



JAMA AGRANDS LACS

Un engagement pour le bien vivre-ensemble

North-Kivu : Building peace in times of crisis

Summary report on the socio-security and humanitarian situation in North Kivu province/DRC

February 2023

North Kivu
Building Peace in Times of Crisis

Rapport de synthèse sur la situation socio-sécuritaire et humanitaire dans la province du Nord-Kivu/RDC

About JAMAA Grands Lacs

JAMAA Grands Lacs is a non-profit organization created in 2016 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with the aim of fostering the emergence of new young leaders who are carriers of social, economic and political causes for their communities. It mainly participates in its action in the process of peace building, constructive conflict management, reduction of community violence in a collaborative approach within the Great Lakes sub-region and more particularly in the Eastern zone of the DRC, characterized for nearly two decades by bloody wars and interethnic conflicts.

In a dialogue in humanity approach, we value the cultural, philosophical, symbolic, and material potentials of local communities to build solutions from the ground up with ordinary citizens, civil society organizations, policy makers, academics, practitioners, media and private sector actors.



Vision

We want a Great Lakes region and an Africa that are united, peaceful and prosperous, where the possibilities of happiness and fulfillment are offered to all people without distinction.



Mission

To unite the youth of the African Great Lakes sub-region around a common ideal of the promotion of a true solidarity and an active fraternity that transcends our tribal and regional particularisms. To achieve its objectives, the organization bases its action on the following areas :

1. Peace, Good Governance and Elections ;
2. Constructive conflict management;
3. Human Rights and Gender;
4. Social and solidarity economy;
5. Ecological humanism;
6. Research-Action.

For more information, please visit his website: www.jamaa-grands-lacs.org

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ADF : Allied Democratic Forces,

EAC: East African Community

EI: Islamic State

FARDC: Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo

FDLR: Force Démocratique de la Libération du Rwanda

JGL : JAMAA Great Lakes

MONUSCO: United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Congo

M23: March 23 Movement

N-K: North Kivu

UN: United Nations

IDPs : Internally Displaced Persons

DRC: Democratic Republic of Congo

RED-Tabara: Resistance for the Rule of Law in Burundi

I. Introduction

A plea for life

To give oneself to the enterprise of reflection at this particular moment when the darkness of violence hovers absurdly in the consciences while shaking and shaking the foundations of the collective being of a whole human community, is to try to find in the collective disasters that the communities go through, a little light in the depths of our cap of human being, well beyond the tribal, national, and/or regional partitions. It is to make reason the natural aspiration to express the luminous face of the beings, in the full expression of the goodness, of the benevolence, and of the humanity in them.

To reflect at this time is simply to call upon the rays of light of wisdom that shine in the heart of each one of us to think and act in terms of the future, and in terms of the durability of the bonds of humanity that rise above absurdity, banality and animosity. Above all, it is to begin the process of calling for the full enjoyment of the freedom to think and act less and less according to the will to crush the other in order to feel like a strong man, or to be right against the other in order to hope to protect oneself to the detriment of the other or of others.

Basically, to reflect at this moment is to put back together the pieces of our hopes beyond the collapse of reason for some and the exponential expression of the sensual for others in order to get out consciously and collectively of the mess while raising us to the rank of those who build together in harmony and respect of the human dignity.

There is more to build together in unity and harmony to complete the work of transforming the Great Lakes region into a space of life, full humanity and shared prosperity, than to be a place of perpetual bloodshed. Aware that the dynamics of violence create more problems than they solve, this report highlights the hell that people are going through in the province of North Kivu in eastern DRC, calling for urgent, effective, coordinated, and sufficiently well thought-out actions to reverse the ongoing chaos into the possibility of new life.



The Democratic Republic of Congo does not need to be the place of eternal expression of all the minions of evil, after more than twenty years of wars with the accumulation of more than 10 million deaths, thousands of women and girls raped, children disguised as killing machines, these innocent populations need in the end to live in peace and dignity like all the other peoples of the world. This country is not an entity outside the world, where international solidarity and the lanterns of human rights defenders and the rights of peoples are extinguished while the cries of distress of thousands of innocent women, children and elderly people resound here and there, crying out for help.

