

MAMBASA

IRUMU

BENI VILLE

BENI TERRITOIRE

BUTEMBO

LUBERO

UGANDA

LOCALISED ANALYSIS OF CONFLICTS IN BENI (NORTH KIVU/DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO): actors, collective identities and opportunities for peace

JANUARY 2025





RESEARCH INITIATIVES FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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FORUM DE PAIX

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We would like to make it clear that the statements and views expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of all project partners.



CONTENTS

Executive summary on the analysis of the conflicts in Beni	5
List of acronyms	7
Introduction	8
Methodology	10
Limitations	11
1. Beni territory	12
2. Types of conflicts in Beni	13
Conflicts of power	14
Land disputes	16
Conflicts linked to armed groups such as the ADF	22
Conflicts linked to sexual violence	25
Ethno-regional conflicts	27
Conflicts over access to natural resources in Beni	31
Political conflicts	33
Conflicts linked to social regulation	33
Conflicts relating to public governance	35
Conflicts linked to forced population movements: the governance of humanitarian action and development aid	37
Cyclical and seasonal conflicts in Beni	40
Other types of conflict in Beni	40
3. Causes of conflict in Beni	43
Actors and consequences of the conflicts in Beni	45
4. Experiences, opportunities and approaches to peace already tested in Beni	48
Peace experiments tested in Beni	48
Local action as an opportunity for conflict prevention and peacebuilding	51
5. Factors limiting peacebuilding and collaboration between actors in Beni	53
Conclusion and recommendations	56
Appendices	64
Appendix I: Interview guide for focus groups and individual interviews	64
Appendix II: Illustration showing some land dispute sites in the city of Beni	67
Bibliography	68



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ON THE ANALYSIS OF THE CONFLICTS IN BENI

The conflicts in Beni are both the causes and the consequences of atrocities and multiple human rights violations, including those that concern the protection of civilians. Studies show that a combination of four key factors¹ explains certain specific conflict dynamics in the Beni territory. These factors include:

POOR GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC ACTION

(the crisis of trust between those in power and those being governed, concerning the State's inability to ensure the security of people and their property, but also to implement public policies guaranteeing the minimum conditions for the development and well-being of the population) leads to **identity-based isolationism**. The struggle for access to and control over natural resources, combined with constant poverty and vulnerability, weakens community capacity and resilience in the face of mass atrocities.

THE LACK OF COLLABORATION between those involved in security governance, protection and the prevention of conflicts and atrocities, as well as the **instrumentalisation of collective identities**, all contribute to exclusion and discrimination.

THE LACK OF INFORMATION, citizens' poor knowledge of rights and a **crisis of trust between political, judicial and social institutions** make it difficult to access truth and justice, which are necessary and indispensable conditions for peace.

THE CONSTANT INSECURITY AND FORCED POPULATION DISPLACEMENT

at the hands of armed groups and individuals compounds a host of linked corollary dynamics, including epidemics, **state of siege-related abuses, and tensions and intolerance linked to the December 2023 election**. Together, these factors fuel conflict and sustain cycles of violence.²

¹ These factors are based on those cited by Philippe Hugon, in particular structural, cyclical, institutional and political, and informational factors. Philippe Hugon, "Conflits armés, insécurité et trappes à pauvreté en Afrique." *Afrique contemporaine*, vol. 218, no. 2, 2006, pp. 33-47.

² Interview with a mixed focus group in Beni Mbau on 7 April 2023. These factors often aggravate conflicts, because when there are armed attacks against civilians, the response of the security services is often delayed, despite early warnings, and this gives the population the impression that they have been abandoned. There is also the inappropriate behaviour of some of those responsible for the state of siege, who are more concerned with fiscal problems than security issues, which irritates the local population.



Conflicts therefore vary according to the context and the specific realities of each administrative sub-ENTITY in the Beni region.³ The most common types of conflict in Beni city and territory include **power and customary conflicts, identity conflicts, armed conflicts, conflicts linked to humanitarian assistance, seasonal conflicts, conflicts linked to forced displacement and population movement, land conflicts, ethno-regional conflicts, conflicts linked to natural resources⁴ and, finally, conflicts linked to the governance of public action and the crisis in societal regulation, which are sources of intolerance, violence and atrocities.**

However, the recurring violence and tensions in the region cannot be explained solely by formal endogenous and structural factors, they are also affected by exogenous, cyclical and even informal factors.

This study, based on field interviews carried out in April 2023, also shows that poor relations between state security services, on the one hand, and the neglect of localised early warnings and weak operational capacity to coordinate security responses on the other, continue to play a decisive role in cycles of violence and atrocities in a precarious security context.

Consequently, the work of preventing and responding to mass atrocities, as well as the consolidation of peace in the area, requires the constant rehabilitation of trust between those involved in the security system – through rigorous, integrated and innovative pilot actions that take contextual realities into account, but also through civic education with a perceptible and lasting impact.

³ The administrative structure in the DRC is as follows: Level 1: Province; Level 2: City and Territory; Level 3: Sector, Chiefdom, Rural Commune and Urban Commune; Level 4: Grouping, Embedded Grouping and Quarter; Level 5: Village and Road. (Source: Archives of the Ministry of the Interior 2017 / developed by the toponymy laboratory / Institut géographique du Congo [Congo Geographical Institute] / DRC, work presented by Pax Mbuyi Mucici. Furthermore, as we will explain in the following pages, issues relating to customary entities through their chiefs are often a source of conflict. The relevant analysis can be carried out at the three levels at which customary authority is exercised. Article 3 of law no. 15/015 dated 25 August 2015 establishing the status of customary chiefs stipulates that: "Customary authority is exercised within the following territorial entities: 1. The Chiefdom; 2. The Grouping; 3. The Village, organised on the basis of local custom."³ Groupings and villages are led by clan chiefs (descendants of the chief of the chiefdom and answerable to them).

⁴ See access to timber, cocoa, etc. This sector is currently managed by armed men and women in the Beni region.



LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADF:

Allied Democratic Forces

ADF-NALU:

Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda

ANR:

Agence Nationale de Renseignement
[National Intelligence Agency]

CECA20:

Communauté Évangélique au Centre de l'Afrique
CECA20 RDC
[Evangelical Community in the Centre of Africa]

CSO:

Civil Society Organisation

DGI:

Direction Générale des Impôts
[General Tax Directorate]

DRC:

Democratic Republic of the Congo

EAC:

East African Community

FARDC:

Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo
[Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo]

FP:

Forum de Paix
[Peace Forum]

INGO:

International Non-Governmental Organisation

MONUSCO:

Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation du Congo
[United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo]

PD:

Peace Direct

PNC:

Police Nationale Congolaise
[Congoles National Police]

PNVi:

Parc National de Virunga
[Virunga National Park]

RISD:

Research Initiatives for Social Development



INTRODUCTION

This study of the conflicts in Beni is part of the “*PAMOJA KWA AMANI YA BENI*:⁵ *Collaboration locale pour renforcer la prévention des conflits et la consolidation de la paix à Beni*” project [Together for Peace in Beni: local collaboration to strengthen conflict prevention and peacebuilding in Beni]. The east of the DRC, in particular the provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, has seen an increase in violence and atrocities in recent years.⁶ Land disputes often escalate due to poorly defined legal frameworks and lack of access to judicial remedies.⁷ In addition, inter-ethnic and community conflicts often arise from disputes over customary power and are manipulated by political elites for their own personal gain. In the region, the motivations behind the violence have been linked to mono-ethnic control of land, the exploitation of natural resources, the imposition of religious practices and the political affiliation of those involved.

Given the State’s lack of civilian protections, the majority of conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities have been carried out by local and international actors such as civil society organisations (CSOs), community members and international bodies including the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and various INGOs. MONUSCO is frequently criticised by local populations for its inaction or passivity in the face of civilian massacres committed by armed groups in Beni and the surrounding area.⁸ The last few days of July 2023 were characterised by an unprecedented spiral of violence in several towns in eastern Congo in a demand for MONUSCO to leave, by deliberate attacks on its personnel. This violence resulted in around thirty civilian casualties and the death of four Blue Helmets:

“Ultimately, these events have greatly widened the gap between the UN mission and a portion of Congolese public opinion, the political class and civil society - all three of which are quite divided with regard to MONUSCO - making it urgent to rebuild the relationship of trust without which the concerted implementation of the transition plan will be impossible.”⁹

⁵ Meaning “Together for Peace in Beni”.

⁶ Jason Stearns, North Kivu. *Contexte historique du conflit dans la Province du Nord-Kivu, à l’est de la République démocratique du Congo*, Institut de la Vallée du Rift, Nairobi, 2012, pp. 10 et seq.

⁷ Séverin Mugangu Matabaro, “La crise foncière à l’est de la RD Congo”, in *l’Afrique des Grands Lacs*, Yearbook 2007-2008, pp. 393 et seq.

⁸ Joel Bofengo, “Beni: La MONUSCO présente à la presse le bilan annuel de la mission pour 2023”, MONUSCO, 3 January 2024.

⁹ See Michel Liégeois and Michel Luntumbue, *Défis et enjeux du plan de retrait de la MONUSCO*, note produced by the Boutros-Ghali Peacekeeping Observatory, with the assistance of the Directorate General for International Relations and Strategy of the French Ministry of Defence and GRIP, September 2022, p.12.



A crisis of trust has arisen because, despite the considerable resources invested in MONUSCO every year since 1999, tangible results have yet to be seen in the area. This calls into question the effectiveness of the UN mission in dealing with rebel groups in the east of the country, which has been ravaged by violence and where the local population has turned against MONUSCO. Today, there is a real crisis of trust between those who live there and the peacekeepers. Since October 2022, more than 1,300 people have been killed in the east of the DRC, where according to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, armed groups have carried out “despicable attacks” against civilians. Recently, MONUSCO was judged to be ineffective in dealing with the crisis perpetrated by armed groups in North Kivu.¹⁰

The diverse and multi-sectoral local civil society in eastern DRC has the expertise and knowledge to create transformative change for its communities. Despite the vital role played by those working on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, there still are two key gaps that may have an impact on the effectiveness of their work:

- There is a gap in the **analysis of conflict dynamics and power of conflict/peace actors at the community/micro level** in the territory of Beni. Often, analysis remains too general, failing to grasp the hyper-local dynamics at play, and only capturing a single moment in time. Given the constantly changing dynamics of the conflict and those involved, sub-national actors as well as national policymakers and international agencies thus fail to grasp the whole picture. Moreover, the analysis is almost always carried out by institutions and researchers from the Global North, with community-led analysis rarely given priority. The result is not only a partial understanding of conflict dynamics, but also the exclusion of key actors during attempts to resolve the problem.
- Weak **coordination and collaboration between those involved in conflict prevention and peacebuilding**: those involved report that weak capacity, the lack of trust, the lack of resources and the absence of networking or coordination significantly undermine the effectiveness of work in the region. Similarly, there is very little information available about how local actors coordinate horizontally (through civil society), and how their actions inform or relate to national or external conflict prevention systems.

¹⁰ Myriam Sandouno, “RDC: le bilan de la MONUSCO, plus de 20 ans après”, *Vatican News*, 31 May 2023.



METHODOLOGY

In order to fill the aforementioned gaps, the RISD team, with the support of the FP and Peace Direct, organised individual¹¹ interviews and focus groups in April 2023 in the city of Beni across various sectors, chiefdoms and rural communes that make up the Beni territory. This activity focused mainly on qualitative data collection, including interviews with key informants, focus group discussions and public meetings to validate the results. This was complemented by secondary data collection, leading to a review of existing research on the dynamics of conflict in eastern DRC, the different causes of conflict, and the role of those operating in the country.

This data collection was carried out in close collaboration with the local protection committees (LPCs).¹² Given their pre-existing links with the local authorities and the communities concerned, the LPCs helped to identify and coordinate with individual interviewees. First, each LPC manager received interview and group discussion guides, as well as the project presentation sheet, so that they could read and discuss them on arrival in the area before any interviews or group discussions took place. The deployment plan was communicated to the LPC chairs in all research target zones, and the data collection schedule was updated with them based on the study zone context. In addition to mobilising individual interview respondents and interview participants, the heads of the LPCs supported the administrative process of obtaining visas for our mission programmes.

They also co-facilitated some of the interviews and group discussions, while others took part in the group discussions. The data collection concluded with a pre-analysis workshop to establish the draft outline of this report and to pool together the salient points emerging from the various interviews and focus groups, as well as the observations of each team member.

This study applies an interactionist approach combined with instrumental logic,¹³ insofar as it is possible to participate in conflicts while advocating for peace. These approaches remind us that collective identities primarily depend on the strategies of the actors who mobilize, construct, and live these identities, often using them to survive according to their interests. Consequently, the team gave priority to diversity in the selection of interviewees, to ensure that a wide range of individuals were consulted in order to paint as accurate a picture as possible of the dynamics of the local conflict at the micro level. The team conducted 31 individual interviews and 12 focus groups, involving a total of 103 people.

¹¹ The individual interview and focus group guides are available in Appendix I.

¹² LPCs are pre-existing conflict prevention mechanisms set up by communities. In Beni territory there are 16 LPCs, each with five members (known as "citizen reporters") who collect data on threats to peace and risks of violence/atrocities and coordinate the response to alerts/incidents with other local entities involved, such as state authorities and security forces.

¹³ «Interactionism does not take the individual as the principle of analysis, but rather thinks in terms of reciprocal actions, i.e. actions that determine each other. An interaction is a mutual field of influence... Interactionism sees society as a living structure that is constantly being made and unmade" (See David Le Breton, *L'interactionnisme symbolique*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2012). As the project itself focuses on the interactions of the actors in the "Pamoja kwa Amani ya Beni" (Together for peace in Beni) security system, in order to assess the challenges and opportunities of peace, it is necessary to question the various interactions, whether at the level of structures, mental representations or imagination. Concerted and collaborative actions between state and non-state actors are important in terms of opportunities for sustainable peace. The instrumental logic makes sense because the entrepreneurs of violence use it as an instrument for their survival within politics and the media. Philippe Braud aptly notes: "The resurgence of identity-based consciousness can be interpreted from the perspective of a matrix of gains: both for the politician in search of votes, and for his or her voters, who form a clientele". (See Philippe Braud, *Sociologie politique*, 11th edition, Paris, LGDJ, 2014). Violence can be seen as a resource for political visibility, say Xavier Crettiez and Nathalie Duclos. Indeed, the strategic model will also insist on the use of political violence to inscribe the actors who practice it in the political field. Violence is used to mobilize not only material and financial resources, but also symbolic resources such as positions of power or access to media visibility. It is therefore directly linked to the framework of political opportunity proposed (See Xavier Crettiez and Nathalie Duclos, *Violences politiques. Théories, formes, dynamiques*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2021). The same structures or identities that are manipulated to create conflict are also opportunities for peace. Entrepreneurs of violence (actors who make violence a resource to be lived or even survived) or conflicts are at the same time opportunities for building peace.



Limitations

This study was not carried out without difficulty, primarily due to the context of certain provinces in the eastern DRC, including North Kivu being under siege. Secondly, the security situation caused by the activity of armed groups such as the ADF meant that it was not possible to visit certain areas of the Beni region, which was under a “red” level security alert. The research team experienced stressful moments, as on two occasions the areas where the team went to carry out its investigations were the target of incursions by the ADF rebels, which in the first case claimed 21 victims, and in the second caused a great deal of panic among the population. As well as posing practical challenges, these circumstances made it difficult to create a climate of security for the people being interviewed, and the research team had to constantly apply a conflict-sensitive approach to its investigations to avoid further trauma and prevent harm.

