

## Secondary Data Review

### *Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) — The Kasai Crisis*

*This document is based on a secondary data matrix compiled by the global Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR) and by the Global Education Cluster using the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and the Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) as an analysis framework. All data points are citations from the secondary data matrix, which have been compared and interpreted, but not triangulated and verified.*

Access to information is rendered difficult by a complex security situation and the lack of humanitarian actors established in the area before the crisis to collect and share data. The primary sources of information cited in this report are estimates produced by the few organizations that have long been in the area as well as reports from more recent field missions.

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## Background

In January 2016, in Dibaya, Central Kasai, a dispute erupted between the traditional chief Kamuina Nsapu and the national government over complex claims regarding customary law, natural resources and land issues.<sup>1</sup> In August 2016, the national armed forces (Forces Armées de la RDC, or FARDC) led an offensive that eliminated Chief Kamuina Nsapu. Since then, new militias have formed, both self-defence and in favor of the late Kamuina Nsapu, stirring up older **ethnic tensions** in the Kasai region. A complex, multilayered conflict has developed involving different actors: the original one, between the state and the Kamuina Nsapu militia, has seen repeated attacks against state symbols and allegedly enemy communities; the new ones, between the various local militias, have developed to include pre-existing issues, often unrelated to the Kamuina Nsapu's original grievances, spreading in the vast Kasai region (provinces of Kasai, Central Kasai and Eastern Kasai, arriving to the provinces of Lomami and Sankuru, covering an area of about 330.000 km<sup>2</sup>). As of May 2017, the conflict affected **eight of the country's 26 provinces**. The consequences have also **extended to Angola**, where an average of 500 refugees from the Kasai region arrive daily;<sup>2</sup> roughly 77% of the refugees are women and children.<sup>3</sup> As of 5 July 2017, UNHCR estimates that more than 31,000 refugees had fled to Angola, and that 50,000 people will flee to Angola by the end of the year.<sup>4</sup>

The conflict has **displaced more than 1.4 million people**, and **more than 3,300 have died** in the greater Kasai region between August 2016 and June 2017.<sup>5</sup> In April, the United Nations Joint Office for Human Rights (UNJHRO) confirmed the existence of **42 mass graves**,<sup>6</sup> and in July an additional 38 unconfirmed mass graves were identified in Kasai.<sup>7</sup> Given access challenges, these numbers likely underestimate the actual situation. The widespread violence has grave consequences on children, who make up more than 60% of the region's population.<sup>8</sup> UNICEF estimates that if the conflict continues, **seven million children** from the Kasai, Central Kasai, Eastern Kasai, Lomami and Sankuru provinces will be at severe risk.<sup>9</sup> In Tshikapa, the conflict took on an inter-ethnic dimension between the Chowe-Pende communities and the Luba, accused of sympathizing with the Kamuina Nsapu militia.<sup>10</sup> The situation quickly degenerated into open conflict at the beginning of 2017, reaching a scale that prompted the visit of the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide in June 2017, which confirmed these concerns. The upcoming elections and related unrest is likely to further complicate matters.

The crisis in the Kasai provinces, which are historically the poorest in the country, has developed against the backdrop of a series of other emergencies. With a total number of **3.7 internally displaced people (IDP)**, of which **60.5% are children**, DRC now has the highest number of displaced people on the African continent. Main protection crises include the interethnic conflict in Tanganyika, the resurgence of armed conflict in the east (including Lord's Resistance Army [LRA] in Haut Uélé and Mayi militias in Beni), as well as regular civil unrest and security threats on Kinshasa (including eight jail breaks since May 2017 with more than 4,000 convicts escaping the central prison) and other parts of the country in relation to elections. Health crises continue to affect children across the country with 1.9 million children under-five with severe malnutrition, 9,692 cases and 322 deaths related to cholera between January and August 2017,<sup>11</sup> and the polio outbreak in Haut-Lomami and Maniema.

## Child Protection

### *Child protection needs aggravated by the crisis*

#### Standard 7 Dangers and injuries

Children are living in a hostile environment due to a volatile security situation and continued armed violence. Key protection issues include **exposure to the ongoing armed conflict** and conditions during **displacement**, particularly in the bush and forest areas.

