

**AFRICA UNIVERSITY**

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**STRATEGIES TO MITIGATE THE RECURRENCE OF CONFLICT  
IN EASTERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO, IN GOMA**

**BY**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
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## Abstract

The conflict in Goma, in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), continues despite decades of military, diplomatic, and peacekeeping interventions, resulting in significant humanitarian and regional instability (United Nations, 2024; Reuters, 2025). This study examines the effectiveness and limitations of current conflict reduction strategies in Goma, while proposing sustainable alternatives to prevent the resurgence of conflict. Drawing on conflict resolution and institutional theory, this study highlights the role of dialogue, mediation, and institutional reform in addressing the root causes of violence (Burton, 1990; North, 1990). Using a qualitative research approach, data was collected through semi-structured interviews with government representatives, local communities, and NGOs, supported by a contextual analysis of policy frameworks and peace agreements (Creswell, 2018). The findings were aimed to assess military interventions, such as the FARDC and MONUSCO operations, which, despite their objectives, have been hampered by logistical challenges, corruption, and human rights concerns (Autesserre, 2010; Nation Africa, 2025). Diplomatic initiatives, including the Luanda Ceasefire Agreement, have experienced delays in implementation due to regional geopolitical tensions (Associated Press, 2025). Furthermore, the exploitation of resources by armed groups and external actors continues to fuel conflict, undermining peace efforts (Bafilemba & Lezhnev, 2015; United Nations, 2021). This study aims to reveal that while international and regional interventions are important, community-led peacebuilding initiatives and strengthening governance structures are essential for sustainable peace (Lederach, 1997; Doyle & Sambanis, 2006). The findings informed policymakers, peacekeeping missions, and civil society organizations by providing practical recommendations to strengthen conflict reduction efforts in Goma, thereby contributing to long-term stability in eastern DRC. Ultimately, this research aims to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical implementation to develop international and domestic strategies that address the cycle of violence in the region, while aligning with Africa University's commitment to peace and sustainable development.

**Key words:** Conflict mitigation; Peacebuilding; Institutional reform; Community dialogue; Sustainable peace.

### Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my original work except where sources have been cited and acknowledged. The work has never been submitted, nor was it ever be submitted to another university for the award of a degree.

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Student's Full Name



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14th October 2025

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18th October 2025

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To my family and friends, thanks for their moral support throughout this challenging ordeal. Their encouragement has given me the motivation to persevere, even when the challenges seem insurmountable.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to the people of Goma and the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, whose courage and resilience in the face of conflict continue to inspire hope for a peaceful future.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my family, who live in South Kivu, whose unwavering love, prayers, and encouragement have sustained me throughout this academic journey.

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to all the peacemakers, researchers, and humanitarians who work tirelessly to transform conflict into lasting peace in the DRC and beyond. Your commitment gives meaning to this work and constantly reminds us that peace is both possible and necessary.

## **List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

ADF:	Allied Democratic Forces
AU:	African Union
AUREC:	Africa University Research Ethics Committee
CSO:	Civil Society Organizations
DRC:	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EAC:	East African Community
EACRF:	East African Community Regional Force
ECOWAS:	Economic Community of West African States
FARDC:	Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo
FDLR:	Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda
ICGLR:	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
IDP:	Internally Displaced Persons
IRC:	International Rescue Committee
ISS:	Institute for Security Studies
M23:	March 23 Movement
MONUC:	United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MONUSCO:	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MSF:	Doctors without Borders
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organizations Governmental bodies
NRC:	Norwegian Refugee Council
PSC:	Peace and Security Council
SADC:	Southern African Development Community
UN:	United Nations

### **Definition of the Key terms**

**Conflict Recurrence:** The reappearance of a conflict after a period of relative peace or de-escalation. It refers to the cyclical nature of violence, where the conflict is not permanently resolved but resurfaces due to unresolved grievances, governance failures, or external factors.

**Conflict Mitigation:** Processes or strategies aimed at reducing the intensity, frequency, or impact of a conflict by addressing its immediate causes and consequences. The goal is not necessarily to eliminate the conflict, but rather to manage it, control it, or prevent its escalation.

**Armed Group:** Non-state armed actors or militias that use force to pursue political, economic, ethnic, or ideological interests. In North Kivu, this includes groups such as the M23.

**Peacebuilding:** A long-term process aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict and developing sustainable structures to support peace. Peacebuilding can include reconciliation, institutional reforms, justice mechanisms, development, and initiatives to strengthen the resilience of communities.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in Goma has been ongoing for decades, therefore creating an area for regional instability. Recurring violence has followed an excess of efforts at peacekeeping and diplomatic mediation, owing to the proclivity of various armed groups, such as the March 23 Movement (M23), to perpetrate violence (United Nations, 2024). The continuing instability has caused humanitarian crises, displaced civilians and disturbing the economy in the region (Reuters, 2025). To deal with the conflict, several measures have been put in place, including military interventions by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and international peacekeeping operations like the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). The implementation of the peace agreements was weak; there was a lack of coordination among military forces, regional political interests intervened, and limited resources hampered a sustainable resolution to the conflict (Nation Africa, 2025).

Diplomatic initiatives for conflict resolution have also been explored; Regional summits such as that of Luanda and Bujumbura have put the DRC, Rwanda, and other East African heads of state together to negotiate ceasefires and strategies for resolving conflicts (Associated Press, 2025). They have, however, confronted setbacks due to nonstop ceasefire violations and regional geopolitical tensions. The engagement and involvement of regional organizations, like the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), have had additional dimensions added to peacekeeping, but still leave much to be desired due to logistics challenges and inadequate funds (ISS Africa, 2025). This dissertation seeks to analyze the strategies employed to mitigate conflict

recurrence in Goma, measure its effectiveness, and seek other alternatives for enhancing conflict resolution efforts. This research looks at the existing frameworks and what the challenges are that prevent peace in order to develop more sustainable and effective conflict mitigation strategies in eastern DRC.

## **1.2 Background to the Study**

The conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in Goma has lasted for decades and has involved a complicated mixture of historical grievances, ethnic rivalries, resource issues, and regional political dynamics. The instability has led to immense displacement, human rights abuses, and an extended humanitarian disaster. Various approaches, including military interventions, peacekeeping missions, and diplomatic negotiations, have all been employed to minimize the violence, but have been limited success because of weak implementation, lack of coordination, and regional geopolitical interests. Considering these strategies and their limitations is vital for developing maintainable mechanisms to alleviate the repetition of conflict in Goma (Stearns, 2012).

The conflict in eastern DRC traces its roots back to the colonial period and the subsequent instability after independence. During Belgian colonial rule, ethnic divisions were intensified with preferential treatment of certain ethnic groups, thereby causing long-term tensions (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002). After independence in 1960, the state confronted a series of political crises, which included the assassination of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba and the subsequent Mobutu Sese Seko dictatorship, which weakened state institutions and aggravated the local conflicts. The 1994 Rwandan Genocide had far-reaching effects on eastern DRC, as millions of Rwandan refugees fled into the area, including genocidaires. Herein began a series of cross-border conflicts as the Rwandan government pursued armed groups such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) inside Congolese territory (Prunier 2009). Since then, armed groups such as the March 23 Movement (M23), the Allied

Democratic Forces (ADF), and the Mai-Mai militias have continued to disturb the peace in the region, often with the support of external actors (International Crisis Group 2020).

The DRC is indeed rich in gold, diamonds, coltan, and tin-natural resources, which have largely been responsible for conflict among warring groups. Armed groups and warlords exploit these incomes to finance their doings, leading to a war economy that benefits from volatility (Autesserre, 2010). Reports have also implicated the involvement of local and foreign actors, like neighboring countries, such as Rwanda and Uganda, in the illegal mining of Congolese minerals (United Nations, 2021). Continuously prosecuting illicit mining compromises all peace efforts, considering that armed groups can now have financial incentives that favor fighting rather than engaging in negotiations so that disarmament may occur (Bafilemba & Lezhnev, 2015)

The Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) as well as international actors have launched various operations against armed groups over the years but have faced difficulties due to a combination of logistical problems, corruption, and human rights abuses from both state and non-state level actors (Stearns, 2012). The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) was established in the year 1999 to ensure the protection of civilians against any threats and to realize stabilization efforts (United Nations, 2024). Not canceled, but it has been criticized for its inability to prevent the mass killing and displacement of people, calling for protests against it and demanding withdrawal from the place (Nation Africa, 2025).

Diplomatic attempts have largely contributed to resolving the conflict. For example, in 2022, the Summit of Luanda brokered a ceasefire agreement that demanded that M23 withdraw from the territories they had captured (Associated Press, 2025). However, weak implementation mechanisms and constant geopolitical tensions have delayed compliance, leading to continuous violations. The

East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have also mediated in regional conflicts, but peace efforts have been complicated due to competing political interests among member states (Reuters, 2025).

Organizations such as the African Union (AU) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) were instrumental in opening a dialogue among the conflicting parties. The East African Community Regional Force (EACRF) was deployed in 2022 to stabilize conflict zones, but it suffered from logistical and financial challenges that reduced its effectiveness (ISS Africa, 2025). In addition, the long tendencies of interference by neighboring states have undermined the possibility of an organized regional response; particularly, Rwanda and Uganda have been accused on many occasions of sponsoring armed groups in eastern DRC (Prunier, 2009).

The conflict in Goma, in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, remains a major challenge despite military, diplomatic, and peacekeeping efforts. Historical complaints, ethnic tensions, resource conflicts, and external political influences have contributed to the persistence of violence. Although numerous strategies have been applied, their efficiency has been incomplete. Understanding these trials is important for developing more active and maintainable conflict mitigation strategies. Breaking the cycle of violence and achieving lasting peace in eastern DRC requires a comprehensive approach that includes strengthening governance institutions, regional cooperation, and addressing economic and social differences.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The city of Goma, located in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), remains one of the most volatile and conflict-ridden areas in Central Africa. Despite more than two decades of peacekeeping operations, regional diplomacy, and military intervention, the region continues to suffer

from frequent violence and instability. Forces of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), supported by international and regional partners, have launched regular military offensives against various armed groups, notably the March 23 Movement (M23), which reemerged in 2021. These military operations were intended to restore government authority and civilian security; however, ongoing hostilities and human rights abuses indicate that these measures have not brought lasting stability (United Nations, 2024).