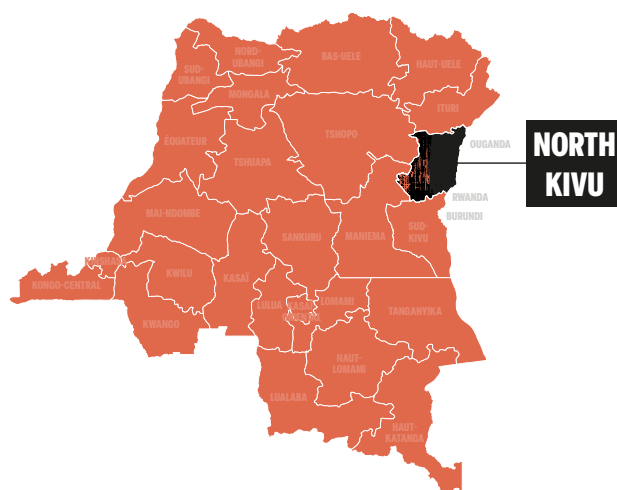
Despite the team’s efforts to consult a diverse group of respondents, it should be noted that, at the analysis stage, there were significant gaps with regard to gender. Although the gender dimension was included in some of the questions in the interview guides, none of the questions focused specifically or solely on this aspect. As a result, the data presented in this report speaks of gender as one of many interconnected aspects of local conflict, rather than specifically examining gender as a key driver or consequence of conflict. We recognise that this is not representative of the complexity of gender dynamics in eastern DRC, nor the severity of the consequences that these dynamics have on women and girls, as well as on men and boys.

TYPE OF INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED	WOMEN	MEN	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS BY CATEGORY
TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	48	55	103
Local leaders	1	9	10
Local administrative authorities	1	14	15
Members of political parties	1	2	3
Members of citizen movements	0	2	2
Religious leaders	0	1	1
CSO members	45	27	72



1. BENI TERRITORY

The territory of Beni is located in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, in the province of North Kivu. Its total population is estimated at 1,427,608, divided into seven main tribes: the Wanande¹⁴ (36 %), the Bambuba (20 %), the Batalinga (15 %), the Babila (11 %), the Bapakombe (8 %), the Balese (6 %) and the Pygmies (Basumba, Mbuti) (4 %). The Wanande are in the majority and are farmers, livestock breeders and traders; the Bambuba mainly live in the forest region and farm; the Babila live in the north-east forest region and work in logging and handicrafts; the Batalinga, Bapakombe and Balese are farmers, while the Pygmies and Mbuti hunt and gather.



The territory of Beni is geographically close to major towns such as Rutshuru¹⁵ and naturally close to Butembo, Goma, Bunia and the Ugandan border. This location places it at the centre of population movements from the Congolese, Ugandan, Rwandan and, to a lesser extent, Burundian territories.¹⁶ The territory of Beni is made up of two chiefdoms (Bashu and Watalinga), two sectors (Beni Mbau and Ruwenzori), five rural communes (Bulongo, Kyondo, Lume, Mangina and Oicha) and the city of Beni.

¹⁴ It should be noted that there are several ways of writing the names of these ethnic and tribal groups because of the linguistic diversity in the east of the DRC. The radicals Wa- and Ba- may often be interchangeable or omitted (for example: Nande [Yira], Wanande, Banande [Bayira] refer to the same ethnic group).

¹⁵ Pourtier, R. (2009).

¹⁶ César Nkuku Khonde, Mbuyi Kabunda, Germain Ngoie Tshibambe, Toni Jiménez Luque, David Bondía Garcia, David Querol Sánchez, *La République Démocratique du Congo. Les droits humains, les conflits et la construction/destruction de l'État*, 2009.

2. TYPES OF CONFLICTS IN BENI

A combination of four factors¹⁷ explain certain specific conflict dynamics in Beni territory:

POOR GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC ACTION AND DYSFUNCTIONAL RESOURCES, in combination with permanent poverty and vulnerability, contribute to weakening the rights, capacities and resilience of the population to atrocities and nationalism.

THE LACK OF COLLABORATION between those involved in security governance, protection and the prevention of conflicts and atrocities, as well as the instrumentalisation of collective identities, all contribute to exclusion and discrimination.

CONSTANT INSECURITY AND FORCED POPULATION DISPLACEMENT, at the hands of armed groups and individuals compounds a host of linked corollary dynamics, including epidemics, state of siege-related abuses, and tensions and intolerance linked to the December 2023 election. Together, these factors fuel conflict and sustain cycles of violence.¹⁸

THE LACK OF INFORMATION, citizens' poor knowledge of rights and a crisis of trust between political, judicial and social institutions make it difficult to access justice.

Conflicts vary according to the specific context and realities of each administrative sub-entity.¹⁹ The most common types of conflict in Beni include conflicts over power (legitimacy and customary succession), land conflicts, identity conflicts, armed conflicts, conflicts over access to natural resources, conflicts over the governance of public action and humanitarian assistance, seasonal or periodic conflicts, and many other conflicts that are sources of intolerance, violence and atrocities.

¹⁷ These factors are based on those cited by Philippe Hugon, in particular structural, cyclical, institutional and political, and informational factors. Philippe Hugon, "Conflits armés, insécurité et trappes à pauvreté en Afrique." *Afrique contemporaine*, vol. 218, no. 2, 2006, pp. 33-47.

¹⁸ Interview with a mixed focus group in Beni Mbau on 7 April 2023. These factors often aggravate conflicts, because when there are armed attacks against civilians, the response of the security services is often delayed, despite early warnings, and this gives the population the impression that they have been abandoned. There is also the inappropriate behaviour of some of those responsible for the state of siege, who are more concerned with fiscal problems than security issues, which irritates the local population.

¹⁹ See footnote 3 for the administrative structure in the DRC.



Conflicts of power

These conflicts pit different customary chiefs (locality chiefs and influential townspeople from certain customary districts and/or groupings) against each other over the conquest and exercise of customary power. These divisions pit certain clans, and even different lineages of royal power, against each other and have already been well documented.²⁰ Our field interviews revealed that power struggles between customary elites are a fact of life in the Bashu chiefdom and in the Mbau sector. These conflicts have their roots in the colonial era and were amplified in 1977 with the enthronement of a customary chief (“Mwami”) who lacked legitimacy and authority within the royal lineage and within the entity. This was affirmed by a customary chief from the ruling Bashu family, contacted in Beni:

“Long ago, in the time of our grandparents, there were no conflicts. The conflicts came with the struggles for succession... That same year, 1977, Kalemire was installed in power. And it was from that year onwards that the problems began. He had taken over administrative and customary power. So, the chiefdom remained in conflict. He began to discriminate against others, as if some were not part of the family, while others were brought in from outside. This is the origin of the conflicts.”²¹

The customary chief considered to be a “usurper” is deemed to have introduced a system of discrimination and even exclusion of certain members of the royal family by denying them kinship or membership of the ruling family, labelling them “foreigners”. State officials, for their part, are perceived as siding with the usurpers of customary power, for example by prohibiting traditional institutions such as the *Barza* [council] of elders²² from resolving these conflicts in the traditional way. The customary chiefs thereby find themselves stripped of the power to institute a structure that promotes traditional methods of conflict resolution or management. This is shown in the interview below:

“The State is already biased, or at least the agents of the State are biased. These days [...] all you have to do is form a Barza of elders and you’re called a rebel [by state agents]. However, customary chiefs have their own legally recognised powers, which prohibit them from contradicting or rebelling against the modern state or its institutions.”²³

²⁰ International Alert, February 2015.

²¹ Individual interview with a Bashu customary chief in Beni city on 12 April 2023, from 9.05am to 11.38am. The interview took place at a host family’s home, as the chief in question was displaced for several months due to the prevailing insecurity in the Bashu chiefdom.

²² *Barza* means council of sages or elders with customary responsibility for managing conflicts or disputes between individuals within a customary jurisdiction. It is therefore a traditional conflict management institution.

²³ Same as footnote 17.



Our interview with the Mbau sector chief also revealed the existence of power struggles between members of the ruling family, although on a lesser scale than in the Bashu chiefdom:

“There are minor power struggles. The ones involved in power conflicts are people from the ruling family who are vying for power: since colonial times, certain political elites looking for legitimacy have succeeded in manipulating these conflicts and creating rivalries between clans within the chiefdom. The consequence of this attitude is the prevalence, in the post-colonial period, of customary succession conflicts, which are a source of division within the chiefdoms.”²⁴

Rivalry between customary chiefs is more marked in rural areas than in urban areas, insofar as power in the former is intertwined with domination in terms of politics and land. For example, two families each claim to be the ruling family of the village of Mambabwanga, 25 km from Beni city. In fact, some of the people we interviewed confirmed that Beni city remains a battleground for disputes and the positioning of certain customary elites because of the political and socio-economic issues at stake.²⁵ Rivalries between socio-political and economic elites become fertile ground for intolerance and conflict, as opportunities arise for them to manipulate the vulnerability of the population in order to legitimise themselves in a particularly precarious and volatile context.

An elected MP for Beni also confirms the existence of conflicts over customary power in the Mbau sector and highlights the links between these and insecurity or possible alliances with armed groups:

“According to some of the information we have, there are certain chiefs of localities, groupings and villages who are being challenged by certain families. According to these families, those who currently manage these entities are not the rightful claimants [...]. In an unnamed grouping in Beni under the authority of a chief X, the latter is being challenged by another family of the same parentage. The disputing family is said to have enrolled its children in the ADF armed groups with the aim of forming a self-defence group capable of recovering customary power.”²⁶

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ A representative of the Beni civil society coordination office, a political party official and the mayor of one of Beni's communes also attest to the existence of power struggles between customary elites in Beni city over political and socio-economic interests.

²⁶ Interviews on 12 April 2023 in Oicha, with a civil society opinion leader who asked to remain anonymous. One example of this type of conflict is the leadership dispute between two decentralised bodies in the village of Bashu Bapakombe Bakondo and the Bathangi Mbau grouping. This conflict arose from the chief of the Bashu Bapakombe villages not recognising the customary authority of the chief of the Batangi-Mbau grouping. See also: <https://www.sofepadirc.org/des-conflits-resolus-a-beni-grace-au-partenariat-pour-le-developpement-de-lest-du-congo-tujenge-resultats-cles-et-histoires-de-succes/>.



Land disputes

Conflicts over land are among the top three most mentioned categories of conflict during our surveys in Beni territory, along with armed conflicts and governance-related conflicts. Customary chiefs play a key role, as they have managed to preserve their prerogatives and remain land managers and purveyors of local justice in the chiefdoms.²⁷ While colonial power invented certain chiefdoms, it incorporated those that already existed into the modern system of bureaucratic governance. Indeed, since 1960 and even prior to that, chiefdoms have always been involved in conflicts, given their role in land management, their politicisation and the ethnicisation of politics.²⁸ The integration of customary power into the institutional and political arena contributes to conflict in the DRC, even though the law considers customary chiefs to be apolitical.²⁹ Customary authorities have had a presence in all of the country's major political and security crises, fuelling ongoing low-intensity conflict.³⁰

Land disputes are on the rise in Beni, a rapidly expanding city where land acquisition is becoming a major economic issue. Meanwhile, a number of government departments with or without jurisdiction over land issues (the Land Registry Office, the City Hall, the communes, the quarters and the customary authorities, etc.) claim to be able to issue land registry documents or charge taxes, taking advantage of people's poor knowledge of the law. The Ministry of Land Affairs also executes decrees and nomenclatures to generate revenue through provincial divisions, real estate titles and cadastral plans. Confusion reigns over the regulatory texts and the roles to be played by each actor in this highly sensitive sector. Despite this, the law on the subject, including all the procedures to be followed to secure land, remains unknown to the general public, leading to misunderstandings and land disputes in the city of Beni.

²⁷ The supervisory authorities share out the land with or without the approval of the customary chiefs. Local customary chiefs have no power over land, apart from a 2013 provincial edict that gives them certain prerogatives over land, in collaboration with the supervisory authorities, of course. "Édit 002/2012 du 28 juin 2012 portant rapports entre les chefs coutumiers, chefs terriens et exploitants agricoles en matière de gestion des terres coutumières dans la province du Nord-Kivu", Office of the Provincial Governor, Province of North Kivu, 22 June 2012.

²⁸ Jean Batory, Thierry Vircoulon, "Les pouvoirs coutumiers en RDC: institutionnalisation, politisation et résilience", Ifri Notes, March 2020, p.20.

²⁹ Article 25 of law 182.08.15 of 25 August 2015 establishing the status of customary chiefs: "The customary chief is apolitical".

³⁰ Same as footnote 21.



These practices create a crisis of trust between the authorities and the population. More than 75% of our respondents cited and emphasised the prevalence of land disputes as a factor in insecurity, intolerance, violence and atrocities in Beni city. The Beni land registry service acknowledges the scale of land disputes and their negative impact on peace in the following terms:

“Land conflicts are often orchestrated by people who call themselves the ‘customary authorities’ of Beni. After looking into it, you can see that most of them are not on the list of actual (i.e. legal and legitimate) customary authorities of Beni. But when they want to create conflicts, they pass themselves off as genuine and often sign illegal land deeds, disrupting the order of land distribution... Also, the authorities of the administrative districts usurp power over the land.”³¹

This is also clear from our interviews with a focus group of eight women leaders in Beni, who also suggest that the economic stakes may be linked to the failure of the state of siege imposed in May 2021:

“Land conflicts are more frequent in Beni, and the security situation in the region creates conflicts in the region. For example, there is a family of ten people who have all come to town because they can no longer freely go about their farming activities. The conflict arises when one of them objects to the sale of the plot for one reason or another... But most of the conflicts, particularly land conflicts, are created by young people and this is one of the factors at the root of the conflicts that have led to the failure of the state of siege. Some authorities forget to concentrate on the war and focus on dividing up plots of land because it’s more economically profitable. If a parent has already sold a concession during their lifetime, and their child finds the old documents, they will start the file there.”³²

These land disputes often lead to the settling of scores through threats, intimidation, atrocities and possibly even murder:

“Among those who encourage land disputes are the land registry agents, who are uncontrollable. These agents aren’t worried about committing a lot of illegal practices in the field because they believe they are using the law to their advantage... When people are unable to pay the legal fees or are dissatisfied with a land dispute, the tendency is for the protagonists to resort to atrocities or shootings, which are rightly or wrongly blamed on the ADF.”³³

³¹ Anonymous, individual interview in the city of Beni on 6 April 2024 at 3pm.

³² Interview with a focus group of women in Beni city on 3 April 2023.

³³ *Ibid*



According to some respondents from citizens' movements such as *Lutte Pour le Changement* (Lucha) [Fight For Change] and civil society, some of the state of siege authorities are there purely for the money.³⁴

Urban land conflicts in Beni therefore manifest themselves in a number of ways, including the illegal sale of a plot of land to several people,³⁵ boundary encroachment,³⁶ the plundering of public spaces by private individuals, misunderstandings about the boundaries between Beni city and Beni territory and between administrative entities, incorrectly rendered judgements,³⁷ and the parcelling out of farmers' fields. Our individual interviews and focus groups already confirm the hypothesis that land disputes are one of the causes of the atrocities in the region.

Land issues in Beni, as elsewhere, concern access to and control of land as a fundamental natural resource. By way of illustration, in a focus group of women leaders in Beni, it was noted that land interests partly explain the cycles of conflict and atrocities in terms of settling scores or other informal or illegal mechanisms for "taking justice into one's own hands" through the use of violence.

For example, *"protagonists dissatisfied with court rulings use armed groups and militias to 'take justice into their own hands'. This phenomenon often pits 'landless peasants' against large concessionaires (landowners)."*³⁸

Some police and military authorities are therefore accused of interfering in civil matters which, according to the majority of our respondents, do not fall within their remit, i.e. they are acting as economic entrepreneurs rather than political and security authorities.

³⁴ Interviews with a leader of a citizens' movement in the city of Beni on 3 April 2023.

³⁵ See interview with an anonymous researcher on the pacification of Beni in Beni city on 13 April 2023.

³⁶ See footnote 30: "In land disputes, there are sometimes boundary disputes. A citizen may have bought a field, and the specialists come to measure the field, but when the neighbour does the measuring, he or she will say that their neighbour has previously moved the boundary stones in their plot. This creates a conflict, and these are often conflicts that go from generation to generation because they often concern large concessions."

³⁷ Interview with the chief of a quarter in Beni: "There are a lot of disputes, especially land disputes, and poorly rendered judgements mean that people resort to settling scores by taking the law into their own hands, resulting in targeted killings and looting."

