THROUGH THE CITIZEN LENS:
LOCAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE
MANAGEMENT OF
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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About Tufaidike Wote

The *Tufaidike Wote* project (« working together for everyone's benefit ») is funded by USAID and implemented by a consortium led by CARE International with International Alert and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). The project seeks to bring a combined response to the problems of poverty and instability in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, by strengthening socio-economic stability in 15 communities in the provinces of North and South Kivu. The project's theory of change is that peace and stability are promoted by the creation of spaces, capacities and opportunities for community members to participate in a range of reconciliation and community-driven recovery activities. The project uses a *combined community-driven* approach, which has three pillars: peacebuilding, governance and livelihoods support. The project applies cross-cutting themes on women's participation, conflict sensitivity and good governance.

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Lessons learned from the Tufaidike Wote project about the relationship between social cohesion and social accountability in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

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Contents

Abbreviations

AAP	*Aide et action pour la Paix* (Aid and action for peace)
ANR	*Agence nationale de renseignements* (Congolese National Intelligence Agency)
ASBL	*Association sans but lucratif* (Non-profit associations)
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CBO	Community-bBased oOrganisation
CDD	Community-driven development
CDR	Community-driven reconstruction
CENI	*Commission électorale nationale indépendante* [Independent National Electoral Commission]
CIVD	*Comité inter-villageois de développement* (inter-village development committee)
CLD	*Comités locaux de développement* [Local Development Committees]
COPA	*Comité de parents* (parents' committee)
COSA	*Comité de santé* (healthcare committee)
CPDG	*Comité de planification et de développement du groupement* (planning and development committee at the grouping level)
CSO	Civil society organisation
DJPC	*Commission diocésaine justice et paix* (Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ETD	*Entité territoriales décentralisées* (decentralised territorial entities)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FARDC	*Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo* [Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo]
FCAS	Fragile and conflict-affected state
FFS	Farmer field school
GAC	Governance and Anti-Corruption Strategy
GP	*Groupement paysan* [Farmers' Group]
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISSSS	International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy
LEAF	Lakes Edward and Albert Fisheries
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
MONUSCO	*Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation du Congo* [United Nationsn Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo]
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NVSLA	Network of Village Savings and Loan Associations
OP	*Organisation paysanne* [Farmers' Organisation]
PAR	Participatory action research
PSCRP	Promoting Stabilization and Community Reintegration Project
SA	Social Accountability
STAREC	*Programme gouvernemental pour la stabilisation et la reconstruction de l'Est de la RDC* [Government Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for War-Affected Areas in eastern DRC]
TW	Tufaidike Wote
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village savings and loan association
WB	World Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study is the result of documentary and field research conducted in October 2016 in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (eastern DRC). Its aim is to provide a better understanding of the mechanisms that link social cohesion and social accountability, with a view to establishing good practice and making recommendations to respective actors in this regard.

This study broadly focuses on the results and observations made within the context of the Tufaidike Wote (TW) project. The TW project spanned the period from January 2012 to December 2016, and was implemented by a consortium made up of CARE, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and International Alert. This multisectoral project is based around three pillars: (1) reinforcing the capacity on conflict prevention, management and resolution in communities; (2) improving citizen participation and good governance of community assets; and (3) promoting agricultural livelihoods and alternative livelihoods. Implemented in six "groupements" (one in North Kivu and five in South Kivu), the project has reached 70,164 people directly and around 370,000 indirectly.

In line with the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy (ISSSS) for the eastern DRC,[1] the activities conducted within the context of the TW project have contributed to the establishment of a framework for a more inclusive and transparent governance system through the strengthening of the spaces, capacities and opportunities for citizens to participate in decision-making. This was achieved across several levels, as follows:

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1   International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy (ISSSS) for the eastern DRC, ISSSS Strategic Framework 2013–2017, http://www.unpbf.org/wp-content/uploads/ISSSS-2013-2017-Strategic-Framework-FINAL_EN.pdf.

- The increase in the number and frequency of meetings and consultations between community members (horizontal relations) and with the authorities (vertical relations) contributed to strengthening relationships of trust, facilitating the circulation and reliability of information communicated to populations, and establishing responses and practices around accountability and good governance.

- The organisation of numerous training sessions increased the confidence of communities in their own abilities and reduced the asymmetry between the authorities and the general population. Community members and the authorities possess the same information and the communities feel able to request explanations from the authorities.

- Through a combination of actions aimed at strengthening women's financial and economic independence and their participation in decision-making spaces, the project has enabled women to gain confidence and to increase their credibility as members of the community in their own right.

However, the overriding political and economic context in the DRC is still proving to be a major obstacle to establishing credible and sustainable relationships and mechanisms in relation to social accountability, therefore:

- The sense of belonging to a community is an essential element in ensuring that communities are invested in decision-making processes. However, the dominance of patrimonial governance frameworks in the DRC (top-down) has profoundly affected the confidence communities have in their leaders and therefore their willingness to take action for the benefit of society as a whole.

- Given the context of extreme poverty in the DRC, survival challenges are at the very heart of the concerns and logic of the actors involved. The willingness of the authorities, as well as communities, to engage in collective action partly resides in calculating the benefits that they can draw from this. With no external financing, the accountability structures implemented through the project could rapidly become devoid of any real substance.

- In a context of incomplete decentralisation, the local authorities are often as destitute as the populations that they are supposed to govern and therefore incapable of mobilising resources (financial as well as political) to respond to their needs.

The analysis of the lessons learned from the social accountability highlights four main axes of intervention: (1) the mobilisation (willingness) of authorities and citizens; (2) building the capacity of authorities and citizens; (3) the creation of open and inclusive communication frameworks; and (4) the inclusion of groups that are generally excluded from decision-making spaces. Two cross-cutting good practices emerge, and they include: (1) taking the intervention context into account; and (2) the adoption of a long-term and iterative strategy.

In response to the challenges encountered in the implementation of inclusive governance projects, as well as the lessons learned from the TW project and other initiatives that promote accountability in the DRC (the TW project being designed on the basis of capitalising on the lessons learned from previous projects to maximise the efforts already invested), we recommend:

- **To donors, agencies, international organisations and Congolese civil society representatives:** When planning intervention strategies and projects, ensure that previous experiences are capitalised on and already documented good practices are taken into account.

- **To agencies, international organisations and Congolese civil society representatives:** During project implementation, if possible, ensure that community participation initiatives are joined up with those already conducted in the intervention areas and, if this is not possible, explain the choice of the new strategy to the communities.

One of the main cornerstones of accountability is the construction of an information system that takes all the different perspectives into account and favours access to as much information as possible. To promote the production and circulation of information, we recommend:

- **To agencies, international organisations and Congolese civil society representatives:** During project implementation, ensure an increase in and diversification of information channels. Access to new social media through mobile apps is a sector to invest in. Social media still occupies a limited, but growing, place in the DRC (particularly among young people) and has significant potential in facilitating access to national, or even international, information and the production and circulation of information by citizens themselves. Furthermore, this strategy can strengthen the participation of women. A study conducted in North Kivu in 2011 demonstrated that women had more access to media/communication resources than men.[2]

- **To agencies, international organisations and Congolese civil society representatives:** During project implementation, facilitate the access of populations to adequate, credible and easily understandable data in order to manage public action.

Since its creation, the Congolese nation has been characterised by a patrimonial governance system, in which the interests of certain groups and personal allegiances are prioritised over public interests. Exacerbated by two decades of war, this situation has resulted in communities severely lacking confidence in their leaders. To strengthen the relationships between the authorities and the general population, we recommend:

- **To agencies, international organisations and Congolese civil society representatives:** During the project design phase, integrate the dissemination and publicity of positive initiatives as activities in their own right. By equipping communities to engage in good practices and undertake commitments, in turn contributes to building communities' confidence in their leaders, strengthening the legitimacy of the authorities and their willingness to invest in the process, and ensuring that communities are fully engaged in decision-making. This in turn strengthens the capacity of citizens to take action in the event that commitments and laws are not respected.

- **To donors:** Restoring the relationship of trust between leaders and communities is a long-term process. As a result, plan long-term financing strategies to enable an iterative process to be triggered, whereby social cohesion and accountability are mutually strengthened, and establish a sustainable accountability mechanism.

- **To agencies, international organisations and Congolese civil society representatives:** The communities' confidence in the authorities also affects their relations with civil society organisations (CSOs) (national and international), which are regularly accused

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2   La Bretxa, Diagnostic de l'écosystème de communication dans la province du Nord-Kivu, DR Congo [Diagnostic of the communication ecosystem in North Kivu province, DR Congo], Butembo: Groupe d'associations de défense des droits de l'homme et de la paix [Group of Human Rights and Peacebuilding Associations, GADHOP], 2011.

of corruption. Ensure that these implementation partners rigorously respect the governance principles that they advocate and, in the event of poor management, take exemplary measures. To limit suspicions and controversies, establish clear and accessible communication and complaints mechanisms, with a contact person who is involved in monitoring the activities alongside the community. The regular presence of teams on the ground and limiting staff changes also contributes to establishing relationships of trust.

The local level enables social accountability practices to be closely embedded in the realities experienced by the population. However, the local authorities' resources and capacities for political action are extremely limited. It therefore seems important to articulate the local accountability initiatives through actions aimed at the higher levels of decision-making. To initiate a "virtuous cycle" of accountability,[3] we recommend:

- **To Congolese civil society representatives:** During project implementation, support and expand collective actions beyond the local level, ensuring that initiatives are joined up and communicated through different civil society networks and the media. Several local groups exercising joint pressure on the provincial or national government is potentially more effective than a single group putting pressure on local authorities.[4]

- **To agencies, international organisations and Congolese civil society representatives:** During project implementation, consolidate the results obtained at the local level by ensuring these are relayed at the provincial and national level.. The coordination of actions across these different levels should contribute to strengthening the chain of governance and accountability, thus ensuring that the needs of the population are considered more carefully when public policies are being drafted (bottom-up). It should also contribute to strengthening the hierarchical management and monitoring mechanisms that govern the application of legal and political decisions (top-down).

- **To donors and Congolese civil society representatives:** Maintain a strong and consistent commitment to requesting political developments from the Congolese government, in particular regarding local elections being held and the completion and harmonisation of the decentralisation process. Citizen mobilisation and actions must be successful in eliciting a response from the authorities; otherwise this runs the risk of discouraging citizens. Indeed, popular pressure has little impact if it is not accompanied by legal and political changes. Inextricably linked, local elections and the decentralisation process are fundamental instruments for strengthening the capacity of populations to participate in decision-making and to hold authorities accountable.

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3   J. Robinson, Making social accountability work: Promoting peaceful development in Uganda, London: International Alert, 2016, p.21.
4   D. Burns, P. Ikita, E. Lopez Franco and T. Shahrokh, Citizen participation and accountability for sustainable development, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, 2015, p.42.

