Political actors and identity-based violence in Beni, Democratic Republic of Congo

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Note for readers

You may notice throughout this report that the language and writing style is slightly different from Peace Direct's previous publications. This report reflects a new approach Peace Direct is taking to localise our research. As such, this report and the research informing it has been produced and led by local researchers. We have limited our edits of the work to retain the voice and writing style of the authors, as we believe that responsible research practice must reflect a diversity of methodologies and styles beyond dominant Western approaches. As such, non-Congolese readers may find that certain word choices do not immediately resonate or explain a concept in the manner expected. As such, we encourage readers to look into definitions of vocabulary to gain a better understanding of the precise message intended by the authors.

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Acronyms

ACCO	Association of Congo Drivers - Association des Chauffeurs du Congo
ADF	Alliance of Democratic Forces - Alliance des Forces Démocratiques
ADF-NALU	Allied Democratic Forces - National Army for the Liberation of Uganda
AFDL	Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo - Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo
ANR	National Intelligence Agency - Agence Nationale de Renseignement
CNDP	National Congress for the Defence of the People - Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EIC	Independent State of Congo – Etat Indépendant du Congo
ESCO KIVU	Cocoa Exploitation Company of North Kivu - Société d'exploitation du Cacao au Nord- Kivu
FAO F	ood and Agriculture Organization
FARDC	Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo - Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office
FDLR	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Rwanda - Front Démocratique de Libération du Rwanda
FG	Focus group
FPB	Beni Peace Forum - Forum de Paix de Beni
IBV	Identity Based Violence
INGO	International no-governmental organisation
KII	Key informant interview
M23	23 March Movement - Mouvement du 23 Mars
MONUSCO	United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the Congo - Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation du Congo
ONAPAC	National Office of Agricultural Products in the Congo - Office National des Produits Agricoles du Congo
UN	United Nations
CSO	Civil society organisation
WFP	World Food Programme
PNC	Congolese National Police - Police Nationale Congolaise
RC	Community Meeting - Réunion Communautaire
RCD	Congolese Rally for Democracy - Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie
RCD-KML	Congolese Rally for Democracy – Kisangani Liberation Movement - Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie-Kisangani Mouvement de Libération
RISD	Research Initiatives for Social Development
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

I.1 Overview of conflict and violence in the DRC

The multi-faceted crisis that the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is currently experiencing is rooted in its pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial history. Long before colonisation, the indigenous people[1] claimed to own the land. At that time, although customary chiefs had absolute power, issues were not as complex then as they are now. In those days, almost everything revolved around a few plots of land and pastures.[2]

'Political dynamics' in the modern sense arrived with the Belgian Congo around the 1800s. Eastern DRC began to receive religious missionaries, whilst the colonial power and administration became firm in safeguarding the interests of the Belgian crown[3] and observing the borders between the country and its neighbours. Colonial rulers chose specific groups of people to rely on in order to serve their interests[4], and political relationships and exchanges with specific groups of people became the norm. This selective exercise gave rise to communal divergences.[5]

Since the end of colonialism in the 1960s, the eastern part of DRC has experienced major conflicts with roots in a complex and interrelated set of events: a forced exit from colonialism, which largely destabilised local cultures and structures; ethnic rivalries exacerbated by widespread poverty; authoritarian regimes unable to provide essential services to the population; major movements of exodus and deportation of populations; a desire for control of natural resources by various politico-military groups; land pressure in densely populated regions; and, in particular, antagonisms between pastoral and agricultural production methods[6].

The first period post-independence, between 1960 and 1965, was marked by a fierce struggle between political parties formed on tribal or regional basis. Throughout the First Republic, this struggle for power led to rebellions and secessions that cost the lives of nearly two million Congolese. It ended with a military coup on 24 November 1965 by Mobutu Sese Seko.

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1   Throughout this report, the terms *"autochtone/indigenous"* refer to **ethnic groups** attached to a given geographical (territorial) entity, which they have conquered, occupied, administered and which they consider to be their collective property, from generation to generation. The territorial entity serves as a framework for social and symbolic identification and political expression. The indigenous person is a sedentary person fixed on the land of his ancestors. The colonial state power and the post-colonial state power have legitimised this concept through various legal texts recognising ethnic territories governed by customary chiefs. The *"allochthone"* is its opposite: it is an uprooted person, swept away by an exodus of many forms and causes, a foreigner from elsewhere, called upon to integrate without claiming or harming the interests of the host groups at the risk of being perceived as a threat, a danger, etc. The allochthonous is not only a foreigner from another country, but also anyone who is not identified with the ethnic group or region in question. This definition was constructed by us on the basis of the following works: Rémy, E. & Beck, C. (2008); Dornel, Laurent. (2015), Noiriel, G. (1998); The dictionary "Trésor de la Langue Française Informatisée" on https://www.atilf.fr/ressources/tlfi/
2   Willy and Adrien (2007)
3   Anonymous (1950)
4   Millet (2005)
5   Sanderson (2010)
6   Verhaegen (1996); Reyntjens (1999)

The second period between 1965 and 1997 ended with the installation of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL- Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo), after the so-called war of 'liberation' in South Kivu in 1996.[7] During this period, the Marshal of Zaire had developed notions such as "Zairianisation, the return to authenticity, the Party-State ... which created a great distance between the communities and pitted them against each other through extreme plundering of the country's resources"[8].

The third period, between 1997 and 2006, was characterised by a long period of transition in search of a new political order. This led to the so-called "war of aggression", (1998-2001) which was waged against the AFDL government by rebel forces and supported by foreign armed forces[9].

The two wars resulted in widespread insecurity, numerous displacements of populations, significant loss of human life, material and immaterial goods, and an attempt to partition the country. This period was concluded with a peace agreement in 2002 and an attempt at national reconciliation (Sun City Agreement), which led to the establishment of transitional institutions, the adoption of the new Constitution in December 2005, and the organisation of presidential and legislative elections in the second half of 2006. During this period, several ethnic self-defence militias were created in areas affected by rebellions (especially in the eastern and northern parts of the country). This, in turn, exacerbated identity-based conflicts between different ethnic groups. Most of the armed groups currently present in eastern DRC are the direct result of the First (1996-1997) and Second (1998-2003) Congo Wars and the subsequent transitional period (2003-2006), culminating in the 2006 elections[10].

In the fourth period, from 2006 to 2011, efforts were made to unify the country and bring peace throughout the national territory of the DRC. The Goma peace agreement, brokered between the Congolese government and the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP – Conseil National pour la Défense du Peuple) in March 2009 brought relative stability to the security situation in eastern DRC, but there were still some pockets of insecurity. This Agreement, which aimed to dilute the influence of the CNDP, a rebellion with Tutsi connotations, led to political opportunism for political conflict entrepreneurs with identity-based overtones. There was a duplication and/or resurgence of ethnic armed groups in search of positions and possibly dividends[11] linked to demobilisation[12].

The fifth period, from 2011 to 2018, began with the second presidential and legislative elections in November 2011 and the resurgence of armed conflict in the east of the country in 2012. A new group of dissident rebels from CNDP appeared in March 2012, called the 'Mouvement du 23 Mars' or M23. This led to the further deterioration of the security situation in the East[13]. In 2013, the victory of the Congolese Armed Forces over M23 put an end to the rebel movement and led to the organisation of National Consultations (September-October 2013) with the aim of strengthening national cohesion.

On 19 December 2016, the constitutional mandate of the then DRC President expired. According to the UN Security Council, political tensions, which had been rising steadily throughout 2016, flared up again, with numerous demonstrations across the country turning violent. The persistence and activism of armed groups continue to dominate the political scene of eastern DRC.

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7   Maindo (2007)
8   Kalter Krieg et al (1998)
9   See Kaïdar (2005)
10   Stearns et al (2013)
11   The dividends from demobilisation were more likely to benefit identity-based political entrepreneurs (elites from ethnic armed groups and self-defence groups)
12   Stearns et al (2013)
13   Diumi Shutsha (2013)

Despite the political transition that resulted from the elections held in December 2018, identity conflicts and tensions in eastern DRC remain topical and serve as a crucible for political violence and social instability. Moreover, the Great North Kivu area (Beni, Butembo) was excluded from the presidential elections because of the Ebola virus and a part of Bandundu (Yumbi) because of interethnic conflicts[14]. This exacerbated feelings of frustration and exclusion from political issues for local populations.

The organisation of electoral processes has often been preceded and/or accompanied by various political conflicts and tensions that have contributed significantly to identity-based violence. Each territory constitutes an electoral constituency, and leaders identify themselves with their home territories. Armed groups have metamorphosed into political parties. Warlords and certain leaders have used the argument of communities or collective identities as a political springboard to justify 'ethnic territories'. To achieve this, they have chosen to pit 'communities' against each other based on language, natural resources, religion and so on[15].

I.2 Assumptions

In view of the political history that has led the DRC to complex dynamics, this report is particularly interested in the role of political actors in identity-based conflicts and violence in the eastern part of the country, particularly the territory of Beni in North Kivu province. The question is whether political actors use communitarianism[16] as an instrument of manipulation and domination of cultural identities or contribute to social integration in the territory of Beni.

The analysis of this report is underpinned by a number of hypotheses. On the one hand, political actors use collective identities as a resource for political, economic, and social classification, both during and outside of political or electoral competitions, through neo-patrimonial practices (clientelism, corruption, nepotism, tribalism, etc.). On the other hand, political actors play a central role in the prevention of conflicts and violence based on identity, particularly in the territory of Beni.

I.3 Objectives of the study

Main objective	The objective of this study is to analyse the role and degree of political actors' involvement in conflict and identity-based violence dynamics in Beni territory and to develop an overview of the key actors for peace in the region.
Specific objectives	• To show the roles played by political actors in identity conflicts in and around the town of Beni;
	• To distinguish between the negative and positive roles of political actors in the dynamics of identity-based violence;
	• To identify and classify the methods by which political actors exert a positive or negative influence in the politicisation of cultural identities and the fight against identity conflicts in Beni;
	• To identify the social perceptions of political actors' contribution to identity-based conflicts and violence;
	• To identify other key actors in violence and peace activities who interact with political actors;
	• To formulate a realistic model or diagram of identity-based violence and recommendations for actors working in the field of peace and the prevention of identity-based violence.

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14   CENI-RDC (2018)
15   African Union Panel of the Wise (2012)
16   Focused on the connection between the individual and the community

I.4 Methodology

Data collection for this study was purely qualitative. Data was collected through a literature review, focus group discussions, community meetings and in-depth key informant interviews. The field research was conducted in Beni territory in March 2021. The research team consisted of six researchers representing *Research Initiatives for Social Development (RISD)* and *Forum de Paix de Beni (BPF – Beni Peace Forum)*. A workshop with researchers and consultants helped to contextualise the research methodology developed.