³⁸ See interview with a group of women leaders who are members of CSOs in Beni city on 4 April 2023.



Land disputes in Beni

The abovementioned arguments about land disputes in the city of Beni can be transposed to the whole territory, and certain particularities can be observed in each territorial sub-entirety or administrative sub-division.

In the rural commune of Mangina, population growth is a source of land disputes, according to one interviewed civil society leader:

“There is a rapid population growth in Mangina, and the commune of Mangina is surrounded by large concessions whose owners do not want to divide them up... Moreover, there are some owners who want to extend their areas... In the Mangondondo quarter, [there is] a land dispute between the population and the CECA20 church. The local people accuse CECA20 of wanting to plunder their plots. According to history, the chief gave the church the land to build a church, a school and a health centre. CECA20 is now claiming the neighbouring land.”³⁹

Also, in Mangina, there are land conflicts between concessionaires and “landless peasants”, who have been relocated by economically and financially powerful concessionaires who are acquiring land beyond their official boundaries, disregarding local development needs. The commoditization and unrestricted, unreserved grabbing of land by certain economic operators and political entrepreneurs contributes to the scarcity of land for local populations:

“In Mangina, there are two large plantations, plantation F and plantation E, restricting the population, which needs space in order to flourish. The other problem is that these plantations are good places for bandits and assailants to hide. Land disputes over the boundaries pass from generation to generation. The plantation covers 155 hectares [approximately 383 acres], but it will deliberately exceed its boundaries by paying the state services for documents that include the surrounding populations, in excess of 200 hectares [approximately 494 acres]. As a result, conflicts arise when the existing population is driven out from the additional perimeter, which has been taken over by the mafia.”⁴⁰

³⁹ Interview with a CSO leader in Mangina on 10 April at 11am.

⁴⁰ Interview with a Mangina quarter chief on 10 April 2023;



In the Eringeti grouping, customary chiefs are often at the root of land disputes. When they fight over land, they endanger the inhabitants under their authority, each claiming to be the true owner or manager. This creates confusion and conflicts of allegiance among those who have purchased fields or paid customary fees⁴¹. This was confirmed in an interview with one of the farmers' leaders in Eringeti:

“The Sultani [customary chiefs] fight over the land, each claiming to be the real owner. This creates conflict between the inhabitants who had bought or acquired fields in these concessions... The other problem concerns the Eringeti reserve bought by the Catholic Church. There were already farmers who had already acquired fields from the Sultani, but now the Catholic Church is claiming the whole concession, which is causing the farmers difficulties and creating tension.”⁴²

According to one contacted customary chief, the main actors in land disputes in the Mbau sector are relatives and customary chiefs. The chiefs are the source of land disputes when they give land to several people. The Wakurima⁴³ also cause these disputes when they move the boundaries of their fields.

Still in the Mbau sector:

“Land disputes, most of which are long term, can have serious consequences, including murder. For example, two women were killed last year after winning a lengthy court case over a large concession. One side went to commandeer a rebel group.”⁴⁴

In the commune of Oicha, there are recurrent land disputes which have major collateral effects on personal safety. In a focus group, some young people reported:

“...This conflict is getting bigger and bigger. Opposing parties are even joining armed groups to finish each other off. More than 80% of the cases brought before the courts and tribunals are land disputes. These types of conflict almost never end.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ Interview with a focus group of eight male leaders in Eringeti on 8 April 2023.

⁴² Interview with one of the farmers' leaders in Eringeti on 8 April 2023 at 10:35;

⁴³ According to some sources, the Wakurima are Rwandan-speaking people who were sent from Tanzania by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. They were then settled in the Beni region by the Congolese authorities, in particular the former Governor of North Kivu, Mr Julien Paluku. They are considered by some local people to be “foreigners”, and therefore invaders and killers.

⁴⁴ Interview with a civil society researcher on the pacification of the city of Beni on 13 April 2023.

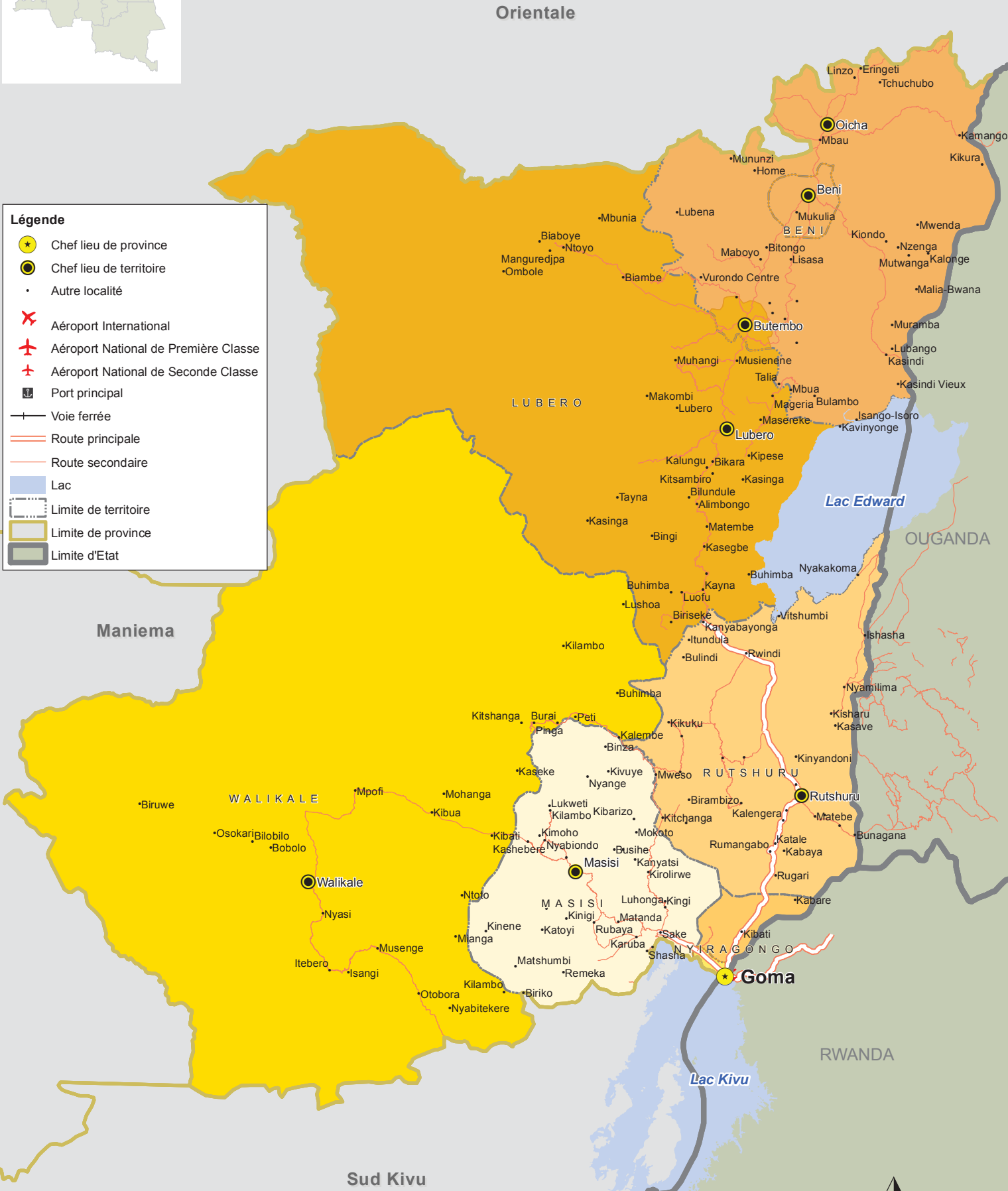
⁴⁵ Interview with a mixed focus group of eight young leaders from Oicha, 11 April 2013.





Légende

- Chef lieu de province
- Chef lieu de territoire
- Autre localité
- Aéroport International
- Aéroport National de Première Classe
- Aéroport National de Seconde Classe
- Port principal
- Voie ferrée
- Route principale
- Route secondaire
- Lac
- Limite de territoire
- Limite de province
- Limite d'Etat



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Conflicts linked to armed groups such as the ADF

The ADF is one of the most active armed groups in eastern DRC. Historically, UN forces and regional government actors have often portrayed the ADF as a one-dimensional transnational jihadist group responsible for most of the violence in Beni territory.⁴⁶ Massacres, killings and displacements in the Beni region began in 2014 and are perpetrated by Ugandan rebels belonging to the ADF, indiscriminately targeting young children and the elderly.⁴⁷ It has been reported that thousands of civilians have been killed or abducted by the ADF since 2014,⁴⁸ and even more people are currently displaced in Beni territory.⁴⁹

According to military sources contacted on the ground in Beni, there is an ADF faction that is desperate to “Islamise” or create an Islamic state in the region, and it has been intensifying its abuse of civilians in the region for over a decade. Another faction of rebels known as the NALU (National Army for the Liberation of Uganda) formed an alliance in 1995, funded by the Sudanese State.⁵⁰ These rebels are largely non-Muslim, and their ambition is to return to Uganda and overthrow the current government.⁵¹ Sudan has continued to support the ADF-NALU joint venture, providing substantial training to militants to fight the Ugandan state.⁵²



⁴⁶ See Candland, T. et al, *The Islamic State in Congo*, Program on Extremism, The George Washington University, January 2021, p.4.

⁴⁷ Radio OKAPI, “30 ans des conflits armés et d’insécurité au Nord-Kivu: chronologie des événements marquants”, *Radio OKAPI*, 6 February 2023.

⁴⁸ Clionah Raleigh, quoted by Tara Candland, *Op. cit.*, p.13.

⁴⁹ Charlie Yakley, quoted by Tara Candland, *Op. cit.*, p.13.

⁵⁰ See Titeca and Fahey, “The many faces of a rebel group”, 2016; Prunier, “Rebel movements and proxy warfare: Uganda, Sudan and the Congo (1986-99)”, 2004.

⁵¹ Scorgie-Porter L., “Economic Survival and Borderland Rebellion: The Case of the Allied Democratic Forces on the Uganda-Congo Border.” *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 6, no. 1 (July 2015): 191-213.

⁵² Titeca, K. and Vlassenroot, K. “Rebels without borders in the Rwenzori borderland? A Biography of the Allied Democratic Forces.” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 6, no. 1, April 2012, pp. 154-176.

Beyond a marked shift in operations, the ADF's evolution is also evident in its adoption of external communications and branding strategies. In 2016 and 2017, the group began to engage in social media-based propaganda and recruitment campaigns, primarily targeting regional audiences in Africa, reframing how it describes and legitimises its operational and strategic activities, and rebranding itself as a global jihadist group and as "the Islamic State in Central Africa".⁵³ In 2018, the Islamic State confirmed the establishment of the Islamic State in Central Africa Province (ISCAP),⁵⁴ and then in April 2019, acknowledged its first attacks in the DRC.⁵⁵

"The conflict that is really doing harm here is the terrorism of the ADF, which is a foreign group that has been here for over twenty years. The ADF have taken women here. Because they had a bit of money, they set up businesses here, they had children here, and they extended their influence as far as Eringeti. At one point, Kampala managed to separate the NALU from the ADF. There was the ADF-NALU. And the NALU left, and the ADF stayed. The leader of the ADF converted to Islam and that's how the fundamentalism started, our sources report. The ADF threat is a sub-regional threat, and even beyond that. [...] This level of violence had not been seen for a decade, and there are also attacks by other actors in Beni (the FARDC, former members of the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie Kisangani [Congolesse Rally for Democracy-Kisangani] / Mouvement de libération [Liberation Movement] (RCD-K / ML), and communal militias."⁵⁶

Simultaneous attacks are carried out, targeting several villages and camps at once. The assailants regularly use bladed weapons to avoid detection by the security and defence forces. They also use the rain for cover, and set up ambushes on main roads, in camps and near oil mills. In addition to the massacres, the abductions of children, women and men, and looting, other characteristic elements of the situation in Beni are the burning of homes and abandoned houses, panic, fear, rumours and terror.⁵⁷

The ADF attacks populations, regardless of their religion or ethnicity, often by way of reprisal or with the aim of appropriating their property or driving them out of certain areas:

"When the killers find you somewhere, they don't have time to ask for your identity card. If you end up in the wrong place at the wrong time, you're done for."⁵⁸

⁵³ MTM video archived by the authors, November 2017.

⁵⁴ Al-Furqan Media Foundation, *But Give Good Tidings to the Patient* (22 August 2018).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* It is clear that, while there is currently little evidence of direct command and control by the Islamic State, having adopted the Islamic State's ideology and strategy, the ADF have demonstrated a willingness to frame their operations as part of the Islamic State's global effort, contributing to its "attrition" and "breaking down the walls" campaigns. In turn, the ADF has increasingly appeared in the Islamic State's globally distributed media, reinforced locally by the ADF's continued production of increasingly sophisticated videos aimed at regional partisans and potential recruits. The ADF faction led by Baluku, although operationally focused on the DRC, is increasingly seeking to develop its transnational networks.

⁵⁶ Anonymous interview in Eringeti on 8 April 2023.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Anonymous, interview with a leading figure in the city of Beni on 6 April 2023 at 3:30pm, at their office.



People only realise this in hindsight. Many of our interviewees testified to the presence, as well as the various forms of activism and modus operandi of armed groups. In a focus group with young people in Oicha, it was noted that, following the war, some young people became thieves or displaced people, while others joined armed groups.

A gender officer from a gender CSO in Oicha confirms the existence and complexity of armed groups and the collateral implications:

“Armed conflicts cause population displacements, but beyond that there are killings, kidnappings, house and vehicle burnings along with many other things, and this leads to juvenile delinquency. Parents are no longer able to look after their children, because they have moved away from their home environment and integration is not easy at all.”⁵⁹

A researcher working on the pacification of Beni illustrates the instrumental dimension of violence, which is often used for personal ends:

“In this region, if you want people to know how strong you are, you have to terrorise them. And to keep you under control, people will approach you and offer you a job or a promotion.”⁶⁰

Here it is worth mentioning the opportunistic use by certain state and even non-state actors of “fake” ADF-NALU groups, particularly the young cocoa thieves who disguise themselves as ADF to scare the farmers. However, these individuals are sometimes killed for their cocoa by the “real” ADF-NALU, especially when there is a need to create the impression of justifying their struggle or to call for humanitarian and philanthropic interventions through partisan media coverage.

“There are real massacres and there are also fake massacres. When a family is the victim of a massacre, real or fake, and we ask who’s to blame, officially they say it’s perpetrated by people assumed to be ADF. They always say “assumed”, but what do they mean? And sometimes the radio only talks about massacres that officials blame on the ADF. These are terms that don’t hold water and border on ambiguity.”⁶¹

One of Beni’s civil society leaders describes the spread of armed conflict throughout the Beni territory and the risks involved:

“Individuals we assume to be ADF are doing harm in our territory, mainly in the commune of Oicha, in the area around the commune of Oicha, it’s the same thing... In Bulongo the threat comes from the area around Ruwenzori, it’s the same thing in Bashu, towards Kiondo, the threat always comes from the surrounding area. In other words, the threats come from this area, and the enemy has already spread out to see how it can destabilise the community.”⁶²

⁵⁹ Interview with one of the leaders of a CSO in Oicha, on 12 April 2023, at their place of work.

⁶⁰ Dépeche, « Beni – Vol des produits agricoles par des jeunes “Sanga Balende”: Habitants et autorités définissent des stratégies pour stopper ce phénomène », 27 January 2022.

⁶¹ Remarks by a leading figure in the city of Beni, who asked to remain anonymous, on 6 April 2024 at 4:10pm, at their place of work.

⁶² *Ibid.*



The ADF remain a real and imminent threat, both locally for the people of Beni, as well as nationally and even internationally. Continuously instrumentalised for economic and ideological reasons, they wage guerrilla warfare and sow terror for material or hidden, immaterial interests. They base their survival on their own isolated informal networks, on the media coverage of their methods of action (repertoires of action), and above all on the Congolese security services' ineffectiveness in ensuring territorial control and internal administrative networking. These armed conflicts perpetrated by the ADF contribute to the creation and/or implantation (conflicts with transversal consequences within society) of other conflicts of a similar nature, i.e. identity-based ones.

