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## THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN DEMILITARISATION IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

**Peter Boswell MCOMALLA, Executive Director, HUREPI-TRUST**

The Great Lakes Region (GLR) has been a home to more than its fair share of violence. The history gives us much about it. Recently the Kenya General Election results which stormed into national violence left almost 1000 dead and more than 600 homeless. While peace talks were going on in Dar Es Salaam between the disputing parties in Burundi, some death reports occurred.

In exploring the role of education in demilitarising the Great Lakes Region (GLR) of Africa it appears that a holistic form of peace education-incorporating disarmament education would be a logical starting point in terms of curriculum content. The concept of peace is being considered, no longer taken only as absence of war (negative peace) but also as being conditioned upon justice and social equity (positive peace). Today practitioners and academicians alike recognize that peace and development are to a large extent but two sides of the same coin.

Numerous initiatives have taken place at the political and diplomatic level, as well as on the sub-regional, regional, continental and international stage in order to create appropriate mechanisms that will not only prevent, manage and resolve conflict situations but also and perhaps most importantly ensure that a comprehensive strategy which link peace, security, good governance, economic growth and education is put in place.

To great extent the demilitarisation of the minds must be sought through education. The efforts of education through peace education activities can support well in contributing to the demilitarisation in the Great Lakes Region. There is a very great and urgent need for the Governments at the national levels to work, support and recognize the efforts of CSOs/Academic institutions and peace practitioners who are the agents for change to share in this. A good examples are the roles played by some of them at the National, the Sub-region and the Continent as Peace- Nets, GPPAC, Coalition for Peace in Africa, NPI-Africa, Amani Forum, (HUREPI-TRUST), CECORE, UPEACE Africa program, APFO and many others as National and Sub-regional Small Arms Networks in the Great Lakes Region.

The Great Lakes Region has now emerged with very prominent strategies and initiative in promoting the regional integration policies geared towards achieving peace, security, development, good-governance, respect for human rights, humanitarian Law and political stability. Many countries in the (GLR) have also embarked on addressing the root causes of conflict and the issues of illicit proliferation, trade, trafficking and

misuse of small arms (SALW) or Control Arms measures which have shaken, threatened and weakened the stability of security in the sub-region. Demilitarizing a sub-region as large and as militarized Great Lakes Region is an enormous task and not for the governments alone but holistic and participatory.

This demilitarization needs a lot of support from human, material, time and financial resources, commitment and voluntarily and this can be done by people who are ready to spread this message through peace education initiative, supported by their governments. CSOs are very good champions to support the government initiatives in this through non-formal education. If this end is to be pursued as commitment to a sustainable future would indicate, it must, - it will have to be pursued through a variety of means. Education clearly has a crucial role to play in this process.

The effectiveness of a number of the other non-military tools demilitarization explored in this presentation requires that the population be educated to the specific end - (e.g. befriending the neighbours and building democracy). It is primarily education that is required for the fundamental processes of demilitarizing the minds of the population - AND it is education that can develop in the population the knowledge and skills required for the specific task of civilian - based defence as well as for generally living more peacefully together.

### Picture of the armed groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo: The Case of the Southern Province of Kivu and of Ituri Prof. Pilo KAMARAGI, Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de Bunia

The "armed groups" phenomenon is a real issue in the socio-political history of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Ituri and Southern Kivu constitute, in East of DRC, the two Congolese spaces that have faced a multitude of armed groups. The Southern Kivu Province, with Bukavu as its headquarters, is composed of 8 territories with several ethnic groups while the Ituri Province of Ituri includes 5 territories with about 15 ethnic groups.

In the Southern Province of Kivu, each territory, even each community has one or more armed groups of its own made up exclusively of the Mai-Mai, a self-defense force which generally includes all men and women from the village. One could distinguish the May-May soldiers whose main activity is fighting from the Mai-Mai civilians who are old men, women and children.

Nearly all the May-May in the Southern Kivu have been created with the aim of resisting, for some time, against AFDL forces before embarking in the philosophy of Interahamwe of going to war with the Banyamulenge that they qualify as the enemy number one in the Uvira territory.

As for the armed groups in Ituri, they were formed in two phases. First, there are armed groups, the real rebels, who transformed themselves into politico-military movements in the political and administrative administration of Ituri.

There was first Wamba dia Wamba's RCD-KML (1999-2000), Jean-Pierre Bemba's FLC and Mbusa Nyamwisi's RCD-KML 2 which will be expelled and replaced by Thomas Lubanga's UPC, which will hold in its hands the destiny of the Ituri Province for 8 months.

