



Executive Summary

Evaluation Report

*Collaborative Learning from the Bottom-up :
Identifying Lessons from a Decade of Peacebuilding in North
and South Kivu through Bottom-up Evaluation (2009-2019)*



Village de Nyamitaba, Nord Kivu, janvier 2020 @ Alexis Bouvy



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Executive Summary

The Conflict Transformation Sector in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Conflict transformation interventions have multiplied in the Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) over the last ten years. Congolese civil society organisations (CSOs) have specialised in this domain. An increasing number of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and UN agencies have positioned themselves in the sector. It is also a priority for many donors, particularly within the framework of the International Security and Stabilisation Support Strategy (ISSSS).

in a context of security dilemmas and largely unchanged local conflict dynamics.

In light of this, the evaluation was guided by the key question: what have conflict transformation interventions contributed to this context? What have they been able to change, individually and collectively? What were limitations for change and what lessons can be learned?

Conflict transformation as a field of intervention (beyond conflict sensitivity as a cross-cutting tool) brings together diverse organisations. Their thematic objectives (such as dialogue, land governance, security) reflect the complex and deeply inter-connected conflict dynamics in Eastern DRC. This diversity makes evaluating the conflict transformation sector particularly complex. However, it is highly necessary.

During the ten-year period under study in this evaluation, the situation in areas reached by conflict transformation interventions in North and South Kivu has remained chronically unstable. The population continues to be exposed to major and persistent security risks. Armed groups – even if fragmented – remain active in the areas,

A Collaborative Evaluation Process

Funded by Sida and coordinated by the Life & Peace Institute (LPI), this evaluation was carried out with the support of a Reference Group (RG) bringing together fifteen national and international organisations specialised in the field of conflict transformation and active in North and South Kivu. STAREC¹ also participated. As part of this collaborative approach, the RG worked with the evaluators in designing the methodology, conducting data collection, analysing data and sharing of findings in evaluation sites.