Focus group discussions	The focus groups were conducted by RISD, with facilitation support provided by BPF, in French and/or Kiswahili in the town of Beni. Focus group participants were selected through a snowball sampling on the basis of their understanding of the research topic, gender, role in society, having a background more affected by identity-based violence, availability and consent to participate in the study. The focus group discussions were held with: leaders of traders and taxi drivers, key civil society actors, key politicians, members of citizen movements, notables and teachers as well as women traders and religious leaders. Each focus group discussion included six to ten participants per target group.
Community meetings with local leaders	Two mixed community meetings were organised. The participants were local leaders chosen from two communes in the town of Beni. These meetings brought together leaders of political parties, community members, members of civil society, representatives of ethnic groups and religious leaders. Participants in the community meetings were selected in the same way as focus groups. The number of participants in each meeting numbered to 12.
Individual interviews	Individual interviews were conducted with members of citizen movements, leaders of youth organisations, members of civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, notables, and leaders of political parties. A total of 18 individual interviews were conducted. Participants in the individual interviews were selected in the same way as for the focus groups.
Secondary data collection	Secondary data collection included a review of previous research on identity-based violence, ethnic conflict, and the role of political actors in these conflicts in eastern DRC.
Target groups of the study	Political actors (political parties, civil society organisations, pressure groups, local leaders, etc.) were selected and interviewed in Beni (Table 1).
Identification of participants	Interviewees were identified with technical support from the *Forum de Paix de Beni (BPF Beni Peace Forum)*, a local Peace Direct partner organisation working on human rights protection and conflict prevention in Beni.
Data analysis	The data analysis was carried out using two main methods: thematic analysis and content analysis. For each of the main themes analysed and for each specific question, the respondents' opinions were manually analysed and reconciled. The aim was to identify themes that best summarised the respondents' comments and enriched the analysis. This made it possible to develop a grid composed of different thematic headings, into which the respondents' extracts were divided. The thematic analysis was conducted in three complementary stages: 1. exploration of the corpus; 2. identification of themes; and 3. extraction of content and quotes for narrative write-up.

TABLE 1: RESPONDENTS ON IDENTITY CONFLICTS BY TYPE OF ACTOR

Type of actor involved	Women	Men	Number of individuals per category
Conflict prevention organisations	8	24	32
Local leaders	7	18	25
Ethnic based community groups	6	19	25
Members of political parties	4	11	15
Members of pressure groups	1	9	10
Religious leaders	4	4	8
Official administrative authorities in Beni	0	3	3
Total number of respondents	30	90	120

I.5 Definitions of key terms

Political actors

In the strictest sense of the term, political actors are those who aim to conquer or influence state power in the name of collective interests. The 'People', in non-democratic regimes, are viewed only as passive and paralysed observers, perhaps inattentive of political life. The arena itself belongs to collective actors such as parties and interest groups, as well as to **individual actors** such as militants and politicians[17].

In this research, political actors are defined differently. We define them as **any person** exercising a mandate, influence, or a position of responsibility towards political, administrative, security, military or even diplomatic institutions at regional/international, national, provincial and local levels. Political actors are individual actors who interact and invest, opportunistically or not, in the political field. This includes **individual activists** in political organisations such as political parties and pressure groups.

On the other hand, **legal entities** are those that constitute collective identities and play a crucial role in social mobilisation and interact with political institutions. **Collective actors** often serve as levers or instruments of political manipulation for individual actors. In this case, the former (legal entities) are the products of the latter (collective actors) and, conversely, the identity of the latter is a function of the former. The 'individual actors' can be mistaken for elites while the 'collective actors' represent the masses.

Collective actors come in many forms: political groups and parties, pressure groups, citizens' movements, social movements, rebel movements, militias, non-governmental organisations, multinational companies, businesses, charitable organisations and various corporations, think tanks, and religious denominations. In short, state institutions and civil society organisations (CSOs) in their political dimensions fall into the category of 'collective actors'. Change is only possible in a context of ideological rupture between the state and CSOs.

The roles played by these actors are understood as **mechanisms** that they put in place or use in different interventions to positively or negatively influence political life, even if it means stirring up violence, particularly identity-based violence within social groups, or contributing to peace, social cohesion and mutual understanding between the different groups. Their actions can therefore be positive or negative depending on their interests and on the perceptions of the members of the group or groups concerned and affected.

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17   Braud (1996)

Ethnic identity[18]

In social psychology, ethnic identity is seen primarily as a form of categorisation. In general, ethnic identity can be defined as "the awareness of belonging to a group that distinguishes itself by specific cultural practices and that, considering that this difference is denied, sees in the struggles at all levels a possibility of eventually leading to another society where these differences are recognised"[19].

Ethnic identity is not based on objective data; it is a social production resulting from a distinction of a symbolic nature. Barth emphasises the interactionist nature of the production of ethnic sentiment, both within the group itself (i.e., an individual's sense of belonging to the ethnic community is based on his or her recognition as a member of the ethnic community) and on the distinctive issues between groups defined as ethnic. He argues that social actors construct their ethnic identity in opposition to other ethnic groups, manipulating arbitrary and socially meaningful signs and symbols of belonging to draw the line between designated group members and others. Several authors recognise four definitional components in the structure of ethnic identity: 'categorical attribution', the notion of boundary (or limit), common origin, and salience[20].

However, if ethnic identity becomes the only mode of belonging, its over-investment reduces class identities to one, thus annihilating the identity of the individual. Therefore, each individual must have a sufficient number of diversified identities in order to socially implement his or her unique personality model. The overemphasis on ethnic identity can therefore contribute to a decrease in cultural diversity[21].

In political contests and competition over access to natural resources, questions relating to ethnic identities arise. It is in this context that Jean-François Bayart evokes the notion of identity strategies[22]. This consists of the appropriation of images, symbols and representations in order to claim their autonomy within the framework of political mobilisation. Thus, the various conflicts in the east of the DRC in general, and in North Kivu in particular, are largely characterised by a great deal of identity-based movement. This consists of discriminating against one group to the detriment of another on the basis of its identity. In other words, an ethnic identity is both a factor of integration of the '*in-group*' and a major belligerent factor towards the '*out-group*'.[23]

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18 We chose to define ethnic identity because it appeared to be cardinal and transversal to the other identities in the realities of the DRC and Beni.
19 Fabre (1979)
20 Ferréol and Jucquois (2003)
21 Devereux (1973)
22 Cohen and Bayart (1997)
23 Banégas (2010)

Identity-based and political violence

The term **"identity-based violence"** (IBV) refers to "any act of violence motivated by the perpetrator's perception of the victim's group identity, such as race, gender, sexuality, disability, religion or political affiliation"[24]. Identity-based violence can include atrocities, but the majority of cases of identity-based violence are not examples of atrocities, just as not all atrocities are examples of identity-based violence. Although identity-based violence does not always amount to atrocities, the role of identity is a key factor in how atrocities develop, based on strategic manipulation and the use of identity for group mobilisation, both for the grouping of victims and for the mobilisation of perpetrators[25].

Atrocities are considered to be "major" and "deliberate" acts of violence, normally targeting specific groups of people with common characteristics (identity groups), committed by political actors through clientelistic and opportunistic practices[26].

Violence is considered **political** when it has an influence on the political universe, either by contributing to a transformation or evolution of the regime, or by challenging an ideological choice or, more often, by influencing the public policies of the state. This may include:

- Violence described as passionate, responding to anger, an impulse, is immediate, discontinuous and disproportionate in its exercise (e.g. riots, spontaneous violence during political demonstrations, etc.);

- Instrumental violence, to designate calculated violence aimed at a precise objective, used for a specified political purpose (the violence of the State measured and circumscribed to the proper implementation of the internal or external order; the violence of criminal organisations - terrorist, when the aim is to make the adversary bend - ideological or mafia, when the aim is personal enrichment; the violence of social movements or trade union organisations, using force for the purposes of negotiation or dialogue with public power.

- Political violence with an identity dimension: here, violence aims to offer an identity to those who practise it, whilst at the same time denying the identity of those who are subjected to it. Genocidal violence or certain forms of fundamentalist or ethnic terrorist violence belong to this third category[27].

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24   Protection Approaches (2019)
25   Renoir and Ceesay et al. (2021)
26   Ibid
27   Crettiez (2008)

CHAPTER II. IDENTITY-BASED CONFLICTS AND VIOLENCE IN BENI TERRITORY

II.1 Overview of conflicts and identity-based violence in Beni territory

II.1.a Presentation of the City-Territory of Beni

Beni Territory is located in the east of the DRC, in the province of North Kivu. With an estimated population of 1,427,608, Beni has 7 major tribes: the Wanande[28] (36%), the Bambuba (20%), the Batalinga (15%), the Babila (11%), Bapakombe (8%), Balese (6%) and the Pygmies (Basumba, Mbuti) (4%). The Wanande constitute most of the population and are primarily farmers, herders and traders. The Bambuba live mainly in the forest region and practice agriculture. The Babila live in the North-East forest region and practice logging and handicrafts. The Batalinga, the Bapakombe and the Balese are farmers, and the pygmies or Mbuti practice hunting and gathering[29].

With the territorial divisions that have divided the greater Kivu region into three parts, including Maniema, North and South Kivu, the territory of Beni has remained geographically close to major towns such as Rutshuru and naturally close to Butembo, Goma, Bunia and the Ugandan border[30]. This position places it at a crossroads of population movements from Congolese, Ugandan, Rwandan and, to a lesser extent, Burundian territories[31].

Beni is the source of food for Goma and its neighbours through significant pastoral and agricultural activities. In 1994[32], Beni was not immune to the displacement of Rwandan refugees, some of whom were armed. In 1996, with the arrival of the AFDL, the town of Beni witnessed the relentlessness of Tutsi fighters against the Hutu refugees in the camps. In this succession of violence, precious minerals began to be exploited in the area and an intensification of economic activities occurred with the formation of the Congolese Rally for Democracy (Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie – RCD)[33] with the city of Goma as its capital[34].

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28 Note that there are several ways of writing the names of these ethnic and tribal groups because of the linguistic diversity in Eastern DRC. The radicals Wa-, Ba- can often be interchangeable or omitted (Example: Nande (Yira), Wanande, Banande (Bayira) refer to the same ethnic group).
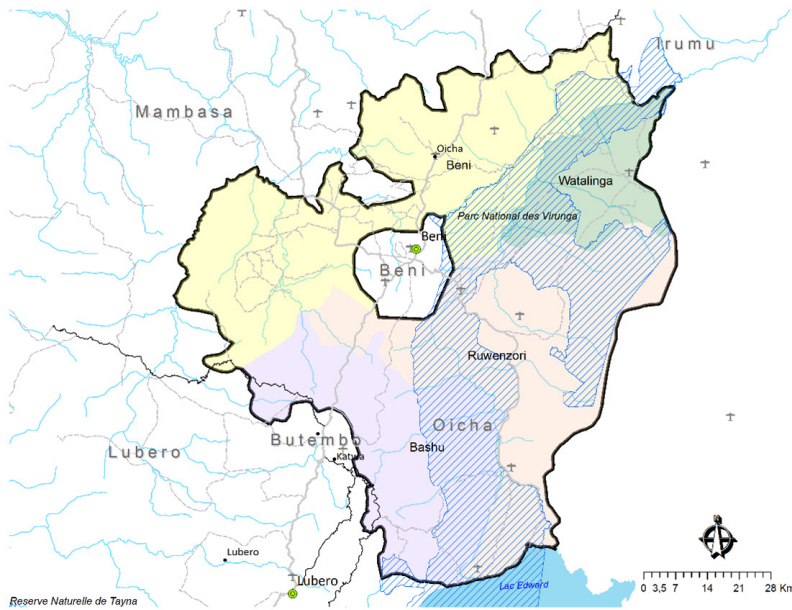29 CAID (2021)
30 Léonard (2001)
31 Nkuku (2009)
32 Maxime et al (2014)
33 A former rebel group that is now a political party in eastern DRC
34 De Villers and Willame (1998)

With the reunification of the country through the Global and Inclusive Agreement[36] in 2003, the transition and the preparation of the 2006 elections[37], the territorial quota grew and constituted electoral districts that some political entrepreneurs used as a political springboard through their own electoral strongholds.

II.1.b Forms of Political-Ethnic IBV in Beni

The below-mentioned violence has a common character in that it is mostly committed for political, electoral, symbolic[38] and socio-economic purposes. The main motivations for the violence, as seen in this section, are the mono-ethnic control of land, the exploitation of natural resources, the imposition of religious practices and the political ranking of the actors involved.

