, such as land and water, rising conflicts over access to these resources, and heightened tensions with host communities (Muggah, 2012). These findings are consistent with Maya Moseley's research in eastern DRC, which attributes many of these negative outcomes to inadequate assessment of the capacity of host

communities to absorb and accommodate IDPs. Moseley emphasises that these host communities often face their own livelihood challenges, compounding the difficulties of integration and exacerbating the socio-economic pressures resulting from displacement (Moseley, 2012).

It could be argued that the majority of scholarly literature on internal displacement tends to investigate it as a group-specific issue. This approach may inadvertently overlook the possibility of internal displacement having a far-reaching connection with other security concerns faced by countries all over the world (Kamanga, 2009). In “Emerging Issues in Internal Displacement in Africa”, Romola Adeola addresses six key issues related to internal displacement in Africa: climate change, xenophobia, harmful practices, generalised violence and development projects. These issues illustrate the complex and multifaceted nature of internal displacement, demonstrating how it not only exacerbates existing challenges but also gives rise to new ones. This ripple effect amplifies socio-economic pressures, strains resources, and deepens vulnerabilities within the nation as a whole (Adeola, 2021).

This research addresses a critical gap in the existing literature that my own study seeks to explore further. It is relevant to consider internal displacement not as a standalone phenomenon, but rather as a complex and interconnected issue, intertwined with other national security challenges. This perspective is particularly pertinent in the context of African countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which has grappled with internal displacement since its inception. Adopting this broader lens enables the research to identify the ways in which internal displacement intersects with and exacerbates the security dynamics of affected nations.

2.7 Research Gap

The majority of studies on internal displacement adopt a static perspective, viewing it as a fixed phenomenon. Even those studies that acknowledge the evolving nature of internal displacement tend to focus exclusively on the vulnerabilities that continuity creates for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities. In the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which has experienced protracted conflict resulting in prolonged internal displacement, insufficient attention has been devoted to understanding the collateral damage inflicted on already fragile social structures. Furthermore, there has been a dearth of attention devoted to examining how opportunistic and divisive forces have exploited internal displacement to establish and perpetuate a system that is sustained by and benefits from it. This reinforces the necessity to

examine the broader impacts of internal displacement in order to develop more efficacious and comprehensive solutions.



Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The chapter discussed in details the research methodology that comprehensively guided the collection, analysis of data to understand the nexus existing between national security challenges and internal displacement. More precisely, this section presented the research design, the sample size, methods and instruments of data collection, and the data analysis techniques.

3.2 Research Design

According to David Silverman, the structure of a research design should be driven by the need to identify the most effective methods and techniques for addressing the research questions (silverman, 2022). In order to achieve the objectives of this study, a descriptive research design was adopted. This approach was particularly suitable for comprehensively investigating the intricate and multifaceted relationship between internal displacement and national security challenges, such as ethnic conflict and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW).

3.3 Population

In 2024, the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix reported that the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was home to an estimated 6,917,478 internally displaced persons (IDPs), representing a slight decline of 0.43% from the previous year. The majority of this population, totalling 5,488,323 IDPs, was located in the eastern provinces. In North Kivu, 2,411,338 IDPs were recorded, representing 44% of the region's displaced population and 35% of the national total. Similarly, South Kivu reported 1,478,639 internally displaced persons (IDPs), representing 27% of the regional displaced population and 21% of the national total (International Organisation for Migration, 2024).

The research concentrated on two sites within these provinces. In North Kivu, the Mugunga Camp, which was established in 2007, was selected for investigation due to its strategic location in close proximity to urban centres and its accessibility via national roads, which makes it the largest IDP camp in the region. By 2019, the camp was home to approximately 4,756 individuals, as documented by its camp manager (Nguya, 2019). In South Kivu, the research site was Bukavu because of its ethnically diverse concentration of IDPs, who predominantly reside outside formal

camp setting (Jacobs & Patrick Milabyo Kyamusugulwa, June 2018). The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated the IDP population in Bukavu to have reached approximately 10,000 in 2024 (OCHA , 2024).

3.4 Sampling Frame

The target population for this study included a range of government officials, personnel from international organisations, representatives of civil society, religious organisations, leaders of community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government agents. In accordance with the purposive design of this research, each member of the target population was selected based on their extensive knowledge of the topic, either as part of the response mechanism to the crisis or as victims of the crisis.

3.5 Sample Size

After reviewing studies that empirically assessed saturation in qualitative research, Monique Hennink and Bonnie N. Kaiser argue that saturation can be achieved in a narrow range of 9 to 17 interviews or 4 to 8 focus group discussions (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). This research involved 22 participants, categorised into several groups, in order to ensure a comprehensive analysis of perspectives.

The participants in the discussion comprised a representative from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and five non-UN actors from Christian Aid, Caritas, Save the Children and Catholic Service Aid.

A further key group of participants consisted of four representatives from local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including the Mkaaji Mpya Organisation in Bukavu, Women, Youth and Children Dynamics in Kalehe, the Primary Health Care Promotion Programme and Action pour les Vulnérables et le Développement Social (AVUDS) in Goma.

Two representatives of community-based organisations were selected: one from the Association of Young Visionaries for the Development of Congo in Goma and another from the Association Paysanne de Développement Intègre in Bukavu.

The research also involved five participants from religious organisations, including members of the 8th CEPAC Hebroni Shirika in both Goma and Bukavu, Shirika Notre Dame de la Paix in Bukavu, Shirika Ya Umoja in Goma and Shirika Kadutu in Bukavu.

Finally, two participants were selected from civil society in Bukavu, one from the mayor's office in Bukavu and one from the district office in Goma. It is noteworthy that one participant expressed a desire to maintain anonymity.

Table 3.5 **Sample Size**

Population category	Population size	Method of collection
UN Actors	1	Interviews
Non-UN actors	5	Interviews
Local NGOs	4	Open-ended Questionnaires and interviews
Community Based Organisation	2	Open-ended Questionnaires and Interviews
Civil Society	2	Open-ended Questionnaires and Interviews
Religious organisations	5	Open-ended Questionnaires and Interviews
Provincial authorities	2	Interviews
Anonymous	1	Interviews
Total	22	

3.6 Sampling Technique

Purposive and snowball sampling represent two non-probabilistic sampling methods commonly employed in qualitative and mixed-methods research. Purposive sampling involves the selection of individuals or groups with extensive knowledge and experience, enabling the collection of information-rich insights and enhancing the analytical depth of the data. In contrast, snowball sampling relies on referrals and networking, whereby initial participants recommend additional individuals who may contribute valuable information. According to Palinkas et al. (2015), combining these methods can address their individual limitations and facilitate comprehensive data collection by achieving saturation effectively (Palinkas, et al., 2015).

The sampling process for this study was conducted in three stages. The initial stage of the process entailed the identification of institutions that are likely to possess information of significant analytical relevance to the research topic. In order to gain a representative sample, institutions operating across both the North and South Kivu provinces has been prioritised. In the second stage, particular individuals within the specified organisations who are in a position to provide the essential data were approached. Subsequently, the third stage utilised the snowball sampling technique, whereby recommendations from initial participants was employed to identify additional informants who could contribute to the study. The combination of these methods was intended to ensure the collection of data of the optimal quality and comprehensiveness.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The research was based on data from a total of 22 participants, who were divided into distinct groups in order to ensure a diverse and comprehensive representation of perspectives. One representative from a United Nations (UN) agency participated in the study, with all their insights gathered exclusively through interviews. Similarly, five non-UN actors shared their perspectives exclusively through interviews. Staff and volunteers from these organisations contributed to the study through the medium of interviews providing valuable insights based on their operational experience in North and South Kivu.

Local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) constituted an important participant group, with four representatives selected from organisations operating in North and South Kivu. With regard to this group, half of the participants provided data through interviews, while the other half

responded to semi structured questionnaires. Similarly, two representatives from civil society participated in the study. As with the non-governmental organisations, one of the civil society participants was interviewed, while the other completed the questionnaire. Five religious organisations from targeted sites were also engaged the same way. This approach ensured a balance between qualitative and quantitative data collection methods within these two categories.

Finally, two representatives of the provincial government contributed to the research exclusively through interviews, providing a governance and policy-oriented perspective. One anonymous participant explicitly requested that no written documentation be produced that could be electronically traced back to him. In order to respect and comply with this request, the data collection was carried out exclusively through an oral interview.

