

Central Africa Report

Fighting behind the frontlines Army wives in the eastern DRC

Maria Eriksson Baaz and Judith Verweijen

Summary

The wives of soldiers of the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC, Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo) may not be very visible, but they are an integral part of the military. They live with soldiers, and often their children, in and around military camps and deployment sites – including in the most insecure zones. The military, however, defines them as civilians and does not provide them with any benefits packages, nor does it invest much in facilities like health care centres. Together with soldiers' low and irregular pay, this causes army wives to struggle to make a living.

WE HAVE TRAVELLED a lot on these frontlines. A lot. Many have died. The soldiers have finished here. Some in combat, but many simply out of hardship and hunger [*pasi na nzala*]. And many of us women have died too, and our children ... We are really suffering here – far from home in a foreign land [*mboka ya batu*]. How can we survive here? Should we start to go naked or start stealing? We are here, but the government says it does not know us. It says it does not know us [*bayebi biso te*], the wives of soldiers.¹

These are the words of Chantal,² the 60-year-old wife of a Congolese army lieutenant stationed in Uvira territory, South Kivu. Both she and her husband originate from Equateur, in the western part of the country. For the past 40 years Chantal has been on the move with her husband, following him on his various deployments. During this period she has not been able to visit her family back home and has no contact with them.

She explains that in the time of Mobutu, when her husband's service began, there were no cell phones and as a result she lost contact. Going back to visit is impossible since the journey is very long and the family has no money. Her husband should have been retired a long time ago but, since there are no guaranteed retirement funds and they cannot live

without his meagre salary, he keeps working. Consequently, Chantal is forced to continue to live ‘in foreign lands’, as she describes her status as an outsider. While emphasising her daily hardships, Chantal still believes that she has been lucky compared with many of her friends: ‘At least my husband is still alive, so I am not alone.’

While Chantal’s story is unusual in the light of the extensive time – four decades – she has spent following her husband on various deployments, many FARDC wives share similar experiences and living conditions. Due to the difficult service conditions of army personnel and the absence of family benefits packages, many spouses are either isolated from their husbands for years or follow them on deployment to insecure zones, often with their children.

Officially the FARDC has a policy of *mouvement sans famille*, implying that families are not allowed to follow their husbands on deployment into operational zones

Officially the FARDC has a policy of *mouvement sans famille*, implying that families are not allowed to follow their husbands on deployment into operational zones. However, in reality, many do so, although practices vary according to the military region and unit. Frequent rotations of army units mean that many army wives lead a nomadic existence, exacerbating already dire living conditions. Despite these hardships, army wives are by no means passive victims. Most struggle courageously to maintain a basic standard of living for their families, engaging in a range of income-earning activities. In doing so, they make use of their status as army wives, for example, claiming privileges like tax exemptions or engaging in illicit activities.

Sources

This report addresses the situation of army wives and widows in the DR Congo, in particular, but not exclusively, in the war-torn east. It is based on data collected in October 2014 in Uvira territory,³ where 75 military wives were interviewed, both individually and in groups.

Data were also gathered from more than 100 civilians, through focus groups, key informant interviews and semi-structured surveys of small-scale economic operators. However, the report also draws on data and insights obtained through years of research, conducted for a variety of other research projects, into the FARDC and civilian-military interactions.⁴

The report is structured as follows: the remainder of this section provides a number of conceptual clarifications. The first part presents a snapshot of the FARDC, which allows the data to be placed in context. We subsequently describe the main dilemma army wives face, namely, whether to stay behind or follow their husbands on deployment. This is followed by a discussion of the particular challenges faced by women who decide to go with their husbands. The next sections focus on army wives’ housing conditions, their relationships with civilians and the various strategies they use to earn a living. We then discuss the specific difficulties faced by army



MANY ARMY WIVES LEAD A NOMADIC EXISTENCE, EXACERBATING ALREADY DIRE LIVING CONDITIONS

widows. The report ends with a discussion of the most important policy areas that need to be addressed in order to improve the situation of army wives and their families.

Army wives: some clarifications

When discussing army wives some initial clarifications are necessary. First, the fact that this report focuses on wives does not imply that there are no male army spouses. However, male spouses were not encountered at any of the research sites. Only a small portion of FARDC personnel are women – slightly more than 2.5% in 2013.⁵ Furthermore, since many female soldiers are married to other army personnel (and official same sex partnerships do not exist) there are not many male civilian spouses.

Second, it is important to emphasise that the category of ‘military wives’ is very diverse, encompassing women from different socio-economic and geographic backgrounds, with varying professions and lifestyles. The wives of superior officers live in conditions that differ radically from those of the wives of the rank and file, who belong to the poorest strata of Congolese society. There is no natural solidarity between these groups. As the wife of a soldier explained: ‘The wives of soldiers are divided. Those of officers are very proud [*kiburi*], they always place themselves above the others.’⁶ While this report considers military wives in general, the focus is on the wives of lower-ranking officers and the rank and file.

There are also important differences in the nature of these women’s relationships with army personnel. While some women are formally married, meaning that their husbands have paid the dowry to the woman’s family (registration at the Civil Registry is rare), others are more like mistresses or girlfriends, which does not exclude the couple having had children together.

Army wives should not be understood as a separate group whose daily struggles are isolated from those of their husbands

Like army personnel in many other contexts globally, it is common for FARDC soldiers with partners back home to develop relationships with women at deployment sites. Although the situation differs from case to case, the relationship with these women is often broken off when the soldiers are redeployed elsewhere. Such local girlfriends, who remain in or close to their area of origin, differ in status from

soldiers’ long-term partners and are often not recognised as spouses by the administration of army units. While, in this report, we simply refer to ‘army wives’ to designate the group as a whole, this wide range of often shifting statuses should be kept in mind.

Third, while the report considers the situation of army wives, it does not only present the voices of these women themselves. In order to present a more balanced picture and go beyond simple narratives of victimhood,⁷ the report is also based on interviews with soldiers and civilians. Moreover, army wives should not be understood as a strictly separate group whose earning strategies and daily struggles are isolated from those of their husbands or the civilians among whom they live. By demonstrating this interconnectedness the report emphasises the need for a holistic and relational approach that places these women firmly in both their civilian and military contexts.

The predicament of the Congo’s military

The FARDC is a young military force. Born in 2003 out of a difficult merger of former warring factions, it had a troubled start. Constant influxes of rebel soldiers, factional strife, poor management and strong ties to extra-military political-commercial networks undermined command, control and cohesion.⁸

These growing pains were compounded by an unfortunate heritage: the Congo has no tradition of well-organised and well-functioning armed forces that offer citizens security.⁹ Furthermore, deployment to ongoing combat operations in the war-torn east has consistently diverted resources and attention from reform efforts.

