



Humanitarian Governance at the Crossroads:
Violence, Remoteness and Ethnic Discrimination in South Kivu (DRC)

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Disclaimer:

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List of Acronyms

ADED	Appui au Développement de l'Enfant en Detresse
CICR/ICRC	Comité International de la Croix Rouge/International Committee of the Red Cross
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
GoC	Government of Congo
WHO (OMS)	World Health Organisation, Organisation Mondiale de la Santé
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
INGOs	International non-Governmental Organisations
ISS	International Institute of Social Studies
MONUSCO	Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en République Démocratique du Congo
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Oxfam	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
SEDI	Solidarité, Echange pour le Développement Intégral
UGEAF Itombwe	Union des Groupes d'Etudes et d'Actions pour le Développement de Fizi- Itombwe
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USA	United States of America

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Abstract

This study concerns the governance of humanitarian organizations during interventions at the crossroads of violence, remoteness, and ethnic discrimination in conflict situations. The case has been narrowed to the minority Banyamulenge community of Minembwe region of the High Plateau of South Kivu. For decades they have suffered from atrocities linked to their identity and which have resulted in repetitive killings as well as other extremely wicked involving physical violence that need humanitarian emergencies to intervene. In this case, the study has been critically conducted with the aim of highlighting different problems encountered by humanitarian organizations during their interventions in such conditions and environments. On the other hand, the study aimed to gain deeper insights into how survivors of recurrent conflicts cope with difficulties in their lives when there is no humanitarian assistance. Targeted killings, theft and displacement have affected communities living in the High Plateau of Minembwe, a remote and inaccessible location. As a result, many people were forced to flee their homes, cannot till their land and their cattle, which were their means of living, have been stolen by the armed groups. As a result hospitals and schools have been destroyed, and the victim communities are left in dire need of humanitarian assistance in the form of food, shelter, and health care to survive. This study aimed to investigate and understand the narratives and practices of humanitarian organizations as non-state actors which have mostly failed to intervene to save human lives in Minembwe High Plateau. The study explored how civilians violently displaced are managing to survive in confined areas, given the almost complete absence of humanitarian assistance. The results suggest that indeed the Banyamulenge community has not been assisted by any major local or international humanitarian organizations. They are in dire need of food, shelter, and health care, and are managing to stay alive only due to support provided by relatives in the diaspora and those in other regions of DRC. On the other hand, the staff of humanitarian organizations contacted for this study all presented reasons why they could not intervene in Minembwe, citing insecurity but also fear of retaliation, as reasons for choosing – contrary to their mandates - not to assist Banyamulenge civilians in Minembwe, in need of humanitarian assistance.

Relevance to Development Studies

Few studies have been conducted to find out how humanitarian organizations operate in remote areas coupled with ethnic conflict and discrimination in a country like the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since 1996, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), especially its eastern parts, South and North Kivu, has been passing through repetitive, brutal, and savage conflicts that have taken thousands of human lives and left many Congolese with hatred among neighbours, division, and severe poverty. Therefore, this research set out to study how humanitarian organizations operate in that kind of development context. This study brings out the lived experience of participants and will contribute to the general academic debate about humanitarian organizations' interventions – and failure to intervene - in the midst of conflict, discrimination, and remoteness. NGOs, activists and public institutions would find consistent information in this research to enhance humanitarian intervention in the midst of conflict, discrimination, and in remote locations.

Keywords

Governance, Humanitarian Organizations, Ethnic Conflicts, DRC, Politics, Banyamulenge Community

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Historical and Contextual Background

This study is about governance of humanitarian organizations during interventions at grassroots level, and at the crossroads of violence, remoteness and ethnic discrimination during a long-term conflict situation. To contextualise the case study of Minembwe in South Kivu, Eastern DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo), it is first very important to understand the geographical location, historical background and ethnic conflicts that have been on-going in that area. Before the Berlin conference of 1885, which divided Africa among the imperial European powers, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC, or Congo-Kinshasa) was not the country we see today. After 1885, Congo was formed by the fusion of different kingdoms.¹ “The kingdom of Kongo was a kingdom located in central Africa in present day northern Angola, the western part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as the southernmost part of Gabon” (M'Bokolo, 1995:5). This kingdom, which gave Congo and the River Congo their name, was well-established for centuries, and a coastal trading kingdom with a Christian king by the 1600s (Axelson, 1970:7-9; Vansina, 2010:10-13). For more historical context of the DRC, please see Appendix 5.

The Banyamulenge community usually consider their cattle as their wealth, providing for their needs, the education of their children, health costs, and capital for farming. Cattle can be exchanged for weddings, given as gifts, sold to pay for funeral, or to buy air tickets. Along with cultivation of fruits and vegetables, Banyamulenge people living remotely in high mountainous areas once had extensive land for grazing and cultivation. This community has gradually been deprived of many unique customs that once characterized them. In recent decades they suffered repeated attacks from neighbouring groups, mainly Mai Mai militias, sometimes supported by national government troops. Banyamulenge were called foreigners, invaders, and their physical features and language were used to misidentify them as ‘Rwandans’. Their history as breeders of cattle led them to be attacked as ‘elites’, despite their relative poverty, and to be marginalized and discriminated against as revenge.

Recently, Banyamulenge started to defend themselves, after experiencing repeated attacks from neighbouring communities (since the mid-1990s). Many young Banyamulenge men joined political movements and armed groups, including to liberate former Zaire from Mobutu, the former President. Some became active local players in the 1996 DRC wars that led to the end of Mobutu’s regime in 1997, bringing Laurent Kabila (Papa) to the Presidency. Rwandan troops were also behind Laurent Kabila march on Kinshasa to ‘liberate’ DRC from Mobutu. The youthful Banyamulenge who took part in this war of liberation hoped to end their community’s discrimination and marginalization once for all, across the DRC (Davey, 2020:1-2).

Discrimination against Banyamulenge did not start in 1997. Already in the 1980s the community was denied the right to citizenship and the vote by decree under Mobutu, after being equated with Rwandan and Burundian refugees of the years 1959-1980s. Denial of citizenship resulted in open protests from Banyamulenge for political space and better relations with non-Banyamulenge neighbours (Ndahinda, 2013:478-480). Ndahinda argues that the most significant period of discrimination coincided with movements of Rwandan refugees into Eastern then-Zaire in 1990-

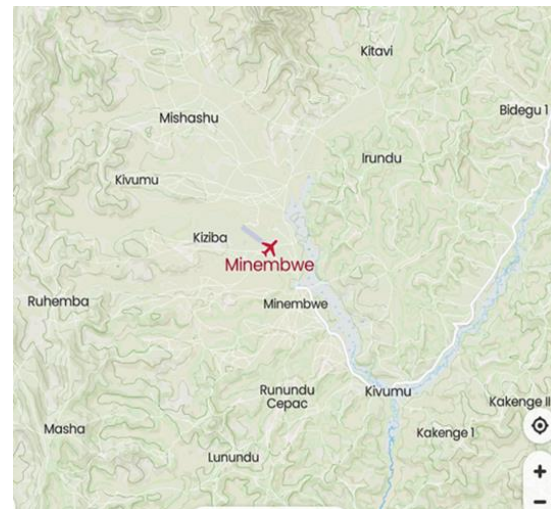
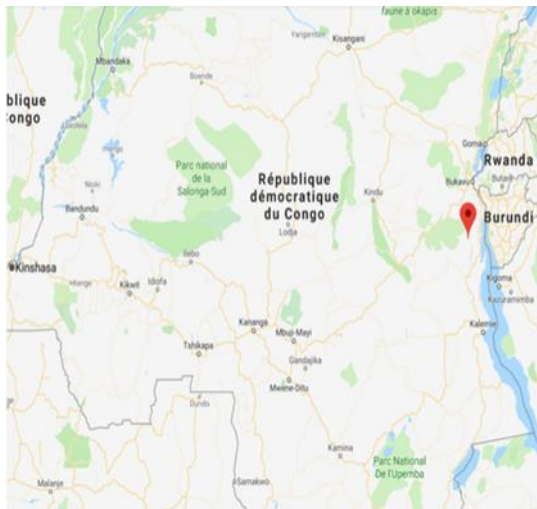
1 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13286306>

1994 during civil war and genocide in Rwanda and Burundi. This context helped activate the 1996-97 Congo war of regime change, and inspired conspiracy theories among opponents of the government, who suggested the Banyamulenge were complicit with a plan for “establishment of a Tutsi-Hima empire aimed at consecrating the domination of the Bantu by Nilo-Hamites” (Ndahinda, 2013). Even though this has almost certainly never been the case, this mythical accusation is still used today by politicians to obtain local support in South Kivu from the majority (Mamdani, 2001:651,654,658; Shain, 2020:273).

Minembwe Region is in South Kivu, in Eastern DRC. The area is known as the High Plateau of Fizi Itombwe and Mwenga, and Minembwe is situated in the high tropical mountains of Fizi. Within and around Minembwe the society is mainly composed of Banyamulenge, though there are also Babembe, Bashi, and Bafuliiru and Banyindu communities living in the same area (Vlassenroot, 2002). Minembwe is considered one of seven districts of Fizi territory, yet is contested by many neighbouring Congolese, who claim that Banyamulenge people are immigrants, and so cannot be granted control over any administrative territory in DRC. Yet in Article 6 of the Constitution of 1964, Congolese nationality was granted to all citizens at the time of independence (30 June 1960) who were in the national territory and whose presence had been established in the territory by 18 October 1908. On 12 November 2004 the DRC transitional government promulgated a new nationality law, which failed to sort out the problem. For the Banyamulenge and some other communities of North Kivu, they were still viewed as belonging to a basket of communities, identified as Rwandophone (Jackson, 2007; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2007).

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has been ravaged by a number of armed conflicts that have occurred over more than three decades, involved armed groups from both within and outside the country. This has caused immense damage to all sectors and institutions of the country, including to the economy, to politics and to infrastructure. In addition, recurrent ethnic conflicts in Minembwe High Plateau have created large-scale displacements and suffering among the Banyamulenge population, bringing about an extensive humanitarian crisis that requires urgent intervention to provide for the most basic needs of the civilian population, through food, shelter and health services (Ahmed et al.2020).

Maps 1 and 2: Minembwe Region, Fizi High Plateau Eastern DRC



Sources: <https://mapcarta.com/N1080896480>

Map 1 above shows the location of Minembwe region in the Eastern DRC and Map 2 shows various localities referred to in this study, in Minembwe Region, around 390 km from the Rwanda border and 330 km from the border with Burundi. In this region, the Banyamulenge have experienced violent discrimination, and been subjected to systematic killings and massacres, motivated by race hatred and toxic identity narratives, over decades (Ntanyoma and Hintjens, 2021).

From a broader perspective, there are other communities that are also discriminated against, such as indigenous Batwa, who since the 1970s have faced being expelled from their forests for the creation of national parks. They have not been compensated by government despite being considered the first occupants of the land in DRC. They face discrimination and marginalization from both government and their neighbouring communities (Matabaro et al, 2021; Simpson et al, 2021; Kenrick and Lewis, 2001; Mulvagh, 2006; Lewis 2000).

We can also cite the case of the Bahema community of Ituri Province, discriminated against for many years and still undergoing an ordeal similar to that of the Banyamulenge community of South Kivu, facing being killed, and having their property destroyed, and their cattle looted (Pottier, 2008; Paluck, 2010). Such discrimination and marginalization against minority ethnic groups can also be found in other African countries, and may be rooted in colonial legacies, which have given rise to enormous violence and loss of life (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2007). Discrimination and marginalization are also signs of state failure which can encourage communities to consider each other mutual enemies (Londoni, 2017; Baaz and Verweijen, 2013; Ntezimana, 2014).

1.2 The Research Problem

In South Kivu, there is arguably an ongoing genocide taking place, which started in 2017. This 'slow genocide', which continues in 2021 at the time of writing, targets the Banyamulenge minority. Each day, selective killings are taking place, based solely on the identity and ethnic attribution, of an identity which has been politicized at national and local level for some time (Ntanyoma and Hintjens, 2021). In DRC, other minorities are also vulnerable, but this study concerns the Banyamulenge, and arises from my own experience of living and being native to South Kivu region in Eastern DRC, and

belonging to the Banyamulenge community myself. Since 1996, for almost 25 years, I have worked with government institutions, and have seen how discrimination, hatred, marginalization and ethnic conflict among people previously living together, have acquired political significance. This in turn has worsened non-development of DRC as whole, especially in the East. From personal experience growing up, I know the situation was not always as it is now. I discuss my own position briefly in Chapter 2 (also see Appendix 3).

The Banyamulenge community of the High Plateau, is a minority community among several other minority communities in DRC. Banyamulenge are known as pastoralists historically, and have experienced more insecurity and killings because of the gradual decimation of their once large herds of cattle. Also, selective killings of Banyamulenge is easier because of their supposed recognisable physical characteristics, as well as their shared language, which implies their belonging to this community (Ntanyoma, 2019; Ntanyoma and Hintjens, 2021; Verweijen and Vlassenroot, 2015). Banyamulenge speak Kinyamulenge which resembles an admixture of Kinyarwanda and Kirundi. Moreover, their physical features are not that different from those of Banyarwanda (people from Rwanda) and of Barundi (people of Burundi) and this creates doubt about their 'real' origins and identity among other, misinformed Congolese.

Today, hundreds of villages have been completely emptied of Banyamulenge, following their deliberate destruction, with homes burned, looting and razed and livestock taken. It is worth nothing that especially from 2017 onwards, hundreds of civilians have been attacked and killed, and thousands of homes destroyed and burnt. Over 265 Banyamulenge villages have disappeared, with civilians killed and over 30,000 Banyamulenge cattle stolen. This has left over one hundred thousand Banyamulenge people displaced, and resulted in a massive humanitarian crisis and widespread poverty among a group once secured by their livestock and remoteness (Rukundwa and Budagu in interview, 20 November 2020). This destruction has forced old people, young people, women and men alike out of rural areas, and into areas of concentration, where they live completely without humanitarian assistance and mostly rejected both by the Congolese government and by neighbouring communities. To add to this, many displaced civilians now find their only refuge inside Banyamulenge churches and other local institutions like schools. Having fled, they had to abandon their homes, schools, clinics. Some spend their lives in displacement sleeping outside without shelter or protection. All of this is part of the research problem: why is this happening?