3.8 Instrument

This research employed a combination of face-to-face and digital methodologies for data collection, including social media, and video conferencing. The interviews, and questionnaires employed open-ended questions in order to guarantee that the participants have the opportunity to provide comprehensive feedback and to minimise the risk of leading questions. closed-ended questions were exclusively for the purpose of data collection pertaining to the subject's biodata.

The data was analysed using respectively two key software tools: ATLAS.ti and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 14. ATLAS.ti, a software specifically designed to support thematic analysis, was employed for the identification, organisation and analysis of qualitative data. This tool enabled the systematic coding of data, the grouping of codes into themes, and the identification of patterns and connections within the data set (Jowsey et al., 2021).

However, as with any software, there is always a risk of technical glitches, some of which occurred during the data analysis phase. To mitigate these problems, I took the initiative to use an alternative tool, NVivo (Kent State University , 2025), a statistical and qualitative data analysis software specifically designed to support mixed methods research. This allowed me to ensure the continuity and reliability of the analysis process despite the earlier setbacks.

3.9 Data Processing and Analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that is frequently employed with data obtained from interviews and focus groups. Its objective is to gain insight into the experiences, ideas, and perceptions of individuals regarding a specific phenomenon. As Braun and Clarke observe, the value of thematic analysis lies in its capacity to accommodate a multiplicity of truths within the data, rather than presupposing the existence of a singular, definitive truth (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

Thematic analysis was conducted for this study using NVivo. The researcher initially engaged with the data in order to gain familiarity with it. The software's visualisation and coding tools was employed to generate preliminary codes that reflected the collected data. Subsequently, these codes were subjected to analysis with a view to identifying recurring themes and subthemes. The identified themes were named and refined in order to comprehensively address the research question, thereby ensuring depth and clarity in the analysis. The quantitative data collected through questionnaires were also analysed using NVivo. The findings were presented using descriptive statistics, including pie graphs, and percentages, in order to identify significant trends, distribution and relationship within the data (Kent State University , 2025).

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The research involving IDPs is inherently sensitive and requires considerable caution at all stages of the process, from data collection to the reporting of findings. The mishandling of data has the potential to reinforce existing biases and exacerbate the situation of an already vulnerable segment of the population. It was therefore imperative to ensure that participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study at the outset of each interview. Only those respondents who provided informed consent, which could have been withdrawn at any point during the data collection process, were included in the research. No incentives or promises was made in exchange for information. Furthermore, the findings of the desk study were shared with participants who expressed an interest in accessing them after being informed of this possibility. This step was taken to ensure that their perspectives were respected and appropriately included in the final analysis.

Chapter 4: Research Findings and Discussions

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study findings. These findings have been organised according to the research objectives. To get insight about the connection between internal displacement, ethnic conflict and proliferation of SALW, the study included participants from international organisations, religious organisations, non-governmental organisations, government offices, and the civil society. The sample are based predominantly within Goma and Bukavu due to the diversity of IDPs categories found in those areas respectively. The research gathered responses by handing out open ended questionnaires and carrying interviews.

4.2 Biodata

This section provides a general overview of the participants, including their total number, current location, organizational affiliations, and the categories of IDPs engaged with.

4.2.1 Participants Location

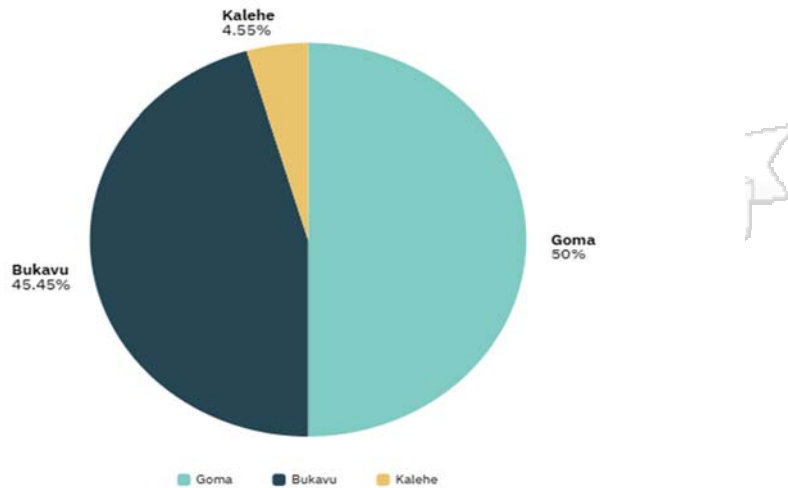


Table 4.2.1 Site of research

Among the 22 participants, 45.45% were based in Bukavu, 50% in Goma and 4.55% in Kalehe.

4.2.2 Participants Organisations

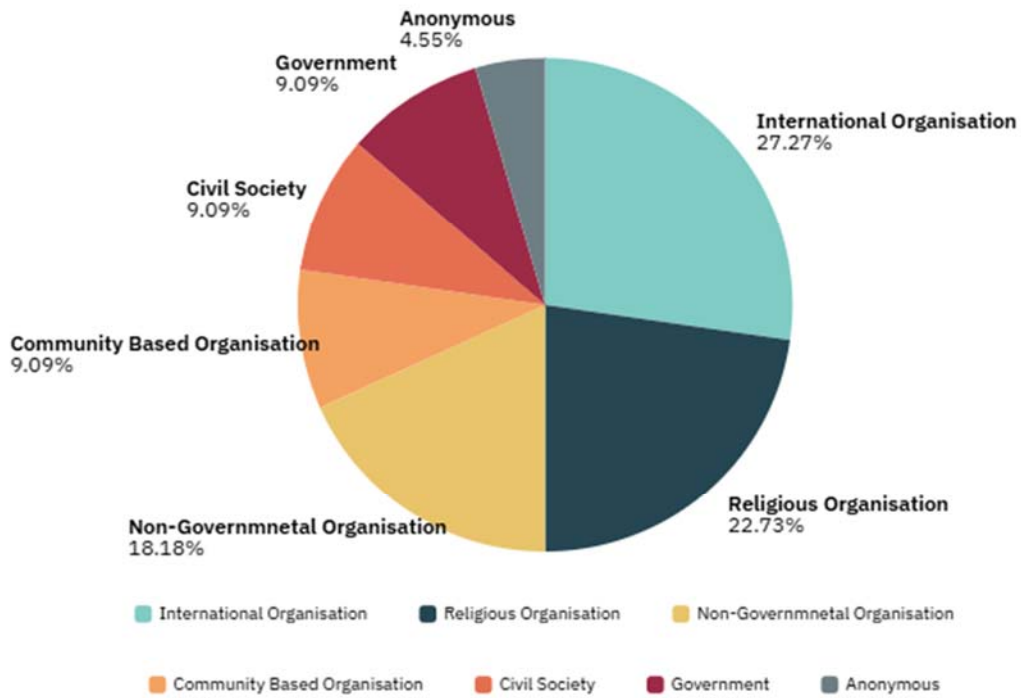


Table 4.2.2 Participants Organisations

In total there were 22 participants representing a diverse array of organisation. Of these, 27.7% of participants were from international organisations, including UN agency and non-UN organisations. Furthermore, 22.73% were affiliated with religious organisations, 18.8% with non-governmental organisations, 9.09% with civil society, and 9.09% with government institutions. 9.09% of participants were affiliated with community-based organisations, while 4.55% chose to remain anonymous.