It is time to sound the death knell for another peace process that is more sustainable and true, to finally allow these populations to breathe the air of expectation and stability to move decisively to the stage of building a development that is inclusive and sustainable. In this, everyone's contribution counts.

MUMBERE SIVHWA

*One person can start a war but
it takes two to make peace.*

Cameroonian proverb

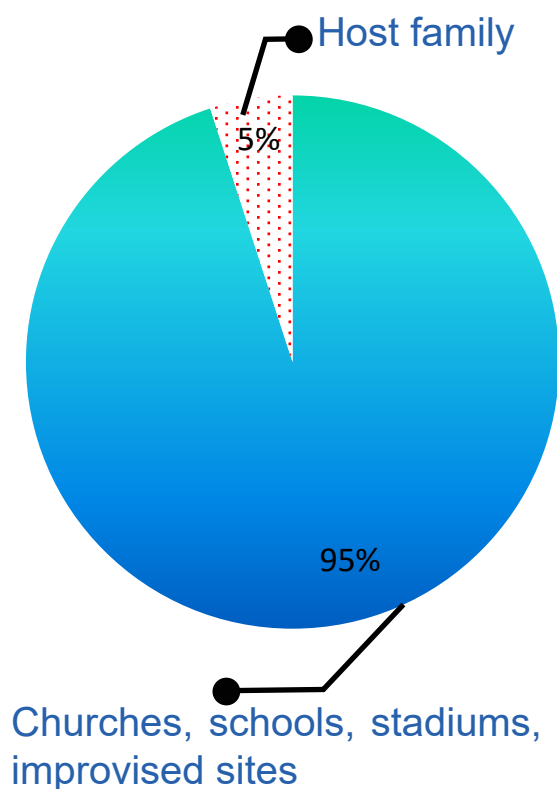


II. Context

The war that has been raging since November 2021 in the province of North Kivu between the M23 rebels and government forces has contributed to a profound deterioration in the socio-security and humanitarian situation. Despite calls for an «immediate ceasefire» from the Luanda mini-summit in November 2022, the call for an «immediate de-escalation» by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, and the call by the heads of state of the East African Community (EAC), the situation remains worrying. Clashes continue in the east of Masisi territory and in the west of Rutshuru territory. In the face of this, the population is suffering. Women, children, and the elderly have become eternal wanderers from one IDP camp to another, living in conditions of extreme misery, without shelter, without water, without adequate health care, without food. And the situation is only getting worse with the continuation of clashes in the eastern part of Masisi territory, which was once under the control of the Congolese army. The consequences are now on several levels.