INTRODUCTION

The DRC has been going through a serious electoral crisis over the past year. With his second and final mandate coming to an end by the close of 2016, President Joseph Kabila announced the postponement of the presidential elections at the beginning of October, making a reference to the conclusions of a multi-party dialogue process.[5] This statement endorses the decision of the Constitutional Court that, referred to by the majority[6] in May 2016, enables the president to remain in power until a new president is elected. This deferment is officially presented as a necessity to ensure the preparation of the elections and, in particular, the registration of new voters. However, for the main leaders of the opposition and civil society, this represents an attempt by President Kabila to remain in power.

On 19 September 2016, the date on which the *Commission électorale nationale indépendante* (Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) should have launched the electoral process, demonstrations were held in the country, leading to the deaths of around 50 people in Kinshasa.[7] The absence of a dialogue between the majority and the opposition, but also within the opposition itself, leaves fears of new outbreaks of violence. The violence resides, on the one hand, in the possible manipulation on the streets by the opposition and, on the other, in the risk of excessive use of force by the majority. This risk is exacerbated by the general poverty and chronic violence that feeds public anger and by the problems around control and command within the security forces.[8]

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5   See Democratic Republic of Congo in Crisis, available at: https://www.hrw.org/blog-feed/democratic-republic-congo-crisis.

6   The term 'majority' refers to the party or the coalition of parties holding the highest number of seats in the National Assembly. In the case of the DRC, this concerns a coalition of parties that have joined forces with the majority party, the *Parti du peuple pour la reconstruction et la démocratie* (People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy) to form the so-called 'Alliance of the Presidential Majority'. At the beginning of 2016, the coalition experienced a wave of defections with the departure of several prominent figures.

7   Jason Burke, Clashes in Kinshasa leave 50 dead, say DRC opposition groups, The Guardian, September 20, 2016, available at : https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/19/democratic-republic-congo-demonstrations-banned-police-killed-joseph-kabila-etienne-tshisekedi.

8   International Crisis Group (ICG), Boulevard des désillusions: La "rue" et la politique en DR Congo [Boulevard of broken dreams: The "street" and politics in DR Congo, Crises Group Africa Briefing No. 123, Nairobi/Brussels: ICG, 2016.

It is within this tense political and security context that International Alert and its partners wish to re-examine the notion of governance, looking at it through the citizen lens (and not through the lens of national political challenges) by observing the everyday engagement of citizens in governance and public affairs. By drawing on its practical experience on the ground, this project seeks to establish the causal relationships between social cohesion and social accountability. Therefore, this study will enable the documentation of changes in terms of horizontal relationships between citizens (more mutual assistance, trust and inclusion) and vertical relationships between citizens, the state authorities and traditional Congolese authorities (increased consultation and transparency), and vice versa.

The Tufaidike Wote project (meaning "working together for everyone's benefit") is at the core of this analysis. Implemented through a consortium made up of CARE, the FAO and Alert, the TW project spanned the period from January 2012 to December 2016. The TW project is based on a methodology that combines the principles and lessons learned in terms of community-driven reconstruction (CDR) and peacebuilding. Peace dividends and efforts are therefore designed in a collaborative manner in order to ensure that the socio-economic recovery serve and support the peace and social cohesion processes, as well as limiting any risks, to ensure that these projects do not lead to conflicts (conflict-sensitive approaches).[9]

The results of this study are based on an analysis, cross-referenced with literature, of a series of interviews conducted in the TW project intervention areas and with certain key actors in the project (implementation partners and the provincial Ministry of Planning). Between 11 and 22 October 2016, the team in charge of the research project conducted 22 individual interviews and 24 focus groups in the TW project intervention areas. The following *groupements* were surveyed: Kabalole in Mwenga territory (Bulende and Kabalole villages); Izege (Izege village), Kaniola and in Walungu territory (Mwirama and Kaniola-Centre villages); Buzi in Kalehe territory (Bulenga and Kalungu villages); and Batangi-Mbau in Beni territory (Mavivi and Batangi-Bingo villages).

Finally, in order to understand the governance challenges from a 'supply-and-demand' perspective, interviews with authorities and community representatives were conducted separately. Therefore, individual interviews were conducted with the traditional authorities (village leaders and heads of the *groupements*); politico-administrative authorities (services responsible for development and decentralisation at the territorial and *chefferie* [chiefdom] levels); and civil society representatives. All the representatives from the local power structures were men. On the other hand, focus groups enabled members (peace committees, development and farmer groups, committees that monitor community dialogues) and beneficiaries (members of village savings and loan associations [VSLAs], farmer field schools [FFSs], etc.) of the project's structures to meet. Within this context, 172 people were interviewed, 90 of whom were women. The majority of these interviews were conducted in gender-specific groups in order to gain an understanding of the differences in perception from a gender perspective.

This study is divided into four chapters. The first two chapters offer a general overview, on the one hand, of the concepts used within the scope of the study and, on the other, the governance challenges in the DRC. The third chapter forms the core of this work. Based on the results observed in the intervention areas covered by the TW project, it sets out the main changes in terms of social cohesion and social accountability. Finally, the concluding chapter contains a summary of the main lessons learned about the relationship between social cohesion and social accountability based on the experiences in line with the TW project conducted in the DRC. A series of recommendations aimed at various stakeholders is also outlined.

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9   Broader than the 'do no harm' principle, the conflict-sensitive approach is based on the hypothesis that an entire initiative conducted in a conflict-affected area will interact with this conflict and that this interaction will have consequences that can have positive or negative effects on this conflict. Conflict-sensitivity aims to minimise the negative impacts and maximise the positive impacts through an understanding of the conflict dynamics and the influence of external interventions on these conflict dynamics. See Africa Peace Forum (AFPO), Centre for Conflict Resolution (CECORE), Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA), Forum on Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER), International Alert and Saferworld, Conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding: A resource pack, London: AFPO, CECORE, CHA, FEWER, International Alert, Saferworld, 2004.

1. MAIN CONCEPTS AND APPROACHES

This study examines the relationship between social cohesion and social accountability through an analysis of the changes observed in the six "*groupements*" that the TW project was implemented. In this chapter, the conceptual framework of the study will be explained and as well as the four main approaches on which the TW project is based will be outlined particularly the community driven development..

1.1 Community-driven development

Since the end of the 1990s, the development sector has experienced a paradigm shift that has materialised through the increased role of communities in the development process. With this in mind, the World Bank has developed an approach called 'community-driven development' (. This approach seeks to "empower communities to manage the decisions and resources in relation to their development"[10] by building their capacity to act collectively, on the one hand, and by empowering local decision-makers, on the other.

CDD programmes are based on good governance principles, which consist of: transparency (access to information), participation, and the inclusion and accountability of authorities. It combines these principles with the building of local capacities and the empowerment of local actors.[11]

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10 A. Hoel, Fiche de résultats: Le développement conduit par les communautés [Results profile: Community-driven development], World Bank, 12 April 2014, http://www.banquemondiale.org/fr/results/2013/04/14/community-driven-development-results-profile.

11 K. Schrader-King, Programmes pilotés par les communautés: Vue d'ensemble [Overview of community-driven development], World Bank, last updated on 29 September 2015, http://www.banquemondiale.org/fr/topic/communitydrivendevelopment/overview.

The CDD approach has been implemented within different contexts, notably in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCASs), where it has been adapted to the challenges of post-conflict situations. To highlight the specificity of CDD interventions in post-conflict contexts, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has developed a CDR approach that has mainly been implemented in eastern DRC through the Tuungane project.[12]

1.2 Social cohesion

Restoring social cohesion is one the main objectives of CDD/CDR programmes in a post-conflict context. The notion of social cohesion can be defined as "the glue that holds society together".[13] According to Larsen, it is a prerequisite to economic development and democracy.[14] The main components of social cohesion are as follows:

- The social connection that designates relationships as a whole and the rules that bring together individuals who are part of the same social group and/or different social groups. Social cohesion is measured according to the degree of unity or reconciliation in post-conflict contexts. Unity or reconciliation manifest through a decrease in or the absence of violence and tensions, the presence of mutual tolerance and understanding, solidarity between citizens and the capacity of communities to resolve their conflicts peacefully.

- Trust can be identified at two levels: between the groups that make up society and between citizens and the state. The notion of trust is connected to a sense of assurance and security that inspires a group (extent and intensity of interpersonal and intergroup networks, degree of dialogue between opposing and intermarrying groups and those sharing common spaces) or the state (confidence of the general population in the security services and justice, absence of corruption, etc.).

- Social, economic and political inclusion[15] means ensuring that within a society each individual or group – without discriminating on the basis of age, gender, religion or beliefs, disability or sexual orientation – is valued, respected and benefits from equal opportunities to participate in social, economic and political life.

- Social capital "refers to dynamics of social organization that influence the creation of groups with which individuals identify, and thus their sense of belonging to a community".[16]

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12   In 2007, the IRC, in partnership with CARE, implemented one of the world's most ambitious CDR programmes. Thanks to financing from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Tuungane project, meaning "Let's Unite", reached over 2.25 million people in over 1,900 communities in four provinces in eastern DRC (North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema and Katanga). In 2010, the programme redirected its approaches to further encourage relationships between the communities, first-line service providers, technical services and decentralised territorial bodies (ETDs). See G. Labrecque and I. Batonon, Redevabilité dans la prestation locale de services: Approche du bulletin communautaire de performance du programme Tuungane [Accountability in local service delivery: The Tuungane community scorecard approach], Document de réflexion: politiques et pratiques [Reflection document: Policies and practices], New York: IRC, 2015, https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/694/ircaccountabilityinlocalservicedeliveryfrenchfinal-labrecque andbatonon-2015.pdf.

13   United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Perspectives on social cohesion: The glue that holds society together, UN DESA, 30 January 2012, http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/news/policy/perspectives-on-social-cohesion.html.

14   C. Larsen, Social cohesion: Definition, measurement and developments, Centre for Comparative Welfare Studies, University of Aalborg, Denmark, 2014, p.37.

15   UN DESA, 2012, Op. cit.

16   A. Poteete, The implications of social capital for empowerment and community-driven development, Working Paper 33078, Washington DC: World Bank, 2003, p.1.

Social capital can, in particular, be measured by members of a community belonging to social structures (associations, political parties and trade unions), informal networks (neighbourhood, friendship or family relations) or participation in local civil engagement actions (mutual assistance, volunteering, etc.).

- Social mobility ensures equal access to social development opportunities,[17] regardless of criteria concerning the identity of individuals or their belonging to a certain group (gender, ethnicity, tribe, religion, social origins). Therefore, social mobility encompasses intergenerational mobility (change in social position of a person in relation to that of their parents) or intra-generational mobility (progression throughout the lifetime of an individual). Unlike the caste system in which social status is transferred from one generation to another, the principle of social mobility is based on the notion of the equality of individuals, which offers each person the right to access any social position.