4.2.3 Participants Engagement with IDPs

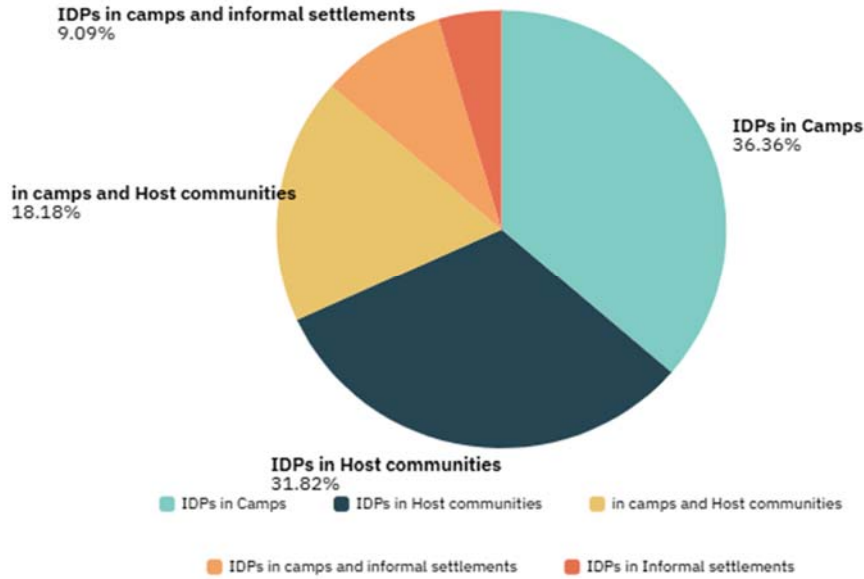


Table 4.2.4 IDP Categories

With regard to their work with IDPs, the data revealed that 18.18% of participants engaged with IDPs in both camps and host communities, 36.36% worked exclusively in IDP camps, 31.82% focused on host community settings, 9.09% operated in both informal settlements and camps, and 4.55% were involved solely in informal settlements.

4.3 Ethnic Conflict and Internal Displacement in Eastern DRC

The participants identified nine factors that, in their opinion, explain the connection between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and ethnic conflict in eastern DRC. However, the analysis focused on the four most frequently mentioned.

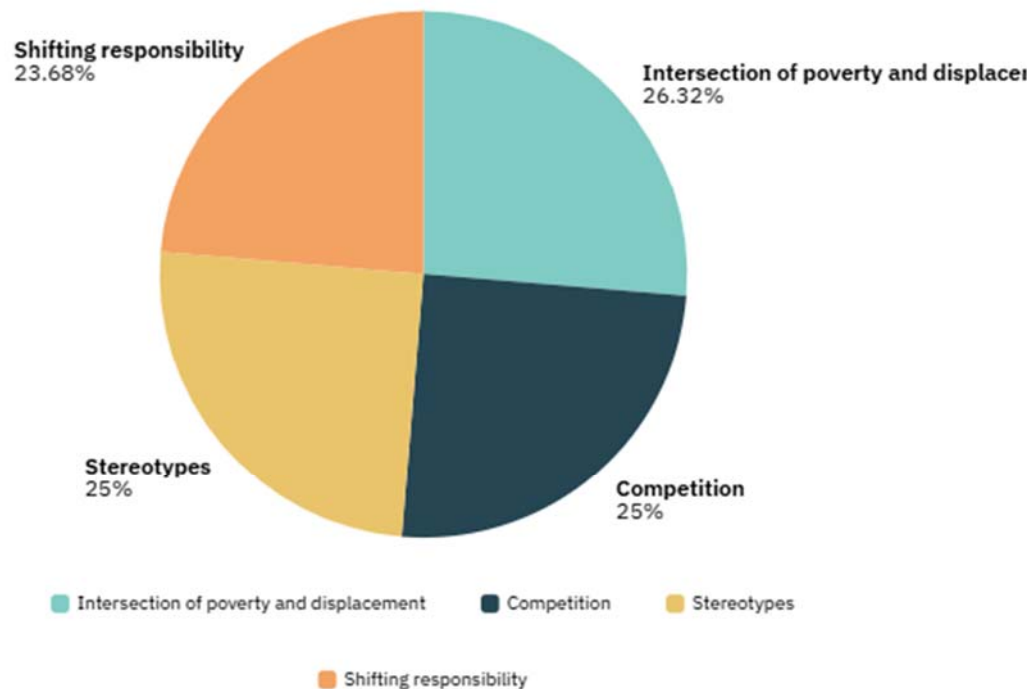


Table 4.3 Factors Explaining the Connection between IDPs and Ethnic Conflict in Eastern DRC

23.68% of participants highlighted intersection of poverty and displacement as a triggering factor, while 26.32% identified shifting responsibility as a contributing element. Additionally, Stereotypes and competition were each mentioned by 25% of participants.

4.3.1 Competition

In response to the question, which sought to ascertain whether any specific triggers or patterns had been identified that contributed to the escalation of tensions, and to the question, which invited the

respondent to identify the principal factors that rendered IDPs more susceptible to becoming involved in ethnic conflicts, competition emerged as one of the main themes. This competition manifested in three key ways.

4.3.1.1 The Allocation of Aid and Selection of Beneficiaries

The findings indicate that 31.58% of respondents in this category perceive competition involving IDPs as often taking on an ethnic dimension, particularly in the allocation of humanitarian aid and the selection of beneficiaries.

Within host communities, tensions emerge when certain ethnic groups of IDPs are perceived to receive disproportionate aid and assistance, while local populations experience resource depletion and unmet needs. On the other hand, within camps, competition manifests itself differently. Registered individuals are in theory eligible for assistance, including shelter materials, clothing, and water; however, biases among aid distributors influenced by ethnic affiliations may result in preferential treatment of certain groups, which can lead to theft and resentment from disgruntled neighbours within the camps.

“Those who are registered will receive assistance, including roof netting, clothing, and water. Please note this is a highly monitored matter. It may happen that individuals involved in the distribution process may sometimes have partisan ethnic affiliations.” (Participants 15)

4.3.1.2 Resources Access and Scarcity

52.63% of respondents attribute the most intense forms of competition to resource access and scarcity. Within camps, tensions are exacerbated when unresolved ethnic conflicts from outside the camps merge with disputes over limited resources from inside the camp. As individuals from rival ethnic groups are forced into close proximity, navigating an environment where ensuring one's safety and protecting personal property becomes a fundamental survival strategy.

Within the context of host communities, local populations provide crucial support to vulnerable IDPs, offering shelter, food, water, medical care, and guidance. However, IDPs frequently encounter environments characterised by pre-existing social and economic dynamics that govern resource management, where access is often determined by ethnic group affiliations. In their efforts to rebuild their livelihoods, IDPs may be perceived as "overexploiting" already scarce resources. In reality, IDPs frequently find themselves entangled in longstanding conflicts that they

neither initiated nor sought, but are drawn into due to perceived or actual ethnic, political, or social affiliations within the host community.

"In the slums with a high concentration of IDPs in Bukavu, ethnic clustering has given rise to new urban ethnic dynamics, particularly concerning rightful claims to scarce resources such as water, jobs, selling spots, and begging areas. In these contexts, IDPs are often at a disadvantage and vulnerable to being drawn into conflicts by association" (Participant 4)

4.3.1.3 Generalized Poverty

15.79% of respondents attribute the observed competition to the challenges and vulnerabilities created by poverty. The influx of IDPs into informal settlements and host communities has several consequences. First, it exacerbates housing shortages in major cities, leading to overcrowding and declining living conditions. Secondly, it disrupts the labour market, as IDPs often accept lower wages, increasing economic pressure on already struggling local populations.

In this context, ethnic dynamics serve as a means of collective action against a perceived economic threat rather than as an inherent cause of conflict. These actions may include acts of sabotage, exclusion from community-based information networks, and other forms of social and economic marginalisation. In some cases, when petty crimes occur, local leaders may be reluctant to investigate or hold individuals accountable to avoid escalating intergroup tensions.

"Among the triggers of conflict, we have identified daily economic hardships as a significant factor that negatively impacts both IDPs and host communities. These hardships create conditions that favour petty crimes such as theft, which can easily take on an ethnic dimension - especially when there is an influx of IDPs from an ethnic group that is not well regarded in the host community. In such cases, hosts may be reluctant to incriminate or even questions their community members, even though they may have committed the offense." (Participants 10)

4.3.2 Shifting Responsibility

In response to the questions that sought to ascertain whether external influences, such as political factors, have a way of increasing the vulnerability of IDPs to get involved in ethnic conflicts, the state's failure to take accountability for the IDP situation emerged as one of the main themes.

4.3.2.1 Bad Governance

According to 55.56% of respondents, poor governance increases the risk of IDP involvement in ethnic conflict by fostering insecurity, weakening oversight of security agencies and failing to implement informal conflict resolution mechanisms. In camps, despite the efforts of private agencies and international organisations to provide shelter, the lack of state protection leaves IDPs vulnerable to looting and violence. In some cases, looters have been identified as Rwandophone, fuelling suspicion of Rwandophone IDPs and leading to their social isolation.