Meanwhile, Banyamulenge civilians displaced from villages are left with almost nothing to survive on and are waiting for support from humanitarian organizations that appears not to arrive. On the other hand, for some reason, humanitarian organizations seem reluctant or unwilling to intervene to help Banyamulenge people, including the majority of those forcibly displaced when their villages were destroyed, who now live besieged in small pockets in Minembwe, in Fizi district.

This problem of violence based on discrimination and marginalization has emerged across the Eastern DRC where minority people in Ituri are also facing similar violence as Banyamulenge of Minembwe region. In south Ituri province the Bahema minority community are being killed, and many have lost their lives while being discriminated against and attacked by neighbours and rebels. They are being killed not only with heavy arms, and sophisticated weaponry, but also with the language of extremism and expressions of hate so extreme that they call for the extermination of this largely unwanted group of people. The justice system in DRC seems not to be concerned about bringing those who attack Banyamulenge or Bahema to justice. Meanwhile, police and courts are

doing very little to apprehend and stop perpetrators who carry out these harmful, illegal and immoral acts against human rights (Vlassenroot, and Huggins, 2005; Verweijen, 2016).

This research asks why this reluctance to intervene and what are the various reasons the Banyamulenge community is not provided with humanitarian aid, except by its own diaspora. This may be due to remoteness, the inaccessible areas where they live, or perhaps due to ethnic conflict and discrimination. All these factors will be considered in this study. Alternatively, we will ask whether there may be a problem in the partnerships between not only national government and NGO service providers, but also with the UN agencies that is preventing humanitarian relief from reaching this specific and vulnerable community.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

This research aims to critically investigate the governance of humanitarian organizations as part of non-state actors while trying to establish themselves for different assistance of interventions to save lives of vulnerable and victims of the perpetuate conflicts, through the case of the Banyamulenge community displaced and living in the High Plateau of Minembwe in South-Kivu, DRC. Moreover, the study explores the ways in which these people survive while in conflicts in the absence of humanitarian aid.

Main research question

This study aims to respond to the following main research question.

Why do humanitarian organizations not intervene more to assist civilians in the High Plateau of Minembwe region?

Sub-Questions

1. How do humanitarian organizations operate while intervening in the High Plateau of Minembwe region?
2. What are the challenges humanitarian organizations face at ground level during their intervention in South Kivu?
3. How does the civilian population of Minembwe survive without external humanitarian intervention?

In addition, the study is interested in proposing some possible ways of improving the situation of civilians in Minembwe, with regards to ensuring their humanitarian relief in future.

1.4 Justification for this Study

The Banyamulenge community have been progressively attacked by neighbouring armed groups, often in coalitions, simply because of who they are. In this world there are people who are discriminated against because of their physical features. This can lead to victimization in society and give rise to frustrations and loss of self-confidence in life (Romero et al, 2014:1-2). By their bodily traits and culture (language, historical background) Banyamulenge people can be quite easily identified for mistreatment. This causes suffering, magnified by being singled out as 'invaders' in their own country, not real 'autochthonous' Congolese. In Chapter 2, Article 10 of the DRC National

Constitution of 13 May 2005, the Congolese nationality of Banyamulenge people is approved. This provision was adopted by the National Assembly, and approved by Congolese citizens in a referendum on 18-19 December 2005. Despite this, contestations of citizenship and of the right of some minorities to be considered authentically Congolese, remain and have if anything increased since 2005. From the 1960s to the present, no action was taken by the UN to protect this minority group. Since 2017, they have been facing an ongoing 'slow genocide', and a constant state of physical and mental threat. The UN through its peacekeeping mission, was given the mandate of protecting civilians but seems to have failed, with many people still losing their lives (Boutellis, 2013.)

Currently the Banyamulenge are being attacked in the few villages that remained, and in the presence of UN peacekeepers. Between March and June 2021, there were many coordinated attacks on the few remaining Banyamulenge villages where civilians remained. These included Kaholo, Marungu, Rurambo district, Gitoga and others. In these attacks, a new set of alliances was involved, with Mai Mai rebels backed by armed groups from Rwanda, and Red Tabara from Burundi. Over 20 people were killed in these attacks. On 12th June when village houses were set on fire, Sophie, an elderly woman of 84 years, was burned alive in her home, unable to flee the attack.

The list of atrocities gets longer daily. All survivors from the above-mentioned villages over 3418 more people have joined more than one hundred thousand civilians crowded into Minembwe and are now gathered in different displacement camps. Some displaced are in Bwegera district and others are in different IDP campsites without security to be ensured that makes fear of the situation worse. It is feared that a massacre similar to what happened in Gatumba in August 13-14th, 2004 in Burundi where over 165 Banyamulenge people lost their lives in a fire deliberately set in the refugee camp. Furthermore, beyond being internally displaced persons (IDPs) fleeing assassination, civilians are experiencing all kinds of persecution, a slow genocide that consists of repeated physical and emotional torment, sexual violence and kidnapping, being exposed to every violence without protection from any corner (Ntanyoma and Hintjens, 2021). For a longer account of the need for this study, and the significance of the term 'genocide' for the current position of the Banyamulenge minority, kindly consult Appendix 4.

1.5 Study structure

This research is structured into five principal chapters. The first has provided some background context, outlined the research problem, objectives and research questions, justifying the need for the study. Chapter 2 provides an overview of research methods used during fieldwork, and why a qualitative approach was chosen. Chapter 3 reviews previous literature on humanitarianism governance, ethnic conflict and the problem of non-intervention, during conflict, linking this with the Banyamulenge case study in Minembwe, South Kivu. Chapter 4 and 5 discuss the study's main findings. Chapter 4 mainly reports on the basis of interview material, around subjective perceptions of humanitarian agency staff and displaced civilians about reasons for non-intervention. In Chapter 5 I explore some proposed solutions to these obstacles, which might potentially at least, help better provide humanitarian relief for civilians in Minembwe in future. The final and sixth chapter reviews answers to the research questions, and in light of these, makes some modest suggestions for improving the current situation.

Chapter 2: Research Methods and Positionality

2.1 Introduction

In the context of COVID-19 and internal conflict, rather than conducting a survey, a qualitative approach was chosen, to collect information from a relatively small number of participants. This also allowed more time for those interviewed to express their feelings, experiences and thoughts, unlike quantitative survey which tend to involve a large number of participants and to strictly limit the time and scope of discussion to easily answerable question. Moreover, by limiting the number of respondents to allow for more in-depth discussions with those included in this study, the qualitative approach helped to minimize the COVID-19 health risks for both respondents, the researcher and research assistant. This study adopts a mainly qualitative approach, “highly reliant on qualitative data (words, images, experiences and observations) that are not quantified” (O’Leary, 2017:142). This helps dive more deeply into people’s lived experiences, including those of humanitarian actors and civilians in need in Minembwe High Plateau. In this way, the study also aims to come up with some possible solutions. Conducted during a challenging period, the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions limited physical contact and movement, coinciding with regular attacks on civilians across South Kivu. Fortunately, towards the end of fieldwork, local COVID-19 rules were relaxed, allowing me to interview a relatively small number of interviewees face to face, whilst abiding with social distancing rules.

2.2 The Scope and Limitations of the Study

This research is focused on generating knowledge around a minority community which has been largely denied, or refused, access to humanitarian aid during ethnic conflict by researching their daily life while living in the camp and displacement place in-midst of ethnic conflicts war. Since this research was conducted during the challenging period of COVID-19, the collection of primary field data was constrained by COVID-19 measures in place.

The researcher could not secure all appointments to interview humanitarian organization staff, despite his best efforts to do so. Thus, to reduce this limitation, the researcher interviewed staff from humanitarian organizations that responded positively to his request for information. At the same time, and this is not related to COVID-19, some humanitarian organizations were unwilling to provide documents in the form of reports, data or background information concerning their humanitarian work. Due to working principles of confidentiality, due to remoteness, it has been possibly to travel to Minembwe region or the High Plateau. For this reason, the researcher decided that he needed to rely on a research assistant.

2.3 Research assistant profile and role

Given the seriousness of the problem of the topic in this study, the researcher was to see and meet as many people as possible, to reconnect with the reality of the field and collect reliable and verifiable primary data. Given the insecurity related to ongoing ethnic conflict in eastern South Kivu and Eastern DRC, and given Corona’s related travel restrictions, the researcher had to enlist the services of a research assistant who could conduct interviews in Minembwe.

This research assistant is a native of Minembwe region, from Fizi High Plateau. He is also a primary teacher (schools were on holidays) and knows a great deal about the history of the Banyamulenge and other communities in Eastern Congo. He works as *chef* of his village and reports regularly to the municipality (*commune*) of Minembwe. Because of his rapport with local government authorities, he has participated in many dialogues and meetings that seek peace, unity and reconciliation between local communities. I found him to be an ideal research assistant, as someone well-informed to help me request people from different communities to take part and contribute to this study. Before he started the data collection in Minembwe, I invited him to Goma where I was so as to train him on the background of this study and what was expected to do at ground level by approaching ten participants that were targeted in Minembwe, balanced by gender and age, and gathered them together to briefly explain the purpose of the study. Those who expressed an interest in participating in the study, would provide the research assistant their phone numbers, and he relayed those numbers to me so I could be in regular touch with them.

The research assistant continued to act as a bridge between participants and myself. There were problems that he made easier, such as poor mobile network and phones being switched off due to battery issues or lack of power. In such cases, he would try to directly contact the respondents so that I could speak to them using his phone.

2.4 Qualitative Methods and Research Techniques

To study the Banyamulenge community's limited access to humanitarian assistance, qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews focusing mainly on the daily life of the displaced civilians, their access, or lack of access, to humanitarian relief in the form of food, shelter and health care. Participants were selected according to pre-defined criteria of a range of ages, and a gender balance. However, the sample was not statistically representative (Mack 2005; O'Leary 2017, Acharya et al, 2013). In total, 18 participants agreed to take part in the interviews, divided into 3 categories by age: 10-25, 26-45, and 46-70, with equal shares of men and women, observing the principle of gender equity. There were in addition nine key informants from international and national humanitarian organizations (OMS, CICR, MSF HOLLANDE, MSF ESPAGNE, OXFAM, UGEAF, EBENEZER, SEDI and ADEDI). They were interviewed to cross-check some of the information provided by the local population.

It was also the aim to more fully understand the constraints faced by humanitarian organizations, faced with the remoteness, with ethnic discrimination and a context of violent conflict. All civilians interviewed were victims of the ethnic violence that has ravaged the High Plateau, mainly targeting Banyamulenge civilians, identified by their facial features. Some of interviewed had fled their villages in remote and inaccessible areas (Mibunda, Rugabano, Rugezi, Kakangala, Kabingo, Runundu, Kakenke, Ilundu, Biziba, Gishigo, Mishasho, Kahwela, Bidegu, Rwitsankuku, Kalingi, Kivumu, Ruhemba, Rutigita, Monyi and Masha, to name just some of the villages. They had fled towards the central city of Minembwe, around municipality centers in Muzinda, Runundu, Kiziba, and Ilundu. Each of these areas accommodated hundreds of displaced people displaced from rural areas. Other forcibly displaced Banyamulenge were able to flee to the more accessible peri-urban areas of Bwegera, Goma, Bukavu and Uvira city. Due to COVID-19-related travel restrictions and insecurity along the roads, the researcher could not reach the more remote and inaccessible regions of the High Plateau, where many Banyamulenge victims are huddled together. Data collection in these areas was facilitated by research assistant who was already in the research sites when interviews began. The

research assistant was paid for all interviews he conducted and all activities he undertook for this research, and transport costs were provided by the researcher.

In addition, where possible, the researcher himself also interviewed displaced people currently living in Goma city, to find out about their life as IDPs, and whether they could access any humanitarian assistance. He also spoke to some civilians in Bwegera displaced camp who had fled the High Plateau of Minembwe. In this camp the Banyamulenge community live alone, and the researcher asked what access they had to humanitarian assistance. I also interviewed key participants from WHO (World Health Organization) and from DWB/MSF (Doctors without Borders, Médecins sans Frontières) to find out if they provided any health or other assistance in Bwegera or elsewhere in the High Plateau where Banyamulenge victims of ethnic violence are living. The office of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which has the mandate to ensure humanitarian protection and assistance for all victims of war and other forms of violence there was interviewed about how they were intervening to provide assistance to Banyamulenge civilians displaced in the High Plateau.

Moreover, some local humanitarian organizations were interviewed including SEDI (Solidarité Echange pour le Développement Integral), UGEAF (Union des Groupes d'Etudes et d'Actions pour le Développement de Fizi-Itombwe), Eben Ezer Ministry International, and ADED (Appui au développement de l'Enfant en detresse – or Support for the Development of Children in Distress in English). All of these are organizations that were known to have at some time in the past intervened to provide humanitarian relief to the civilian population in Minembwe. Therefore, these interviews were conducted to study how they understood their interventions now and in the past, in the High Plateau of Minembwe.

After data collection, recorded audio interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis, so that the study's results could be organized around a combination of themes selected from the literature and new themes that emerged during interviewing, transcription and analysis. (Braun and Clarke, 2021).

Table 1. Young Males and Females (10-25 years)

Respondents	Gender	Age from 10-25
R1	F	21
R2	F	24
R3	F	18
R4	M	20
R5	M	18
R6	M	20
Total	3 Females and	6

	3 Males	
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Table 1 illustrates the category of young generation, aged between 10 and 25, selected to participate to this study and share experiences of ongoing ethnic violence that led them to be displaced and facing a humanitarian crisis. We interviewed three females and three males, both in Bwegera and in Minembwe camps.

Table 2. Participants Males and Females (26-45)

Respondents	Gender	Age
R7	F	40
R8	M	38
R9	M	45
R10	F	39
R11	M	44
R12	F	41

Table 2 show the respondents, by gender between the ages of 26 and 46. During interviews and group discussions, these age groups were separated because we wanted to understand how their views varied, and different experiences they had gone through over time. We assumed they might be interested to talk about dissimilar information based on their prior experiences of recurrent ethnic conflicts and violence.

Table 3. Key informants, staff from International and National Humanitarian Organisations

Respondents	Gender	Age
R12	M	53 and 43
R14	M	56
R15	F	40
R16	M	60
R17	M	55
R18	M	53
R19	M	61
R20	M	57

R21	M	63
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Table 3 represents key informants interviewed, from international and local humanitarian organization. The first column shown respondents' numbers (with the abbreviation R), and the second column shows gender, the last shows the age of each key respondent. In the first row, two male staff from the same international organization were interviewed, aged 53 and 43 respectively. They were asked by their Chief of Mission, who was a woman, to represent her. Those I personally interviewed were thus mainly the staff of local and international humanitarian NGOs. During fieldwork, it emerged that most humanitarian organizations in Eastern DRC, and in South Kivu, are represented almost entirely by men.