The massive population displacement, particularly from Kasai and Central Kasai, has created about 1.4 million IDPs, of which many have sought refuge **in isolated forests and in the bush**. The inaccessibility of these areas make assessments and humanitarian interventions challenging. Moreover, life in the open entails significant dangers, such as an increased risk of physical violence and abduction by militia or military personnel.<sup>12</sup> Children are at particular risk for malaria, accidental injuries, attacks by wild animals, or infections after contact with thorny plants; such injuries can be severe and even fatal.

Additionally, the lack of adequate medical facilities to treat conflict-induced injuries, leave children without access to **sufficient medical attention**. Reports indicate that several injured people, including children, do not want to be treated in health centers or hospitals but rather resort to **traditional medicine**, out of fear of being identified as enemy combatants, increasing the risk of infections and other complications.<sup>13</sup> For example, an injured child died of hepatitis in the bush due to lack of care in Luiza, Central Kasai, following a clash between militias and security forces.<sup>14</sup>

Children are particularly vulnerable to injuries from **explosive remnants of war (ERW)**. For example, in January 2017, a child was killed in the village of Kamuina Nsapu while playing with a **grenade**;<sup>15</sup> in April 2017, a 10-year-old child was injured by a grenade in the Kanshi commune in Eastern Kasai;<sup>16</sup> and a girl was injured by a **mine** in Kazumba and was hospitalized in Kananga.<sup>17</sup>

#### Standard 8 Physical violence and other harmful practices

The conflict in the Greater Kasai and neighboring provinces has increased the risk of physical violence against children. They witness and faced extreme forms of violence, primarily massacres, mutilations and torture.

The risk of being **killed during attacks** of both militias and security forces is constant. The continuous attacks against villages and the civil population and rising ethnic tensions contribute to widespread chaos. In March 2017, UNICEF estimated that at least 100 children had been killed since January 2017 because of the conflict.<sup>18</sup> Several reports mention local death counts (particularly in the three Kasai provinces and in Lomami), suggesting that the number is in fact much higher. For instance, between May 10 and 14, in Luiza, Central Kasai, several skirmishes between the militias and the military caused panic in the local population, with an official count of 11 girls and 28 civilian boys killed by bullets, and 51 boys and 27 girls reported dead overall.<sup>19</sup>

Human Rights Watch indicates that the **excessive use of force** by Congolese authorities and the FARDC caused the death of several alleged Kamuina Nsapu militia members and sympathizers, including a large number of women and children.<sup>20</sup> Inquiries by the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) also point to an **excessive and indiscriminate use of force**, including lethal force, by the defense and security forces present in the territories, which has caused, among other things, the death of at least 53 children in Central Kasai.<sup>21</sup> Reports from the affected provinces point to the presence of several children in local hospitals, suffering from bullet wounds.<sup>22</sup> For instance, in the Kananga hospital, about 90% of those wounded by bullets are children or young adults.<sup>23</sup>

The use of children as **human shields** by the militia and the widespread presence of child soldiers exacerbates the risk of severe injuries and death. The violence of the attacks and the use of bladed weapons such as machetes have caused **several cases of grave child mutilations**, at times even on newborns.<sup>24</sup>

**The use of drugs** for the initiation rites of the Kamuina Nsapu combatants<sup>a</sup> and before a battle is frequent<sup>25</sup>. Currently there is still a lack of information on the nature and effects of these drugs.

Various UNJHRO inquiries between February and May 2017 report an alarming number of **summary or extra-judicial executions**, particularly in the Central Kasai province, carried out by FARDC soldiers<sup>26</sup> in which several children, allegedly associated with the Kamuina Nsapu militia, seem to have been executed.

The NGO Save the People International has reported instances of **torture** against a dozen children in the Tshikapa;<sup>27</sup> further inquiries are needed on this issue.

## Standard 9 Sexual violence

The armed conflict and widespread insecurity in the region have increased the risk of sexual violence against girls, boys, women, and men, not only during attacks, but also during daily activities such as going to the market or fetching water. Children are at risk of **sexual exploitation to support their daily needs**;<sup>28</sup> there is a lack of precise information on this phenomenon. From August 2016 to June 2017, about **600 cases of sexual violence including 350 girls and 4 boys** were recorded in Kasai and Central Kasai, according to the results of an assessment mission of the gender-based violence (GBV) sub-cluster in the Kasai and western Kasai provinces (26 May – 2 June).<sup>29</sup> However, **stigmatization** and **fear of reprisals** influence the number of victims willing to report the violations. Consequently, their actual number is likely to be under-reported.