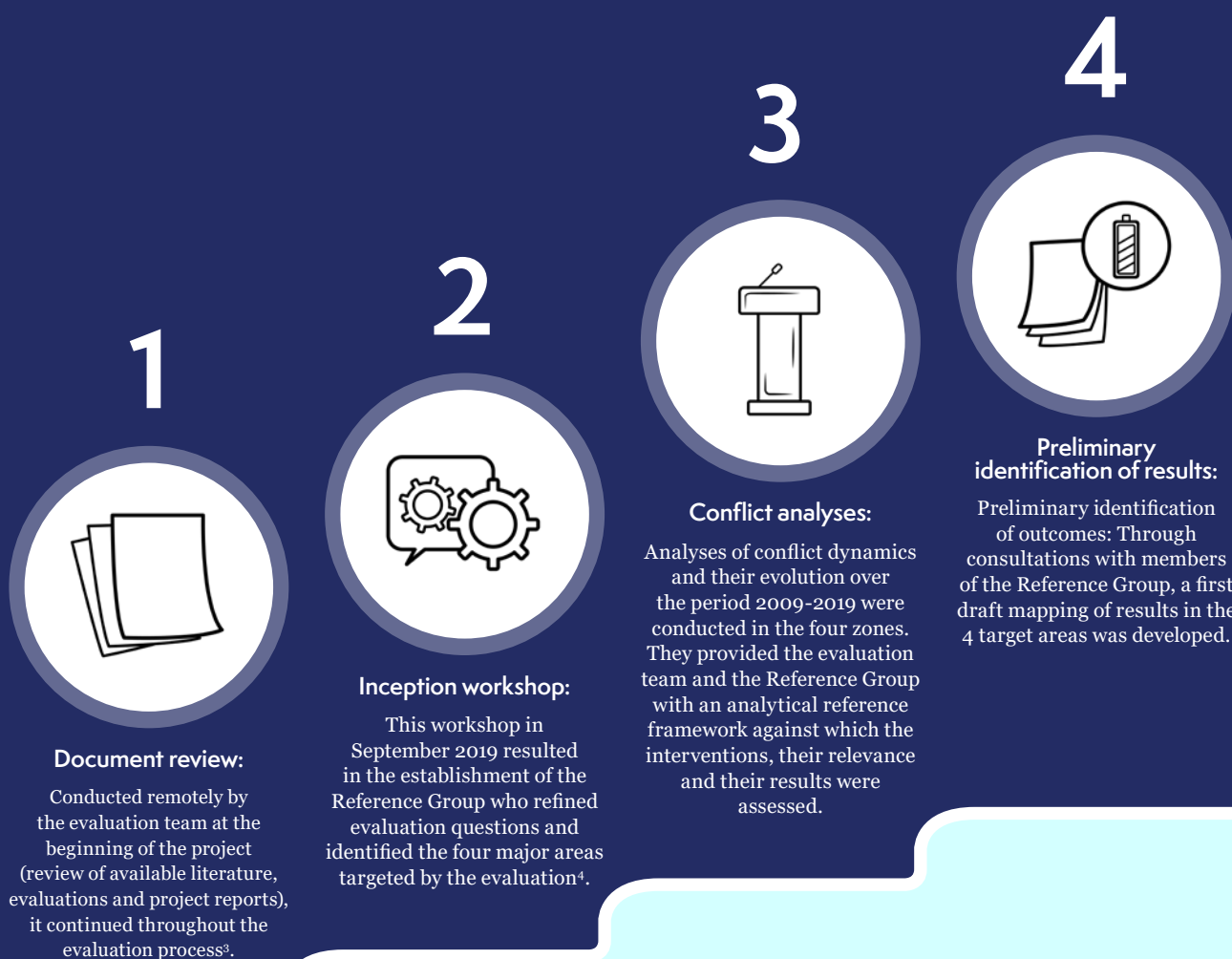
had to be postponed to November 2020 in response to the Covid-19 situation. The evaluation findings are informed by the conclusions of the analysis workshop and the contributions of the local actors consulted during these restitutions.

The evaluation chose the qualitative approach of Outcome Harvesting. Data collection took place in December 2019 and January 2020 in four main areas/territories in North and South Kivu (Uvira, Kalehe, Masisi and Rutshuru)²: 23 localities were reached and 955 people (34% of which were women) were consulted in groups or individually. Around thirty political actors (Provincial Ministers, Directors of Cabinet, Deputies, etc.) were also interviewed at the provincial level to shed light on these institutional perspectives on conflict transformation interventions and their results. The data collected was analysed in February 2020 during a four-day workshop in Bukavu with members of the RG, representatives of the UN Stabilization Support Unit (MONUSCO), STAREC (North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri), UN Habitat and the Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The process concluded with a cycle of restitutions which had initially been planned for April and May 2020, but

¹ The National Programme for Stabilisation and Reconstruction of the Zones emerging from armed conflict (STAREC) was created in 2009, replacing Programme Amani (stemming from the Goma Accords of 2008). STAREC is placed under the authority of the Ministry of Plan and supported by the International Support Strategy for Stabilisation and Security (ISSSS) in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri.

² Respondents from some locations in Fizi and Walungu territory were also engaged in the data collection process.

The steps of the evaluation process



³ See the list of documents consulted in the Bibliography section.

⁴ Ruzizi Plain, Middle and High Plateaux of Uvira; Kalehe (littoral, High Plateaux and Bunyakiri); Bashali Chiefdom (Masisi); Bwisha Chiefdom (Rutshuru).

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Identification of outcomes and their analysis at local level:

Two missions were organised in South and North Kivu (in December 2019 and January 2020) in order to identify the outcomes as experienced, perceived and formulated by local actors and to discuss the main criteria for evaluating conflict transformation interventions (relevance, effectiveness, etc.).