Despite these difficulties, there have been a number of achievements in recent years, such as the adoption of a new Code of Conduct, the (re)opening of various military training centres and investments in military justice. Yet the effectiveness of the FARDC continues to be limited, mitigating its track record in keeping civilians secure. One reason for this is a lack of resources.

The FARDC has only minimal infrastructure such as barracks or health care facilities and service and social conditions are poor. Like wages in other state services in the Congo, those in the army are very low, ranging at present between US\$85 and 100 a month.¹⁰ While there have been salary increases over the years, the present sum is far from sufficient for even a small family to live off. Moreover, payments continue to be irregular and military personnel frequently go unpaid for two or three months.¹¹

In addition to limited and irregular wages, there are no social benefits, family allowances or pensions. Furthermore, soldiers have to pay for a portion of health care and other basic

necessities themselves. Basic items needed for everyday life and professional functioning, such as soap, basins for washing, blankets and phone credits, are not provided by the military. In combination with other factors, including erratic accountability systems, weak unit cohesion and limited training, such poor service conditions cause members of the FARDC to regularly behave badly. Civilians report incidents of extortion, illegal taxation, arbitrary arrests and physical abuses such as torture and rape. However, the nature and frequency of these abuses differ according to the military unit and context.¹²

Despite being a source of insecurity at times, the presence of the FARDC helps keep the plethora of armed groups that litter the country's east at bay. This was evidenced in 2012-2013, when massive numbers of troops were deployed in operations against the rebel movement M23 in North Kivu. Where the military withdrew, armed groups rapidly took over the vacated spaces. In many areas abandoned by the military, people indicated that they would prefer the FARDC to return, even though they feared its behaviour.¹³

Hence, while the army has been cited as engaging in abuses, it is also recognised as providing basic protection. This reflects the ambivalence of civilians' attitudes towards the FARDC, which is seen as difficult to live with, but often more difficult to live without.

While there is a great need for army reform, neither the DRC government nor international donors have, thus far, pursued a coherent reform agenda based on a long-term strategy and integrated vision. Rather, military policies have been ad hoc, inconsistent and poorly coordinated, in part because they have often been induced or diverted by military crises.

Why would women expose themselves to such dangers and choose a difficult and unstable nomadic existence?

Crucially, reform efforts have rarely been backed by sustained political and financial commitment. Furthermore, attention to structural reforms, like logistics and administration, has been modest. Rather, both donors and the government have prioritised classic train-and-equip approaches.¹⁴

Finally, army reform has paid relatively little attention to improving the conditions of military personnel and their families. This is an important omission, as the effectiveness of other reforms partly depends on progress in this area: as long as soldiers are preoccupied with surviving and the fate of their families, interventions like training and education will have a limited impact.

A difficult dilemma: stay or leave?

As observed above, the FARDC's official policy of *mouvement sans famille* is generally not respected, leading to a situation where many women are present near the frontlines.

Why would women expose themselves to such dangers and choose a difficult and unstable nomadic existence? There are no easy answers to this question, as many considerations play a role, often in varying combinations. These relate to both 'push factors', or circumstances that force army wives to quit their home area, and 'pull

\$500

THE COST OF A ROUND TRIP FROM KINSHASA TO THE EAST. THIS IS MORE THAN FIVE TIMES THE MONTHLY SALARY OF MANY SOLDIERS

factors', which make following their husbands on deployment a more attractive option than staying at home.

One of the most important push factors is the difficulties soldiers, especially those deployed in the east, experience in obtaining leave. Because of the ongoing war and military operations, superiors tend to be reluctant to let personnel go. Despite the existence of formal guidelines, the discretion to grant leave ultimately lies with individual commanders.

Even when they are given leave, soldiers may still not be able to visit their families. Those who live far away often cannot bear the costs of travel, or cannot complete the journey within the allotted time. The degeneration of road infrastructure in the Congo has made it impossible to travel overland from the eastern to the western part of the country and airfare is relatively expensive. A round trip from Kinshasa to the east may cost more than US\$500, which is over five times the monthly salary of many soldiers. Moreover, there are no transport allowances for leave. Therefore, soldiers from the western Congo deployed to the east are often not able to return to their zone of origin to visit their families. This leads to a situation that many call *divorce forcé* (forced divorce).

Some soldiers have not seen their families for over a decade. For example, soldiers in the naval unit at Lake Albert, deployed there in 2004 from Kinshasa, said they had never been able to go home. As a lower-ranked officer explained:

We arrived when we were still too small, too young [encore trop petit] ... and now we have become grown up [devenus trop grands], but we do not see our families, we have children and family that have never seen their fathers nor their brothers ... Many of us have married here again. We do not even know our wives anymore.¹⁵

Because of these difficulties, many army wives know that if they do not follow their husbands on deployment they are unlikely ever to see them again or to receive any income. For a variety of reasons, including low salaries, debt and competing priorities, soldiers often send money home very irregularly. In some cases they even stop sending it altogether. The fact that transferring money is problematic, especially in the most remote deployment areas, further increases the problem.

Fearing that soldiers might stop sending money home, family members and in-laws often pressurise army wives to follow their husbands. The pressure is sometimes aggravated by anger over the non- or partial payment of dowries. Another reason why families prefer army wives to leave is the stigma associated with having a daughter married to a soldier. Like the military, army wives (at least those of the rank and file) tend to have quite a bad reputation in the Congo, being seen as ill-behaved

and immoral. For the same reason, military wives experience difficulties in finding new civilian husbands once they have been abandoned or widowed.

In addition to these 'push factors' there are several pull factors. Many of the women interviewed said they simply prefer to be near their husband because they love them. In addition, they want their children to grow up with a father. These are also important reasons why soldiers encourage their wives to follow them on deployment.

Army wives follow their husbands on deployment for various financial and family-related reasons, but not all of them end up at the frontlines

Army personnel generally displayed a strong commitment to taking care of their children. As one major commented: 'My children need a father. When they do not see their father for so long, they become alienated from us. They lose paternal affection.'¹⁶ Many soldiers also worry that their wives will start cheating on them if they leave them behind. According to one corporal from Kinshasa, stationed with his wife in Goma:

Life here is hard for us, particularly my wife. She misses her family back home, but I brought her with me. You know, women are weak [*faible*]. We men are also weak in that respect, but women are even weaker I think. If you leave her for too long, she will start meeting other men.¹⁷

Many of the army wives who have followed their husbands gave similar reasons, saying they had done so partly because they feared that their husbands would otherwise meet other women and abandon them. As a wife of a sergeant in Uvira put it:

Leaving my husband? Never. Don't you know how men are? Too light-footed/like prostitutes [*kindumba trop*], especially soldiers. Even if you live together they find it hard to resist the temptations with other women. If you do not follow, they will find another woman and forget you and the children.¹⁸

In sum, army wives follow their husbands on deployment for various financial, affective and family-related reasons. But not all of them end up at the frontlines. The more well-to-do officers often install their families in bigger and relatively safer towns, such as Goma and Bukavu. Moreover, some region, sector or unit commanders try to prevent that women follow their husbands to the most dangerous areas, encouraging them to stay in towns nearby. This enables these women to visit

their husbands occasionally to spend time with them, collect a part of their pay and bring them food and items from town. Other commanders are more tolerant, and do allow women, usually spouses of rank-and-file soldiers with few means, to live in the operational zones.