The United Nations Mission for the Restoration of Peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), originally established as MONUC in 1999 following the Lusaka Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, was tasked with monitoring peace agreements, protecting civilians, and assisting the Congolese government in consolidating peace. Over the years, MONUSCO's mandate has evolved, and its presence in eastern DRC has grown to include more than 14,000 uniformed personnel (United Nations, 2024). Despite its substantial resources and an estimated annual budget of over one billion US dollars, the mission continues to face significant criticism for its limited effectiveness in preventing violence, halting rebel advances, and reducing mass displacement (Nation Africa, 2025). Reports from OCHA (2024) estimate that over 1.5 million people have been displaced in North Kivu alone, with thousands of civilians killed or injured as conflict continues in many areas. These figures indicate a high number of civilian casualties and call into question the long-term impact of international peacekeeping in the region.

In parallel, diplomatic and regional peace initiatives have been launched to reduce tensions and encourage ceasefires between the warring parties. High-level meetings held in Luanda, Angola, and Bujumbura, Burundi, have brought together leaders from the DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, and other East African states to discuss ways to achieve peace. For example, during the Luanda Summit on November 23, 2022, M23 forces were formally ordered to withdraw from captured territories or face

military action (Associated Press, 2025). However, the frequent violations of these ceasefires and the continued expansion of armed groups' territories demonstrate the fragility of diplomatic agreements.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has also attempted to stabilize the situation through the deployment of the Southern African Development Community Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC) in December 2023, comprising troops from South Africa, Tanzania, and Malawi. SAMIDRC's initial role was to transform armed groups and support government control in the eastern provinces, however conflict still persists in the provinces (Reuters, 2025).

Despite the long-standing presence of peacekeeping missions, regular military campaigns, and numerous regional agreements, Goma continues to suffer from frequent conflicts and humanitarian crises. The persistence of this instability highlights a fundamental disconnect between intervention efforts and the reality on the ground. Civilians remain the main victims; losing homes, livelihoods, and lives; while government authority remains weak and contested. The ongoing violence not only threatens the social fabric of society in Goma but also undermines regional stability in the Great Lakes Region.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

- 1.4.1. To identify current strategies used to reduce the recurrence of conflicts in Goma.
- 1.4.2. To assess the effectiveness of existing conflict reduction strategies in promoting sustainable peace.
- 1.4.3. To examine the institutional and community challenges that affect the implementation of these strategies.
- 1.4.4. To propose sustainable approaches to prevent the recurrence of conflicts in Goma.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

- 1.5.1 What are the current strategies used to reduce the recurrence of conflict in Goma?
- 1.5.2 How effective are existing conflict reduction strategies in promoting sustainable peace?
- 1.5.3 What institutional and community challenges affect the implementation of these strategies?
- 1.5.4 What sustainable approaches can be taken to prevent the recurrence of conflict in Goma?

## **1.6 Assumptions**

This study works on several important assumptions that determine the analysis of conflict mitigation strategies in Goma, Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Peace efforts were continued to be appointed by regional and international actors. The contribution by such organizations as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the East African Community (EAC) has been most crucial in mediating conflicts, while their long-term continued involvement is imperative for sustaining peace. Second, the long-term aspiration of local populations is peace and stability. While conflicts have continued from both intra and external levels of society, the expectations from those affected in terms of community support for initiatives meant to ensure peace, economic development, and security would be realized. The success of any initiative in mitigating the conflict was taken into account the efforts and willingness of those affected to engage in reconciliation and post-conflict rebuilding. The other key assumption is that there is a political war in the DRC government to find a solution to the conflict. Knowing that many governance challenges are extant, the study presupposes that the authorities were to cooperate with peacekeeping efforts of missions, implement treaties signed, and promote dialogue to address the underlying and root causes of conflict.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The study is important mainly for contributing to conflict resolution initiatives in Goma and the general field of peace and security in Africa. The study proceeds to evaluate military intervention, diplomacy, and regional cooperation in terms of assessing existing conflict mitigation strategies in terms of their success and failure. By understanding where these strategies worked and where they did not, policymakers and stakeholders could improve their approaches to conflict resolution. Secondly, the study proposed practical suggestions for improving peace efforts in Goma and addressing the challenges. This should thus help actors both at the local and international levels devise better and sustainable community-driven peace processes.

Thirdly, this study contributes to the form of knowledge on conflict resolution in DRC, especially concerning humanitarian emergencies and prolonged conflicts with various actors engaged. The case helped understand problems and solutions and thus improve theoretical and practical perspectives on peacekeeping, governance, and regional stability. In addition, the study findings were useful to government agencies, peacekeeping missions, civil society organizations, and researchers interested in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The primary aim of this study is to develop long-term stability and development in eastern DRC through policy applications and advocacy.

### **1.8 Delimitation of the Study**

This study focuses on the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) mainly in Goma, as a case study for conflict repetition and mitigation strategies. It looked into military, diplomatic, and regional responses employed toward resolving the ongoing conflict, discussing the effectiveness and challenges of these approaches. Assessments of the recent interventions covered only the last ten years, i.e., 2015 to 2025, while historical contexts were considered wherever necessary. The focus

was only restricted to conflict resolution in Goma, without extending to other areas in the DRC, though similar conflicts may be present there.

### **1.9 Limitation of the Study**

The study may meet numerous challenges, mainly due to the unstable security situation in Goma. Active armed conflict and instability might limit access to certain areas and impede direct fieldwork or interviews with affected community members and key stakeholders. Furthermore, political sensitivities arising from the conflict may restrict access to information, making some government officials, military personnel, and others unwilling to disclose classified or politically sensitive information to such a level that analysis cannot go further. The research also relies upon secondary data sources such as various reports from international organizations, NGOs, and the media, which rarely present a unified view and often contradict each other. To alleviate this, several sources were cross-verified to certify precision and consistency.

## CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.1 Introduction

Conflict remains a defining feature of many parts of Africa, and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) represents one of the most complex and enduring cases. The city of Goma, located in North Kivu Province, has been plagued by recurrent episodes of violence fueled by political instability, competition for resources, and weak governance. Over the years, numerous interventions, including military campaigns, peacekeeping missions, and diplomatic negotiations, have attempted to restore stability. However, the persistence of armed groups and humanitarian crises suggests that these responses have largely addressed the symptoms rather than the root causes of conflict. This underscores the need for a deeper theoretical understanding of why conflict persists and how it can be resolved in a sustainable manner.

This chapter reviews the relevant theoretical and empirical literature that informs the study of strategies to reduce conflict recurrence in Goma. It provides a discussion within the framework of John Burton's (1990) Conflict Resolution Theory, which emphasizes that long-term social conflicts stem from the denial of basic human needs such as identity, security, and recognition. The theory provides a lens through which to examine how unmet needs perpetuate grievances and hinder peacebuilding efforts in contexts like Goma. Supporting perspectives from Johan Galtung (1969), John Paul Lederach (1997), and Marshall Rosenberg (2003) are included to broaden understanding of dialogue, relational change, and positive peace. By integrating theoretical insights with empirical experience from the DRC and other post-conflict societies, this chapter lays the conceptual foundation upon which the analysis and interpretation of the research findings are built.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework: John Burton's Conflict Resolution Theory**

John Burton's Conflict Resolution Theory (1990) provides a human-centered approach to understanding and addressing the sources of social and political conflict. Burton argues that conflicts persist when basic human needs such as identity, security, recognition, and participation are not met. Unlike traditional conflict management approaches that focus on controlling or suppressing violence, Burton's framework emphasizes resolving the underlying needs and relationships that fuel conflict. He argues that when these needs are not met, peace agreements and coercive interventions will only bring temporary stability rather than sustainable peace.

According to Burton, long-term social conflicts occur when social systems fail to provide individuals or groups with opportunities for security, wealth, and meaningful participation in decision-making. In such environments, groups resort to violence as a means of asserting their identity and rights. Therefore, true conflict resolution must go beyond the interests of negotiation or balance of power; It is necessary to address both the psychological and structural dimensions of conflict simultaneously.

This theory departs from conventional peacebuilding models by prioritizing problem-solving dialogue rather than coercion. Burton's approach advocates facilitated discussions that enable conflicting parties to express needs, rebuild trust, and identify solutions that meet the needs of all parties. This participatory and relational approach aligns closely with Lederach's (1997) concept of transformative peacebuilding, which views peace as a process of rebuilding relationships and creating social systems that sustain cooperation and justice.

Marshall Rosenberg's (2003) Nonviolent Communication Framework reinforces Burton's ideas by emphasizing empathetic listening and avoiding blame in negotiation processes. Through empathetic communication, conflicting parties can express their needs without hostility, reducing the emotional

barriers to reconciliation. Similarly, Galtung's (1969) distinction between negative peace (the absence of direct violence) and positive peace (the presence of social justice and equality) expands Burton's concept by framing peace not only as a political outcome but also as a state of structural and human equality.

Fisher and Ury's (1981) interest-based negotiation framework further complements Burton's theory. They argue that effective conflict resolution focuses on the basic interests and human needs of the parties rather than their fixed positions. This approach promotes win-win outcomes through understanding and cooperation, rather than zero-sum competition.

In summary, Burton's theory emphasizes that sustainable peace requires addressing the sources of conflict at both the human and structural levels. It encourages processes that transform adversarial relationships into cooperative ones, based on recognition, respect, and shared problem-solving.

### **2.3 The Relevance of Burton's Theory of Conflict Resolution to Research**

Burton's Theory of Conflict Resolution provides a powerful lens through which to analyze the recurrence of conflict in Goma, Eastern DRC. The instability of the region is not simply the result of armed conflict but is rooted in unmet human needs and weak social structures that perpetuate grievances within communities. These include disenfranchisement, economic exclusion, insecurity, and the erosion of trust between citizens and state institutions.