The broader problem, however, is the widespread criminal activity involving the security forces, which reinforces the perception that the state is failing to protect its citizens. As a result, individuals and communities feel compelled to take security into their own hands. Within host communities, this sense of insecurity influences the willingness to offer support, which is often shaped along ethnic lines. While this practice may be perceived as tribalistic, it is primarily driven by security concerns and deep-seated mistrust.

4.3.2.2 Delegating Responsibility toward IDP

According to 27.78% of respondents, IDPs are particularly vulnerable to being drawn into ethnic conflicts for two main reasons. First, the lack of active state cooperation with international organisations in aid distribution weakens the continuity of supply chains, fueling competition in camps and exacerbating economic hardship in host communities. This often reinforces ethnic grouping tendencies. The government's failure to take ownership of the issue and develop a national plan stems from its silent delegation of the responsibility for IDPs in camps and host communities to international organisations and NGOs.

"In fact, there is currently no draft law on IDPs in the DRC, which makes them highly vulnerable due to the lack of formal recognition," (Participant 1)

Second, the lack of community awareness campaigns aimed at reducing prejudice and bias further isolates IDPs. Certain ethnic groups face heightened suspicion and hostility, particularly in host communities where superstition remains widespread.

"IDPs newly settled in impoverished neighbourhoods are often blamed for various misfortunes, including the death of a child, the sudden illness of a neighbour or the loss of a business. Superstitions, particularly beliefs in witchcraft, combined with deep-seated mistrust, make them vulnerable to mob justice. Local religious organisations and neighbourhood councils rarely intervene to educate the community or challenge misconceptions that portray IDPs as thieves or sorcerers, largely due to a lack of financial incentive in slums." (Participant 22)

4.3.2.3 Misrepresentation of Facts

According to 16.67% of respondents, IDPs are more vulnerable to involvement in ethnic conflicts because of deliberate misrepresentation of the facts by state officials. Proximity to red zones makes it particularly difficult to accurately identify the perpetrators of targeted attacks. However, accountability is ultimately hampered by the authorities' consistent denial of such incidents or deflection of blame to external actors, despite well-documented evidence of abuses by state forces. Armed ethnic groups are often used as scapegoats.

"In Bukavu, the presence of IDPs is often overlooked by the authorities because there are no formal camps. However, many IDPs live in impoverished neighbourhoods where crime is at its highest, with even police and army personnel involved in theft, rape and arms trafficking". (Participant 11)

4.3.3 Intersection between Poverty and Displacement

In response to the question, "What impact does the distribution of humanitarian aid (or its absence) have on inter-ethnic relations within IDP camps and host communities?", the intersection between poverty and displacement was identified as a recurring theme, understood in three key ways.

4.3.3.1 Humanitarian Aid Vs Development Initiatives

40% of respondents attribute ethnic conflicts involving IDPs to the absence of a coherent and coordinated response that effectively integrates humanitarian aid with development initiatives, or, at the very least, clearly distinguishes between the two. According to participant 12, distinguishing between vulnerabilities caused by internal displacement and those stemming from widespread poverty is particularly challenging in urban areas. This has the effect of leading to development initiatives being mistakenly viewed as humanitarian aid, thus reinforcing a culture of dependency that, over time, results in the emergence of ethnic competition. *"Aid can become counterproductive*

by undermining development efforts, as recipients may assume that humanitarian assistance will remain a readily available fallback option, reducing their incentive to pursue long-term economic stability." (Participant 19)

4.3.3.2 Internal Displacement as a Catalyst for Worsening Poverty

According to 35% of respondents, IDPs have the capacity to exacerbate an already dire economic situation simply by their presence. While conflict is an inevitable aspect of cohabitation, its escalation into ethnic tensions is largely situational. Initially, host communities tend to welcome IDPs, recognizing their potential to contribute to the local economy. However, as economic hardships intensify due to poor governance, those once seen as a source of hope gradually come to be perceived as a burden, particularly when they lack the means to generate income and offset the depletion of shared resources.

Furthermore, the influx of IDPs can accelerate the expansion of slums and informal settlements, which, in turn, heightens insecurity in surrounding areas due to the lack of proper oversight by authorities. This has resulted in the emergence of a lawless environment, which has, in turn, attracted opportunistic and malicious actors. In such cases, ethnicity is often used as a tool to mislead communities and obstruct investigations.

4.3.3.3 Poverty as a Catalyst for Worsening Displacement

According to 25% of respondents, the presence of poverty fosters an environment conducive to conflict, with internally displaced persons (IDPs) serving as convenient scapegoats. The prospects for growth and integration beyond the camps or within host communities appear particularly bleak for IDPs from certain ethnic groups, who are often perceived as perpetual outsiders. IDPs are viewed as depleting already scarce resources and intensifying competition for limited job opportunities. This perception, over time, contributes to the view that IDPs are responsible for urban overcrowding, thereby exacerbating socio-economic tensions within host communities.

However, "while it is true that the presence of IDPs exacerbates economic hardships, it should be noted that the economic conditions were already dire. The IDPs are merely the most unfortunate, drawn further into these hardships due to the absence of a structured plan for their integration, a lack of employment opportunities, and the prevailing insecurity. Poverty itself fuels division and fosters greed, preventing genuine social cohesion and making it difficult for IDPs to integrate,

whether in host communities or informal settlements.” (Participant 3)

4.3.4 Stereotypes

In response to the question exploring the dynamics between different ethnic groups in IDP camps and host communities, stereotypes emerged as a key issue. All respondents agreed that these stereotypes often start as harmless jokes about cultural practices. However, in host communities, tensions escalate when criminal activity or accusations of witchcraft increase following the arrival of certain ethnic groups. This often leads to defamation campaigns that portray new arrivals as a source of insecurity.

In IDP camps, the dynamic is somewhat different. Interactions may begin peacefully, but over time residents develop boundaries and thresholds of tolerance. Certain cultural practices that are perceived as disruptive or uncomfortable contribute to the gradual deterioration of intergroup relations. In some cases, stereotyping is not always a matter of one ethnic group targeting another; it can also occur within the same ethnic group.

"Even clan members in host communities or camps have prejudices about the origin of their displaced kin. This often makes them reluctant to defend them against false accusations or offer them shelter - especially if it jeopardises their own standing in the community. As a matter of fact, some ethnic groups from certain regions are automatically assumed to be 'allied with the aggressors". (Participant 3)



4.4 Proliferation of SALW and Internal Displacement in Eastern DRC

The participants identified five factors that, in their opinion, explain the connection between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the proliferation of SALW in eastern DRC. However, the analysis focused on the three most frequently mentioned.

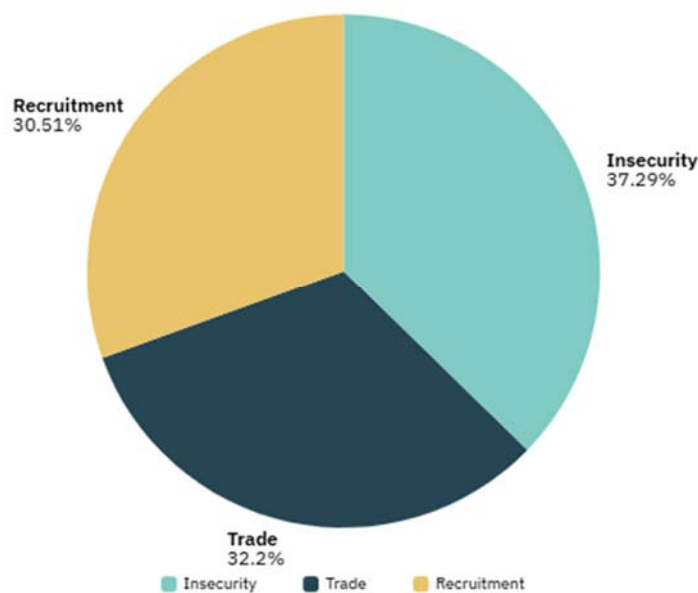


Table 4.4 Factors Explaining the Connection between IDPs and the Proliferation of SALW

37.29% of participants highlighted insecurity as a triggering factor, while 32.2% identified trade as a contributing element. Lastly, recruitment was mentioned by 30.51% of participants.