Land-based IBV

Violence based on ethnic identity in Beni can be explained, in part, by demographic dynamics in North Kivu, the parallel existence of traditional (customary) power with state power, the DRC's legal arsenal that legitimises the ethnicisation of land, the electoral system and the bankruptcy of the state.

Population movements in Eastern DRC, which date back to the pre-independence years[39], were determined by the search for pasture for cattle, the search for food security, the reunification of scattered ethnic groups, the armed and ethnic conflicts formerly fuelled by the colonists[40], and the deportation of populations or mass immigration by the colonists. This included the massive deportation or immigration of more than 150,000 Rwandan Hutus and Tutsis by colonialists between 1928 and 1956 to meet the labour needs of the settlers' agricultural and mining operations and to cope with

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35   CAID (2021)
36   The agreement provided the power-sharing formula and transitional arrangements until elections were held
37   Journal Officiel-DRC (2006)
38   Pierre Bourdieu speaks of symbolic violence in relation to a form of invisible, masked violence linked to the implementation of a system of domination and resulting from the imposition of a cultural arbitrariness (Paul Bacot, 2016, Guide de sociologie politique, Paris, Ellipses, p.328). In this report the term 'symbolic' refers to cultural heritage which can be ethnic, religious, artistic, etc.
39   Maxime et al (2015)
40   François et al (2013)

natural disasters and tribal wars in Rwanda[41].

In order to secure its holdings, the colonial regime had introduced reforms aimed at favouring the expropriation of local land in order to promote the settlers' agricultural activities. With this reform, all land was considered vacant because it now belonged to the State, which could expropriate it for a tiny sum and pass it on to prospective settlers. It was in this context that a decree was signed giving the right to dispossess indigenous people of their land, a legal basis that would have constituted, at that time, a major threat to the indigenous people who relied on the customary system of land tenure.[42] It is from these migrations that the Rwandophone populations have occupied a large part of the territories of Masisi and Rutshuru. The latter borders the territories of Lubero and Beni via Lake Edward.

The Yira or Nande migrated to Beni about 200 years ago from Uganda[43], they are in the majority and live together with other tribes throughout the Beni-Lubero region. Roger Mwanawavene[44] notes that the Yira (Nande) people are in the majority alongside the Watalinga, the Balese, the Bakumu, the Bapera, the Babumba, the Bapakombe, the Bambuti and other Congolese tribes. There are also foreign ethnic groups, including the Bakondjo (from Uganda, with historical links to the Nande), the Hima, the Sudanese, the Hunde, the Nyanga, etc. For reasons of integration, many of these peoples prefer to naturalise as Nande through various social channels including marriage, twinning, cultural mixing, etc[45]. Hence there are very few articles reporting conflicts or tensions between the so-called 'indigenous' ethnic groups in the Beni-Lubero region.

However, the reported ethnic violence is between the Rwandophone Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups, including the "Wakurima" farmers, perceived by the "indigenous" (Nande/Yira and assimilated or allied clans)[46] as invaders with an expansionist aim, seeking to conquer the ethnic territories 'legitimately' acquired by these groups.

A respondent who is a member of a citizen's movement condemned the xenophobic behaviour of the so-called 'indigenous' groups in the Beni-Lubero region towards people they associate as Rwandan, in the following terms:

"a woman from Bukavu was killed because she had a Rwandan morphology and was assimilated to Rwandans. It was when they killed her that they saw her voter's card which was hidden and realised that she was not Rwandan..."

The antagonism between the so-called 'indigenous' ethnic groups and those considered 'non-indigenous' has increased the quest has prompted a politicization of ethno-regional identities for political purposes and to protect their lands.

The DRC constitution endorses ethnic territoriality and the collective acquisition of Congolese nationality, which therefore serve as the basis for claims of 'ethnic territories'. The Rwandan constitution, on the other hand, allows dual nationality for its subjects and any individual with Rwandan ancestry. However, Congolese nationality is exclusive. Given that Rwandophones in the DRC have the right to hold Rwandan nationality, this uncertainty about their national identity is opportunistically exploited by conflict entrepreneurs.

The results found by Furaha (2008) show that conflicts in North Kivu, as elsewhere in eastern DRC, are often related to the control of land, partly because land is valuable in this densely populated region

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41   Stearns (2012)
42   Ibid
43   Bergmans (2009)
44   Kasereka Mwanawavene (2009)
45   Ibid
46   Namely: Bashu, Baswagha, Bamate, Batangi, Bahira, Bakira, Bapakombe, Bambute, Babila, Banisanza, Bakumbule, Bapere, Balegha, Bahambo

and partly because it has been conventionally tied to specific ethnic groups and the authority of their chiefs[47] . Several people interviewed during this study also mentioned that some customary chiefs operating in collusion with land registry and land title services are the source of land conflicts among the population.

From October 2014 to March 2021, Beni territory has been affected by a cycle of violence that has claimed more than 1,345 civilian victims[48]. This violence is attributed to armed individuals presumed to be Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)[49] fighters[50]. On closer examination, the violence in eastern DRC tends to be analysed through the prism of violent conflict, linked to clashes between armed groups mainly in rural areas [51]. In this respect, the civilian populations of Beni are subjected to massacres that are tantamount to war crimes, perpetrated essentially with knives (axes, machetes, etc.) and sometimes with firearms[52].

According to the UNHCR report of March 2021,

"of all protection incidents collected in the province, the majority of homicides (71%), fires (74%), illegal taxes (96%) and forced labour (40%) were committed in Beni territory, with a concentration in the Mutwanga and Oicha health zones. This is the result of incursions by the alleged ADF in Matombo, Kisiki and Muziranduru. Around 85 civilians were killed and abducted and around 20 houses were looted; the health post and the Anglican parish of Muziranduru were burnt down[53]. Nevertheless, the endless spiral of violence in Beni is without doubt one of the most severe humanitarian crises"[54].

"Monthly trends show that non-state armed actors commit the largest share of protection incidents. 55% of documented incidents are alleg-

edly committed by local armed groups, 29% by the FARDC, 10% by armed bandits and 3% by the alleged ADF. These non-state armed actors commit the majority of violations of the right to life and physical integrity (100% of torture, 85% of abductions, 57% of assaults, 49% of rapes and 13% of homicides). It should be mentioned that, despite the high level of activism of the alleged ADF elements, the documentation of protection incidents remains very limited because of the difficult access to the areas where they operate (in the north of Beni territory)"[55].

Livelihoods and IBV

In addition to land- based IBV, there is also ethno-occupational violence. Different ethno-professional groups have been established according to specific sets of activities, notably pastoralism, agriculture and trade. The ethno-professional groups express their divergent interests between Nande traders and 'Rwandophone' shepherds-farmers (Wakurima), which have included Rwandan refugees since 1994.

Several interviewees mentioned the rejection by the Nande and allied tribal-ethnic groups in Beni and throughout North Kivu of Rwandophone populations such as the Wakurima, who come from Masisi and Rutshuru in search of grazing and arable land. In a focus group discussion with female traders, the participants agreed that

"despite their competencies, there are ethnic groups that are not accepted in Beni. The Wakurima (Rwandan-speaking people), for example, are not accepted here".

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47   Furaha (2008)
48   FPB (2021)
49   A rebel group found both in Ugandan and DRC
50   OCHA (2019)
51   Rift Valley Institute (2019)
52   Kwiravusa (2019)
53   UNHCR (2021)
54   Vlassenroot and Reaymaekers (2003)
55   UNHCR (2021)

The "indigenous" communities also accuse international organisations of only hiring people who do not belong to their ethnic groups. They are said to favour foreigners ("allochthones"), especially for senior positions, and to leave some lower positions to "natives". Traders and transporters in a focus group also said:

"In NGOs, we see that the selection of candidates is very much linked to ethnic identity. Also, when NGOs arrive here, we see that 80% of the workers come from outside and when unemployment gets out of hand, the young people rise up against those who work there."'

From the above, it can be noted that the term 'foreigner' used by the interviewees refers, without distinction, to anyone who is not 'autochthonous', i.e., those who do not belong to the ethnic groups attached to their territories, in this case Beni. Even fellow Congolese who do not belong to these 'indigenous' groups are considered 'foreigners' or 'allochtones'. According to G. Noiriel[56], this language was found in colonial literature where the colonist used zoological language to internalise the simple equation immigrant = exoticism = danger. For E. Remy[57], the equation becomes "allochtone" = invasive = harmful = to be destroyed. This same equation can be transposed into the opinions of the people interviewed for this study and becomes: "allochtone" = invader = dangerous for access to employment and resources = to be excluded (to be fought). This rejection underpins much of the intolerance that leads to the cycle of violence and systematic reprisals between 'communities'.

The 'indigenous' groups also accuse INGOs of being complicit in the plan to depopulate and occupy indigenous lands by the Rwandans. This conflict leads to several acts of violence between the so-called 'indigenous' and 'allochthonous' groups. The majority of people interviewed in the course of this study also pointed to the complicity of political and administrative authorities. In one

focus group, female civil society leaders stated:

"our local authorities are also complicit in these conflicts that have become recurrent here, because sometimes they let these people (Wakurima) pass through during the night when everyone else is already asleep...; it is during this period that there was an influx of these people here."

These ethno-professional conflicts and violence are deeply rooted, firstly, in the weakness of the state in promoting employment; secondly, in the current laws which, in a way, have mirrored laws from the colonial era (e.g. ethnicisation of territorial entities); and above all, are reinforced by political agendas which ride on ethno-tribal identities in order to position themselves in the political arena (politicisation of collective identities).

Religion and IBV

Religious identity has also factored into the violence taking place in Beni territory. Interviewees mostly argued that religious leaders and denominations play on the one hand, a formal role of appeasement, of conciliation, by preaching peaceful cohabitation between social groups; and on the other hand, an informal role in inciting identity-based segregation.

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56   Noiriel (2006)
57   Rémy and Beck (2008)

Most religious leaders do not hesitate to take a stand in defence of their respective ethnic groups. Some respondents criticised the bias that an INGO[58] of a religious nature, with strong roots in Rwanda, would show in orienting its projects on behalf of the displaced/immigrant Rwandophone populations in Beni. Other religious leaders of the revivalist churches, in particular, are also accused of playing on identity by creating ethnically-based churches preaching "false prophecies" about their ethnic group.

However, according to interviewees, the most atrocious religion-based IBV is perpetrated by the ADF-NALU[59] *(Allied Democratic Forces - National Army for the Liberation of Uganda)* groups, who have imported their political ideologies from Uganda into Congolese territory. This is, in effect, an internationalisation of their political demands to perpetuate their 'physical' and 'symbolic' existence. These Ugandan rebel groups have progressively constituted themselves into a radical Islamic group.

Initially, the ADF's agenda was purely political in nature. The religious component came in later as a way to get further support and new recruits. The ADF adapted the grievances of Muslim communities to appeal to Muslims. Many of the young recruits were Muslims, so their numbers in the ADF increased. Islam was seen as a ticket to strengthen their ranks, so the leaders pursued their political motivations under the guise of religion. The authors of this report will not go as far as to state that religion was simply instrumentalized; however, it is useful to highlight how the religious perspective coexisted alongside other strategies, such as the group's wider political agenda (at the collective level) or existing political grievances (at the individual level). Throughout their incursions into the DRC, and their increased disconnect with Uganda, the group's political agenda became less and less important and now seems to have largely abandoned.[60]

One member of a civil society organisation working to prevent violence in Beni pointed to the religious aspect of identity-based violence:

"they attacked a vehicle where the village chief was with his two wives, but his second wife was Muslim, so they asked the chief which of the two wives he liked, he replied the first, so they killed the chief and his first wife. They left with the other woman who managed to escape after three days with the intervention of the FARDC."