In the context of Goma, numerous interventions ranging from military operations (FARDC and MONUSCO) to diplomatic dialogue (the Luanda and Bujumbura processes) have attempted to restore peace but have failed to address the underlying social and psychological dimensions of the conflict. Many of these interventions focus on short-term stabilization, while ignoring the identity-based grievances, economic inequalities, and historical mistrust that divide local communities.

Burton's framework explains why such high-level interventions often fail: they ignore the non-negotiable human needs that drive rebellion and resistance. For example, the exclusion of certain ethnic groups from political participation, or the unequal distribution of resources, fosters persistent resentment and exclusion. Unless these needs are identified and addressed through inclusive dialogue and equitable governance, violence is likely to recur even after a ceasefire is signed.

Intriguingly, similar applications of Burton's theory have been observed in other post-conflict contexts. In Rwanda, social reconciliation processes such as Gacaca courts successfully addressed core identity grievances following the 1994 genocide (Clark, 2010). In Northern Ireland, problem-solving workshops facilitated dialogue between Catholics and Protestants, leading to greater understanding and cooperation (Mitchell, 2013). These examples illustrate how addressing basic human needs and promoting dialogue can transform protracted social conflicts into sustainable peace processes.

In the case of Goma, the theory emphasizes the importance of integrating local peacebuilding mechanisms such as community mediation, interfaith platforms, and reintegration programs into broader national and regional strategies. These strategies align with Burton's emphasis on participatory problem-solving, as they prioritize relationships, empathy, and mutual understanding over military or coercive solutions.

Burton's Conflict Resolution Theory is therefore used as the central framework for this study, guiding the interpretation of findings and the analysis of peacebuilding strategies. It provides a conceptual framework for understanding why externally imposed interventions have produced limited results, and why sustainable peace needs to address the psychological, relational, and structural dimensions of conflict simultaneously.

## **2.4 Empirical Literature Review**

Globally, Burton's principles have influenced peacebuilding practices in different contexts. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, post-conflict reconstruction under the Dayton Peace Agreement (1995) included identity-based power-sharing mechanisms to address the security and representation needs of former adversaries (Chivvis, 2010). In Liberia and Sierra Leone, ECOWAS-led peace processes incorporated community dialogue and reconciliation mechanisms as well as disarmament programmes, leading to long-term political stability (Adebajo, 2002).

In Africa, Lederach's (1997) extension of Burton's ideas into multi-level peacebuilding has been widely used. The African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Peace and Security Council (PSC) also reflect human-centered approaches to promoting participatory governance, justice, and reconciliation (African Union, 2015).

Within the DRC, however, international and regional peace efforts including MONUSCO, SADC, and EAC have often prioritized security consolidation over community dialogue. As noted by Autesserre (2010), peace building in Congo has been hampered by the dominance of external actors and the neglect of domestic actors. Thus, while large-scale military operations and diplomatic summits have attempted to control violence, they have not addressed the underlying causes of exclusion and inequality that perpetuate recurrent conflict.

The evidence thus supports Burton's claim that conflict persists when basic human needs remain unmet and when communities lack meaningful participation in peace processes. This theoretical and empirical foundation informs this study's analysis of strategies to reduce the recurrence of conflict in Goma, highlighting the need to consider human needs, dialogue, and participation in all peacebuilding efforts.

## **2.5 Summary**

This chapter reviewed the relevant literature and theoretical perspectives that inform this study, with John Burton's (1990) Conflict Resolution Theory serving as the main analytical framework. The theory posits that conflicts arise when human needs for identity, security, recognition, and participation are denied, and that lasting peace depends on addressing these needs through dialogue and structural change. Supporting insights from Galtung (1969), Lederach (1997), and Rosenberg (2003) reinforce this framework by focusing on positive peace, relational change, and nonviolent communication.

The empirical studies reviewed show that interventions that focus solely on military or diplomatic action have limited effectiveness in resolving protracted conflicts such as that in Goma. Instead, evidence suggests that lasting peace depends on people-centered approaches that combine local participation, social justice, and participatory governance. The next chapter presents the research methodology used to examine these trends in the context of Goma, Eastern DRC.

## **CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the methodology framework employed in the study on strategies to mitigate the recurrence of conflict in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, in Goma. The complexity of this issue requires a multidimensional approach, integrating research design, population, sample, data collection instruments, and procedure. This chapter also addresses ethical considerations to ensure the integrity and validity of the research process. By adopting a methodical and structured approach, this study aims to provide consistent information on the efficiency of existing conflict mitigation strategies and suggest possible developments.

### **3.2 The Research Design**

This study uses a qualitative research design that emphasizes considering the human experiences, perceptions, and social dynamics connected to conflict mitigation. Qualitative research is well-suited to this study because it allows for an in-depth study of conflict resolution strategies, challenges, and stakeholder viewpoints (Creswell, 2018). Given the complexity and multidimensionality of the conflict in Goma, a qualitative method allows the researcher to obtain nuanced information from a variety of stakeholders, including government officials, peacekeepers, and local communities.

Qualitative design is particularly useful in conflict studies because it captures strong meanings, cultural norms, institutional behaviors, and community narratives (Patton, 2002). It provides the flexibility to understand how various actors interpret and respond to conflict and peace-building strategies, thus helping to reveal the root causes and obstacles to sustainable peace.

## **3.3 Population and Sampling**

### **3.3.1 Population**

A target population is individuals, groups, or institutions with similar characteristics concerning the topic of study (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the target population comprises key stakeholders directly engaged in conflict mitigation in Goma, as their experiences and points of view have a significant impact on assessing the effectiveness of several strategies. The study is organized around three broad categories, which are government officials, local communities, and non-governmental organizations

Government officials, including representatives of local administration and policy-makers of the DRC government, who engage in conflict resolution strategies; officials in charge of security, peace negotiations, and defense, as their decisions influence the conflict context directly.

Local communities include civilians and internally displaced persons (IDPs) who directly experience conflicts and the consequent impact of peacekeeping operations; community leaders, traditional chiefs, and activists working for peace and mediation of local conflicts; and members of civil society organizations (CSOs) that are engaged in grassroots conflict resolution.

On the other side are non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are involved in giving humanitarian aid, establishing peace, and engaging in the social development of families and communities. This might include NGOs like the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). Representatives of local and international NGOs assist conflict-affected populations, contribute to peace initiatives, and support other projects.

### **3.3.2 Sampling**

The sampling method used in this study is purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method. Purposive sampling is suitable for qualitative studies that aim to obtain detailed information from participants with specific knowledge or experience related to the research topic (Bryman, 2012). This allows the researcher to purposefully select individuals based on their relevance to the research objectives, rather than choosing randomly.

The total number of participants was determined based on fieldwork feasibility. Source of Recruitment: Participants were recruited from government institutions, NGOs, and local communities. Although qualitative research does not aim at the generalization of statistics, the selected sample size is justified based on data volume, where no new themes or ideas emerge from additional interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Participants were selected based on their direct participation in conflict resolution or peace building. Their lived experience of conflict or displacement and their institutional role in influencing or implementing mitigation strategies.

A purposive sample ensures that the data collected is rich, relevant and grounded in practical experience, thereby improving the validity and reliability of the study.

### **3.4 Data Collection method and procedure**

This study follows a qualitative approach to collect data, primarily utilizing semi-structured interviews and document analysis. These methods provide detailed and in-depth information on conflict mitigation strategies in Goma and allow researchers to accumulate the perceptions of key stakeholders actively involved in conflict resolution. By involving government officials, local

community members, this research certifies a thorough understanding of the efficiency, trials, and potential developments of continuing peace efforts.

Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to explore deeper into participants' responses, confirming an interactive and in-depth discussion (Creswell, 2018). This flexibility is mostly significant in conflict studies, where context-specific knowledge is essential to understanding the complexity of the condition. Interviews were conducted with government officials involved in developing conflict resolution policies, with local community members, and displaced people to comprehend their experiences and perceptions on peace efforts.

Document Analysis examines policy documents, past peace contracts, and official reports from MONUSCO, the EAC, and NGOs. Analyzes media reporting of developing conflict situations and identifies trends and discrepancies in reported findings. Documentary analysis certifies a historical and political understanding of conflict tendencies.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The study uses qualitative content analysis to systematically study and interpret the collected data, identifying recurring themes and trends in participants' responses. The procedure starts with transcribing interviews. Once transcribed, the data was coded to highlight important themes such as military success, diplomatic trials, community resilience, and insights into peacekeeping efforts. These themes were then characterized to enable comparative analysis across different stakeholder groups, including government officials, non-governmental organizations, and local communities.

### **3.6 Ethical Consideration**

Ethical considerations are important to ensure the integrity, trustworthiness, and social responsibility of this research, especially given the politically sensitive and potentially distressing topic of the Goma

conflict. This research adheres to international and institutional standards for ethical research and prioritizes the protection, dignity, and well-being of all participants involved.

Informed consent, all participants were required to provide informed consent prior to participating in the study. I provided a clear and detailed explanation of the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, the voluntary nature of participation, and the rights of participants, including the right to refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Written consent forms, available in the relevant local languages, were signed by participants to indicate their understanding and agreement.

Anonymity and confidentiality, to protect the identity and personal information of participants, especially those who share sensitive ideas or criticism of the institution, anonymity and confidentiality was strictly maintained. Personal identifiers were removed during data transcription, and pseudonyms were used in all reports. Audio recordings, transcripts, and other sensitive data was stored securely in password-protected digital files and encrypted storage devices. Access to the data was available to the research team only.

Minimize risk and damage, considering the emotional and political risks associated with conflict discussions, displacement, and trauma, specific risk reduction strategies were implemented. Questions were worded in a neutral and respectful manner to avoid causing distress or political reactions.

Interview sessions were held in safe, private, mutually agreed-upon locations to ensure the physical and psychological safety of participants. The researcher remained alert for signs of emotional distress and terminated the interview or provided appropriate referrals (e.g., local counseling services) if necessary.