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Identification of results and their analysis at the provincial level:

Eight focus groups of 4-5 political actors (Provincial Ministers, Directors of Cabinets, Deputies, etc.) were organised in Bukavu and Goma in February 2020, in order to obtain a more political and institutional point of view on outcomes interventions and their results.

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Participatory data analysis workshop:

Organised in Bukavu in February 2020, members of the Reference Group, representatives of MONUSCO (Stabilization Support Unit), STAREC (North and South Kivu and Ituri), the UN Country Team (UN Habitat) and the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) jointly analysed the data collected. The findings of the evaluation are largely based on the conclusions of this workshop.

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Restitution of results, formulation of recommendations and their dissemination:

A final round of discussion with community and political actors (consulted during the data collection) had been planned for June 2020. Because of Covid-19, it was finally organised in November 2020. The conclusions and recommendations presented in this report integrate the contributions of the stakeholders who participated in the different restitution workshops.⁵

⁵ In Uvira, Bukavu, Minova, Goma, Kitshanga, and Rutshuru. A total of 162 people participated in these exchanges (162 persons participated to these sessions).

The Results of Conflict Transformation in North and South Kivu

During the evaluation process, we identified 18 outcomes (i.e. key contributions to the transformation of conflict dynamics in the areas reached by the evaluation). They are described, contextualised and analysed in the first part of this report.

First and foremost, we report a significant reduction of social tensions on community level through the setting-up of extra-judicial mediation mechanisms and the negotiated and peaceful resolution of a significant number of local and inter-individual conflicts, mainly connected to land. Organisations have invested significantly in addressing such land-related conflicts. However, these interventions have had little effect on their number and recurrence, because the underlying causes of these conflicts were left unaddressed. Due to the lack of institutionalisation, their sustainability is challenged. Further, the capacity of the mechanisms and committees to deal with complex land conflicts – a major source of violence and instability – has remained limited. Some organisations have worked on such complex land conflicts, conducting direct mediation initiatives, sometimes with success. However, these interventions have remained ad-hoc in nature and to a large extent dependent on the availability of funding. The issue of land inequalities and large concessions has also been addressed in North Kivu. Based on dialogue processes, local arrangements strengthened the access of small producers to land through sharecropping however without contributing to enhanced land tenure security or equitable land distribution. These experiences show the potential of negotiated approaches used by conflict transformation practitioners. They also highlight limitations in a context

where the balance of power between landowners and farmers has remained largely unchanged, and where the involvement of political-security elites in land speculation and the absence of a regulatory framework (and enforcement of existing provisions) prevent any form of legal response. In South Kivu, Congolese CSOs are engaged on the issue of land tenure security for rural and customary land and the organisation of the livestock sector as a means of preventing conflicts between farmers and livestock breeders. Their research and dialogue processes have created a dynamic of legitimacy, from which local governance arrangements and mechanisms have been developed. However, the implementation of these mechanisms has remained limited. From this analysis we conclude the following:

- *The leadership of the authorities in governance processes is critical (as opposed to NGO-driven initiatives, in which the authorities are involved without a strong role or control).*
- *The complementarity between legitimacy and legality is a fundamental condition for the effectiveness and sustainability of these local governance mechanisms.*
- *There is a need for stronger policy engagement of civil society geared towards influencing the development and implementation of legal mechanisms and public policies that provide structural responses to the underlying causes of land conflicts. In this regard, we have referred to the engagement of some CSOs*

- *in the process of reforming the Land Code, emphasising its potential and importance.*