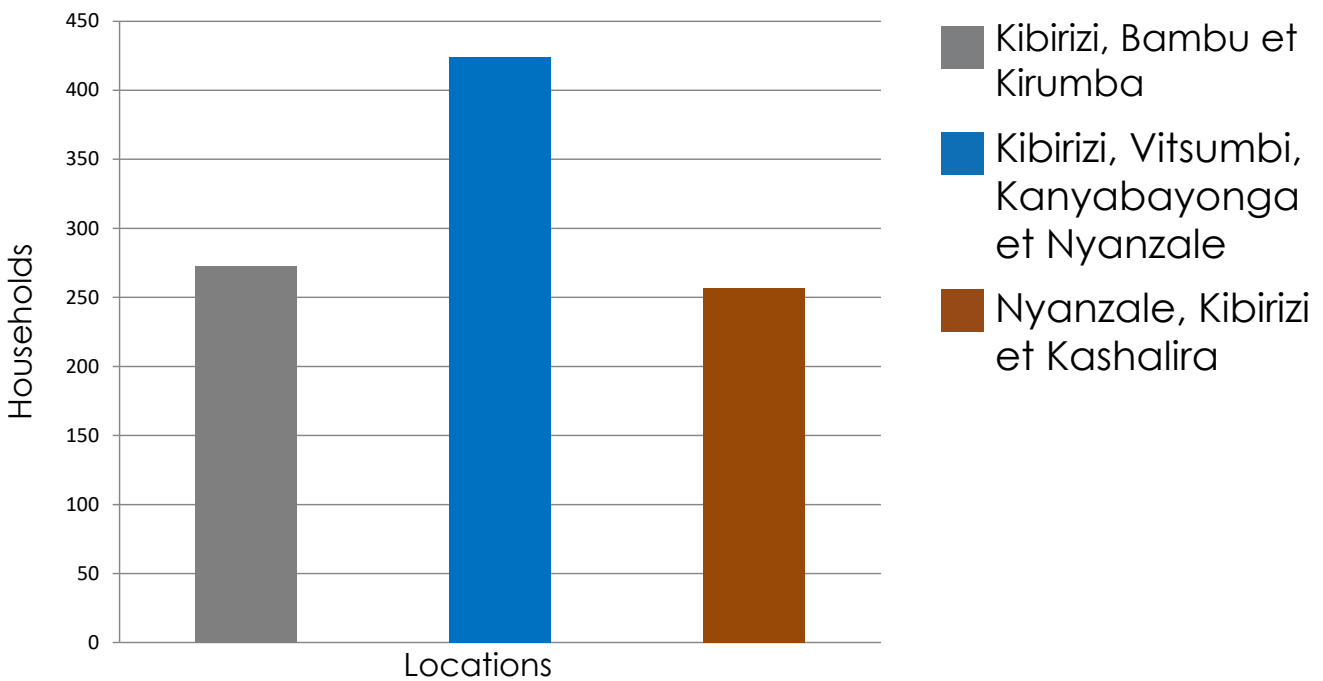
III. The humanitarian consequences

The humanitarian situation is becoming increasingly complex with the difficulty of getting humanitarian aid to certain tense areas due to the ongoing clashes. Nearly 530,000 civilians have been displaced from Rutshuru to the northern part of the city of Goma, in Nyiragongo territory, the majority of whom are in the Kanyaruchinya camp. Due to the lack of urgent interventions, 95% of them are unable to find dignified shelter and are forced to live in churches, schools, stadiums, and improvised sites. Only 5% live with host families.