## Strategies for Managing Ethical Issues

To solve the ethical challenges arising from the sensitive nature of the research, the following effective strategies were used: Cultural Sensitivity Training. The researcher was engaged with cultural traditions and customs to avoid misinterpretation and mistakes during the interview.

Ethical Review and Oversight: The study was reviewed and approved by Africa University Research Ethics Committee and, where necessary, institutional organizations in the DRC. All protocols adhered to national and international ethical guidelines for research in conflict areas.

Continuous Consent: Recognizing that participant comfort may change during the interview process, continuous verbal confirmation of consent was requested, allowing participants to suspend or terminate their participation at any time.

Community Involvement: Local stakeholders, including community leaders and civil society organizations, were consulted during the research process to ensure that the research is conducted in a respectful and inclusive manner.

Avoiding researcher bias and ensuring integrity, to maintain neutrality, triangulation was used, reviewing information from multiple sources (e.g., interviews, documents and observations). This reduces personal or institutional bias. Furthermore, the researcher avoided leading questions and used an open, non-judgmental interview method to allow participants to express themselves freely and truthfully.

Compliance with legal and institutional standards. This study fully complied with the legal and institutional requirements for conducting research in the DRC. This includes obtaining necessary permits, complying with national data protection laws, and harmonizing humanitarian principles when working with vulnerable groups.

The ethical framework of this research is designed to protect the dignity, freedom and safety of the participants while ensuring that the research is conducted responsibly, transparently and sensitive to the context of the conflict in Goma.

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter describes the research methodology, detailing the qualitative approach. The study uses a purposive sampling method to choose key stakeholders, involving government officials, peacekeeping personnel, and local community representatives, certifying the collection of diverse and informed perspectives on conflict mitigation strategies in Goma. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis to facilitate in-depth discussions on the efficiency and challenges of current peace efforts. Ethical considerations, such as knowledgeable consent and data protection, are firmly followed to sustain honesty. The following chapter presents the results and analysis of the collected data.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents, analyzes, and discusses data collected from thirty-one authors and institutional reports to assess strategies used to reduce the recurrence of conflict in Goma, located in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The analysis draws on data collected through informal interviews, fact-finding, and fieldwork, providing a comprehensive perspective that combines community-level experiences, institutional knowledge, and regional policy dynamics. The chapter aims to interpret how diverse actors ranging from government representatives, security officials, humanitarian agencies, civil society organizations, and community leaders perceive and implement conflict resolution strategies in an environment of social, political, and economic instability.

The findings are systematically organized around four research objectives, which aim to identify existing conflict resolution responses, assess their effectiveness, examine challenges in implementation, and propose sustainable strategies to prevent recurrence. This framework allows for a robust relationship between empirical evidence and theoretical reflection. Given the multifaceted nature of the Goma conflict rooted in historical grievances, ethnic tensions, resource competition, and regional intervention this chapter adopts a thematic approach that includes descriptive and interpretive analysis. The interpretation of the findings is anchored in three complementary theoretical frameworks: Conflict Resolution Theory (Burton, 1990), which emphasizes the satisfaction of basic human needs and the role of dialogue and negotiation in addressing the sources of conflict; Galtung's Positive Peace Model (1969), which distinguishes between the mere absence of violence (negative peace) and the presence of social justice, equity, and structural harmony (positive peace); and Institutional Theory (North, 1990), which explains how formal and informal institutions influence the behavior, governance, and sustainability of peace. Drawing on these theories, this chapter not only

examines the effectiveness of conflict resolution strategies but also examines how institutional weaknesses, governance deficits, and societal resilience interact to shape peace outcomes in Goma.

Finally, this chapter provides an integrated understanding of how local, national, and regional actors respond to conflict dynamics, highlighting the progress made and the ongoing gaps that hinder sustainable peace. The presentation and discussion of the findings therefore serve as a critical bridge between empirical realities and theoretical analysis, and form the basis for concluding recommendations in Chapter Five.

**4.1 Demographic and Institutional Profile of Respondents**

The study involved a total of thirty-one interviewees representing government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious institutions, community leaders, and internally displaced persons in Goma. Table 4.1 provides a summary of respondent categories and representation.

Category of Respondent	Number of Participants
Government officials and security representatives (FARDC, local administration)	6
NGO and humanitarian workers (MONUSCO, NRC, IRC, MSF)	9
Fait-based and community leaders	5
Civil Society representative and peace committees	6
Internally displaced persons and peace committees	5

Table 4.1 indicates that the study incorporated a diverse range of respondents, ensuring balanced representation across institutional and community actors.

## **4.2 Presentation of Results According to Research Objectives**

### **4.2.1 Current strategies used to reduce the recurrence of conflicts in Goma.**

Interviewees highlighted four main strategies currently being used to reduce the recurrence of conflict in Goma: (a) military and security interventions; (b) diplomatic mediation; (c) community peacebuilding and dialogue; and (d) socio-economic reintegration programmes. Military operations led by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), often supported by international actors such as MONUSCO and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), were repeatedly described as essential for rapid stabilization. These operations, while effective in preventing rebel incursions and reducing major violence, were seen as short-term solutions. As one government official put it, “Without military intervention, rebel groups could take Goma, but the military alone cannot bring peace,” emphasizing the limits of power in addressing the root causes of the war.

In contrast, community-based strategies were consistently identified as sustainable and effective in the long term. Efforts such as baraza councils’ forums for cultural dialogue, church-led reconciliation programs, and local peace education efforts were frequently cited by respondents for their ability to rebuild trust, foster understanding, and heal fractured social networks. These efforts often provide participatory spaces where grievances can be aired and discussed, enabling local actors to participate fully in the peace process. In addition, socio-economic inclusion programs, including skills training, microfinance projects, and assistance to former combatants, were highlighted as essential in addressing the structural weaknesses that fuel the cycle of violence, such as poverty, unemployment, and marginalization.

These findings strongly reflect Burton's (1990) theoretical framework, which argues that sustainable peace depends on addressing basic human needs rather than suppressing overt violence. Military and diplomatic interventions, while essential for immediate security, are insufficient in isolation; long-term stability requires strategies that promote social cohesion, economic opportunity, and participatory governance. The combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches in Goma illustrates a complex, multi-layered nature of conflict resolution, emphasizing that lasting peace is as much a product of community engagement as it is of formal security systems.

#### **4.2.2 The effectiveness of existing conflict reduction strategies in promoting sustainable peace.**

##### 4.2.6 Regional and International Engagement

The role of regional and international actors in the Goma peace efforts elicited mixed views among interviewees. While many acknowledged the positive contributions of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) in providing temporary stability through peacekeeping forces, others expressed doubts about the intent and effectiveness of these interventions. Interviewees appreciated that the regional forces helped deter armed groups and restore temporary stability in strategic areas around Goma, but they also expressed concerns about competing political and economic interests among neighboring states. As one community leader observed, "Some neighbors come with flags of peace but they carry guns under the table," capturing the widespread distrust of some external actors perceived to have influence under the guise of peace operations.

These findings highlight the paradox of regional cooperation in Eastern DRC: while cooperation between regional and international organizations is essential for maintaining security and diplomatic pressure, the lack of transparency and mutual accountability often undermines their credibility and

long-term impact. This finding is consistent with Institutional Theory, particularly North's (1990) argument that weak institutional arrangements and informal power dynamics can reproduce existing conflict structures rather than dismantle them. In this context, genuine peacebuilding requires not only coordinated regional action but also robust governance structures that ensure accountability, shared interests, and respect for local ownership of the peace process.

Most authors agreed that military intervention, while necessary for providing immediate security and preventing the advance of insurgents, provided only temporary relief and failed to address the structural and socio-political drivers of conflict. Diplomatic efforts under initiatives such as the Luanda and Bujumbura processes were acknowledged for creating important platforms for dialogue and negotiation between the conflicting parties. However, respondents criticized these processes for weak implementation, lack of monitoring, and insufficient engagement with local communities. As one responded, "Ceasefire agreements have been signed in Angola, but in Goma the bullets keep flying," highlighting the disconnect between high-level agreements and the realities on the ground.

In contrast, community-led peacebuilding efforts such as local reconciliation councils, interfaith mediation, and peace education programs were consistently cited as having more lasting results. These programs foster trust, encourage dialogue, and directly address grievances within communities, allowing people to participate fully in rebuilding social cohesion. Such views highlight Galtung's (1969) distinction between negative and positive peace: while military and diplomatic interventions can suppress violence (negative peace), sustainable stability depends on the creation of positive peace, which is based on social justice, equity, and trust. The findings emphasize that long-term peace in Goma cannot be achieved by force or diplomacy alone; it requires a holistic approach that includes security, political dialogue, and community empowerment.

Nearly all respondents emphasized the importance of grassroots programs in maintaining peace in Goma. Local mediation committees, women's peace groups, and youth associations were frequently described as the backbone of reconciliation efforts, often working where formal institutions struggle to reach. A female interviewee from a religious organization explained, "Women speak up in all communities even when men are fighting; they rebuild trust," highlighting the unique ability of local actors to bridge divisions and foster dialogue in fragile contexts. Despite facing severe resource constraints, these programs create participatory spaces where grievances can be addressed, social bonds restored, and collective agency strengthened. This emphasis on local efforts aligns closely with Lederach's (1997) peace building framework, which emphasizes the importance of ethical considerations, cultural roots, and the agency of local actors in conflict transformation. By drawing on indigenous knowledge, social networks, and community norms, grassroots programs contribute not only to immediate reconciliation but also to the long-term development of social cohesion, trust, and resilience. Such findings suggest that lasting peace in Goma is not simply the product of external intervention but emerges through the sustained engagement and empowerment of the communities themselves.

