

## **A Critical Analysis of the Implications of Conflicts on Urban Development and Transformation in the City of Bukavu, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo**

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**Abstract :** Throughout the world, armed conflicts and civil wars unleash widespread destruction, displacement, and loss of lives, profoundly transforming urban landscapes and declining the possibility of sustainable urban development. This research project aims to examine how conflicts affect urban development and arouse urban transformation in Global South cities, particularly in Bukavu, a city in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Adopting a qualitative approach, the study employs different methods, including participant observation, focus-group discussions, semi-structured interviews, photography or visual methods, and spatial analysis methods. Preliminary observations indicate that conflicts constitute a key factor that handicaps sustainable urban development in conflict-affected cities like Bukavu. For nearly three decades, Bukavu has faced several urban development challenges mainly caused by conflicts in the eastern DRC since 1996. These challenges include a significant decline in quality of life and a rapid proliferation of informal settlements driven by accelerated and unplanned urbanization. Additionally, the city has witnessed a marginalization of vulnerable populations and a deterioration of physical infrastructure. This study makes a significant original contribution to the field of urban development in conflict-affected settings by offering a holistic analysis of urban transformation, governance systems, and living conditions of residents. Through an active engagement of local communities, the research elucidates how conflicts reshape urban areas and contribute to the exacerbation of social and economic vulnerabilities in the Global South cities affected by conflicts like Bukavu. Grounded in the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11, the research evaluates the effectiveness of local and international interventions to inform sustainable urban planning strategies in Bukavu. By bringing academic inquiry with practical insights, this study offers valuable knowledge for scholars, policymakers and practitioners working in conflict-affected contexts, focussing on the importance of an inclusive and community-driven approach to resilience and sustainable urban development.

**Keywords :** conflicts, governance, informal settlements, living conditions, physical infrastructure, SDG11, sustainable development, urban development, urban transformation

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