Despite the prevalence of the ADF in our surveys, several armed groups and militias operate in Beni. The ADF are the largest and are said to be somewhat complicit with certain unidentified local individuals:

“There is another armed conflict by people who call themselves Mai-Mai. They claim to be a self-defence group and that they will seek ways to protect the local environment. Unfortunately, it is unclear what motivates them, because the enemies kill the population in the areas they occupy.”⁶³

Conflicts linked to sexual violence

In the context of this study, conflicts linked to sexual violence involve perpetrators and their families against medical personnel on the one hand, and on the other hand perpetrators against survivors and sexual violence prevention actors. A nurse contacted in Mbau gave her own description of these conflicts:

“We are in a war zone, and people are afraid to report their crimes for fear of reprisals and the settling of scores. In the past, people could report their crimes without fear, but now it's the opposite. I sometimes fear reprisals for confirming that a rape or attempted rape of a minor has taken place, given the proximity of the assailants within society. It's very frustrating for me as a nurse, not to mention stressful, because information like this could cost me a lot, even my life.”⁶⁴

⁶³ Same as footnote 56.

⁶⁴ Interview with a nurse, who asked to remain anonymous, during a medical training course in Mbau, on 7 April 2023 at 1:18pm.



According to some accounts, women and young girls are pressured into transactional sex in order to gain access to employment opportunities, which amounts to sexual exploitation. It can create conflict within communities and families. It can also lead to discrimination against the survivors of sexual exploitation and any potential children born under these circumstances. This is what emerged from the testimony of a woman leader in Beni city:

“The Ebola virus has created a conflict between young girls and boys working in disease response. I have a real case in point: my brother-in-law’s wife worked in the response against this disease, but in order to be hired, some leaders demanded that she have sexual relations. Today, I’m a victim because I’m looking after a child she had with the response team, and that’s creating a problem for me with my in-laws because they wanted me to send her away. The child is also a victim of this discrimination.”⁶⁵

Some humanitarian workers are also guilty of sexual exploitation, and they abuse their power over girls by exchanging humanitarian assistance or employment for sexual favours. This is what came out of one interview:

“Other partners turn girls into their girlfriends and divert to themselves the aid intended for displaced people. Yes, there are humanitarian workers who sexually exploit girls, particularly during the tenth Ebola outbreak, and also recently during aid distributions by the World Food Programme in Oicha and Mbau. This often results in the selection of fake internally displaced people in exchange for sexual favours, while the real ones do not receive the aid they deserve, leading to conflicts.”⁶⁶

In the commune of Mangina and the Mbau sector, focus groups of women mentioned the lack of respect for ethical principles by certain humanitarian workers involved in the Ebola virus response:

“[They] have had sexual relations with local girls, resulting in unwanted pregnancies. As a result, there are fatherless children (left behind by the humanitarian workers) whose social integration is difficult and creates conflicts.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Interview with a nurse, who asked to remain anonymous, during a medical training course in Mbau, on 7 April 2023 at 1:18pm.

⁶⁶ Interview with a nurse from Mbau at her workplace, 7 April 2023.

⁶⁷ Interview with a focus group of women members of CSOs in Beni on 4 April 2024 at 10:20am.



Payments made by medical providers during the tenth Ebola epidemic even destroyed many homes, as some providers did not hesitate to give women and even married women money in exchange for sexual services. Some of the women even abandoned their homes and left with response experts to start a new life elsewhere. A focus group of women leaders in Beni maintains that:

“Homes were broken during Ebola, with women prioritising the money they received to the detriment of their homes.”⁶⁸

Curiously enough, one of our interviewees referred to specific or isolated cases to criticise the situation as a whole, condemning the lack of ethics among certain military personnel, who fight over girls with some civilians:

“If a military officer is in a friendly or amorous relationship with a girl, no one else can dare approach her in that way, otherwise they risk being shot dead by the soldier. We have seen cases where a soldier shoots the girl’s family at point-blank range, kills the girl (the object of desire) and then commits suicide.”⁶⁹

Ethno-regional conflicts

Latent conflicts in the city of Beni

According to interviews conducted in April, inter-ethnic conflicts are generally less prevalent in the city of Beni than in Beni territory and rural Beni. The chief of one quarter commented: “Beni is a cosmopolitan city, with several tribes living together without any problems”,⁷⁰ which confirms the opinions of influential townspeople. A local leader echoed this (socially) widely shared opinion, comparing the city of Beni to Butembo, which is an autarky.

This view of Beni as cosmopolitan is not universal, as it is nuanced by the opinions of a researcher studying the pacification of Beni, and by certain political party officials. In fact, the researcher notes a certain hypocrisy insofar as certain opinion manipulators distinguish between “indigenous” and “foreign” people, in relation to the ethno-regional divide that exists in the city of Beni:

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Interview with a leader of a citizens’ movement in Beni on 3 April 2023.

⁷⁰ According to the local leader consulted, there is less tribe-based discrimination in Beni than in neighbouring Butembo. Beni is said to have a higher level of inter-ethnic integration than Butembo.



“We have already experienced the identity conflict, especially with some citizens who came from the northern part of the province, moving south to what is called the ‘Petit Nord’ [Little North];⁷¹ they were going to Ituri. They were judged to be foreigners, and there were outbursts from the locals. Stonings were recorded as a result of intolerance, despite the fact that this is a city with a reputation for being cosmopolitan. People wake up in the morning to find messages circulating against a particular tribe, and instead of going about their business, they start keeping their eyes open just to harm other people.”⁷²

Some political party members and officials agree, calling this “peaceful cohabitation” a crisis of trust between the tribes living in the city of Beni:

“The city of Beni has several tribes, but there is no trust between them, so each one doubts the others. And that creates mutual suspicion.”⁷³

In short, the correlation between the perception of ethno-regional conflict and violence and the committing of atrocities remains weak in the city of Beni.

Conflicts on the Mbau, Oicha and Eringeti axis

In the Eringeti area, large-scale conflicts are linked to conflicting relations between different ethnic groups who are in competition or even direct opposition over access to and control of land, and more broadly over economic and political resources at a local level. These conflicts pit Mbuba farmers against Pygmies, and the Nande in the north against the Nande in the south. In each of these conflicts, the categories “indigenous” and “foreign” are used in discourse aimed at delegitimizing the rights of certain sections of the population.

⁷¹ See Stearns, J. (2012) p.10: “The lower part of North Kivu - the territories of Masisi, Rutshuru, Nyiragongo, and Walikale, commonly known as the ‘Petit Nord’ [Little North] - arguably the epicentre of the Congo wars. In social perception, the other two territories, Beni and Lubero, constitute the ‘Grand-Nord’ [Big North] by virtue of their geolocation, being located in the far north of North Kivu. The ‘Petit-Nord’ has also long been under the domination of pro-Rwandan or pro-Kigali socio-political and economic forces, a domination that was reinforced by the advent of the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD), a rebel movement, in 1998. The other two territories (Beni and Lubero), inhabited mainly by the Nande people, have long been opposed to Rwandan domination. The Nande want to be governed by the children of the land and, failing that, by social strata other than the Rwandan authorities. This is how the RCD-KML came into being, with the support of Uganda. The geographical, demographic and economic dimensions - with the two major cities outside Goma: Butembo and Beni, reinforced by political ranking struggles, either through war or elections, the two concepts symbolised the divide between those who believed themselves to be the majority and those perceived as being in the minority and with expansionist aims.”

⁷² Interview with an anonymous researcher in Beni on 13 April 2023.

⁷³ *Ibid.*



There is also conflict between Bantus and Pygmies in Eringeti.

“Following the insecurity created by the presence of the ADF-NALU in the Virunga National Park (PNVi) and the increasing scarcity of game, the Pygmies have left the PNVi forest (their natural environment) to settle around the villages and continue to live off forest products by illegally occupying other people’s plots of land.”⁷⁴

According to some Bantus, Pygmies have difficulty adapting to lifestyles that divert from those of the forest. The adaptation strategies developed by the Pygmies support the Bantus but are realized at the expense of the Mbuba and Nande farmers, sometimes violently, causing conflicts between the members of the two ethnic groups and further reinforcing the numerous prejudices against them from other ethnicities. “These conflicts are linked to the cohesion between the Bantus and the various categories of Pygmies,” says a source from civil society in Oicha. “The Pygmies accuse the Bantus in Oicha of procreating with Pygmy girls without assuming their responsibilities and with fear of being stigmatised.”⁷⁵

A focus group of women from Eringeti revealed the rivalry, real or imagined, between the Pygmies and the Bantus:

“Pygmies are also a source of conflict. They move all over the place, so people with bad intentions use them to steal farmers’ harvests.”⁷⁶

One of the leaders of the Eringeti farmers confirmed that conflicts exist between Pygmies and Bantus:

“The soldiers’ wives and Pygmies are suspected of stealing crops. The Pygmies in turn claim that it is the soldiers’ wives who encourage them to steal crops, which the soldiers’ wives deny.”⁷⁷

As a result, conflict arises not only between Pygmies and Bantus, but also between farmers and soldiers’ wives, as well as between soldiers and farmers.

Like the women’s focus group, a focus group of men also confirmed that the identity conflict between these two ethnic groups essentially concerns the method of production and theft of agricultural produce:

“[There are] economic conflicts between the first citizens and the farmers. The war has meant that the Pygmies in the forest and the farmers only cultivate the surrounding area because of their fear of the ADF. When a Pygmy gets hungry, they will go onto a farmer’s field, and this creates serious problems. Sometimes they get hurt.”⁷⁸

⁷⁴ International Alert, February 2015, p.20.

⁷⁵ Interview with a focus group of men in Eringeti on 8 April 2023.

⁷⁶ Interview with a focus group of women in Eringeti, 8 April 2023.

⁷⁷ Interview with the leader of a farmers’ group in Eringeti, 8 April 2023.

⁷⁸ Interview with a focus group in Eringeti, 8 April 2023.



Those who buy food for Pygmies do not sell it at the same price as farmers. This dynamic of conflict, linked to livelihoods, was previously confirmed in a report from the NGO International Alert.⁷⁹ The report notes that Eringeti farmers accuse the Pygmies of stealing their crops. This conflict further illustrates how Mbuba customary power is being challenged by the Pygmies, and how the Pygmies are exploiting the discourse of autochthony traditionally developed by other ethnic groups (particularly the Mbuba) to consolidate their customary power.

Latent conflicts between southern Nande and northern Nande

There are also identity conflicts of ethnic or clan origin in the Mbau sector between the Nande of the North (or Nande Kaïnama) and the Nande of the South. The former tend to be considered as “indigenous” Mbuba, as they historically settled in the Bambuba Kisiki grouping at the same time as the Bambuba. The southern Nande arrived later and are therefore generally perceived as outsiders by the other communities.⁸⁰ Differences between the histories of these two clans have led to socio-economic inequalities and conflicts linked to the use of customary or modern law as the most common means of gaining access to land.⁸¹

One of the people in charge of the farmers in this entity refers to the ethno-regional or clan variable in the following terms:

“Tribal conflicts exist. The tribes we have here are the Babumba, the Banande Kainama and the southern Banande. The problem is between the Banande Kainama and the Babumba over the boundaries of two groupings, namely the Banande Kainama grouping and the Babumba Kisiki grouping, and this problem has not yet been resolved. This problem has already caused divisions and confusion among the population over customary allegiances and land fees.”⁸²

⁷⁹ International Alert, “Participatory Action Research: a Method to Repair Fractured Social Relations. Lessons From a Project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” June 2015, p.9.

⁸⁰ International Alert, February 2015, p.23, “However, over time, the Southern Nande have become the majority, and therefore exercise greater political influence and importance than the other communities: most of the elected members of parliament come from their community... The southern Nande also include many large traders and landowners. Economic inequalities thus intersect with clan differences and reinforce polarised discourse on the categories of ‘indigenous’ and ‘foreigners’. Stigmatising statements such as ‘the Nande from the south are stealing our purchasing power’ are recurrent among the Nande Kainama. Generally speaking, cooperation between members of the two clans is no longer good: this can be seen, for example, in the boycott of economic or development initiatives by members of the other clan. Finally, these tensions are further aggravated by the customary power struggles that exist within the grouping, with the southern Nande tending to support the grouping chief, while the northern Nande and certain Mbuba clans tend to support their rival.”

⁸¹ International Alert, February 2015, p.23

⁸² Interview with the leader of a farmers’ group in Eringeti, 8 April 2023.



Conflicts over access to natural resources in Beni

Conflicts between Pygmies and the Catholic Church in Mbau.

This conflict, which was described during an interview with a focus group of men in Mbau, deserves particular attention, as it is likely to descend into violence, as our source suggests:

“The other conflict here, although the Abbot didn’t mention it, is the conflict between the Catholic parish and the Pygmies... We were lucky enough to receive an international NGO that wanted to build shelters for the displaced people who were living in the classrooms, but we didn’t have the space, only the Catholic church did. People throughout the area had asked the Catholic Church for space, but without success.”⁸³

Another major conflict relates to the delimitation of the Virunga National Park, and pits the park’s administration, the Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature (ICCN) [the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature], against local residents. The dispute concerns the boundaries:

“The conservationists say that it’s park space that we’re using, yet we need it to feed the city of Beni and help us solve the famine problem. The park rangers don’t want the population to come into the park, so they shoot at people or arrest them, or if we manage to plant certain crops, the park rangers destroy everything without taking into account the expenses incurred.”⁸⁴

Conflicts related to mining

Access to, control over and exploitation of mines are at the root of many conflicts and even violence, and influence the dynamics of peace and economic development in the region:

“Access to natural resources is sometimes on the outskirts, where the mines are. A very rich Mr X can illegally take over a mine... All those who work there have to give him all the raw materials they find and when someone is found to be hiding something, they are whipped.”⁸⁵

So the mines are also an issue that divides people in Beni, whether Congolese or foreign actors with active business interests in the region, or Chinese investors mentioned in the interviews. According to local investigation documents from 2020, the armed groups that have for several years controlled a large part of the territory and mines, are benefiting from the dividends, especially with gold as the main mineral mined and sold in the Beni territory.⁸⁶

⁸³ Interview with a focus group of men in Mbau on 7 April 2023.

⁸⁴ Interview with a focus group of young people in Oicha on 10 April 2023 at 10.30am.

⁸⁵ Interview with an anonymous researcher on the pacification of Beni on 13 April 2023.

⁸⁶ Kamabu Ngavo Henri et al., *L’exploitation minière artisanale à Beni-Mbau: état des lieux et cartographie des sites miniers*, February 2020, p.7.



Conflicts over access to water

Access to water also remains a source of insecurity and exposure to violence, especially during the dry season and in the rural commune of Oicha. The following is from an interview with a gender officer from this decentralised local authority:

“During the dry season, access to drinking water becomes a problem, and sometimes we have to travel long distances through less secure areas to get water when we don’t have access to water in the city. And then we’re exposed to sexual violence against women, and kidnappings involving both men and women. Imagine someone having to travel from Oicha to Mukoko (6 km away) just to fetch water.”⁸⁷

Access to water reinforces discrimination between displaced people and local host populations:

“The conflict between displaced people and local people. There is already not enough water for the population of Oicha, not to mention the displaced people.”⁸⁸

In the Mbau sector, there is violence stemming from disputes over access to water during the dry season. This is what emerged during an interview with a focus group of eight young people in Mbau:

“During the dry season, people fight over water. Water becomes scarce, and people in the queue to draw water sometimes fight.”⁸⁹

Whether in Oicha or Mbau:

“There is violence between the wives of soldiers and the civilian population, on the one hand, and between local and displaced populations, on the other. And at night, for those who live in the city, banditry is on the increase. Some of the patrols harass the population as they leave the water point. Bandits steal people’s phones, and rapes also take place in the city. Women and girls are the main victims of violence relating to access to water, as the social division of labour makes them responsible for the domestic supply of water.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Interview with a CSO leader in Oicha, 11 April 2023.