The hardships of continuous rotation

Both the army wives who follow their husbands and those who stay behind face a number of challenges. While this section focuses on wives who are continuously on the move, their living conditions are not necessarily more difficult than those of the women who remain behind.

In the course of our research we encountered many women in the latter category who struggle to make ends meet and have very little or no contact with their husbands. One army wife in Kinshasa, who opted to stay because she and her husband were worried about the safety of their children in the volatile east, said she now regretted the choice. She had not seen her husband for seven years and had received no money from him for the past two years. What is worse, she had heard from others that he had married another woman in the east. None of her six children went to school and she was soon to be thrown out of the military camp where she was staying for free.¹⁹

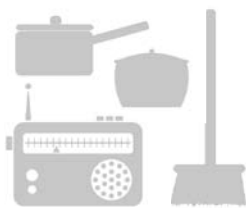
Aside from the hardships of the journey, each time army wives arrive in a new area they have to start all over again

The women who stay behind do have the advantage of being closer to their families and the potential social safety nets they provide. Furthermore, they do not have to travel as frequently as the women who follow their husbands. This applies especially to the spouses of soldiers in infantry units involved in military operations, who may be redeployed once a year or every other year, sometimes over vast distances. One woman said she had had to travel hundreds of kilometres from Mbandaka to Kisangani to Goma while pregnant, taking her two small children with her.²⁰

The difficulties these travels entail were among the most frequently cited problems faced by army wives. The military does not generally pay for dependants' displacements, or help with travel arrangements. Only a few units have a type of voluntary contribution scheme for shared transport. In such cases the commander rents a vehicle and deducts the costs from the salaries of the soldiers whose wives want to travel in the vehicle.²¹

In many other cases, soldiers simply move ahead with their unit to comply with orders, leaving their wives and children behind. The wife must then find the means to pay for transport. This is frequently done by selling all their household items, which, in any case, they would not be able to take with them because of limited space in the vehicles. As one woman testified:

Each time we travel, we have to improvise and we have to sell all our goods, mattresses, pots and pans, household appliances, even mobile phones; anything to cover the costs of transport. We end up with nothing.²²



ARMY WIVES OFTEN PAY FOR TRANSPORT BY SELLING ALL THEIR HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Because they have to move at short notice, the wives rarely have enough time to negotiate a good price for the items they sell. Furthermore, when a unit leaves collectively there is a glut of second-hand household items in a certain area, which further depresses the price. The result is that the women sustain substantial losses.

Aside from the hardships of the journey, each time army wives arrive in a new area they have to start all over again: searching for a house, buying new household items, finding new revenue-generating opportunities, making new friends. Frequent displacement also exacts a heavy toll on children. Many women who follow their husband on deployment bring small children with them. Older children are often left with relatives or an older sibling, either in the area of origin of the parents or in a bigger town near the husband's deployment area.

Because their living environment is constantly changing, the education of military children tends to get disrupted. Moreover, there is often no money to pay school fees. While some schools will not allow children to attend if their parents are unable to pay the fees, others are more benevolent. Many civilians understand the plight of military families and blame their situation on the government, not on the families themselves. Consequently, they try to be accommodating. As a school teacher in Luberizi explained: 'When it is children of military we do not immediately chase them away when their parents do not pay. We try to be patient [*kuvumilia*] and wait till they have found the money.'²³

However, many children eventually drop out of school and some end up on the streets, having been abandoned by their parents. It is a widely held belief that there are many children of soldiers among the *shégués* (street children) in the big cities, although it is difficult to substantiate these claims.

Because their living environment is constantly changing, the education of military children tends to get disrupted

In addition to the difficulties of frequent travel and changing environments, families who follow their husbands/fathers on deployment are exposed to insecurity – attacks on FARDC camps by enemy forces are frequent. For example, in April 2012 eight army wives and four children were seriously wounded when a group of Mai Mai combatants managed to penetrate camp OZACAF, located in the town of Beni.²⁴ As recently as

25 September 2015, five army wives were killed and two were wounded in the Rumangabo camp in Rutshuru in a raid carried out by an armed group.²⁵ While living in military camps may be dangerous, living among civilians is not necessarily a better option, as it also has a number of disadvantages.

Difficulties with housing

Reflecting a long-standing tradition in the Congolese armed forces, army wives are entitled to live in the barracks. However, like military personnel, many in fact live elsewhere. This is not only because of the relative scarcity of barracks but also because many wives simply prefer not to live there because of the poor conditions. However, there are important differences in living conditions at different sites, partly depending on whether donor money has been used for recent upgrades.

While housing in military barracks is supposed to be free of charge and often is, in some cases, fees have to be paid due to informal arrangements.²⁶ Furthermore, certain camps are overcrowded, leading to poor hygiene, a lack of privacy and peace, and frequent conflicts between military families. As one woman explained:

I have stayed in a camp. Some camps are good, but others are bad. Just too many people and too many conflicts [*makelele eleki*]. I prefer to stay as we do now [renting a civilian house] even if it is difficult to pay the rent.²⁷

In many cases, twice or three times the prescribed number of people live in one apartment/room. In addition, only some of the families, usually those of officers, live in apartments in brick houses, which may also be overcrowded. Numerous others get by in tents, hangars or wooden shed-like constructions within the compound of the camp.

Apart from the housing conditions, the quantity and quality of amenities in barracks, such as water points, health care centres, schools and electricity, vary enormously.²⁸ These variations are well documented in a study conducted by the human rights organisation *Association Africaine des Droits de l'Homme* (ASADHO), among military camps in Kinshasa in 2014.

ASADHO found that whereas some camps had sufficient water points, camp CETA had one tap, which worked only on a few days a week, between 3am and 5am. Consequently, families had to fetch water from the river or buy it for US\$0.32 per 25 litres. The study also found that the quality of the schools in the camps was poor. Furthermore, for some parents, the fees were too high, varying between US\$55 and US\$165 a year for primary schools. As a result, parents either did not send their children to school at all or sent them to schools outside the

barracks. Only one military camp has a school that does not charge, the infamous 'Ecole du banc' in Camp Kokolo, in Kinshasa, so called because of the absence of benches for the pupils.

A similar situation pertains in relation to health care. While in most camps there is a hospital or health care centre, in many cases the costs of medical care, even at reduced tariffs, is still prohibitive. Furthermore, the quality is often assessed as poor, since many military health care structures have limited medical equipment and cannot provide specialised care. Consequently, those who can afford it seek better quality care elsewhere.