There were relatively very few women working in those organizations, and women thus formed a smaller percentage of interviewees. However, when it came to interviewing civilians in Minembwe or in other localities, we were able to ensure equal numbers of women and men were interviewed. Interviews conducted by my research assistant were mostly done face-to-face, as well as on the phone. Most were done outside or in school buildings, since schools were closed. Displaced people were living in every available building in Minembwe, which made interviews difficult for my research assistant.

2.5 Ethical Consideration

During the field activities, ethical considerations were followed as provided by ISS ethical guidelines. The researcher and assistant research sought informed consent before starting interviews, and the safety and security of participants was paramount. In this regard, participants were approached formally and explained the purpose of the study, reassuring them that data collected would only be used for the thesis as a requirement for the MA at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University of Rotterdam. Therefore, research participants contributed voluntarily.

Moreover, anonymity of respondent was respected to protect them from possible harm due to having taken part in the study. All respondents agreed that we could use the information they provided, anonymously since we did not use their real names. To avoid any unforeseen problems, it was decided to use a code (R1, R2) or pseudonyms for all respondents. Since this study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure all participants were safe, national restrictive measures were observed, including rules around use of sanitizer, hand-washing, use of facemasks, and social distancing. All participants were given facemasks and sanitizer for protection before interviews took place. And before the researcher started to conduct fieldwork at ground level, he obtained permission from the local authorities, including the Governor of South-Kivu Province, the Mayor of Uvira District, and Mayor of Minembwe *Commune*.

2.6 A brief word on positionality

A more extended note on positionality is to be found in Appendix 3. To state my position briefly, I was born in a rural area of the High Plateau and belong to the Banyamulenge ethnic minority. This research has been motivated by my lived experiences and passion for community development and

peaceful cohabitation between different ethnic groups in and around Minembwe and South Kivu generally.

After studying humanitarianism, conflict, and peace as part of the GDP (Governance and Development Policy) major, I decided to research how humanitarian organizations do and do not intervene in conflict situations in the context of ethnic discrimination and remoteness in the High Plateau of Minembwe, my original home locality. Overall, what proved vital for me was to listen to, interact with, and even be rejected by agency staff themselves. This study also aims to raise awareness of the challenges facing those humanitarian agencies whose mandate is to intervene to alleviate suffering (see Appendix 3).

Chapter 3: Humanitarian Governance and Ethnic Conflict in South Kivu

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is going to elaborate on humanitarian governance, ethnic conflict and discrimination based on 'race'. The main question is how management of humanitarian organisations functions in the unstable context of Eastern DRC, how humanitarian organizations manage, and fail, to operate in conflict contexts. This chapter also opens up questions around a core issue for the study, namely the *humanitarian failure to intervene*, a problem the research has centred on. The context of Eastern DRC is also analysed through literature dealing with ethnic conflict, discrimination, violent persecution and hate speech.

This chapter connects literature on humanitarianism, humanitarian governance and ethnic conflict with the geographical, historical and political background in Minembwe Region of the Banyamulenge minority. This chapter explains how humanitarian governance can fail in settings where ethnic conflict predominates (i.e. in the Minembwe Region). Our case study, the Banyamulenge minority, is referred to throughout. It is worth emphasizing that the literature selected connects the present situation in DRC, with relevant theories about conflict and humanitarian intervention, to better understand why humanitarian agencies seem unable to assist civilians in Minembwe Region today.

3.2 Understanding Humanitarian Governance in DRC

According to Barnett, humanitarian governance can be defined as “the increasingly organized and internationalized attempt to save the lives, enhance the welfare, and reduce the suffering of the world’s most vulnerable populations” (Barnett, 2013: 379). When we think of humanitarian governance, the first thing that probably comes to mind for many people are interventions of international humanitarian organizations rather than of local ones (Hilhorst et al., 2019).

Some scholars argue that humanitarian agencies are very important in interventions in the most vulnerable areas of the world, where population are encountering multiple crises, and where humanitarian relief can make the difference between saving and losing lives, protecting or losing human dignity, potentially restoring hope for the future, and preserving life (Barnett, 2013). Generally, when people have run away from wars and violence, they need to be assisted through emergency measures organized by specialized humanitarian organizations (Pincock et al, 2021). Africa is known to be a continent plagued with repetitive wars and ethnic violence. A large number of African governments are fragile, due to long-lasting conflicts situations (Yang and Moorman, 2021; Schmid et al, 2014). State failure means failure to restore security, which results in a lack of trust in the government among many civilians. As a result, victims place their trust and hope more in local NGOs or in the international community, represented by the UN and international NGOs providing humanitarian relief (Koddenbrock, 2015; Aembe and Dijkzeul, 2019).

Through their interventions, humanitarian organizations have the enormous responsibility of saving human beings' lives, and helping them ensure a swift, efficient recovery when hit by natural disasters, displaced by violence and war, or reduced to destitution by long-term conflicts. The mission of humanitarian agencies is to undertake humanitarian action for the benefit of the most vulnerable populations in any difficult or crisis situation, including in wars or other humanitarian crises, such as natural disasters or mass displacement. Moreover, in their mandates, humanitarian

organizations, wherever they intervene in the world, are supposed to be endowed with all possible means to exercise relief actions with human passion. This implies they should have a budget that allows for all kinds of humanitarian intervention for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) alike (Hilhorst and Pereboom, 2015).

However, in DRC, non-interventions by humanitarian organizations in the East is not confined to the Banyamulenge. People have experienced a whole series of difficult moments, with war and ethnic violence continuing, sometimes for decades. This has created such a vast arrange of needs for humanitarian assistance among the population that even saving lives and alleviating the sufferings of children and other victims may be beyond the capacities of humanitarian agencies. Civilians in such a situation may find themselves and may remain, in desperation (Healy and Tiller, 2004). Frequently humanitarian organizations in DRC and more particularly in South Kivu, have failed to intervene. They claim this is because of state fragility, and the lack of any positive support from government to help NGOs to operate through guaranteeing their security (Koddenbrock, 2015; Aembe and Dijkzeul, 2019).

Non-intervention by humanitarian agencies in conflict contexts is often blamed on the host government for failing to protect civilians in the first place. Failing to protect basic human dignity, is blamed on lack of state legitimacy that means humanitarian agencies may feel isolated, without reliable partners to help with implementation of humanitarian action plans (Tyagi, 1994). Many international humanitarian organisations are constrained by norms and principles governing their operations, and one such principle is that of non-intervention in the domestic political affairs of any sovereign state. The principle of national sovereignty was part of the 1793 French constitution under Article 119, and was later adopted into the United Nations Charter (Shen, 2001). Some scholars suggest that the UN peace keeping operations will lose their purpose on the ground so long as the UN Security Council is beset by member countries willing to place their nationalist interests over and above those of the needs of civilian population in wars, in need of protection (Jones, 1995, Lillich, 1995).

Approaches to explaining failures of humanitarian governance and humanitarian non-intervention when a need for protection is clearly established, will be useful in this study. The data analysed in Chapter 4 and collected during fieldwork, helps understand some of the workings of current humanitarian governance in Eastern DRC, and how humanitarian organization explain that own failure to intervene to assist a minority community currently facing ‘slow genocide’.

3.3 Understanding Ethnic Conflict in DRC

For researchers, theories of ethnic conflict help explain conflict motivations, if not necessarily the root causes of violence. According to Wolff (2007:2) ethnic conflicts are conflicts “in which the goals of at least one conflict party are defined in (exclusively) ethnic terms, and in which the primary fault line of confrontation is one of ethnic distinctions”. Brown (1993) suggests ethnic conflict can be defined more broadly, as social relations associated with racial, cultural, and even intrastate conflicts, and centring on ascribed or assumed ethnic differences.

Ethnic competition and violent conflict among ethnic groups has to be viewed through a very deep analysis that is not confined to the national or local level but has an international dimension, as if seen through a telescope. Yes, ethnic conflicts do occur between two or more contending

communities or identity groups, for example in one city, region or state, but the source of the conflict may be both political interests within the country, and social, economic and religious tensions. Also, individuals in direct conflict may be fighting for other rights, such as political citizenship, economic independence or psychological and socio-cultural well-being. Often, there are some influential actors whose own interests involve other states intervening, openly or behind the scenes, through proxy armed actors. The actors involved may then become multi-level, involving local, national level, regional and international powers (Taras and Ganguly, 2015)

In addition, several authors have suggested that the causes of ethnic conflict and violence can vary enormously. Not many believe that distinct genetically and culturally shaped personalities are at the root of two or more communities being unable to live together (Cordell and Wolf 2016). As Cordell and Wolff (2016) suggest, ethnic conflicts is mostly an expression of deeper issues of social relations and economic grievances, expressed through ethnic differences. As they say, ethnic conflicts are:

“caused by competition for (increasingly) scarce sources, the agendas of political activities and more especially political elites and through the manipulation and essentialisation of identity markers of which ethnicity is but one”. Correspondingly, the genesis of ethnic conflict is observed in many domains of social life especially where people gather together in the same settings, workplace in government institutions, local and international organizations, it may be also among two economically emerging states (Lee and Reade, 2015: 1645; Hoskisson, et al 2000: 249).

Furthermore, ethnic conflicts have emerged as a highly significant element in global military conflicts, taking on different dimensions among different sets of actors. Although it would be compelling to find one single hypothesis or theory to capture all the different possible causes of such ethnic conflicts, this may be unrealistic. The challenges related to ethnic conflicts on a global and international scale, centre on security agendas and agreements based on forms of majoritarian consensus (Banchoff, 2008). This atmosphere can spread to other locations around the world, and result in easier justification of the sufferings of ethnic-based minorities, such as the Kurds, Miskito indigenous people, Chinese in Malaysia, or Turks in Germany. Recent violence in west Myanmar against Rohingya showed how gradual reconstruction of national identity can result in majority feelings of superiority over minorities, with religion compounding ethnic conflict between communities (Wade, 2017).

Many societies have suffered from ethnic conflicts for decades, including since the post-colonial period of the 1960s into the 1970s when huge revolutionary uprisings took place across the African continent (Blagojevic, 2010). In many cases, regional and international involvement in the political management of a particular country has amplified existing inter-community conflicts because the latter aim to achieve their hidden goals or agendas, through proxy wars based in racial, religious, regional or ethnic divisions. This can result in massive destruction of lives and property, both through heavy military technology, bombs, guns and tanks, and through loss of dignity, suicide and trauma following attacks carried out for the purposes of terror, without any other clear rationale. This concept of constructed threat is used in chapter four when it comes to analysing ethnic violence in South Kivu, and in Minembwe in particular.

3.4 Discrimination, 'race' and ethnicity

Before the 1884-85 Berlin Conference there were no borders between Africa countries. There were kingdoms with borders that shifted with war and peace. With colonisation, some of these pre-existing kingdom were broken up, so that African people from same kingdom found themselves in two different countries. This is also the situation in Rwanda, Burundi and DRC. As stated by Check: "At the dawn of colonial rule, several components of African nations found themselves in different countries, thereby creating an international separation between formerly single and centralized nations. The Banyamulenge of the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are a perfect example of this" (Check, 2011:1)

One should be reminded that before the break-up of Africa were no hard boundaries around nations or states, the boundaries shifted with time, and although there were kingdoms, pastoralists could usually move freely across any natural boundaries.² People who moved into what is now DRC during the formation of the state, dated to 1885, found themselves in a new state and found themselves unwelcome, not recognised as natives of where they were then living, and in a place where they soon lost most of their connections with the so called country of origin.³ This reality applies across many African countries including Rwanda, DRC, Côte d'Ivoire, Tanzania, Liberia and Uganda, where ethnic groups find themselves living in two or more different states, scattered about and defined, potentially everywhere, as non-autochthonous.⁴ In most cases, the failure to recognise this complex historical reality among citizens lies with the colonial records first, and then continues after independence with discrimination against those communities by irresponsible governments seeking majoritarian popularity. Instead of the issues being resolved, they come to be the source of many repetitive conflicts and wars across Africa.

The DRC Constitution adopted on 13 May 2005 by the National Assembly and approved by the Congolese in a referendum on December 18-19 2005, says in Chapter 2, Article 10: "The Congolese nationality is obtained either by origin or by individual acquisition". The same article continues: "Of Congolese origin are all persons who belong to the ethnic groups whose members and territory formed [part of] what has become the Congo (presently the Democratic Republic of the Congo) upon its independence". This means individuals and groups of people living in DRC before land was reallocated from the Belgian colonisers, are Congolese citizens; by this criteria the Banyamulenge should be accepted and included as full citizens and nationals of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (former Zaire).

From 2015 the Banyamulenge community started to experience worsening and recurrent violent attacks from various armed groups from among neighbouring communities, including the Babembe, Bapfuliru and others. From 2017, the situation worsened as Maimai armed group were in coalition with external armed groups from Rwanda and Burundi, including RED Tabara and the Rwandan Hutu Allied Democratic Forces (FDLR), the offshoot of armed groups responsible for the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and who had fled into then Zaire (Ntanyoma, 2021). As with Rohingya, or with Kurds, violence and killings against Banyamulenge have recently been justified through disputing

2 <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-worldhistory/chapter/the-berlin-conference/>

3 <https://www.statelessness.eu/updates/blog/statelessness-africa-scale-challenge-and-opportunities-leadership>

4 Ibid

their origins, their national identity and through hate speech that promotes anti-Banyamulenge discrimination as fully justified, claiming the minority is a threat to peace and stability in DRC (Davey 2020; Ntanyoma 2021). This situation can confirm what Manby started, that:

“across Africa there are people who can obtain recognition of nationality neither in the country where their last name ‘belongs’ nor in the country where in fact they live and to which they have much closer connections” (Manby 2015:5).

Local armed groups attacking Banyamulenge are known as Maimai, Biloze Bishambuke and regional forces that back them. Their combined attacks have resulted in massive internal displacement, and the repetitive killings and systematic starvation of besieged, displaced Banyamulenge civilians. Some authors characterise the present situation as a ‘slow-moving genocide’ (Ntanyoma and Hintjens, 2021). Amidst mass displacement, sexual violence, kidnapping, torture and property looting, as many as 150,000 Banyamulenge civilians are now IDPs in and around Minembwe, in urgent need of food, shelter and health care (Ntanyoma and Hintjens, 2021).