1.3 Social accountability

The concept of accountability is generally understood as the obligation, by those in power, to take responsibility for their actions by propagating and justifying their decisions, actions and results to those who have elected them. In return, citizens can, by exercising their vote, support or sanction the political decision-makers. Social accountability is further enriched by insisting on the engagement of citizens in the management of public affairs. In order to achieve this, social accountability anticipates additional leverage actions in the electoral process.[18] The World Bank's governance and anti-corruption strategy (GAC) defines social mobility as the "extent and capacity of citizens to hold the state accountable and make it responsive to their needs".[19]

The notion of accountability is based on several pillars. These pillars are generally associated with the application of tools. However, it is worth mentioning that the methods and tools used in one context do not necessarily apply in another. Indeed, some social accountability interventions are determined based on methods and tools to the detriment of an analysis of the political context and the relationships between rulers and the ruled.[20] The different pillars of social accountability are:

- Citizens' access to information: This pillar is founded upon the principle of transparency. Among the most current tools are information campaigns,[21] public poster campaigns,[22] the publication of public spending reports and, more recently, the use of text messages and even social networking sites, etc. There are other more highly developed tools such as the Citizens' Charter, which informs the users of a public service about their rights. In the event that rules are not respected, this tool seeks to provide an explanation or even compensation to users.

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17 UN DESA, 2012, Op. cit.

18 H. Grandvoinnet, G. Aslam and S. Raha, Opening the black box: The contextual drivers of social accountability, New Frontiers of Social Policy, Washington DC: World Bank Group, 2015, p.21.

19 See http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialdevelopment/brief/social-accountability?

20 H. Grandvoinnet, G. Aslam and S. Raha, 2015, Op. cit., p.30.

21 This may also include public meetings, the use of mass media, printed documents, public events, information booths, social networks, websites, text messages, radio broadcasts, etc.

22 This can be implemented through the use of bulletin boards in administrative offices, schools, healthcare centres, community centres, project intervention sites and any other place where beneficiary communities discuss public affairs.

- Mobilisation and collective action[23] enable people to organise themselves around an action that aims to resolve a social issue. The approaches used involve dialogue with the authorities to a greater or lesser extent, and often combine several approaches. Therefore, mobilisation and collective action include activities such as: monitoring the drafting of laws and public policies, advocacy campaigns, implementing innovative project models, public demonstrations or even civil disobedience.

- Citizen participation in governance varies between consultation, collaboration and full citizen governance. The methods used are essentially supervision and the management or monitoring of contracts and public assets. Among the tools employed are: participative budgeting and planning, community governance (when services are managed by citizens or even belong to them) and community contracting.[24]

- The active monitoring by citizens of the response provided by the authorities (requesting accountability) can be broken down into the following approaches and tools: community monitoring, complaints or appeals mechanisms, public hearings, social or community audits, citizen studies to monitor public spending and user management committees. The community score card approach used within the scope of the TW project represents a tool for monitoring public spending and the performance of public services and local administrative units.

In addition to these four pillars is the response from public authorities to citizens' requests, an essential element in the process. Indeed, while the concept of social accountability focuses on the active participation of citizens, it also underlines the reciprocity of the obligations between the state and citizens. Political figures must be accountable to the population and, in turn, citizens have a duty to require this of them. The improvement of each one of these pillars is part of a "virtuous cycle".[25] If authorities respond to citizens' requests, citizens are in turn encouraged to participate in managing public affairs, and if citizens conduct collective actions, the authorities will in turn be more inclined to respond.

One of the beneficiaries talks about the project's achievements.

23   Other terms or notions connected to this type of collective action include 'citizen voice' and 'citizen engagement'. Certain sources include 'citizen mobilisation'; others make a distinction between the two.
24   This is when community groups are contracted, or contract companies, to provide services or build infrastructure within the community.
25   J. Robinson, 2016, Op. cit., p.21.

Highlighting this dimension, the Global Partnership for Social Accountability defines social accountability as "a process of engagement and dialogue between citizens, civil society and the state, in order to make government more responsive to citizens' needs".[26] Social accountability can therefore 'be activated' by the citizens, as well as by the state. The interaction between citizens and the authorities is present across all levels of the social accountability cycle: (1) at the point at which citizens are informed; (2) the formulation of citizen requests to the authorities; and (3) the provision of explanations to citizens about decisions made by the authorities.

1.4 The relationship between the three concepts

While there is consensus on the existence of a close interaction between the social cohesion and accountability dynamics, the nature and methods of this relationship are multiple, non-linear and often complementary.

Social cohesion as a determining factor in citizen action: Social cohesion (in particular, trust) appears as a precondition to social accountability actions, notably in fragile states where the re-establishment of institutional relations requires the rebuilding of relationships of trust within society.[27] The inclination of citizens to take action is notably influenced by the sense of belonging

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26 "Social accountability involves a process of engagement and dialogue between citizens, civil society and the state, in order to make government more responsive to citizens' needs." See Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA), Compilation of case studies presented at the GPSA Forum 2015, "Social accountability for citizen-centric governance: A changing paradigm", May 2016, p.4.

27 H. Grandvoinnet, G. Aslam and S. Raha, 2015, Op. cit., p.196.

to a community,[28] and their ability to organise themselves is facilitated through strong social cohesion.[29] At the operational level, the collective organisation of communities is one of the main strategies adopted in the context of CDD in order to build the capacity of communities to hold their representatives accountable.[30]

Social cohesion as an obstacle to citizen action: In certain cases, strong social cohesion may constitute a barrier to the involvement of citizens in social accountability actions.[31] In other words, if communities enjoy social harmony, they prefer not to risk losing it or changing it by taking action against their rulers to demand more social accountability.

Social cohesion as a result of social accountability processes: Experience shows that CDD programmes that aim to strengthen social accountability in turn contribute to strengthening social cohesion. This confirms the cyclical and iterative nature of social accountability processes.[32] The strengthening of social cohesion (or its components) is initially observed *during* processes. Therefore involvement around a joint project between the authorities and different groups that make up a community (and which are sometimes in conflict) forces them to communicate their expectations and needs, and therefore contributes to improving their understanding of the opinions and concerns of each party.[33] Social cohesion can also be strengthened *at the end* of a project on the basis of the results obtained.

While experience confirms the existence of a strong relationship between social accountability and cohesion, it also demonstrates that this relationship is not systematic or linear. The analysis of the dynamics of social cohesion and accountability within the scope of the TW project intends to provide additional elements for understanding the nature of this relationship, as well as, and above all, identifying the factors that enable positive changes to occur.

28   P. Kyamusugulwa Milabyo, Community-driven reconstruction in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo: Capacity building, accountability, power, labour and ownership, PhD thesis, Wageningen University, the Netherlands, 2014, p.187.

29   H. Grandvoinnet, G. Aslam and S. Raha, 2015, Op. cit., p.135.

30   A. Poteete, 2003, Op. cit., p.1.

31   H. Grandvoinnet, G. Aslam and S. Raha, 2015, Op. cit., p.136.

32   J. Robinson, 2016, Op. cit., p.21.

33   K. Harris, Water and conflict: Making water delivery conflict-sensitive in Uganda, London: Saferworld, 2008.

2. THE GOVERNANCE CONTEXT IN THE DRC

Social accountability is closely linked to the relationships between the ruler and the ruled. In FCASs, as is the case in the DRC, these relationships are often a source of tensions.

Since its creation, the DRC has never known a form of governance that has promoted public assets, the rule of law and the wellbeing of citizens.[34] The appropriation and redistribution of resources and benefits is organised according to a patrimonial governance system, in which personal relationships and allegiances take precedence to the detriment of the development of institutions and implementation of public policies. The colonial system has therefore encouraged violent practices, such as the exploitation of resources and accession to power, which have become systemic as a result of 32 years of the Mobutu regime and compounded by 20 years of war and chronic instability.

2.1 The institutionalisation of corruption

In an economic context marked by the failure of zairianisation at the beginning of the 1970s,[35] the demonetisation of 1980, structural adjustment policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the "cannibalisation of the state" by Mobutu have led to an economic and social regression with dramatic consequences for the general population.[36] In the name of the principle

34   International Alert, Ending the deadlock: Towards a new vision of peace in eastern DRC, London: International Alert, 2012.

35   'Zairirization' consists of the progressive nationalisation of commercial assets and land or property belonging to immigrants or foreign financial groups.

36   G. de Villers, B. Jewsiewicki and L. Monnier, Manières de vivre: Économie de la 'débrouille' dans les villes du Congo/Zaïre [Livelihoods: 'Unofficial' economic activities in the towns of Congo/Zaire], Cahiers africains [African Studies], No. 49, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002.

of "*débrouillez-vous*" (be resourceful) espoused by President Mobutu, illegal practices such as corruption, influence peddling and cronyism became daily practices for numerous Congolese, and state officials in particular.

According to a 2015 report by Transparency International on global corruption, the DRC is in 147th place out of the 168 countries surveyed.[37] The impunity of acts of corruption is a particular focus of this report, as numerous services that are supposedly free are in fact paid for.

The *Police Nationale Congolaise* (Congolese National Police Force) is organised into a sophisticated pyramidal structure, whereby each officer is obliged to pay a daily fixed sum to his hierarchical superior, or risk losing his job.[38] It is therefore accepted that in the civil service, corruption is necessary to make ends meet. This state of affairs favours solidarity within official state bodies, preventing the system from being held accountable.[39] These frameworks do not spare the education or health sectors either, where a more discreet form of corruption exists, but one which is just as damaging to users (absenteeism, monetisation of grades, the deliberate circumvention of rules for personal gain, etc.).[40] Made commonplace, corruption is part of the daily lives of the Congolese people, who use a rich, highly descriptive lexicon both to refer to it and to resort to it.[41]

2.2 The fragmentation of decision-making spaces

The system for accessing and managing resources (political, economic and social) around networks of loyalty has generated a marked fragmentation of power, which is further compounded by economic fragmentation and the politics of power. Indeed, with the decrease in state revenue during the 1980s, the Mobutu regime found itself incapable of maintaining its network of loyalties.

This fragmentation of power affects all spheres of Congolese society. Schools and healthcare facilities are increasingly being entrusted to religious orders. In terms of politics, the establishment of the multi-party system in the 1990s has translated into a multiplication of political parties (more than 300 in June 1992) and ethnicity has become a mobilisation challenge for power accession, resulting in the fragmentation of society along ethnic and regional lines. This context of fragmentation also affects civil society. Accused of being a political springboard, it is regularly the source of leadership conflicts that mainly materialise through the establishment of dissident structures. Finally, the weakness of the security and defence services has led to a security void which, in turn, favours the propagation of armed groups in eastern DRC (there were around 70 active armed groups in November 2015).[42]

Given that the state is either not able or does not want to protect the population (and their livelihoods), communities have a tendency to rely on armed groups for their protection.[43] The

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37   See https://www.transparency.org/cpi2015/.