Many soldiers live in makeshift camps. Some live in tents and others stay in self-built *manyata* (huts) made from bamboo sticks, mud and banana leaves

In the war-torn east, which has the highest concentration of FARDC troops, most soldiers and their families do not live in barracks. Especially in rural areas, a large number live in makeshift camps. Some live in tents and others stay in self-built *manyata* (huts) made from bamboo sticks, mud and banana leaves. These fragile constructions can often not withstand heavy rainfall and, in colder climates, fail to provide sufficient warmth. Moreover, soldiers are rarely given tarpaulins to make the huts more robust. Living in such conditions can prove especially difficult for families with babies and young children, who easily fall ill.

Some military families live in civilian homes, a widespread practice among the Congolese military. Even when they do not have their families with them, soldiers tend to rent rooms and houses in towns and villages, the costs varying according to the place and category of house. For example, in Uvira territory, monthly rent ranges from about US\$5 for a simple room and US\$10-15 for a very basic house to US\$35-50 for higher quality houses. While the rent often places pressure on the household budget, many families prefer to live in civilian houses because of the enhanced privacy and better conditions for children.

Relationships with host communities

The large-scale presence of military personnel and their families in civilian residential areas has significant consequences for civilian-military (family) relations. Importantly, this intermingling fosters friendships that can contribute to breaking down negative stereotypes. Yet, in many areas, especially in the rural zones where local communities are relatively closed, army wives are generally regarded as strangers. As was explained during a focus group:

Wife A: There is discrimination [*ubaguzi*] by the local population, they call us *watokambali* [those who come from far].

Wife B: The women in the local community do not like us. And they start speaking the local languages to cheat us at the market, so they can raise the price and talk behind our backs. They don't like newcomers [*bakujakuja*].²⁹

Furthermore, reflecting the historically poor reputation of the armed forces alluded to above, many civilians believe that army wives have the same bad character attributed



IN THE WAR-TORN EAST,
MOST SOLDIERS AND
THEIR FAMILIES DO NOT LIVE
IN BARRACKS

to their husbands, implying they are difficult, hot-headed, aggressive and always want to impose themselves. Moreover, it is believed that they are immoral, come from the bottom layers of society and are *bamayala* or *ndumba* (whores, in Swahili and Lingala). As one army wife put it: 'In general we have a bad reputation, we spouses of soldiers, because some of us are involved in prostitution, steal and are engaged in other bad things [*mambo ya mayanga*].'³⁰

Obviously, many army wives strongly resent these stereotypes and feel that the group as a whole is tainted by the behaviour of a few. It seems, however, that civilians are aware of the heterogeneity of the group of army wives – many emphasised that each individual is different and it is therefore not good to generalise.

Interaction with neighbours plays an important role in cultivating these more nuanced views. Indeed, many army wives said they have good relationships with their neighbours. They frequently look after each other's children, help each other when someone is sick and borrow sugar and salt from each other. Some also said that when their husbands' salaries are in arrears and they have nothing to eat, their neighbours might give them some food.

However, the intermingling of civilian and military families also causes problems for civilians and therefore sometimes ends up confirming stereotypes. Many civilians said they fear getting into a conflict with the women and children of army personnel as these often turn to their husbands or fathers to settle the affair, sometimes violently.

Others mentioned frequent disputes between army wives and other women around the water points, especially where these are scarce. Allegedly, army wives commonly jump the queue and try to get water first. Furthermore, house-owners complained that military personnel are often late paying the rent due to the irregularity of military salaries. In rare cases, families may even leave when the husband is redeployed, without paying what they owe.

Certain units have put agreements in place with local health care structures to ensure that military personnel and families pay their medical bills

It is not only the neighbours of military families who experience an enhanced risk of conflicts and unpaid debts. Other civilians and, particularly, civilian health care structures, encounter similar problems. Soldiers and their families commonly frequent civilian health care centres and hospitals, but are unable to pay their share of the costs of medical care. Some are also reluctant to pay as they believe that the military should take care of this. Consequently, soldiers and their families frequently leave without paying, driving civilian health care structures into financial difficulties.³¹ As staff of the hospital in Sange testified:

There is not really a system of payment. Some escape payment as they have no money. This is why we try to reduce the tariffs for wives of soldiers who are deprived of means ... The OMED (*officier médical*, medical officer) never assures the payment for any military wife that is treated here, but sometimes the hierarchy pays a little, for instance when it is the wife of the bodyguard of a certain commander.³²



THE COST OF MEDICAL CARE
IS OFTEN PROHIBITIVE

There are important differences in payment practices among different military units. Certain units have put agreements in place with local health care structures to ensure that military personnel and families pay their medical bills. Such arrangements stipulate that sick soldiers first have to go to the OMED, who makes a diagnosis and draws up a *bon de référence* (document of referral, sometimes also called *bon de santé* or health voucher). Only soldiers and dependants with a document from the OMED are treated at the hospital and the referral number is noted on the bills the hospital sends to the unit headquarters each month. The latter then deducts a part of the amount from soldiers' salaries.³³ These efforts, however, do little to alleviate the burden of medical costs on already impoverished families.

Strategies in the fight for survival

Like most other women in the Congo, army wives commonly engage in a variety of revenue-generating activities to make ends meet. While some wives reported that their husbands receive food rations from their unit, these rations are generally only sufficient to feed the family for a few days, so most women have to work to supplement the household income. The activities they undertake are diverse and depend partly on the rank, socio-economic status and connections of the husband, although individual abilities and preferences also play a role.

As noted above, the economic activities of the army wives who follow their husband on deployment are circumscribed by their status as outsiders. They commonly have no access to land of their own, although some rent plots in the communities in which they reside. In addition, their nomadic existence makes it difficult for them to engage in activities with immobile assets, like shops, or to make investments that only yield revenue in the longer term.

Food rations are generally only sufficient to feed the family for a few days, so most women have to work

Like other low-income households, the poorest families lack the money to make large up-front payments, causing them to engage in activities that require little to no prior investment, like work as day labourers. The wife of a corporal explained:

I help the civilian women pull weeds from the field [of manioc] and then receive a sack of 10 kilos when she begins the harvest. When the salary of my husband does not arrive in time I also accompany civilian women to the fields. I work there for 2000 Franc Congolais [(FC), approximately US\$2.2] a day, and sometimes I go crushing cassiterite [a tin ore] in the mining site to earn 3000FC [approximately US\$3.3] a day. I can also do the laundry for families who have the means.³⁴

Depending on the quantity of clothes, doing laundry reportedly does not yield much income, only about US\$1-2 a day. Tasks in richer people's households, like cleaning the house, may yield a bit more.