The ongoing need for humanitarian aid which does not arrive is what has pushed the researcher to study and seek to understand how such an evidently marginalized minority civilian population is being denied access to humanitarian assistance. Although the community lives in a remote area, and amidst ongoing violent ethnic conflict, ideologies of discrimination and hate speech are also part of the wider picture, since they aim to reduce sympathy for Banyamulenge as a minority in DRC, and to deter those who might think of showing solidarity with their suffering. Even the more competent authorities of government and civil society leaders, fall into the temptation to manipulate the political majority, calling on their followers to repeat their hate speech and to undertake actions to ‘cleanse’ the region of an unwanted minority. The political interests of some in high positions in government, mean that today it is almost a mark of patriotism and nationalism, loyalty and statesmanlike behaviour, to accuse Banyamulenge people of destroying the DRC, as if they were the new colonizers, which as has been shown, could not be further from the truth.

In DRC if someone is an unemployed person and wants to get to a higher position in the government, one way is to be heard attacking Banyamulenge and other Rwandophone, and to loudly proclaim in the media, that once elected, he will use his government position to chase away the Rwandophone, once and for all, out of the Congolese territory, back to “where they came from”. This has become a pattern, with candidates publicly stating that Banyamulenge people are foreign herders, who strayed into DRC, and claiming they occupy key positions in national government (which is not the case). The few remaining Banyamulenge representatives are challenged and questioned in parliament, simply for raising concerns at the condition of their own community and seeking to defend themselves (Court, 2013). Propaganda and hate speeches by many DRC leaders has become the norm. This has real, tangible negative effects and civilians in Minembwe for example, find themselves in danger of being attacked and killed any day, in what seems to qualify as a slow and ongoing genocide (Ntanyoma and Hintjens, 2021).

Yet if anything can be learned from how the United Nations Security Council acted in Rwanda in 1994 during the genocide against Tutsi, it is that responses should not wait till the genocide is over (Hintjens, 2001; Jones 1995). For genocide to be identified as it happens, requires looking for clear signs, for example identified by Genocide Watch in the ten ‘stages’ of genocide. Many stages of preparation precede actual mass killings. Actions that convey false information about how to behave towards minorities, often accompany hidden plans that form part of the agenda of extremists, and await execution at some opportune moment. Hate speeches and negative propaganda through

national media and social media, leaflets and word of mouth, aim to mislead the majority and promote political hatred and division among those who in the not-very-distant past lived together.

It is known that the international community, in the shape of the UN or forces sanctioned by the UN, is the only global institution with the right and obligation to intervene in the internal affairs of a failed state where there is a risk of war crimes or genocide. Where the state itself is persecuting or allowing the persecution of an internal minority, the international community is supposed to protect them where the state fails to do so, in order to restore the peace and save human lives (Cottey, 2008). The neutrality of the international community and international humanitarian actors does not help those people in humanitarian crisis, but rather can advantage armed groups, and killers who regularly take away human lives and property of persecuted minorities (Udombana, 2005:).

Some questions arise when we think deeply about how vulnerability has grown across many nations in recent, and recurrent ethnic and religious armed conflicts. Why the long 'wait and see' about intervention when there are so many emergency and calamity situations? And why does interventions often come only after a big number of people have already lost lives and their property has been destroyed? This was the in Darfur in 2003, Rwanda in the 1994 genocide, and the Rohingya in Myanmar in 2017. The civil war in Rwanda started in October 1990, but UN peacekeeping forces were only deployed in October 1993, and whilst one million Rwandans were slaughtered over three months, the UN actually withdrew part of its peacekeeping forces from the country only to have to redeploy them later after most Tutsi had been murdered. This failure qualified as a big gap, helping the enemies of Tutsi civilians, among the Hutu majority, to have enough time to finalize their plan of killing all Tutsis (Jones, 1995).

3.5.Humanitarian failure to intervene and loss of civilian lives

People are being murdered, injured, and forced to flee their homes all over the world, these actions result from dreadful wars and injustices. Conflict creates havoc in the lives of over 125 million people displaced throughout the world, from Syria to South Sudan and from Greece to DRC. A significant number have lost their homes, their land, livestock, their jobs and many have lost their families and friends. As a result of governments' repeated failure to prevent conflicts and wars, most governments also fail to protect their own civilians, or even attack them directly.

Amidst such chaos civilians are await the international community, the UN and Western countries, hoping they will react and save lives, since their own governments have failed to protect them. Some scholars suggest that those more capable do have the obligation to intervene and defend the more vulnerable (Wood, and Sullivan, 2015). Others suggest impunity is the norm, and that "In today's conflicts, the most basic rules of war are being bent or broken to gain even the slightest advantage on the battlefield. Terrible human rights abuses continue to go unchecked" (Cairns, 2016:7). Western Countries do not intervene wherever human rights are being threatened. Instead, they tend to select where to intervene and even decide not to intervene, depending on their judgements about the balance of political interest and the extent of political will to help (Longo, 2015). Non-intervention by international humanitarian agencies and actors may also refer to the principle of the non-use of force and other military means, or it may be claimed that non-intervention is an expression of respect for state sovereignty (Bellamy and Wheeler, 2008). The decision to intervene thus depends on 'anticipated cost and benefits', and Western countries tend only to intervene when benefits outweigh the costs. In Rwanda, Western governments were very slow to intervene because of their relative lack of interest in the country, and the anticipated calculation that the returns of intervention would be low (Regan, 1998).

Chapter 4: Voices in the Arena: NGOs and Civilians explain

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on findings of fieldwork conducted in South Kivu province of DRC in summer 2021, regarding reasons for non-intervention by humanitarian organizations at the crossroad of violence, remoteness and ethnic discrimination. How and why they failed to intervene – or tried to intervene - in this difficult arena, what their challenges have been, and experiences they encountered, are central to this chapter. The second focus is on civilians and their own humanitarian needs and priorities, in displacement, faced with the fear of attacks and ethnic violence. Overall this chapter presents how both humanitarian workers and victims of recurrent conflict manage to survive - or fail to survive - in the arena of humanitarian governance.

During my career as a government agent, I gained a great deal of knowledge from talking with local people. In this way I came to understand that local people have more knowledge of their lived experiences than government officials usually appreciate. During this research, more information and insight were collected while discussing with participants, through semi-structured interviews and with international humanitarian actors, local humanitarian NGOs, survivors of ethnic violence, and members of the Banyamulenge diaspora living abroad, who were contacted to find out how they are organizing to support victims, enabling some to survive in the harsh conditions in South Kivu.

4.2. “We fear to go there”: NGOs explain their non-intervention

South-Kivu, in Eastern DRC, has been ravaged by violence and wars for decades and this is why many humanitarian organizations are now operating there. These humanitarian organizations provide a wide range of types of support including food relief, shelter and medical care for local people, especially those displaced. Most humanitarian organizations have their main offices in the cities, in Uvira, Bukavu, and Goma, not normally where the violent attacks that characterize the High Plateau, take place. In Minembwe, where people are losing their lives, especially in the more remote areas affected by ethnic violence, living conditions have rapidly deteriorated since 2017 in particular. Yet no major humanitarian agencies have a base near this potential field of relief operations.

During field research, the researcher found that international humanitarian organizations tend not to intervene in Minembwe region. Most of the international humanitarian organizations in the region labelling the remoteness and inaccessibility of the location as the major challenge that hindering their operation there. This contradicts with the international humanitarian principles in which all humanitarian organizations needed to consider while people are in extreme sufferings that need humanitarian assistance so that to survive. According to impartiality principle in international humanitarian principles, humanitarian operation should target the neediest ones (UNOCHA, 2021).⁵ In Minembwe the Banyamulenge community which urgently needs humanitarian aid does

5 UNOCHA (2021), OCHA on Message: Humanitarian Principles, retrieved from https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples_eng_June12.pdf (23.10.2021)

not get it purely because international humanitarian organizations operating in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have failed to their mission. The international humanitarian organizations are plenty over the country and they even progressively increasing but despite their huge number in the country they don't show up tangible impact on what they were supposed to do (Healy and Tiller, 2014).

One staff member from an international humanitarian organisation told me that "there are ongoing ethnic conflicts in Minembwe. We do not intervene there to minimize the risk for our staff along the way going and coming back" (Uvira 10th August, 2021 at 11:00 am). Once the area is mentioned by OCHA as a red zone, it means that all international humanitarian agencies take this into consideration, even if they have the capacity for intervention. For a red zone, non-intervention of numerous international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) is justified for security reasons, though this can be an excuse for a lack of existing will to intervene in such a region. The risk-related communications of OCHA during different meetings with humanitarian organization can in this way end up underpinning all the agencies' decisions. This is similar to reasons advanced by respondents for non-interventions, shared by several humanitarian agency staff operating in South Kivu:

"We usually intervene in the conflict situations where infrastructures like roads and airports are available and accessible. [In] the case of Minembwe region we heard that there is an airdrome, but we fear the endless ethnic conflicts which resulting into constant insecurity. We worry the risk that our staff may encounter. The other important element is that intervening in Minembwe region requires enough and very expensive logistics. We have to use airplanes since the roads towards there are not practicable" (International humanitarian organization at Bukavu, 13 August 2021, 3:00 pm).

Moreover, the repetitive violence is also used as a pretext for non-interventions by several respondents representing humanitarian organizations in Eastern DRC. A third key respondent from an international humanitarian organization based in Bukavu shared a narrative close to the previous ones, suggesting Minembwe region has been shown to be a no-go area, after experiences of different international non-governmental agencies. He suggested it was not feasible to intervene in Minembwe because there are few agencies who raise the issue, and in meetings around the table between international humanitarian agencies and local NGOs, most of those present seem unwilling to raise the question of the need for humanitarian assistance in Minembwe. They simply reiterate that roads are not passable, and mention the issue of insecurity along the way. In this way, one anonymous key respondent replied, after being asked if their assistance reaches the vulnerable people in the High Plateau of Minembwe, and alleviates their suffering.

"Minembwe is dangerous zone (red zone), currently we cannot intervene there as far as OCHA forbade us to go to Minembwe because it is a red zone and we cannot intervene in red zone, so that to protect our staff, we will wait until we are allowed to intervene in the similar locations as in Minembwe. We are waiting the order from OCHA and our headquarters, Maybe once security is restored from there we can meet and evaluate and decide on what kind of humanitarian aid is needed" (international humanitarian organization in Bukavu, 13 August 2021 at 13:00 pm).

In South Kivu, hundreds of humanitarian organizations and hundreds of local NGOs operate, but they mostly seem reluctant to intervene in Minembwe, and their attitude can be qualified as showing a lack of goodwill around intervening to assist in an environment beset by discrimination and targeted violence. Some staff seemed unconcerned, some were out of the country or even the continent, and others were from varied ethnic communities that are those which are in conflict with the Banyamulenge. This can explain their often careless replies, and the sense that they were making

excuses about why they could not intervene in Minembwe. These various narratives seem to confirm what Healy and Tiller noted:

“UN agencies and INGOs are increasingly absent from field locations, especially when there are any kind of significant security or logistical issues. In acute emergencies, when assistance is most needed, international staff of humanitarian agencies are rapidly evacuated or go into hibernation, and programmes downgrade to skeleton staff or are suspended. Many agencies are concentrating only on the easiest-to reach populations and ignoring the more difficult places” (Healy and Tiller 2014:4).

They added something important, which the researcher found at ground level during the fieldwork, and was been mentioned by many people including local NGOs, namely that “some humanitarian agencies simply wait until the emergency passes to continue their usual, long-term programmes” (Healy and Tiller 2014:4). These humanitarian organizations fear the risks they may encounter when deploying staff in areas with ongoing ethnic violence targeting IDPs. They fail to collaborate with certain armed groups along the way, who might enable them to operate perfectly well, if they decided to do so. It is worth mentioning that many armed groups in South Kivu have relatively good relations with many humanitarian organizations and with NGOs, and allow them to move about and undertake their humanitarian activities, mostly unmolested, in areas where they agree that civilians are ‘deserving’ of assistance (Brabant and Vogel, 2014).

Local humanitarian organizations have more limited financial means and logistics than international agencies, and cited this as their main challenges they face to intervene in Minembwe region. Moreover, they added that the donors and international humanitarian that they work with to get the fund they have very difficult conditions to fulfil before accessing their financial support. Testimony from one staff of local humanitarian organization, said:

“We do not intervene in the High Plateau of Minembwe because we do not have enough means, ours are less that can allow us to move for interventions. Secondary, donors and international humanitarian actors in partnership every time they give tough conditions before to donate, they oblige the local NGOs to intervene where they have their own interests. Others will ask you amount of money back on what donated and then tell you to report and justify the all agreed amount to be used” staff of local NGO other than from the Banyamulenge Community. (Uvira 10th August 2021 at 8:00 am)

One local non-governmental organization by the name of Ebenezer Ministry International has shown that this NGO cannot intervene in Minembwe during ongoing conflicts because their leaders are known to be from the Banyamulenge community, thus, they fear being killed along the way. As one Eben Ezer staff member narrated:

“We fear to go in the High Plateau of Minembwe to intervene because our organization is known to be of the Banyamulenge community, for this case we are exposed to danger along the road towards there once using our cars. For instance, we have already faced with this case during interventions in Minembwe our staff were fallen into the ambush stretched against them as they were all Banyamulenge vehicles” (A Munyamulenge staff from local NGO, Uvira, 10 August 2021 at 2:00 pm).

In this respect, on October 4, 2011, members of Mai Mai Yakutumba, a largely ethnic Babembe armed group, had attacked a vehicle of the non-governmental organization Eben Ezer Ministry International in Kalungwe village, near the town of Fizi. The Mai Mai separated passengers based

on their ethnicity and then executed the seven humanitarian workers who were members of the Banyamulenge ethnic group, among them was Eraste Rwatangabo, Tite Kandoti, and Edmond Gifota, the driver Fidèle Musore, Gisèle Nabisage, Pastor Amédée Ngeremo, and Gitandu Muhoza. The dead were all Banyamulenge staff and up to now neither government nor judicial officials have even been to Kalungwe to investigate this fatal attack. The risks taken by locals are evident:

“These local organizations have enormous burdens placed on them to respond, but often do not have the skills and experience required to conduct technically difficult interventions; further, it can be difficult for them to operate in contested areas and to be seen as neutral and impartial” (Healy and Tiller, 2014:4).