#### **4.2.3 The institutional and community challenges that affect the implementation of these strategies.**

The research findings reveal a complex network of actors engaged in peacemaking efforts in Goma, including the Congolese government, MONUSCO, the African Union (AU), the East African Community (EAC), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Interviewees emphasized that local religious organizations and civil society groups play a particularly important role in mediation, often bridging the gap between communities and official peace actors. As one local leader noted, "When our priests speak, people

listen more than when foreign missions do,” highlighting the unique legitimacy and trust that indigenous institutions can command in post-conflict settings. Regional organizations, on the other hand, contribute primarily through diplomatic engagement, applying political pressure, and facilitating dialogue between state and non-state actors. Despite the diversity and commitment of these actors, interviewees repeatedly noted challenges related to coordination, overlapping mandates, and inconsistent communication, which often limited the overall effectiveness of peace initiatives. For example, multiple NGOs working in the same region sometimes duplicated programs or pursued conflicting agendas, while regional organizations frequently promoted policies that were not well-connected to local realities. This study reflects North’s (1990) theoretical perspective that institutional weaknesses and misaligned governance structures can undermine collective outcomes, even when actors share common goals. In essence, while the multiplicity of stakeholders in Goma brings resources, expertise, and legitimacy, the absence of an integrated strategy and effective collaboration remains a major obstacle to sustainable peace.

Interviewees identified a number of ongoing challenges that continue to undermine conflict reduction efforts in Goma. Chief among these are low and inconsistent funding, widespread corruption, political interference, and weak institutional coordination across government and non-government actors. Many interviewees emphasized that peace initiatives are often underfunded or rely on short-term donor rotations, which undermines program sustainability and reduces long-term impact. Corruption within local governance structures increasingly erodes public trust and diverts resources intended to stabilize communities. Political interference, particularly the use of peace programs for ethnic or tribal interests, was also cited as a major obstacle to impartial and inclusive peacebuilding.

A recurring theme in the interviews was the deep-rooted distrust between government institutions and civil society actors. Interviewees noted that while participatory mechanisms exist in theory, they often

break down in practice due to competing priorities, lack of transparency, and the pursuit of individual organizational agendas. As one NGO interviewee observed, “We plan together on paper, but in practice, each party pursues its own agenda,” illustrating the fragmentation that undermines joint peace efforts. These trends are consistent with the concept of institutional isomorphism described by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), in which organizations adopt formal structures and similar rhetoric to appear legitimate, but fail to establish true coordination or shared accountability. As a result, peacebuilding in Goma often becomes a patchwork of isolated initiatives rather than a coherent framework of collective action. The findings highlight the need for robust institutional frameworks, better accountability mechanisms, and sustained dialogue between government authorities, civil society, and international partners. Only through genuine partnership and transparent governance can peacebuilding efforts overcome systemic inefficiency and achieve lasting results.

#### **4.2.3.1 Humanitarian and Displacement Trends**

Displacement data from agency sources (CCCM, OCHA, 2025) indicate that over 1.15 million people were displaced, while approximately 2.06 million returnees were recorded over the 18-month period. Displacement was concentrated in the Masisi, Rutshuru, and Nyiragongo regions, reflecting areas of conflict and geographic instability. Humanitarian actors reported significant challenges in coordination between formal camps and informal settlements, resulting in gaps in service delivery, protection, and aid distribution. As one UN official observed, “We have two systems that are not talking,” highlighting the inefficiencies in functioning that exacerbate the vulnerability of displaced people.

These patterns of displacement reflect the cyclical nature of conflict in Eastern DRC, where frequent violent incidents trigger population movements and hamper socio-economic recovery. The model is consistent with Galtung’s (1969) concept of negative peace, in which the absence of direct violence

does not necessarily translate into long-term stability or resolution of structural grievances. Without addressing the underlying causes of displacement, such as land disputes, insecurity, and weak local governance, temporary resettlement or cessation of hostilities is unlikely to break the cycle of recurrent conflict. This emphasizes the need to integrate humanitarian responses with comprehensive conflict reduction strategies that combine security, governance, and social reconciliation.

#### **4.2.4 Sustainable approaches to prevent the recurrence of conflicts in Goma.**

Interviewees proposed a comprehensive set of strategies aimed at strengthening sustainable peace in Goma. Key recommendations included strengthening governance structures, promoting inclusive dialogue across all social groups, empowering youth and women as agents of change, and enhancing transparency and accountability in regional cooperation. A recurring theme was the integration of community-led peacebuilding initiatives with broader institutional reforms, ensuring that local voices are not marginalized in decision-making processes. As one civil society representative emphasized, “Peace comes when the government listens to the people, not just the generals,” highlighting the critical importance of participatory governance in breaking the cycle of conflict.

These perspectives align closely with Lederach’s (1997) concept of bottom-up peacebuilding, which emphasizes the need to integrate social, political, and even spiritual dimensions in conflict transformation. By combining grassroots engagement with institutional accountability and regional cooperation, sustainable peace is not simply conceived as the absence of violence but as the active development of trust, equity, and social cohesion. The recommendations of the engagement highlight that lasting stability in Goma requires multi-layered interventions that integrate formal and informal structures, empower marginalized groups, and create robust mechanisms for dialogue and reconciliation.

### **4.3 Thematic Analysis and Discussion**

Thematic analysis shows that achieving sustainable peace in Goma depends critically on a combination of community ownership, robust institutional reform, and coordinated regional cooperation. Grassroots initiatives such as local reconciliation committees, women's peace groups, and youth associations show remarkable resilience and the capacity to rebuild social trust, but often operate without adequate structural support or resources. At the same time, institutional weaknesses, weak governance, and overlapping powers contribute to perpetuating the cycle of violence, while external intervention, while sometimes beneficial, can undermine accountability and undermine domestic legitimacy.

Combining these findings with theoretical perspectives emphasizes the need for a hybrid peacebuilding model in which domestic and institutional capacities complement each other. As Burton (1990) argues, addressing basic human needs is essential for lasting conflict resolution; North (1990) highlights the importance of strong and transparent institutions to prevent the reproduction of conflict patterns; and Lederach (1997) emphasizes the importance of cultural, bottom-up engagement in promoting long-term reconciliation. Together, this knowledge suggests that sustainable peace in Goma cannot rely solely on military deterrence, diplomatic negotiations, or external assistance; it requires a coordinated approach that combines community-driven initiatives, good governance, and responsible regional cooperation to address immediate security concerns and the root causes of conflict.

### **4.4 Summary of Key Findings**

The key findings from this study reveal five interrelated factors shaping peace and conflict reduction in Goma. First, community-based initiatives such as local mediation forums, women's peace groups,

and faith-based reconciliation programs are emerging as credible and effective ways to restore social cohesion and rebuild local trust. Second, while military and diplomatic interventions provide short-term stability and prevent violence, their impact remains temporary and limited in addressing the structural causes of conflict. Third, persistent governance weaknesses, institutional fragmentation, and poor coordination between state and non-state actors undermine the sustainability of peace efforts. Fourth, regional politics and transnational interests continue to act as destabilizing forces, disrupting local and national peacebuilding agendas. Finally, integrating humanitarian response approaches with long-term development and governance reforms offers a more comprehensive path toward lasting peace.

These findings are closely aligned with Conflict Resolution and Institutional theories. Conflict Resolution theory emphasizes the importance of addressing basic human and social needs in achieving positive peace (Burton, 1990; Galtung, 1969), while Institutional theory emphasizes the role of systems of good governance, transparency, and accountability in maintaining stability (North, 1990). Together, they emphasize that sustainable peace in Goma depends on the interaction between human-centered approaches and institutional capacity that links the empowerment of local communities with the strengthening of formal structures and regional cooperation.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The key findings from this study reveal five interrelated factors shaping peace and conflict reduction in Goma. First, community-based initiatives such as local mediation forums, women's peace groups, and faith-based reconciliation programs emerge as credible and effective ways to restore social cohesion and rebuild local trust. Second, while military and diplomatic interventions provide short-term stability and deterrence, their impact remains temporary and limited in addressing the structural causes of conflict. Third, persistent governance weaknesses, institutional fragmentation, and poor

coordination between state and non-state actors undermine the sustainability of peace efforts. Fourth, regional politics and transnational interests continue to act as destabilizing forces, disrupting domestic and national peacebuilding agendas. Finally, integrating humanitarian response approaches with long-term development and governance reforms offers a more comprehensive path toward lasting peace.

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## CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter synthesizes the key findings of the study titled “Strategies to Mitigate the Recurrence of Conflict in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, in Goma.” It consolidates the results presented in Chapter Four, draws overarching conclusions, and proposes practical recommendations aimed at strengthening peacebuilding and conflict mitigation efforts in Goma and across the broader Eastern DRC. The discussion moves beyond description to interpretation connecting empirical findings to theoretical perspectives and to the wider peace and security context in the Great Lakes Region. In doing so, this chapter emphasizes how the lessons drawn from Goma’s conflict dynamics can inform both local and regional policy frameworks for sustainable peace.

The chapter is organized around three main components: a concise summary of the study and its key findings, analytical conclusions that tie the results to the guiding theories, and comprehensive recommendations addressing policy, institutional, and community dimensions of peacebuilding. The conclusions highlight the interplay between socio-political, economic, and institutional factors that perpetuate conflict recurrence, while the recommendations provide actionable pathways to bridge the persistent gap between short-term stabilization and long-term peace consolidation.

The discussion is grounded in four interrelated theoretical perspectives that offer complementary explanations of peace and conflict. Burton’s (1990) Conflict Resolution Theory underscores the idea that conflict endures when basic human needs such as identity, recognition, and security remain unmet, and that sustainable peace requires structural change rather than superficial compromise. Galtung’s (1969) Positive Peace Model differentiates between the absence of direct violence (negative peace) and the presence of justice, equity, and cooperative social relations (positive peace),

asserting that peacebuilding must dismantle structural and cultural violence. North's (1990) Institutional Theory provides an analytical lens for understanding how weak governance, poor coordination, and fragile institutions perpetuate instability and limit the effectiveness of interventions. Finally, Lederach's (1997) peacebuilding framework introduces the concept of "relational peace," advocating for the transformation of relationships, reconciliation, and inclusive participation from the grassroots level upward.