38   M. Eriksson Baaz and O. Olsson, Feeding the horse: Unofficial economic activities within the police force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, African Security, 4(4), 2011.

39   G. Blundo and J-P. Olivier de Sardan, Everyday corruption and the state: Citizens and public officials in Africa, London: Zed Books, 2006, p.298.

40   O. Kodila-Tedika, Anatomie de la corruption en République démocratique du Congo [Anatomy of corruption in the Democratic Republic of Congo], MPRA Paper No. 43463, Institute of African Economics, Kinshasa University, DRC, 2013, pp.14–15.

41   Ibid., pp.4–5.

42   J. Stearns and C. Vogel, The landscape of armed groups in eastern Congo, Congo Research Group, New York: Centre on International Cooperation, 2015.

43   Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for War-Affected Areas (STAREC) (STAREC) [ISSSS in eastern DRC in support of the governmental stabilization and reconstruction plan for war-affected areas (STAREC)], 2013–2017.

creation of armed movements has also been motivated by the local challenges centred on the management of resources and power (disputes about tribal succession and land).[44] In addition, this fragmentation logic also affects the legal and local policy framework, creating confusion and sometimes conflicts, in particular around land ownership where the law and tradition present significant inconsistencies.

The parallel power structures created by this patrimonial system, as well as by the multiplicity of the actors that have established themselves in the spaces left vacant by a state that is negligent and eroded by conflicts, are a major contributing factor to the institutional insecurity of the populations. This, in turn, favours the use of violent strategies by communities around the protection and defence of their interests. All decisions (including legal statements) can be called into question in accordance with arrangements made among those in positions of authority.[45]

2.3 Decentralisation: A 'work in progress'

The 2006 Constitution, followed by the adoption of two organic laws in 2008,[46] form the legal and political bedrock of decentralisation in the DRC. These texts enable the *Entités territoriales décentralisées* (decentralised territorial entities, ETDs) to acquire legal, administrative, financial and political autonomy, as well as increased competencies, notably in the healthcare and education sectors. To finance these actions, for each level of decentralisation, the Constitution sets out the right of the ETDs to retain 40% of national revenue at source (known as 'retrocession').[47]

The logic underpinning decentralisation is as follows: the closer the authorities are to the population, the better they are able to identify their needs and respond to these in an appropriate manner.[48] Therefore, and to guarantee their democratic nature, the law anticipates the election, under universal suffrage, of the provincial assemblies (which then elect the governors) and urban, communal, sectoral and chiefdom councillors (who in turn elect their executive colleges).

However, the implementation of the policies and laws around decentralisation is proving to be very patchy. Although decentralisation has been official for 10 years, the political power remains highly centralised. Planned for 2006, postponed in 2010 and then in 2013, the urban, municipal and local elections have not yet taken place. The mayors (city level), *burgomestres* (communal level) and other heads of sectors and chiefdoms continue to be appointed centrally by the government in Kinshasa. The first elected level is the provincial level, a level that the majority of citizens do not have access to. Furthermore, in office since 2007, the provincial deputies have largely exceeded their mandate.

44   J. Stearns and C. Vogel, 2015, Op. cit.
45   H. Morvan and J-L. Kambale Nzweve, La paix à petits pas: Inventaire et analyse des pratiques locales de paix à l'est de la République démocratique du Congo cas du Nord et du Sud-Kivu [Small steps towards peace: Inventory and analysis of local peace practices in North and South Kivu], London: International Alert, 2010.
46   Organic Law No. 08/016 of 7 October 2008 on the composition, organisation and functioning of the ETDs and their relationship with the state and provinces and Law No. 08/012 on the fundamental principles in relation to the free administration of the provinces.
47   See Jean Salem Israël Marcel Kapya Kabesa, Distribution of national revenue between the central government and provinces in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Modalities and challenges, available at: http://www.hamann-legal.de/upload/4Jean_Salem.pdf last accessed December 15, 2016.
CONGO: MODALITIES AND CHALLENGES
48   STAREC, 2013–2017, Op. cit.

The incompletion of the decentralisation process is further exacerbated by the pre-existing competition between the traditional and state authorities, resulting in grey areas. The provisions for decentralisation contradict previous texts and create conflicts of competencies, notably between the chiefdom and territorial administrations. Due to a lack of human resources, the provinces, as well as the ETDs, refer to the decentralised staff.

Between 2007 and 2011, payment of the retrocession to the provinces represented between 6% and 15%[49] of their budget, while before decentralisation this figure was closer to 20%.[50] To address this lack of funds, local officials become "resourceful", mainly by relying on a system of unofficial taxation and low-level extortion,[51] the cost of which falls to the citizens. Therefore, rather than a governance system of proximity, Congolese decentralisation has led to the "local authorities having more autonomy and becoming predatory, as well as the formation of a sort of state of emergency in which the force of the law is called into question".[52]

49   World Bank, Democratic Republic of Congo: The impact of the 'découpage', Joint study by the European Commission, the Belgian Development Cooperation and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Washington DC: World Bank, 2010.

50   K. Kaiser, Decentralization in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Opportunities and risks, Working Paper 08–31, International Studies § Program, Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, 2008.

51   Taxes on market stalls, the sale of marriage certificates, marriage ceremonies, hire of public spaces, bicycle licences and activities such as cutting wood and grazing animals. See P. Englebert, Incertitude, autonomie et parasitisme: Les entités territoriales décentralisées et l'État en République démocratique du Congo [Uncertainty, autonomy and parasitism: The decentralised territories and state in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Politique africaine [African Policy], 1(125), 2012, p.182.

52   Ibid, p.185.

3. THE TUFAIDIKE WOTE EXPERIENCE

Contributing to peace and socio-economic stability in eastern DRC, the TW project is based around three objectives, formulated in the form of interim results: (1) reinforcement of capacity on the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in communities; (2) improving citizen participation and the correct management of community assets; and (3) promoting agricultural livelihoods and alternative livelihoods.

The project has contributed to socio-economic recovery in 15 villages situated in six "*groupements*", including one in North Kivu and five in South Kivu. The North Kivu *groupement* targeted was Batangi-Mbau in Beni territory[53] and the South Kivu *groupements* targeted were Izege, Kaniola and Mulamba situated in Walungu territory, Kabalole in Mwenga territory and Buzi in Kalehe territory. Overall, 70,164 people have benefited directly from the project and around 370,000 indirectly from the community results of the project.[54] The implementation of the project activities was supported by structures established within the scope of the project and a group of local partners comprising CSOs, politico-administrative authorities, state services and community-based organisations (CBOs).

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53   Initially, the TW project was also being implemented through the Bambuba Kisiki grouping, but for security reasons the activities had to be suspended.

54   CARE, FAO and International Alert, Final report Tufaidike Wote 2015–2016 (interim version), 2016.

Location of the Tufaidike Wote peace committees
DR Congo - North-Kivu: Beni Territory: Administrative map
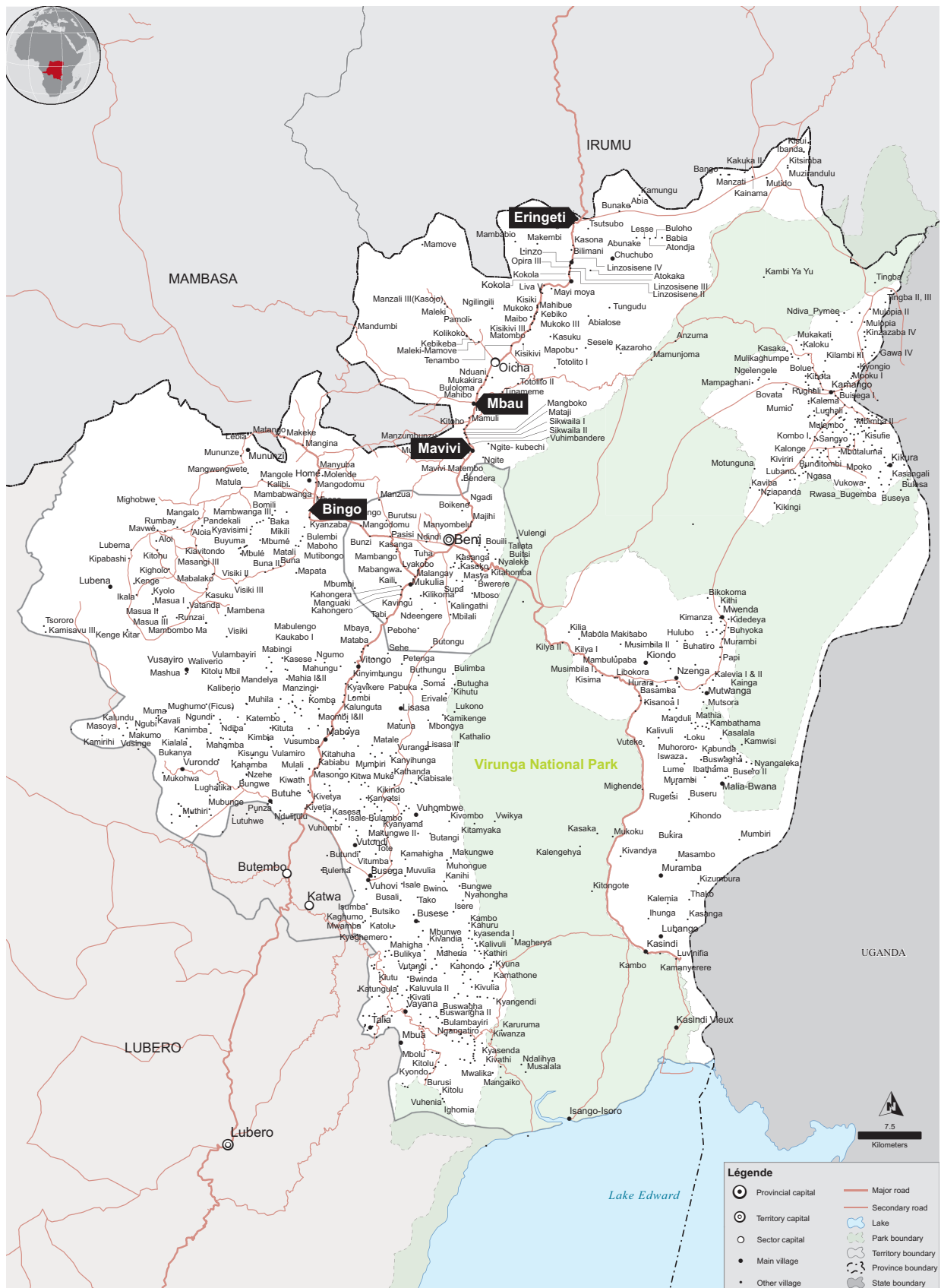
Map courtesy of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

This chapter sets out the contributions of the TW project to social cohesion and social accountability. It concludes with an analysis of the relationships between these two concepts.

