

# A Quest for Stability: An Appraisal of the United Nations' Efforts to Enhance Human Security in the Democratic Republic Congo

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## ABSTRACT

This article analyzed the United Nations' (UN) approach to ensuring human security among its members, with a focus on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It explored the various strategies that the UN has utilized to promote human security in the region, such as deploying peacekeeping operations, providing humanitarian assistance, engaging in conflict resolution and prevention, and pursuing international criminal justice efforts. The article also examined the challenges encountered by the UN in addressing the complex and prolonged conflict in the DRC and identifies some of the key successes and limitations of the UN's approach. The study underpinned by the theory of Human Security. The theory was developed by Mahbub ul Haq. Mahbub ul Haq introduced this idea in the 1994 in the Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The paper adopted a descriptive research design where human security matters are described the way they are articulated in the theatre of operations in DRC. Data was collected from secondary sources which were published journals and materials. The article contends that while the UN has been critical in defending people, promoting human rights, and preventing the escalation of violence in the DRC, more needs to be done to address the underlying causes of the conflict and promote sustainable peace and development in the region. To enhance the UN's efforts in ensuring human security in the DRC, the article proposes several recommendations, including promoting greater international cooperation, addressing the illicit trade in natural resources fueling the conflict, investing in the social and economic development of the country, and addressing the grievances of marginalized and vulnerable communities. The article concludes by advocating for continued international support and cooperation for the UN's endeavours to ensure human security among member states in the DRC conflict and beyond. The research design employed in this study is a descriptive design, relying on secondary data sources obtained through a desktop review of relevant literature.

**Key Words:** Security, United Nations, Congo, Conflict, Protection, Civilians, Human Security.

## INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has been grappling with conflict and insecurity since the mid-1990s, resulting in severe implications for human security (Mathys, 2017). This research paper aims to examine the United Nations (UN) approach to ensuring human security in the country amidst these challenges. The paper will analyze the UN's key initiatives, interventions, and strategies and evaluate their effectiveness in promoting human security. The persistence of armed conflict and violence in the DRC poses a significant challenge to the UN's efforts (Von Einsiedel, Bosetti, Cockayne, Salih, & Wan 2017). The DRC has enormous potential with its vast natural resources such as gold, diamonds, coltan, tin, uranium, and oil, as well as being the largest source of cobalt and the biggest copper producer in Africa (Adesola, 2015). Its immense biodiversity and large rainforest make it an essential carbon sink for greenhouse gases. With its hydropower potential, Congo has the capability of powering half of sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, Congo has a diverse climate and 80 million hectares of arable land, making it capable of feeding much of Africa. Moreover, the country's volcanoes, gorillas, and landscapes offer vast opportunities for the tourism industry. However, the country is among the world's poorest, with a high child mortality rate, malnutrition, and poor governance, which have led to abuses by armed groups

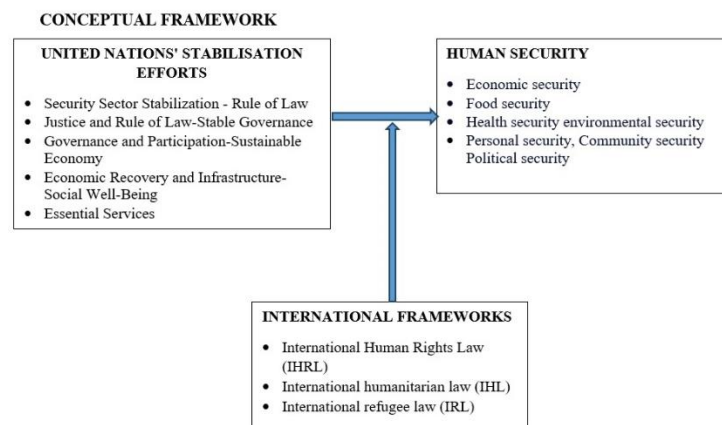
and the Congolese security forces. Over 13 million Congolese require emergency assistance due to recent violence, including food, shelter, sanitation, and education (Von Einsiedel et al 2017; Adesola, 2015).