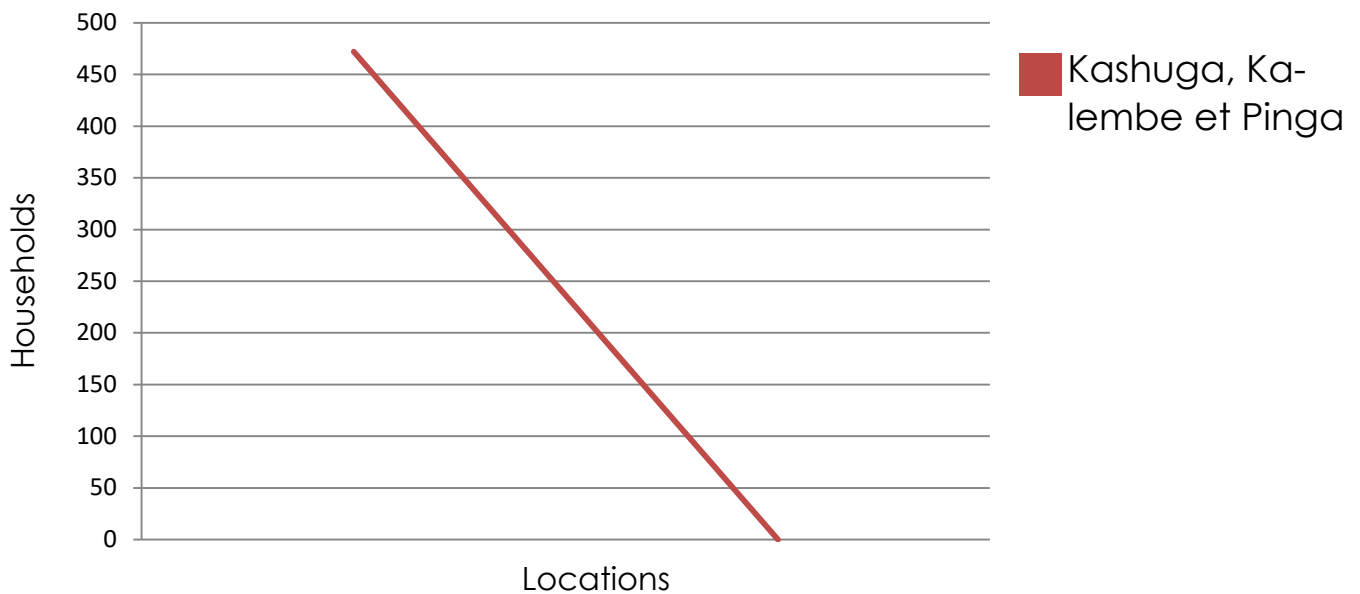


The movement of people continues to increase as clashes continue and expand in part of Masisi territory after Rutchuru. Following the latest confrontations, several population movements have taken place in the following areas

1. Following the clashes around Kishishe, approximately 273 households moved to Kibirizi, Bambu and Kirumba. Approximately 424 households from the agglomerations of Kashalira, Muliki and Kirima moved preventively to Kibirizi, Vitsumbi, Kanyabayonga and Nyanzale. As a reminder, approximately 257 households from the agglomerations of Matete, Musayi, Ngoroba, Rugarama, and Katolo had already moved to Nyanzale, Kibirizi, and Kashalira, in the Mutanda grouping on January 24 and 25.



2. Heavy gunfire continued to be expected in Mweso. Approximately 472 IDP households and a small number of Mweso residents moved to Kashuga, Kalembe and Pinga between January 31 and February 1.



3. The cyclical clashes in the Masisi and Rutshuru areas are causing continued displacement of IDPs and worsening their vulnerability, according to the protection cluster.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, a total of 5.5 million people have been forced to leave their homes because of the violence.² UNICEF Regional Director Marie-Pierre Poirier said: «The scale of the crisis and the protection risks are alarming (...) 5.7 million people are displaced in the DRC, the overwhelming majority of whom in the east have fled the fighting that is raging and that has caused the displacement of at least 1.5 million people in 2022, more than half of whom are children. The violations of children's rights are absolutely shocking.





In the emergency humanitarian assistance missions organized by JAMAA Grands Lacs in the displaced persons' camp of Kanyaruchinya, it appears that the suffering on the faces of individuals has reached its peak, hope has collapsed for many, pregnant women in need of something to eat, children in need of going to school, women and girls in need of having their dignity kits, etc.

To arrange a palaver one does not bring a knife that cuts, but a needle that sews.