3.1 Social cohesion

3.1.1 Community mobilisation and structure

Numerous projects, including TW, have made community participation one of their key intervention criteria. This approach responds to the drive by international organisations to move away from an assistance logic by revitalising their endogenous initiatives. Within the scope of the TW project, community participation takes two forms: (1) structuring the committees elected by the community in a way that ensures the continuation of the project and (2) ensuring a broad base for mobilising communities through their participation in decision-making spaces (community forums and dialogues) and project activities (savings and loan associations, community fields and mobilization for improved infrastructure).

For each of the pillars of the TW project, the implementation of activities was entrusted to local structures and committees elected by the community during general meetings.

- The peace committees at the *groupement* level (peace cells) and village and sub-village level (peace core and spaces for listening and mediation) are responsible for conflict-resolution activity. One hundred and thirty-five peace structures have been established with 930 members, including 381 women (40.97%).[55]

- The agricultural committees (farmers' organisations and groups) are responsible for the agricultural activities. Three hundred and ninety farmers' groups and 43 farmers' organisations have been restructured. In addition to these structures, the project focused on the establishment of different solidarity and discussion frameworks including VSLAs and FFSs. Of these structures, 61%[56] of all members are women.

- The development committees at the *groupement* level (*Comités de planification et de développement du groupement*, CPDGs) and village level (*Comités inter-villageois de développement*, CIVDs) are responsible for good governance component. Fifteen CIVDs and six CPDGs were established, comprising 471 members (295 in the CIVDs and 176 in the CPDGs), of which 219 are women (46.5%).[57]

- The above is in addition to the participation of different structures in the community forum, the project's decision-making and accountability body.

An exhaustive inventory was conducted at the start of the project, which enabled the existing community structures to be identified. As far as possible, these are structures that have been revitalised. Therefore, by being based on the structures already in existence, the TW project

55   CARE, FAO and International Alert (2016).
56   CARE, FAO and International Alert (2016).
57   CARE, FAO and International Alert (2016).

A woman seeks audience at the village savings and credit association meeting.

establishes coherence and continuity with previous projects, in particular the Tuungane project implemented by the IRC in Kalehe and the Promoting Stabilization and Community Reintegration Project (PSCRP) implemented by MSI (Management Systems International) and Alert in Walungu. By encouraging elections to be held, the project ensured a balanced representation of the different layers of the population, while capitalising on the competencies available. Thus, the majority of the elected persons were able to demonstrate experience in relation to the activity and/or are known in the community for their leadership skills and credibility. In the Kaniola *groupement*, where the population is divided due to a leadership crisis, the implementation of solid structures proved difficult.[58]

Throughout the entire duration of the project, the capacity of the members of committees and structures were reinforced through training,[59] and they were provided with close guidance and support for their internal structures (establishing rules of operation). The know-how that they acquired through this enabled an improvement in their practices. In the majority of the villages visited, beneficiaries report that they are regularly consulted by members of the *groupement*, who are keen to acquire the know-how transmitted through the project. By facilitating the transfer of skills through positive role models, the project contributes to strengthening relationships of trust and expanding the sphere of these relationships.

All members of these structures are involved on a voluntary basis. This voluntary engagement is in part compensated by the advantages that the project brings to the committee members in technical (training) and material terms. Therefore, each peace cell has benefited from support to build and equip an office space. However, these mechanisms rely on extremely impoverished communities with limited resources. The committee members report facing difficulties when they incur costs (for example, transport costs) for an activity that they are undertaking on a voluntary basis. While certain structures have developed self-funding mechanisms, as in Bulenga, where the peace core has a little goat-breeding facility, these revenues are deemed insufficient. The chronic poverty that affects the populations in the areas visited represents a definite limit to the sustainability of these structures.

In this context of extreme poverty, the project structures are, from an economic perspective, very fragile. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), more than 63.4% of the Congolese population lives on less than US$1 a month, but there are significant disparities in this figure depending on the provinces, as well as between urban and rural locations[60] and

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58   Inhabitants of the Northern axis recognise the legitimacy of the leader of the *groupement*, who was chased out and disowned by the inhabitants of the Southern axis. See Tufaidike Wote annual report 2015.

59   According to the remit of each committee, members had their capacity built around conflict analysis, mediation, dialogue facilitation (peace committees), stakeholder analysis and the performance of community structures (community scorecard system), good governance principles, advocacy (development committee), as well as in agricultural and livestock techniques, managing small businesses and the commercialisation of agricultural commodities (farmers' organisations).

60   Government of Democratic Republic of Congo and UNDP, Rapport bilan OMD 2000–2015: Evaluation des progrès accomplis par la République démocratique du Congo dans la réalisation des Objectifs du Millénaire pour le développement [MDG report card 2000–2015: Assessing progress in the Democratic Republic of Congo towards the Millennium Development Goals], Kinshasa: Government of Democratic Republic of Congo 2015, p.22

gender. The average salary for women amounts to US$ 15 per month, while it is US$ 20 for men.[61] This economic fragility makes these structures vulnerable to clientelism and they run the risk of losing their credibility, as is now the case for parents' committees (*comités de parents*, COPAs) (in the education sector) and healthcare committees (*comités de santé*, COSAs). Indeed, schools are officially managed by one school management committee made up of the head teacher, the deputy (in large schools), a representative from the teaching body, three representatives from the COPA and a representative from the student council. However, these structures do not have the authority to impose a certain level of accountability on the management committee, state-run administrative structures or religious schools.[62] "Each head teacher calls upon his brother [to sit on the management committee], who, in exchange, will not have to pay the school fees for one or more of his children. Some parents have been sitting on the committees for more than 15 years".[63]

Based on an inclusive approach, the community structures function in close interaction with the community, which is encouraged to participate in each stage of the project and in each of the themed activities. Therefore, populations are involved in the implementation of community projects by participating in the design of development plans, selecting infrastructure projects and monitoring their construction and maintenance. They have also been requested to provide a material contribution to the implementation of these projects (manpower, construction materials or making a plot of land available). This participation has mainly contributed to strengthening the sense of pride and belonging to a community. "We are looking beyond small local interests and are seeing the bigger picture."[64]

Greatly variable from one village to the next, the weak community mobilisation in certain localities does not so much seem to be linked to poverty or insecurity, but to the perceived benefits for a given community. The Izege *groupement*, which has not received much benefit from development projects in the past, has demonstrated a strong appetite for engagement, while the Kabalole *groupement*, which has in particular benefited from dividends related to the installation of the Banro mining group and the IRC community development project, has been more demanding. For the Kabalole community, the only community project that it wanted was the construction of a hydroelectric dam, even though the budget available was incapable of covering the costs.

The involvement of communities in a project therefore resides in the credibility and relations that the project teams have established with the communities but, above all, the dividends of the project. A completion point and barometer of success of the project is the infrastructure projects that have a particular symbolic resonance for the communities. In Kaniola, members of project structures describe the multipurpose events hall as a "gem" that they are extremely proud of, while in Kabalole (which until recently had not experienced any project completion), the population states that so long as the water supply system remains unfinished, all activities within the project will be discredited.

3.1.2 The inclusion of women

There are numerous women's organisations in the DRC, ranging from CBOs that operate with little support and in a very informal manner through to national platforms and networks. Women's

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61   L. Davis, P. Fabbri and I. Muthaka Alphonse, Gender country profile DRC 2014, Commissioned by the Swedish Embassy in collaboration with DFID, the European Union Delegation and the Embassy of Canada in Kinshasa, 2014, p.30, http://www.lauradavis.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Gender-Country-Profile-DRC-2014.pdf.

62   G. Labrecque and I. Batonon, 2015, Op. cit., p.8.

63   Men's focus group, Buzi *groupement* October 2016.

64   Mixed focus group, Batangi-Mbau *groupement*, October 2016.

This woman is proud to be a member of the peace committee.

organisations are generally encouraged to organise themselves into a network in order to be able to speak with one voice about "women's issues".[65] Although this structure has strengthened women's advocacy power, it tends to exclude real decision-making spheres,[66] an exclusive logic is also visible in the practices of development organisations. The persons surveyed explained that community projects have a tendency to either favour men or women, but rarely both. "In the past, agricultural projects were only for women."[67]

By choosing to involve men and women in the different committees, the TW project has been able to overcome gender divisions and to ensure that everyone, without discrimination, is involved in decision-making. In the project's structures, women hold 45% of the posts with responsibility, with 85% saying that their point of view is taken into consideration by their community.[68] For women, their participation across all structures of the project, including posts with responsibility, is the main success of the TW project. "In the past, only men who were close to the traditional power could participate in decision-making."[69]

The consultation spaces created by the project also ensure the continuity and connection between the project's different pillars, and together contribute to strengthening the place of women in society. In Kabalole, the women surveyed revealed that the FFSs are a space that promotes dialogue between men and women. "When we are out in the field with the men, we make the most of the opportunity to discuss issues raised during the training and, in particular, the joint management of family finances."[70] In the same way, the VSLAs enable members to get involved in discussing matters around common interests on an equal footing. Therefore, the TW project contributes to reconciling the dominant place that women occupy in managing the family finances by recognizing the women as members of the larger community. "Before I thought that I

65   L. Davis, P. Fabbri and I. Muthaka Alphonse, 2014, Op. cit., p.3.
66   Ibid., p.10.
67   Mixed focus group, Kaniola *groupement*, October 2016.
68   Tracking table for quantitative indicators in the TW project (2012–2015).
69   Mixed focus group, Kabalole *groupement*, October 2016.
70   Women's focus group, Kabalole *groupement*, October 2016.

depended on my husband, now I know that I can take care of myself."[71] According to the women surveyed, various project activities have contributed to increasing their financial independence, self-confidence and participation in decision-making spaces.

The capacity of women, as with all marginalised groups, to take part in community-based approaches, is underpinned by the resources that they can bring to the table. A woman who is a member of a VSLA, which is exclusively made up of female heads of households (widows or divorcees) observes that "there are so many problems concerning paybacks that we are forced to turn to the head of the *groupement* for advice".[72] In the Batangi-Mbau *groupement*, the pygmies (men and women) who are part of the famers' organisations and the VSLAs have abandoned these structures. Pushed by a situation of extreme poverty but also by a weak savings culture, they have sold the seeds and no longer have any capital for small business.