Some of these day-labourer activities, especially working the land and mineral crushing, entail very hard physical labour. Some women said they work each day from 6am to noon on the land, often with the youngest child on their back. But when they come home, tired after a morning of hard labour, the work does not stop. They still



CHARCOAL PRODUCTION IS A SOURCE OF INCOME FOR MANY MILITARY FAMILIES, BUT LEADS TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

need to fetch water, cook, clean the house, take care of the children, do laundry and go to the market.

Another exhausting job many army wives engage in is helping their husbands with the production of *braises* (charcoal). While the husband cuts down the trees, the wife transports the charcoal to sell at the market. The limited revenue this activity yields constitutes a crucial means of survival for the poorest families. However, the deforestation resulting from large-scale charcoal production by military families creates substantial environmental problems. This highlights how the consequences of the military's poor service conditions reverberate throughout society.

Another popular form of revenue generation among military wives is petty trade, an activity that generally has small profit margins. For example, a woman trading in palm oil said it takes almost a week to sell a 20 litre jerry can of palm oil, and that reselling it yields a profit of only US\$1.6.³⁵ The goods in which army wives trade are diverse and include maize and cassava flour, fruit and vegetables, cigarettes, fish (both fresh and dried), sugar, peanuts, soap, and so called *divers* (various small items commonly used in the household, such as batteries, matches, plastic combs and mirrors).

The modalities of this trade differ. While some women only buy from local suppliers and then retail locally, others travel in order to get the merchandise from middlepersons or suppliers. Although this requires a higher investment, it offers higher profit margins. For example, army wives in the gold mines in Misisi (Fizi territory) said that in order to buy fish, they travel to Baraka, while others go to Kalemie (in North Katanga), both on the shore of Lake Tanganyika.

Army wives can also be found selling items, mostly foodstuffs, that they have produced themselves. Some women in the east make and sell *chikwange*, a type of manioc bread that is predominantly consumed in the western parts of the Congo. Others produce *tangawizi* (a ginger drink), *kanyanga*, (a local alcoholic brew made of maize and cassava waste), or *ndazi* (beignets). However, producing beignets requires substantial prior investment in ingredients like sugar, flour and cooking oil, and renting kitchen utensils. Therefore, most women have to pool resources in order to engage in this activity. As a result, the limited profits – about US\$7-9 a week – have to be shared. Moreover, selling the beignets takes a considerable amount of time. Thus, children are often required to assist with this task.

Most army wives, who have limited savings of their own, depend primarily on their husbands' salaries in order to undertake economic activities. Consequently, the regular delays in military salary disbursements hamper continuity in revenue generation. Many women said that when their

husbands have not received their wages for more than two months, they are forced to stop trading and can only take up jobs as day labourers or engage in activities that do not require up-front investment.

Such downturns in trade flows are all the more problematic since many of the clients of military wives are other military families and soldiers, often part of the same unit. Therefore, delays in salary disbursement tend to have knock-on effects, depressing the entire local economy in and around military units.

When salaries continue to be delayed, the only option is often to take out loans at usurious interest rates, sometimes as high as 50%

In order to continue trading despite salary arrears, many women ask civilian suppliers to sell them goods on credit. However, this is generally only successful where army wives have built up long-standing relationships with suppliers. Civilian business people tend to distrust military wives as they know they might experience ruptures in income, causing them to pile up debts. Therefore, they only agree to extend credit when they have done business with them for some time. This initial distrust is another reason why frequent rotations are difficult for military wives, forcing them to construct such relationships from scratch in every new deployment location.

When debts – not only to suppliers but also for unpaid rent and school fees – pile up after two or three months of delays in receiving salaries, and it becomes increasingly difficult to finance basic necessities like food and charcoal, army wives often start selling items, such as clothes or furniture. Yet, poor families in particular have few belongings beyond the most basic necessities. Therefore, when salaries continue to be delayed, the only option is often to take out loans at usurious interest rates, sometimes as high as 50%. Such loans may also be provided by superior officers or their wives. This so-called *Banque Lambert* system is widespread in the Congo and has devastating consequences as it causes people to become caught up in cycles of debt. As the wife of a soldier explained:

When we run out of money we are forced to take out a loan [*kuomba deni*], like we borrow 20 000FC [approximately US\$22], then we pay back 10 000FC [approximately US\$11]. With that, and as we have bought on credit and have arrears with the rent, when the salary of my husband finally arrives he immediately has to pay back

the major and all debts and over half is immediately gone. And then at the end of the month we begin again incurring debts.³⁷

Manipulating the army status

The difficulties described above make women more likely to make use of their status as army wives by claiming certain benefits, such as exemptions from taxation, or to violate rules and regulations, including by engaging in illegal activities. Civilian authorities are generally reluctant to address such conduct as they want to avoid getting into trouble with the military. When she feels she has been treated in an inappropriate manner, a military wife may turn to her husband and his contacts within the military, who will pressurise the civilians involved.

While the situation differs in each area, in many cases army wives pay few or no taxes. For instance, they generally refuse to pay the *taxe d'étalage* (display tax) of US\$0.6 at the market. According to a market authority in Uvira: 'They do not pay at any of the markets in Uvira [territory]. They say, "We are the wives of the military, our husband is not paid, so we do not have to pay."' ³⁸ In the gold mining area of Misisi, where many army wives run *nganda* (bars) and other places where people drink (*buvettes*), they reportedly do not have the required permits, including a US\$100 licence to sell alcohol.³⁹

While most army wives, especially those of the lower ranks, struggle to make ends meet, widows are hit even harder

Apart from failing to pay taxes and evading other regulations, army wives sometimes engage in illegal activities. Whenever civilian authorities try to put a stop to such activities or hold those engaging in them to account, the military interferes through so called *traffic d'influence*, implying that they exert pressure on the authorities in question to drop the case. However, many authorities are willing to close their eyes in exchange for payment. For example, in Uvira town, army wives run illegal drinking venues where people smoke *bangi* or *nganja* (cannabis), or drink illegal types of alcohol like *Sapilo* or *500*. Others, particularly wives of officers, engage in trading cannabis. They buy it, for example, in cultivation areas in Fizi, then sell it in Uvira, Bukavu and sometimes Bujumbura, where a *bouteille* (bottle, as the measure is called) of cannabis sells for three times the Congo price.

Certain army wives are also alleged to be involved in facilitating theft carried out by their husbands, especially by selling stolen goods. For example, at the time of the Amani Leo operations in 2010, there was large-scale theft of small livestock in the south of Lubero. At the same time, butchers in the town of Kirumba reported that army wives were selling meat below the regular price, creating strong suspicions that it came from stolen livestock.⁴⁰

Army wives are also believed to be involved in theft themselves, mostly the pillaging of crops from civilian fields for self-consumption. Some even admitted to doing so.