The conclusion seems to be that most humanitarian agencies are slow to move where the need is greatest, and then weaken their position by maintaining minimal diplomatic relations with the host government (National or Provincial government) which would be needed to enable them to negotiate security clearance and operate in more insecure areas like Minembwe, working with IDPs. Despite challenges raised both by international and local humanitarian organizations, they work in a country where government mainly fails to protect civilians. Yet international agencies especially do still have some room to negotiate with the host government for their own security. Unfortunately this room for manoeuvre is not being used, for reasons noted in some of the comments quoted above. That Minembwe is a remote and inaccessible area is used as an excuse by INGOs and local NGOs. International NGOs and UN organizations may fear losing their voice in DRC and having an overall impact on the DRC government, something they could lose by insisting on establishing a humanitarian space for this unpopular minority. They do their work where they can move without hindrance, hoping that the great role they can play at national level, in resolving difficulties will offset the loss of humanitarian relief for unwanted civilians displaced in more isolated parts of the country. Here, it seems, the core humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanity, are overrun by political interests of remaining and operating elsewhere in the country (Spearin, 2001:22 cited in Hilhorst and Jansen, 2010:1117).

This is why many humanitarian organizations in DRC and elsewhere in Africa find themselves challenged for not intervening, since they ignore some of those who are suffering the most (Blagojevic, 2010). Most humanitarian organizations rely on humanitarian principles of neutrality, but can also hide behind this principle, by deciding to keep silent about situations where humanitarian aid is urgently needed. They fear being accused of taking part in hostilities and being engaged in domestic political affairs regarded as the domain of state sovereignty. In such situations, these agencies neglect the principle of humanity, and of address suffering wherever and among whoever it is found. The protection of life and health are paramount, as if respect for the human person, when it comes to humanitarian action.

It has been almost five years since humanitarian organizations, facing various challenges to their operations, ceased to support the discriminated minority community of the Banyamulenge of the Minembwe High Plateau. During field research, while interviewing members of humanitarian organizations, I took notes and carefully listened to what the interviewers were trying to explain as to the various different challenges they referred to, including conflicts between local and international humanitarian agencies. Some international humanitarian organizations have multiple operations, like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which is an impartial, neutral, and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and those in other situations of extreme vulnerability. It is among

the key international humanitarian organizations operating in the east of the DRC, based in Bukavu, Uvira and with sub-offices, including in Baraka and Fizi. In previous years, ICRC did help all parties in the South Kivu conflicts, especially those wounded during violence, bringing them to nearby hospitals in Bukavu and Uvira. However, since 2017 ICRC no longer do these kind of activities, and have completely stopped operating in Minembwe. This is ominous, and despite the high demand for the agencies logistical means, and difficult related to the context of violent conflict, their intervention in this part of the world, to help a stranded civilian population, should be expected and realised.

However, it has also been observed that all local NGOs represented by Banyamulenge staff who coordinate activities, are not heard during meetings between local and international humanitarian agencies. Trying to advocate for immediate interventions in Minembwe, where people are suffering extremely from hunger, lack of potable water, and lack of basic medical treatments, is difficult.

Many local and international humanitarian agency personnel are represented by those from communities in conflict with the Banyamulenge in the High Plateau of Minembwe. Not surprisingly, few manifest much concern for civilians stuck in Minembwe, or show the will to intervene, given that a high percentage of those displaced in Minembwe are Banyamulenge people. For example, 7 out of 10 people are estimated to be Banyamulenge in Minembwe, with only 3 out of 10 from other ethnic groups such as Babembe, Bafuliiru and Banyindu and their traditional culture that isolate them as the way of living seem as well to shape the discrimination against all community (Buzard, 2021, Rukundwa, 2004))

This applies also to villages in Minembwe region, many of which are historically inhabited by the Banyamulenge community. This means any intervention on the High Plateau would primarily benefit Banyamulenge civilians. This produces on-going discussions between local NGOs, some represented by Banyamulenge workers, and international humanitarian agencies which are represented by staff from other local ethnic groups. Those employed by international agencies are mostly Congolese staff who are native to South Kivu and fully recognize and understand the context of the region and what is happening in Minembwe High Plateau. But many come from ethnic groups opposed to the presence of Banyamulenge in the region. A small number of representatives of international humanitarian agencies are from Europe, the USA, and elsewhere in the world. They normally do not decide on the locations of interventions and instead ask their local staff to advise and decide where to intervene and where not. Banyamulenge NGOs are stuck in their interventions because although they have tried by all means to plead for the cause of civilians in Minembwe, they are not being listened to and fail to convince their colleagues, whether representatives of international humanitarian organizations or local NGOs, some of which can be considered racists, enemies, and adversaries. Staff of local NGOs from the Banyamulenge community have met several times with representatives of OCHA and other international humanitarian agencies representatives, trying to explain the current humanitarian crisis in Minembwe, and asking for funds. Since Minembwe is our home and those vulnerable people stuck there are our parents and relatives, we will make every effort to ensure that help reaches them and even pay out of our own pockets, since we are totally committed to helping them. Humanitarian actors, however, look on, and sound receptive to our questions but fail to provide positive response, and do not act. Usually their response is like this:

“We are going to review this and asking for the outcome. When it lasts longer, we go again to knock, and they will tell us, "Minembwe is a red zone, we cannot fund you to intervene where we will not supervise and follow up." These are resistant responses that encountered in the journey of

over than three years up to know" (Testimony of the Coordinator of a local NGO at Uvira, 9 September, 2021).

Local NGOs especially ones represented by the Banyamulenge personnel have the will and passion to intervene in Minembwe, despite the very tough situation, in order to save lives of their parents and relatives who are sufferings, but they lack the resources and financial means to do so on the scale required. In addition, Minembwe situation has been reported on by OCHA as a red zone which means '*location in the high risk*' category, as based on humanitarian principles that are supposed to be applied by all humanitarian agencies. As one informant said:

"After being tired in pleading to the International humanitarian organizations and OCHA without practical feedback, we went towards embassies of different countries of Europe and USA in the DRC and explained the same problem of humanitarian crisis in Minembwe, each ambassador contacted could say our humanitarian organization in here in the country has the money for that program and your issue is among of their intervention missions, so go and tell them they will fund you, this is how we have been played by international humanitarian organizations, OCHA and embassies when we were seeking for the aid to intervene in the high plateau of Minembwe. (Testimony of Coordinator of local NGO at Uvira, 9 September 2021).

Moreover, according to the Banyamulenge staff heads of local NGOs, each year OCHA draws up a humanitarian plan for interventions 'Plan Humanitaire d'intervention', to identify areas of priority emergency operations. In almost four last years, Minembwe has been not yet appear to the list of areas of interventions by international humanitarians operating in South Kivu, rather is being placed always to in the red zones in OCHA's annual reports. (Explained by X Coordinator of local NGO based at Uvira, 9 September 2021).

During fieldwork, the researcher visited some local NGOs led by other personnel who were not Banyamulenge, but who nonetheless responded positively to different questions of the research and beyond that. They even tried to show their interest in the principle of humanity, stating they were willing to intervene in the difficult zones (locations) including Minembwe, where the majority of beneficiaries are Banyamulenge, and without racial segregation. However, in one case the individuals expressed two things that appeared to be impediments, including limited financial means (lacking funds from donors) and thus not having the logistics to intervene. The second obstacle cited was the fear of intervening in an area where Banyamulenge would be the main beneficiaries,

"I am from Babembe community, and would like to intervene in the High Plateau of Minembwe, but we do not have means. We are in shortage a long time without funding. The second obstacle even if I could have this means my organization currently cannot give any humanitarian support to the Banyamulenge community. I can have problems with my own community members and [intervention] can also result in the loss of life" (Uvira 10 August, 2021, Coordinator of a Local NGO).

These two narratives show how in making the decision of whether the organization will support a victim community, the ethnic group of the decision-maker or leader of the humanitarian organization plays a significant role, as does that of the victims. They will only support a victim community in need of humanitarian aid that is not being actively discriminated against by their own community. Therefore, from the discussion with humanitarian organizations members, it emerges that some organizations have adequate means, knowledge and appropriate system to intervene. The reason they do not intervene, however, is that they remain absent due to the fear that intervening on

the side of the discriminated against community will result in violence or isolation (punishment) for their own staff and for their organization. The following section presents how displaced Banyamulenge civilians are surviving, given the non-intervention of local (and international) humanitarian organizations in the High Plateau.

4.3 The Results for Civilians: Bare Survival

The Banyamulenge community victims of on-going ethnic violence are living in separate displacement camps in Minembwe and Bwegera, and are in utmost need of humanitarian assistance as previous section and chapters have shown. They are not accessing any humanitarian assistance on a regular basis, neither food nor, not education or health care. During interviews with them the research assistant and researcher asked how they were surviving without access to humanitarian aid. For shelter, many were currently living in a church and others had built their own tents under nearby trees, a solution that was very insecure, given the prevalence of attacks.

IDPs living in Bwegera camp said they have tried to speak to some humanitarian organizations to obtain shelter, food and some aid for their basic needs, and as for response to their requests, some humanitarian organizations replied that they could not build shelters and camps intended only for one ethnic group, all consisting of the same individuals. On the other hand, Banyamulenge community were afraid to live in IDP camps alongside other communities, who they view as having caused their misery up to the time they were forced to leave their homes and villages, and flee without aid following violent attacks, the burning of their homes and looting of their cattle.

On the other side, Babembe, Bafuliru and Banyindu also do not accept to live in the same IDP camp as Banyamulenge whom they too consider as enemies, as refugees and invaders from Rwanda, Burundi or elsewhere, came to DRC to destroy the country. They believe Banyamulenge must be treated like enemies and have to be killed or expelled to Rwanda, where it is claimed they came from. The Banyamulenge community faces similar challenges everywhere in DRC, though the situation in South Kivu and the High Plateau of Minembwe is the worst. Almost the entire remaining Banyamulenge community now is forced to co-habit the centre of Minembwe after their villages have been destroyed and burned. The Banyamulenge' livestock have also been stolen, traded and killed, impoverishing the entire community.

"I cannot tell you the way we survive, we live by the grace and miracles of God, it's almost now five consecutive years in misery without means to survive, we have been prevented by rebels to cultivate our fields, our cows have been looted and others to be killed by them, many of our enemies are neighbours in conspiracy with government army, brief we are surrounded everywhere by enemies and many attacks are coming even here where we got shelters. Since all the time in these unrest/troubles we did not get any humanitarian assistance, only our children and relatives from all over the world have done their best to assist us and we are thankful to all of them, for example We are seven (7) in my family and all of us do not have any source of revenue that can be helpful to us so that to survivor, no field, no cows, no sheep and business, only we live by God's miracles through our children and relatives in diaspora" (Minembwe, 12 August, 2021 Testimony given by Julia in front of her husband Philemon and collected by research assistant).

It is worth attempting to make this testimony comprehensible for the readers of this study because the displaced people were trying to express their sense of discrimination and how they feel

when they do not receive the humanitarian aid they so desperately need. Both humanitarian organizations and the government of the DRC have stayed quiet, as if in a conspiracy to ignore the suffering of these civilians. On the other hand, this abandoned community faces daily attacks, and killings, famine, hunger, and a lack of the most basic needs.



Image 1: Displaced arrive in Bwegera with nothing

Image 2: Children seek shelter under trees

Images 1 and 2 show the miserable situation in which displaced people, especially women and children, find themselves, with empty hands and with no assistance from any humanitarian organization. They have lost everything, and are seated outside the church that they occupy as shelter, the Banyamulenge church of Bwegera. They are recounting the bad histories of where they had lived and how they had fled, while their husbands, children and relatives were killed and their villages burned in front of them. Image 2 shows children without shelter sitting outside, since the church was full. There was no room for them, so some volunteers among the displaced people took them outside so they could sit under the trees and not be suffocated. Additionally, if people are packed too tightly in the church, it becomes hot and hard to breathe. Sick and elderly people and small children suffer and can easily become sick in such conditions.

Several respondents talked about issues not originally included in this research and that were encountered during fieldwork. In the course of the ethnic conflict, women in particular have suffered in distinctive ways, and feel even more vulnerable and targeted than men, because of their physical ability that does not allow them to defend themselves with weapons, or run away from the enemy, given that many have small children. Beyond all of their burdens, some women have had to deliver their babies whilst fleeing. And in such cases, there is no special assistance from doctors or nurses. Many babies and mothers experience extreme misery, others suffering the sorrows of their children dying along the way, as they run to escape their enemies and save their own lives. The following quotation shows how women may be affected differently, and suffer from their limited access to humanitarian aid. As observed during the research in the field, this story was narrated by a 21 year old woman who had given birth to twins on the road, fleeing those who were coming to kill them in their village:

“I am still mourning for my child that died on the way due to ethnic conflicts. I delivered twins while fleeing in the bush, it was the day when my village has been attacked and when enemies were approaching my house, while running away I delivered in the forest, the enemies were followed us,

when trying to run with two babies, by fear I threw one down and he immediately died and I did not bury him because we were running to save lives, up to now I am crying on my child who died and did not bury” (Testimony by: Anne, 11st August, 2021, Bwegera displaced area and collected by researcher himself).

On the same day as that attack, 16 March, 2021, an old woman of 84 years was calcinated in her house because she was unable to flee her attackers. From the above testimony, this case represents many more women who are encountering similar problems after giving birth without proper health care. When babies die due to the lack of a midwife during delivery, and without advice before and after birth, or in cases where mothers have no milk and there is no food for either mother or baby, predictably mortality levels go up. There is no medicine for those who get sick. Some women who have given birth, report that they die either immediately or one or two days after being born, because of the terrible living conditions.

During the interviews, the researcher realized that most Banyamulenge women are in agony and are deeply traumatized by the situation they have been living in until now. They are tired of running from heavy gunfire, of different weapons used by enemies to kill their relatives, and almost all have faced both extreme physical and mental suffering in recent years. Moreover, new-born children have to receive medical care, regular vaccinations, and it is almost impossible to travel with them to clinics to ensure this is the case. Those children living in camps do not receive health care and many are suffering from malnutrition. There probability that they will be attacked by disease and die in the camps, is high.

Moreover, most women living in displacement camps are those whose husbands and older sons have often disappeared or been killed in the ongoing ethnic conflict in the High Plateau. They are unable to work the land, which has been taken over, and have no other means of engaging in activities that can earn them the means to feed themselves and their children. They were used to live from farming, and were always able to get milk from their cows to feed children and babies, if needed. They are mourning the loss of their herds, looted and killed by neighbours.