⁸⁸ Interview with a youth focus group in Oicha, 8 April 2023.

⁸⁹ Interview with a mixed youth focus group (four boys and four girls) held in Mbau on 7 April 2023.

⁹⁰ Interview with a youth focus group in Oicha, 11 April 2023.



Political conflicts

Political conflicts have a dual dimension in the context of this study: those pertaining to the political manipulations of young people and other political rivals, especially during the electoral campaign; and those that involve the crisis of meaning⁹¹ or representation between the rulers and the ruled regarding the governance of public action.

These two types of political conflict partly explain the prevalence of collective mobilisation, the activism of citizens' movements and political violence. In a focus group in Oicha, it was revealed that the crisis of trust between those in power and those being governed was due to the activeness of the ADF:

“The ADF is at the root of other problems, such as the lack of trust between the population and the security forces, political recuperation and conflict, but curiously the people are more likely to listen to them.”⁹²

Conflicts linked to social regulation

Political intolerance that is conducive to violence continues to be dominated by hate speech, manipulation and the demonisation of political rivals, resulting in divisions and opposition between militants. The electoral process remains a propitious time for political manipulation and persuasion, as a political party executive in Beni attests:

“During the election period, politicians manipulate young people, and some even go off the rails and collaborate with insurrectionary movements, which creates problems. Some politicians give money to young people to buy alcohol in order to cause damage in the city, which creates fear and does not give hope of living in peace.”⁹³

Political conflicts exist both in Beni city and in Beni territory, although they seem to be less recurrent in the latter. One of the customary chiefs in Mbau confirms the view that political conflicts are prevalent before, during and after elections:

“Political conflicts arise at election time, when everyone is looking out for their own interests, trying to get elected, and at this stage candidates are posing as saints. This is the time to manipulate the vulnerability of potential voters.”⁹⁴

⁹¹ In this context, citizens have a negative image of state institutions and their leaders, due to their noted inefficiency. This will significantly determine political behaviour, notably the proliferation of protest movements or citizens' movements, collective mobilizations, street demonstrations - in short, unconventional modes of political participation.

⁹² Interview with a mixed youth focus group (four boys and four girls) of civil society leaders, 11 April 2023.

⁹³ Interview with a political party official in the city of Beni, 3 April 2023.

⁹⁴ Interview with one of Mbau's customary chiefs in Mbau, 7 April 2023.



In addition, one of the Mbau farmers' leaders reports:

“We perhaps don't have enough political conflicts; there are some cases of ignorance among certain politicians who treat their opponents as enemies, while others don't acknowledge them, and some even end up in court - it's really out of ignorance”⁹⁵

Conventional and unconventional ways of gaining and retaining power are often illegally implemented and degenerate into identity-based intolerance and violence. As a result, political groups use these dynamics to consolidate their hold on the electorate, embracing various forms of collective identity, and hence creating a trap of intolerance that is likely to pit collective identities against each other.

This is how the politicisation of cultural identities is transformed into a legitimate strategy of political competition. Political groups with a strong capacity to mobilise resources to “convince” these collective identities to turn against each other have a better chance of winning elections. Previous surveys have also noted that during the pre-election period, representatives or MPs invent rumours and sow misinformation; they do not hesitate to opportunistically manipulate collective identities that do not have a political agenda.⁹⁶



⁹⁵ Interview with one of the leaders of the Mbau farmers in Mbau, 7 April 2023.

⁹⁶ Pacifique Makuta Mwambusa (2021).

Conflicts relating to public governance

The second dimension of political conflict relates to the crisis of representation between those in power and those being governed. It concerns the state's inability to ensure the safety of people and their property, as well as to implement public policies that guarantee the minimum conditions for the development and well-being of the population. According to a source close to a Lucha citizens' movement, the arson attack on the Mayangose market on the night of Wednesday 11 to Thursday 12 January 2023 appears to be attributable to the irresponsibility or complicity of the urban security committee:

“They said that the fire was caused by a short-circuit in a mill, but there was no machine in operation during the night and only the security service was present.”⁹⁷

This attitude partly explains the collective mobilisations and the activism of citizens' movements, either out of opportunism or political manipulation, or out of (disinterested) civic-mindedness. The repertoires of action and demonstrations that reflect the crisis of trust between those who govern and those who are governed take the following forms: work-free days (“ville-morte” – a city-wide shutdown), peaceful and/or violent marches, the barricading of certain avenues, the burning of tyres and other combustible objects – not only on the road, but also on roundabouts and crossroads – as a sign of anger and discontent with public authority.

Many of those interviewed mentioned the role played by pressure groups and young people in these conflicts. In Beni, a member of the Urban Youth Council remarked on a certain amount of manipulation of young people:

“It's the conflict between pressure groups and motorcyclists, because when motorcyclists are asked to go on strike as a form of protest in the name of civil disobedience, it creates disputes and violence.”⁹⁸

A political party official deplores this manipulation of young people for selfish ends:

“I'm sorry to say that young people are manipulated more, I have a brother who is in prison because of politicians. Others cite those who are in contact with the people of Kinshasa and receive money to stage demonstrations. And there are also those from Verranda Mustanga who don't understand the conflicts we are experiencing.”⁹⁹

Also in Beni city, the focus groups and individual interviews confirmed that young people were still holding demonstrations, even though the state of siege had reduced their scale:

“There is [a] crisis of security governance which is leading pressure groups to organise demonstrations and rise up against local authorities.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Interview with a member of a citizens' movement in Beni, 3 April 2023.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Interview with a member of a youth CSO, 3 April 2023.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*



A member of a citizens' movement active in Beni added:

“We criticise the military authorities for spending so much time in their offices with their guards instead of out in the field. And when we tell them this, they accuse us of wanting to become politicians.”¹⁰¹

In the Mbau sector, young people accuse the State of failing to guarantee security. As a result, they organise demonstrations to denounce this state of affairs. The young people interviewed in a focus group stressed that the demonstrations were simply a reflection of the conflict between the security services and the local population:

“These conflicts arise when there is insecurity in the area. Sometimes an incursion between the community and the youth leads to the belief that those responsible for protecting the population have not done their job well, and they then organize protests.”¹⁰²

In the rural commune of Oicha, young people are surreptitiously recruited into militias or popular self-defence groups that claim to protect and save their abandoned villages, which is another form of manipulation. Young people are also manipulated into violence by certain politicians and economic operators.¹⁰³ When it comes to the composition of the demonstrators, though, sources close to civil society say there are fewer girls than boys:

“When you look at the composition of the groups, there are fewer girls in the armed groups and amongst those disturbing the peace. Even when you look at the time of the protests, there are fewer girls than boys.”¹⁰⁴

Ultimately, the patrimonial or neopatrimonial practices that characterise access to public employment and the governance of public action are a source of frustration and conflict, collective mobilisation, violence, and even the proliferation of armed groups. The social perceptions and practices of wasteful or ineffective public action within state structures are transposed, all other things being equal, to many non-state actors responsible for humanitarian and development action.

¹⁰¹ Interview with a member of a CSO in Beni, 4 April 2023.

¹⁰² Interview with a youth focus group in Oicha, 10 April 2023.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Remarks by a former civil society leader from Beni, contacted in Oicha on 10 April 2023.



Conflicts linked to forced population movements: the governance of humanitarian action and development aid

The forced displacement of populations as a result of ongoing insecurity caused by armed groups is creating a situation of humanitarian crisis and emergency. The humanitarian response and any assistance provided to displaced people is not without conflict. The governance of humanitarian action and development aid is the source of conflict between local populations and other partners in aid projects and programmes. Local sources interviewed said that these conflicts were prevalent in both Beni city and territory (in Mbau, Oicha and Eringeti, to name but a few). The instrumentalisation and/or misappropriation of humanitarian aid or assistance for personal ends by certain state and non-state actors were mentioned in various ways during our interviews in the field.¹⁰⁵

A representative of a religious denomination told us during an interview in Beni city that humanitarian workers are being called on to be more vigilant in order to distinguish between the real, targeted recipients and the fake ones:

“Humanitarians will need to analyse the data they collect in the field in minute detail, and if necessary, contact the direct beneficiaries to check that they have not been prefabricated.”¹⁰⁶

In the same vein, it was revealed in a focus group discussion in the Mbau sector that humanitarian workers have a negative image of certain international NGOs working in the region:

“Conflicts also occur when humanitarian assistance is provided, especially in the identification of the vulnerable, because sometimes those who are not vulnerable are registered while the vulnerable are not. Conflicts arise when there are opportunities of any kind and the undeserving are selected over the deserving.”

A focus group of men in the same area of Mbau condemns the same attitude in other words:

“The problem is that when humanitarians arrive, they put their trust in the State or in someone who selects their relatives or friends based on their own interests, because they are going to benefit from something in return.”

¹⁰⁵ Interview with a mixed focus group of young people in Mangina, 11 April 2023.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with a youth focus group in Oicha, 10 April 2023.



This hypothesis of diverting assistance away from the real target – beneficiaries or co-authors of the humanitarian response – is also confirmed by the opinion of a health worker contacted in Mbau:

“The people directing the partners who come here to assist the internally displaced people put their family members ahead of the displaced people, which means that the assistance benefits the indigenous people more than the displaced. The displaced and the indigenous people don’t get along, so they’re in conflict.”¹⁰⁷

It should be noted that the same phenomenon can be observed in Oicha, but also in the particular case where humanitarian assistance is limited to the presumed displaced people and not provided to the host families, thereby creating a conflict between the two social categories. According to a discussion group of young people in Oicha, this exclusion of host families is at the root of the conflicts in the area.¹⁰⁸

This conflict dynamic is also present in Beni, as an elected deputy from Beni pointed out during an interview:

“There is a conflict between internally displaced people and humanitarian NGOs. Some of those involved in civil society activities sometimes misappropriate humanitarian aid intended for the displaced.”¹⁰⁹

To take it a little further, the same crisis of trust in local government and humanitarian assistance was revealed by a focus group of men in Eringeti:

“Humanitarian workers arrive at the home of the delegate [the representative of the Territory Administrator], but instead of directing them towards the internally displaced people, the delegate keeps them there and gives them their own programme or agenda. And yet the displaced people have no means. They are [sheltered] in classrooms in an extremely vulnerable state. One of them has just died, another died the day before yesterday due to lack of aid. Please tell the humanitarians to make sure they find their real targets.”

In the rural commune of Mangina, the identification of displaced people is also the subject of conflict between the inhabitants and the local authorities. This is what emerged from a focus group of women from Mangina when they mentioned the instrumentalisation or monetisation of the process of identifying displaced people:

“The local authorities are helping to take in the displaced and are suspected by some of monetising their identification. Because here in Mangina, almost everyone pretends to be displaced. When the displaced people are being identified, many Mangina residents pass themselves off as being displaced.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Interview with a nurse in Mbau, 7 April 2023.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Interview with a youth focus group in Oicha, 11 April 2023

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*



Ultimately, a large number of respondents shared the view that humanitarian assistance and development aid are often tainted (as is public action) by predatory practices, such as falsifying and misrepresenting the quality and quantity of targets or beneficiaries, clientelist practices and even disrespect for professional ethics in the field. The consequences of this, as put by a focus group of men in Mbau *“Many projects fail at this point in the sector because of the poor selection of targets.”*¹¹¹ It is clear that this will happen again and again.

Sometimes, following a localised attack, a village school will have to move in its entirety with its staff and pupils, and ask for help from a school that is supposedly safe from threats and attacks. This was revealed in an interview with a women’s focus group in Eringeti:

*“When the enemy arrives in the area where the school is located, the population moves and so does the school. The school takes refuge in the same place as the surrounding population. To ensure a skeleton operation can continue, the displaced school requests a service from another school in the host community (for example, use of its premises). However, sometimes the host school is not equipped or paid by the State, and this creates a conflict between the displaced school and the host school because some are paid, and others are not paid at all.”*¹¹²



¹¹¹ Interview with a focus group of men in Mbau, 7 April 2023.

¹¹² Interview with a focus group of eight women civil society leaders in Eringeti, 8 April 2023.

Cyclical and seasonal conflicts in Beni

Seasonal conflicts are those that arise following an unexpected or unforeseeable event, such as insecurity, natural disasters, epidemics or pandemics. The challenges to the Ebola response have been the subject of a regional study, which provides information on the origin of conflicts arising from Ebola Virus Disease (EVD).¹¹³ Throughout the Ebola period, the disease created and/or amplified conflicts in the commune of Mangina, in the province of North Kivu, where the epidemic first broke out before spreading elsewhere.

The other seasonal conflict relates to the harvesting of agricultural produce. During the growing season, there are never as many atrocities as during the time when the crops are ripe. In this case, Pygmies and soldiers' wives (who sell food) are suspected by farmers of stealing their produce. The ADF are also suspected of committing atrocities, particularly during the harvest period, in order to seize the produce from the fields of terrorised populations that are forced to leave and abandon all their possessions, and they are also accused of harvesting what they have not sown.¹¹⁴

Other types of conflict in Beni

Several types of conflict often lead to violence and atrocities in Beni. Without being exhaustive, the list below was drawn up during an interview with a member of a CSO who was researching the pacification of Beni. He mentions various types of conflict:

Lifestyle conflicts

Much of the activity in the region is agropastoral. Each entity is home to a people who claim to be landowners and consider other populations who come to settle on the same land as invaders. This can sometimes lead to a degree of competition, or even conflict, between the two peoples, especially when some come up with ways to take revenge on the people labelled as invaders, such as sending youths to attack the immigrants from other populations.

¹¹³ See Nicholas Crawford et al, *La 10e réponse à Ebola en République démocratique du Congo. Leçons sur le leadership et la coordination internationaux*, Compte rendu HPG, March 2021.

¹¹⁴ Focus group interviews in Eringeti on 8 April 2023, in Mbau on 7 April 2023 and in Oicha on 10 April 2023.



Conflicts of jealousy between “entrepreneurial” non-natives and natives

Compared to other urbanised areas, Beni still has green spaces to exploit. When people leave a region and settle in Beni, they invest what they have in agriculture. However, the “indigenous” people become jealous of the prosperity that results from the entrepreneurial spirit of the “foreigners” and put obstacles in their way. Sometimes the indigenous people hire delinquents to threaten them, and in turn the “foreigners” seek out other delinquents to protect themselves. This becomes a conflict that can affect even those who are not involved.

Conflicts linked to agricultural produce

There are places where insecurity reigns at harvest time because of thieves, who are indistinguishable from rebels. In fact, they use firearms or knives and wear masks because they know there will be resistance when they try to harvest what they haven't sown. Those who own the fields also look for protection, so they organise groups to watch over their fields. Every time these groups encounter thieves, a confrontation ensues. If it is discovered that a victim belongs to a particular tribe, others will attack the tribe they suspect (abusive generalisation).

Religious conflicts

In the province of North Kivu, preference is given to “indigenous” rather than “foreign” administrators. This also applies to representatives of different religions, in that when a priest or pastor from another region is sent to an evangelical mission here, they tend to be seen as one missionary too many, because they are “foreign”. People wonder why this particular priest has been chosen to be in charge rather than other local pastors who also have theological training. This creates divisions in terms of allegiances within society.

The same problem is faced by the Muslims, who are united in the area through a regional organisation. In the city of Beni, there are two main mosques, as well as mosques scattered around the quarters. Sometimes people from the southern mosque can't pray in the northern mosque, even though the distance between them is less than a kilometre. How can this be explained? This opposition is due to the fact that Muslims in the lower mosque follow a Saudi Arabian doctrine, while those in the mosque higher up follow a Kenyan doctrine.

There is a further problem that occurs within the same religious group. There are educated members of the congregation who submit project funding proposals. When they get funding, believers from another mosque make accusations, and ask the authorities to keep a watch on them in case they are being funded by jihadists. They are in constant conflict and cannot even agree on decisions around major religious events.



