A Summary of the Congo Peace Center Report: "Mapping of Conflicts in the Province of Bas-Uélé in the Democratic Republic of the Congo"[1]

ConDev-Congo Peace Center, World Bank Fond Social of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and STAREC[2]

1. Introduction

As part of the World Bank's country assistance strategy for the period 2013-2016, the Bank and the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have identified activities aimed at contributing to the stabilization of eastern DRC, and this for five years. These activities are funded through the Eastern DRC Stabilization Project for Peace (STEP) and the Community Resilience and Stabilization Support Project (CRRP).

The STEP Project's goal is to improve access to vulnerable communities' socio-economic infrastructure and livelihoods in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's eastern provinces. Through its activities, the program will reduce the risk of conflicts and promote peaceful coexistence to lay the foundations for longer-term development. The Fond Social of the DRC is responsible for the overall implementation of the program. At the same time, ConDev – Congo Peace Center is technically responsible for its implementation in Bas-Uélé through the Conflict Prevention and Management component.

In the DRC, the Center on Conflict and Development (ConDev) supported in 2014 the launch of the Congo Peace Center (CPC), a national organization working in conflict prevention and management, and development. The CPC promotes non-violent, participatory, and transformative approaches in a combination of research and actions involving conflict mapping, community dialogues, identifying priority needs in a given area, strengthening existing local capacities, monitoring, and evaluation, and lobbying and advocacy. The current study reviews and analyzes the context of the Bas-Uélé province by documenting existing conflict dynamics in the area. Specifically, it focuses on the security conflicts dynamics, land and identity conflicts, natural resources, and regional dynamics.

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[2] Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (STAREC).

There are several tensions and inter-community conflicts, mostly latent, in Bas-Uele. These are worsened by foreign players such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), nomadic Mbororos herders, and the Bayuda, a group of armed poachers, sometimes confused with the Mbororos. The presence of these groups incites more hostility from the local populations. The flow of refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR) puts additional pressure on the communities close to the borders. Moreover, the province experiences some administrative conflicts and conflicts over land use. There have been some attempts to build peaceful coexistence by Civil Society, customary and religious leaders, and by stabilization and development partners. However, support for conflict resolution is still struggling to produce expected results.

The study uses a participatory methodology to construct a detailed mapping of a fragile province to show its socio-economic profile, community composition, nature, causes, frequencies, and impacts of conflicts, local mitigation capabilities, potentials, and dynamics; and conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms. Creating a conflict map in the province of Bas-Uélé is the prelude to a conflict interpretation in a multi-community society. It allows identifying actual and potential conflicts likely to threaten any peaceful cohabitation of local communities and thus destroy any possible longer-term development. This provides a basis for conflict management and peace plan for the area.

The study results show that conflict is widespread throughout Bas-Uélé Province and is driven by land and border disputes overlying differences in identity. Conflicts can be resolved by transforming community differences into communion and replacing exclusion with inclusion. Here "communion" implies a mutual sharing of group concerns, grievances, aspirations and other feelings across social boundaries in an atmosphere of mutual respect for peace, political governance and sustainable economic development.

2. Methodological approach
2.1. Conceptual framework
The Congo Peace Center approach considers rival communities in a country as "community orders," which prevent the formation of a proper "homogeneous order" of collective and national thought, conducive to combining individual efforts in the service of long-term development. This blocks creativity, economic integration, socio-cultural exchanges, and inexorably, political harmony between people from different backgrounds. This notion of community order is more empirical than ideological. It tends to reduce local communities to simple electoral bases, inducing sectarian competitions, sometimes suicidal and reckless in terms of governance and subtle exclusions of all kinds.

CPC's approach implies that conflict management is primarily to unite individual minds, cause them to form a provincial and national framework of a shared understanding of development

goals. This alliance opens up to a more effective conception of the fight against poverty in a multi-community framework. It makes it possible to consider "community orders" as impediments to forming a collective and global thought open to sustainable progress. Therefore, conflict mapping in the province involves the following steps:

(1) Identify local communities in a geographic area in the form of community identities;
(2) Indicate the major characteristics of the communities present and competing in an area to the extent they can explain distinct beliefs and traditions;
(3) Identify traditional powers and find out how they are or are not responsible for the good or bad governance of the management of ancestral heritage in the form of "customary power";
(4) Evaluate whether the state (as opposed to customary power) can inject a new form of social cohesion to effectively manage conflicts by promoting the peaceful coexistence of people around the notion of "landowner";
(5) Identify the exclusions and grievances that arise in the wake of modern state power politics and civil society organizations and enterprises as potential sources of inter-community conflict through the analysis of "alternative resources and incomes";
(6) Identify common thoughts and collective behaviors that may or may not exacerbate existing conflicts concerning the actions of "politico-administrative authorities and law enforcement officials"; and finally
(7) Survey and record current conflicts in their local empirical expressions in a single table by territory so that their internal connections, and possibly their circular causality, can be detected.