The increased participation of women does not seem to cause any tensions or resentment; on the contrary, they are considered an added value. Women, as well as men, therefore state having more confidence in women who, according to them, manage in a more transparent and responsible manner. "There are fewer number of women to be engaged, but those who do get engaged, turn out to be more courageous and determined. They rarely back away from issues and are far less likely to be persuaded into corruption."[73] This finding strengthens the observation made within the context of a previous project implemented in certain areas covered by the TW project, which showed that female members of peace structures had redoubled their efforts during periods of violence and open conflicts.[74] Therefore, the presence of women in mediation teams is requested by the beneficiaries, especially if this concerns dealing with cases in relation to women's inheritance or intervening in marital conflicts. In the majority of ethnic groups in the DRC, women do not have a right to land. This is particularly dramatic in a conflict situation marked by the dissolution of numerous homes and where women lose their status as a wife and thus find themselves with nothing. The participation of women therefore enables a better consideration of the conflicts that women are stricken with.

Contrary to what we can observe at the level of women's rights organisations, the increased participation of women does not translate into an increased demand for recognition of their rights. Indeed, the group of women surveyed failed to identify an action or issue that is specific to them. Therefore, for women, this is first and foremost about having the same rights and duties as men. "The men wanted to exclude the women from community works on the basis that it involved heavy labour. The women demanded to participate and were therefore able to draw a small benefit."[75] The absence of claims by the women about their specific situation should be evaluated in light of a cultural context that remains dominated by patriarchal structures, whereby women are submissive to men and whereby the expected behaviour of a woman is discretion and reserve, especially in public spaces.

3.1.3 Community-based conflict management

The insurrectional context that characterises eastern DRC has favoured the violent expression of local conflicts and the segmentation of communities along the ethnic lines of these conflicts. Both

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71   Women's focus group, Buzi *groupement*, October 2016.

72   Women's focus group, Kabalole *groupement*, October 2016.

73   Mixed focus group, Batangi-Mbau *groupement*, October 2016.

74   O. Lazard, Évaluation du projet de renforcement des capacités communautaires en gestion des conflits et promotion de la paix en RDC [Evaluation of the community-based capacity-building project around conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the DRC], London: International Alert, 2015, p.33.

75   Women's focus group, Izege *groupement*, October 2016.

victims of and actors in these conflicts, communities are at the core of cycles of violence, exacerbated by poverty and tribal identities. In a context marked by violence and tensions, recourse to justice, as well as the security forces – army, police, *Agence nationale de renseignements* (Congolese National Intelligence Agency, ANR) – is not envisaged as a way of establishing social peace, but rather as an instrument that enables sanctioning against the party that populations are in dispute with. In Izege, a civil society member stated that: "Any dispute over land or tribal power that is not correctly managed ends up in popular justice." An extensive survey shows that around 70% of the population living in the DRC believes that justice is corrupt.[76] The widespread corruption within the legal system enables wealthier individuals to succeed. While legal processes require time, resorting to the army, police or the ANR offers a rapid response. The conflict is referred to the security forces, which place the accused party in custody until a fine is paid.

With a view to overcoming the weaknesses and abuses of governmental and traditional structures in conflict resolution, Alert and its local partners have revitalised the community peacebuilding structures and built their capacity by ensuring the inclusion of different social and ethnic groups. By applying a 'win-win'" approach, based on research into a negotiated solution and the restoration of social cohesion, this method is in line with traditional practices whereby conciliation prevails over justice.

Throughout the duration of the project, 1,317 conflicts were dealt with by the peace core and cells.[77] These were interpersonal, domestic and intra- and interethnic disputes, the majority of which have to do with economic challenges and survival (debt, theft, inheritance, land tax, land spoliation, coexistence of livestock farmers and agricultural farmers, etc.). The process of consultation between the parties locked in dispute and reaching an agreement is accompanied by post-resolution and post-signature follow-up. This ensures that adherence to the agreement is supervised and prevents conflicts from resurfacing. Conflict resolution is conducted in collaboration with the authorities (traditional and military). By involving them in the decision-making, without, at the same time, giving them full power, the peace core and cells contribute to neutralising the negative influences of the authorities, who are identified as one of the main driving forces behind conflicts.

According to the populations consulted, the decrease in referring to the police and courts has had a positive impact on social cohesion. "A conflict which is decided on by a police or legal authority remains a source of social tension because there is a winner and a loser."[78] This finding is in accordance with the results of a perception study conducted by Alert in 2015, in which 71% of those surveyed preferred to adopt a non-violent resolution that saw both parties as winners, while this figure was only 48% in the initial study.[79] For the populations surveyed, the existence of a free conflict mediation service undoubtedly contributes to social wellbeing (by strengthening relationships of solidarity), as well as financial wellbeing. "No longer having to pay to settle fines and legal fees means that we can invest more in our children's education."[80] The TW project has contributed greatly to building the capacity of communities to produce credible endogenous responses in the eyes of the populations concerned.

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76   P. Vinck, P. Pham and T. Kreutzer, Peacebuilding data, Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, 2016, http://www.peacebuildingdata.org.

77   These data were compiled at the end of October 2016.

78   Women's focus group, Kabalole *groupement*, October 2016.

79   International Alert, Connaissances, attitudes et pratiques de populations de groupements de Kamuronza à Masisi, Batangi Mbau à Beni en province du Nord-Kivu en matière de prévention, gestion des conflits et promotion de la paix [Knowledge, attitudes and practices of the populations in the *groupements* of Kamuronza in Masisi territory and Batangi Mbau in Beni territory in North Kivu province around conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding], Final CAP study, London: International Alert, 2015a, p.4.

80   Mixed focus group, Buzi *groupement*, October 2016.

Resorting to these mediation structures, however, proves to be ineffective when this involves intervening in large-scale conflicts that involve actors who are evolving outside the sphere of influence of the peace core and cells.[81] The TW project has therefore equipped and accompanied peace cells in conducting research and dialogue processes, in conducting participatory action research (PAR) and therefore in engaging the actors in the conflict operating within and outside of the community. Within the context of the project, six PAR processes were conducted and resulted in the signing of five social contracts. PAR is based on communities that are affected by violence – which are placed at the heart of the conflict analysis and resolution process – deciding on which conflicts to deal with and monitoring the commitments included in the 'social contract'. PAR is organised into three phases: (1) the organisation and strengthening of local peacebuilding committees in charge of the PAR process; (2) the documentation and analysis of conflicts; and (3) community dialogues and forums resulting in the signing of social contracts.

The increase in trust within and between opposing groups is both a prerequisite and an objective of PAR. A prerequisite to the formulation of planned solutions, building mutual trust between groups affected by violence, is based on two preliminary stages to the dialogue: (1) a holistic and participative conflict analysis and (2) the organisation of micro-dialogues.

Holistic and participative conflict analysis involves conducting a broader, more complex analysis of a conflict that takes the perceptions and experiences of all parties into account. This process is part of a mutual learning dynamic. Therefore PAR strengthens the culture of dialogue and fills an information gap between conflict-affected communities. The population's main information channels are word of mouth, community radio stations and public announcers.[82] The information communicated through these channels concerns highly localised challenges, in particular concerning word of mouth, which is likely to start rumours. The lack of analytical dialogue on the challenges concerning security and development is even more pronounced when the villages are enclaved with little access to communication technologies. In the DRC, the penetration rate for mobile telephony is just 18%.[83] Furthermore, resorting to verbal dissemination– although it enables the entire population and illiterate people, in particular, to be included – leads to a loss of and change in information.

These women are part of a literacy group and are learning how to read and write.

81   International Alert, Au-delà de la stabilisation: Comprendre les dynamiques de conflit dans le Nord et le Sud-Kivu en République démocratique du Congo [Beyond stabilisation: Understanding the conflict dynamics in North and South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo], London: International Alert, 2015b, p.41.
82   Tufaidike Wote: Baseline study, Report, 2013.
83   UNDP, Human Development Index, 2015.

Community micro-dialogues were organised by the communities' initiatives. A time for introspection and cooling off, these homogenous dialogue structures have created an opportunity for different parties to prepare their proposals and to listen to one another about how to conduct themselves before engaging in a dialogue with opposing groups.[84] "The dialogue process has enabled the strengthening of mutual respect. Before, people who were in conflict engaged in defamatory exchanges."[85] By gradually understanding the dialogue frameworks with a more numerous and more heterogeneous audience, PAR has created a level of confidence that was sufficient for establishing dialogue between groups engaged in conflict and resulted in the signing of a social contract.

Because it concerns complex conflicts involving multidimensional challenges and numerous actors, PAR often results in a "long, fragile and sometimes uncertain process"[86] that requires an investment of time as well as resources. Of course, an effective transfer of competencies has taken place in terms of research methodology. However, such work requires long-term support in order to consolidate the gains[87] and to accompany the actors engaged in this work. In the different intervention zones visited, the members of the monitoring committees outlined the slowness and lack of willingness on the part of the stakeholders in the application of agreements, particularly because these agreements disrupt the interests of some of these stakeholders.

3.2 Social accountability

3.2.1 Access to information

The information transmitted by local authorities, aims to circulate information about decisions (legal texts, security measures, etc.) from the top down. According to the different levels of power, a piece of information transmitted by a province reaches the population of areas that are the furthest away, passing in turn from the chiefdom (and/or territorial administration) to the *groupement*, then to the village level, and finally to reach to many through the heads of 10 households. The latter can be asked to go from house to house in order to pass on information. Due to its community approach, the TW project inverses this pyramidal information structure. In this case, the communities are organised into committees, which are the first to relay the information.

All the structures involved in the project meet with the authorities on a monthly basis in the presence of the population. An intermediary structure between society and the authorities, the community forum enables regular dialogue to be held within the community (horizontal relations) and between the population and the authorities (vertical relations) on matters as varied as the renovation of health and education infrastructures, agriculture or even the resolution of local conflicts. This framework therefore provides an opportunity for the population – without discrimination in relation to which group they belong to and regardless of gender – to access information about the project and ask questions. In the project's different intervention areas, and notably at the village level, the community forum has established itself as the preferred framework for dialogue between the population and the authorities.

84   International Alert and UNDP, La recherche-action participative: Une méthode pour rétablir les liens sociaux fractures, Leçons d'un projet en République démocratique du Congo [Participatory action research: A method for re-establishing fractured social relations, Lessons learned from a project in the Democratic Republic of Congo], London: International Alert, 2015, p.31.

85   Monitoring Committee for Community Dialogue, Kaniola.

86   International Alert, 2015b, Op. cit., p.42.

87   International Alert and UNDP, 2015, Op. cit.

The involvement of the community members in managing all the project structures has contributed to strengthening the project's community empowerment, while channelling the risks of an appropriation of resources by the elite, ensuring a broad and transparent circulation of information. Placed under the moderation of a community member, the community forum firstly serves the project's goals, the monitoring and implementation of activities being at the very core of the discussions. It is at the community forum level that the members of the different project structures report on the actions implemented within the scope of their activity, as well as communicating the difficulties encountered. This undoubtedly contributes to strengthening the relationships of trust within and between communities, and with the authorities, by establishing a culture of dialogue based on repeated and interactive meetings, which are conducive to the participants expressing their opinions, listening to one another and formulating solutions together.