Leadership conflicts

The vast majority of interviews focused on the leadership conflicts in which some people feel they should be running the city of Beni. These conflicts are linked to the political manipulation of young people, but also to the fact that many young people see themselves as natural and irreplaceable leaders. This leads to violence and atrocities, especially during mass mobilisations, and it also causes a leadership crisis between CSOs. In fact, when it comes to calling a strike or days without work (“ville-mort”), some CSOs often make the decision without involving businesses and transport companies. This leadership conflict remains a recurring phenomenon in both the city and the territory of Beni, as shown in our interviews with opinion leaders and community focus groups.

Conflict between the population and MONUSCO

Some people feel that MONUSCO is not fulfilling its role in protecting civilians and bringing peace and stability to society. MONUSCO is often suspected of being complicit with the enemies of peace (“ennemis de la paix”), and as a result there is a crisis of trust between MONUSCO and the civilian populations.¹¹⁵ The population’s resentment or rancour towards MONUSCO can be explained by its failure or inaction in protecting civilians from massacres or constant danger.



¹¹⁵ For more information, see Pacifique Makuta Mwambusa et al., *Acteurs de la vie politique et violences identitaires à Beni*.

3. CAUSES OF CONFLICT IN BENI

It is difficult to discuss the causes underlying the violence and atrocities in the Beni territory, given the diversity and specificities of each conflict, as well as the shifting local context. Analysing the underlying causes involves linking internal and external dynamics and focusing on political factors and on governance - which is seen as the institutionalisation of norms and behaviours, of democratic mechanisms and of procedures for managing public affairs. These appear to be the products of a crisis in political and economic governance, of politicians' strategies (including the politicisation of cultural identities and the manipulation of collective identities) or of interference from external actors.

A representative of a citizens' movement cites bad governance and impunity as factors at the root of the conflicts in Beni:

“For the love of the country, the authorities of the state of siege have not helped the Beni region. There is also the justice system, which raises up a nation but does not manage to do its job properly. In this case, the justice system is at the root of the conflicts in Beni, whether it's over land or other issues, the justice system is being exploited by those who have the power, those who have the money.”¹¹⁶

With specific regard to conflicts between the city and the territory of Beni, poor governance is the result of non-compliance with the laws in force in the country. Some political party activists contacted in situ told us of conflicts linked to the failure to respect the boundaries between the city of Beni and the Virunga National Park, as well as the boundaries between the park and the indigenous population. According to the same source:

“The city of Beni was created in a particular context of war or rebellion in 2003. We failed to compensate the customary chiefs, whose powers extended right into the city Beni as it now stands. To this day, they believe themselves to be customary chiefs in the city, which creates conflicts of jurisdiction between the urban and rural areas.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Interview with a local authority on 6 April 2023.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*



This catch-all concept of “bad governance” points to several indicators that caught the attention of the majority of people interviewed in the various administrative districts of Beni. This included unemployment and the resulting poverty, the phenomenon of “landless peasants” faced with land concessionaires (political entrepreneurs and economic operators), incivism and dysfunctional social regulation.

In summary, regarding the causes and roots of the conflicts in Beni, we highlight a few points shared by Tabin Lissendja Bahama.¹¹⁸ Since 1998, both central and provincial political power in the DRC has been weakened by armed group activity, the establishment of a war economy, the permeability of borders, the militarisation of the local economy and its orientation towards the outside world.

Private individuals and organisations are organising to limit the deployment of state authority in their areas of operation, to prevent the State’s presence from harming their interests and illicit businesses. The State, being responsible for organising, controlling and regulating society, is thus put to the test by internal and external social forces. Even the state of siege, which has been extended several times, has not risen to the challenge by shielding the Beni region from conflict, violence and atrocities. This context remains “fertile ground” for the proliferation of conflicts and even micro-conflicts such as those identified in the first part of this study. The local populations of Beni are faced with local, national, regional and international actors seeking to protect their interests in their region, interests that contradict with the ideal of lasting peace in the area.

¹¹⁸ Tabin Lissendja Bahama, “Conflicts armés et fragilité de l’autorité étatique au Nord-Kivu en République Démocratique du Congo”, *European Scientific Journal* 13, no. 5, February 2017.



Actors and consequences of the conflicts in Beni

The nature and extent of conflicts differ from one area to another. There are specific features depending on the entities visited, even though certain causes may be transversal. Several interviews with different groups referred to a crisis of trust between those who govern and those who are governed. According to a focus group of women in the city of Beni:

“Those involved in the state of siege are experts in sexual harassment, and it’s the government that puts them there... Women’s rights are being trampled underfoot.” This is at the root of the conflicts between the authorities and young people. “As well as this, marches are forbidden during a state of siege. However, even if you try to meet an authority figure to explain a problem, they won’t see you, and marching is the only way left for us to make demands to deal with our problems. But when we want to march, they warn us that they will kill us...” (If we know the house, by extension we know who the “criminal” is). “And these young people are busy looking for and violently attacking police officers’ homes. There have often been injuries, people displaced and even deaths.”

There are also conflicts in Beni territory that combine a number of factors, including land, power, identity and population movements.¹¹⁹ By extension, the activities of armed groups, production methods and even insecurity can be added to the list of factors creating conflict.

One of the particularities of the Mbau and Bashu sectors remains the prevalence of customary power conflicts between clan chiefs of the ruling family, causing antagonism between the local populations. This came to light in interviews¹²⁰ with two customary chiefs from these two entities.

Among those taking part in the conflicts, an elected member of parliament from Beni, who asked to remain anonymous, argues that:

“Politicians and economic operators are both directly involved in conflicts, because it is the politicians who protect the interests of the economic operators and vice versa. Those who are involved in the conflicts are the ones who are buying up large concessions to the detriment of the people who were working the land long before these new acquisitions were made.”¹²¹

The same source points to the irresponsibility of the State in this matter, which is consequently considered primarily responsible for conflicts over the exploitation of the resources of Virunga National Park. The ICCN and the public services are still accusing the population of violating the boundary and gaining illegal access to the interior of the park to obtain firewood or to hunt, with the result that the park rangers arrest people and send them to the public prosecutor’s office.¹²²

¹¹⁹ See Interpeace, *Terre, identité, pouvoir et mouvements de population. L’escalade des conflits dans la région des Grands-Lacs*, February 2016.

¹²⁰ Interview conducted on 3 April 2023 in Beni.

¹²¹ Interview with an elected MP from Beni, 12 April 2023.

¹²² *Ibid.*



A customary chief from Mbau gives their opinion, ranking those responsible for conflicts and atrocities as follows:

“The primary actor in conflicts is the State. The State imposes laws on us that we are completely unaware of. The second actor is the ‘community’: the State gives us laws that we ourselves are already breaking. The State’s partners, civil society and other partners have a leadership problem.”¹²³

Moreover, there is a significant range of groups and individuals involved in the conflicts in Erigenti. A men’s focus group in Eringeti added various state and non-state actors to the list of those involved:

“The population is threatened by the police. Field boundaries are dealt with by the Agence Nationale de Renseignement (ANR) [National Intelligence Agency], marital problems are also dealt with by the police and the ANR, and this creates misunderstandings between us customary chiefs and the state services. There are economic conflicts between Pygmies and farmers. The war has meant that the Pygmies in the forest and the farmers only cultivate the areas around their homes because of fear of the ADF. When Pygmies are hungry, they will go onto a farmer’s field to steal crops, and this creates serious problems. And they often get hurt.”

In a focus group of young people in Oicha, those taking part in the conflicts are identified along three levels: local, national and international. Community members are among those involved, as are local authorities, state services at local, provincial and national level, and the *Direction Générale des Impôts* [General Tax Directorate]. In the case of land disputes, multinational companies are among the causes of conflict, as they seek to protect their interests. There are participants at all levels in the conflicts, and some local leaders are manipulating the situation for their own benefit. There are also local authorities and members of the security services at all levels. Political actors and those with ambitions for power are among those who start conflicts. Then there are the national and transnational armed groups.

In the commune of Mangina, as in Oicha, the main feature of land conflicts is land grabbing by the concessionaires, who are often political actors and economic operators, as well as suspected members of the ADF. A member of a CSO in Mangina explains:

“International organisations in Beni city are looking for natural resources. I’m referring to these people who want to invest, who buy concessions at national level (from the relevant ministries) and come in without considering the local communities or the environmental impact. In these concessions, the members of the local communities who farm there find themselves up against someone who has the title deeds, and the local population is forced to evacuate. At local level, the same actors involved in land issues are at odds with each other.”¹²⁴

¹²³ Interview with a Bashu customary chief in Beni on 12 April 2023.

¹²⁴ Interview with a member of a CSO in Mangina on 10 April 2023.



A focus group of eight women leaders and members of CSOs in the city of Beni summarised those involved in conflict, pointing the finger at certain leaders and certain MPs who, for their own interests, use people to spark societal conflict. There are also certain opinion leaders, youth leaders, militias described as “community self-defence” and pressure groups that are manipulated by certain people, foreign or otherwise.

Conflicts are inherent to any society, and the humanitarian consequences are corollary. Violence of various kinds, atrocities, massacres, targeted assassinations, threats, settling of scores, insecurity, demonstrations and repression, armed attacks resulting in internal displacement, house fires, looting, theft and rape, hunger, reprisals and other forms of human rights violations are all logical consequences of the conflicts in Beni. Our presence on the ground last April and the latest bulletin from the United Nations through its Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)¹²⁵ are eloquent proof that the context under study is far from immune to instability and crises. A local authority in the Mbau sector reckons the ability of those involved to settle their accounts for certain unresolved conflicts, either amicably or in the courts:

“There are killings that we can’t explain, like the case we have now: yesterday evening a local officer was shot dead in their home at 9pm. He worked for the State Planning Department. This was no accident, just another incursion by a rebel group. He was targeted. In a case like this, we don’t know who he was in conflict with - it was a settling of scores.”¹²⁶

Conflict also has a negative impact on vulnerable and marginalised groups in Beni.

Women returned by the ADF after having been kidnapped and/or survivors of forced detention are often stigmatised and marginalised as a result of their membership or forced association with armed groups. It is even difficult for them to register with the Independent Electoral Commission to obtain a voter’s card. It is also difficult for these women to obtain a certificate of loss of identity. When they are kidnapped or taken hostage, they can easily spend six months or even two or three years under the command of armed groups without identity papers, after having suffered atrocities of all kinds.

Children displaced by insecurity no longer have access to school due to a lack of resources. They are traumatised by their almost constant exposure to atrocities and threats. These children are also stigmatised and are neither accepted nor welcome in society if they are they are born as a result of rape or relationships between staff involved in the Ebola response and local people:

“Foreigners have left a lot of children behind: there are already Traoré and Aboubacar children here, and these children are marginalised. It’s enough to know that such and such a child was born in such and such a situation for people to start discriminating against them or stigmatising them. There are also displaced girls who are too poor and who have sex in exchange for 1,000 Congolese francs. They are also marginalised, and their vulnerable state is exploited for prostitution.”¹²⁷ To this category we must add people living with disabilities and the elderly, who are also discriminated against when it comes to the allocation of social services or protection.

¹²⁵ OCHA, RD Congo: *Situation humanitaire dans la province du Nord-Kivu au 2 juin 2023.*

¹²⁶ Interview with a local authority in Mbau, 7 April 2023.

¹²⁷ Interview with a woman leader, member of a CSO, at her workplace, 4 April 2023.



4. EXPERIENCES, OPPORTUNITIES AND APPROACHES TO PEACE ALREADY TESTED IN BENI

This third part of the study successively covers the experiences or desires for peace in Beni, the approaches or repertoires of action primarily tested by non-state actors, and the challenges arising from them in terms of social exclusions or any other form of obstacle to peace efforts. However, it should be emphasised that the questions put to the people we met during our research did not yield exhaustive answers, yet these answers nevertheless provide a starting point for further discussions.

Peace experiments tested in Beni

Cooperation between the military and the civilian population

A focus group of female members of CSOs in the city of Beni highlights the collaboration between the military and the civilian population in peacebuilding efforts:

“Young people are forming a neighbourhood watch group to detect the enemies of peace. Collaboration between the authorities and the population is at its best.”¹²⁸

There is also a degree of collaboration between the army and the civil society organisations responsible for supporting survivors of sexual violence. A female CSO leader said as much during an interview in the city of Beni:

“We would work in collaboration with the authorities, because the military brought back people who had been kidnapped or held captive in the bush by armed groups.”¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Interview with a focus group of women members of CSOs in Beni, 3 April 2023.

¹²⁹ Interview with a female leader of a Beni women's organisation at her workplace in the city of Beni.



One of the mechanisms put in place by the population is the introduction of vigilance and warning systems through the “*Chunguza jirani*” (Watch Your Neighbour) campaign. As one of the women’s focus groups in Beni mentioned above put it:

“Operation Chunguza jirani consists of keeping a constant watch on your neighbours and their activities, making sure that any visitors have gone to the neighbourhood chief for identification, and reporting suspicious neighbours.”

The problem here is that alerts sent to the relevant authorities are often neglected or even just ignored. A member of a CSO in Mangina links this lack of action or failure to the crisis of trust between the various partners in the peace process, in particular the police, MONUSCO, certain CSOs and the population:

“There is a crisis of trust, which is the big obstacle. Sometimes we don’t take on board the information given by one organisation or another. That’s why you have those who say they can’t work with MONUSCO. For example, the police who always intervene too late, and the Judicial Police Officers who impose exorbitant demands on the population. There may be CSOs who don’t know how MONUSCO works and its limitations. We have the local government, civil society organisations and international organisations to help us find solutions to our problems.”¹³⁰

Joint peacekeeping operations are often fragile, owing to the population’s negative image of not only the security services, but also the non-state organisations (especially external ones) involved in protection, including MONUSCO. Conversely, security services and other security actors often find themselves out of touch with local customs and beliefs around factors that destabilise the context. This crisis of trust is also partly the result of poor understanding and/or awareness of the extent of the competences of the various parties to the peace process. However, this conclusion should be nuanced in the context of the commune of Oicha, where solutions to certain conflicts are found during the parade organised in the name of peace and security. This point is illustrated by a focus group of young people we met in Oicha:

“Every Monday, there is a weekly parade during which the local authority invites the people to talk about local problems, some of which can even be resolved immediately.”¹³¹

¹³⁰ Interview with a member of a CSO in Mangina on 10 April 2023.

¹³¹ Interview with a group of young people in Oicha on 11 April 2023.



Community dialogues and peace forums

A key experiment involves community dialogues on peace and on media that regularly convey messages and peace advertisements for young people. The interviews with the youth focus group in Oicha highlight the prominent role played not only by these dialogues, but also by peace training seminars¹³² on banning the use of violence as a means of settling disputes.

A second experience worth mentioning is the presence of peace structures such as the LPC, civil society, the Youth Council, “community” radio stations and even “community” leaders trained in conflict management and prevention. The abundance of these structures is accompanied by certain challenges, as a woman leader of a CSO in the city of Beni pointed out:

“In Beni, there are several organisations working for peace, but they do not work together. Each organisation is accountable to the person who sent it. There is no coordination. And if there is coordination, it is limited by a lack of resources, and if there is funding, it is for three months.”¹³³

This also raises the problem of targeting participants for training. Many of the same types of training are aimed at the same individuals, instead of diversifying and including as many different actors as possible. A respondent from a civic movement in the city of Beni criticizes the routine behaviour of NGOs, which always focus on the same target as a representative of a vulnerable social group in need of some kind of assistance:

“... Unfortunately, many organisations arrange activities with people who have already been trained in the same subject, but I’ve been refusing to take part in these activities for the past two years to give others a chance. I receive the invitation, but I assign someone else to take part... We need to think beyond community leaders.”¹³⁴

The other challenge to media-led peacebuilding remains the lack of professionalism of the majority of media institutions. This is what was said by a group of young people interviewed in Oicha, who mentioned the rumours that spread more quickly in this Commune as a result of being underinformed, misinformed or disinformed:

“... As far as young people are concerned, there are radio stations that don’t give the floor to pressure groups, especially youth groups. There are other radio stations that give the floor to anyone, without taking into account the impact of the message that will be conveyed. This often leads to misunderstanding. Rumours spread easily here at home, and they have a big influence on people’s attitudes and behaviour.”

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Interview with a female leader of a women’s CSO in Beni at its headquarters in the city of Beni.