One woman said: 'Sometimes we go at night to the fields of civilians to cut the leaves [*kukata majani*] so we have something to eat with the manioc.'⁴¹ According



IN MANY CASES, ARMY WIVES
PAY FEW OR NO TAXES

to civilians, army wives often cut *matembele* (the leaves of sweet potato plants) or *sombe* (the leaves of the cassava plant) from their fields. Obviously, where this occurs, relationships with the population deteriorate rapidly and the negative image that civilians commonly have of army wives is confirmed.

The plight of army widows

While most army wives, especially those of the lower ranks, struggle to make ends meet, widows are hit even harder. Although reliable statistics are lacking, there appear to be many army widows, notably in the east of the country. Casualty rates in the FARDC are high, not least because of the ongoing deployment in combat operations and weakly developed structures of emergency care and transport.⁴² Furthermore, as a result of poor diet, ill health and limited access to quality health care, many soldiers die of diseases.

While FARDC widows are officially entitled to their husbands' salaries, the implementation of this policy is challenging. The FARDC generally recognises only one woman as having the right to the deceased husband's salary. However, given that soldiers sometimes have multiple partners, it may not be clear who the legitimate widow is. Soldiers may, for example, have a first spouse in one part of the country and a second spouse elsewhere, with whom they have had children. This second spouse may also be the one registered on the lists maintained by the S5 (staff officer in Bureau 5, charged with the social dimensions of army life, including military spouses).

When a soldier dies, the first spouse and her family often try to claim the salary, implying that the other spouse ends up with nothing. It sometimes also happens that the family of the deceased tries to appropriate the salary by getting hold of the biometric identification card of the soldier. For instance, in Luvungi, we encountered a widow whose children had been taken away from her by her brother-in-law in Kinshasa, who had also taken her husband's ID card.

Given that soldiers sometimes have multiple partners, it may not be clear who the legitimate widow is

Other difficulties faced by widows relate to their position within the FARDC. Some stay with the unit of their deceased husband, both because the husband is on the pay list of that specific unit and because it constitutes their primary social network. However, commanders of some units try to abuse widows' vulnerable position, for example, by giving them only a third of the salary, or by demanding sexual favours in return.

Because of the bad reputation of army wives, it is generally difficult for widows to find a new civilian husband. Furthermore, a substantial number, especially those coming from afar, have lost contact with their families, who often live hundreds of kilometres away. Others cannot afford to make the journey back to their families. Moreover, some are orphans or have run away from home because the family did not approve of them marrying a soldier. For these reasons, widows often cannot or do not want to return to their area of origin. Thus, they end up staying with the army unit or in the military region where the husband last served, at times marrying another soldier.

In many cases the name of the spouse is eventually administratively transferred from the pay lists of the unit to the military region, implying that the widow will thenceforth



WIDOWS OFTEN CANNOT OR DO NOT WANT TO RETURN TO THEIR AREA OF ORIGIN

be paid by the region. This also applies to women whose husbands died before the introduction of biometric identification in 2007, when a project sponsored by European Union Advisory and Assistance Mission for Security Sector Reform in the DRC (EUSEC RD Congo) was launched to identify soldiers by their fingerprints, to create a central database of military personnel. These women received an ID card with a photograph, which gives them the right to the equivalent of their husbands' salary. In addition, there is a large group of widows from the FARDC's predecessor forces, an estimated 60 000 nationwide, who do not fall under the Ministry of Defence but the Ministry of Social Affairs and are formally entitled to US\$11 a month.⁴³

Many of the widows registered in the military regions experience problems accessing the monthly pay. Efforts to count this group have not been systematic and have sometimes been engineered to reduce the numbers. For example, in 2011 the 8th Military Region (North Kivu) tried to reduce the number of widows by introducing a very strict screening process. Consequently, today, many women claim to have been unjustly left out, prompting what has now become the 34th Military Region to launch a new census.

Due to the absence of certainty about pensions, which have, until now, been regulated erratically, many elderly soldiers prefer to stay in the FARDC

Even many women who did receive ID cards, or whose husbands are registered on the pay list, still do not receive their due. As several told us during the research, it is widely believed that some of the money is embezzled at various stages of the payment chain.⁴⁴ Yet there is hope for improvement now that a biometric census of army widows has been initiated, which is scheduled to be completed before the end of 2016.

However, as previous experiences with the FARDC show, neither biometric identification nor payments into bank accounts (a system called *bancarisation*) are a guarantee of (timely) salary payments. Attempts to introduce these systems have met with varying success, due to both political and technical obstacles, implying that there are still delays in salary disbursement.

Towards humane human resources management

In the light of the difficulties detailed above, it is important that the situation of military families be improved. Such improvements require initiatives in the domains of the social and service conditions of army personnel, including their salaries, and army wives' opportunities for revenue generation and organisation into associations. What is the state of play in these policy areas? What efforts have the Congolese government and donors made up to now and what more could be done?

Service and social conditions

On paper, the service and social conditions of military personnel and families are well organised, at least for officers. In January 2013 Parliament adopted a key piece of legislation for army reform, the Law on the Statute of FARDC Personnel (Loi 13/005 portant statut du militaire des FARDC). This law, the elaboration of which was

60 000

THE NUMBER OF ELDERLY
MILITARY PERSONNEL IN
THE FARDC WHO SHOULD
BE RETIRED

encouraged by EUSEC, contains many improvements in service and social conditions, although most of these are only applicable to officers and *sous-officiers* (non-commissioned officers – NCOs), exempting the rank and file.

For example, Article 124 specifies that officers and NCOs have the right to:

- family allowances (*allocations familiales*)
- family complement (*complément familial*)
- accommodation or allowances for accommodation
- free consumption of water and electricity in barracks
- health care
- allowances for funeral costs
- allowances for installation
- transport costs in case of the absence of means of transport provided by the state

The law also states that 'leave is an inalienable right of a soldier' (Art. 98) and recognises pensions for elderly soldiers who have served for more than 22 years. There are at present nearly 60 000 elderly military personnel in the FARDC, like the husband of Chantal, mentioned at the start of this paper, who should be retired. However, due to the absence of certainty about pensions, which have, until now, been regulated erratically, many elderly soldiers prefer to stay in the FARDC, fearing that they will be left without income once they leave.⁴⁵

It is obvious that, at present, few of the clauses of the Law on the Statute of FARDC Personnel have been implemented. One reason is that in order for the law to come into operation, myriad decrees must be adopted. However, not one decree has been adopted since the law came into force in 2013.

Another reason why implementation is lagging behind is that it would require the allocation of a vast (and as yet uncalculated and unbudgeted) amount of funding, for which there is little capacity in the national budget. International donors commonly exert pressure on low-income countries to keep defence expenditure below 2% of the gross domestic product (GDP). Since defence spending was already roughly 2.3% of GDP in 2013, improving social conditions without downsizing the army, at present comprising about 145 000 troops, would entail exceeding that threshold.

Despite the fact that it has not been implemented, the Law on the Statute of FARDC Personnel is a valuable starting point for improving the social conditions of army personnel and could serve as focal point for pressure from national and international stakeholders. At the same time, it should be

acknowledged that it offers no relief for those currently in the direst state: the rank and file and their dependants.

