

Overview of Sub-Regional Conflicts, Upper Great Lakes Region

Eastern DRC

The DRC has witnessed one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Much of the violence has been in the eastern part of the country where between 1998 and 2004 what has been called "Africa's first world war" took place, costing 4 million lives. In December 2002, former warring parties agreed to form the transitional government (TNG). Yet, violence in Eastern DRC continued, perpetrated by members of armed militias and the national army. This violence was especially acute in the Ituri, North and South Kivu, and Katanga provinces, partly because the TNG was severely limited by massive corruption and pervasive state weakness, and could not prevent it. Many of the combatants sought control of, and perpetrated violence and massacres in, areas with abundant natural resources. With the assistance of the UN peacekeeping force (MONUC), DRC held its first free and fair elections in 40 years in July 2006, and later that year the presidential elections, won by Joseph Kabila. The peace process, however, remains extremely fragile; little state authority exists in most of the opposition-dominated West. In the capital, Kinshasa, there is large-scale civil unrest.

For further reading:

The University of Essex Children and Armed Conflict Group - General information on DRC (English)
http://www.essex.ac.uk/armedcon/world/africa/central_africa/democratic_republic_of_congo/default.htm

International Crisis Group – Overview of conflict in DRC (English)
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1174&l=1>

University of Antwerpen – Political and socioeconomic aspects of the conflict in DRC (French)
<http://www.ua.ac.be/main.aspx?c=.GRALACP&n=46050>
<http://webhost.ua.ac.be/gralac/somm.htm>

Southern Sudan

Sudan has been the site of three devastating conflicts, each of which have reflected the ethnic, political and religious divisions that afflict the country. These conflicts in Southern Sudan, primarily over self-rule, are believed to have claimed 2 million lives, internally displaced 4 million people, and created 420,000 refugees. These conflicts were intensified by conflicts over religion and natural resources, primarily oil and timber. With the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which brought the SPLM/A¹ into a power sharing deal with the National Congress Party (NCP) within the Government of National Unity (GNU), the conflict formally ended in January 2005. Under the CPA, Southern Sudan was granted semi-autonomy for 6 years and was allowed to form a regional government, the Government of South Sudan (GOSS). A referendum is scheduled for 2011 to vote on the region's possible secession from Sudan. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for 2009. Since then, the GoSS has been establishing its own political institutions and a constitution, the 'Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan'.

¹ Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army.

Uganda

The nearly 20 year-long insurgency perpetrated by Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), led and dominated completely by Joseph Kony, in Northern Uganda, has caused great suffering and the internal displacement of nearly 1.5 million people. The conflict has three main causes: the struggle between National Resistance Movement (NRM) government of President Yoweri Museveni, and the LRA; conflict between the predominantly Acholi LRA and the wider Acholi population, and which as been fuelled by hostility between Uganda and Sudan who support rebel movements on each other's territory; and finally by the North-South conflict that has marked Ugandan politics and society since independence. At the same time, the LRA lack any clear political objective or coherent strategy, limiting any effective counter or negotiating strategies. It is widely believed that the current conflict in North Uganda consolidated the monopolisation of power and wealth in the South, together with the preservation of the current status quo in Ugandan politics. The pursuit of a military solution with an unreformed army (Museveni's power base) may have prolonged the conflict to justify continued military activity. It is unlikely that a purely military or a purely negotiated solution is feasible. An effective solution would instead require elements of both military and negotiated approaches, as well as the concerted engagement by the international community.

Note:

This document is part of a larger study undertaken by Forests Monitor and partners, within the context of the UK Department for International Development's (DFID) programme on the trade in natural resources from the DRC. This study uses a multidisciplinary approach - comprising socio-economics and politics - to analyse the timber trade in the Upper Great Lakes Region in central Africa, and recommends a set of integrated policies to increase the contribution of the timber trade to regional sustainable development. For the full report see 'The Timber Trade and Poverty Alleviation in the Upper Great Lakes Region', www.forestsmonitor.org