¹³⁴ Interview with a member of a citizens’ movement and member of a CSO on 3 April 2023. He criticises the ineffectiveness of NGO interventions due to poor targeting.



Referring to Radio Okapi, one opinion leader interviewed in the city of Beni remarked:

“Not 48 hours ago, a member of the national government team said that they did not know what was happening in Beni.”¹³⁵

This is at the root of much abuse and violence, especially among young people who are more vulnerable to manipulation by opinion leaders. Having or possessing correct and true information represents an opportunity to build peace. This is what some CSO leaders in Mbau and Mangina, and even in the city of Beni, think:

“I’ve said here that the lack of training is at the root of conflicts. If you come and train people in the importance of peace and social cohesion, you can reduce conflict.”¹³⁶

In the face of the violence and atrocities that have plagued Beni for more than a decade, a number of pleas and mediations have already been initiated to create opportunities for peace, with mixed results. This is a response from a focus group of women we met in the city of Beni:

“We make appeals, but we get no response, or they claim impunity; you have a problem with the land registry, but your rights are not restored, which can only create problems that make you feel insecure.”

Local action as an opportunity for conflict prevention and peacebuilding

One opinion mentioned by a representative of the religious groups and shared by the majority of our interviewees is that society ought to become peaceful through the creation of gainful employment:

“The opportunities for peace lie in work: the availability of gainful employment for young people.”¹³⁷

By way of illustration, the organisation *Je suis Éleveur de Bétail (JEB)* [I am a Livestock Breeder] helps young people and women to learn to rear livestock. The actions of several state and non-state organisations and actors working in Beni, including the youth parliament, religious groups, *Solidarité Féminine Pour La Paix et le Développement Intégral (SOFEPADI)* [Women’s Solidarity for Peace and Integral Development] and Mercy Corps were cited by our respondents as opportunities to be capitalised on for conflict prevention and peacebuilding:

¹³⁵ Interview with an opinion leader in the city of Beni, 6 April 2023.

¹³⁶ Interview with a member of a CSO at the Cellule d’Animation Communautaire (Community Events Unit) in Mbau.

¹³⁷ Interview with a Muslim member of a CSO, 3 April 2023.



“We have many social actors involved in peace, including local NGOs. We are all part of a network called RAHCAHD (Réseau des Acteurs Humanitaires pour la Coordination des Actions Humanitaires et de Développement) [Network of Humanitarian Actors for the Coordination of Humanitarian and Development Actions]. This network includes civil society, local authorities and local NGOs in various fields.”¹³⁸

A local political authority in Mangina acknowledges that there is good cooperation between civil society actors and the district administration:

“If there is a conflict, people get involved in resolving it. We often invite those involved in civil society, and they often invite us for several cases as well. Yes, there is a weakness. They devote their time to resolving conflicts, but the lack of motivation discourages them. Also, there’s the risk of threats. Sometimes the party that doesn’t win the case threatens the person responsible for the peace initiative.”¹³⁹

A customary chief from Bashu says that the barza [gathering of elders] is an opportunity to put an end to power struggles and other related antagonisms:

“Barza are everywhere, the State is a barza. It is important to have barza. The peacebuilders can come and tell people what they need to do to restore peace. To stop land disputes, the courts must be given time to resolve them. Or the courts should demand that cases first go through the barza of the customary chiefs before they get to court. The conflicts will not end as long as the courts continue to ignore the role of local (customary) chiefs.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Interview with a CSO leader in Mangina, 10 April 2023.

¹³⁹ Interview with a local political authority in Mangina, 10 April 2023, at their place of work.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with a Bashu customary chief at the home of their host family in Beni, 12 April 2023.



5. FACTORS LIMITING PEACEBUILDING AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN ACTORS IN BENI

The presence of a variety of actors involved in the prevention of conflicts and atrocities in Beni does not mean that there is collaboration and coordination of humanitarian action on the ground. The notions of “synergy” and “symposium” at different levels seem to be overused by predatory practices, as we have previously mentioned. Conflicts of interest, selfish motivations, unclear management, and communication deficits weaken coordination and collaboration. The absence of consensus on joint operations or priority plans for peace, and a crisis of trust between actors further complicates efforts at local, national, and international levels.

In the city of Beni, sources close to civil society mention the existence of a local urban development plan, which however does not seem to have identified the real problems and priorities in this area. This was revealed in an interview with an opinion leader from urban civil society:

“I believe that these are also interests that divide people and undermine peacebuilding. There was no local development plan, a plan that was initiated and validated less than six months ago. As a result, any new actors who want to get involved in the area are referred by the urban authority to the peace and development committee set up for the cause.”¹⁴¹

Along these lines, a member of a youth CSO contacted in Beni added to this issue of interests:

“The lack of coordination of peace initiatives is a serious problem here in Beni. Someone comes along, they think they can bring peace all on their own and work in isolation: this is already an obstacle. It’s a question of selfish interests. We need to ban the issue of individualistic interests and then try to give priority to sharing between those involved in peace in the name of peace.”¹⁴²

A CSO leader contacted in the rural commune of Oicha, criticising the lack of communication between actors on the ground, added:

“There is little grassroots feedback from those involved in the Local Safety Plan. There is poor communication, which makes collaboration difficult. There is no sharing of information between CSOs and government departments involved in the protection and security of citizens.”¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Interview with a youth CSO leader in the city of Beni, 3 April 2023.

¹⁴² Interview with a member of a youth CSO in Beni, 3 April 2023.

¹⁴³ Interview with a CSO manager in Oicha, 11 April 2023, at their place of work.



In addition to selfish interests, there is also the question of the development and empowerment of grassroots authorities and the crisis of trust between those in power and those being governed. This view is widely supported by a member of Parliament, young people from citizens' movements, and certain political party representatives:

“One day we went to talk to the urban authority and suggested creating a permanent framework for consultation (an inter-community barza). The urban authority took our proposal on board, but since the barza was set up, there has never been a meeting.”¹⁴⁴

The failure of humanitarian action can also be explained, in part as noted above, by poor targeting, a lack of joint planning and a lack of accountability at grassroots level. A representative of a religious group put it this way during an interview in the city of Beni:

“The failure of humanitarian actions is due to the fact that they don't reach the target. They are limited to intermediaries. You meet people who you think are close to the target, but who are not the target. Here in Beni, there are several organisations working for peace, but they do not work together. Each organisation is accountable to the person who sent it.”

A female leader of a women's organisation in the city of Beni says that, in addition to the poor targeting:

“...there is no coordination. And if there is, it is limited by a lack of resources. Three months of funding, for example, cannot produce long-term results. And even if there was coordination, we don't plan activities together, everyone is accountable somewhere.”

“State actors, those from civil society and those from the international community will speak the same language, this issue of permanent insecurity will come to an end here in Beni,” maintains a civil society leader.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Comments from a political party representative contacted in Beni at their place of work (a shop).

¹⁴⁵ Interview with a civil society leader on 6 April 2023 in Beni.



In the city of Beni, like in all the entities visited, the lack of coordination, collaboration and “differential complementarity” was emphasised as one of the major causes of scarce peacebuilding results. A women’s discussion group in the city of Beni noted greed, tribalism, nepotism, and ignorance by some organizations that prioritize money, selfishness, and hypocrisy – essentially poor governance – as obstacles to coordination. By way of illustration:

“We’re working on GBV [Gender-Based Violence], and each organisation overlaps in terms of the opportunities and it’s a chance they have to share with other organisations. It’s an issue of cooperation or deal making. Everyone wants to get richer. Even participating in training has become a matter of cooperation. For a question about tuberculosis survivors, we brought in people who had never suffered from the disease. I also realise that it’s a problem of leadership: there are those who get opportunities and believe that it’s thanks to a state of siege. I mean that whatever happens, they’re not going to share with anyone, not even their direct collaborators.”¹⁴⁶

The lack of patriotism was mentioned several times in Eringeti, Oicha, Mbau and Mangina as an obstacle to humanitarian coordination. Negative rumours generate demonization and suspicion around some of those involved in peacebuilding, which also contributes to poor coordination of humanitarian action. A researcher studying the process of Beni towards peace, who asked to remain anonymous, seems to have adopted the same line of thought:

“First, it’s the demonization of all organisations that come here with the aim of teaching people about peaceful coexistence and peacebuilding. They are perceived negatively, as some believe they are instruments of a certain invading country with expansionist aims. They come to us with the concept of peaceful cohabitation, while they are preparing for the arrival and settlement of those they call ‘refugees living abroad’. Apart from the demonization, there is a crisis of trust between the actors themselves.”¹⁴⁷

The lack of transparency and honesty between state and non-state actors involved in protection and security remains one of the challenges to coordination at different levels.

¹⁴⁶ Comments from a focus group of women leaders from CSOs in the city of Beni, in Beni, 3 April 2023.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with a researcher who asked to remain anonymous on 13 April 2023 in Beni.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The eastern part of the DRC has been marked by three decades of incessant warfare, resulting in millions of civilian and military casualties. With the situation bogged down in a military-political stalemate and with violence raging in Beni, local populations are yearning for peace and security in an environment of fragile security. The issue has become more acute following the general elections in December 2023.

Of the multitude of conflicts at the root of the violence and atrocities in Beni, three transversal types stand out, and their collateral effects are plunging the region into a climate of permanent terror and insecurity. They include land conflicts, armed conflicts and conflicts linked to poor social regulation and access to natural resources.

The aim of this study was to analyse the opportunities for peace through coordination and collaboration between the actors involved in preventing atrocities in Beni. To achieve this objective, the study began with the hypothesis that one of the challenges was a lack of reliable information and a crisis of trust between state and non-state security and protection actors. To test this hypothesis, a qualitative approach was favoured and 11 focus groups and 30 individual interviews with key informants were organised in Beni in April 2023.

After triangulating the field data, the analysis confirmed the hypothesis that the lack of success in terms of preventing violence and atrocities in Beni is due to an absence of reliable information, on the one hand, and a crisis of trust between those involved in the security sector, on the other. Despite the diversity of opportunities and interventions on the ground over the past decade, the area remains the target of various kinds of abuse and atrocity. This is why, in this conclusion, we agree with the premise of Marie-Laure Le Coconnier and Bruno Pommier: *“Humanitarian action takes place in an environment that is essentially unstructured, where the authority of the State is non-existent or weakened. While everyone agrees on the need for coordination, fewer people are willing to be coordinated.”*¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Marie-Laure Le Coconnier and Bruno Pommier, *L'action humanitaire, Que sais-je?* Presses Universitaires de France, 2017.



In the context of our study – Beni – there is currently no coordination and collaboration based on a system of trust between those involved in the protection and security sector. *“Substantive coordination is more complex: agreeing on the rules of action, agreeing on the level of cooperation with local and national authorities, discussing methods and objectives all require a consultation mechanism. Goodwill and simple adherence to humanitarian principles are not enough”*¹⁴⁹ to organise effective action and bring about change. Many aspects often remain ignored by or unknown to all the parties involved in peace processes or joint operations, as in the case of the nature and the political mandate of the United Nations.¹⁵⁰ Reliable information, much like a system of trust, cannot be decreed with a wave of a magic wand. Rather, it is built through a neutral, inclusive and innovative “Research–Action–Participation” process, including some priority actions. The priority actions resulting from a grassroots co–design process must reflect relevance, coherence, feasibility, sustainability, measurability and contextualisation; in short, they must reflect the theory of change.

These recommendations are formulated according to the specific types of conflict identified on the ground in Beni. They are addressed to the various state and non–state parties involved in protecting civilians and preventing mass atrocities in the region. The new opportunities and priorities for peace will involve collaboration and coordination of the responses to the humanitarian crisis, as called for by the Congolese government, the national Ministry of Defence, the Beni political and administrative authorities, MONUSCO, civil society, national and international non–governmental organisations, and finally political parties.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p.113.

¹⁵⁰ Priorities, urgencies and agendas continue to fluctuate according to the avowed or unavowed interests of the UN Member States (and above all those of the Security Council) that have decided to deploy the Blue Helmets – to maintain international peace and security.



1. CONFLICTS OF POWER AND CUSTOMARY CONFLICTS

THE CONGOLESE GOVERNMENT (PARLIAMENT) should review the status of customary chiefs. There is a de jure and de facto contradiction between article 25 of law no. 15/015 of 25 August 2015 establishing the status of customary chiefs in the DRC and law no. 22/029 of 29 June 2022 amending and supplementing law no. 06/006 of 9 March 2006 on the organisation of presidential, legislative, provincial, urban, municipal and local elections, as amended by law no. 11/003 of 25 June 2011, law no. 15/001 of 12 February 2015 and law no. 17/013 of 24 December 2017.¹⁵¹ Customary chiefs become involved in militant and partisan activities, which undermines their customary authority, which is supposed to be politically impartial and protective of custom and the entire population. In practice, some customary chiefs allow themselves to be manipulated by politicians. The co-opted customary chiefs are both legislative (Provincial Assembly) and executive (retaining the power of chief of the chiefdom and/or influence/control over the executive power of the chiefdom, a customary entity which is one of the decentralised territorial entities) and they constitute a decentralised administrative entity. As a result, they become judge and jury, as they still have control over chiefdom budgets and influence over the local judiciary.

THE CONGOLESE GOVERNMENT (EXECUTIVE) should periodically initiate training for customary chiefs and CSO leaders in conflict resolution methods, including land conflicts and transformational leadership. They should also provide training in the peaceful cohabitation of differences and the primacy of the national interest over manipulated collective identities, which are the driving force behind conflicts.

2. IDENTITY CONFLICTS

THE CONGOLESE NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

- should finance a civic and political education campaign on the rights and duties of citizens, including coexistence among different actors and promotion of diversity as a cardinal value in the fight against intolerance and inequalities of all kinds, which are a source of frustration, tension and violence.
- should create a consultative commission to settle customary conflicts in the Beni region in order to effectively combat the multiplicity of these conflicts, which destabilise the peoples' lives and cause insecurity.

CIVIL SOCIETY (IN COLLABORATION WITH THE MINISTRIES RESPONSIBLE FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH) should establish priorities for formal and informal education around patriotism and the national interest. This complicated task requires much rationality and gravity to recruit experts and trainers, and to allocate substantial resources.

¹⁵¹ There is a real contradiction between article 25 of law no. 15/015 of 25 August 2015, which states: "The customary chief is apolitical..." and article 125 of law no. 06/006 of 9 March 2006, which states: "During the extraordinary session to install the Provincial Assembly, the elected deputies, after validating their mandates, co-opt the designated customary chiefs, with at least two-thirds of the provincial deputies present."



3. ARMED CONFLICTS

THE CONGOLESE GOVERNMENT should demonstrate greater professionalism in its decisions and actions to respect the principle of unity of command within the army. It should refrain from creating multiple parallel and sometimes contradictory official services in charge of maintaining public order.

NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS should adopt and regularly maintain the security councils' meetings, that have been expanded to include civilians as a result of the Pamoja kwa amani ya Beni pilot project. The aim of this is to strengthen collaboration, trust, and coordination between different actors in the prevention of mass atrocities in Beni.

THE DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

- should professionally carry out routine military operations recognised in every state that claims to be “sovereign” (carrying out its autonomous missions), making the tracking down of armed groups the top priority and allocating substantial resources to it. Its commitment to public security policies, based on evidence and a mastery of the context, can help restore the authority of the State.
- should improve the image of the FARDC, along with its capacity to protect civilians, through joint activities aimed at strengthening positive relations and trust between civilians and the military, thereby promoting a better understanding of, and greater respect for, human rights and international humanitarian law. It should impose its sovereignty by putting internal and external ‘enemies of peace’ out of action through military intervention, one of the major attributes of the police state.

THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE should apply more rigorous sanctions against the perpetrators of violence and insecurity, i.e. those guilty of compromising behaviour, embezzlement and corruption within the security system. A campaign should be adopted and implemented to combat the illegal trade of timber, coffee and cocoa, the illicit sale of state land, uncontrolled parcelling out of land, and the smuggling of minerals, particularly within the Congolese public administration and army. The conclusions of the enquiry into the Kasindi incident should be made public. Lastly, it should scrupulously follow the recommendations of the round table on the evaluation of the state of siege¹⁵² held in Kinshasa from 14 to 16 August 2023 and lift the state of siege in North Kivu.