The current conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has its roots in the mid-1990s when the country fought the First Congo War in the aftermath of the genocide in neighbouring Rwanda (Von Einsiedel et al 2017). The conflict involved several armed groups, including Rwandan Hutus who crossed the border. The Congolese government failed to control these groups, and war eventually erupted, threatening neighbouring populations. From 1998 to 2003, government forces supported by Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe battled rebels backed by Rwanda and Uganda in what is referred to as the Second Congo War. While the death toll varies widely, estimates suggest that it may have exceeded three million people. Despite a peace agreement in 2002 and the establishment of a transitional government in 2003, violence continues to be perpetrated by armed groups against civilians in the eastern region. The root causes of this ongoing violence are weak institutions, poor governance, and rampant corruption (Van Leeuwen, Nindorera, Kambale Nzweve, & Corbijn, 2020).

Following the Second Congo War, one of the most notable rebel groups to emerge was the March 23 Movement (M23), primarily made up of ethnic Tutsis (Shepherd, 2023). The group rebelled against the Congolese government, citing a breach of a 2009 peace deal. The UN Security Council authorized an offensive brigade under the mandate of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) to support the DRC state military in its fight against M23. Even though the Congolese army and UN peacekeepers defeated the group in 2013, other armed groups have since emerged (Krahmann, & Leander, 2019). Besides MONUSCO, numerous efforts have been made to achieve peace and end the violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In 1999, the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement was signed, which aimed to bring an end to the Second Congo War. However, the agreement was not fully implemented, and the violence continued. In 2002, the Sun City Agreement was signed, leading to the creation of a transitional government and a new constitution. The agreement was considered a significant step towards peace, but the violence persisted, particularly in the eastern region of the country (Krahmann, & Leander, 2019).

In 2012, the Framework for Peace, Security and Cooperation was signed by 11 African countries, including the DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda. The framework aimed to address the underlying causes of conflict and improve regional cooperation. Nevertheless, the framework has encountered obstacles, and violence has continued in the eastern region of the DRC. Despite these efforts, violence and conflict continue to ravage the DRC, particularly in the eastern region. For lasting peace and stability to be achieved in the country, the root causes of the conflict, including poor governance, weak institutions, and corruption, must be addressed (Krahmann, & Leander, 2019). Despite heavy investment by the United Nations through MONUSCO, the conflicts persist. This article analyzes the United Nations (UN) approach to ensuring human security among its members, with a focus on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It explores the various strategies that the UN has utilized to promote human security in the region, such as deploying peacekeeping operations, providing humanitarian assistance, engaging in conflict resolution and prevention, and pursuing international criminal justice efforts.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Stabilization is a range of activities that is brought about through partners allies and a whole of government response. The wide range of Stabilization activities takes place before during and after conflict. The UN mission in Congo United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) is engaged in implementing a number of programmes that are aimed at achieving human security for the individual people of DRC. These activities include: Security Sector Stabilization – to ensure the rule of law; Justice and Rule of Law- to ensure stable governance; Governance and participation- to ensure a sustainable economy; Economic recovery and infrastructure- to ensure communities have social well-being; Essential services meant to ensure that population enjoy fulfilling life. Once these programmes are achieved optimally, they will lead to human security which encompasses: Economic security, Food security, Health security, Environmental security, Personal security, Community security and Political security. Moreover, the international legal frameworks developed by the UN which include: International Human Rights Law (IHRL), International humanitarian law (IHL), International refugee law (IRL) are relied upon to provide the roadmap on how to implement these stabilization programmes to help towards achieving human security.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Human Security Theory**

The study underpinned by the theory of Human Security. The theory postulates that security of an individual is paramount in the contemporary world unlike in the past when security of a state was of much focus. The theory was developed by Mahbub ul Haq. Mahbub ul Haq introduced this idea in the 1994 in the Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The human security approach is a proven analytical and planning framework that supports more comprehensive and preventive responses by the United Nations, cutting across sectors, developing contextually relevant solutions, and adopting partnerships to help realize a world free from fear, want and indignity.