Humbu proverb Tanzania

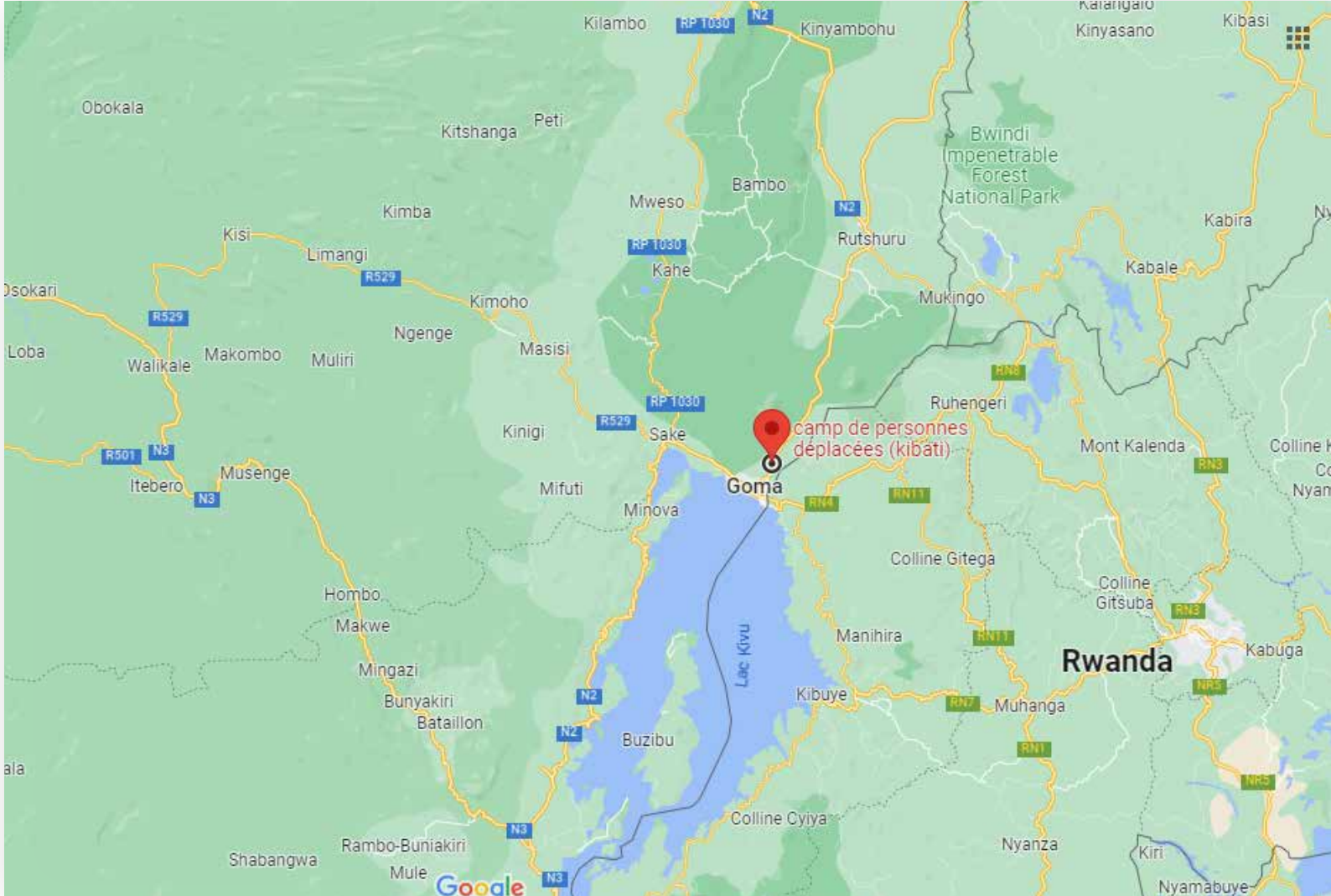


IV. Consequences for civil-military collaboration

Several attacks on MONUSCO convoys have been observed in recent times as a result of popular uprisings linked to the fact that the population believes that this UN mission is not supporting the FARDC as it should. With more than 15,000 peacekeepers deployed to stabilize the eastern part of the DRC, it is the largest mission in the world. After 24 years of operation, MONUSCO has come under heavy criticism for not being able to effectively combat local and foreign armed groups in the area.

Approximately 122 armed groups are active in eastern DRC (North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri and Tanganyika), the most notorious of which are the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a Ugandan Islamist group whose activities are increasingly being claimed under the banner of the Islamic State (IS) group. The rise in virulence of this jihadist group in the DRC is part of an advance into Africa after the collapse of its so-called «caliphate» in 2019; also, the M23, the FDLR from Rwanda in North Kivu, the RED-Tabara from Burundi in South Kivu.





The most recent attack occurred on February 7, 2022, when four vehicles belonging to peacekeepers returning from a mission in Kiwanja were set on fire in Nyiragongo territory by the population of the Kanyaruchinya camp. Three civilians lost their lives in the scuffles.

«Violence is never a just response

Compendium of the social doctrine of the church n°496



This is a continuation of the demonstrations accompanied by destruction and looting that took place in Goma, Butembo, Beni and other localities in July 2022, and which led to the death of 36 people, including four peacekeepers, and several collateral damages.

This remains the consequence of a deep crisis of confidence that has developed between the population and MONUSCO, and an increased circulation of misinformation without a coordinated communication strategy to combat it effectively in time.

«No one hates another, he just misunderstands him».