This lack of information is even more pronounced for boys and men. At the moment, there is almost no data on sexual violence against males; evidence from similar crises in DRC suggest that boys can

<sup>a</sup> There is a general lack of detailed information on these rites, but different inquiries (mostly journalistic) indicate that before joining the militias, it is necessary to be “baptized.” Kamuina Nsapu militia initiations involve drinking a potion that is believed to make the drinker invincible. To receive this “baptism” is an essential step in the initiation process. No one knows with certainty what is in the baptism potion, however various witnesses of the Kamuina Nsapu’s attacks have referred to “drugged youths” to indicate the altered state of the combatants. Sonia Rolley, *Le système « Kamuina Nsapu »* (Documents ajoutés), 15 June 2017, RFI

become victims of different kinds of sexual violations: historically, they have been raped, forced to rape female family members, or forced or subjected to other violent sexual acts, as punishment or to denigrate them.<sup>30</sup>

Girls, boys, women, and men are particularly exposed to the risk of sexual violence in the context of displacement, particularly **by members of the armed forces**.<sup>31</sup>

A June 2017 assessment mission reports that girls younger than 18 are sometimes taken by force by militia combatants and soldiers in Kamonia, Kasai.<sup>32</sup> For example, the population of Kabilengu village refuses to send its food vendors (both women and girls) to nearby markets out of fear that they could be raped.<sup>33</sup> On 15 May 2017, in Bana ba Ntumba, Dimbelenge, an 8-year-old child was reportedly raped by an 18-year-old aggressor.<sup>34</sup>

A local NGO active in the protection field reports 95 cases of rape in the Central Kasai province between August 2016 and June 2017. Of these, **58 cases were girls younger than 18**; the majority of the alleged perpetrators were members of the armed forces.<sup>35</sup> In the city of Kananga, the NGO African League for the Defense of Children and Student Rights (LIZADEEL) reports that **at least five to 10 cases of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) are recorded every time there is a clash**. Since the reinforcement of the military presence in the region in March 2017, hardly a week has passed without reports of at least one case of rape by armed men in uniform, not otherwise identified, and even by civilians.<sup>36</sup>

Some violations last several days. For example, on 18 January 2017, two women and five girls traveling by foot to the market through the bush from Kamako to Dundu (Kasai province) were raped by seven men; reports indicate that they were abused for more than two days.<sup>37</sup>

In similar crises, such as in northeast DRC or more recently in Tanganyika, sexual slavery is common for girls, either as concubines or as “wives” of combatants.<sup>38</sup> Sexual violence has also been used as a weapon of war. Thus far there is no account of either of these violations in the Kasai region.

## Standard 10 Psychosocial distress and mental disorders

Conflict exposes children in the region to **high levels of stress and psychosocial distress** (mostly due to extreme violence, including killing, maiming, torture, loss or separation of family members, sexual abuse, association with militia, and displacement, often in the unprotected bush). There are signs of psychosocial distress among the general population and among survivors in particular (e.g. wounded, displaced families that have lost one of their own), including sadness, lack of sleep, being overly alert, lack of appetite, aggression, loss of self-esteem, guilt, unexplained physical pain, etc. Psychosocial distress and mental disorders are perceived in the region as a curse, a burden, a punishment, which leads to the **stigmatization**, exclusion, rejection and neglect of people with psychosocial distress.<sup>39</sup> This perception can lead to problems of reintegration and consequently recidivism for children suffering from psychosocial distress and mental disorders.

Conflict and ongoing insecurity have contributed to creating a “culture of fear;” much of the population remains in a state of deep panic and shock, with **children showing signs of psychosocial distress including fear to be away from their parents**.<sup>40</sup>

In a joint assessment mission to Tshikapa, Kasai Province, in December 2016, 65% of interviewees indicated that children were “**in shock**” following severe disruptions of their daily lives due to conflict-related events, and were **afraid to leave their homes**. Psychosocial distress caused by such atrocities has been identified as an obstacle to the reintegration of children into school,<sup>41</sup> a phenomenon observed in the conflicts in northeast DRC.<sup>42</sup>

The large presence of children in the region’s militias has also contributed to the **hostility of some host communities towards children** of the same ethnic groups or from the same areas,<sup>43</sup> which can cause serious psychosocial and physical risks for children, and further complicates the process of normalization and reintegration in the community.