We also discussed results connected to establishment of local security governance mechanisms in almost all the areas reached through the evaluation process. The aim of these interventions is to expand decision-making spaces, to rebuild trust between the security services and the populations and to lay the foundations for mutual accountability. The evaluation shows that these mechanisms constitute new spaces in which the grievances of the populations can be addressed, and we provide several examples from the different sites visited. However, their action is generally confined to the most local aspects of security management. They are hardly able to influence the structural causes of insecurity, the nature of security governance in the DRC and the patrimonial and clientelist networks which are the main driving forces behind it. In the four areas under study, local committees for the sensitisation of armed groups have also been set up, with interesting results in terms of reducing harassment of populations and demobilising certain armed group members. We detail and contextualise these outcomes in the report. We also qualify them: the engagement of these committees often remains very local and punctual, without any influence on the sponsors of the armed groups they target. Moreover, the committees have little or no effect on security dilemmas, which explains – in part – why the number of demobilised members (and the number of weapons collected) remains low. Many of the armed group members demobilised by these committees have returned to armed groups quickly, most often in a logic of “circular return”⁶. This is largely due to the dysfunctions of the national policy for Disarmament,

Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) and the limitations of the reintegration projects implemented by NGOs (limited target group, short duration of projects, lack of adaptability of support, little investment in the social aspect of reintegration, etc.).

The issue of natural resources has also been explored, although to a lesser extent, based on experiences collected in Kalehe territory focusing on site certification and mineral traceability. These initiatives contributed to formalise the channels for the sale of mining products and reduce – even if only partially – opportunities for the diversion of resources by certain armed actors. As we detail in the first part of the report, their impact on fraud and conflict around the sites is nevertheless mixed. Data collection also shed light on one outcome in terms of addressing regional conflict dynamics, looking at engagement around the management of border posts, cross-border flows and social cohesion on both sides of the borders.

Another theme explored was the participation of young people and women. While many interventions targeted these groups, they generally did so in an ad-hoc manner, and relatively disconnected from the broader and strategic processes of community and political dialogue. If women and young people have been involved, this was usually based on quotas that ensured their presence, however without enabling their active, meaningful participation in these processes in the absence of specific strategies of support.

Finally, as the evaluation shows, strengthening trust and social cohesion within and between communities is the main contribution of conflict transformation organisations. In the four evaluation zones, we observe:

⁶ Vlassenroot (K.), Mudinga (E.), Musamba (J.). *Retour circulaire: navigation entre la vie de civil et de milicien à l'est de la RDC*, Groupe d'Etudes sur les Conflits et la Sécurité Humaine (GEC-SH), 2019.

- *A relative (and sometimes very limited) reduction in the phenomenon of 'globalisation' (i.e. an act committed by an individual is attributed to his or her community as a whole) and*
- *A re-establishment of contacts and exchanges between individuals from different communities, after relatively recent periods of withdrawal or total breakdown of relations*

Several indicators illustrate this change (such as resuming commercial exchanges, mixed marriages, spatial mixity in some villages and cities. While our interlocutors were generally in agreement that peacebuilding projects were one of the main explanatory factors, contextual

developments were considered another critical contributor. In fact, a certain number of interlocutors established a direct link between the dynamics of inter-community rapprochement and the reduction of the intensity of conflicts and violence (over which peacebuilding actors generally have only a weak influence). This suggests that, in general, NGO engagement did not cause, but capitalise on the positive evolution of a given conflict and security context. Their work on peaceful cohabitation then makes it possible to consolidate social cohesion.

Concluding from this analysis, we consider that the 18 outcomes identified by this evaluation are significant. They show the capacity of conflict transformation organisations to bring about changes at individual, relational and in some cases even institutional level, in a complex and volatile political and security context.



Focus group with young people, Bwegera, South Kivu @ François van Lierde

Key Insights and Lessons

These critical contributions need to be seen in light of several fundamental and recurring limitations which have been highlighted during data collection and consultations conducted at the local and provincial levels. These are analysed in-depth in the Part 2 of the report.

Firstly, we questioned the objectives of conflict transformation interventions and noted that they have generally targeted issues on the periphery of the key conflict-driving factors: power conflicts, the question of identity and nationality, the question of justice and reconciliation, the activity of armed groups, security dilemmas and the political dynamics in which they are anchored. Some member organisations of the RG have spoken of ‘red lines’ to describe these issues. Despite having been identified repeatedly in conflict analyses, organisations have rarely sought to address them directly, for reasons of sensitivity, associated risks and/or mandate.