Salary payment

As illustrated in this paper, the irregularity of salary payments has devastating consequences for the household budgets of military families, impeding revenue-generating activities and dragging families into cycles of debt. Salary payment has been the object of long-standing attention within international army reform efforts, in particular those of EUSEC.

From 2007 onwards EUSEC has worked to create payment lists coupled to a biometric database, which allows for the separation of the chain of command from the chain of salary payment. Initially this occurred via payment officials called *chefs de bureau comptable* (CBCs). This system worked reasonably well, although it was undermined by constant influxes of rebel soldiers and reorganisation.

At the end of 2012, the government launched an initiative to pay salaries directly into individual bank accounts. This decision was part of a wider policy of the government formed after the 2011 elections, initiated by Prime Minister Matata Ponyo, to pay all state agents by bank transfer.

The implementation of this measure started with the payment of officers in Kinshasa and has gradually been extended to other parts of the country, although it is not yet in place everywhere. Furthermore, a pilot project was organised in areas without banking infrastructure to pay military personnel via mobile phone. However, this system faced a number of technical and practical difficulties and has therefore not been applied on a large scale. It can also not be implemented in the vast areas that have no mobile phone coverage.⁴⁷

At the end of 2012, the government launched an initiative to pay salaries directly into individual bank accounts

While *bancarisation* appears to be a step forward, there remain serious technical and infrastructural obstacles to its implementation, in particular the limited presence of banks in rural areas, which causes delays in payment. Therefore, salaries remain a point of concern.

Army wives' associations and revenue generation

Donors have initiated a number of projects aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of army wives, in particular stimulating their organisation into associations and their

revenue-generating activities. EUSEC has been particularly active in this domain, for instance, supporting the foundation of associations for military spouses. This builds on a long tradition in the Congo, where self-help associations flourish to compensate for limited public service provision.

Either with or without external support, military spouses in many units have organised themselves into associations. The modes of organisation and level of activity of these structures differ considerably. For example, some of the former Integrated Brigades (which were formed at the start of the army integration process between 2004–2008) had associations that were quite vibrant and participated actively in community life, including in church and non-governmental organisation activities.

Either with or without external support, military spouses in many units have organised themselves into associations

Military bases may also be home to active associations of military spouses, as is the case in Luberizi in South Kivu. Between 2010 and 2012 spouses there tried to develop common agricultural activities, in particular breeding schemes for small livestock and large-scale cultivation with tractors.⁴⁸ However, the situation in Luberizi was exceptional as the core of the committee was made up of the spouses of permanent staff, such as instructors, who are not redeployed as frequently as the spouses of soldiers serving in operational units.

While associations can advance military spouses' interests, they are not free from the power relations that permeate the military as a whole. Indeed, it is often the wife of the unit or camp commander who heads the association, which ensures that the command exercises a level of control. For the same reason, commanders have tried to block efforts to organise elections for the president of the association of military spouses, as was once proposed by EUSEC in North Kivu.⁴⁹

Associations of military spouses may also become immersed in party politics. For instance, in 2009, during a visit by President Joseph Kabila to the Ruzizi Plain, the association of military wives of the 8th Integrated Brigade in Sange put their *pagnes* (cloth worn by women) on the road to welcome him. The demonstration was orchestrated by the wife of the brigade commander, who headed the association, but was criticised by those who were less happy with the Kabila government's military policies.⁵⁰

Another problem is that some associations of military spouses are organised on an ethnic basis, not unlike the *mutuelles* (self-help organisations) that developed during the Zaire era. By hampering cross-ethnic collective action, such organisations might undermine transformations of the power relations that are at the root of adverse social conditions.

Despite these limitations, it would seem that associations for military spouses have the potential to contribute to better living conditions, at least where they address the structural conditions that disadvantage military spouses. This also applies to socio-economic projects. However, up to now, only a few donors have invested in such projects.



SPOUSES IN LUBERIZI
TRIED DEVELOPING
AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Most of these interventions have been in the domain of agriculture. For example, in 2010, the Food and Agriculture Organisation trained and provided seeds and tools to the wives of FARDC soldiers of the 12th Integrated Brigade in order to promote the cultivation of vegetables like cabbage, onions and *lenga-lenga*.⁵¹

While these agricultural projects were appreciated, several of the associations for army wives encountered expressed the wish to receive vocational training and equipment in other economic sectors as well. For example, some said they would prefer sewing machines and equipment for soap-making, while others were keen to access micro-credit. However, it is not guaranteed that providing such items and training will result in sustainable improvements to army wives' living conditions, especially if other dimensions of their socio-economic life remain unchanged.

Conclusion

Around the world, families of military personnel deployed to war zones live in a special situation, forced to cope with constant anxiety about the fate of loved ones. In the Congo, such anxieties are compounded by severe socio-economic difficulties, which are partly caused by poor service conditions.

These difficulties are also one of the reasons why many women follow their husbands on deployment, even into dangerous zones. While military wives have thus become closely integrated with the FARDC, the army has few policies in place to cope with or disincentivise their presence in operational zones. As a consequence, the women are largely thrown back on their own perseverance and mutual solidarity, drawing on fragile relationships both within the military and in ever-changing civilian contexts.

Around the world, families of military personnel deployed to war zones live in a special situation, forced to cope with constant anxiety

Up to now, donor attention to improving the social conditions of military personnel and their families has been limited and incoherent. The output-oriented and project-based nature of interventions in army reform, which are generally geared towards direct, visible results, tends to undermine their effectiveness and sustainability. Importantly, many projects do little to change the structural conditions that are at the root of the plight of military families, such as women's continuing dependence on their husbands' irregularly paid salaries for economic activities. Furthermore, like army reform efforts in general, interventions often pay little heed to the interdependence of the military and civilian contexts.

While there are no easy solutions to the immensely complex task of reforming the FARDC, using the everyday realities of the rank and file and their families as a point of departure might offer a way forward.