Two versions were highlighted by the interviewees in this study about how the ADF would select the people they kill in the villages. The first version states that when they arrive in the targeted villages, they kill all non-Muslims. According to the second version, they torture Muslims more cruelly because they accuse them of being complicit with those they call "unbelievers". As a result, they are accused of not honouring the Muslim religion and not supporting the ADF in their fight. Messages from Muslim religious authorities in Beni try to clean up the image of Islam tarnished by the ADF by denouncing the crimes committed in the name of Islam[61].

Furthermore, personalities who try to call for peaceful cohabitation or who dare to condemn the killings perpetrated by the ADF are systematically threatened and/or assassinated, such is the case of local Imams, priests and even pastors. Muslim leaders have been victims of targeted killings. Two recent cases were reported by newspapers:

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58   Noiriel (2006)
59   Initially two armed groups, ADF and NALU that merged into one ADF-NALU, but commonly referred to simply as ADF.
60   Titeca and Vlassenroot (2012)
61   Cath-Info, 2016, *Muslims condemn Beni massacre*s, https://www.cath.ch/newsf/rdc-musulmans-condamnent-massacres-de-beni/ accessed 11/06/2021 at 19:15'

"Sheikh Moussa Djamali, from the Mavivi mosque, was killed on his way back from evening prayers", the representative of the Islamic Community of Congo (Comico) for the town of Beni confirmed. *"It is the same modus operandi as with Sheikh Aliamini killed at the beginning of May, the shooter aimed for the head"*, the Comico representative stressed[62].

Gender-based IBV

Violence in Beni is also gender-based. The various forms of violence and human rights violations affect men, women and children, adults and young people alike. Most of the violence and violations are perpetrated by armed groups and Congolese state agents (the FARDC and the police) who engage in killings, assassinations, abductions, forced recruitment of children and men into the ranks of armed groups, physical violence, sexual violence (especially against women), and the mutilation of organs. These, in addition to other forms of atrocities, spread fear and horror in order to dissuade the survivors from returning to their normal living environment.

Gender identity is a factor that accentuates violence based on ethnic identity, especially against women. Indeed, women and children are perceived by some 'natives' as instruments used by non-native ethnic groups ('non-originals') to infiltrate and conquer native lands ('lands belonging by right to the natives'). The 'non-indigenous' would bring these categories to the forefront because they are less likely to be attacked by non-indigenous people. This way of thinking by IBV entrepreneurs stigmatises and victimises so-called non-indigenous women. In this regard, supposedly foreign-bodied non-indigenous women are more likely to be victims of such violence.

For example, in a focus group discussion with taxi drivers, the following statement was made:

"some women harbour criminals... And with the advent of human rights, these ethnic groups [foreigners] use women and children much more to commit these atrocities because they will be protected by MONUSCO and other human rights organisations".

Some twenty women's associations in the province of North Kivu called for an end to the use of the population for personal and selfish ends, while recalling that women were the first victims of violence[63]. Some civil society leaders interviewed in the field said that women are attacked in their fields, in their households, when they go in search of drinking water and even in their daily activities.

The markets most frequented by women are often those most attacked by armed groups. Like women, young people and especially children are forced to spend nights under the stars. Braving the bad weather, they are forced to abandon their studies and the comfort of their homes to find themselves in the bush without assistance. Young people are recruited by armed groups through force or ideology.[64]

Since November 2019, violence has escalated in Beni and spread to the adjacent territories of Irumu and Mambasa in the neighbouring province of Ituri. Civilians, the majority of whom are women and children, are the targets of repeated violence that has left more than 150 dead between 11 December 2020 and 10 January 2021.[65]

62   La Libre Afrique, 2021, DRC, *Nouvel assassinat d'un responsable musulman à Beni,* https://afrique.lalibre.be/60920/rdc-nouvel-assassinat-dun-responsable-musulman-a-beni/ accessed on 11/06/2021 at 19:18'.
63   Cath-Info, 2016, *Muslims condemn Beni massacre*s, https://www.cath.ch/newsf/rdc-musulmans-condamnent-massacres-de-beni/ accessed 11/06/2021 at 19:15'
64   Interview with a member of an organisation working in conflict prevention in Beni
65   UN Info (2021)

II.1.c Electoral mobilisations based on ethnic identity

In the Congolese political arena, political identities are not based on societal projects or political ideologies, but on the personalities of political party leaders (the personification and personalisation of political parties) and on regionalist (East, West, Centre, North, South), materialistic (bargaining for votes) and ethno-tribalist (belonging to an ethnic group/territory) considerations. The political entrepreneurs then navigate these registers to convince voters who are predisposed to choose only those from their own backgrounds as they are better at defending the interests of their ethnic territory.

Several opinions shared by respondents during this study in Beni illustrate this. For example, a leader of a political party noted that:

*"yes, because the Baswahili[66] say that **kila mamba na kivuko yake' (to each cayman his own pond)**, as soon as the elections are sociological, the leaders are obliged to take the lead in their place of origin, ... People are suspicious of non-native candidates because in our experience they direct their actions in their home areas instead of here."*

Other interviewees echoed these comments, denouncing the dishonest, hateful and divisive nature of comments made by political actors during elections towards members of other ethnic groups. They also added that some traditional chiefs would impose candidates on voters by threatening their constituents with expulsion if they do not vote for their favourite candidates.

II.1.d Ethnic representation in political institutions

Political conflict entrepreneurs also manipulate ethnic identity during elections because there is a logical link between ethnic territories, electoral constituencies, representativeness in political-administrative institutions and the creation of ethnic electoral strongholds[67].

According to the report of the Provincial Assembly of North Kivu, at the end of the 2006 provincial legislative elections in North Kivu, each ethnic group had mobilised its members in order to ensure its representativeness within the provincial political bodies. Of the 42 elected deputies, the Nande ethnic group represented 24 provincial deputies, i.e., 57.14% of the total number of members of the province's deliberative body. This political weight enabled a member of this ethnic group to run for provincial governorship in January 2007, following the elections organised at the second round. The

second political force was the Hutu ethnic group, which has 7 provincial deputies in the Provincial Assembly of North Kivu, or 16.66%. This allowed this ethnic group to run for the presidency of the Provincial Assembly[68].

Territories throughout the country, including Beni, are considered electoral strongholds for political competitors. Some of them do not hesitate to maintain ethnically-based armed groups as a back-up and a means of influencing the political balance of power. This is how various armed rebel

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66   This term covers all populations that share the language of communication "*Kiswahili*".
67   Indeed, the constitution and the electoral law of the DRC provide that territories and towns are electoral districts. Within the territories there are one or more chiefdoms that are both decentralised (modern) administrative entities and customary (the customary chief is at the same time an agent of the state). During elections, candidates organise their election campaigns on the basis of ethnic identity within the original chiefdoms.
68   Lissendja (2017)

and ethnic self-defence groups were created, some of which later became political parties. Some of the political-military leaders of these armed groups have obtained political dividends through dialogue and negotiation, while remaining committed to using violence to obtain power[69].

II.1.e Violence as a consequence of the manipulation and mobilisation of ethno-political identity

More frequently, the notion of ethnicity is linked to that of cultural minority. As T. Lissendja (2017) points out, this may presuppose that a political grouping must have an ethnic basis. This tends to make ethnicity one of the components of both political mobilisation and the construction of political systems, which can lead to the extreme violence of ethnic cleansing[70].

All these opportunities - conventional and unconventional – are used to gain and maintain power, and inevitably contribute to violence based on ethno-political identity in Beni territory. As a result, political actors use this as a resource to consolidate their hold on ethnic groups, religious denominations, non-governmental organisations and civil society. Political conflict entrepreneurs fan the flames of fanaticism and consequently incite political violence within these identity groups.

In North Kivu, the use of identity is a political strategy frequently used by local, national and regional actors for advantageous political positioning. The equation consists of pitting ethnic groups, which political conflict entrepreneurs like to call 'community', against each other as part of their political jockeying for power. Since political conflict entrepreneurs are themselves an offshoot of the different ethnic groups to which they belong, they exploit, adapt to and take advantage of the rivalries between cultural identities to further their ambitions.

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69   Political actors align themselves with these groups to gain power. See online article at https://grandjournalcd.net/2021/03/29/rdc-tonnerre-a-lassemblee-nationale-christophe-mboso-denoncent-des-deputes-membres-des-groupes-armes/,, *DRC/terror at the National Assembly: Christophe Mboso denounces deputies who are members of armed groups* - Here the president of the National Assembly calls on deputies to leave the armed groups. The deputies are said to maintain armed groups as a rear base, once their mandate is over, if they are not re-elected, they can use the armed groups to gain access to power in an unconventional way (for example through dialogues, consultations, etc.), but also to influence the distribution of key positions within the institutions.
70   Lissendja (2017).

II.2 Mapping of actors involved in the dynamics of violence and identity-based conflicts in Beni

Political actors are individual or collective actors who interact and invest, opportunistically or not, in the political field; they are also collective actors who often serve as instruments of political manipulation for individual actors. Individual actors politicise a social reality through various operational modes, which will be explored in greater detail in the following sections of this report.

The town of Beni is full of different types of political actors who intervene in identity-based conflicts and violence. Individual or collective actors act in a direct or indirect way (from near or far, formally or informally). These actors occupy the political, administrative, diplomatic, military, social and economic pyramid at the international, national and local level. Some are more prominent than others. The influence that these actors enjoy is based on and strengthened by material, financial, cultural, and symbolic capital at their disposal.

II.2.a Categories of actors involved in the violence and identity-based conflicts in Beni

The classification of actors is not an easy task, given the complexity of and dynamics at play in identity-based conflicts and violence. However, within the framework of this study and the available data, the actors involved in political life have been classified in three ways according to whether they are victims or whether they play a negative or positive role in the dynamics of identity-based conflicts and violence.

Actors negatively involved in the dynamics of IBV in Beni

Fourteen categories of actors who play a negative role in IBV were listed by the people interviewed during this study. The table below shows the categories of political actors according to their degree of involvement in the conflicts and violence based on identity in Beni, according to the people interviewed.

TABLE 2: PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO CITED SPECIFIC ACTORS AS NEGATIVELY CONTRIBUTING TO CONFLICTS AND IDENTITY-BASED VIOLENCE IN BENI

Actors	Proportion
Armed groups	80%
Public representatives (MPs)	73%
Religious leaders (churches)	53%
Security forces (FARDC, PNC, ANR)	40%
Political party activists and leaders	33%
Non-Governmental Organisations	33%
Political and administrative authorities (the rulers)	50%
Customary leaders	27%
Multinational companies	20%
Ethnic and tribal based communities	13%
The musical artists	6.5%
The media	6.5%
Public services	6.5%
Other leaders (traders)	6.5%

Armed groups: In the majority of cases, armed groups are attached to ethnic groups improperly called 'communities'[71]. They claim control over certain areas occupied by the ethnic groups to which they belong. They offer protection and security to ethnic groups that recognise them as self-defence forces. Some political conflict entrepreneurs use these groups as a political springboard, and if necessary, create them to better position themselves in possible political negotiations. This encourages tension, dissent and the proliferation of armed groups in their search for political dividends. The members of these armed groups, manipulated in this way, become, according to the majority of respondents, 'terrorists', 'warlords', 'road blockers', and 'kidnappers'.

In their modus operandi of life and survival, armed groups use violent protest as political expression. A member of a local women's rights organisation illustrates the presence of ethnically-based armed groups in Beni:

"some tribes have their own armed groups. For example, in Lubero, there is a Mazembe armed group close to the Banande; the Nyature armed group close to the Hutu, the Mayi-Mayi close to the Nyanga."

On several occasions, these groups engage in criminal acts, rape, robbery, murder, looting, besieging villages, burning houses and collecting illegal taxes.