Some deaths of the Banyamulenge community in the high plateau of Minembwe are due to the lack of possibilities for feeding family members, including small children, since the IDPs are surrounded by hostile armed groups, and have no access to their fields, and so cannot do farming. None still has their cattle for milk. While collecting data in Minembwe, we encountered with special and sadness cases of women killed in the midst of their fields as they went to search for food for their family. Two such were Namwiza Francine and Namutarutwa Namurinzi, who were killed together on 18 April 2020, after being raped by a multitude of armed Mai Mai, their babies left at home waiting for food. The same day Nansasirwa Anne and Adoni Fabien were taken hostage, and 30 June, 2021 three other women and one man were killed coming back from looking for food to feed their children. They were Aimee Nantabara, Namuhoza Bibianne, Rushemuka Veronique and Bitwenge Sebudegeri. This shows how much non-intervention by humanitarian organizations in this conflict situation is costing to the civilians thus abandoned in Minembwe. Non-intervention by INGOs and local NGOs can contribute to a larger number of people losing their lives while trying to find the means for bare survival and look after themselves without any support from outside.

Chapter 5: Identifying Obstacles to Intervention in Minembwe

5.1 Introduction

This study targeted three categories of respondents. The first were victims of recurrent ethnic conflicts and discrimination; the second were staff of international humanitarian organizations and the third were staff of local NGOs with humanitarian remits. The aim of this chapter is to synthesize, before the conclusion, the overall reasons why humanitarian organizations are reluctant to intervene in the Minembwe region. To move towards solutions or recommendation, it is first necessary to draw out the main obstacles to intervention that can now be identified as follows:

1. Lack of logistical capacity to work in an inaccessibility area
2. Limited presence of humanitarian organizations in South Kivu
3. The impediment of humanitarian bureaucracy
4. Fear of consequences due to ethnic antagonism and polarization in the humanitarian arena

5.2 Lack of logistical capacity in a remote area

During fieldwork, we noticed how Minembwe region, an inaccessible and remote location, without appropriate infrastructure to allow easy interventions, nonetheless should normally be a priority area for humanitarian relief operations. There are no basic physical organizational structures or facilities that could allow vehicles to move with humanitarian aid towards Minembwe region, but there are flights that could solve this problem. However, the reasons given for non-intervention by international humanitarian agencies, after talking with several of them, is that they lack the capacity to operate in such a remote area, even if they were willing. It is quite hard to believe that with all the many international humanitarian organisations operating in South Kivu, each one is lacking the logistical capacity to intervene in Minembwe. Many have helicopters for moving material around the town, without handling the tough tasks of an area where people are suffering with humanitarian crises.

Roads towards Minembwe are badly damaged and government does nothing to reconstruct them or install other much-needed infrastructure to facilitate human movement and humanitarian intervention to reach those displaced in these localities. Despite roads being damaged, there are some international and local NGOs that assist the equally remote and isolated Babembe, Bifuliru and other communities, for example at a location called Mulima, in the villages of mainly Babembe communities, some 270 km from Uvira. These agencies do distribute aid to other communities, besides the Banyamulenge and then return back to Uvira without coming to Minembwe which is just 30km from Uvira. The reason given is that the Banyamulenge community are not mixed in with other communities, but are all alone in this competitive humanitarian arena, where discrimination and isolation appear to be major flaws on the part of victims of violence, making them seem less deserving of help than those who are their combined 'enemies'.

There is a huge question of insecurity along the roads towards Minembwe region where armed groups operate all along the way, hiding in the bush to trap anyone passing, who dares to go and

assist the vulnerable Banyamulenge community, stuck in the High Plateau of Minembwe. This tactic works to deter even the most neutral humanitarian organizations from advancing along that road. Local NGOs also consider it necessary to avoid exposing their staff to the significant danger of kidnapping or worse. In this remote and inaccessible area, travelling by road is not the only possible humanitarian response. Other alternatives exist to intervene in order to help people in a humanitarian emergency situation, and alleviate some of their suffering.

5.3 Limited Presence of Humanitarian Organizations

Some scholars suggest that the dramatic emergence of conflicts and natural disasters in many parts of the world will continue in coming years, and should not be used to justify not delivering necessary aid to those in evident need, through well-organized humanitarian interventions by local and international agencies (Battini et al., 2014). For almost five years, emergency cases in the High Plateau of Fizi, Mwenga, and Itombwe have mostly been ignored, despite being reported on and known about (Stearns, and Vogel, 2017). The situation has worsened especially in the last three years, as all displaced civilians have suffered the ordeal of being burned out of their rural homes, losing their land and livestock, and ending up destitute, yet without any assistance from humanitarian organizations based in South Kivu.

Because of ongoing violent attacks, and a siege around Minembwe, humanitarian organizations which operate throughout the DRC, avoid places without asphalt roads, and are less and less present in areas therefore, where the emergency situations may be the most severe. Instead, sitting behind their office desks, they present huge reasons, enormous pretexts that they use to defend themselves against the accusation of not intervening in the High Plateau and not fulfilling their core mandates as humanitarians. Remoteness, inaccessibility, a violent ongoing conflict, and the lack of logistics, are all used as justifications for not stepping in. That there are helicopters and airplanes is not mentioned. Most responses from humanitarian agencies in interviews, where about the good reasons they felt unable to intervene.

Realities on the ground are somewhat different and some staff of humanitarian agencies were more candid, explaining that the Banyamulenge were such an unpopular minority with other communities in the region, that to be seen to help them could lead to violence or revenge attacks on the agency helping. According to Tomasini and Van Wassenhove (2004), cited in Battini et al. (2014:131), "a successful humanitarian operation [is one that] mitigates the urgent needs of a population with a sustainable reduction of their vulnerability in the shortest amount of time and with the least amount of resources." The Minembwe region and its community have experienced no successful humanitarian intervention in this sense, with a persistent absence of humanitarian intervention leading to worsening livelihood conditions, avoidable fatalities and further traumatic subjection to violent attacks.

5.4 The Impediment of Humanitarian Bureaucracy

Humanitarian organizations have a well-shaped mission with agreed principles that lead and guide all humanitarian actors when engaging in intervention practices in the fields. However, the bureaucracy and process of their management decisions pushes this researcher to question the importance and effectiveness of how such missions and principles are put into practice. The

impression at the ground level can be that many humanitarian organizations and NGOs arrive along with the displaced, arriving at the camps just a few days after the displaced themselves arrive.

They meet the situation and talk to those displaced, promising to return with humanitarian aid, given that the reality on the ground may be that they leave and do not return later, as promised. This generally raises questions about why humanitarian organizations promise to provide emergency assistance to displaced people, but at times fail to realize such assistance. This lack of will to follow through on commitments made, could this be due to a long process of reporting and obtaining authorization? In different displaced campsites, displaced people who can afford to, move out of camps, to cities where accessibility to assistance may be easier. Others remain stuck, far from the headquarters of humanitarian organizations. Reports are shared, on the basis of only superficial knowledge of the real situations on the ground, and this is the case in most reporting on Minembwe, based on hearsay and second-hand information. Reporting on Minembwe about displaced people gathering in what now resembles a concentration camp, can for example be put together by someone in Uvira, many kilometres away, who has not visited Minembwe. You can imagine the kinds of reports sent to their superiors; the problems of civilian Banyamulenge will tend to be minimized.

Moreover, intervention takes too long. There are many meetings to be held at local level and then higher levels, and decisions have to be taken on intervention practices with agreement from other parties. For example, the humanitarian organizations of Uvira city report on the situation in both Minembwe and Bwegera camps. Their report is passed on only to the Bukavu offices and with humanitarian organizations in Bukavu, who in turn assess the reports and agree for their part on how to report the situation to their headquarters in Kinshasa or beyond. Upon arrival in Kinshasa, the capital city, they will also revise and assess the reports from provincial size and finally send them as well to the general headquarters, depending on the origin of each humanitarian agency. These cases are frequent and routine for all international humanitarian organizations and local NGOs. This is how we discovered the situation on the ground, and it is not possible to go through these steps and expect to intervene in emergencies where people are in immediate humanitarian need.

5.5 Antagonism and polarization in the humanitarian arena

During data collection for this study, conducted in the difficult settings of ongoing targeted attacks, I met different people representing almost all communities living in the Minembwe region. Among those were key informants, staff representing distinct international humanitarian organizations established in South Kivu and local organizations (NGOs) with a humanitarian remit. As I was making different appointments depending on the availability of individuals, I could tell that at times and at the beginning, after welcoming me, some staff began to doubt who I was and which position I was coming from. The way they behaved could be qualified as a kind of personal polarization. I presented myself as a Masters student from ISS, based in the Netherlands, working in Governance and researching humanitarian agencies. I also offered a university letter that asked them to assist my fieldwork. Finally, I emphasizes that information would remain anonymous, used only for research purposes. None of this appeared to work with some of those encountered, whose defences I could sense rising as the minutes ticked by.

In addition, after presenting who I am, where I was from, and why I was collecting data about humanitarian (none) intervention, some respondents, as I had hoped, felt free to interact with me in a comfortable manner, and provided me with much-needed information. There was no need for

reflection or philosophizing about my own personality and identity, with these respondents. Others could be polite in a superficial way, but their answers to some key questions, were to insist in a simple way, that they were not the right person to talk to. In general terms, they would politely say something like this: "I am not the person to answer this question, because my competencies are limited to what have discussed before, better to contact the chief of mission to answer this".

As a conclusion to this section, the researcher found that in Eastern DRC, in South Kivu, many international humanitarian organizations are represented by personnel who are native to the province and many from communities now in direct ethnic clashes with Banyamulenge people. I started to realize that this could be a very significant factor in explaining the difficulties not only of collecting the primary data I needed for this study, but also in explaining the topic of non-intervention of humanitarian agencies in Minembwe. The researcher's own ethnic identity could be reacted to, and meant a lot to some of the respondents, causing them to refuse interviews after having agreed, or to even avoid meeting at all. After briefly attempting dialogue and trying to be polite to whatever extent, since it is quite easy to someone from their name on their identity card or from papers and letters presented, some respondents did ask me directly which region in the DRC I was from.

During data collection, the phenomenon of ethnic polarization was observed both in international humanitarian organizations and among local NGOs, notably where non-intervention in the Minembwe region was explained due to ethnicity-based factors. Another point of view was reflected in the refrain that providing relief should not be based on racial categories, as a pretext for its non-provision. Some international humanitarian agencies refused to open up their doors to the researcher at all, and I already described being stopped at the reception desk by the security guards and sent away, being informed it would not be possible to meet with staff, or the chief of mission, for unspecified reasons or reasons which felt fabricated to avoid meeting me. This led me to conclude that for some humanitarian actors in the arena, polarization, discrimination, racial stereotypes and even segregation, are already well-embedded in their outlook. Histories of antagonisms have fed into an ideology that polarizes communities between victims and perpetrators, deserving and undeserving victims. These forms of racism reinforce a callousness that comes from staff who are influenced by ethnic antagonisms, but also seek to distance themselves from unpopular minorities, all of these being background assumptions that should not be operating especially in the humanitarian arena, or in the domain of operational decisions.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study investigates humanitarian governance in the midst of ethnic conflict, discrimination and remoteness, considering the case of a discriminated minority, the Banyamulenge displaced in the High Plateau of Minembwe in South Kivu. The findings suggest that humanitarian organizations, both local and international, are slow to intervene, or fail to intervene to deal with emergencies affecting this group of civilian IDPs. The reasons they give include the remoteness of the area, the risks implied by its being defined as a 'code red' area, and the complicated logistics needed to transport materials to the area, as well as fear of insecurity for staff along the road, and in the area.

Thus, a community that is greatly and increasingly in need of humanitarian relief is living in remote areas without access to humanitarian aid including food, shelter and medical treatment. Even wounded survivors and the sick are not being helped by the hundreds of agencies working in the region. The result is a higher loss of lives, including of babies, children and women who cannot survive in such harsh situations without support. This civilian population is in urgent need of all kinds of assistance through humanitarian organizations whose mandate is, after all, to save lives, alleviate all suffering, and maintain human dignity, the primary objectives of humanitarian aid. It is worth mentioning that when humanitarian aid does arrive for the IDPs in Minembwe, it is paid for by the local community, or by the Banyamulenge diaspora groups. Since the government of DRC also lacks concern for the situation of these civilians, only the diaspora is taking steps to harmonize and provide a little, though insufficient, relief to these IDPs, who remain Congolese citizens, however unwanted by their neighbours.

On the one side, some humanitarian organizations can be shown to have both the logistics and the financial means to intervene in Minembwe High Plateau, but are sceptical about supporting the discriminated community of Banyamulenge alone. For instance, many humanitarian organizations in South Kivu are represented by people, and staff, from ethnic groups in open conflict with the Banyamulenge minority community. These include Babembe, Bafuliro, and Banyindu people, and the study has shown that in some local humanitarian NGOs, workers with these backgrounds fear interacting with Banyamulenge. They fear that if they do intervene on their behalf, even if this is the right thing to do, this could in practice cause them (i.e. the humanitarian workers who are not themselves Banyamulenge) further problems, and even threats to their lives or their organization. They expressed fears that moving back and forth between Minembwe and relief depots would result in staff being attacked and killed, for helping the 'undeserving' Banyamulenge. For these reasons, all those members of other communities involved in humanitarian work had decided to make the tough but what they saw as unavoidable decision, not to intervene in Minembwe at all, to help anyone.

Furthermore, on the other side, humanitarian organizations in South Kivu, in Bukavu and Uvira, who mainly represent the Bashi community, were more neutral in tone and tried not to get involved in taking sides regarding ethnic clashes in Haute Plateau. They however remain in a minority themselves, and lack the influence to push decisions that could produce an emergency response to help IDPs in Minembwe High Plateau. They also fear that other local community members, more openly hostile to Banyamulenge, might cause them problems and punish them for advocating for the needs to Banyamulenge civilians. Thus, one is pushed to conclude that sadly, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that discrimination operates within and among humanitarian organizations operating in South Kivu, and leads them to avoid intervening in Minembwe High Plateau.

According to some staff of both national and international humanitarian organizations, working in Bukavu and Uvira, whose names cannot be mentioned here due for their own protection, they revealed in interviews, that the ethnic discrimination that influences preparatory meetings with OCHA, arises at crucial moment when it is time to decide where humanitarian interventions take place, long before the descent to the ground in different corners of South Kivu, among IDPs, for example. Regarding the High Plateau of Minembwe specifically, some staff from communities in conflict with Banyamulenge, actively oppose intervention in this area, during preparatory meetings of humanitarian agencies.