4.4.1 Insecurity

In response to the question, which sought to ascertain whether any specific factor had been identified that rendered IDPs more susceptible to becoming involved in the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, insecurity emerged as one of the main themes, manifesting itself in two key ways.

4.4.1.1 Physical Insecurity

According to 36.36% of respondents in this category, the influx of IDPs into an area tends to exacerbate existing challenges by creating chaos that enables opportunistic forces, often involved in the proliferation of arms, to thrive. Insecurity, in and outside camps, often arises because IDPs attract aid from international organisations (IOs) and NGOs, which is frequently targeted by non-beneficiaries excluded during the selection process.

"Within the camps, there is a high prevalence of petty theft among IDPs, while outside the camps, criminals often attempt to intercept aid supplies by force." (Participant 22)

In host communities, overcrowding and inadequate infrastructure create opportunities for criminals posing as IDPs to infiltrate spaces with minimal surveillance, exploiting the trust of those offering support to commit armed theft and kidnappings.

"The expansion of informal settlements due to the influx of IDPs increases the risk of their involvement in turf wars, which are conflict between rival urban ethnic cluster controlling specific streets or markets space. The involvement of IDP arise often as the result of association with specific ethnic groups within their immediate environment. These groups are often armed and dangerous." (Participant 1)

This situation is further complicated by the fact that individuals, driven by desperation and often facing hostility from national security forces, resort to selling their remaining possessions to acquire firearms, either as a means of self-protection against extortion or as a tool to participate in racketeering activities.

The alarming lack of accountability, noting that the very entities responsible for investigating these activities are often complicit in them. This has created an environment where distinguishing between perpetrators and victims has become increasingly difficult, further encouraging collective actions that reinforce ethnic fragmentation and distrust." (Participant 15)

4.4.1.2 Scarcity of Resources

According to 31.82% of respondents, when resources are scarce and job opportunities are unavailable, both IDPs and host communities experience severe economic hardship, which

fosters desperate survival mechanisms, often pushing individuals toward illicit activities. Some resort to joining armed criminal organisations, fueling gun violence in urban areas, while others become entangled in associated activities of arms trade such as illicit financial transaction.

“The emergence of sudden fortunes, often termed the "nouveau riche phenomenon," is frequently accompanied by an escalation in local violent crimes, with individuals rapidly accumulating wealth only to subsequently become victims of violence themselves in mysterious circumstances.” (Participant 15)

4.4.2 Recruitment

In response to the question which sought to understand how vulnerable communities, with IDPs being one of them, end up being approached by networks involved in the proliferation of, recruitment was one of the key themes manifesting itself in two ways.

4.4.2.1 Push Factor

According to 38.98% of respondents, insecurity is the main push factor driving demand for weapons. However, the failure of the state to protect people and their property creates a vacuum that is exploited by opportunistic networks.

“If weapons were to be found in camps, it would largely come off as a result of the insecurity IDPs face when they go out to fetch water, collect firewood or carry out other daily activities. Many IDPs report harassment and assaults by national forces, among others stationed in the area. As a means of self-protection, it wouldn't be surprising if some resorted to selling food and non-food items provided in the camps to buy or rent weapons.” (Participant 17)

In host communities and informal settlements, the situation is different. In urban areas, rigid in-group dynamics regulate vending and begging points, often with the involvement of corrupt authorities.

While displaced people and local communities often seek to make a honest living, many turn to alternative means when these efforts fail. Some join local gangs and engage in racket of honest informal businesses, while others engaged in petty crime such as theft.” (Participant 2)

These turf wars have been known to rapidly escalate into acts of violence, resulting in the rise and

fall of gangs faster than investigations can keep up.

“children of security personnel - who have access to weapons - often recruit others into gangs. These groups are often involved in theft and other crimes, further exacerbating insecurity. For many, joining a gang or acquiring a weapon is not just an act of survival, but a necessary means of protection in an environment where the rule of law is weak and violence is constant.”
(Participant 19)

4.4.2.2 Pull Factor

According to 61.11% of respondents, recruitment isn't just about resource scarcity, insecurity or corruption. It is also about the ease of obtaining weapons and the fact that these networks actually provide the livelihoods they promise. What's more, they have the judiciary in their pocket - arrested members don't stay behind bars for long. Whether through connections, bribes or outright escapes, they come and go as they please.

Another overlooked reality is the ease with which armed leaders can emerge. In these environments, anyone with enough weapons and followers can declare themselves a "general". Their firepower and numbers alone make it almost impossible to question their origin.

“They recruit under the banner of a government that neither confirms nor denies their status, allowing them to operate with impunity. They set up roadblocks and flood the streets with armed individuals who have little or no formal training, further destabilising the security situation.”
(Participant 11)

“Recruitment Does not just target displaced people; it targets anyone who is desperate enough to follow. IDPs may just be more vulnerable because some are born into this environment and don't know any better.” (Participant 15)

4.4.3 Trade

In response to the question of identifying the principal conduits through which weapons gain easy access to displacement zones, trade emerged as the dominant theme. All respondents in this category concurred that the lack of oversight, manifesting in two key ways, is a major driver of the arms trade.

4.4.3.1 National Security Agencies

First, there is the failure to monitor national security agencies. The proximity of frontlines, combined with the presence of weapons in and around camps and host communities, makes it easy for anyone to acquire arms. The primary channels through which weapons are trafficked include deserters and corrupt police and military officers. Unmonitored military camps serve as a significant source of weapons, with security forces who are either acting independently or with tacit approval from superiors, to sell weapons to the local population. Many of these security agents, often unpaid or underpaid, resort to arms trafficking to support their families.

4.4.3.2 Porous Borders

Secondly, there is the failure to pacify red zones and control national borders. This ongoing instability has created a conducive environment for smuggling and the illicit arms trade, with weapons flowing into the region from neighbouring countries such as Burundi and Uganda. The porous borders and lack of enforcement allow armed groups to restock effortlessly, thereby further fueling insecurity in displacement zones.

4.5 The Nexus between Internally Displaced Persons, Proliferation of SALW and Ethnic Conflict in Eastern DRC

To explore the relationship between internal displacement, ethnic conflict and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), the study identified common themes both in the relationship between internal displacement and ethnic conflict and in the relationship between displacement and the proliferation of SALW in eastern DRC.

4.5.1 Urban Ethnic Cluster and Insecurity

The study established that poverty has already created widespread vulnerability in the region by fuelling division and fostering greed, which hinders genuine social cohesion and makes it difficult for IDPs to integrate into host communities or informal settlements. However, the influx of IDPs into these areas, particularly informal settlements and host communities, tends to intensify existing

tensions. In host communities, this influx exacerbates economic hardship in two significant ways. First, it exacerbates housing shortages in major cities, leading to overcrowding and deteriorating living conditions. Secondly, it increases economic pressure on already struggling local populations.

These communities operate within pre-existing social and economic structures that regulate resource distribution, often granting access based on ethnic affiliations. In urban areas, these in-group dynamics are frequently extended to the regulation of public spaces, often facilitated by corrupt authorities who exploit these systems for financial gain. Consequently, when legitimate economic opportunities are obstructed by such structures, both displaced persons and local residents may be compelled to engage in these informal networks as a means of economic survival. Some individuals join local gangs and engage in illicit activities, including the extortion of informal businesses and money laundering which contributes to the rise of a “nouveau riche class”. Others engage in crimes such as armed robbery, while some resort to selling their possessions to acquire firearms, exclusively for self-protection against extortion and thefts.

In slums and informal settlements, the rapid expansion caused by IDP arrivals increases the likelihood of involvement in turf wars, which often arise between rival urban ethnic clusters that control important streets or market spaces. Notably, some of these groups consist of children of security personnel, who have access to weapons. In this case, IDPs often become entangled in these conflicts due to associations with specific ethnic groups within their immediate environment.

4.5.2 Insecurity and Ethnic Grouping Tendencies

In this context, the issue of insecurity manifests as a multidimensional phenomenon, ultimately underscoring the power vacuum created by ineffective governance. In host communities, the arrival of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is often accompanied by a rise in petty crime. The resulting overcrowding and inadequate infrastructure create conditions conducive to criminal activities, as individuals posing as IDPs infiltrate private spaces with minimal surveillance.