2.2. Data collection

Data collection took place in Aketi, Bambesa, Bondo, and Buta territories. The survey collected qualitative as well as quantitative data. Unstructured interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires were used. A participatory approach was used; in particular, the Rapid Participatory Appraisal Methodology (RPAM) was employed during focus groups. The overall sample size was 400 respondents: 300 randomly selected respondents for the survey, and 100 individuals participated in the focus groups and interviews. To include key players of the identified conflict dynamics, members of the territorial security committees were invited to the results presentation workshops. A final results validation workshop took place in Buta.

3. The Bas-Uélé Province: an overview

The Bas-Uélé province is located in the northern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Six territories make up the province: Aketi, Ango, Bambesa, Bondo, Buta, and Poko. There are several large rivers in the area. Various minerals are found in the Bas-Uele province, including

iron, gold, diamond, aluminum, lead, copper, and zinc (Omasombo et al., 2014). These resources attract the greed of several armed groups, poachers, and bandits, creating insecurity in the region.

Despite the mining wealth, agriculture remains the main economic activity of the population. The main food crops are cassava, rice, peanuts, plantains, maize and beans, sweet potatoes, yams, and cowpeas. Cash crops such as oil palm, coffee, cotton, and rubber are also produced in the province.

According to the Development Indicators Analysis Unit (CAID) and data from the Provincial Ministry in charge of Internal Affairs of Bas-Uélé, between 2010 and 2018, the population of each territory comprising the Bas-Uélé has increased significantly. According to the sources, the population of Aketi has increased by 37.88%, that of Ango by 265.69%, Bambesa by 77.80%, that of Bondo 387.5%, that of Buta, both territory and city, by 285.53%, and that of Poko by 279.90%. Overall, the province population increased by 212.30%, with a total population of 1,947,602 inhabitants in 2018. In light of these data, if the province does not achieve adequate economic growth, high pressure on (natural) resources is expected.
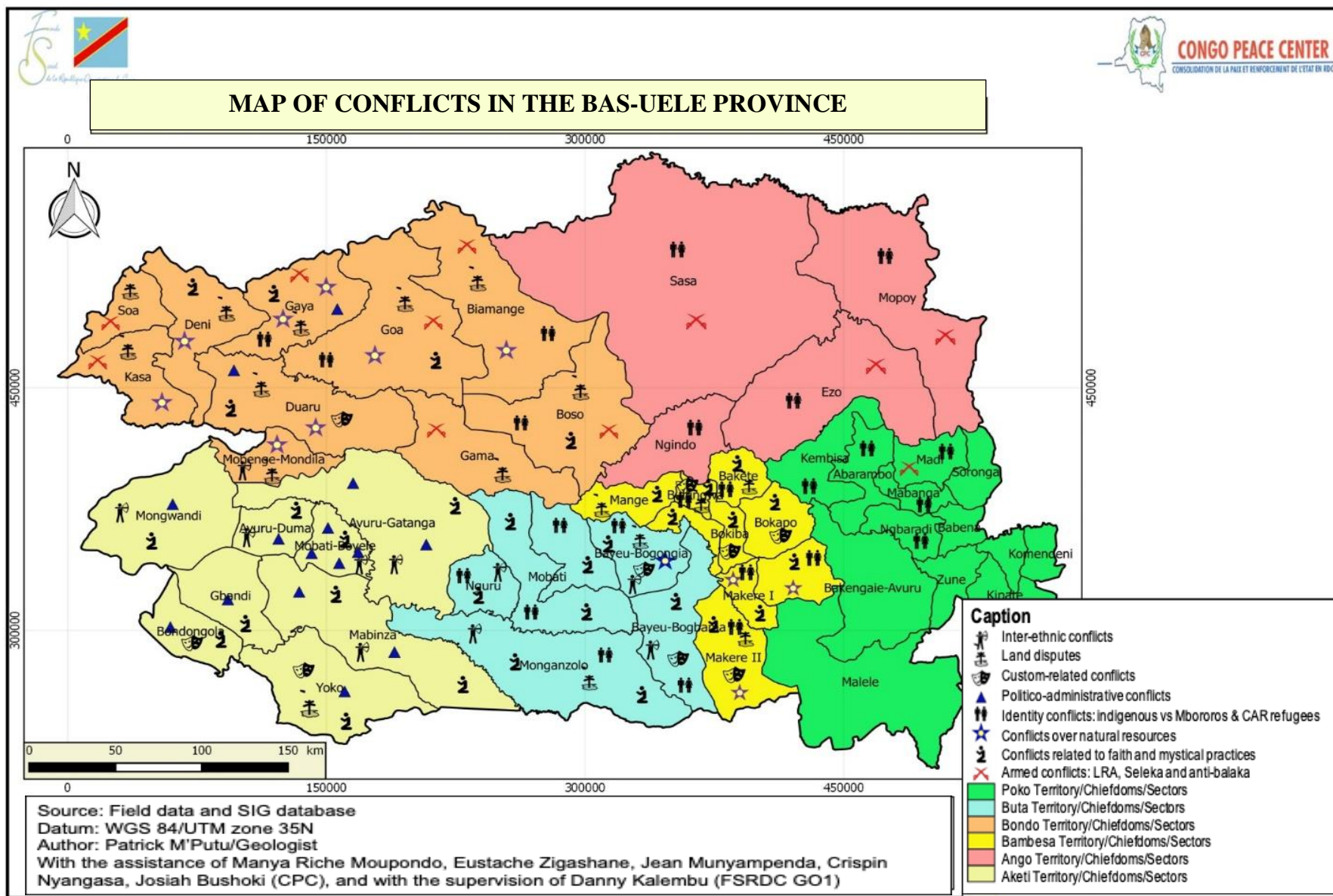
4. Conflict mapping in the Bas-Uélé province