While the community forum has the vocation of informing the communities and authorities about developments in the project, this framework also provides an opportunity for allowing community issues and problems to be addressed. However, the communities surveyed state that while the community forum enables the authorities to be held accountable, the issues concerning 'sensitive' matters (management of land and power) are dealt with superficially or have no follow-up. Therefore, while the different project mechanisms have enabled the information structure to be inversed, from a top-down structure to a bottom-up structure, they still come up against the willingness, as well as the capacity, of the authorities to respond.

According to the populations consulted, the more important the challenges faced (including the possible benefits for one or another level of power), the less fluid the information flow is. When this concerns security issues or mobilising resources (taxes, community works, etc.), civil society representatives are sollicited, in particular because the authorities recognise their great capacity for mobilisation. However, they are not so welcome when the economic benefits are limited. "If it is about communicating the deduction of new taxes, the communication is broad but if it is about managing the available resources, the information is transmitted within a restricted circle."[88]

A field belonging to an agricultural school for peasants.

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88   Men's focus group, Buzi *groupement*, October 2016.

This information asymmetry does not only apply to the information transmitted between the populations and the authorities, but also affects the different levels of power. Indeed, the village leaders are often as ill-informed as their communities and powerless to respond to their requests. Surveyed about their involvement in drafting a participative budget for the chiefdom, the leader of the Izege *groupement* responded, "I can't ask questions [about the allocation of the budget] because I am under the thumb of the leader of the chiefdom." Depending on the interests at play, the cycle for communicating information can still disregard hierarchy, thus limiting the number of intermediaries involved and, with that, the probable 'taxation' of resources. For example, privileges exist in Numbi, a mining village situated in the high plateaus of the Buzi *groupement*. "The local authorities [heads of the administrative managerial posts and village leaders] communicate directly with the provincial Minister for Mines [without going through the intermediary levels]."[89]

Based on a strategy of building local capacities, numerous training sessions were organised during the implementation of the TW project. The members of the community structures and the authorities were invited to participate, thus enabling both the rulers and the ruled, men and women, to "access the same information at the same time".[90] The population and the authorities learn together and act jointly as guarantors of the application of the principles that are communicated to them. "In the past, people went to the police to settle their differences because they thought that the police knew more than them."[91] The members of the project structures, both men and women, now state that they would no longer get the police involved when this concerns disputes between individuals, which comes under civil law.

By reducing the knowledge asymmetry between authorities and the general population, training sessions build the capacity of the latter in addressing the decisions made by the authorities and in reporting abuses – a major part of social accountability processes. In the absence of an institutionalisation of these practices, they still remain fragile and vulnerable regarding the relationships of trust that the community has been able to build with the authorities and are also vulnerable to staff changes within the public administration and security services.

3.2.2 Citizen action and authorities' response

As the first level of power, the village leaders and the leaders of the *groupements* are the closest authority figures to the populations. They share the same everyday experiences and are essentially facing the same extreme difficulties, poverty in particular. "The local leaders have become poorer than the population themselves and are no longer respected."[92]

The local tribal leaders are therefore both the first point of reference for the populations and the main vehicle for their grievances. Respondents describe tribal power as corrupt, partial and conflictive. It is considered shameful for the leaders to get involved in local conflicts and, in numerous villages, their power is subject to disagreement. The ambiguous place that tribal leaders occupy within these structures reveals their status in society. The standing of local leaders has been weakened and they have lost their legitimacy, however, they remain the most accessible and credible point of reference for communities because they are closest to their reality.[93]

89   Men's focus group, Buzi *groupement*, October 2016.
90   Mixed focus group, Kaniola *groupement*, October 2016.
91   Member of the community forum, Kabalole *groupement*.
92   Women's focus group, Kaniola *groupement*, October 2016.
93   H. Morvan and J-L. Kambale Nzweve, 2010, Op. cit., p.25.

The activities of the TW project are first implemented at the village level, then at the *groupement* level. Unsurprisingly, it is therefore the authorities of these two subdivisions that appear to be the best informed and the most galvanised regarding the project. During the different stages of project implementation, the local authorities (*groupement* and village level) were asked to provide support to engage with the members of their community. The authorities have, notably, made plots of land available for the construction of community infrastructures; taken part in different training sessions and meetings, including community dialogues; and were involved in the mediation processes conducted by peace cells. By including the tribal leaders in the mediation processes, the project has promoted collective decision-making between the members of the peace committees and the authorities. Furthermore, as the conflicts were brought before the peace core, the communities could engage in daily dialogue with the authorities, including in the discussion of sensitive matters such as land management and tribal power.

By using a consultative approach, the TW project has created or strengthened the spaces for dialogue between citizens and the authorities. Rather than requesting explanations from the authorities, this focuses more on requesting their collaboration in joint actions. By using this win-win approach, the TW project is perceived as a benefit to the populations, as well as the authorities, which are supported in their role and strengthened in their legitimacy. Authorities view the peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms as relieving them of a burden. "I no longer have to make time to go to the Magistrates' Court in Uvira or the Public Prosecutor's Office in Kavumu," said the leader of the Izege *groupement*,[94] for instance. Similarly, the project's participative approach, which requires that communities provide a contribution, is strongly agreed upon by the authorities. The authorities combine it with the official practice of *Salongo*[95] and see it as a way of revitalising community mobilisation. "The TW project organisers facilitate awareness-raising actions among the populations to enable a contribution from the community."[96] This is a statement echoed by the communities of Izege and Kaniola, which affirm that the project has enhanced the communities' willingness to participate in *Salongo*. "At present, if the leaders call it, the people mobilise."[97] However, this enthusiasm is not always shared by everyone – the authorities use *Salongo* to serve their own interests by demanding that the population carries out works at their own expense.[98] Furthermore, a study conducted in the chiefdom of Luhwindja highlights that it is generally poor women and men who contribute to the community work, while others leverage their status or buy their participation to get out of this obligation.[99]

A community session on conflict and mediation.

By involving the authorities in its activities, the TW project has fostered the emergence of good governance practice, and in particular the consultation of the committees elected within the scope of the project, as well as an improved consideration of the needs expressed by the communities.

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94   Interview with the leader of the Izege *groupement*.
95   The mandatory community service (known by the name '*Salongo*') was established by Mobutu in 1973. One half-day per week, the population was required to undertake works of public interest, generally agricultural or development work. Currently, the practice is no longer obligatory, but still continues.
96   Interview with the leader of the Izege *groupement*.
97   Women's focus group, Izege *groupement*, October 2016.
98   Women's focus group, Batangi-Mbau *groupement*, October 2016.
99   P. Kyamusugulwa Milabyo, 2014, p.147.

The head of the Kabalole group handing over a certificate to one of the women from the literacy group.

"We would like our village leader to call general meetings to share information and take decisions together."[100] Through the local development committees, each *groupement* involved in the project has designed a local development plan that has been summarised in the form of a short printed leaflet. Available to the authorities as well as members of the project structures, it acts as an advocacy tool for the authorities. Therefore, during our trip to Minova, the local leaders (secretary of the *groupement* and village leaders) met up with the representatives of the development structures to adjust the plan in preparation for a participatory budget meeting being organised by the chiefdom. According to the secretary to the chief of the *groupement*, who was in Minova, the Buzi *groupement* is the driving force in the territory of Kalehe because it is the only one that has a plan.

The traditional authorities' degree of involvement in the project structures varies from one village to the next. Unlike the North Kivu provincial government,[101] which has issued instructions in this regard, the communities in South Kivu have refused to place the local leaders at the head of these structures. However, several have been co-opted to take an advisory role. In Kabalole, Izege and Batangi-Mbau, the chiefs of *groupement* participate in all activities and meetings called by the different committees. The leader of the Kabalole *groupement* has even gone as far as organising the meetings for the peace cells at his home.

The involvement of the chiefs of *groupement* can, in particular, be interpreted on the basis of the benefits that they hope to draw from this. The chief of the Kabalole *groupement* develops his role in a context where the superior authority, the leader of the chiefdom, exerts a strong influence that, in turn, leaves him little room for making decisions. The TW project has therefore served as a way for him to strengthen his authority and legitimacy. However, the participation of authorities can be motivated by more commercial interests. During the selection of the community project, the different authorities in Buzi *groupement* engaged in a dispute over influence. The *groupement* wanted to build a multipurpose events hall, while the chiefdom and territory administrations were lobbying for an abattoir. This dispute appears to have been motivated by financial gain. Indeed, in the case of the abattoir, the taxes would be collected at the chiefdom and territory level, while in the case of the multipurpose events hall the revenues generated would come back to the grouping level. Within this context, and although an infrastructure assets transfer agreement was signed between the local authorities and the development committee, the latter was worried about how the facility would be used. The committee feared that the authorities would appropriate these works for their own interests after the partners had left.

The TW project is organised around three pillars of intervention: conflict resolution, governance and agriculture. Through these different sectors, the project is able to reach numerous fields of activity, such as economic and land affairs, and the healthcare and education sectors. By intervening in these different sectors, the project has enabled the sphere of influence of the different communities to be extended to different state actors and across different hierarchical levels. By basing itself on the 'community score card' approach, the development committee members have carried out the participative evaluation of 13 structures in the healthcare and education sectors.

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100   Women's focus group, Kaniola *groupement*, October 2016.

101   Order of the Provincial Minister of North Kivu, No. 002/CAB/MIN/MPPBCP/NK/2014 of 17 January 2014 on the denomination and mission of local coordination structures for humanitarian, development and conflict resolution actions at the local level.

Education and healthcare are among the priority public services, however, both sectors offer services that are deemed to be mediocre, particularly in rural settings. As a consequence, they are the source of significant grievances from the populations. In Beni, in the village of Batangi-Bingo, on two occasions young people have attempted to remove the head nurse of the healthcare centre, who was accused of poor management of human resources, finances and materials; discrimination; and publicly insulting her subordinates. Decades of poor management and conflict have badly affected healthcare and education facilities in the DRC, marked by infrastructure falling into disrepair, a lack of resources, and underpaid and demotivated staff. The lack of financing as well as poor financial management have led to extremely high fees being imposed on the users of these services. The sectors therefore are asked to pay for salaries, modernisation of infrastructures, purchasing of materials (including supplies for surgical interventions) and the management costs of the structures.[102] While parents do their best to pay for school fees (given the regular expulsion of children whose school fees are not paid), the high cost of these limits access to healthcare facilities for the majority of households.[103]

Reported within the context of the community forum, the participants proposed conducting an evaluation of the Batangi-Bingo healthcare centre. After having been made aware of this, the nurse and the health zone authority agreed to take part. At the end of the exercise, the chief doctor of the health zone referred the matter to the chief medical authority at the district level, and the nurse as well as three of her colleagues were replaced. The leader of the *groupement* accompanied the CPDG at the *groupement* level and the health zone authority's team in the organisation and appointment of a new COSA. Given that the authorities, population and health zone authority were satisfied with the result, they wanted the exercise to be repeated at three other healthcare facilities within the same health zone.