However, the Banyamulenge community continues to make sincere efforts to survive in the midst of a severe humanitarian emergency, and despite being discriminated against, attacked and deprived of humanitarian aid. They get a little support, from time to time, mainly food, clothes and some money for basic needs, and usually from relatives living abroad in the diaspora, as well as those living in other parts of the country, less directly affected by the ongoing ethnic violence.

Overall, the results of this research contribute to understanding how humanitarian organizations are intervening in remote areas, coupled with ethnic violence, and discrimination against some minority communities by the local majorities. Consequently, the findings help to imagine how humanitarian organizations, governments, activists and other stakeholders involved in trying to support communities facing humanitarian emergencies, might counter this politicization and ethnicization of aid-as-a-weapon in future. Specifically, the minority communities living in different remote areas of Eastern DRC, can testify to a severe gap in access to humanitarian assistance. They can propose what should be done to support the minority groups being discriminated against and attacked, to ensure they have some access to humanitarian support and to avoid starvation, premature deaths and worse humanitarian emergencies in future. To create a separate fund that supports local partner organizations in inaccessible areas, is one serious option that might be experimented with.

Nevertheless, the study has some distinct limitations. For example, the study was not able to cover many other minority communities which are unable to access humanitarian aid and are also in need in South Kivu and Eastern DRC. Limited time and resources meant the case study was one single community, with which the researcher was familiar. Other less marginalized communities, such as Babembe, Bafuliru, and Banyindu might be helped to gain a deeper understanding that on a wider scale, humanitarian support is an entitlement, not a privilege of those considered deserving. Therefore, future studies could consider reaching out to those communities, to open up dialogue about how all sides can support the resolution of humanitarian crises like the one now unfolding in Minembwe.

The differences between the Banyamulenge and their fellow ethnic groups of Congo should not be the cause of what separates them as human beings, as there are also huge similarities among them and despite different political beliefs, languages and religious practices, their common history means that hatred is especially lethal and damaging to all groups. At the end of the day, people may deny and dehumanize their neighbours but even if they consider them as vermin or insects, in the end such hate speech ends up hurting the very communities who follow leaders appealing to ethnic exclusivism. In the end, they too suffer from killings, and face the possibilities of extermination.

The government of DRC should end its agenda of tolerating and even fostering ethnic divisions that stigmatize Congolese people who speak Kinyarwanda or Kirundi. With an ongoing genocide this should be taken seriously as an indicator of the need to protect all citizens of Congo, without

exception, from politics based on hatred and discrimination. The world needs to know that the majority of the Banyamulenge are survivors of many previous attempts of genocide, and based on their history, their identity is of collective victims, deeply traumatized by their past experiences (Hintjens 2002:25; Ntanyoma 2019:4-6). Some are survivors of the 2004 Gatumba massacre in Burundi, where 165 refugees were killed in a refugee camp. Hundreds of others are lame or crippled, survivors of massacres in Ngandja, Kirumba, and Bibokoboko during 1996, or of Vyura, Kamina, Likasi, Bukavu, Uvira, Lubumbashi and Kinshasa, all across the country with different dates. In DRC the lives of Banyamulenge are not valued. Whereas once in government institutions of the country the Banyamulenge occupied some valuable positions and contributed the country's overall development. Among Banyamulenge are the parents, fathers and mothers of generations, teachers, ministers, soldiers too, lawyers, policemen, parliamentarians and senators, as well as doctors, nurses and social workers. This clearly that the Banyamulenge are committed to playing their part as Congolese citizens, alongside all those others who also deserve all the human security possible, and to live in human dignity.

Banyamulenge lives do matter and need to be protected and valued by all their fellow Congolese, both from other communities, and government which has to take seriously its responsibility to restore peace among its citizens. The United Nations and the world in general also has to take care and react to end the present ongoing genocide against unarmed Banyamulenge civilians, instead of labelling them as a threat to the majority. This has to be as emergency measures, since it involves human lives and is vital to prevent this community from being completely exterminated in the near future (Annan. 2007:33, 34, 35). If the world can finally recognize what Banyamulenge people are facing, and consider how to protect them, then also in Eastern DRC they deserve recognition. This group of people deserve to live in dignity, on the basis of mutual respect for the right to life, like any other human beings created to be on this earth, and who constitute humanity, the entire population living on this planet.

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Appendix 1

Table 1.1: Characteristics of research participants/Respondents list

No	Pseudonyms	Age	Gender	Location	Occupation
1	Esperance	21	F	Bwegera	Student
2	Evariste	20	M	Bwegera	Student
3	Mapendo	18	F	Bwegera	Student
4	Japheth	20	M	Bwegera	Student
5	Erickson	18	M	Bwegera	Student
6	Matilde	24	F	Bwegera	Student
7	Sophonie	45	M	Minembwe	Farmer
8	Dinah	63	F	Minembwe	Farmer
9	Jeremy	38	M	Minembwe	Farmer
10	Antoinette	67	F	Minembwe	Farmer
11	Elisha	69	M	Bwegera	Farmer
12	Deborah	40	F	Minembwe	Farmer
13	Ezechiel	44	M	Minembwe	Farmer
14	Meschake	62	M	Bwegera	Farmer
15	Julienne	39	F	Minembwe	Teacher
16	Claudine	41	F	Minembwe	Farmer
17	Barnabe	46	M	Minembwe	Farmer
18	Justine	43	F	Minembwe	Farmer

**Table 2. Characteristics of key informants interviewed those working with humanitarian actors/
civil officials**

No	Key informants Pseudonyms	Age	Gender	Location	Type of Organization
1	Fabrice	53	M	Uvira	International humanitarian organisation
	Herman	43	M	Uvira	
2	Romerino	40	F	Bukavu	International humanitarian organisation
3	Hobbes	56	M	Goma	Local NGO
4	Luc	60	M	Uvira	Local NGO
5	Julias	55	M	Uvira	Local NGO
6	Georges	53	M	Bukavu	International humanitarian organisation
7	Remson	61	M	Uvira	Local NGO
8	Chrysostom	57	M	Bukavu	International humanitarian organisation
9	Gervais	63	M	Bukavu	International humanitarian organisation

Appendix 2

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN EASTERN PART OF THE DRCONGO

Hello, I am a postgraduate researcher at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR). I am conducting a study on **Governance of humanitarian organization at the crossroad of violence, remoteness and ethnic discrimination during conflict situations the case of Minembwe/ South Kivu** in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and would like to know your experience of intervention in such situation of ethnic conflicts and how you assist the victims during the harsh time, our target is for any Organization involves either international humanitarian organizations, national humanitarian organizations , MONUSCO or associations that have to intervene in humanitarian crisis . Please help to complete this survey that will not take you more than 30 minutes. Your responses are anonymous and you are free to skip any question you are not comfortable with.

1. IDENTITY OF THE RESPONDENT

Date of Survey :/...../2021

Nome of respondent:Tel: +243..... (Optional)

Position of respondent:

E-mail:

Nationality:.....ID/Passport No: (Optional)

2. INFORMATION OF ORGANISATION

1. Nome of the organization.....

2. Status of the organisation :

☐

National

☐

International

Other not mentioned

.....

1. What is the Domaine of intervention of your Organisation?

- ☐ Human rights
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Food Aid
- ☐ Victim's rescue during crises
- ☐ Stabilisation and pacification
- ☐ Conflict Eradication

Other not mentioned above.....

1. Geographically, which part (area) that is targeted by your Organization for intervention in the DRC.

☐ East (a)

☐ West (b)

☐ North (c)

☐ South (d)

1. If **(b)**, **(c)** or **(d)**, we thank you.

2. However if **(a)**, are you informed on what is happening in the High Plateau of Minembwe in this region of southern-Kivu on conflicts between ethnic groups ?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If **no**, ok we thank you, but on the Other hand if **Yes**, did you arrive there to assist communities in sufferings through your area of intervention that is compatible with your mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. If **Yes**, when? year

4. If **not**, why? (Write your answer down)

A/
.....

1. How do you intervene during ethnic conflicts in the High Plateau of Minembwe: (many answers are possible and allowed here) :

1. Do you intervene when conflicts are ongoing? Yes or Not

2. Do you wait until the conflicts are stopped?

3. You never intervene there? (Give reasons)

4. If **Yes**. How? Write the answer below

If **not** what do you thing or realize to be reasons of not intervention?

A/
.....

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION!

Prepared by: **DODO BYAMBU NDAHINDURWA**

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E-mail :dodobyambu@yahoo.com

QUESTIONNAIRE D'ENQUETE POUR LES VICTIMES LOCAUX DE HAUTS PLATEAUX DE MINEMBWE

Bonjour, je suis chercheur de troisième cycle à l'Institut international d'études sociales (ISS) de l'Université Erasmus de Rotterdam (EUR). Je mène une étude sur **la Gouvernance des organisations humanitaires au carrefour de la violence, de milieux reculés et de la discrimination ethnique lors des situations de conflits le cas de Minembwe/ Sud Kivu** en République Démocratique du Congo (RDC), et j'aimerais connaître votre expérience par rapport à tous ces conflits ethniques car notre cible implique tout le monde qui a été touché de manière soit directe ou indirecte par la situation dans le haut plateau de Minembwe depuis 2017-2021. C'est pourquoi nous vous avons choisi, Aidez-nous à remplir ce questionnaire qui ne vous prendra pas plus de 30 minutes. Vos réponses sont anonymes et vous êtes libre de sauter toute question avec laquelle vous n'êtes pas à l'aise. Merci beaucoup de votre contribution !!!

1. IDENTITE

1. Date de l'enquête :/...../2021

2. Noms : Tél: +243 (Facultatif)

3. Sexe : M ☐ F ☐ ID Carte: (Facultatif)

4. Profession :

5. Catégorie d'âge : 1^{er} Cat : de 10-25 ans

☐

2^{ème} Cat : de 26-45 ans

☐

3^{ème} Cat : de 46-70 ans

☐

6. Votre famille est composée par combien de personnes ?

.....

7. Quel est l'âge de chaque membre?

2. QUESTIONS PROPREMENT-DITES

1. Faites-vous partie de quelle communauté ? (Au choix)

.....

- Munyamulenge ☐ - Munyindu ☐

- Mufuliru ☐ - Mubembe ☐ - Autres ☐

2. Etes-vous de quel village

3. Quelle est votre localité.....

4. Avez-vous toujours vécu ici à Minembwe centre ? Si Oui/ Non /

Année

5. Etes-vous ici dans votre village natal ou en fuite ?

- village natal ☐ - En fuite ☐

6. Pourquoi vous êtes ici à Minembwe ?

7. Depuis quand les violences ont commencés dans votre village ?

R/ Année

8. Comment vivez-vous et dans quelles conditions de vie ?

.....
.....

9. Avez-vous réussi l'assistance provenant d'une organisation humanitaire,-

- Oui ☐ - Non ☐

10. Si oui, Nationale ou Internationale ? Et lesquelles(s) ?

R/

.....
.....

11. **Si non**, pensez-vous que cela est dû à quoi selon ce que vous pensez ?

R/.....
.....

12. Connaissez-vous où les organisations Humanitaires (NGOs) ont assisté les sinistrés (déplacées), **si oui** où et comment faut-ils ?.....
.....

Et **si non** pensez-vous que c'est pour quelle raisons qui font que les humanitaires (NGOs) n'interviennent pas ?

13. Comment vivez-vous face à toutes ces violences sans aides humanitaires pour vous assister ?

- ☐ Par la grâce et miracle divine
☐ Par les contributions de nos frères et sœurs diasporas
☐ Par nos sueurs misérables
☐ Je ne sais pas

R/commentaires
.....
.....

Nous vous remercions !!

Préparé par: **DODO BYAMBU NDAHINDURWA**

Etudiant à International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of

Erasmus University Rotterdam (Netherlands) 2020-2021

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E-mail :dodobyambu@yahoo.com

QUESTIONNAIRE D'ENQUETE POURDIASPORAS/BANYAMYLENGE

Bonjour, je suis chercheur de troisième cycle à l'Institut international d'études sociales (ISS) de l'Université Erasmus de Rotterdam (EUR). Je mène une étude sur **la Gouvernance des organisations humanitaires au carrefour de la violence, de milieux reculés et de la discrimination ethnique lors des situations de conflits le cas de Minembwe/ Sud Kivu** en République Démocratique du Congo (RDC), et j'aimerais connaître votre expérience par rapport à tous ces conflits ethniques car notre cible implique tout le monde qui a été touché de manière soit directe ou indirecte par la situation dans le haut plateau de Minembwe depuis 2017-2021. C'est pourquoi nous vous avons choisi, Aidez-nous à remplir ce questionnaire qui ne vous prendra pas plus de 30 minutes. Vos réponses sont anonymes et vous êtes libre de sauter toute question avec laquelle vous n'êtes pas à l'aise. Merci beaucoup de votre contribution

3. IDENTITE

1. Date de l'enquête :/...../2021 Age : ...ans
2. Noms :.....
3. Tél +.....
4. Sexe : M ☐ F ☐ ID Passeport : (Facultatif)
5. Profession :
6. Continent de refuge :

<input type="checkbox"/> Amérique	Océanie <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Afrique (excepté la RDC)	Europe <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Asie	

7. QUESTIONS PROPREMENT-DITES

1. Faites-vous partie de la communauté Banyamulenge n'est-ce pas ?
- Munyamulenge ☐

Si autres, on vous remercie, par contre si Munyamulenge

1. Depuis quand vivez-vous ici/ la bas en diasporas ?

R/ Année

2. Comment vous vous retrouvez ici/ la bas ?

☐

(a) Je suis dans mes affaires

☐

(b) Je fais mes études

☐

(c) Je suis victime des conflits ethnique dans ma région voilà pourquoi je suis ici

☐

(d) J'aime ce milieu simplement pour ma survie

3. Si (a), (b), (d) ok, mais si (c) depuis quand ?

R/ Année

4. Lorsque vous étiez là au sud kivu pendant les conflits ethniques qui datent des années, Avez-vous réussi l'assistance provenant d'une organisation humanitaire, ONG Internationale ou Nationale ? - Oui ☐ - Non ☐

5. Si oui, Nationale ou Internationale ? et le(s) quelle(s) ?

R/Noms :

6. Si non, pensez-vous que cela est dû à quoi ?

R/
.....

7. Avez-vous une famille restée sur le haut plateau de Minembwe au sud kivu ?

8. - Oui

☐

Non

☐

9. Si non, pour quoi ?

10.