These individuals, who have been known to exploit the trust of those providing assistance, have been found to be involved in armed theft and kidnapping. Despite the existence of substantial evidence indicating the frequent complicity of national security forces in the incidents in question, mechanisms to investigate and prosecute those responsible remain ineffective. This

failure of accountability fosters an environment in which distinguishing between perpetrators and victims becomes increasingly difficult, thereby reinforcing collective actions that exacerbate ethnic fragmentation and distrust.

This sense of insecurity has been shown to influence the willingness to offer support, which is often shaped along ethnic lines. While this practice may be perceived as tribalistic, it is primarily driven by security concerns and deep-seated mistrust. However, even this ethnicity-based assistance is limited, as members of the same clan in host communities or camps often hold prejudices about the origins of their displaced kinsmen. This often makes them reluctant to defend their relatives against false accusations or offer them shelter, particularly if doing so risks jeopardising their own standing within their urban ethnic cluster.



Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This paper examined the link between national security challenges in eastern DRC and the protracted internal displacement of people. While existing analyses focus primarily on the immediate impact of displacement on livelihoods, there is growing evidence linking internal displacement to broader security concerns. Current assessments of DRC's security landscape suggest that displacement is intertwined with various by-products of conflict, but this link remains underexplored. This study tried to fill this gap by examining three key aspects: the relationship between IDPs and ethnic conflict in eastern DRC, the link between IDPs and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and the potential link between all three. By shedding light on these critical dynamics, this research aimed at contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of internal displacement as a security issue rather than merely a humanitarian challenge.

5.2 Summary

There were 22 participants in this study. Their responses were used to identify the main themes of the research. In order to provide a clear theoretical explanation for these themes and to link them to an established body of knowledge, as outlined in Chapter 2, we will evaluate them in comparison with rational choice theory and Cadinu and Rothbart's differentiation model.

5.2.1 The Link between IDPs and Ethnic Conflict in Eastern DRC

When examining the factors that increase the vulnerability of IDPs to ethnic conflict, four main themes emerged: competition, blame shifting, stereotypes and the intersection of poverty and displacement. Eighteen participants highlighted the shifting of responsibilities as another critical factor. Within this theme, 55.56% interpreted it as a manifestation of bad governance, 27.78% saw it as a delegation of responsibility towards IDPs and 16.67% saw it as a misrepresentation of the facts. Nineteen participants identified competition as a key driver of vulnerability. Of these, 31.58% defined competition in terms of allocation of aid and selection of beneficiaries, 52.63% emphasised scarcity of resources, and 15.79% attributed it to generalised poverty.

Again, nineteen participants identified stereotypes as a key factor. All respondents in this category

argued that these stereotypes emerge either at the initial stage of interpersonal interaction or after prolonged cohabitation, suggesting that both immediate perceptions and long-term exposure contribute to the entrenchment of ethnic prejudices. Additionally, twenty participants identified the intersection between displacement and poverty as an important factor. Of these, 40% conceptualised the intersection in terms of the interaction between humanitarian aid and development projects, 35% saw internal displacement as a catalyst for poverty, and 25% saw poverty as a catalyst for exacerbating the conditions of internal displacement.

The study shows that the link between IDPs and ethnic conflict in eastern DRC can be understood through the lens of Cadinu and Rothbart's differentiation model, which posits that conflict – whether pre-existing or emerging through interaction – serves to reinforce group distinctions and intensify in-group identity. This dynamic is palpable within both IDP camps and host communities, where resource competition and social dynamics significantly shape intergroup relations.

Within camps, ethnic tensions over aid distribution do not necessarily originate with the IDPs themselves, but rather with the staff responsible for aid distribution. These individuals, influenced by their own ethnic affiliations, tend to allocate more resources to their own ethnic group than to other groups. In line with the differentiation model, this preferential treatment reinforces negative perceptions of the favoured group, deepens divisions within the camp and leads to resentment and, in some cases, theft by those who feel discriminated against.

Furthermore, unresolved ethnic conflicts from outside the camps often merge with disputes over scarce resources, further exacerbating hostilities. An illustration of this phenomenon is the social exclusion experienced by Rwandophone internally displaced persons (IDPs), who are often suspected of collaborating with looters, a significant proportion of whom are also Rwandophone. This suspicion serves to reinforce their distinctiveness, thus turning them into target or a scapegoat.

Moreover, while initial interactions between camp residents may be peaceful, prolonged coexistence leads to the gradual emergence of social boundaries and fluctuating levels of tolerance. Cultural practices that are perceived as disruptive or unfamiliar further strain intergroup relations, ultimately creating an environment in which tensions escalate over time. This dynamic reinforces the perception of an 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy - with one group seen as more civilised and the other as engaging in barbaric practices - a core tenet of the differentiation model.

Within the host communities, a similar pattern is observed. Although local populations initially provide essential support to vulnerable IDPs, offering shelter, food, water, medical care, and guidance, the increasing influx of IDPs exacerbates existing challenges. As IDP numbers rise, housing shortages in urban centres become more critical, leading to overcrowding and deteriorating living conditions. Moreover, the tendency of IDPs to accept lower wages has been shown to disrupt local labour markets, thereby intensifying economic pressures on already vulnerable populations.

The situation is further complicated by pre-existing social and economic structures governing resource management, which are often determined by ethnic affiliations. Consequently, IDPs frequently become entangled in longstanding conflicts that they neither initiated nor sought, drawn into disputes by real or perceived ethnic, political, or social alignments within the host community. It is important to note that the influence of affiliation on IDPs' access to resources is more closely aligned with Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory (Cadinu & Rothbart, 1996, p. 675), which emphasises that in-group membership shapes individuals' self-perception and social reality, than with Cadinu and Rothbart's differentiation model, which supports the notion that in-group perception must align with one's self-concept to create identity and a relatable reality.

The study also highlighted that tensions arise within host communities when certain ethnic groups of IDPs are perceived to receive disproportionate aid and assistance from NGOs, while the local population experiences resource depletion and unmet needs. According to Cadinu and Rothbart's differentiation model, group members tend to view their own in-group more favourably while ascribing negative characteristics to the out-group. In this context, the host community represents the in-group and the IDPs constitute the out-group. While both groups face economic hardship, the host community perceives itself as more deserving of support, partly because it provides essential assistance to these vulnerable populations. This perception reinforces negative stereotypes and intensifies intergroup distinctions, thereby deepening tensions within the host community. The study introduces economic hardship as a catalyst for in-group/out-group dynamics, a factor that has not been extensively explored within the traditional framework of the differentiation model.

Last, the arrival of certain ethnic groups has been observed to coincide with an increase in cases where they are blamed for rising criminal activity and incidents of witchcraft. This has led to

defamation campaigns that portray these groups as sources of insecurity. Rising criminality and the perpetuation of negative stereotypes have been shown to serve as catalysts for conflict by prompting the attribution of undesirable characteristics to the out-group, thereby reinforcing intergroup distinctions. The study introduces criminality and stereotypes as sources of differentiation, highlighting their roles in deepening social division. In this context, ethnic dynamics do not function as an inherent cause of conflict; rather, they serve as mechanisms for collective action against a perceived threat. This dynamic often manifests in acts of sabotage, exclusion from community-based information networks, and various forms of social and economic marginalisation.

5.2.2 The Link between IDPs and Proliferation of SALW in Eastern DRC

In examining the relationship between IDPs and the proliferation of SALW, participants identified three main themes: insecurity, recruitment and trafficking. All 22 participants identified insecurity as a driver of vulnerability. Within this category, 36.36% of respondents conceptualised insecurity primarily in terms of physical security, while 31.82% conceptualised it in terms of resource scarcity. Additionally, eighteen participants identified recruitment as a key factor. Of these, 38.98% discussed recruitment in terms of push factors, conditions that compel individuals to join armed groups, while 61.11% emphasised pull factors, which act as incentives for individuals to engage in recruitment. Lastly, nineteen participants highlighted trade as a critical driver of vulnerability. Across the board, respondents attributed the trade in SALW to the absence of robust state control at national borders and inadequate oversight of national security agencies. This lack of regulatory control is implicated in the unimpeded flow of weapons, which further exacerbates the insecurity of vulnerable populations.