Humanitarian partners have begun recreational and educational activities aimed at addressing children’s psychosocial distress; however, there is not enough capacity to cover the full range of psychosocial assistance needs in the field.

### Standard 11 Children associated with armed forces and armed groups

**This conflict is characterized by the widespread use of children by militias.** The risk of recruitment of child soldiers is particularly high because of the combatants’ belief that children, especially girls, become invincible and invulnerable to bullets after a ritual “baptism.”<sup>44</sup> This belief, apparently shared by some members of government armed forces, could also be one of the reasons for the indiscriminate brutality of the military against children.

UNICEF estimates that **between 40 and 60% of militia combatants in the greater Kasai are children**,<sup>45</sup> often under the age of 15, which constitutes a war crime. Similarly, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) estimates that about 70% of the combatants are minors and reports that in the Kananga region 70% of the militia are between the ages of 10 and 20, of which 22% are girls.<sup>46</sup> During interviews conducted by the International Crisis Group (ICG) in Kananga, local observers noticed the presence of **5-year-old militia members** in the ranks of Kamuina Nsapu,<sup>47</sup> which was observed by local witnesses in Kamonia, in the south of the Kasai province.<sup>48</sup> Some witnesses also reported **drug use** among several militia members, many of them children, mainly for initiation rites or in preparing for battle.<sup>49</sup>

In April 2017, UNICEF estimated that **several thousand children had been recruited by the Kamuina Nsapu militia**, and many more were at risk of being recruited<sup>50</sup> and sent to battlefields with only rudimentary weapons, often made of wood.<sup>51</sup> Between August 2016 and 1 June 2017, MONUSCO documented more than **500 cases of girls and boys who were either used as combatants or human shields by local militias**, resulting in a significant number of casualties during clashes between militias and security services.<sup>52</sup> In addition to these immediate consequences, the large presence of children in the militias is sowing **hostility and mistrust towards displaced children** from pro-Kamuina Nsapu areas in some host communities.<sup>53</sup> For example, in the Mwene Ditu area of Lomami Province, following the hospitalization of four injured children, allegedly engaged in the militia, the community’s hostility directly influenced the administration of health care by the medical staff and the children’s safety at the hospital.<sup>54</sup> The **challenges of reintegration** into their communities

remains immense, with children abandoning the militias after perpetrating violent acts not daring to return home for fear of reprisals.

In joining the militias, children are often promised free education (even at university and abroad<sup>b</sup>) and future well-being. A preliminary UNICEF study aimed at identifying factors influencing children's mass enrollment in militias indicates the two driving factors as **"suffering" and the impossibility of financing their studies**, aggravated by problems at home including the death of one or both parents) and generally poor socioeconomic conditions.<sup>55</sup>

Child recruitment has become so intense with the spread of the conflict that **some parents have sent their children across the Angolan border** for fear that they would be forcibly recruited by the militias if they remained in DRC.<sup>56</sup> In Central Kasai, it has been reported that when parents oppose their children joining the militias, they are often threatened. Moreover, families are not allowed to mourn when they learn that their child has died in battle, nor can they claim the body.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, in similar crises, such as northeast DRC, it has been reported that children — especially girls — are used by militias to regularly **transport extremely heavy loads** of pillaged goods, to work in the fields controlled by the militias, to cook and to perform other domestic tasks such as the collection of wood and water.<sup>58</sup> Boys were more likely to be forced into conflict-related activities, usually as spies or fighters, but they were also used as carriers or servants.<sup>59</sup>

## Standard 12 Child labor

There is **little data on child labor** related to the conflict. There is some evidence that children have become a source of support for their families on a number of occasions,<sup>60</sup> particularly in displacement, but there is no data on the conditions or nature of child labor. The large number of unaccompanied and separated children also raises fears that these children could be exploited and abused.<sup>61</sup>