☐

- Toute ma famille a été tuée et assassinée

☐

- Je suis ici avec toute ma famille

☐

- J'ai toujours membres de ma famille là-bas

11. Si oui, comment vivent-elles là-bas dans ce calvaire ?

☐

Par la grâce et miracle divine

☐

Par les contributions de nous diasporas

☐

Par leurs sueurs misérables

☐

Je ne sais pas, Dieu seul s'occupe d'eux

12. Selon vous, qu'est-ce qui mettrait fin à ce calvaire que vos familiers vivent, les conflits ethniques?

R/.....
.....

Nous vous remercions !

Préparé par: **DODO BYAMBU NDAHINDURWA**

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Appendix 3: Positionality Note

Hoping to find out how humanitarian organizations get help to people in dire need of support, especially where communities are engaged in violence, focusing on the minority Banyamulenge made sense, as one of the most discriminated against minorities of South Kivu. Moreover, the researcher hoped to raise the voices of minority Banyamulenge people, and their challenges in accessing humanitarian assistance over a long period. These civilians have had to endure a whole series of attacks and emergencies, yet few humanitarian organizations have been involved or intervened to help them. Supporting people in such extreme misery is the role of humanitarian aid, so that they can survive. In DRC as in many other countries, weak governance and state fragility mean that the safety of the population cannot be guaranteed without intervention.

The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified and deepened the crisis situation in Minembwe as it has internationally, making a bad situation even worse and reinforcing the vulnerabilities of the displaced and those in flight (Hilhorst and Mena, 2021:1-2). Within the same line of ideas, Hilhorst and Mena have pointed to the harsh realities in some countries at ground level, especially in fragile and conflicted-affected environments:

“Authorities instrumentalised Covid-19 to strengthen their control and agendas. While taking responsibility for lockdowns, this was not accompanied with care to mitigate the adverse effects. Social conflict shaped the response, as high levels of mistrust in authorities complicated the implementation of measures, while authorities did not support community-based coping initiatives” (Hilhorst and Mena, 2021:1-2)

Thus, this study was triggered by a passion for my community and a concern for its continued survival from one generation to the next, in the current situation of violence, and humanitarian crisis. I am concerned that assistance should be reaching people in the High Plateau of Minembwe region, given the challenges of survival that they are facing. Despite many things that have been said by different authors about discrimination against the Banyamulenge community by other Congolese citizens, I have realised there is still limited information about current struggles of Banyamulenge people facing a severe humanitarian crisis and at risk of being decimated through a form of economic and military genocide. I wanted to know what they were going through, without humanitarian assistance.

While in the field for data collection, I presented myself as a simply student, careful to appear humble in what is a very demanding environment beset by severe ethnic conflicts. I met separately with individuals from the diverse communities living in the High Plateau of Minembwe. Some were key informants, staff of agencies that represent different international and local humanitarian organisations, with bases in South Kivu. I scheduled appointments depending on the availability of each respondent, meeting them only for research purpose, at times suitable to them. However, from the start I noticed that although they initially welcomed me at the beginning, I realized that part of the staff soon became doubtful and thought I might be someone to avoid. This felt like what could be termed a kind of personal polarization. Although I would present myself as a Masters researcher from ISS, studying in the Netherlands and researching humanitarian governance, as well as presenting a university letter asking respondents to help me conduct fieldwork, the response was often negative. I would carefully emphasize that information provided would be treated anonymously, and only used for research purposes. Not all those I approached were convinced.

After introducing myself and my research topic, several respondents interacted in a smooth and polite manner, and some provided much-needed information without too much philosophising about my personality or identity. However at other times, the friendliness was superficial, and they were keen to hide their responses to some of my main questions. Some respondents would then insist in a polite but superficial way that: “I am not the person to answer this question, because I do not have competencies on it, better to be answered by my chief or Director.” Other humanitarian organizations would deny me appointments, postponed appointments for days or even in one case, two weeks, knowing I could not wait that long. This was unfortunately the case with UNHCR when I tried to meet with someone on two separate days. After I requested an audience with an authorized person who could interact with me a researcher, the receptionist at the gate went to talk to someone in their office, and carried the letter from ISS with him. After some time, the receptionist returned with my letter and told me that it was not possible to meet with anyone.

They were all in a staff meeting. When I asked to wait for the meeting to end, the security guard refused and said it was not allowed for people to wait at the gate, and that I would have to come back another day. The second day I arrived, the same security guard told me that those responsible were not around and had gone to the field. When I tried to politely insist on speaking to someone, the security guard openly told me: “they cannot receive you from what I have seen and understood when I presented your letter for you the first day. They were saying you are suspicious and they cannot disclose information about the organization to you. I don’t know what the reason behind that is”. (Field notes, 6th and 9th August, 2021).

I also met considerable resistance at OCHA, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, a UN body established in December 1991 by the General Assembly to

strengthen the international response to complex emergencies and natural disasters. OCHA has the mission to coordinate global emergency responses and save lives, and to protect people in humanitarian crises by advocating for effective and principled humanitarian action by all for all. In OCHA I was received by the head of the office who welcomed me in a polite way with hospitality, but after I introduced myself and presented my letter asking that I be allowed to conduct research, he thanked me and say “I am sorry to tell you that OCHA does not receive researchers from universities or research institutions, rather they receive humanitarian agents from humanitarian organization or local NGOs.

Therefore, I cannot provide you with information related to OCHA” (field notes Monday 9th August, 2021). After that, I went to the Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid (Cordaid) whose mission is to reduce people’s vulnerability, providing relief where it is most needed and most difficult to reach, so in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Here, for two days, I was told by the security guard that no staff were around in the office and that all of them went to the field and would not be back till the following week. I continued my efforts, travelling to the UN peacekeeping Mission (MONUSCO) offices, where again I met with resistance. I was received by the receptionist who connected me to a UN staff member responsible for receiving researchers. However, this staff member told me he was not available that day as he was preparing to travel and that I would have to go to OCHA which was the body responsible for coordinating all UN humanitarian relief in the region. There, he assured me, I would get all the information I needed. I had come full circle. I did not show disappointment with his response, but rather said in a courteous and respectful way that I would not take more than a few minutes of his time. He replied

“Monusco is not in a position to receive and interact with a student doing research because Monusco work directly with the government but not researchers, [this is the] reason why you have to contact OCHA for your research if you want to know the organization or management of humanitarian agencies” (field notes, Thursday 12 August, 2021).

Fortunately, others were more accessible. Given the choice made to research humanitarian governance at the crossroad of violence, remoteness and ethnic discrimination during conflict situations.

Appendix 4 : Relevance of the term Genocide for Studying the Banyamulenge

The government of Congo seems silently to have embarked on an ethnic cleansing agenda, with the single goal of exterminating every Congolese Tutsi and stealing their belongings (Davey, 2020; Ntanyoma, 2021). The government of DRC has stood by, or even participated whilst other ethnic Congolese groups have physically worked together to destroy the lives of Tutsi Congolese, Banyamulenge in Minembwe High Plateau being one example. When ethnic identities become a tool of discrimination and violence, targeted communities lose their sense of belonging to that society, and can even lose their self-esteem. Ethnic identity is typically defined by social psychologists as “a social identity that represents the sense of belonging to one’s ethnic group” (Romero et al, 2014: 2).

Although some in DRC appear to disbelieve that one can be Tutsi in more than one country, in fact there are Tutsi in Burundi, in Kenya, in Uganda, in Rwanda, in Tanzania and in many other countries of Africa. The government of DRC and even neighbouring ethnic communities, do not seem to believe Tutsi can live in the DRC only because of some crude assumptions about what Congolese people are supposed to look like. Through such self-justifying stereotypes, they desire to destroy this minority community through different acts that directly damage their physical and emotional well-being. Lemkin defined genocide in the following terms "genocide means any acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group". The Genocide Convention of 1948 refers to genocide as:

“Killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group” (cited in Jorgensen, 2001:285).

Genocide ideology starts with myths of origin, and political leaders communicating the biased or misleading information through the population to influence an audience for further agenda.

“To make...genocide thinkable, myths of origin were reinvented and differential forms of citizenship enforced. Identity politics became a means of legitimizing collective violence and scapegoating and a knife in the back of the civilian population as a whole, victims and victimizers alike” (Hintjens, 2001-25).

The Banyamulenge have been labelled for long years ago as stateless people, and from evidence at ground level in Minembwe High Plateau, the government itself seems to perpetuate an ideology of discrimination against the Banyamulenge community, publicly questioning the nationality, identity and origin of the Banyamulenge Congolese person in front of everyone. This is accompanied by hate speeches, which ensure effective mass mobilization aimed to dehumanize Banyamulenge people and their dignity. Speeches appear on public televisions and on social media platforms, and the lack of action to prevent such hate speech suggests that the national army state conspiracy with armed groups scattered throughout the country and especially in the east of the country which is the origin of the Banyamulenge community simply for an ethnic extermination agenda. Recently the UN has condemned the proliferation of different messages from political leaders of DRC, who by inciting hatred, encourage violence and hostility between communities in the country. (Genocide Watch, 2021). There was the case of former Minister Justin Bitakwira who incited hostility towards Banyamulenge by labelling them ‘invaders’ and ‘strangers’. The current Deputy Prime Minister and

Minister for the Environment, Ève Bazaiba Masudi, has made similar statements (Rodrigue and Keita, 2021; OHCHR-MONUSCO, 2021; Genocide Watch, 2021).

Appendix 5: Historical Background of DRC and Banyamulenge

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) formerly known as Republic of Zaire, is also known as Congo-Kinshasa, is one of the potentially richest countries in the world, with respect to natural and mineral resources. It is also the second largest country in Africa, the largest in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the 11th largest in the entire world.⁶ There has been no census of the population in DRC since 1984, but estimates suggest the population is around 105 million and this would make DRC the 4th most populated country in Africa. DRC is extremely multicultural, with some 250 ethnic groups and 700 languages and dialects.⁷

Although: “The Democratic Republic of Congo is potentially one of the richest counties on earth, but colonialism, slavery and corruption have turned it into one of the poorest” (Snow, 2013). Ever since Congo-Kinshasa was colonized by King Leopold of Belgium in 1884, and then became a Belgian colony in 1908 until its independence in 1960, competition for resources and identity politics have been intertwined. However, despite the DRC being blessed with abundant natural resources, this abundance can be considered as ‘resource curse’ on the country, generating violent conflict and placed millions of Congolese in extreme darkness of poverty and lives are devastating day by day (Lalji, 2007; Rapanyane, 2021; Maystadt et al, 2014).

In 2020 the newly elected President of DRC, Felix Tshisekedi surprised some observers when he declined to inaugurate the decentralized Minembwe municipality. This followed mass demonstrations by non-Banyamulenge communities in Eastern DRC and protests from parliamentary delegates in the national and provincial assemblies.⁸ Why were they protesting against decentralization in Minembwe, and Minembwe alone? Vlassenroot (2015) sees this contestation as the continuation of discrimination against Banyamulenge as a ‘Hamitic’ minority group, for the purposes of excluding them from governance. With their own municipality in Minembwe, local people would have been able to register births, deaths and marriages without making the 2-day dangerous trip to Fizi town, the district capital. But parliamentarians and local leaders refused to let Banyamulenge control even a single municipality, as this would automatically mean Banyamulenge were recognized as autochthonous Congolese citizens. This is contested by the ‘Bantu’ theory of Congolese identity and citizenship.

The outcome is that the only administrative structure in DRC that might ‘belong’ to the Banyamulenge minority is still contested by the neighbouring population as a whole, representing other ethnic groups in Fizi District. Contestation of Minembwe municipality was caused by the inauguration of Minembwe municipality, its officials and its Banyamulenge mayor. Atrocities against civilians have increased since 2017, resulting in displacement out of native villages following violent

6 <https://www.britannica.com/place/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo>

7 idem

8 <https://theconversation.com/why-history-matters-in-understanding-conflict-in-the-eastern-democratic-republic-of-congo-148546>

attacks. The Banyamulenge community fled to different displacement camps. The problem is that these IDPs are not being assisted – or so it seems from reports - by any major humanitarian organizations at all. Since their personal and human security is assured neither by the DRC government, nor by any international or national humanitarian actors, the Banyamulenge IDP civilians today can only survive through contributions from relatives around the world, and from donations collected by the Banyamulenge diaspora committees.

Historical debates around ‘Banyamulenge’ identity are important. According to the community’s own historical memories, the Banyamulenge are Tutsi Congolese living in what is now DRC for over 400 hundred years (Rukundwa and Budagu in interview of 20th November, 2020). Today Banyamulenge people live in different regions of DRC, including in Kinshasa and Katanga, but most originated and are still native to South-East DRC, mainly the High Plateau of Minembwe and elsewhere in Fizi, Itombwe and Mwenga districts of South Kivu. In the above-mentioned areas, Banyamulenge have historically been characterized as herders of large cattle herds, and sheep. They often exchanged these with neighbouring communities, and farmed, as did other local Congolese communities in South Kivu. There is evidence that relationships with neighbours were not always based on violent discrimination or even competition. Even quite recently, the Banyamulenge managed to live quite peacefully alongside the Babembe, Bafuliro and others. But for several decades now, and most notably since the 1994 Rwanda genocide, land, identity and citizenship have been contested and the Banyamulenge minority is increasingly targeted for violence and victimization (Court, 2013:421-422; Vlassenroot 2002:501-502).

Several studies on violent conflicts in the Great Lakes Region and specifically in Eastern DRC, have stated that the principle causes of recurrent ethnic conflicts are often political in origin and formed by elite contestation and competition which leads to mobilisation of ethnic grievances, resulting in violence (Gahama, 1999; Ntanyoma 2021). Ethnic conflicts are often accompanied by gross human rights violations, a criterion that differentiates ethnic conflicts from some other forms of community struggles (Varshney, 2002). Ethnic conflicts arise from a number of causes that generate violence. Many ethnic conflicts can result in crimes against humanity and even in genocide. Underlying factors include economic competition and decline, state failure, environmental problems and refugee and IDP movements. Thus, violent ethnic conflict can lead to tremendous human suffering. Negative effects for entire countries, and for minorities include economic underdevelopment, loss of cultural values and inability to restore peaceful cohabitation, as well as human rights violations, war crimes against civilians, and high levels of mortality due to destitution and disease among the displaced population. Regimes with internal minorities subjected to ‘ethnic cleansing’ rarely favour a free press or public reference to the suffering of an unpopular minority, living in a given part of the country.