For many people, today's world is an insecure place, full of threats on many fronts. Protracted crises, violent conflicts, natural disasters, persistent poverty, epidemics and economic downturns impose hardships and undercut prospects for peace, stability, and sustainable development. Such crises are complex, entailing multiple forms of human insecurity. When they overlap, they can grow exponentially, spilling into all aspects of people's lives, destroying entire communities and crossing national borders. This theory applies to this study in the sense that, the UN mission in DRC is continuously working towards stabilization and attainment of human security in Congo. The theory takes care of all aspects of human security as a variable in this study.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study utilized secondary data obtained from a desktop review of relevant literature. A descriptive research design was used to analyze various United Nations (UN) efforts aimed at resolving the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The research provides a detailed account of the UN's initiatives towards bringing about peace and stability in the DRC. The study underpinned by the theory of Human Security. The theory postulates that security of an individual is paramount in the contemporary world unlike in the past when security of a state was of much focus. The theory was developed by Mahbub ul Haq. The study underpinned by the theory of Human Security. The theory was developed by Mahbub ul Haq. Mahbub ul Haq introduced this idea in the 1994 in the Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The paper adopted a descriptive research design where human security matters are described the way they are articulated in the theatre of operations in DRC. Data was collected from secondary sources which were published journals and materials.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Key Achievements in Efforts to Stabilize Democratic Republic of Congo**

This research paper found out that the United Nations has played a critical role in ensuring human security among member states in the context of the DRC conflict. The UN has adopted a multifaceted approach, involving military, police and civilian components, to address the conflict and promote human security in the country. The

UN's key initiatives, interventions, and strategies have centered on resolving the sources of conflict, safeguarding innocent people, and fostering lasting harmony (Karlsrud, 2019).

The UN's military component has played a critical role in addressing the security challenges facing the country. MONUSCO has been instrumental in protecting civilians, supporting national security forces in their efforts to disarm and demobilize armed groups, and monitoring human rights violations (Kälin & Künzli, 2018). Moreover, MONUSCO has been involved in mediation efforts aimed at resolving the conflict and promoting sustainable peace (Autesserre, 2010). The UN's civilian component, on the other hand, has devoted its efforts towards resolving the underlying root causes of conflict and fostering lasting harmony by championing a robust political peace process. This has been achieved through initiatives such as the UN Secretary-General Special Representative for the African Great Lakes Area, which has played a critical role in facilitating dialogue among key stakeholders and promoting regional cooperation (United Nations, 2021). Moreover, the UN's humanitarian agencies have provided critical assistance to affected populations, including food aid, healthcare and shelter (Karlsrud, 2019).

The protection of civilians has been a critical component of the UN's efforts to ensure human security in the DRC. The conflict in the DRC has had a devastating impact on civilians, resulting in widespread human rights abuses and displacement. In response, the UN has established a number of initiatives and mechanisms aimed at protecting civilians, including the MONUSCO Protection of Civilians strategy, which focuses on preventing and responding to threats against civilians (United Nations, 2019). Moreover, the UN's human rights agencies have played a critical role in documenting human rights violations, advocating for justice, and providing support to victims (Kälin & Künzli, 2018).

Moreover, the UN has implemented a number of strategies to promote human security in DR Congo over the past three decades. One of the most notable efforts was the deployment of the UN peacekeeping mission, known as MONUC, in 1999. In the years since its establishment, MONUC achieved various successes. These include playing a significant role in facilitating the signing of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in 1999, which effectively ended the Second Congo War (Otunnu, 2014). Additionally, MONUC provided logistical and technical support to the Democratic Republic of Congo's first democratic elections in 2006 and helped ensure a peaceful transfer of power from former President Joseph Kabila to President Felix Tshisekedi in 2019. MONUC has also worked to disarm and demobilize several armed groups operating in the country, as well as to reintegrate former combatants back into civilian life. Additionally, the mission has played a crucial role in protecting civilians, particularly in areas affected by conflict. MONUC has deployed troops to protect civilians from attacks by armed groups and has helped to provide humanitarian assistance to those in need. Furthermore, MONUC has supported efforts to strengthen the rule of law and promote human rights in the country. The mission has provided technical assistance to the Congolese justice system and has helped to investigate and prosecute cases of human rights abuses (Caula Americo Dos Reis, 2019).