As a result, **armed groups** are also considered the most difficult political actors in terms of collaboration. These include local armed groups (e.g., the Mayi-Mayi), international armed groups (e.g., ADF-NALU, FDLR) and some self-defence forces with ethnic connotations, which arise according to the interests of certain political actors.

People's representatives or Members of Parliament (MPs): during the pre-election period, parliamentary candidates invent rumours and disinformation. During electoral campaigns, they create so-called 'community media', but during their speeches, some of them indulge in insults, defamation, and pit ethnic groups against each other using pseudonyms and jargon communicated in their mother tongues. Their divisive strategies are much more developed in the run-up to the elections. In addition to the media, some MPs create foundations[72] in their names to perpetuate their visibility and popularity. Once in power, some MPs obtain positions of responsibility within the offices of the assemblies (national or provincial) or the government. This is an opportunity for them to hire from their respective ethnic groups, which creates frustrations among other groups.

The interviewees demonstrated that some MPs support armed groups in the province of North Kivu, particularly in the territory of Beni. Several MPs are known to be financial backers and leaders of certain armed groups that are destabilising the region. According to those interviewed, various supplies of arms and food for these armed groups come from these MPs.

Moreover, respondents noted that some political actors are more likely to provoke conflicts than others. In the field, local authorities (town mayor, village chief, neighbourhood chief, mayor etc.) carry out their work by maintaining understanding and cohesion between ethnic groups. Some members of the legislature are seen as aggravating identity conflicts in the region. These include some provincial and national deputies, senators, etc. To summarise, lower-level leaders (those rooted in their 'communities') are considered less likely to inspire violence than those at higher levels.

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71 The concept of 'community' is ideologically loaded and scientifically unsound. The use of the term is far from reflecting the reality of what it is supposed to refer to. It is often used by many actors in an opportunistic way to legitimise their personal interests. The authors choose to put the term in inverted commas because we believe that it is a term that is often pejorative and subject to debate among scientists.

72 A humanitarian organisation that is often promoted by political actors to help the poor and support community actions. These organisations are often centred on the ethnicity of the initiator.

A member of civil society speaking about the suspension of the mayor of Beni said:

"this mayor was suspended and then replaced because he discovered the truth that it is the most popular elected deputies of Beni and other characters who are unfortunately involved in the violence: they bring food to the Mayi-Mayi in the hills while they are working with the ADF."

Religious leaders: Respondents claim that in Beni town, there is a proliferation of religious denominations and that their creation and establishment is often financed by unknown persons. They also claim that if one looks closely, one can find political involvement. Some political entrepreneurs preach and donate to churches with the goal to build up a political base.

In their preaching, these political-religious actors interpret the scriptures in such a way as to discriminate positively or negatively, as the case may be, against certain 'communities'. These religious denominations serve as a cover for many political actors who promote discourses of exclusion or even fundamentalism[73]. Some interviewees indicated that there are 'homogeneous' religious denominations in which a single ethnic group constitutes almost all the believers. The messages disseminated in these churches are likely to pit the said ethnic group against the others.

Some religious denominations, with mono-ethnic tendencies, are said to act in complicity with armed groups that identify with their ethnic base. During previous periods of tension, some churches who identified with these armed groups suffered reprisals from opposing ethnic armed groups. There is a triangulation or close relationship between religious denominations, (militarised) ethnic groups and political actors. In particular, one revivalist church was mentioned several times in a focus group with political leaders in Beni:

"the church of ... the pastor ... who preaches with inflammatory words and incites tribal hatred" and in another focus group with members of citizen movements, in the following terms: *"churches continue to preach love except for the church of ... of the pastor ... who made accusatory words against the Nande."*

The security forces (the repressive apparatus of the state): the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC- Forces Armées de la République Démocratique), Congolese National Police (PNC- Police Nationale Congolaise), the National Intelligence Agency (ANR - Agence Nationale de Renseignement),[74] should be loyal and at the service of the whole society. However, certain challenges are perceptible, such as communication problems, the infiltration of armed groups in the national army, and the ethnicisation of the army and its command.

Firstly, various communications by members of the security services, disseminated in the press and social networks, link ethnic or religious identities to the perpetrators and victims of violence. The criminals (bandits or members of armed groups) are presented to the public primarily through their ethnic or religious affiliation. This use of ethnic and religious markers to identify the perpetrators of crimes makes certain groups appear to be the instigators of violence. This communication and use of the media by the security forces pits

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73   To understand these terms in their pejorative sense as the cause of religious intolerance
74   A government intelligence agency of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

collective identities against each other. As a result, this approach contributes, unconsciously or not, to a culture of revenge, intolerance, and self-defence on the part of ethnic or cultural groups. These attitudes and political communications are, in part, negatively impacting on the communication activities of public/state services and vice versa. This is the shift from individual criminal responsibility to collective (holistic) responsibility.

Secondly, the infiltration of different elements of armed groups in the FARDC is also a problem. There are some officers in the army who maintain relationships with armed groups that have an ethnic or "community" base. There are numerous cases of officers leaving the ranks of the FARDC to return to their respective "communal" or "cultural" armed groups.

Finally, many ethnic groups sometimes reject certain officers who do not belong to their ethnic group. Collective mobilisations are organised to demand that these officers be transferred elsewhere and that they be replaced by 'indigenous' or native officers. In addition, some officers refuse to be transferred to other locations on the grounds that they want to protect the land and members of their ethnic groups.

For these reasons, CSOs and other IBV prevention actors may find it difficult to work with the FARDC and PNC. As these IBV prevention actors sometimes condemn acts of abuse of power and violence, this makes them unpopular with security forces.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs):
Local and international non-governmental organisations intervene in the town of Beni for humanitarian purposes. Discrediting occurs during the implementation of their projects. The challenge is the lack of impartial, rigorous and unbiased studies that can a fair and objective account of the nature of the problems. In addition to this, the principle of 'Do no harm' in relation to diversity is not taken into account. According to numerous interviewees, the agents of these organisations have preferences towards certain 'communities' (ethnic or religious groups) to the detriment

of others. This practice extends to some local NGOs that explicitly favour specific communities over others. In addition to this, negative public perceptions of UN institutions continue to rise and the UN has struggled to gain general trust among the local population. Thus, according to the majority of respondents, they are often accused of being incompetent, ineffective, biased or even complicit in atrocities and chaos. Furthermore, various air flights with unknown destinations fuel beliefs that the United Nations' specialised agencies are engaged in shady and informal activities in the region. Their community engagement at the grassroots level seems to be failing.

State services, in particular the land service:
This research found that the state service is known by the population to be dependent on the highest bidders or to serve the ethnic groups to which its agents belong. With land clientelism, several conflicts arise. Disputes related to the delimitation of land, land titles, land acquisition and even inheritance, are at the origin of several cases of violence. In order to win a land dispute, some interviewees said that ethnicity is a very important factor often used in bargaining. Conflicts between herders and farmers are the source of violence between ethnic groups. Contracts and titles are superimposed, implicitly or not, by certain agents of this state service. The conservation of property titles is a service that escapes any rigorous and impartial control. It is rare to benefit from a public service outside of neo-patrimonial and clientelistic practices. Most of what would be considered a public service seems to take place in the informal sector.

Customary chiefs:
They are historically known as conveners especially within their own ethnic groups. Sometimes their stance and influence are conflictual and create divisions between ethnic and/or tribal groups. During election periods, some traditional chiefs do not hesitate to take sides with certain candidates and sometimes even threaten their subjects with sanctions if they do not elect the people they present to the population. The statement quoted below from a member of a civil society organisation working to prevent violence is evidence of this:

"a traditional chief declared during the last elections that he had two deputies from his ethnic group and that anyone who dared to vote for someone else would be chased out of his entity."

In the political sphere, the laws of the country do not allow customary chiefs to run for elected office at different levels, although they can be co-opted into provincial assemblies. Although their succession is hereditary, their powers have been strengthened by transforming the chieftaincies into Decentralised Territorial Entities and they are therefore agents of the Congolese state. Other facts show that several political actors seek the support of customary chiefs during election periods, yet the 2015 law on the status of customary chiefs requires them to be apolitical[75]. This is a divisive factor in society. Indeed, the coexistence of the electoral logic and the logic of quotas and co-optation is a real source of conflict and violence for the populations who believe in the legitimacy of customary chiefs.

In short, several negative actions pitting one group against another are noticeable in Beni. This reality takes various forms. Some political actors see social tensions and conflicts as opportunities to gain a useful position on the political scene. Some commercial companies, ethnic groups, media and even artists are also perceived as actors who fuel identity-based violence because of their conflict-generating positions and the exploitation of resources in the areas occupied by the rebel groups.

A member of a citizen's movement said in an interview:

"the ADF have been making incursions lately, especially in the Mayango area. These incursions started when companies produced a large quantity of cocoa and today this area is no longer frequented and has caused the displacement of the population to the Rwenzori area. And when [cocoa production started] in Rwenzori, the ADF attacked again towards this area. One wonders then where companies like ESCO KIVU and ONAPAC get the cocoa they export to Uganda while the real cocoa farmers do not harvest it."

Actors positively involved in the dynamics of IBV in Beni

It is difficult to define precisely the positive roles played by certain political actors in Beni. The exercise here is to lay the foundation on their salient and perceptible actions. As the interests of each group are satisfied in a relative way, the actions are judged as positive or negative according to the perception of the ethnic group benefitting from the result. Thus, organisations that do not pursue individual and selfish interests and whose actions do not lead to or prevent violence are considered to play a positive role. These actors include: civil society organisations (members of citizens' movements, human rights organisations, leaders of Muslim or Christian religious denominations, journalists, humanitarian actors, etc.), some Members of Parliament and certain traditional leaders.

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75 Law No. 15/015 of 25 August 2015 establishing the status of customary chiefs, Official Gazette, 31 August 2015, Articles 25, 29.

Indeed, the respondents voted in favour of civil society organisations as being positively involved in the dynamics of the conflict and identity-related violence in Beni. These organisations include citizen movements, local associations, the media and human rights organisations. To a lesser extent, MONUSCO, certain political parties and politicians, the FARDC, traditional chiefs and tribal-ethnic groups were also mentioned by the interviewees. below shows the categories of political actors according to their degree of positive involvement in the conflicts and violence based on identity in Beni according to the interviewees.

TABLE 3: PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO CITED SPECIFIC ACTORS AS POSITIVELY CONTRIBUTING TO CONFLICT AND IDENTITY BASED VIOLENCE IN BENI

Actors	Proportion
Citizens' movements and pressure groups	96%
Local associations and organisations (youth, women, etc.)	75%
International NGOs	56%
Political parties, political party leaders and politicians	36%
Religious denominations	31%
The Media	31%
Human rights organisations	25%
MONUSCO	19 %
The FARDC	19%
Ethnic and tribal groups	19%
Customary leaders	19%

Faced with cases of insecurity, identity-based violence and atrocities in the town of Beni, **civil society organisations and pressure groups** have set up several collective mobilisations (public demonstrations) to denounce and fight against these various acts of violence. Thanks to the work of CSOs and pressure groups, the demands for violence reduction are brought to the attention of the leaders. Through the media and social networks, these citizens' movements have initiated several slogans such as:

"I am Beni", "I cry Beni", "Kinshasa is not the whole Congo", "there is no Congo without Beni", "a look at Beni", "let's say no to violence in Beni".

These emotional slogans are calls for help that aim to get the government's attention, playing on the dramas to 'amplify' the violence that the people of Beni are suffering. However, some members of these citizen movements are accused of obtaining funds from other national or international actors for selfish or hidden interests.