Ful proverb, Cameroon





V. Consequences on social cohabitation

The more the crisis grows, the more the population does not know which saint to turn to, and they look everywhere for the presumed authors of their misfortunes. Consciences are so overheated and fully charged with horror and misery, that at any moment the explosion of extreme violence can become one of the possibilities of popular expression. Certain discourses that manipulate identities to propagate hatred, incite violence, hostilities and the division of populations among themselves are becoming a factor in the degradation of the quality of harmonious living together and a major blockage to social cohesion in this critical period in the province of North Kivu.

This is particularly worrying when one considers that the election period is approaching. Evidence of the pattern of armed group activism and the rise in communal violence has shown that the trends in the formation, increase in the level of virulence and multiplication of armed groups spreading violence tend to increase in the period before, during and after the elections.



This is due to the rise in the expression of ideological differences, the political manipulation of certain actors to broaden their electorate, and the partisan expression of certain individuals or groups using violent methods, as witnessed by the electoral crisis of 2006.

The DRC's first multiparty elections were held in July 2006. Although these elections were deemed peaceful and generally successful, there were sporadic incidents characterized by violent attacks on polling stations and violent demonstrations in the streets. The EISA (Electoral Institute for Sustainable Development in Africa) election observation mission deployed to the country reported incidents associated with periods of campaign tension: rising tribal tensions, indiscriminate and unwarranted disorder, repression of street demonstrations organized by political parties, confiscation of campaign materials, and clashes between Kabila's guards and Jean-Pierre Bemba's guards resulting in 23 deaths and injuries. The battle between Bemba's troops and Kabila loyalists began at a television station owned by the vice president of the Republic.



This reality is often evident in almost every province of the Democratic Republic of Congo, especially in the province of North Kivu, which has been plagued for more than three decades by bloody violence and tensions linked to the activism of local and regional armed groups. At this particular time, when the country is still approaching elections, in parallel with the security crisis linked to the resurgence of the M23, the need to lay the foundations for a peaceful electoral process, i.e., without violence, is becoming more and more necessary in order to avoid setting back to zero the efforts that have been implemented for a long time by the peace actors.

«The rope shows us how peace is made; the pieces of fiber and animal skins woven together are stronger than any of these materials taken alone.»

Kenyan Rendille Proverb



VI. Economic Consequences

Since the beginning of the crisis there has been a surge in the price of food and non-living goods on the market. Here is a summary table:

N°	Name of food and non food items	Before the M23	After the M23
01	Bean casserole	1000 FC	3500 FC
02	Oil can	25 dollars	30 dollars
03	Bag of corn flour	18 dollars	28 dollars
04	The bag of embers	40 000 FC	80 000 FC

This is largely due to the fact that most of the agricultural feeder roads are now cut off and farmers have difficulty accessing their fields due to the security situation. And knowing that the territories of Rutshuru and Masisi are among the granaries of the province of North Kivu and the Democratic Republic of Congo, food scarcity is felt.

Given the soaring prices, the majority of the population living on less than 1 dollar per day/per person has difficulty obtaining food. This is also becoming one of the factors of famine in the province, in addition to the fact that the exchange rate is also rising, from 2000 FC to 2150 FC per dollar.





VII. Conclusion and perspectives

In view of the above, it is useful to use all possible means to help resolve the current crisis. International solidarity in favor of these wounded populations is all the more essential to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe. And given the rise of speeches calling for hatred and violence, we hope it will be useful to :





Favouring preventive solutions: this means highlighting the approach of early detection of these discourses both on social networks and in the community and fighting them through an awareness mechanism. This requires that there are actors who are committed to this.

«The argument becomes a fight and the fight becomes a fight.»

Kikuyu proverb, Kenya



Favour inclusive solutions: inter-community dialogues are becoming more necessary than ever at this time to prevent the ongoing war from continuing to unravel the local alliances of solidarity and inter-community cooperation that are the foundation of living together and peace in the province of North Kivu in the DRC and in the Great Lakes region

**«It's the gourds that
are tied together that
touch.»**

Dida proverb, Ivory Coast



Favouring a bottom-up strategy in the disinformation process: this aspect concerns MONUSCO, while rethinking its strategies for action and collaboration with the civilian population on the ground.

«The solution to a conflict is to talk about the conflict.»

Somali proverb



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