The study demonstrates that the link between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the proliferation of SALW in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) can be understood through the lens of Cornish and Clarke's rational choice theory. This theory posits that understanding the relationship between human behaviour and crime requires recognizing that criminal behavior depends on two key components: criminal involvement, defined as the willingness to commit a crime, and the criminal act, defined as the specific offence to be carried out. Crime is palpable within both IDP camps and host communities, where insecurity and social dynamics significantly shape intergroup relations.

Insecurity, both inside and outside camps, often arises because IDPs attract aid from international organisations (IOs) and NGOs. This aid is often the target of two different groups: disgruntled beneficiaries, who may resort to petty theft among IDPs, and non-beneficiaries, who may resort to violent interception of aid deliveries. Another dimension of insecurity is harassment and attacks by national forces and other groups stationed in the area. As a means of self-protection, it would not be surprising if some IDPs in camps resorted to selling food and non-food items provided in the camps in order to buy or rent weapons.

Within the camps, the criminal behaviour observed may be rooted in resentment and targeted towards accessible fellow IDPs. In this context, traceability is challenging and apprehension primarily results in relocation to another camp. In contrast, outside the camps, organised non-beneficiaries – whether operating as established criminal entities or on an ad hoc basis – engage in systematic planning and assessment, with humanitarian aid supply convoys serving as their target. In these scenarios, the consequences of failure may include death or arrest, thereby escalating the risks involved.

In line with Cornish and Clarke's rational choice theory, crime in this context is seen as a conscious choice rather than the result of external coercion. The criminal acts are premeditated and deliberately planned. However, it is important to note that this case falls within the framework of situational crime theory - an offshoot of rational choice theory - which posits that the influence of contextual and situational factors, such as immediate financial need, a cost-benefit analysis can supersede moral codes, and prior experiences with crime. In the initial two cases, criminal behaviour is driven by pull situational factors, whereby individuals are attracted either to the accessibility of easy targets or the perceived benefits. However, in the final instance, the deliberate decision to obtain a weapon can be understood as the result of a perceived threat, whereby individuals evaluate the benefits of enhanced security against the potentially fatal risks associated with inaction. Despite the absence of overt coercion, this behaviour is driven by a fear for one's safety, thereby demonstrating that the environmental cue behind the decision to commit a crime is not necessarily a positive one.

In host communities, where resources are scarce and employment opportunities limited, both IDPs and local residents face severe economic hardship that fosters desperate survival mechanisms, often driving individuals into illicit activities. In urban areas, economic hardship is compounded

by rigid in-group dynamics that control key streets and market spaces, further limiting opportunities for growth and integration. Faced with such insecurity, some individuals join local criminal organisations and engage in activities such as extortion of informal businesses and money laundering, while others commit crimes such as armed robbery or sell their property to acquire firearms for the sole purpose of protecting themselves from extortion and theft. Moreover, the expansion of informal settlements around urban centres, driven by the influx of IDPs, increases the risk of involvement in armed violence or turf wars for both IDPs and local residents, whether as active participants or innocent bystanders. Additionally, overcrowding and inadequate infrastructure - such as the lack of proper registration offices for IDPs - create opportunities for criminals posing as IDPs to infiltrate communities with minimal oversight and exploit the trust of local residents offering support to carry out armed robberies and abductions.

This scenario is more closely aligned with routine activity theory, another subsidiary of rational choice theory, than with situational crime theory. Routine activity theory posits that the likelihood of an individual committing a crime is significantly increased by unstructured socialising with peers, rather than being solely influenced by situational factors such as financial need or a calculated cost-benefit analysis. As demonstrated, in the case of host communities, interactions with rigid in-group dynamics maintained by local criminal organisations present IDPs and local residents with three choices: to join these groups to profit from their illicit activities, to purchase firearms to engage independently in these illegal activities, or to acquire firearms solely for self-defence. Furthermore, the influx of IDPs and the absence of proper identification mechanisms create additional opportunities for criminal behaviour. In such a context, the decision to exploit or forgo opportunities is driven more by peer interactions in environments lacking lawful supervision than by an immediate need or fear.

5.2.3 The link between Internal Displacement, Ethnic Conflict and Proliferation of SALW in Eastern DRC

In examining the linkages between internal displacement, ethnic conflict and the proliferation of SALW, two main themes emerged from the participants' responses. First, urban ethnic clustering creates both physical and economic insecurity, which increases the vulnerability of IDPs to become involved, directly or indirectly, in the proliferation of SALW. This clustering serves as a source of insecurity that simultaneously drives both the demand for and supply of weapons.

Second, the increased insecurity resulting from the overcrowding associated with the influx of IDPs and the high availability of weapons in the area acts as a catalyst for ethnic grouping tendencies. Taken together, these findings suggest that internal displacement exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and contributes to conditions conducive to the escalation of ethnic conflict and the proliferation of weapons. All these components show that the link between IDPs and ethnic conflict in eastern DRC can be understood through the lens of Cadinu and Rothbart's differentiation model and Cornish and Clarke's rational choice theory.

The findings emphasise that insecurity is not merely a consequence of economic hardships arising from widespread poverty and the added pressure on resources due to the influx of IDPs in host communities; rather, it is further exacerbated in urban areas by the presence of pre-existing social and economic structures that control the already limited distribution of resources, often conferring access based on ethnic affiliations. Consequently, when legitimate economic opportunities are constrained by these dynamics, both displaced persons and local residents may find themselves compelled to engage with informal networks responsible for them as a means of economic survival. Such engagement may involve joining these networks, acquiring weapons to participate in illicit activities, or procuring arms solely for self-protection.

The perception of legitimate claims to resources by the in-group reinforces practices that effectively marginalise the out-group, as access to resources becomes contingent on ethnic affiliation or the financial means to secure such access. Consequently, to enforce compliance, these groups often resort to the use of weapons. Individuals faced with the imperative to survive, after weighing the costs and benefits against their financial needs (as suggested by situational crime theory), are faced with a dual choice based on the nature of their interaction with their peers (as suggested by routine activity theory). They can either integrate into the in-group and become part of its workforce, or they can create opportunities for themselves by acquiring firearms, either to participate in criminal activities independently or to enhance their personal security.

The study further shows that the emergence of these in-groups can be attributed to two key factors: an unmonitored security environment and the implicit complicity of those responsible for providing security. This dynamic is exacerbated by the ready availability of weapons in the hands of locally organised criminal entities, a situation often facilitated by the failure of the state to pacify red zones and effectively supervise national security forces. As a result, there is a tendency to

project opposing values onto arriving IDPs, with potential membership of these in-groups determined not only by ethnicity but also by geographical origin. Such biases often make local residents reluctant to defend their relatives against false accusations or to offer them shelter, particularly if doing so might jeopardise their own standing within their urban ethnic cluster.

In contexts where the line between perpetrator and victim is increasingly blurred, ethnicity plays a dual role. It operates both as a situational factor shaped by cost-benefit calculations, as explained by situational crime theory, and as a social outcome influenced by peer interactions in unstructured environments characterised by persistent violence and insecurity, as explained by routine activity theory.

5.3 Conclusion

National security is fundamentally linked to the survival of the state within its operational environment. This survival depends on the state's ability to effectively mobilise and utilise human and non-human resources. This research highlights internal displacement as a factor that perpetuates existing conflicts and contributes to the emergence of new ones by exacerbating structural vulnerabilities in the socio-economic fabric of affected areas. As displacement increases, so does the spread of vulnerability, disrupting the normal functioning of domestic systems.

Addressing the central question of whether internal displacement constitutes a matter of national security, the answer is unequivocally yes. It undermines the state's capacity to maintain control over its territory and resources, impairs governance structures and aggravates long-term vulnerabilities. Collectively, these effects diminish the state's ability to ensure stability and protect its citizens, making internal displacement a critical national security concern in DRC.