The weak collaboration between the state and conflict transformation organisations is another area limiting success in transforming conflict. The involvement of the Congolese state in conflict transformation processes – and importantly institutional reforms – is a vital condition for the effectiveness and sustainability of conflict transformation efforts, as the conflicts are strongly influenced by political and security factors and operate across levels. Between 2009-2015, in the absence of any functioning collaboration framework and in a context of strong mistrust towards the authorities, implementing organisations intervened relatively independently from government actors. The situation changed significantly in

2016, following the launch of the 2nd phase of the ISSSS, which also (re)positioned STAREC at the centre of the strategy and its implementation mechanism. This created a framework for joint planning and coordination.

More recently, some NGOs have placed their dialogue initiatives under the leadership of government mechanisms/programmes (Addis Ababa National Monitoring Mechanism (MNS) and STAREC), thus taking a back seat and playing a technical assistance role. This approach represents a shift in the conception that these NGOs have of their own role and their collaboration with the Congolese government. It is also a sign of an awareness of the limits faced by conflict transformation processes when implemented by NGOs alone, having a solely local scope, and being implemented in an isolated manner. However, it should also be noted that the active involvement of the state in conflict transformation processes stays a major challenge. Authorities need to harmonise existing frameworks for collaboration and develop their technical capacity for engagement. The recommendations will detail further what is needed to progress in this area.

We also discussed the methodologies and levels of intervention of conflict transformation organisations. Over the last 10 years, organisations have particularly developed approaches combining participatory action research and dialogue. Participatory research remains critical for conflict transformation processes – and serves as a vector for increasing stakeholder awareness and prepares for targeted, credible and inclusive dialogue processes. Dialogue functions as a new negotiated space⁷ within which the practices, behaviours and positions of stakeholders can shift. Dialogue functions as a new

⁷ Morvan (H.) et Nzweve (J-L.), *La paix à petits pas. Inventaire et analyse des pratiques locales de paix à l'Est de la République Démocratique du Congo*. Londres, International Alert, 2010, p.52

negotiated space within which the practices, behaviours and positions of stakeholders can shift. However, these processes are characterised by significant weaknesses limiting their effectiveness. Beyond implementation modalities (duration, credibility of implementing organisations, local anchoring, financial flexibility, etc.), we have noted three main challenges in dialogue approaches:

- *The mobilisation of communities remains limited, because of the lack of sustained engagement of intervening organisations at the most local level;*
- *The weak impact on the political and security actors and elites who have a major influence on the dynamics of conflict at the local level;*
- *Process leadership is largely held by intervening organisations, while the authorities show a low level of engagement (in dialogues and in the implementation of the resulting recommendations).*

Another major issue is the role of civil society. While well placed to function as an engine of mobilisation for conflict transformation and to hold Congolese authorities accountable, Congolese CSOs are divided along identity and socio-political lines. Further, they seem increasingly confined to a project implementation role, in a logic of operational and short-term partnerships. Creating opportunistic effects, this weakens CSOs credibility, their positioning and capacity for innovation, and considerably weakens civil society's capacity for collective action. A few initiatives mentioned in this report show the potential of civil society – if speaking with one voice, engaging in political processes and functioning as a credible interlocutor with the authorities.