Overall, 85.3% of the sample stated that there are significant conflicts in their communities, while 14.7% said otherwise. The identified conflicts are summarized in table 1 and their location mapped in figure 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of conflicts in Bas-Uélé

Types of conflict	Description	Location /Territory	Chiefdoms / Sectors
1. Customs related conflicts	Historical conflicts linked to hereditary customary powers but revived by intense competitions for local political leadership. These are conflicts linked to lousy governance from the traditional point of view.	Aketi	Bodongola and Yoko
		Bambesa	Bolungwa, Bokapo, Makere II, and Bokiba
		Bondo	Duaru
		Buta	Bayeu-Bogongea and Bayeu-Bogbama
2. Politico-administrative conflicts	Conflicts arising from the inadequate exercise of political and administrative authority or any poor management of public order. These are conflicts linked to bad governance from a modern point of view.	Aketi	Across the territory and mostly in Mobati-Boyele
		Bondo	Duaru and Gaya
3. Land disputes	Conflicts related to land ownership in the form of inter-community competition for access to extensive agricultural land, using rudimentary farming, fishing, hunting, or breeding tools. These are traditional types of resource conflicts.	Aketi	Yoko
		Bambesa	Bakete; Bolungwa; Mange; Makere II, and Malele
		Bondo	In all ten chiefdoms
		Buta	Bayeu-Bongongea and Monganzulu
4. Economic conflicts over access to new resources	Conflicts born from the competitive search for alternative natural resources and new economic opportunities offered by nature (forests, rivers, lakes, farmlands, mines, tourism, etc.). These are conflicts over emerging resources.	Bambesa	Makere I, Makere II and Makere-Bakete
		Bondo	Deni, Duaru, Gaya, Goa, Mobenge-Mondila, Kassa and Gbiamange (in the Bili-Uere hunting area)
5. Conflicts related to faith and traditional values	Conflicts born from traditional religious practices such as "witchcraft," including the so-called "Ponoli" or related to any faith but in competition for local spiritual leadership and in an attempt to replace traditional beliefs. These are conflicts of judgment related to imported/modern religions trying to replace traditional practices.	Aketi	Across the territory
		Bambesa	Across the territory
		Bondo	Goa, Deni, Bosso, Duaru and Gaya
		Buta	Across the territory
6. Ethnical conflicts	Ethnical conflicts related to differences in identity between local communities (differences in perception of traditions, languages, and	Aketi	Avuru-Gatanga, Avuru-Duma, Mabinza, Mobati-Boyele, Mongwandi, and Ngbongi