Over time, the mission evolved into MONUSCO, with a focus on supporting the Congolese government's efforts to stabilize the country and address the root causes of conflict. Since its inception, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) has made significant strides in promoting peace, security, and stability in the country (Nduru, 2017). One of its notable successes is the support it provided during the 2018 presidential and legislative elections, where MONUSCO provided logistical and technical assistance, and helped to ensure the polls were conducted transparently and peacefully.

United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC has also been instrumental in protecting civilians, particularly in areas affected by conflict. The mission has deployed troops to protect civilians from attacks by armed groups and has provided humanitarian aid to those in need. The disarmament and demobilization of armed groups in the country have been among the mission's top priorities. MONUSCO has facilitated the reintegration of former combatants into civilian life, which has helped in reducing violence and conflict in the country (Bashengezi, 2018).

Furthermore, MONUSCO has contributed to the fight against human rights abuses and worked to strengthen the rule of law in the country. The mission has offered technical support to the Congolese justice system, investigated cases of human rights violations, and facilitated the prosecution of offenders. In addition, MONUSCO played a



significant role in supporting the Congolese government's efforts to control and contain the Ebola outbreak in the country. It provided logistical support and technical assistance to health workers on the ground (Bashengezi, 2018).

The UN has also supported efforts to strengthen governance and promote human rights in DR Congo. For instance, the UN has provided technical assistance to the Congolese government to reform the security sector, enhance the justice system, and improve the rule of law. The UN has also established several mechanisms to investigate human rights abuses and provide accountability, including the Group of Experts on the DRC and the International Criminal Court.

Moreover, the UN has collaborated with other international and regional organizations and civil society actors to address the humanitarian crisis in DR Congo. The UN has provided humanitarian assistance to millions of people affected by conflict and displacement, including food, shelter, and medical support. The UN has also worked to promote sustainable development and reduce poverty in DR Congo by supporting programs in areas such as education, health, and agriculture. Overall, the UN's strategies in DR Congo have aimed to address the underlying causes of conflict and promote sustainable peace and development in the country.

To summarize the key successes of the UN's engagement in DRC, the UN has been actively engaged in promoting democratic processes and institutions in the DRC, including supporting the country's 2006 and 2011 presidential and legislative elections. The UN has also supported the development of a national disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programme for former combatants, which is essential for promoting sustainable peace and security in the country (UNDP, 2017). Additionally, the UN has been working to strengthen the capacity of the DRC's institutions of governance and civil society organizations, particularly in the areas of justice and human rights. For example, the UN has supported the establishment of specialized courts to address severe transgressions of international humanitarian law, including war crimes, as well as providing training and technical assistance to judicial actors.

## **Challenges Faced by the UN in Promoting Stability in DR Congo**

### ***Lack of Commitment and Determination***

The UN has faced significant challenges in promoting stability in the DRC for many years. Despite attempts to stabilize DRC as shown in the previous section, a number of variables have made it difficult for the UN to guarantee human security in the DRC. The main reason for the ongoing conflict in the DRC is the lack of commitment and determination from important stakeholders, both inside and outside the country, to tackle the root causes of the conflict and work towards sustainable peace (Kälin & Künzli, 2018). The UN has been working closely with the government and other stakeholders to address this issue. For example, the UN has been advocating for regional cooperation to address the cross-border dimensions of the conflict and has been engaging with civil society and other stakeholders to promote social cohesion and support peace-building efforts.

Jackson (2011) highlights the crucial role of international collaboration in addressing the conflict, especially in combating the illegal exploitation of natural resources that sustains the violence. Additionally, significant investment is needed to promote the social and economic development of the country, and to address the grievances of marginalized and vulnerable populations.