In the three Kasai provinces, and especially in Kasai and Kasai Central, there is a long history of **child exploitation**, particularly in **gold and diamond mines**. In 2013 these activities were concentrated in Tshikapa, Kamonia, Luiza, Demba, Luebo and Kazumba.<sup>62</sup> In these sites, children, sometimes as young as six, face extremely difficult working conditions, and are exposed to the risks of sexual violence and HIV/AIDS.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, according to surveys conducted by UNICEF and Save the Children in 2010, child miners are sometimes forced by their employers to take drugs to "remove fear" before going down in the mine, and to increase their working outputs.<sup>64</sup>

As the conflict spreads in these provinces and becomes more complex, it is important to obtain data on the status of children in these mines and their exploitation either by local actors or by the parties to the conflict.

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<sup>b</sup> Since school system reforms in the 1980s, the State has decreased funding for teachers' salaries, forcing parents to pay school fees that are beyond the means of large chunks of the population, especially for poor areas like the Kasai. As a result, many children found themselves unable to continue their primary and higher education, a fact that was indicated as a source of resentment and motivation to join the militia, and that is likely related to the many attacks against schools, forced to close "in solidarity" with the children who could not go there. See: UNICEF-BIE, *Données mondiales de l'éducation. 7e édition, 2010/11. République démocratique du Congo*. Version révisée, novembre 2010 ; UNICEF-Ministère de l'enseignement primaire, secondaire et professionnel, *Rapport national de l'évaluation de l'éducation pour tous (EPT) en République Démocratique du Congo*, January 2015 ; Sonia Rolley, *Le système « Kamuina Nsapu »* (Documents ajoutés), 15 June 2017, RFI

## Standard 13 Unaccompanied and separated children

The crisis in the Kasai has generated some 1.4 million IDPs, of which more than 60% are children. By April 2017, UNICEF had registered **4,180 children separated from their families**;<sup>65</sup> **this number undoubtedly underestimates the real situation** due to access difficulties. In May 2017, NRC estimated that in Kasai Central alone, **more than 860 children were unaccompanied**, excluding orphans.<sup>66</sup> The large presence of IDPs in the bush or in areas where humanitarian actors do not have access implies that the number of UASCs and the types of risks to which they are exposed are underestimated or unknown. At the end of June 2017, UNICEF registered 99 UASCs in Angolan refugee camps arriving from the Kasai, of which 71 have already been reunited with their families.<sup>67</sup>

**Unaccompanied and separated children are particularly vulnerable to being recruited** by militias and to being victims of violence and abuse.<sup>68</sup>

The majority of data available on UASCs is fragmentary and refers to children identified in the largest reception centers, such as those in major cities in the DRC or refugee camps in Angola.

## Standard 14 Justice for children

The **illegal detention of children** for their alleged association with militias is widespread, and their treatment in prisons is often reported as dangerous and degrading. Although Congolese law prohibits all forms of detention of children under the age of 14, there are reports referring to children in **state of “hébergement”** (lodging), a term used by the authorities to indicate the condition of children under 14 years of age in detention. For example, in the Tshikapa prison, seven children, — three of which were younger than 14 — were reported to be in “hébergement; after a few days, they were transferred to a makeshift cell in the Tshikapa prison due to lack of space adapted to their specific needs.<sup>69</sup>

A joint mission to Tshikapa in December 2016 reported that the **living conditions** of the imprisoned children were **very precarious** (sharing cell with adult detainees in the absence of a space designated for children, lack of food, water, basic sanitation, hygiene, health care). One of the child detainees, wounded in the arms, never received first aid.<sup>70</sup>

Claims of **arbitrary arrests** have been reported on numerous occasions. A February 2017 UNJHRO survey indicated that in Kananga, Dibaya, and Kazumba (Kasai province), 46 children had been arbitrarily arrested and illegally detained, and at least seven children had been victims of **forced disappearance**<sup>c</sup> by FARDC soldiers, on the basis of their alleged affiliation with the Kamuina Nsapu militia.<sup>71</sup> A report of April 2017 stated that 173 children (168 boys and five girls) had been detained in Kananga’s central prison between August 2016 and March 2017, and 60 were still in custody at the time of the report. In general, **more than 300 children have been arrested** in Kananga and Tshikapa since August 2016. Thanks to local child protection actors, only a dozen are still detained in Kananga,

<sup>c</sup> The *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance* (art. 2) defines forced disappearance as the “arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law.”

but the situation needs further support, particularly in Tshikapa. In June 2017, local NGO Les Aiglons reported the presence of 23 children detained in Kolwezi, Haut-Katanga, for alleged affiliation with Kamuina Nsapu, 12 of them between 13 and 15 years old,<sup>72</sup> indicating the continuous spread of the impact of the conflict.