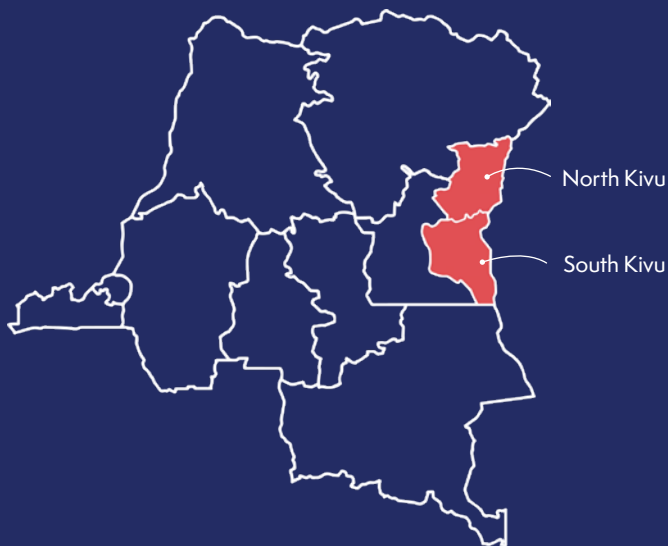
We also explored how conflict transformation initiatives are implemented and what limitations are created through these modalities. Generally, respondents reported a very low level of stakeholder participation in the design and implementation of projects, as well as insufficient accountability of intervening organisations vis-à-vis the authorities and other actors they collaborate with at the local and provincial level. Lack of transparency in the management of funding, cases of misappropriation of funds (reported in all the sites visited) and the widespread nature of 'return operations' are other factors which explain the suspicions and the relative crisis of confidence towards NGOs and agencies which we observed during data collection. Finally, some of our interlocutors referred to 'peace business' to describe the repetition, or multiplication, of conflict transformation projects carried out at local and community level in a static and routine manner, without any real questioning or risk-taking. These elements constitute major obstacles to the mobilisation of local and community actors (and to the sincerity of their engagement) in the framework of conflict transformation projects and processes, which considerably limits their effectiveness.

Finally, and perhaps most fundamentally, the nature of the responses and conflict transformation mechanisms that have been supported and financed over the last 10 years need to be called into question. The projects implemented by civil society organisations cannot alone contribute to the transformation of multidimensional, multi-level, deeply political and security-based conflict dynamics. The organisations – because of their strategy, vision, risk or capacity – have largely intervened in a relatively local and isolated manner, within the limited scope of their project and lacking flexibility. While these organisations have a central role to play in conflict transformation in Eastern DRC, rethinking their actions and strategies to place them within broader institutional and political collaboration frameworks is essential.



South Kivu @ Francois van Lierde

A “bottom-up” evaluation



23

Locations⁸

reached through the process.



955

Participants engaged



34%

Women



Categories of actors :
Local authorities (political-administrative and security);
Representatives/members of local peace structures;
Community members (not members of peace structures);
Women leaders;
Youth leaders.



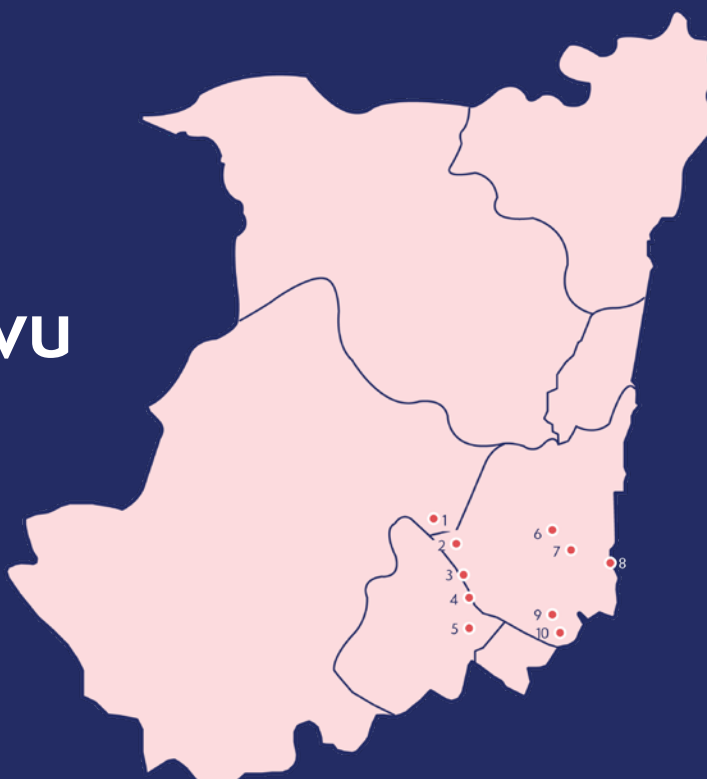
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Political actors at the provincial level