The Congolese government should renegotiate and clearly define the mandate and mission of the contingent of forces from the Southern African Development Community (SADEC) and the Ugandan Army (UPDF) operating in the DRC.

¹⁵² Since May 2012, a state of siege has been in force in the province of North Kivu. “In total disregard of the law, the defence and security forces have been given extensive powers that are not justified by the declared aim of the state of siege, and which they are using to silence anyone calling to account the actions of the state in the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri, theatres of conflict.” See Amnesty International, RDC. Depuis un an, l’« état de siège » est utilisé comme un instrument pour écraser la dissidence, 10 May 2022. According to the Lucha citizens’ movement, the state of siege has totally failed, a message that can be read on several buildings in the city of Beni.



MONUSCO

- should be more open and communicate more with the civilian population, not only on the extent of its powers, but also on its gradual withdrawal plan and related procedures; this could improve its relationship with the local population.
- should implement a youth leadership project in Beni territory, with a view to combating the manipulation that sometimes leads young people to enlist in armed groups, in order to limit the risks of armed conflict. For example, building a cultural centre would enable young people to discuss their roles in society on a regular basis, learn about the values and shortcomings of their respective cultures, and engage in innovative exchanges with each other. This would have a positive impact, not only on the enhancement of cultural heritage, but also as part of lifelong learning and the exchange of experiences.

MONUSCO'S FORCE INTERVENTION BRIGADE should exercise its right to use force beyond self-defence. Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter should be applied, allowing them to fight alongside the FARDC against other armed groups, including the ADF, and coordinating or closely collaborating with other forces invited by the government to protect civilians and enforce peace.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE VARIOUS CSOS should initiate awareness-raising campaigns aimed at young people, with a view to making them aware of the role they can play in bringing peace to Beni by collaborating with the state security services and avoiding the complicity that some people have with armed groups and other enemies of peace.

NGOS WORKING IN THE FIELD OF SECURITY AND PEACE

- should, in their intervention plan, only give priority and financial support to inclusive and sustainable local pilot actions (by CSOs) that work in synergy with local authorities, young people, lower-ranking military personnel, police officers, agents of the Agence nationale de renseignement (NAR) [National Intelligence Agency], the Direction générale des migrations (DGM) [Directorate-General for Migration], women, and certain vulnerable and marginalised groups, particularly Pygmies, in peacebuilding activities.
- should support and/or create other local protection committees, providing financial support to income-generating activities that can ensure their autonomy in carrying out their missions.



4. CONFLICTS LINKED TO HUMANITARIAN AID

HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT NGOS should always include research and contextual studies at the various stages of humanitarian and development programmes in order to prevent and/or reduce the incidence of abuse in this area.

THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT should involve local leaders more closely in the process of identifying and targeting populations in distress and survivors of armed conflict, respecting the principles of “Do No Harm”.

NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS should, in their respective budgets, always include funds to be allocated to survivors of war and reduce tax measures in provinces suffering from recurring armed conflicts.

5. SEASONAL CONFLICTS

THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT AND ITS PARTNERS should reinforce the capacity of the state department responsible for emergencies and humanitarian crises through trainings and workshops.

6. CONFLICTS LINKED TO FORCED DISPLACEMENT AND POPULATION MOVEMENTS

HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT NGOS should demonstrate greater fairness in the distribution of humanitarian assistance by respecting the relevant code of conduct. In this respect, they should be called upon to apply a sanctions regime in the event of misconduct by their staff in the country.

INTERNATIONAL NGOS WORKING IN BENI should organise regular reconciliation activities, which are essential in Beni, Oicha, Eringeti and Mbau, to strengthen ties between Pygmies, Bantus and people displaced by war, organising social dialogue between the different actors.

THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THE SECURITY SYSTEM SERVICES should strengthen their control over population movements and residence, by digitising and interconnecting the relevant operations.



7. LAND DISPUTES

THE NATIONAL MINISTRY OF LAND AFFAIRS

- should train land registry and title agents in the prevention and peaceful resolution of land conflicts. It would also be necessary to involve customary chiefs, custodians of custom and other grassroots leaders in discussions aimed at finding lasting, coordinated and consensual solutions.
- should modernise land management by digitising the relevant files and maps.

8. ETHNO-REGIONAL CONFLICTS

POLITICAL PARTIES AND CSOS should agree upon and undertake a campaign to raise awareness among supporters about a sense of citizenship based on autonomy rather than ethnicity, origin, or any other collective identity – in order to fight against corruption, manipulation and indoctrination. This political socialisation would take place during “political morning” events that could be organised by political parties.

CSOS should undertake actions and initiate forums (such as community dialogue, popular expression forums, citizen forums, etc.) with a view to prevent and combat identity-based violence, domestic violence and atrocities of all kinds.

9. CONFLICTS OVER NATURAL RESOURCES

NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERS should hold regular trainings for CSOs and public services responsible for the environment, about governance of natural resources and community protection of the ecosystem and biodiversity. This is one of the best ways to educate both on environmental civics and fiscal culture.

THE MILITARY PROSECUTOR’S OFFICE, THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR’S OFFICE AND THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE should initiate legal proceedings against officials and civilians involved in the illegal exploitation of natural resources through smuggling activities and mafias of various kinds.

THE COMMANDERS OF THE SOKOLA OPERATIONS [military operations to free Beni territory] during their talks should organise awareness-raising sessions for the military, focusing on their roles, rights, and responsibilities in creating a safe and secure environment for the civilian population.



10.

CONFLICTS RELATING TO PUBLIC GOVERNANCE

THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT, THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES, AND THE PROVINCIAL CIVIL SOCIETY COORDINATION OFFICE should periodically set up a consultation framework to define priorities and urgent matters relating to integrated participatory governance and accountability, especially in the area of security governance. This could also be done by holding regular extended security councils.

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND THE CONGOLESE PARLIAMENT (HIGHER AND LOWER CHAMBERS) should decide when to end the state of siege. The state of siege has been in force in the provinces of Ituri and North Kivu since May 2021. It was evaluated during a three-day round table on the state of siege (August 14 to 16, 2023). The majority of participants at the round table on the evaluation of the state of siege in North Kivu and Ituri were in favor of lifting this exceptional measure, as its effectiveness has been the subject of much debate and severe criticism in the field, given that its objectives have never been achieved, without the measure being called into question by the national authorities based in Kinshasa. It is now time to carry out a serious assessment of the lessons learned, the failures – but also the successes – of the state of siege, and to proceed with its outright lifting. According to the Lucha citizens' movement, “the state of siege has totally failed”. This is a good opportunity to make the military and the security services aware of their responsibilities with regard to security and the protection of civilians.

THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS should organise biannual forums for the people to have their say, with a view to bringing those in power closer to those being governed, to discuss the ills that are undermining social cohesion in Beni, to strengthen dialogue between the stakeholders, and also to avoid rumours and disinformation.

THE MINISTRIES OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND HIGHER AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION should support local expertise via small, more specific grants in the form of scholarships dedicated to training or retraining, with the aim of helping local researchers build their capacities and increase their professional experience. Among their priorities, these ministries could subsidise political, security and diplomatic research and studies.

THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS, HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND NATIONAL SOLIDARITY, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SOCIETY'S LEADERS should subsidise activities aimed at strengthening dialogue, trust and collaboration between state and non-state actors in conflict prevention. This could include activities such as a forum for popular expression, inter/intra-community dialogue, a round table, a citizens' forum, inclusive sporting and cultural activities, community work, mass communication strategies around national interest, etc. The purpose of this would be to strengthen trust between the population and those involved in protection.

THE FARDC AUDITOR GENERAL, THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE (THROUGH AN INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMISSION) should launch an investigation into the relevance of the allegations of misappropriation or appropriation of FARDC equipment, salaries, and food by certain military commanders in several localities and develop more binding monitoring tools through the FARDC Inspectorate General.

INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL, AND LOCAL NGOS, INTERNATIONAL BODIES AND LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS should undertake advocacy activities in relation to the specific recommendations made in this study.



APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview guide for focus groups and individual interviews

CONFLICT ANALYSIS *Project Pamoja Kwa Amani Ya Beni*

GUIDE FOR KII AND FGD

Note: This tool is intended for use during individual interviews and focus groups. The team must assure the participant that all information given during the interview will remain confidential; if the secretary is asked to take notes, he/she will not collect any information that could identify individuals or associate people with the answers given. Some of these questions are sensitive. You should consider any potential ethical issues before starting the interview, taking into account the safety of the interviewees and obtaining the informed consent of the participant.

Introduction before the interview (informed consent)

Dear Sir/Madam,

Hello. My name is _____ (name and position held in the organisation). We are conducting a conflict analysis study for Research Initiatives for Social Development in partnership with Forum de paix de Beni and Peace Direct, three organisations specialising in research, peacebuilding and the fight against atrocities. RISD, PD and FPB are working on a peace initiative called “**Pamoja Kwa Amani Ya Beni: Collaboration locale pour renforcer la prévention des conflits et la consolidation de la paix à Beni**” [Together for the Peace of Beni: local collaboration to strengthen conflict prevention and peacebuilding in Beni]. We are doing this to find a response to the gaps in conflict analysis and the power held by key players in the Beni region, but also the gaps in collaboration and coordination between the various entities involved in conflict prevention in the region.

We would like to ask you a series of questions **in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the conflict dynamics in our project area and those directly linked to the Beni region (Beni city and Beni territory).**

Participation in this interview is voluntary and if you do not wish to answer one or more questions, please let us know. Your answers will be kept confidential. Your name will not be recorded. The results of this interview will be recorded in a report, and the data will be fed back to the community to ensure that the participants remain informed and can participate in the identified recommendations.

Our discussion/interview will last approximately one hour. Many thanks in advance for your participation. Would you like to take part? Has consent been given? If so, please continue.

So that we can remain faithful to all your answers and not miss anything, we are also asking for your agreement to the use of the recorder. The recordings made as part of this research will only be used by the research team when writing the report and will not be made available to others. If consent is given, please switch on the recorder and start the focus group straight away.



I. Context of conflicts and conflict drivers

1. Can you tell us about yourself and your work in conflict prevention and the fight against atrocities in the Beni region?
2. What is the nature of the conflicts in the target areas? (*Are they mainly political, social, ethnic, economic, cultural and/or ideological?*)
3. Which conflicts have increased or decreased with the state of siege? Why? What about with the Ebola virus? Why? And what about with Covid-19? Why?
4. What conflicts are seasonal or cyclical? (For example, during the harvest, the electoral process, the dry season, the rainy season, etc.)
5. What are the structural, historical and local causes of these conflicts?
6. How do these conflicts affect social cohesion at a local level?
7. What key factors fuel the conflicts (e.g. natural resources, access to political power, access to work, access to healthcare, education, etc.)?
8. Which conflicts are long term, and which have rapidly changing dynamics that need to be monitored regularly? Which ones last longer than others, and why?
9. What are the main divisions within society? Which of these are most likely to lead to violent conflict?

II. Actors and interests

1. Who are the main local, national and international actors in these conflicts? How do they interact? What about the groups affected by these conflicts?
2. Who are the disrupters and facilitators of peace at different levels? What level of influence do they have on the community/communities?
3. What are the relationships of power or influence between these groups (and their impact on public and private institutions)?
4. What are the strategies and tactics used by each of these groups to fight for their existence and meet their objectives?
5. Who, within each group in conflict, is a potential actor who could contribute to peacebuilding?
6. What role do men, the elderly, women, boys and girls play in conflicts and their resolution?
7. Which social strata/categories are the most discriminated against and the most active in the conflicts in Beni? Have relationships between women, men and young people changed as a result of conflicts? If so, what impact have they had on these relationships?
8. Do men, women, young men and young women have the same interests and the same positions in these conflicts? If so, why? If not, why not?

III. Factors and root causes

1. What are the root causes of the conflicts?
2. What are the key behavioural factors that contribute to conflicts? How do these key behavioural factors relate to each other?
3. What are the dynamics that create an environment conducive to violent conflict?
4. What are the dominant attitudes in the population that create conditions conducive to violence? Do men and women have different roles in creating/supporting violent conflict?



IV. Manifestations and consequences of conflicts

1. For each type of conflict listed, how does the conflict manifest itself (mistrust, tension, petty crime, low-level violence, armed conflict, etc.) in your community? How is violence used? What triggers the violence? Who are the perpetrators?
2. Rank the conflicts you have mentioned in order of risk of violence and atrocities.
3. How do these conflicts relate to the exercise of power, natural resources (PNVi, water, land), governance, livelihoods and health? (*What effects does conflict have on land, power, security, livelihoods, health and governance?*)
4. How do the main players in the conflict pursue their objectives?
5. How are economic and political operators involved in the conflicts in Beni?
6. What are their interests in relation to this conflict and what about those of the other key (secondary) players? How are these interests formed?
7. What are the main narratives (histories) of the conflict? Are they competing or compatible? How are these narratives shaped? Can they be changed?
8. What is the impact of the conflict on the lives of different groups of men, women and young people (e.g. livelihoods, family/community arrangements, violence)?

V. Opportunities for peace, risks and Do No Harm

1. In your opinion, what are the opportunities for peace in your community/area of work? Which of these opportunities are the most promising? Why?
2. What are the obstacles to collaboration and coordination between those involved in preventing conflict and atrocities in the Beni region?
3. What should the various players do to ensure good coordination and collaboration between those involved in preventing conflict and atrocities in the Beni region?
4. How can local community structures and CSOs develop or support these opportunities?
5. What sensitive aspects need to be monitored during conflict research activities here in Beni?
6. What factors need to be taken into account to ensure conflict sensitivity in the implementation of pilot activities aimed at strengthening collaboration between those involved in peacebuilding in Beni?

Thank you for your participation.

We will use this information to produce our research report and will come back to you to check the content before it is shared at local, national and international level. We also note that we will be coming back to you for other participatory action research workshops as well as for our conflict monitoring activities with FPB's local protection committees. We are truly optimistic that your participation in this process will make a positive contribution to the consolidation of peace in the Beni region, an ideal without which no development action is possible.



Appendix II: Illustration showing some land dispute sites in the city of Beni

COMMUNE (location of land dispute)	ISSUE OR OBJECT OF THE LAND DISPUTE
1. MULEKERA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stadium located in Masyani Quarter - Ngongolio cemetery - Masyani cemetery - Beni public abattoir - Masyani health centre - Concession housing the Mulekera commune office - Machozi concession in Masyani - Mupitanzila concession in the Masyani Quarter - UPAC concession, known as the reconciliation site, allocated during the reign of the RCD-KML (<i>Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie /Kisangani Mouvement de Libération</i>) [Congolesse Rally for Democracy / Kisangani Liberation Movement]
2. RWENZORI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plot in the Paida Quarter - Sotadere stadium in Talyata - Avenue Kasuku, blocked by a house already built there - Vulyambo block, the sold avenue - Vusamba cell on Avenue Ramazani - Bel Air stadium - Small market commonly known as Kasoko Munzambanyi - Sun City stadium in Boikene Quarter - Kipriani cemetery - Concession at the small Kasabinyole market - Mabakanga district office plot
3. BEU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the field surveys, it was revealed that there are conflicts over land in the Malepe district in the commune of Beu.
4. BUNGULU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict around the Kimbangu stadium between Monsieur M and the Beni-Sport football team. • The Mamiki youth stadium is currently being investigated by the military prosecutor's office. It turns out that the surveyors from the Land Registry and the alleged false customary chiefs are in conflict. • In Mukulya Quarter in the commune of Bungulu, in the Manzole, Kilya and Tabi cells, fields are divided up in a disordered way, with no consultation with the land chiefs. • In the Mabango Quarter behind the Brasimba factory, the parcelling out of land is creating conflict. Local residents have revealed that the perception of percentages on private plots is at the root of these conflicts. For example: Land Registry 15 %, Landowners 25 %, Lawyers 10 % (see Ngese concession file).



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