### ***Greed and Resentment***

Berdal and Malone (2000) explore the concepts of greed and resentment employed as economic weapons in civil wars, which can help understand the drivers of violence in the DRC. In the DRC, natural resources have been a major source of conflict, with armed groups controlling mines and other extractive industries for self-financial gain. Natural riches abound in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Among the minerals available in DRC are: gold, diamonds, tin, cobalt, copper, and coltan. However, the control and exploitation of these resources have fueled violence and conflict in the country. Bob (2011) further illustrates this point by examining the marketing of conflict in the DRC and the role of economic interests in perpetuating the conflict. He argues that these economic interests provide a strong incentive for armed groups to continue fighting, as control over

resources becomes a means of financing the war. Furthermore, the exploitation of natural resources in the DRC has resulted in significant environmental damage and the displacement of local communities, which has further exacerbated the conflict. Bob's analysis emphasizes the requirement to handle the underlying economic causes of strife in the DRC, in addition to military and political efforts to bring about peace and stability.

### ***Persistent Armed Conflict and Violence***

Ahmed and Mbonimpa (2018) provide an in-depth analysis of the UN's efforts to promote human security in the DRC, including the challenges and limitations faced by the organization. The conflict in the DRC is highly complex, involving multiple armed groups with diverse interests and agendas. These groups are often involved in the exploitation of natural resources, such as minerals and timber, which provides them with a source of funding for their activities. This complex situation has made it challenging for the UN to effectively engage with all parties and address the root causes of conflict. However, the UN has been adopting a multifaceted approach to address the conflict and promote human security in the country.

### ***Lack of Sufficient Resources***

Another challenge facing the UN in promoting human security in the DRC is the lack of resources. The UN's efforts in the DRC are heavily dependent on funding from member states. However, funding shortfalls have often limited the UN's ability to effectively implement its initiatives and interventions in the country. As a result, the UN has struggled to maintain stability in the country due to a shortage of funding, personnel, and equipment necessary to effectively carry out its mission. This has limited the UN's ability to protect civilians, enforce ceasefires, and disarm armed groups. The UN has also faced logistical challenges in transporting troops and supplies to remote areas of the DRC. As a result, the UN has had to rely on the support of other countries and international organizations to supplement its resources, which has been inconsistent and insufficient. The lack of resources has therefore contributed to the ongoing conflict and instability in the DRC. As a result, the UN has been actively advocating for increased financial support from member states to support its activities in the DRC (dos Reis, n.d.).

### ***Complexities of Eastern DRC Theatre***

The Eastern DRC has multiple armed groups and militias that have been fighting for control of the region's vast natural resources, including minerals such as coltan and gold. Some of the most notable armed groups in the area include the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), the Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo (ACPLS), and the Allied Democratic Forces/National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF/NALU). Other groups include Mai-Mai Mongol, National Democratic Council (NDC), Mai-Mai Kifuafua, People's Armed Forces of Congo (PARECO), Patriotic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (FPLC), Front for Patriotic Resistance in Ituri (FRPI), Mai-Mai Yakutumba, Mai-Mai Simba, Mai-Mai Kiritikitcho, Revolutionary Front of Burundi (FRF), Patriotic Forces for Justice in Congo (FPJC), and National Liberation Forces (FNL) of Burundi (Lopez, Awawi, & Salcedo-Albarán, 2017).

These groups often operate independently and are difficult to disarm, as they are deeply entrenched in the local communities. Another challenge is the weak state institutions and governance structures in the region, which have allowed for corruption, impunity, and human rights abuses to persist. The lack of government authority has also made it challenging for the UN peacekeeping mission to establish a stable and secure environment in the region. Accordingly, the UN has faced significant challenges in addressing the conflict in the Eastern DRC due to the complex nature of the conflict, including the involvement of multiple armed groups, the presence of foreign actors, and the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

## **CONCLUSION**

Despite noteworthy accomplishments, the UN has faced several difficulties in ensuring human security in the DRC. One of these challenges is the persistence of armed conflict and violence, which has made it difficult for the UN to effectively engage with all parties and address the root causes of conflict. The presence of natural resources, such as minerals and timber, has fueled the conflict by providing a source of funding for armed groups

(Autesserre, 2010). Moreover, the lack of political will and commitment by key actors, both within and outside the DRC, to address the root causes of conflict and promote sustainable peace has hindered the UN's efforts (Jackson, 2011).