⁸ In South Kivu (Kamanyola, Luberizi, Sange, Kigoma, Lemera, Uvira, Kalehe Centre, Nyabibwe, Minova, Numbi-Ziralo, Bitala-Bunyakiri, Minembwe, Bijombo). In Nord Kivu (Nyamitaba, Kalembe, Burungu, Kitshanga, Mweso, Kiwanja, Rutshuru, Jomba, Kisigari et Rugari).



North Kivu



- 1 Kalembe
- 2 Mweso
- 3 Kitshanga
- 4 Burungu
- 5 Nyamitaba
- 6 Kiwanja
- 7 Rutshuru
- 8 Jomba
- 9 Kisigari
- 10 Rugari



South Kivu



- 1 Minova
- 2 Numbi-Ziralo
- 3 Bitale-Bunyakiri
- 4 Nyabibwe
- 5 Kalehe - Center
- 6 Kamanyola
- 7 Luberizi
- 8 Lemera
- 9 Sange
- 10 Kingoma
- 11 Uvira
- 12 Bijombo
- 13 Minembwe

Recommendations

Based on key findings and conclusions of this collaborative evaluation process, the following recommendations for future conflict transformation practice and policy were developed:

■ ***To the Government of the DRC:***

Support the development of a national policy and strategy for peace and reconciliation based on a joint understanding of the critical issues in terms of security, conflict transformation, transitional justice and (community-based) DDR. Such a policy and strategy would provide the government and its partners with a common strategic framework for planning and coordinating their actions.

■ ***To organisations working in the conflict transformation sector:***

Systematise conflict analysis/research (and mobilise the necessary technical and financial resources for doing so), target the major causes and factors of division and put in place the strategies, implementation mechanisms, resources, alliances and innovative multi-level and multi-stakeholder partnerships to address these issues in an effective and coordinated manner (including at the regional level).

■ ***To the Government of the DRC:***

Develop a decentralised, community-based national DDR policy. The policy should

- *Address the issue of armed groups, security dilemmas and their underlying political and conflict dynamics in an integrated and holistic manner,*
- *Strengthen the convergence between DDR actions and programmes focused on the management of natural resources (especially mining) and*
- *Allow for a review and adaptation of approaches to the rehabilitation/reintegration of ex-combatants (with a focus on structural investments and the social and community aspects of reintegration).*

■ ***To donors and their partners:***

Develop, strengthen and systematise strategies for engaging influential and delocalised political and security actors and employing political, social and community pressure (as well as judicial) to change their behaviour and actions.

■ ***To donors and their partners:***

Review and strengthen approaches to dialogue by

- *Moving away from a purely community-based approach in order to address the political and conflict dynamics at all levels including their interconnection,*
- *Prioritising initiatives for negotiation and mediation between a limited number of actors (those with high interest/stake in the issue) on specific issues (in contrast to broad-based community dialogue),*
- *Investing in media and strategic communication (with a robust and innovative approach, focusing on social media) and*
- *Strengthening and systematising the complementarity and alignment between investments, creating economic opportunities and dialogue initiatives.*

■ ***To the government of the DRC, donors and their partners:***

(Re)place the competent authorities and services at the centre of local land governance processes and mechanisms, avoid substitution, but make technical and material support conditional on the political and financial engagement of the supervising authorities on higher level. Strengthen civil society organisations actions in awareness-raising, technical support and advocacy actions and the National Land Reform Commission (CONAREF) within the framework of the reform of the land policy and law.