When asked what type of actors should be relied upon for the prevention of identity-based conflicts and violence, the interviewees demonstrated that **civil society organisations** (CSOs) in all their diversity come to the fore. They indicated that working with these organisations has a great chance of success, given that they have the confidence of the population and their actions to date are generally considered to be focused on social well-being.

As the dynamics are changing, special attention should be paid to the in-depth study of these CSOs, as among them there are those whose credibility is in doubt. The infiltration of other groups of actors as a tactic of many political entrepreneurs makes this process more or less sensitive and complex. Although CSOs are praised as commendable actors in the prevention of conflict and violence based on identity in Beni, they are also accused of being influenced by political actors who manipulate them for profit. In some cases, political actors cause divisions between CSOs by favouring one over the other and promise gains. One civil society actor puts the issue as follows:

"This is the case in Beni where we see groups of people of different tendencies yet belonging to the same class: there are two Civil Societies! This is curious in the same town. This means that this duplication is aimed at something other than the people. Understand that if two different groups have the same objectives, they will try to nullify each other's words or actions so that they are the ones who deserve the trust of the people and retain control over them: this is where contradictions, misunderstandings, ... are observed and people are divided. In the end, relations deteriorate among the people."

This practice of creating several civil society groups is used by politicians to infiltrate, manipulate and counter any initiative of civil society organisations that does not suit their interests.

On a positive note, some **MPs**, in search of a certain stability in their electorate, use their parliamentary holidays to pass on messages of peace and peaceful cohabitation in their constituencies. Furthermore, some political actors are very close to the population. Among these actors are those who have families or live in Beni themselves. Some actors use customary, religious, associative, and identity-based entry points to convey messages of awareness and peaceful cohabitation. Within governmental bodies, some elected representatives engage with the parliamentary forum to raise general and salient issues. They work with other political actors who embody the notions of responsibility, good governance, unity, pacification, advocacy and concern for the development of the entities to which they belong. One can also mention the advocacy of some political actors at higher levels to call for peace in Beni.

However, it is important to note that it would also be difficult to work with some politicians, as some respondents argue that they tend to cover up MONUSCO's mistakes and present their image as positive to community members. Another challenge is to identify political actors who are sincere because, as mentioned earlier, many conflict entrepreneurs often wear several hats and hide behind various social groups.

Religious denominations were also cited as supporting violence reduction by the respondents in this study. Religious actors consider that their line of conduct revolves around social peace, cohabitation, well-being, neighbourly love, and the fight against discrimination. However, some individuals and religious leaders advocate speeches that are likely to incite hatred and identity-based withdrawal and consequently violence, and therefore they represent a complicated group for collaboration.

The media were favoured by the respondents because they consider that the media obey certain ethical rules that recommend neutrality in the treatment of information. The same is true for musical artists who, in their artistic works, produce messages of cohesion and denounce human rights violations. However, some media actors are instruments of politicians and other conflict entrepreneurs who use them to disseminate messages inciting violence for their own benefit.

Some interviewees reported that the **FARDC**, in collaboration with **MONUSCO**, are fighting armed groups, in particular the ADF, and are helping to reduce identity-based violence in Beni. On the other hand, however, MONUSCO is criticised negatively by the majority of respondents in this study. According to focus group participants, the UN Mission's staff are seen as tourists, and the results of their work are not tangible. Others consider that the Mission funds local armed groups such as the ADF that contribute to violence in the region. Collaboration between MONUSCO and other actors is therefore not easy. This is illustrated by business leaders in a focus group:

"MONUSCO plays two roles, sometimes they supply the armed groups with food and non-food items"; "MONUSCO makes us suffer. One day, I had caught MONUSCO agents entering the forest to supply food to the ADF. Now we see them as a bridge to the ADF".

Finally, it is also advisable, as some interviewees said, to collaborate with the **Federation of Enterprises of Congo (FEC)** and **transporters' associations**, such as the Association of Congo Drivers (ACCO - Association des Chauffeurs du Congo) and motorbike taxi drivers' associations in peacebuilding, as they are viewed to be key partners in the current dynamics of conflict in Beni.

Actors negatively impacted by identity-based violence in Beni

Some of the groups that are victims of identity-based conflicts and violence, particularly ethnic groups, are themselves members of the groups who are also viewed as perpetrators of violence. The belief that these armed groups constitute a 'community' self-defence system allows them to find allies within the 'community' and therefore makes it easier to recruit fighters. One of the comments that best illustrates this theory was collected from a member of an organisation working for better cohabitation between ethnic groups:

"we also know that the armed groups did not come into being on their own, they are encouraged by certain parents who believe that children should take charge of themselves, so in the outskirts of the town there are about twenty Mayi-Mayi armed groups, but they speak the same language. We met with these groups, who all identify with the Bay-ira, to ask them what they were gaining by waging war. They answer that it is to protect themselves. "

The table below lists some of the groups of victims of identity-based conflicts and violence as mentioned by the people interviewed during this study. It should be noted that women also constitute key victims as highlighted in chapter 2.

TABLE 4: PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO CITED SPECIFIC GROUPS AS NEGATIVELY AFFECTED BY CONFLICT AND IDENTITY BASED VIOLENCE IN BENI

Actors	Proportion
The Nande ethnic group	62%
The military	62%
Civil society organisations[76]	54%
Pygmies	46%
Other tribal-ethnic groups[77]	39%
The Wakurima [78]	39%
Farmers	39%
Traders	16%
Musicians	8%
Politicians	8%
People living with disabilities	8%

The Nande and other tribal-ethnic groups:

The Nande consist of the majority of the population in Beni and according to the interviewees, they also constitute a large proportion of the victims of identity-related violence. The other 'minority' ethnic groups also see themselves as victims and believe that the problem comes from the 'majority' group, the Nande. Hence, there are recurring attacks, the settling of scores and mob justice against members of the opposing ethnic groups.

A member of a local organisation said:

"Beni is a multi-ethnic territory with the domination of the Nande ethnic group, so we see their hold on all the other ethnic groups in the area. There are minority communities whose leaders convey hateful messages against the majority community. I cite the Bakombe community which considers itself indigenous but which has been invaded by the Nande who have become the majority."

The FARDC military: Both in the FARDC military and the armed groups have suffered many losses due to the violence. On the FARDC side, soldiers and their families easily find themselves on different fronts given the precarious conditions in which they live in the camps. In addition to this, many wounded soldiers find themselves abandoned by the government and are forced to beg for money to survive[79].

Members of civil society organisations: some of which are pressure groups for change. These organisations often mobilise their members to denounce, make declarations or create memoranda in order to oppose the violence perpetrated against the civilian population. The leaders of these organisations are therefore the main target of the instigators of the violence. Some are threatened, killed, imprisoned, kidnapped or forced into exile.

Pressure groups contain people who are targeted everywhere in authoritarian systems as individuals to be corrupted, silenced or eliminated. Among them are journalists, human rights defenders, some MPs, some politicians and young musicians who convey messages of peace and denunciation through their artistic works.

Pygmies: they are considered "indigenous" by some, but they are not attached to a specific territorial entity as they are historically nomadic. They are also the target of various armed groups who often find them on their way through the forests that constitute their natural habitat, these habitats tend to be invaded and occupied by armed groups. They attack pygmies, kill them and even destroy their homes. Their spaces are taken over by culturally politicised armed groups with hegemonic ambitions.

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76   This group includes: members of citizen movements, human rights organisations, leaders of religious denominations (Muslim and Christian), journalists, humanitarian actors.
77   Bashu, Baswagha, Bamate, Batangi, Bahira, Bakira, Bapakombe, Bambute, Babila, Banisanza, Bakumbule, Bapere, Balegha, Bahambo, the Hutus, etc.
78   Rwandophones, mostly farmers.
79   Interview with a civil society leader

In a focus group discussion with women traders, this statement was collected:

"Pygmies are also very affected because they are being chased out of their natural living environment (the forest), even though they live only on hunting and gathering and have no other place to live."

Farmers and herders: according to interviewees, livestock is looted by armed groups, fields are abandoned by farmers and harvested by armed groups from whom some economic operators come to buy goods at lower cost.

Transporters: According to respondents, the territory of Beni is linked to other towns via different roads, courriers and their convoys are the target of several attacks. The people targeted are traders who transport goods and money via different agencies. These economic operators are the target of various abuses by armed groups. Vehicles are often set on fire. Several armed groups impose lump sums of money on certain courriers, which they must pay in advance before any release. However, some transport agencies reportedly collaborate with these armed groups so as not to be bothered during the journey.

People living with disabilities: Respondents also cited people living with disabilities as victims. They are, for the most part, dependent on others due to their motor, hearing, visual, mental, etc. limitations.

II.2.b Level of collaboration between different groups of political actors

The level of collaboration between political actors can be strong, moderate or weak. These links were classified on the basis of the opinions collected from the interviewees, but also on the basis of informal interviews and the secondary research on the interaction between different political actors in Beni. The table below shows the level of collaboration between the different groups of political actors in Beni.

TABLE 5: LINKS BETWEEN DIFFERENT GROUPS OF POLITICAL ACTORS

Strong collaboration	Moderate collaboration	Weak collaboration
1. NGOs ↔Traditional leaders 2. NGOs politicians ↔ political and administrative authorities 3. Customary chiefs ↔ political and administrative authorities 4. Customary leaders ↔ pressure groups 5. Politicians ↔ MONUSCO 6. MONUSCO ↔ Justice 7. CSO Pressure ↔ Groups 8. Political and administrative authorities ↔ Economic operators 9. Justice ↔ Churches	1. Customary chiefs ↔ Justice 2. Customary chiefs ↔ MPs 3. The artists/musicians ↔ traditional leaders	1. MONUSCO ↔ Pressure groups 2. Traders ↔ traditional leaders 3. Law enforcement ↔ Pressure groups 4. Pressure groups ↔ Justice 5. Law enforcement ↔ pressure group 6. Pressure groups ↔ Economic operators 7. Pressure groups ↔ Estate services 8. Pressure groups ↔ politicians

* the back and forth arrows (1) designate an existing relationship between actors.

CHAPTER III. OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OF IBV IN BENI

III.1 A breakdown of the complex networks behind the violence in Beni

The perpetuation of violence based on ethnic, religious, gender and political identities in Beni has several causes, ranging from the identity integration crisis to the instrumentalisation of causes (political, economic, religious, etc.) by conflict entrepreneurs. The latter take advantage of the legitimisation violent protests, which is related to the failure/crisis of the state[80] (a source of frustration), to obtain material, goods and advantages.