Together, these frameworks illuminate the central dissertation of this study: that peace in Goma cannot be achieved through military or externally driven efforts alone but must be built through a combination of robust institutions, responsive governance, and community-centered reconciliation processes. Sustainable peace depends not only on security and ceasefire agreements but also on restoring trust, promoting justice, and empowering local actors to take ownership of the peace agenda. Consequently, this chapter positions Goma's experience as both a challenge and an opportunity demonstrating that the path to durable peace in the DRC lies in aligning national, local, and regional strategies within a coherent, inclusive, and institutionally grounded framework.

## **5.1 Research Summary**

The study examined strategies aimed at reducing the recurrence of conflict in Goma, in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a region that has endured a long-term cycle of violence despite decades of local, national, and international intervention. The ongoing insecurity in the region reflects a complex web of historical grievances, political marginalization, weak governance, and competition over natural resources. Against this backdrop, the study sought to assess the effectiveness of existing conflict management strategies, identify challenges that hinder their success, and propose sustainable approaches to fostering lasting peace.

A qualitative research design was adopted to capture the depth and complexity of the peacebuilding experience in Goma. Data were collected from thirty-one authors from a variety of institutions, including government agencies, humanitarian organizations, civil society networks, and faith-based institutions. This diversity ensured a balanced representation of official and grassroots perspectives. In addition, secondary data were reviewed from key institutional reports such as MONUSCO, OCHA, CCCM, and SADC, providing a multifaceted understanding of conflict reduction efforts. The data were thematically analyzed, allowing for the identification of patterns and linkages between governance weaknesses, regional dynamics, and community resilience mechanisms.

The findings revealed that multiple military, diplomatic, and social approaches are being used simultaneously to manage and control the conflict in Goma. Military and security interventions, primarily led by the FARDC in partnership with MONUSCO and SADC, have been instrumental in providing short-term stability and protecting civilians in vulnerable areas. However, these interventions were seen as reactive and unsustainable, often failing to address the underlying structural causes of violence such as poverty, inequality, and marginalization. Similarly, diplomatic efforts through the Luanda, Bujumbura, and Nairobi peace processes created platforms for dialogue but lacked effective mechanisms for implementation and monitoring.

In contrast, community-led peacebuilding initiatives including local dialogue councils (barza), interfaith reconciliation meetings, women's peace groups, and youth empowerment programs emerged as more credible and contextually appropriate ways to promote social cohesion. These initiatives were credited with promoting reconciliation, healing, and coexistence among divided communities. However, they remain chronically underfunded, undervalued, and poorly integrated into formal policy frameworks, hindering their long-term impact.

A key theme that emerged from the findings is the weakness of institutions at the local and national levels. Weak governance structures, corruption, and poor coordination between government agencies, humanitarian actors, and regional organizations have perpetuated inefficiency and mistrust. Interviewees repeatedly emphasized that overlapping mandates among peace stakeholders contribute to duplication of effort and fragmented implementation. Regional interference, particularly from neighboring states involved in mining and security dynamics, was also identified as a significant destabilizing factor that undermines peace processes.

Drawing on the theoretical foundations of Burton's (1990) Conflict Resolution Theory, the study concludes that the persistence of conflict in Goma stems from a failure to address basic human needs for identity, recognition, and participation. Galtung's (1969) Positive Peace Framework emphasizes the idea that peace cannot be sustained by simply ending violence but must involve the establishment of equitable social and political systems that promote justice and inclusion. North's (1990) Institutional Theory further explains that the absence of strong, accountable institutions hinders the implementation of the rule of law and perpetuates instability. Meanwhile, Lederach's (1997) peacebuilding framework highlights the importance of relational change and internal ownership in peace processes.

In summary, the study concludes that reducing persistent conflict in Goma requires a hybrid peacebuilding approach that combines top-down institutional reform with bottom-up community ownership. Effective coordination among local, national, and regional actors supported by transparent governance and inclusive dialogue emerges as the foundation for achieving lasting peace. The findings emphasize that true stability in Goma cannot be imported or imposed from outside but must come from a partnership of strong institutions, responsive leadership, and empowered communities committed to transforming structures of violence into systems of cooperation and justice.

## **5.2 Summary of Key Findings by Objective**

### **5.2.1 Current Conflict Resolution Responses**

Four main categories of conflict resolution responses were identified in Goma: (1) military and security interventions led by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and supported by the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); (2) regional diplomatic initiatives such as the Luanda, Bujumbura, and Nairobi processes; (3) community-based peacebuilding initiatives including councils, interfaith dialogue, and local reconciliation programs; and (4) socio-economic integration projects targeting ex-combatants and displaced persons. These approaches reflect the complex and multi-layered nature of peacebuilding in Eastern DRC, where local realities intersect with national and regional political dynamics.

Military and security measures while necessary to protect civilians and contain armed groups were widely viewed by interviewees as reactive and short-term. FARDC operations and MONUSCO patrols have succeeded in restoring temporary stability in some areas; however, these interventions often fail to address the underlying drivers of violence, such as competition over resources, corruption, and marginalization. One government interviewee stated that “without security, development is impossible, but the military alone cannot bring peace.” This view reflects a widespread recognition that while coercive measures can quell violence, they rarely resolve the socio-economic grievances that fuel conflict. Regional diplomacy, facilitated through the Luanda and Bujumbura mechanisms, has focused on dialogue between the DRC and neighboring states, particularly Rwanda and Uganda, whose involvement in the instability in eastern Congo remains controversial. These diplomatic efforts have contributed to reducing tensions between nations and creating avenues for dialogue, but interviewees noted that such processes are often driven by elites

and disconnected from the realities of the lives of affected communities. The limited implementation of agreements signed under these mechanisms highlights the gap between political rhetoric and practical change on the ground. In contrast, community-level peacebuilding initiatives have emerged as more credible and effective means of resolving conflicts. Local dialogue forums (barza), church-led reconciliation activities, and civil society networks have been instrumental in promoting social cohesion, mediating internal conflicts, and rebuilding trust among divided ethnic groups. Interviewees repeatedly emphasized that these grassroots efforts are more community-based because they are based on shared cultural norms, local leadership, and ethical legitimacy. A community leader in Goma said, “People listen to reconciliation when it comes from their neighbors and priests, not from politicians far away.”

In addition, socio-economic reintegration programs targeting youth and former combatants were identified as important in reducing the incentives for individuals to rejoin armed groups. Efforts that focus on skills training, livelihood restoration, and access to education contribute not only to stability but also to dignity and self-reliance essential ingredients for sustainable peace. However, these programs have often been criticized for being poorly funded and poorly monitored, resulting in limited long-term impact.

In brief, the research findings demonstrate that community-based peacebuilding processes hold the greatest potential for conflict reduction because they foster participation, trust, and ownership elements that cannot be externalized. This study is consistent with Burton’s (1990) Conflict Resolution Theory, which states that lasting peace can only be achieved when interventions address the basic human needs that fuel conflict, such as identity, security, participation, and recognition. Unlike military and diplomatic approaches that tend to treat symptoms, community-based programs

directly address the structural and psychological roots of violence, thereby laying the foundation for genuine reconciliation and social change.

### **5.2.2 Effectiveness of Strategies Implemented**

The effectiveness of the various conflict response strategies implemented in Goma varied greatly across the different types of interventions and institutional actors. Military and diplomatic measures, while helpful in controlling violence and providing temporary security, have not been sufficient to prevent the recurrence of conflict. FARDC operations, supported by MONUSCO and SADC, have succeeded in recovering strategic areas and securing key urban centers, however, interviewees repeatedly stressed that these interventions did not address the structural drivers of instability such as corruption, political marginalization, and socio-economic exclusion. One humanitarian interviewee stated, “Every attack brings stability for a few months, but shortly after, another group emerges. The roots of the war are still here.” This recurring pattern underscores that while security operations are essential for stability, they rarely translate into sustainable peace.

Diplomatic cooperation, including the Luanda, Nairobi, and Bujumbura processes, has played a key role in facilitating dialogue between the conflicting parties and fostering regional cooperation. These efforts have contributed to a short-term reduction in tensions between the DRC and neighboring countries, particularly Rwanda and Uganda. However, their overall impact remains limited due to inconsistent political will, weak implementation mechanisms, and the exclusion of local voices from the negotiating table. As one local leader put it, “Agreements signed abroad do not always reach the people who live in war every day.” This disconnect between elite diplomacy and the realities of society has undermined the sustainability of peace agreements and undermined local confidence in regional arrangements. In contrast, community-based peacebuilding approaches including village-level dialogue forums, church-led reconciliation efforts, youth engagement programs, and women’s

peace networks have demonstrated a higher level of legitimacy, inclusiveness, and acceptance among the community. These efforts operate on the principles of trust, cultural knowledge, and mutual responsibility, which are deeply rooted in the local population. Interviewees emphasized that community actors often succeed in mediating inter-ethnic and land-related conflicts that formal institutions fail to resolve. Their success stems from fostering horizontal relationships of cooperation rather than vertical imposition of authority. This people-centered approach enhances a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for peace outcomes. Galtung's (1969) concept of Positive Peace provides a useful lens for understanding this difference in effectiveness. While military and diplomatic interventions primarily produce negative peace, the mere absence of violence-based strategies in the community promotes positive peace, characterized by justice, equity, and social healing. In the context of Goma, these local efforts go beyond ceasefires to address emotional trauma, rebuild relationships, and promote coexistence in divided communities. As one religious interviewee put it, "We don't just stop people from fighting; we teach them to live together again." This illustrates how peacebuilding is sustainable when it changes the attitudes and social structures that perpetuate violence.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that the most effective interventions are those that combine top-down stabilization mechanisms with bottom-up reconciliation processes. Security and diplomacy create the space for peace, but community engagement gives peace its substance and durability. The experience in Goma reaffirms Galtung's theoretical position that enduring peace depends not only on silencing the guns, but also on repairing relationships, redistributing power, and ensuring justice within the social system.