	collective behavior) search for better access to public services (schools, hospitals, safety, jobs)	Buta	Bayeu-Bogbama, Bayeu-Bogongea, Monganzulu, and Nguru
	These are conflicts of judgment related to modern values and desires for social well-being	Bondo	Goa and Duaru
7. Identity conflicts: indigenous people vs. Mbororos and CAR refugees	Conflicts resulting from demographic pressures from outside and related to the presence of non-natives such as Mbororos herders and Central African refugees in the Bas-Uélé province. These are civil conflicts with external origin and lastingly affecting local communities.	Ango	Across the province
		Bambesa	Bakete, Bolungwa, Makere I, Makere II, Makere-Bakete
		Bondo	Bosso, Gaya, Gbiamange, and Goa
		Buta	Across the territory
		Poko	Abarambo, Kembisa, Mabanga, Madi, and Ngbaradi
8. Armed conflicts: LRA, Seleka, and Anti-balaka	Conflicts resulting from the presence of foreign armed groups that disrupt traditional socio-cultural orders. These are conflicts ignited by foreign armed groups that lastingly affect the local communities.	Ango	Ezo, Mopoy, and Sasa
		Bondo	Bosso, Kasa, Gama, Gaya, Gbiamange, Goa and Soa
		Poko	Madi

Figure 1: Conflict mapping in the Bas-Uélé province

MAP OF CONFLICTS IN THE BAS-UELE PROVINCE

Caption
- Inter-ethnic conflicts
- Land disputes
- Custom-related conflicts
- Politico-administrative conflicts
- Identity conflicts: indigenous vs Mbororos & CAR refugees
- Conflicts over natural resources
- Conflicts related to faith and mystical practices
- Armed conflicts: LRA, Seleka and anti-balaka
- Poko Territory/Chiefdoms/Sectors
- Buta Territory/Chiefdoms/Sectors
- Bondo Territory/Chiefdoms/Sectors
- Bambesa Territory/Chiefdoms/Sectors
- Ango Territory/Chiefdoms/Sectors
- Aketi Territory/Chiefdoms/Sectors

Source: Field data and SIG database
Datum: WGS 84/UTM zone 35N
Author: Patrick M'Putu/Geologist
With the assistance of Manya Riche Moupondo, Eustache Zigashane, Jean Munyampenda, Crispin Nyangasa, Josiah Bushoki (CPC), and with the supervision of Danny Kalembu (FSRDC GO1)

5. Lessons learned

Customary conflicts
- Developing a citizen-based approach would significantly help manage customary conflicts throughout the province
- A common vision of decentralized territorial entities between traditional chiefs, groups, and sectors would facilitate the harmonization of customary and administrative powers.
- The customary-administrative rapprochement would allow customary chiefs to become opinion leaders transformed into Actors of economic development or leaders and managers of collective productions in the form of community enterprises (such as cooperatives) and no longer only as traditional chiefs, leaving the policy of corrupt governance for the productive economy in their chiefdoms, sectors, groups, and villages
- Customary leaders have community land heritage, which is a significant untapped material base. Converting customary chiefs into traditional local authorities, supporting them financially to adopt community development plans, and seeking support and investment funds for these plans would considerably de-escalate the conflicts

Land disputes
- The lack of delimitation of chiefdoms by state authorities fuels most boundary disputes between various chiefdoms.
- The non-anticipation of conflicts related to creating new towns and municipalities following provinces dismemberment would be at the origin of the existing disputes between some chiefdoms or villages.
- The persistent challenge to define the role and limits of customary power regarding land tenure has a very negative impact on managing land disputes in many groups.

Farmers - (Mbororo) herders conflict
- The absence of a grazing area and pastoral corridors defined by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock contributes to intensify conflicts between the Mbororos and local communities.
- The lack of dissemination of existing laws regulating small and large cattle husbandry intensifies conflicts between farmers and herders in the area.

Religious conflicts
- The extreme poverty in which the majority of the province's population lives is fertile ground for the proliferation of sects and the exploitation of followers, which feeds religious conflicts and mysticism.

Politico-administrative conflicts
- The imperfect definition of roles, along with the mistaken understanding of each other's prerogatives, pushes towards ethnic instrumentalization and sectarian sensitization for political and electoral purposes.
- The Administration's politicization creates mistrust within itself and causes the offsetting of the Public Administration, allowing all kinds of abuses.

Reference:
Omasombo, J., Akude, J. de D., Stroobant, É., Sita, C. K., Etambala, M. Z., Simons, E., Krawczyk, J., Laghmouch, M., & Laghmouch, M. (2014). *Bas-Uele: Pouvoirs locaux et économie agricole ; héritages d'un passé brouillé* (Vol. 6). Royal Museum for Central Africa. https://www.africamuseum.be/sites/default/files/media/docs/research/publications/rmca/online/monographies-provinces/bas-uele_web.pdf