The UN has been involved in efforts to stabilize the DRC since late 1990s. One of their biggest successes was the deployment of the MONUSCO in 2010 succeeding MONUC. MONUSCO has been instrumental in providing security and support to the Congolese government, as well as working to protect civilians from violence and human rights abuses. The UN has also worked to disarm and demobilize armed groups, promote the rule of law and good governance, and provide humanitarian assistance to those affected by conflict. Additionally, the UN has been involved in supporting the DRC's electoral processes, including the peaceful transfer of power in 2019. While there is still much work to be done, these efforts by the UN have helped to bring about greater stability and security in the DRC.

David Mozersky and Ann Mosely Lesch (2018) emphasize the need for sustained international engagement in addressing the main reasons for strife, including economic factors including the use of natural resources. They argue that sustainable peace requires not only addressing the immediate security concerns, but also investing in the long-term, social and economic development of conflict-affected regions. It is also clear that a more comprehensive and integrated approach is needed to address the underlying drivers of conflict and insecurity in the DRC. This includes not only addressing the immediate security concerns, but also the long-term social, economic, and political factors that perpetuate the conflict. Moreover, there is need for greater cooperation and collaboration among all stakeholders, including the UN, member states, civil society, and local communities, in working towards a common vision of peace and security in the DRC. By adopting such an approach, it may be possible to achieve a more sustainable and durable peace in the country, one that upholds the human security of all its citizens.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

First, the DRC conflict requires a thorough and integrated strategy to handle the underlying causes of the conflict as elucidated in the results. This approach should involve a combination of military, political, and socio-economic interventions aimed at addressing the underlying grievances and issues that fuel the conflict. The UN should work closely with member states and other stakeholders to strengthen existing mechanisms and initiatives aimed at promoting peace and security, while also exploring new avenues for engagement and cooperation. Balmelli & Smith (2019) suggest that a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding in the DRC must be based on a strategic and integrated vision that considers the underlying structural and systemic factors that contribute to the conflict.

Secondly, there is a need to enhance the protection of civilians in the DRC. While the UN has established several mechanisms and initiatives aimed at protecting civilians, such as MONUSCO and OHCHR, more needs to be done to ensure their effectiveness. Among the efforts should be strengthening the mechanisms mandates, resources, and operational capacity, as well as improving their coordination with other actors on the ground. Alston & Abbott, (2010) postulates that the UN has established a range of mechanisms to protect civilians, but these mechanisms often lack the necessary resources and support to be effective. In the context of the DRC, there is a need to strengthen the capacity of MONUSCO and OHCHR to protect civilians and address human rights abuses, including by improving their coordination with other actors on the ground.

Moreover, there is need for greater international engagement and cooperation in promoting human security in the DRC. The conflict in the DRC has far-reaching implications, both for the society at large and the area, and as such, requires a coordinated and collaborative response. The UN should work closely with member states and other stakeholders to strengthen existing partnerships and networks, while also exploring new avenues for cooperation and engagement. Luck & Doyle (2012) emphasize that effective responses to conflict situations require the active engagement and cooperation of the international community, as well as the participation and consent of the affected states and populations. They further emphasize the importance of coordinated efforts among different actors and stakeholders, including the business sector, civic society, and regional groups, in addressing the complex and multidimensional challenges posed by conflicts such as that in the DRC.

In the same vein, the UN should prioritize the participation and inclusion of local communities in the UN's initiatives and interventions aimed at promoting human security in the DRC. As noted in the discussions above, the UN has recognized the importance of engaging with local stakeholders in tackling the underlying reasons for strife and promoting sustainable peace. However, there is still much work to be done to ensure that local communities are actively involved in decision-making processes, particularly those that directly impact their lives and well-being. To achieve this, the UN should prioritize the inclusion of local communities in its planning, implementation, and monitoring of initiatives and interventions aimed at promoting human security in the DRC.

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