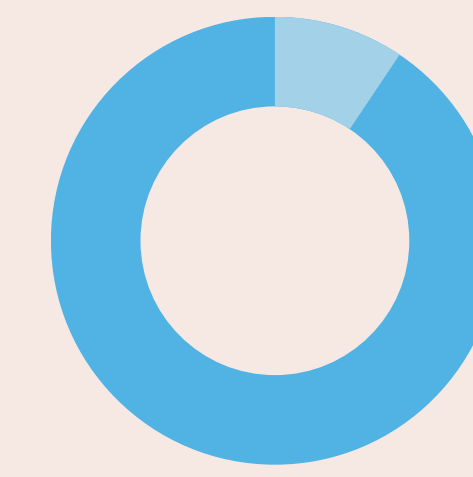


UNFULFILLED PROMISES: UNVEILING THE EU'S GENDER EQUALITY EFFORTS IN THE DRC

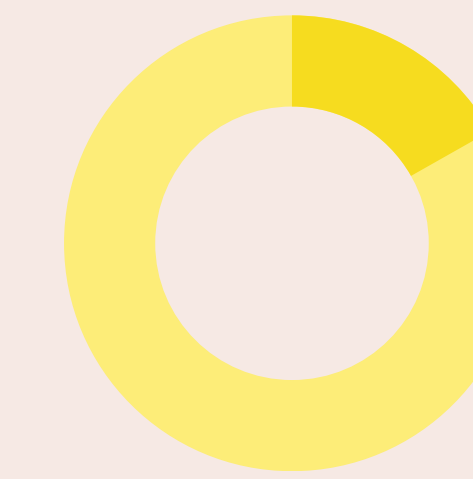
By Numi Ali, Henry Bogdanowitz, Fleur Jans, Ales Kováčik, Henri Runge, Conni Spanier
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WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE DRC?

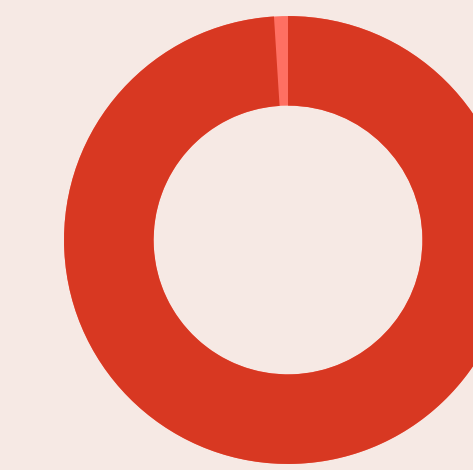
- 250 armed groups since 1996 (Adolpe, 2024)
- Increased cases and reports of sexual violence against forcibly displaced women & children
- Underrepresentation of women in the political sphere
- Rape used as a weapon of war (and has turned into a structural problem)
- In 2018, 7.6 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 were not attending school (UNICEF, n.d)
- Lack of methods to regularly monitor physical & sexual harassment (UN Women, n.d)



12.8%
of seats in Parliament held by women in 2022 (The World Bank, 2024)



16.8%
of women have completed a secondary education in 2024 (World Bank, 2024)



99%
rise in gender-based violence in DRC since Covid (Mendoza, 2020)

METHODOLOGY: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

- 1** United Nations Women, Peace & Security Agenda
 - No clear guidelines & limited use
- 2** Gender Action Plan (GAP) III
 - Not binding
 - Limited coordination & underfunding
- 3** Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP)
 - Not effective in practice (because of the situation on the ground in the DRC)
- 4** Multi-Annual Indicative Program (MIP)
 - Not effective in practice (connects back to what is occurring in the DRC)

THE THEORETICAL LENS: DECENTRING

- Questioning the assumptions that underpin EU narratives
- Euro- & Western-centrism
- Inextricably linked with overcoming colonial burdens
- Operationalisation: spatial, temporal, normative and polity decentring (Keukeleire & Lecocq, 2018)

EU INTERNAL COMPLEXITIES

- Lack of unity in the EU, f.e. no consensus in endorsement of GAP III
- Democratic backsliding leads to even more division and stagnance in decision-making (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019)



Image adapted from Krauze, A. Andri Krauze on the EU-cartoon. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/picture/2018/apr/18/andri-krauze-on-the-eu-cartoon>

WESTERN WORLDVIEW

- Continued exploitation of the DRC in post-colonial times > "recolonization" (Mafa, 2016)
- EU imposes Western definition of gender equality on non-EU countries in foreign policy (Hellsteen, 2013)
- Lack of consideration of local context

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

- Widespread sexual & gender-based violence (VICE news, 2024)
- Exploitation of women in education & government jobs
- Deeply engrained patriarchal standards in society - existence of 'traditional' roles (Kvinna till Kvinna, 2012)
- Government corruption & lack of control of the territory i.a. due to economic interests (Kvinna till Kvinna, 2012)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The EU must recognise that a decentring approach to foreign policy will lead to more effective outcomes. This means moving away from its entrenched Eurocentric worldviews in foreign policy-making, acknowledging the legacy of colonialism, and collaborating with and incorporating the voices of local actors in the DRC
- Reassessment of the EU's external priorities & acknowledgement that instrumentalisation of aid leads to decreased effectiveness of normative commitments
- Enhanced cooperation and cooperation between Member States in EU institutions
- The main focus of EU foreign policy in the combat of gender inequality in the DRC should be reducing sexual and gender-based violence, and with that breaking deeply entrenched patriarchal customs
- Aiming for greater cooperation and accountability between the EU and the DRC's government

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