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"Hello, my name is a Charles Nasibu and I come from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where I have been doing research on arms trafficking for three years. I can tell you from my own experience that what you will read in this report is true.

The Great Lakes of Africa is one of the regions worst affected by the problem of small arms: The armed conflicts going on in the region make a very good business for arms traffickers - for them the whole region is a huge market:

The airports and landing strips, the ports, borders and the roads that go along the borders are the common routes for guns to come into the each country before being distributed into the hands of people who are not authorised to have them - including bandits, militias, and the civilian populations.

I found that the guns came into DRC directly from the neighbouring countries of Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and Tanzania: But indirectly they came from a very long way away - from the countries of Eastern Europe, the ex Yugoslavia, China, the ex communist bloc, including Ukraine, Slovakia.

The weapons cause so many deaths and injuries - and not only in the conflict, but among normal civilians. For example, one of my neighbours was at home sleeping, at night, with his family when a someone came to rob the house: My neighbour heard a noise and went to see what it was. The robber had a gun - he fired a shot, just to scare the man - but the bullet hit him on the arm, and the injury was so terrible that later his arm was amputated. Now he cannot work - he has many children to support.

That is just one example, but this problem is recent and growing. You may think that violence is normal in Africa, but not violence like this! Before, someone who came to rob a house did not carry a gun, and now they do. Even students at school who are angry with someone - maybe their teacher - before, if they wanted to take revenge, they did not have guns. But now the guns are so easily available, the result of that revenge will be death, or very very serious injury.

The problem has also affected our culture in a terrible way. Small arms are now so common they have become normalised (banalisées). In some areas of Congo today guns are used instead of money, to buy something, including land, or to pay for services. For example, in rural areas there is the tradition that when a man wants to marry a woman, he should give the woman's family a cow or 2 cows - but now, he gives the family one or 2 kalachnikovs, depending on the woman's beauty or her level of education.

Similarly before, the best way for a young man to prove his value in our society was to study and to obtain his diploma. But now a young man proves his value according to how many guns he has in his possession.

But small arms are not bread, they are not something that should be sold every day. They are instruments of destruction and death."