## Education

### *Education needs exacerbated by the crisis*

The volatile security situation in Grand Kasai limits secure access to basic social services including education, affecting — even damaging or destroying — hundreds of schools, disrupting the education of thousands of children.

UNICEF estimates that **more than one in 10 primary school aged-children in the region can no longer attend school due to violence**,<sup>73</sup> and that approximately 310,000 girls and boys have had their education disrupted since the onset of the crisis. The insecurity that reigns over the area has led to the closure of countless schools, depriving the children of this part of the country of normal schooling over the course of the 2016-2017 schoolyear. A total of **937 attacks and allegations of military use of schools**<sup>d</sup> have been reported in the Grand Kasai,<sup>74</sup> jeopardizing back to school for the upcoming schoolyear, scheduled for September 2017.<sup>75</sup> As schools are on break until at least September, this period should be used to better understand the specific needs of affected children and educational personnel and to plan the response.

### Key findings

The review of existing reports on the humanitarian situation in Greater Kasai shows that most of the problems in EiE are related to access and learning environment. The majority of the needs identified are related to attacks on education, including against schools and education personnel. These setbacks have already contributed to school dropouts and the failure of many Congolese children within the school system.

### Access and learning environment

*“Children live in a state of shock as a result of the severe disruptions experienced; they’re afraid to leave their homes.” – OCHA, December 2017<sup>76</sup>*

*“The fact that 70% of militia members are between the ages of 10 and 20, of which 22% are girls, is also a problem in terms of class attendance.” – NRC, May 2017<sup>77</sup>*

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<sup>d</sup> According to the UN, “‘Military use of schools’ refers to a wide range of activities in which armed forces or armed groups use the physical space of a school in support of the military effort, whether temporarily or for a protracted period of time. The term includes, but is not limited to, the use of schools as military barracks, weapons and ammunition storage, command centers, defensive positioning, observation posts, firing positions, interrogation and detention centers, training facilities, and recruiting grounds. See : Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *Guidance Note on Security Council Resolution 1998*, May 2014

In some areas where schools are still functional, fewer than 10% of enrolled students attend school.<sup>78</sup> Damages to schools range from destroyed roofs, missing doors and windows, desks and chairs used for firewood by armed elements; others have been perforated by bullet holes<sup>79</sup> and others burnt to the ground.<sup>80</sup>

Access to schools is compromised for multiple reasons. The closure of schools due to insecurity, and repeated population displacement (students and teachers) prevents students and teachers from accessing education. There is also a lack of alternative education for children affected by the crisis.

Moreover, the militias recruit teachers and students of all ages into their ranks by force; in Kananga, Central Kasai, more than 10,600 children are out of school, nearly half of which are now enlisted in the militias.<sup>81</sup>

The INEE standard on protection and well-being — that learning environments are secure and safe and promote the protection and psychosocial well-being of learners, teachers and other education personnel — is not respected across the region at present. On the contrary, as a symbol of the state, school infrastructure is targeted by armed groups.<sup>82</sup> The Education Cluster estimates that **937 schools have been attacked or relegated to military use** since the beginning of the crisis 11 months ago, **404 of which have been confirmed** by field staff in the provinces of Kasai and Kasai Central alone. Some partners cited UN Resolution 1612, which prohibits any attack on schools as one of the six grave violations against children during armed conflicts. It should also be noted that the DRC ratified the Safe Schools Declaration in July 2016.<sup>83</sup>

In many cases, children armed with sticks, knives, and machetes, accompanied by a few adults with firearms, entered schools and ordered students and teachers to get out, threatening them with decapitation if they were to return.