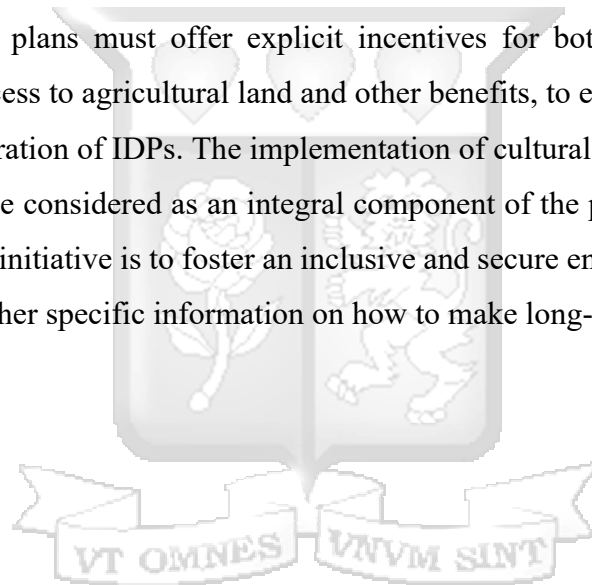
5.4 Recommendation

The aim of this research was to determine whether there is a link between the national security challenges facing the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and protracted internal displacement. The findings confirm that such a link exists, by connecting IDPs to two critical issues that escalate and sustain conflict in the DRC: ethnic conflict and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

This systemic issue could be addressed by implementing a strategically informed national security plan that incorporates elements of citizen security into state security, and by tailoring strategies to

the specific security context of each province, town and district. In the case of IDPs, this approach entails moving beyond the narrative that regards internal displacement solely as a humanitarian issue or a by-product of conflict. Instead, it should be recognised as a fully-fledged security concern, with threats evaluated not merely in terms of their immediate tactical implications but also in terms of their strategic potential to further deteriorate the overall security environment.

The securitisation process of internally displaced persons (IDPs) could be initiated by the enactment and implementation of legislation that clearly defines who qualifies as an IDP within the context of protracted internal displacement in the Congo. This is followed by the establishment of registration offices to issue official identification documents and provide monthly aid in the form of food and non-food items, in cooperation with NGOs and international organisations. Furthermore, integration plans must offer explicit incentives for both host and neighbouring communities, such as access to agricultural land and other benefits, to encourage cooperation and facilitate long-term integration of IDPs. The implementation of cultural tolerance campaigns on a state-wide scale should be considered as an integral component of the proposed action plan. The primary objective of this initiative is to foster an inclusive and secure environment for all affected communities but also gather specific information on how to make long-term cohabitation easier.



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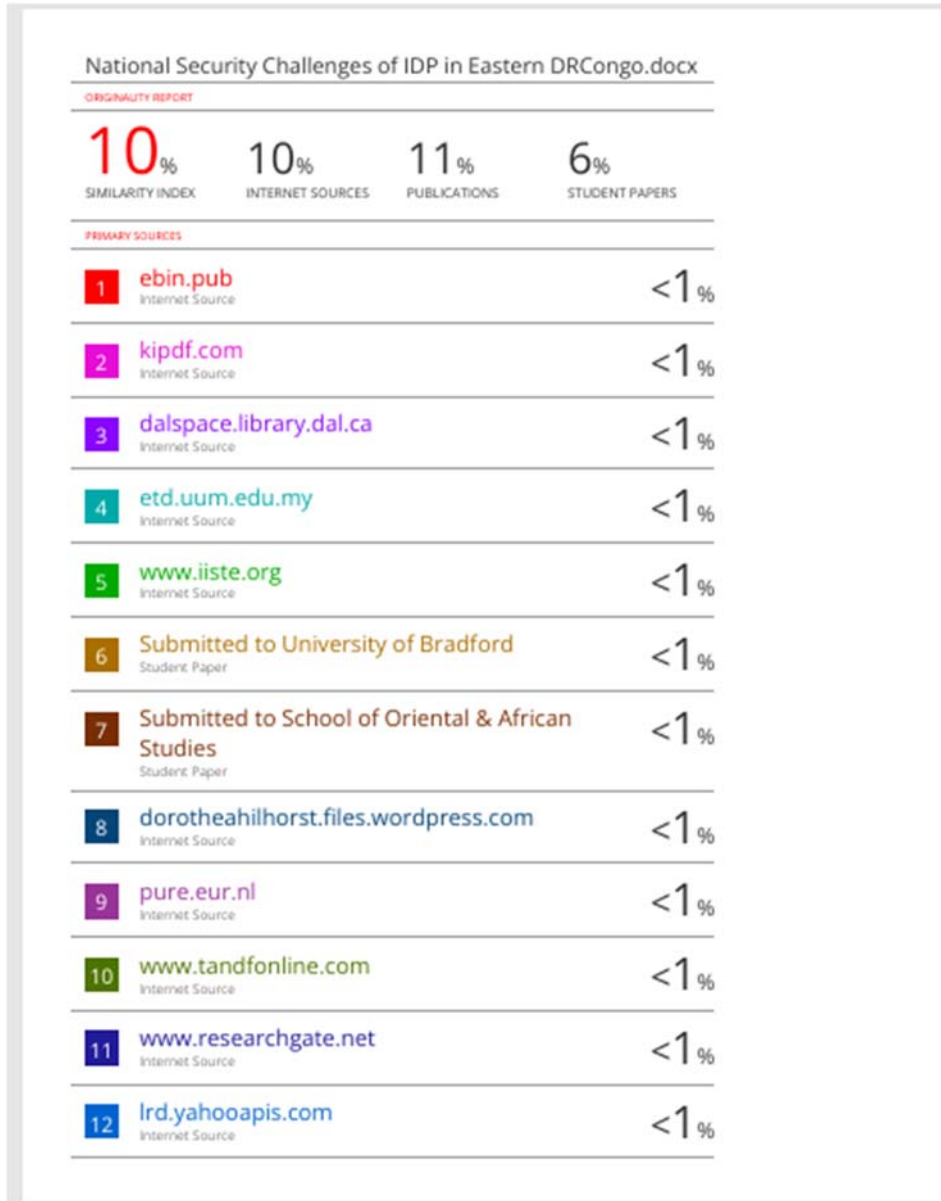
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Appendices

Appendix I: Similarity Report



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Appendix II: Ethical Approval Letter



15th January 2025

Ms Mugangu Christiane-Benedicte,
nkuba.mugangu@strathmore.edu

Dear Ms Mugangu,

RE: The National Security Challenges of Internal Displacement of Persons in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

This is to inform you that SU-ISERC has reviewed and **approved** your above **SU-masters** proposal. Your application reference number is SU-ISERC2503/24. The approval period is from **15th January 2025 to 14th January 2026**.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements:

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used.
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by SU-ISERC.
- iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to SU-ISERC within 72 hours of notification.
- iv. Any changes anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to SU-ISERC within 72 hours.
- v. Clearance for the export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to the expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days of completion of the study to SU-ISERC.

Before commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke/> and obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ambrose Rachier".

Mr Ambrose Rachier,
Chairperson; SU-ISERC

Appendix III: Nacosti Research Permit



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

Ref No: 352254



**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION**

Date of Issue: 27/January/2025

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that **Ms. Christiane Nkaha Muganga of Strathmore University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Bungoma on the topic: "The National Security Challenges of Internal Displacements of Persons in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (the research will be done in DRC) for the period ending : 27/January/2025.**

License No: NACOSTI/025/415307

Applicant Identification Number: **352254**

Signature of Applicant

Signature of Director General



Director General

**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
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See overlaid for conditions

The National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, hereafter referred to as the Commission, was established under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act 2013 (Revised 2014) herein after referred to as the Act. The objective of the Commission shall be to regulate and assure quality in the science, technology and innovation sector and advise the Government in matters related thereto.

CONDITIONS OF THE RESEARCH LICENSE

1. The License is granted subject to provisions of the Constitution of Kenya, the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, and other relevant laws, policies and regulations. Accordingly, the licensee shall adhere to such procedures, standards, code of ethics and guidelines as may be prescribed by regulation made under the Act, or prescribed by provisions of international treaties of which Kenya is a signatory to
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 - ii. Adversely affect the lives of Kenyans
 - iii. Be in contravention of Kenya's international obligations including Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBT), Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN).
 - iv. Result in exploitation of intellectual property rights of communities in Kenya
 - v. Adversely affect the environment
 - vi. Adversely affect the rights of communities
 - vii. Endanger public safety and national cohesion
 - viii. Plagiarize someone else's work
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15. Relevant Institutional Scientific and Ethical Review Committee shall monitor and evaluate the research periodically, and make a report of its findings to the Commission for necessary action.

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