

Press Release

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300,000 Weapons Held by Civilians in the East of Congo

In the most comprehensive study ever undertaken into weapons and violence in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Belgian, German and Congolese researchers estimate that at least 300,000 firearms are currently in the hands of civilians in Kivu, Ituri, Maniema and Tanganyika.

Carried out by the Groupe de recherche et d'information sur la paix et la sécurité (GRIP, Brussels) and the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) at the request of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP-DRC) and the Congolese Commission nationale de Contrôle des Armes (CNC), l'Etude sur la prolifération des armes légères en RDC, is now available online on the UNDP website.

Those interviewed in the study confirm that the two zones experiencing the highest levels of conflict are in North and South Kivu, where assault rifles are cheap, widely available and insecurity has free rein. Most of the weapons there are used primarily for criminal ends, which is also the case in Ituri. In the other two regions they are used in the lucrative poaching industry. Throughout the whole zone, more than one family in eight has been the victim of an armed assault over the course of the six months preceding the study. Rape (after robbery) is the second most prevalent crime denounced by Congolese interviewees, although this phenomenon is not exclusively conflict-related and is also experienced in some of the most secure areas of the DCR. This situation is very worrying, especially in the context of the mass rapes committed last August, in 13 villages in North Kivu.

This study was carried out among 10,000 households in five Eastern Congolese provinces or districts (Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema and Tanganyika). It was also based on around one hundred discussion groups and interviews held with key players. It should help to provide a basis for the CNC to develop an action plan for disarming civilians throughout the DRC. It has already been used as a source of reference during the recent debate at the Congolese National Assembly on a draft law aimed at preventing, controlling and reducing the number of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition.

Publication of this study is taking place at a time when 11 of the countries in the region have adopted on 19 of November in Brazzaville the plan of action for the implementation of the Convention on Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Central Africa, also known as the "Kinshasa Convention". This legal instrument will help states harmonise measures required for arms control.

In order to access the report (in French only), type:

<http://www.cd.undp.org/mediafile/RAPPORT%20PNUD%20final%20avec%20cartes.pdf>

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