### 5.2.3 Implementation Challenges

Interviewees identified a number of ongoing and interrelated challenges that continue to undermine the implementation and long-term success of conflict reduction strategies in Goma. These challenges are embedded in the socio-political and institutional framework in the region and reflect structural weaknesses and contextual complexity.

A key issue raised by participants was systemic corruption and weak governance, which has eroded public trust and diverted resources intended for peacebuilding and development. Many interviewees expressed concern about the misuse of funds and lack of accountability in local and national institutions. One civil society representative stated, “Peace cannot be built when corruption eats away at funds intended for rebuilding society.” Corruption has not only undermined the credibility of government institutions but has also eroded donor confidence and reduced the flow of international assistance to local initiatives.

The second major challenge concerns limited funding and logistical capacity, particularly for civil society organizations that play a key role in mediation, reconciliation, and trauma healing. Many grassroots programs operate with little or no external support, relying on volunteers and local donations. As one NGO respondent put it, “We have faith in people but it is not the way to sustain our work.” This low funding limits the viability and sustainability of local peacebuilding programs, leaving them dependent on short-term project cycles and donor priorities rather than the long-term needs of communities. Weak institutional coordination emerged as another key obstacle to effective implementation. The coexistence of multiple actors, government agencies, MONUSCO, NGOs, church networks, and regional organizations has created a crowded peacebuilding environment marked by duplication, competition, and fragmented interventions. Several participants described the peace sector as “a collection of good intentions without coordination.” The lack of clear channels of

communication and joint planning mechanisms between actors often leads to inefficiency, conflicting messages, and reduced impact on the ground.

The problem of regional interference exacerbates these challenges. Neighboring states such as Rwanda and Uganda were repeatedly cited as having vested interests in the dynamics of the conflict in Eastern DRC, particularly through political influence and control over mineral resources. Interviewees argued that the continued involvement of foreign-backed armed groups undermines national authority and undermines peace efforts. This regional dimension transforms what may appear to be a local conflict into an international security dilemma, making national solutions inadequate.

Furthermore, political fragmentation and elite manipulation of local peace initiatives hinder their effectiveness. Peace processes are often driven by political actors who use them to consolidate power or suppress opposition, rather than to genuinely seek reconciliation. This politics undermines community ownership and fosters distrust among citizens, many of whom see peacebuilding as an externally driven or elite-controlled enterprise.

These interconnected challenges are best understood through the lens of Institutional Theory (North, 1990), which argues that weak or dysfunctional institutions fail to establish the formal and informal “rules of the game” needed for stability and cooperation. In the context of Goma, institutional weaknesses manifest themselves in weak law enforcement, weak accountability mechanisms, and the absence of reliable governance systems that can collectively manage conflicts. Without strong institutions to enforce agreements, coordinate actions, and ensure equitable distribution of resources, peace efforts remain fragmented and unsustainable.

Essentially, the findings suggest that the recurrence of conflict in Goma is not just a security issue but a governance problem. Building peace thus requires changing the institutional environment that

sustains cycles of violence to enhance transparency, promote coordination among actors, and strengthen accountability at all levels of society. Only through credible and capable institutions can peacebuilding initiatives move beyond emergency responses toward a coherent, long-term strategy for stability and justice.

#### **5.2.4 Recommended Strategies for Sustainable Peace**

Participants and institutional reports alike emphasized the urgent need to integrate top-down and bottom-up peacebuilding approaches to create a coherent and inclusive framework for sustainable peace in Goma. The consensus among interviewees was that no single intervention whether military, diplomatic, or community can independently address the complexity of the conflict in Eastern DRC. Instead, effective and lasting peace requires a collaborative interaction of formal government institutions, regional actors, and grassroots structures to ensure that peacebuilding efforts are legitimate and locally owned.

A recurring recommendation was the strengthening of governance and institutional accountability systems. Interviewees emphasized that corruption, weak leadership, and a weak state presence in rural areas continue to fuel mistrust and create an enabling environment for the mobilization of weapons. Strengthening local administrative capacity, reforming the security sector, and implementing transparency in the management of public finances were identified as key priorities. These measures, according to several government and non-governmental representatives, could restore trust between citizens and the government, and reduce the perception that governance structures serve the interests of elites rather than the broader population.

Another key theme that emerged from community participants and institutional reports was the importance of inclusive dialogue and participatory decision-making. Respondents emphasized that

sustainable peace cannot be imposed from above but must involve all social categories especially women, youth, traditional leaders, and displaced people who are often excluded from formal dialogue platforms. One female respondent said, “If women are not part of the dialogue, then half of the community’s voice is missing.” Establishing permanent dialogue spaces at the local and regional levels, such as peace forums and reconciliation committees, would establish channels of communication between citizens, authorities, and peace actors.

The empowerment of youth and women also featured prominently in the recommendations. Many interviewees identified youth unemployment, inactivity, and marginalization as major contributors to the cycle of violence and recruitment of armed groups. They suggested that vocational training, entrepreneurship programs, and civic education programs targeting youth could transform them from criminals to potential agents of peace. Similarly, empowering women through leadership training, funding for peace initiatives, and protection from gender-based violence were seen as essential for fostering inclusive and resilient societies. Interviewees further emphasized regional transparency and cooperation as a prerequisite for sustainable peace. They called for greater accountability among neighboring states regarding cross-border support for armed groups, illicit mineral trafficking, and refugee management. Strengthening regional mechanisms under the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the East African Community (EAC), and the African Union (AU) was recommended to coordinate peace efforts, share intelligence, and monitor compliance with peace agreements. A civil society leader summed up this sentiment by saying, “As long as our borders remain rigid and our neighbors interfere, peace will remain fragile.”

Furthermore, interviewees and institutional reports highlighted the importance of linking humanitarian assistance with long-term development, following the Humanitarian Development Peace (HDP) Nexus approach. This integration was to ensure that emergency relief efforts such as

food assistance and shelter provision are complemented by livelihood support, education, and community rehabilitation programs that address the root causes of displacement and vulnerability.

These proposed strategies strongly reflect Lederach's (1997) framework for peacebuilding, which views peace as a relational process that connects three interconnected levels of society: the upper echelons (political and military elites), the middle echelons (civil society and local institutions), and the grassroots (ordinary citizens). Lederach argues that lasting reconciliation and conflict transformation only emerge when these levels are connected through shared vision, trust, and inclusive participation. The recommendations from this study reflect this logic precisely calling for structural reform at the top, institutional coordination at the center, and grassroots empowerment.

Essentially, sustainable peace in Goma requires a multifaceted approach that balances national and local priorities, integrates social and institutional dimensions, and aligns domestic reforms with regional diplomacy. This approach should build on the domestic peace infrastructure that already exists while addressing governance gaps and ensuring transparency in regional dialogue. By adopting this multi-level and relational approach, the DRC and its partners can transform peacebuilding from a series of fragmented projects to a comprehensive and lasting system of stability, justice, and social cohesion.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This study concludes that the recurrence of conflict in Goma is due to a combination of weak institutional frameworks, unmet human needs, and poorly coordinated peace efforts at the national and regional levels. The study findings indicate that while multiple military, diplomatic, and humanitarian interventions have contributed to a temporary reduction in violence, they have failed to address the underlying structural and relational causes of instability. The persistence of armed groups,

frequent displacement, and the breakdown of governance reflect a peacebuilding architecture that remains fragmented and externally driven, with little ownership by local communities. Sustainable peace in Goma, therefore, was dependent not only on stabilizing the areas but also on transforming governance systems, empowering local actors, and ensuring transparent and accountable regional engagement.

The study reaffirms Burton's (1990) Conflict Resolution Theory, which emphasizes that conflicts persist when basic human needs such as security, identity, participation, and recognition remain unmet. In Goma, the continued marginalization of youth, the marginalization of women, and the neglect of local voices in decision-making processes have perpetuated exclusion and resentment, creating fertile ground for the growth of violence. Burton's framework emphasizes that peace cannot be imposed by force or constraint; it must be developed through inclusive structures that recognize and meet these essential needs.

Galtung's (1969) Positive Peace Model provides further insight into the Goma situation by emphasizing that peace is not simply the absence of physical violence (negative peace), but the presence of justice, equality, and social harmony (positive peace). The temporary stability achieved through ceasefires or military operations in Eastern DRC represents only negative peace and an unstable cessation of hostilities. Lasting peace requires dismantling the structures of exploitation and inequality that perpetuate violence. The findings of the study, particularly the success of community reconciliation forums and interfaith dialogue, exemplify Galtung's argument that positive peace results from changes in social relations and the promotion of equality and dignity.

From an Institutional Theory perspective (North, 1990), the study highlights how weak institutions of governance and overlapping powers have hindered the effectiveness of peacebuilding. Weak institutional capacity, poor accountability, and corruption have undermined coordination between the

government, MONUSCO, and regional partners. Goma's institutions have struggled to establish robust laws and enforcement mechanisms that the North describes as essential for building trust, predictability, and cooperation. Strengthening these institutions is essential to breaking the cycle of conflict recurrence. Without legitimate and functioning governance structures, peace interventions risk remaining ad hoc, donor-driven, and unsustainable. Lederach's (1997) peacebuilding framework provides a lens that unifies the findings of this study. Lederach emphasizes that sustainable peace requires relational change to build trust across social divisions and bridge the gap between leadership, middle-level actors, and grassroots communities. The study data highlights this principle: respondents consistently identified community-based initiatives as more credible and transformative than externally-driven programs. True peace in Goma was dependent on building networks of trust and reconciliation that connect official institutions with the realities of ordinary citizens' lives.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives highlight that a path to lasting peace in Goma must be accompanied by institutional reform and human-centered approaches. Institutions provide structure and legitimacy for governance, while community engagement ensures inclusiveness and authenticity in peace processes. Neither approach can succeed in isolation. Sustainable peace therefore demands a hybrid approach to peacebuilding that encompasses structural change, social justice, and relational healing.

Ultimately, this study concludes that the future of peace in Eastern DRC depends on a shared commitment among local, national, and regional actors to move from reactive conflict management toward development-oriented, participatory, and inclusive peacebuilding. Only through such a holistic and inclusive approach can Goma move beyond cycles of conflict toward a future based on justice, dignity, and shared resilience.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the study and are formulated at the policy, institutional and community levels to promote an integrated approach to peacebuilding.