Indeed, the links between mobilisation and identity-based violence stem from the constraints of ethnic belonging, which force individuals to join armed groups in defence of their ethnic territories and the quest for ethnic or cultural hegemony. Alongside identity-based protectionism, which encourages ethnic groups to mobilise violently, there are elements including political positioning, as well as material, economic and symbolic interests (satisfaction), which determine the degree of commitment of conflict entrepreneurs.
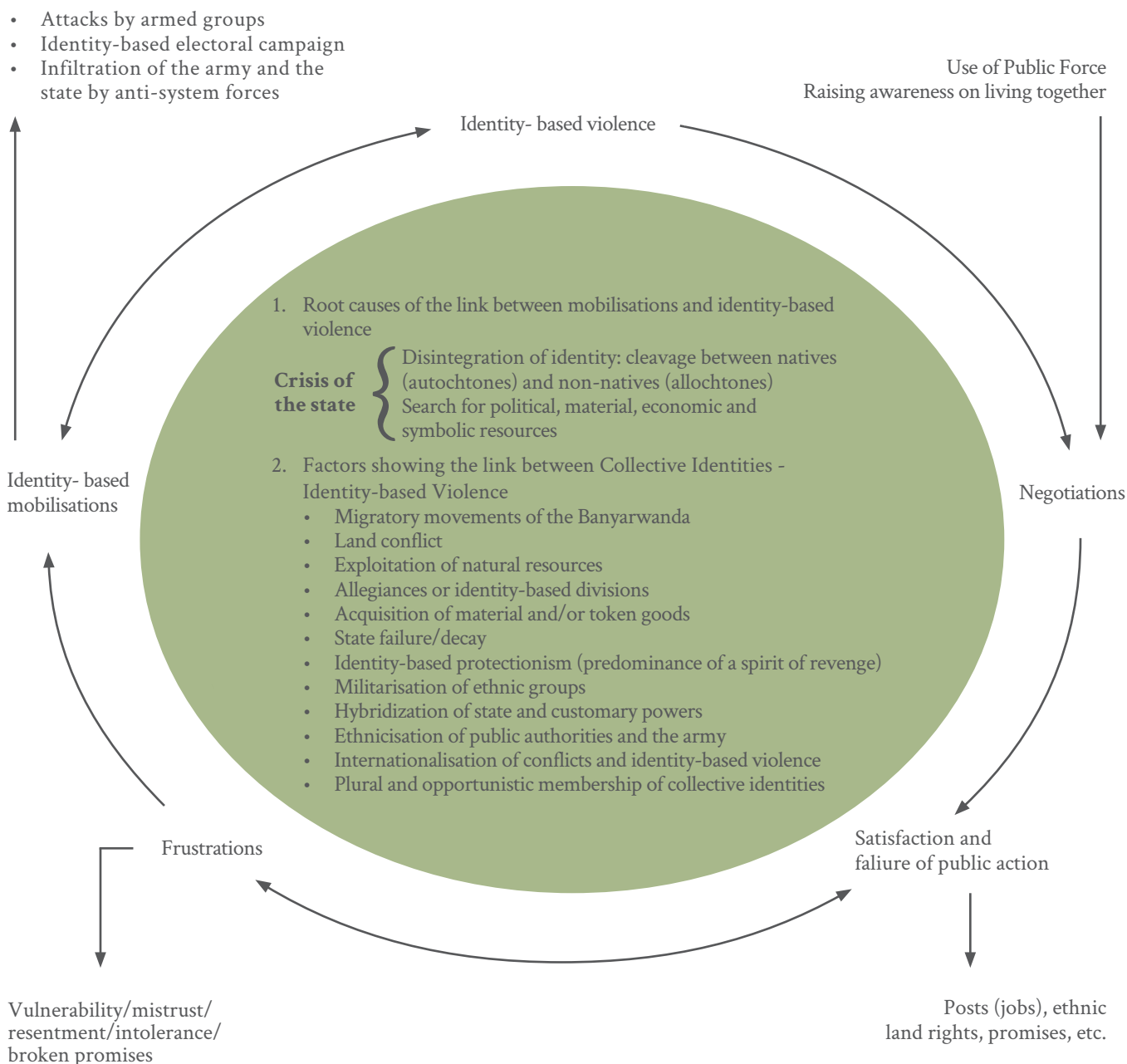
Moreover, alongside ethnic identity, there are other identities (religious, professional, political, gender, etc.), which are correlated and can be mobilised, alone or in combination, to achieve the same objectives. Identity conflict entrepreneurs are, consciously or unconsciously, unaware of the risks of they pose on the existence of the state and its functions. The violence caused by the exploitation of collective identities can either lead to negotiations to achieve political dividends and symbolic positioning, or to perpetuate violence within mafia-like networks in order to exploit natural resources or to satisfy certain ambitions.

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80 Steuer (2012). *State failure. Due to an inability to fully perform their function, some of the states that emerged from decolonisation do not in fact manage to meet the criteria for the definition of a true state. For example, they do not always have sufficient extractive capacity to claim an effective exercise of the monopoly of legitimate physical violence. Their regular army can therefore be challenged by 'private' armed groups: community or ethnic militias, troops financed by a foreign power to control part of the territory, etc. These states...only partially control their territories and are unable to impose their law on all the populations under their jurisdiction. Moreover, the imported state is generally unable to perform its distributive function, as public resources are monopolised by the rulers and their extended families, or even their clans, religious communities or tribes. This situation of neo-patrimonialism leads to the constitution and perpetuation of networks of private clients who thus become a privileged means - if not the only means - of accessing the resources of the state.... Indeed, the establishment of a rational administration recruiting its civil servants on the sole criterion of competition becomes impossible in a system where private clientele networks, nepotism, co-optation or community membership constitute the main means of access to public service jobs.*

The outcome of these negotiations and the illegal exploitation of natural resources favour and lead to the emergence of the conflict entrepreneurs; at the same time, they create new frustrations that give rise to new demands and generate new violence created by the armed groups based on identity. This is the reality in Beni. The figure below proposes an explanatory model of the "identity-based mobilisations - identity-based violence" cycle in Beni.

In the light of the above figure, the situation of conflict and violence based on identity in Beni territory has become part of the status quo, which the conflict entrepreneurs, at various levels, have a particular interest in maintaining unabated. Multiple incentives have become a way of life and a matter of survival for political or economic conflict entrepreneurs.

FIGURE 2: CYCLE OF IDENTITY-BASED MOBILISATIONS FOR VIOLENCE IN BENI

- Attacks by armed groups
- Identity-based electoral campaign
- Infiltration of the army and the state by anti-system forces

Use of Public Force
Raising awareness on living together

Identity- based violence

1. Root causes of the link between mobilisations and identity-based violence

Crisis of the state { Disintegration of identity: cleavage between natives (autochtones) and non-natives (allochtones)
Search for political, material, economic and symbolic resources

2. Factors showing the link between Collective Identities - Identity-based Violence
   - Migratory movements of the Banyarwanda
   - Land conflict
   - Exploitation of natural resources
   - Allegiances or identity-based divisions
   - Acquisition of material and/or token goods
   - State failure/decay
   - Identity-based protectionism (predominance of a spirit of revenge)
   - Militarisation of ethnic groups
   - Hybridization of state and customary powers
   - Ethnicisation of public authorities and the army
   - Internationalisation of conflicts and identity-based violence
   - Plural and opportunistic membership of collective identities

Identity- based mobilisations

Negotiations

Frustrations

Satisfaction and faliure of public action

Vulnerability/mistrust/ resentment/intolerance/ broken promises

Posts (jobs), ethnic land rights, promises, etc.

III. 2. Strategies and counterstrategies behind the perpetuation of identity-based conflicts and violence in Beni

The crisis/failure or decay of the state[81] leads to frustrations and dissatisfaction among the population, which are exploited by conflict entrepreneurs through the breakdown identity in the quest for political, material and symbolic resources. These frustrations are transformed into demands on behalf of a part of the population whose interests contrast with the collective interest. In this case, the conflict entrepreneurs present the protection of an ethnic territory and its resources or its cultural heritage, but in reality, personal or veiled interests can even be opposed to community interests.

Strategies (mechanisms) are invented or even reinvented by identity conflict entrepreneurs to incite aggressive behaviour, including calls for identity-based mobilisation (identity-based demonstrations, the use of the media and other communication channels), the creation of identity-based armed groups, infiltration in the army and the state by armed groups (certain internal or external state and non-state actors), etc. This process culminates in the mobilisation of identities, which triggers identity-based violence.

To counter this, counterstrategies are put in place, notably, on the one hand, the use of public force and/or negotiations initiated by public authorities, and on the other hand, the use of persuasive mechanisms of 'living together' by pro-system forces (certain internal or external state and non-state actors). However, the counterstrategies put in place to combat identity-based violence are underperforming. This produces new frustrations and dissatisfaction which, in turn, lead to new violent strategies. Hence the perpetuation of identity-based conflicts and violence, and so the circle is complete.

III.2.a Exploitation of vulnerability

In order to gain power, conflict entrepreneurs exploit vulnerable people with self-serving compassion to gain their support. For example, politicians distribute money, food, non-food items and even promises to a specific part of the "community" to gain their support. Some armed groups promise attractive salaries to young people by opportunistically tapping into the patriotic self-defence of their respective "communities" or religious beliefs. The electoral campaign is a privileged moment for politicians to exploit the vulnerabilities of the population in Beni and everywhere else in the DRC. Moreover, a study carried out in Bukavu on the first elections after the Mobutu era has largely illustrated the strategies mobilised by the electoral competitors in the DRC who navigate on clientelism, theft of public funds, and identity mobilisation (kinship, tradition, clubs or associations of friends, corporations, gender).[82]

High unemployment, poverty and crime among young people make them a target for conflict entrepreneurs to use them as instruments to commit violence in their own "communities". These political actors do not usually reside in these "communities" and are therefore not directly affected by the violence.

A representative of a youth organisation in Beni concluded:

"they divide the ethnic groups to rule better. They use intoxication to get elected. They benefit from the support of their political parties and mentors. They manipulate the youth and other youth associations to increase their popularity."

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81   Steuer (2012)
82   Makuta Mwambusa, (2012).

III.2.b Stirring up violence/violent feelings

Politicians and other political actors also use triggers to stir up identity-based violence and then present themselves as 'heroes'. Political actors can stir up old feelings/tensions to encourage conflict. When the situation deteriorates, these actors provide financial resources to gain notoriety and portray their ethnic groups as victims by telling them to 'take matters into their own hands', which tends to be code for revenge/violence.

The interviewees sufficiently demonstrated that some parliamentarians support armed groups in the province of North Kivu, in general, and in Beni, in particular. In these areas, several parliamentarians are known to be financiers, informers and leaders of certain armed groups that destabilise the population.

A member of an organisation working on inter-ethnic reconciliation said the following during interviews in Beni:

"each ethnic group seeks to form an armed group to take charge of itself; in order to have power, people are divided to create enmities between communities. At a certain point, we observed Yira Power joining the ADF in order to constitute an ethnic territory as the Tutsi Power did in Uganda and Rwanda to become an independent state from Kanyabayonga to Kasese. These conflicts are fuelled by leaders, politicians. Since 2010, violence is spontaneously perpetrated against people with a Rwandan accent or who have a Nilotic morphology commonly called Wakurima. They tend to make people believe that the enemy is the one who comes from Rwanda, from Rutshuru."

In addition, when violent actors are captured, these political actors, in some cases through the military, overemphasise the ethnic identity of the person to create resentment towards the ethnic group of the captured actors. Members of other ethnic groups then see these ethnic groups as their executioners instead of seeing the perpetrator as an individual. Indeed, there are numerous videos circulating on social networks in which captured members of armed groups are interrogated by the military and made to confess their ethnicity.

III.2.c Infiltrating and manipulating different collective identities and stakeholder groups

Some perpetrators of identity-based violence have power over armed factions that, although part of the national army, still recognise the authority of the sponsoring political actor. During hostilities, the factions follow the orders of these political actors. The latter, seeking to gain power, can also work through state structures by manipulating and creating disorder within state institutions. They can also exert influence on the judicial system. Senior army officers were even cited in the UN Experts' report as being involved in the looting of resources, including cocoa cultivation, and in conflicts and violence in Beni[83].

By analysing data collected in the field, we notice that a politician may own a social foundation that bears his name in order to gain popularity and fame. Simultaneously, political actors who are members of political parties act as religious leaders in churches, as members of civil society and sometimes own so-called "community radios". This atmosphere of proliferation, polarisation and even overlapping identities means that, when mapping, we find them in several areas of intervention.

Very often, and opportunistically, they may therefore present themselves as, for example, humanitarian workers or officials, civil society actors, religious

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83   UN, 2020, *Mid-term report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo,* UN Security Council, p.8

actors, etc., in order to capture the attention of the population at a given moment. As elections approach, they turn their actions into propaganda. This is where the roots of political intolerance and religious fundamentalism, which are sources of exclusion, conflict and violence, can develop.