■ ***To donors and their partners:***

Strengthen actions focused on the emergence of women and youth leadership at the community and political levels and facilitate networking and alliance building. Provide specific support and resources to prepare women and youth (through coaching and mentoring approaches) for their active participation in strategic peace, dialogue and reconciliation processes at all levels.

■ ***To donors and their international partners:***

Move away from a strictly operational and short-term partnership logic and (re) invest in the development of new collaborative dynamics within civil society and in the strengthening of civil society capacities for collective action for transforming conflict.

■ ***To donors:***

Strengthen Congolese civil society organisations' direct access to funding, while supporting capacity development and ensuring adequate technical and management support.

■ ***To donors and their international and national partners, with regards to project implementation:***

- *Strengthen communication, transparency and accountability towards local authorities and stakeholders and systematise their participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of projects,*
- *Substantially strengthen monitoring bodies and mechanisms within organisations, systematise the establishment of complaints mechanisms at local level and develop appropriate strategies to limit the risks associated with 'return operations',*
- *Enhance conflict sensitivity in the choice and selection of partner organisations and areas of intervention and*
- *Considerably increase the flexibility of projects and funds provided (according to modalities to be defined) to reduce the often static and unresponsive nature of conflict transformation interventions.*

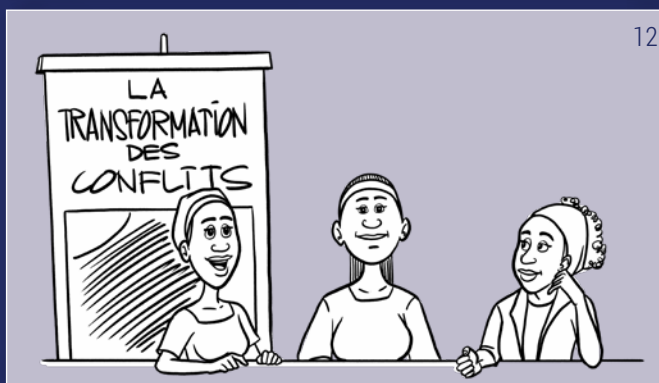


A road, South Kivu, December 2019 @ Francois van Lierde

The Results



1. Reduction of conflict within communities through the establishment of mechanisms to mediate inter-individual land conflicts.
2. Reduction and prevention of violence through the mediation of complex land conflicts.
3. Prevention of conflicts related to transhumance and livestock raiding through the establishment of a customary fee system, the opening of crossing paths and the adoption of a provincial decree.
4. Prevention of land conflicts through land tenure security and strengthened land administration.
5. Initiatives tested at local and community level by CSOs are relayed to the national level and influence the process of revising the land law.
6. The risks of escalation of inter-community violence are reduced thanks to the intervention (punctual and targeted) of committees and consultation frameworks.
7. Strengthening of trust and inter-community social cohesion, as a result of the actions of NGOs, the sensitisation of churches and a spontaneous resumption of contacts and inter-individual relations.
8. Relative disassociation/distanciation of populations from armed groups associated with their community.
9. Temporary cessation of hostilities in the Bijombo Grouping (end 2018), in an extremely volatile security and political context.
10. Resolution of intra-community power conflicts in the Kabimba Groupement and the locality of Bwisha.



11. The authorities and community leaders in Kitshanga are engaged in transforming some of the root causes of the conflict dividing them.
12. Women's representation and participation in conflict transformation processes is strengthened.
13. Increased security for the population through the establishment and strengthening of expanded Local Proximity Security Committees (CLSPs) and other measures to bring civilians and security services closer together.
14. Increased security of populations through community-based initiatives to raise awareness of armed groups.
15. Socio-economic reintegration of elements from armed groups.
16. Establishment of an Interprovincial Commission for Community DDR.
17. Limited reduction of conflict around mining sites through site certification, mentoring of artisans and the establishment of local governance mechanisms for mining resources.
18. Strengthening of collaboration and trust between populations on both sides of the borders and reduction of hassles at border crossings through the establishment of Permanent Dialogue Groups (GDP).



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