### **5.4.1 Policy Level Recommendations**

1. Strengthen governance systems through anti-corruption reforms, transparent resource management, and implementation of accountability mechanisms.
2. Align national peacebuilding efforts with the African Union's 'Silencing the Guns' initiative and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16.
3. Strengthen regional cooperation through structured diplomatic dialogues within SADC and EAC to address the movement of cross-border arms.
4. Develop national reconciliation policies that recognize local peace processes and traditional justice systems.
5. Integrate peacebuilding into national development plans to integrate humanitarian, security and economic objectives.

### **5.4.2 Institutional Level Recommendations**

1. Improve coordination among security actors (FARDC, MONUSCO, SADC) through joint planning and operational mechanisms.
2. Strengthen local NGOs and faith-based institutions through capacity building, funding, and participation in decision-making.
3. Establish a national early warning and rapid response system for conflict prevention.
4. Establish monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the implementation of peace agreements.

5. Invest in justice sector reform to rebuild public trust in law enforcement and judicial systems.

### **5.4.3 Community Level Recommendations**

1. Formalize community peace platforms (baraza) as permanent platforms for conflict resolution.
2. Promote youth employment and entrepreneurship to reduce the risk of recruitment into armed conflict.
3. Empower women's organizations in peace advocacy, reconciliation, and reconstruction efforts.
4. Expand civic and peace education curricula in schools to foster a culture of tolerance.
5. Support trauma healing and reconciliation programs through religious and psychological interventions.

## **5.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the entire study, summarizing the main findings, drawing conclusions, and outlining actionable recommendations aimed at strengthening conflict reduction and peacebuilding in Goma, Eastern DRC. It integrated evidence gathered from thirty-one authors and institutional reports, combining empirical research with theoretical perspectives to provide a coherent interpretation of conflict dynamics and pathways to sustainable peace.

The discussion emphasized that sustainable peace in Goma cannot be achieved through singular or isolated efforts. Instead, it requires a multifaceted and participatory strategy that combines grassroots participation, institutional reform, and regional cooperation. The study showed that while military and diplomatic initiatives contribute to temporary stability, they are lacking without social change

and governance accountability. Community-based efforts rooted in dialogue, reconciliation, and local ownership emerged as a credible and sustainable foundation for rebuilding trust and coexistence.

Key to the findings is the recognition that strengthening governance, promoting inclusion, and addressing structural inequalities are essential to preventing the recurrence of violence. The study reaffirmed that peace is not simply the absence of conflict but the presence of justice, equity, and participatory governance. Institutional transparency, equitable resource management, and citizen empowerment are therefore essential pillars of a sustainable peace architecture.

In theoretical terms, the chapter emphasized that the interaction between Burton's human needs theory, Galtung's positive peace framework, Northern institutional analysis, and Lederach's relational peacebuilding approach provides a broad framework for understanding and transforming the conflict in Goma. Together, these frameworks reveal that sustainable peace emerges when institutional strength is balanced with community empowerment and relational trust.

The insights gained from this study contribute significantly to scholarship and practice. For policymakers, the findings highlight the need to design inclusive, locally-based peace policies that bridge the gap between formal structures and social realities. For scholars, the study adds to a growing body of literature on inclusive peacebuilding in fragile states. For practitioners, it provides a roadmap for developing participatory, accountable, and context-sensitive peace interventions. Overall, this chapter and the entire dissertation confirm that transforming conflict into lasting peace in Eastern DRC requires more than ending hostilities; it demands building a socially just system where governance, equity, and reconciliation are mutually reinforcing. The recommendations presented here therefore provide a basis for future peacebuilding strategies, informed by empirical evidence and theoretical insights, to guide Goma and the wider Great Lakes region towards stability and sustainable development.

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# Appendix 1



AFRICA UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (AUREC)

P.O. Box 1320 Mutare, Zimbabwe, Off Nyanga Road, Old Mutare-Tel (+263-20) 60075/60026/61611 Fax: (+263 20) 61785 Website: www.africau.edu

Ref: AU3416/25

5 August, 2025

**OYA BASILWANGO CHANCELINE**

C/O Africa University  
Box 1320  
**MUTARE**

RE: **STRATEGIES TO MITIGATE THE RECURRENCE OF CONFLICT IN EASTERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO, IN GOMA**

Thank you for submitting the above-titled proposal to the Africa University Research Ethics Committee for review. Please be advised that AUREC has reviewed and approved your application to conduct the above research.

The approval is based on the following.

- a) Research proposal
  - **APPROVAL NUMBER** AUREC 3416/25  
This number should be used on all correspondence, consent forms, and appropriate documents
  - **AUREC MEETING DATE** NA
  - **APPROVAL DATE** August 5 2025
  - **EXPIRATION DATE** August 5, 2026
  - **TYPE OF MEETING:** Expedited  
After the expiration date, this research may only continue upon renewal. A progress report on a standard AUREC form should be submitted a month before the expiration date for renewal purposes.
  - **SERIOUS ADVERSE EVENTS** All serious problems concerning subject safety must be reported to AUREC within 3 working days on the standard AUREC form.
  - **MODIFICATIONS** Prior AUREC approval is required before implementing any changes in the proposal (including changes in the consent documents)
  - **TERMINATION OF STUDY** Upon termination of the study a report has to be submitted to AUREC.



Yours Faithfully

**MARY CHINZOU**  
**FOR CHAIRPERSON**  
**AFRICA UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

## Appendix 2



COLLEGE OF BUSINESS, PEACE, LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

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12/06/2025

Africa University Research Ethics Committee

**Ref: Approval for AUREC Proposal Submission**


Oya Basilwango has worked on the proposal and I can confirm that it is ready for review by your esteemed committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr A. Murwira  
Supervisor's Name

  
Supervisor's Signature

Dr T. Nyikadzino

  
-----

H.O.D's Name

H.O.D's Signature

## Appendix 3

République Démocratique du Congo

Goma, le 26 mai 2025

Province du Nord-Kivu



Division Provinciale de la Santé

Zone de santé de Goma

Téléphone : +243 998 624 891

E-mail : [bczgoma1@gmail.com](mailto:bczgoma1@gmail.com)

**Objet : Autorisation d'effectuer des recherches dans notre entité**

Par la présente, nous autorisons à Mademoiselle **OYA BASILWANGO Chanceline** étudiante à Africa University d'effectuer les recherches dans notre entité administrative dans le cadre de ces travaux de fin d'études. Nous sommes disposés à lui offrir tous ce dont elle aura besoin afin de bien mener ses recherches et d'accéder aux données dont elle aura besoin.

Cette autorisation est établie pour servir à qui de droit et pour toute fin utile.

Fait à Goma, le 26 mai 2025

Pour la Zone de santé de Goma

**Dr Jeannine MUHINDO MUHAWI**  
Médecin Chef de Zone



## Appendix 4

### Questionnaire / Interview Guide

#### A. PERSONAL DETAILS

Name:

Age:

Gender:

- Male
- Female

Position/Role:

Years of experience in conflict/Peacekeeping in Goma:

#### B. SECTION

1. What are the major conflict resolution strategies currently being implemented in Goma?

.....  
.....

2. What institutions or actors are being involved in these efforts?

.....  
.....

3. How would you describe your organization's role in conflict mitigation?

.....  
.....

4. In your opinion, to what extent have military interventions such as FARDC, MONUSCO, SADC and SAMIDRC been effective in restoring peace in Goma?

.....  
.....

5. To what extent have diplomatic initiatives example the Luanda and Bujumbura meetings, succeeded in reducing conflict?

.....  
.....

6. What evidence can you share of concrete improvements or setbacks from these strategies?

.....  
.....

7. Do community or local initiatives play a significant role in peacebuilding?

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.....  
.....

8. What challenges have been encountered in implementing conflict resolution strategies?

.....  
.....

9.To what extent does regional intervention (the involvement of neighboring countries) affect peace efforts?

.....  
.....

10. In your opinion, what strategies could be more effective in mitigating the recurrence of conflict in Goma?

.....  
.....

11. Would regional Organizations and Organizations need support to improve its impact on peacebuilding?

.....  
.....

FRENCH Version of the questions

A. RENSEIGNEMENTS PERSONNELS

Nom :

Âge :

Sexe :

• Homme

• Femme

Position/Rôle :

Nombre d'années d'expérience en conflit/maintien de la paix à Goma :

B. SECTION

1. Quelles sont les principales stratégies de résolution des conflits actuellement mises en œuvre à Goma ?

.....  
.....

2. Quelles institutions ou quels acteurs participent à ces efforts ?

.....  
.....

3. Comment décririez-vous le rôle de votre organisation dans l'atténuation des conflits ?

.....  
.....

4. Selon vous, dans quelle mesure les interventions militaires, telles que celles des FARDC, de la MONUSCO, de la SADC et de la SAMIDRC, ont-elles contribué efficacement au rétablissement de la paix à Goma ?

.....  
.....

5. Dans quelle mesure les initiatives diplomatiques, comme les réunions de Luanda et de Bujumbura, ont-elles permis de réduire le conflit ?

.....  
.....

6. Quels éléments pouvez-vous apporter quant aux améliorations ou aux revers concrets de ces stratégies ?

.....  
.....

7. Les initiatives communautaires ou locales jouent-elles un rôle significatif dans la consolidation de la paix ?

.....  
.....

8. Quels défis ont été rencontrés dans la mise en œuvre des stratégies de résolution des conflits ?

.....  
.....

9. Dans quelle mesure l'intervention régionale (l'implication des pays voisins) affecte-t-elle les efforts de paix ?

.....  
.....

10. Selon vous, quelles stratégies pourraient être plus efficaces pour atténuer la récurrence du conflit à Goma ?

.....  
.....

11. Les organisations régionales auraient-elles besoin d'un soutien pour améliorer leur impact sur la consolidation de la paix ?

.....  
.....