Additionally, several missions (two June 2017 OCHA missions and two local organization missions — RHA (Rebuild Hope for Africa) and CEMEA in May 2017 in Kamonia, Kasai province) reported that many **displaced children were not integrating in host community schools** due to lack of available resources,<sup>84</sup> including school fees and school supplies, as well as psychosocial distress. Similarly, in a survey on children caught up in the conflicts in northeast DRC, as observed by MONUSCO, girls associated with the militia had repeatedly been unable to continue their education due to the great psychological distress suffered.<sup>85</sup>

Furthermore, **many schools serve as a makeshift accommodation for IDPs**,<sup>86</sup> even though the Education Cluster has guidance on IDPs sheltering in schools.<sup>87</sup>

Other schools have been closed since the end of 2016; in Kazumba alone, dozens of villages have been completely deserted.<sup>88</sup>

The start of the 2017-2018 schoolyear could be postponed; in the remotest areas, it is not certain that schools will make up the missing days, further depriving children of their right to education.

## Teaching and learning

*“Many of them [students] keep the traumas of the pangs of war.” – CEMEA, June 2017<sup>89</sup>*

The INEE teaching and learning domain includes the training, professional development, and support of teachers to teachers, as well as assessment of learning outcomes. Final examinations could not take place across the Grand Kasai. In a few pockets, exams did take place, especially in larger cities. The government was able to postpone exam dates in a few locations to allow children affected by the crisis to do catch-up classes. Nonetheless, thousands of children were not able to take their exams at the end of the schoolyear because of the insecurity and mass population displacement.<sup>90</sup> In remote isolated areas, an estimated **60,000 children eligible for the TENAFEP (primary school exam) were unable to complete the exam**,<sup>91</sup> thus compromising their eligibility to remain in the school system.

Further, psychosocial distress among children and educational staff weak children’s ability to learn and the ability of teachers to teach effectively.<sup>92</sup>

## Teachers and other education personnel

*“Faced with violence, teachers are reluctant to go to their schools.” – UNICEF, June 2017<sup>93</sup>*

*“In the interior of the province, certain teachers allegedly abandoned their schools to join the militia.” – NRC, May 2017<sup>94</sup>*

*“Remaining officials are very afraid to give inputs at this time, given the extreme gravity of the situation for schools in the field. All are displaced to the cities for fear of retaliation by the militias, which have ordered and insist on the closure of schools until further notice.” – RHA, March 2017<sup>95</sup>*

Analysis of secondary data shows **protection problems in regard to teachers and other education personnel**. There are a number of educational staff — especially teams of inspectors that were sent to prepare national examination centers — that have been subjected to **extortion, abuse, physical violence (assault, battery, including machete attacks), taken hostage or killed**.<sup>96</sup> Others have fled the fighting the hysteria that reigns.<sup>97</sup>

The fear of educational personnel to get to work has negative consequences on the Congolese education system.<sup>98</sup>

## Information gaps

Current humanitarian access constraints do not allow for an in-depth understanding of all aspects of the current crisis, its drivers, and short- and long-term impacts. Furthermore, at the moment there is not a dedicated institution tasked with registering the movements and status of the Kasai population, and it is often difficult to obtain formal authorization for missions in certain areas of the Kasai. Given existing insecurity, population displacements in areas currently under fire have not necessarily been documented. Additional information is needed for each of the sectors to paint an accurate picture.

Major information gaps concern the following subjects:

- Dangers and injuries (number and location of children injured, tortured, killed by the conflict);
- Psychosocial distress and mental disorders;
- Child labor;
- Justice for children;

- Education policy;
- Number and location of child SGBV survivors;
- Analysis of the impact of the crisis on girls;
- Analysis of intercommunity dynamics and dangers of ethnic cleansing;
- Existence and nature of human trafficking and international adoption of children;
- Further disaggregation of figures by type of child (IDP, host community, etc.) and geography;
- Numbers and location of unaccompanied and separated children (requires the establishment of a case management database to better identify and document these children so that an appropriate response can be put in place);
- Number and level of education of affected children, disaggregated by sex and age or age groups;
- The number and location of children injured, tortured, and killed by the conflict;
- Community support mechanisms, including existing care options for unaccompanied and separated children;
- The harmful practices of militias to initiate children into combat (like drugs);
- Number of classrooms affected, as existing statistics are only partial;
- An analysis of current data on student enrollment, in-service teachers, drop-out and absenteeism rates, as compared to pre-crisis data, to better understand the impacts of the crisis.

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