They may even use cultural/sporting events to sow discord, turn young people against each other and exacerbate these tensions at community level. They sometimes work under the guise of humanitarian, social (setting up foundations and friends' groups as discussed in the previous chapter), or religious individuals (posing as pastors or 'men of God') with the goal to help communities. These are then used as tools of propaganda when elections approach. In short, politicians and other conflict entrepreneurs infiltrate other groups to raise the political stakes.

III.2.d External actors and identity conflicts

Political actors tend to use clientelism for individual gain - this is the case for development projects and humanitarian work. Political actors will support external actors if their interests align but will sabotage or turn local communities against these actors if their interests do not. One INGO was cited by interviewees in this study as being suspected of colluding with 'allochthonous' (Rwandophone) groups by building houses for them. Indeed, this INGO is said to work to support refugees and displaced persons who turn out to be Rwandophones. This situation is a springboard for political conflict entrepreneurs who use it to exacerbate resentments within the 'indigenous' groups, particularly by pitting the Nande ethnic group against the Rwandophones.

Other external actors, including companies, are cited by respondents in this study as continuing to exploit cocoa in areas controlled by the ADF and other armed factions, whether ADF-related or not. The exploitation of natural resources in general by national and multinational companies in areas of conflict and violence is a support to armed groups as these companies often negotiate with them to exploit without being bothered. The FARDC, armed

groups and other identity-based factions supported by political actors are also involved in cocoa exploitation in Beni territory. Moreover, several armed groups and unidentified bandits commit acts of violence that they blame on the ADF in order to chase away farmers by instilling fear and thus profit from the cocoa industry of Beni.

III.2.e Channels of communication or dissemination of messages of incitement to identity-related violence

The media is used to spread hate messages. Personal media disguised as community radio stations are usually created during the election period. Politicians' speeches revolve around name-calling, defamation and pitting ethnic groups against each other using pseudonyms and jargon from their local languages. Communication channels that are difficult to control and discern by the authorities are normally used to incite identity-based violence. Tribal-ethnic groups meetings, community radio stations, leaflets, posters of identity symbols, telephone messages, websites and social networks as a whole are widely used. A leader of a political party in Beni summarised this aspect well:

"the channels used are mainly sensitisation, meetings between leaders of the same ethnic group: messages are passed on in ethnic/ tribal language to say 'beware, if you are not careful, there are other ethnic groups who want to take our land'. Such a message will be conveyed, and the non-natives become the target of the originals who see them as potential enemies and have to organise themselves for a possible retaliation."

The Church is sometimes used as a vehicle for identity politics. Respondents pointed out that there is a proliferation of churches, especially the so-called revivalist churches in Beni. Political figures are said to be behind the creation of these churches.

CHAPTER IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

IV.1 Conclusions

The general objective of this study was to analyse the degree of involvement of political actors in the dynamics of identity-based conflicts and violence in Beni. To achieve this objective, this work started from the hypothesis that, on one hand, political actors use collective identities as a source of power on the political, economic and social levels, during and outside political or electoral competitions through neo-patrimonial practices to promote IBV conflict and violence. Conversely, political actors also play a central role in the prevention of conflicts and violence based on identity in the territory of Beni, in particular. To verify these hypotheses, qualitative research and analysis methods were used: a review of the literature on the subject, focus groups, community meetings and individual interviews with key informants in Beni.

The analysis of the data obtained from the groups and individuals interviewed confirmed the hypothesis that political actors in Beni not only use collective identities for political, economic, social and symbolic ranking purposes, but also play a central role in both the perpetuation and prevention of identity-based violence in Beni. Firstly, it is clear that the deep-rooted causes that link identity mobilisation and identity-based violence in Beni include the crisis of the state and the failure of social policies, which lead to the disintegration of identities. This also applies to the political, material, economic and symbolic opportunism of identity-based conflict entrepreneurs whose life and political survival strategies constitute a denial of the state and of any ideal of social integration (the 'allochthonous' - 'autochthonous' divide).

Secondly, although it is impossible to directly capture the covert strategies of conflict entrepreneurs, the data collected in Beni identified a non-exhaustive list of factors that shape collective identities by transforming them into identity-based conflicts and violence. These include the bankruptcy or decay of the state, the legitimisation of ethnic entities, identity-based protectionism (with the predominance of a spirit of vengeance and rancour between ethnic groups), allegiance to or withdrawal into one's own identity, the militarisation of ethnic groups, the hybridisation of state and customary powers, the ethnicisation of public authorities and the army, the plural and opportunistic membership of collective identities, migratory movements, land conflicts, the exploitation of natural resources, the acquisition of material and/or symbolic goods, as well as the internationalisation of identity-based conflicts and violence.

An attempt was made to model and theorise the dynamics of the violence perpetrated in Beni by estimating that the starting point of identity-based violence is the frustrations of the population, resulting from the crisis of the state and social policies as seen above. In the absence of a population management programme, conflict entrepreneurs communalise ethnic, religious, political, socio-professional differences, etc., to the detriment of the state in order to achieve their self-serving goals. However, the strategies and forces in place to prevent and/or combat identity-based violence are unable to counter the mechanisms and approaches implemented by the identity-based conflict entrepreneurs. Hence the interminable cycle of conflicts and violence based on identity in the territory of Beni.

Finally, the perceptions of the people interviewed during this study show a complexity in the role played by political actors in the dynamics of identity-based conflicts and violence in Beni. Although certain actors including within civil society and certain politicians have been praised as the best placed actors to fight against identity-based conflicts and violence, it is difficult to distinguish between positive and negative actors in the prevention of IBV in Beni. This is due to the fact that the roles of these actors are duplicitous and changeable depending on the circumstances and the fluctuating and dynamic issues at stake.

To support the work of identity-based conflict and violence prevention, it is first necessary to encourage an inclusive approach to working with and bringing together groups with different identities and to promote the participation of these groups' members in community management. Respondents in a focus group with teachers advocated awareness-raising work with the argument: *"No to identity-based violence".* Apart from this, the interviewees argued that any person or organisation coming up with a project to put an end to violence in all its forms would be listened to by the population of Beni.

Secondly, listening to the different ethnic groups and creating a sincere dialogue between them by placing them on an equal footing will prove fruitful. Nonetheless, it is important to note that this is a difficult task because there is a strong feeling of rejection between the ethnic groups, particularly between the 'natives' (mainly Nande) and the 'allochtones' (mainly Hutu). This is confirmed by statements made by some of the people interviewed at a community meeting:

"We have a very bad image of foreigners who come to stress the population and who are called WAKURIMA".

Therefore, there is a need to work with actors who do not focus on individual interests but on the public community's interest. These actors include: CSOs, citizen movements, INGOs, the media, religious denominations, some members of parliament and some traditional leaders.

Finally, the strengthening of the state will not only ensure the security of the population and its property but will also improve socio-economic conditions and access to employment. In addition, whilst this is happening in tandem, in the meantime, there is a need to revise certain laws that enshrine the ethnicisation of territories and grant collective nationality on the basis of ethnicity.

IV.2 Recommendations

These recommendations, based on the analysis of the data collected in the field, are addressed to the DRC government, the provincial government of North Kivu, the political and administrative authorities of Beni, MONUSCO, civil society, national and international non-governmental organisations, the World Trade Organisation and international donors.

To the Government of the DRC

1. Revise the provisions of the Constitution and laws that enshrine the ethnicisation of territorial entities, the collective acquisition of Congolese nationality on the basis of ethnicity and the politicisation of collective identities. In this case, Article 10, paragraph 2 of the current Constitution and Article 6 of Law No. 04/024 of 12 November 2004 on Congolese nationality should be amended as follows, "this provision should either be deleted with all the consequences for the related provisions in order to avoid ethno-nationalism (a feeling of identification with and attachment to an ethnic group that serves as an identity marker for belonging to an ethnic nation corresponding to the ethnic territory) and confusion over the nationality of members of transnational ethnic groups."

2. Restore the authority of the state by strengthening the presence of the state in remote areas where power vacuums have led to the proliferation of non-state armed actors and promote equitable justice in the service of integration, peace and social cohesion. This should be done by building and equipping territorial infrastructures and courts and tribunals by bringing them closer to the people. Adopt a population management policy (demographic policy) by carrying out at least a second general and scientific census of the population, and by issuing identity cards to all Congolese in accordance with the law. The need for this census is to provide a baseline for population management, given that the first census was rendered obsolete by repeated wars which did not facilitate updating of population movements and demographic growth.

3. Open up the territories by building road and airport infrastructures, not only to fight armed groups effectively, but also to facilitate contact between the various social groups on the national territory, and thus dilute 'ethno-nationalism' in the ideal of the nation-state, which favours living together.

To the provincial government of North Kivu

4. Support local organisations working in the field of reconciliation and inter-ethnic cohabitation by creating, while taking accompanying measures, a framework for consultation, socialisation for citizenship and inter-ethnic dialogue.

5. Fight against ethnic favouritism in the distribution of posts in provincial institutions.

To the political and administrative authorities of Beni

6. The Mairie and the territory of Beni, in collaboration with the sectors, chiefdoms and communes, should take advantage of their reputation in the community to raise awareness among grassroots leaders (heads of neighbourhoods, avenues, villages, ten houses) and other groups (associations) of young people, women, etc., about the fight against the spread of messages of tribal-ethnic hatred and the detection of information intoxicating tribal hatred, and if necessary, to suspend the media that disseminate these messages.

To MONUSCO

7. Given the dissatisfaction and mistrust of the local population towards MONUSCO, it would be beneficial to use Chapter VII of the UN Charter to support the FARDC in prioritising civilian protection in their interventions in Beni.

8. In the MONUSCO withdrawal strategy, capitalise on the achievements of the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo by integrating the training of the FARDC, the allocation of MONUSCO logistics to state structures and by creating a structure for monitoring and sustaining these achievements in close collaboration with the UN. Request independent and impartial investigations to assess the possible cases of misconduct by MONUSCO peacekeepers in the accomplishment of their mission, in order to reassure the local population that its units are not involved in the violence perpetrated in Beni.

9. The Civil Affairs Section of MONUSCO should strengthen its system of communication and collaboration with local populations, civil society organisations and grassroots leaders through community outreach activities and sensitisation on the role and missions of MONUSCO, as the expectations of the local populations seem to be out of sync with its roles and missions.

To civil society

10. Raising awareness of political citizenship instead of identity-based and/or ethnic citizenship, by familiarising social groups with citizenship education and socialisation in republican values.

11. Avoid the politicisation of civil society by reducing the control of politicians over it by abolishing the logic of quotas in favour of the civilian society in the distribution of political positions or public mandates.

12. Coordinate the actions of civil society in the prevention of and fight against identity-based violence in order to mitigate the infiltration of identity-based conflict entrepreneurs within it.

To the World Trade Organisation

13. Regulate the cocoa trade in eastern DRC by requiring certification and traceability of cocoa and other raw materials from Beni to discourage exploitation as a result of violence.

International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs)

14. Take into account the principles of "Do no harm", inclusiveness and conflict sensitivity in their areas of intervention during the implementation of development projects.

15. Consider sustainable impact components in each project, especially those that create local skills and employment.

To international donors

16. Enhance, through funding, independent research and careful analysis of actors working in the prevention and fight against conflict and violence based on identity in Beni, in order to eliminate any possibility of funding organisations that are subservient to identity-based entrepreneurs. The analysis of data collected in the field by means of surveys, interviews and observations will make it possible to identify local, national and international organisations that have a positive impact on the implementation of interventions to prevent violence in general, and identity-based violence in particular.

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This second report analyses the role and degree of political actors' involvement in conflict and identity-based violence dynamics in the Beni territory of DR Congo.