Notes

- 1 Interview, Luberizi, October 2014.
- 2 Chantal is not her real name.
- 3 This research, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) was conducted by both authors in collaboration with the research NGO Centre Indépendant de Recherches et d'Etudes Stratégiques au Kivu (CIRESKI), based in Uvira.
- 4 Maria Eriksson Baaz has conducted research into the FARDC together with Maria Stern since 2006, addressing gender discourses and violence against civilians. Judith Verweijen has conducted research on civilian-military interactions among FARDC units and civilian populations in deployment sites since 2010.
- 5 Interview, Human Resources expert EUSEC, Kinshasa, November 2013.
- 6 Interview, Luvungi, October 2014.
- 7 See also M Eriksson Baaz and M Stern, *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War?: Perceptions, Prescriptions, Problems in the Congo and Beyond*. London: Zed Books, 2013.
- 8 For a discussion of the formative years of the FARDC, see J Verweijen, 'Half-brewed: The Lukewarm Results of Creating an Integrated Congolese military', in R Licklider (ed), *New Armies from Old: Merging Competing Military Forces after Civil Wars*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014, pp. 137-162.
- 9 J Ebenga and T N'Landu, 'The Congolese National Army: In Search of an Identity', in M. Rupiya (ed), *Evolutions & Revolutions: A Contemporary History of Militaries in Southern Africa*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2005, 63-83.
- 10 Figures obtained from EUSEC.
- 11 During the fieldwork conducted in October in 2014 in Uvira territory, many women said their husbands had not been paid for three months.
- 12 M Eriksson Baaz and M Stern, *The Complexity of Violence: A Critical Analysis of Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*. Stockholm: Sida, 2010; J Verweijen, *The Ambiguity of Militarization: The Complex Interaction Between the Congolese Armed Forces and Civilians in the Kivu Provinces, Eastern DR Congo*, PhD dissertation, Utrecht University, 2015.
- 13 Oxfam International, *Commodities of War: Communities Speak Out on the True Cost of Conflict in Eastern DRC*, Briefing paper 164, November 2012.
- 14 J Stearns, J Verweijen and M Eriksson Baaz, *The National Army and Armed Groups in the Eastern Congo: Untangling the Gordian knot of Insecurity*. London: Rift Valley Institute, 2013; E Kets and H de Vries, *Limits to Supporting Security Sector Interventions in the DRC*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2014.
- 15 Interviews Tchomia, November 2013.
- 16 Interview, Fizi centre, December 2011.
- 17 Interview, Goma, March 2008.
- 18 Interview, Lemera, October 2014.
- 19 Interview, Kinshasa, December 2013.
- 20 Interview, Bukavu, May 2015.
- 21 This was, for instance, observed in the 809th regiment in North Kivu in 2012.
- 22 Interview, Luvungi, October 2014.
- 23 Focus group with civilians, Luberizi, October 2014.
- 24 Radio Okapi, 'Attaque du camp Ozacaf: la population de Beni appelée à collaborer avec l'armée', 24 April 2012, <http://radiookapi.net/actualite/2012/04/24/beni-les-femmes-de-militaires-accusent-les-groupes-armes-de-les-prendre-pour-cible/>
- 25 Reuters, 'At least eight dead in suspected rebel raid on Congo army camp', 25 September 2015, www.reuters.com/article/2015/09/25/us-congodemocratic-attacks-idUSKCN0RP1N220150925
- 26 Particularly in Kinshasa we have encountered FARDC soldiers who pay a small rent for housing in military barracks.
- 27 Interview, Sange, October 2014.
- 28 ASADHO, *Rapport sur les conditions de vie des femmes et enfants des militaires et policiers à Kinshasa*, March 2014.
- 29 Focus group at military base of Luberizi, November 2011. Quoted in Verweijen. 'The Ambiguity of Militarization', p.123
- 30 Interview, Luvungi, October 2014.
- 31 This is described in more detail in Verweijen, 'The Ambiguity of Militarization' pp.146-148.

- 32 Interview, hospital staff, Sange, October 2014.
- 33 Such systems were found, for instance, in 2011 in Uvira territory and in 2013 in Lubero territory.
- 34 Interview, Lemera, October 2011.
- 35 Interview, Misisi, December 2011.
- 36 Interviews, Misisi, December 2011.
- 37 Interview Lemera, October 2014.
- 38 Interview with market authority, Uvira, March 2011. Quoted in Verweijen, 'The Ambiguity of Militarization' , p.165.
- 39 Interviews with civilian authorities, Misisi, March 2011.
- 40 Interviews with butchers, Kirumba, May.2010.
- 41 Interview, Luberizi, October 2014.
- 42 While the FARDC has an *Unité Médicale d'Intervention Rapide* (UMIR, Medical Unit for Rapid Intervention), this unit has only very limited geographical coverage.
- 43 Interview, EUSEC staff, Goma, April 2014.
- 44 Interviews Uvira, October 2014 and Bukavu, May 2015.
- 45 Interviews, EUSEC staff, Kinshasa, November 2013.
- 46 SIPRI, Military Expenditure Database, <http://milexdata.sipri.org/files/?file=SIPRI+milex+data+1988-2011.xls>
- 47 Radio Okapi, 'Nord-Kivu: des militaires impayés accusent Vodacom et Rawbank de bloquer leurs soldes', 31 May 2013, <http://radiookapi.net/actualite/2013/05/31/nord-kivu-des-militaires-impayes-accusent-vodacom-rawbank-de-bloquer-leurs-soldes/>
- 48 Interviews Luberizi, November 2011.
- 49 Personal correspondence, former EUSEC gender adviser, March 2012.
- 50 Interview with human rights monitors deployed in Sange, Uvira, October 2014.
- 51 Radio Okapi, 'Journée mondiale de l'alimentation: les épouses des militaires des FARDC engagées dans la production agricole à Baraka', 16 October 2010, <http://radiookapi.net/actualite/2010/10/16/journee-mondiale-de-lalimentation-les-epouses-des-militaires-des-fardc-engagees-dans-la-production-agricole-a-baraka/>



About the authors

Maria Eriksson Baaz is an associate professor in Peace and Development Research at the School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg and a senior researcher at the Nordic Africa Institute, Sweden. Her research areas are within defense reform, civil-military relations, gender and militarisation, conflict-related sexual violence and post-colonial theory.

Judith Verweijen is a researcher at the Nordic Africa Institute, Sweden, and the Conflict Research Group at Ghent University, Belgium. She specialises in the study of state and non-state armed forces in the Kivu provinces (eastern Democratic Republic of Congo).

About the ISS

The Institute for Security Studies is an African organisation that aims to enhance human security on the continent. It does independent and authoritative research, provides expert policy analysis and advice, and delivers practical training and technical assistance.

Acknowledgements

This report had been made possible with funding from the governments of Australia and The Netherlands. The ISS is also grateful for support from the other members of the ISS Partnership Forum: the governments of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Japan, Norway, Sweden and the USA.

ISS Pretoria

Block C, Brooklyn Court
361 Veale Street
New Muckleneuk
Pretoria, South Africa
Tel: +27 12 346 9500
Fax: +27 12 460 0998

ISS Addis Ababa

5th Floor, Get House
Building, Africa Avenue
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Tel: +251 11 515 6320
Fax: +251 11 515 6449

ISS Dakar

4th Floor, Immeuble Atryum
Route de Ouakam
Dakar, Senegal
Tel: +221 33 860 3304/42
Fax: +221 33 860 3343

ISS Nairobi

Braeside Gardens
off Muthangari Road
Lavington, Nairobi, Kenya
Cell: +254 72 860 7642
Cell: +254 73 565 0300

www.issafrica.org