Given the heavy financial burden that paying for education and healthcare incurs, the populations generally concentrate their requests on reducing the fees for modernising infrastructures. By using the community score card approach, the participants formalised their expectations as users, as well as becoming aware of the challenges faced by healthcare and education staff. Delegations were therefore sent to Bukavu to meet the provincial Ministers for Education and Health and to request financial support for modernising healthcare facilities and schools. Although they were pleased that they had been received by the provincial authorities ("we didn't know that the provincial authorities could receive people like us"),[104] to date they have not received a follow-up on their request. In Kalungu, the development committee members proposed that a monitoring visit be organised. However, in the absence of financial support, this request appears difficult to envisage. Bukavu is situated 150 kilometres from the Buzi *groupement*, a journey that has to be undertaken by boat in the absence of a usable roads. With no follow-up to their requests, the populations risk becoming demotivated and instead turning to more receptive actors, in particular non-governmental organisations or churches.

The involvement of the authorities in the project is largely dictated by the calculation of the profits and losses involved. This is even more the case when the level of responsibilities and interests increases. Therefore, community initiatives are tolerated, and sometimes even voted on (at the local level), provided they do not go against the interests of the elite.[105] In order to be able to counter the obstacles resulting from disputes over power and personal interests, the TW project has commissioned PAR in the six *groupements*, aiming to resolve conflicts at the community

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102   G. Labrecque and I. Batonon, 2015, Op. cit., pp.7–8.
103   S. Bashir, Education in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Priorities and options for regeneration, Washington DC: World Bank, 2005.
104   Men's focus group, Izege *groupement*, October 2016.
105   J. Robinson, 2016, Op. cit., p.22.

level. The conflicts reported by the community are: interethnic distrust (Buzi), intra*groupement* divisions and disputes over power exacerbated by the absence of a state authority (Kaniola), a conflict about borders between the localities of Mavivi and Ngite (Batangi-Mbau), a conflict around management of the Luhwindja COOPEC (Kabalole) and a land conflict between two villages (Izege). Five of these six research studies led to the organisation of a community dialogue, bringing together an average of 160 people, 25% of whom were women, and resulted in the signing of a social contract.

Field Facilitator / Peacebuilding Component / CDJP.

Men are encouraged to attend women capacity building sessions.

PRA, a pillar of community dialogue, has in particular enabled an in-depth conflict analysis to be planned and conducted, as well as the participation of various actors who are often at the core of conflict-related processes. In the DRC, decision-making spaces are shared between different positions of power; some are officially invested (politico-administrative authorities, traditional powers, security forces) and others are recognised as influential actors (civil society representatives, ethnic insurance schemes, economic actors, religious authorities, armed groups, teachers). The boundary between social actors and authorities often appears to be upheld, while the political authorities rely on civil society to mobilise the population, and social actors use civil society as a political springboard. In this fragmented space, the overlaps and competing interests between those in positions of power are numerous. Conflicts motivated by power not only divide authorities, but also communities. The grey area that surrounds decision-making spaces is compounded by the fact that numerous tribal leaders do not live in the area that they manage. The absence of an authoritarian presence represents a major obstacle to decision-making, especially in a context in which allegiance to the traditional authorities is significant.

Faced with this fragmentation of power and opacity of interests, the TW project established spaces for open and inclusive dialogue that brought together the actors who gravitated around these conflicts, whether they were divisive or unifying. "Before the project, we thought that advocacy was a dispute in which we were not the strongest party. Now we perceive it as a strategy"[106] – a strategy whereby dialogue prevails over confrontation. The following were present during community dialogues: community leaders (tribal leaders and politico-administrative authorities), CSOs members, representatives from religious faiths and state services, as well as delegates from the provincial authority and the provincial assembly, including the Ministry for Planning.

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106   Men's focus group, Izege *groupement*, October 2016.

The community dialogue processes, which concern major conflicts within the community, affect sensitive issues such as the management of power and resources. As a consequence, the process conducted by the project came up against numerous obstacles. Significant diplomatic efforts had to be deployed by the project's partners throughout the entire process, to explain the challenges of this work, mobilise the authorities and channel grievances and attempts by certain elites to block the process. "We appealed to the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission [partner in the project] because we, the community, were incapable of resolving a conflict that involved the members of the royal family."[107]

By achieving the signing of five social contracts, the process has demonstrated its effectiveness, as well as the essential role of the hierarchical authorities, in settling apparently local conflicts, which, in some cases, have been going on for decades. This finding corroborates the observation made by Patrick Milabyo Kyamusugulwa, according to whom, local collective actions are generally initiated by the actors participating in the struggle for power.[108] In Izege, the intervention of the leader of the Ngweshe chiefdom was necessary so that, with his swift intervention, he put an end to a two-decades-old conflict by declaring that, "each party had to stay within their boundaries".

By using a similar strategy to that observed at the local authority level, the motivation of the superior authorities to invest in the process also seems to be line with the win-win approach. The head of development in the chiefdom of Ngweshe deemed the Izege community dialogue not only as a success in terms of social cohesion, but also as an initiative that strengthened the authority of the leader.

> "The dialogue was able to shed light on a conflict over borders, which the mwami [king] had not grasped the severity of. The dialogue also enabled the harmful role of local leaders in conflicts to be highlighted. Following this dialogue, his Majesty called on them to remind them of their role in accompanying populations in their development."

A group photo of participants after a workshop on agriculture and livelihoods.

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107 Men's focus group, Izege *groupement*, October 2016.
108 P. Kyamusugulwa Milabyo, 2014, p.183.

3.3 The relationship between social accountability and cohesion

In line with the ISSSS,[109] the TW project has contributed to laying the foundations for a more inclusive and transparent governance system. Through its activities, the project has strengthened the spaces, capacities and opportunities for citizens to participate with the local authorities in decision-making and the formulation of joint solutions in the peacebuilding and socio-economic sectors. Furthermore, the different community structures have participated in establishing responses and practices around accountability and good governance that are transposable within the public sphere.

3.3.1 Spaces for mutual assistance and dialogue

The project has fostered the creation of spaces and opportunities for consultation at different levels: between the members of the different committees in charge of monitoring the project (farmers' organisations, development committees, peace core and cells); the beneficiaries (VSLAs, FFSs); and the authorities (through community forums, community dialogue). Each of these spaces offers a range of opportunities to break isolation, build relationships of trust around common interests and experiences, seek out joint solutions, and promote solidarity between the different members.

By increasing the frequency of and fora for these meetings, these spaces have contributed to building relationships of trust and proximity within the communities, as well as with the authorities. The community forums and, to a greater extent, the spaces connected to the PAR process (discussion groups, micro-dialogues and community dialogues) have facilitated the circulation of information, as well as the breaking down of barriers, and increasing its reliability through the multiplication and cross-referencing of sources. The acquisition of reactions concerning the verification and cross-referencing of sources of information should contribute to increasing community vigilance when faced, in particular, with the risks of resource appropriation or the manipulation of discussions.

The revitalisation and strengthening of the capacities of local mediation structures has established a culture of conflict resolution based on the principles of restorative justice, which prioritises the restoration of social relationships over sanction. The voluntary-based investment made by members of the peacebuilding committees represents an undeniable financial advantage to the communities, as well as a guarantee of credibility. Because they do not receive any money, they are less likely to be corrupted by one or another of the parties. Working alongside the members of the peacebuilding committees, the authorities also perceive a gain as they are relieved of the burden (at least partially) of having to manage community conflicts and tensions. Peacebuilding committees and the authorities join forces to reconcile parties. The inclusive nature of the peace committees and collegiate nature of decision-making forums enables the negative influences and self-interests (notably of the authorities) to be neutralised by 'ruling' in the name of the stability of the entire community.

However, the joint efforts and approaches in terms of accountability initiated within the different structures remain fragile so long as they are connected to the dynamics and benefits generated by the project. Therefore, without financing to complete the projects included in the groupement's development plan, the community forum could rapidly become devoid of any substance.

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109   ISSSS for the eastern DRC, Op. cit.

3.3.2 The necessary capacities and confidence to act

The TW project facilitated the organisation of numerous training sessions, such as basic literacy or leadership training or training sessions that include both the authorities and members of the peace structures for conflict-resolution and governance. The persons trained during the project cycle were recognized and sought for by the communities. Seen as a positive role model, they feel encouraged to share their learning beyond the direct beneficiaries of the project. By broadening their relational sphere, the empowerment of the community members and the appeal of the outcomes produced contribute to strengthening social cohesion, but also potentially their capacity to mobilise other community members for joint actions.

The acquisition of knowledge has contributed to increasing the communities' self-confidence, as well as reducing the authority-population asymmetry. Based on a mutual learning approach, PAR favours a process ranging from introspection to mutual learning. The community members, as well as the authorities, have access to the same information and, in turn, the communities assert that they hold the authorities directly accountable if they do not respect the principles or commitments that they have jointly undertaken. The members of the peace committees (and women in particular) state that they no longer fear going to the police to intervene in a case of arbitrary arrest.

With no internal training and feedback mechanism, the acquisition of training and dialogue initiatives is largely based on the willingness and capacity of individuals, thus running the risk of a change in staff (especially in the security services) destroying the efforts invested.

3.3.3 Participation and inclusion

The TW project is based on a community and participative approach that aims to strengthen the capacities and responsibilities of communities in developing their immediate environment. Strengthening community-based participation is a powerful driver to increasing a sense of belonging to a community, which is in itself essential to guaranteeing that communities participate in decision-making and hold authorities accountable. However, a deep-rooted scepticism persists, resulting from a governance culture in which patrimonial and clientelistic structures take precedence over public interests. As a consequence, the communities attach great importance to commitments being honoured, in particular through the construction of infrastructures that they can benefit from. The populations express the same attachments for the commitments and promises being respected when it concerns the implementing partners as well.

Generally excluded from decision-making spaces, women occupy a significant role in the TW project structures. Through a combination of actions aimed at strengthening their financial and economic independence (VSLAs, FFSs, literacy initiatives) and their participation in decision-making spaces, the project has enabled women to gain self-confidence and credibility, both in their relations with men in the community as well as with the authorities. However, the participation of women seems to be limited to two levels. On the one hand, women do not take advantage of the spaces that they have access to in order to express their interests or claim their rights. On the other, there is a risk of seeing women confined to spaces where the stakes are limited. Indeed, the participation of women in the different community dialogues was only around 25%, while across other structures it is around 50%. This weak participation can be explained by the fact that, for the most part, men continue to occupy official positions of power and that in reality they are given priority in expressing themselves in the name of the community.

3.3.4 The political and economic context

Social accountability is based on a "virtuous cycle"[110] that involves social mobilisation, collective action and a response from authorities. The nature of the state and its relations with citizens and communities has a profound impact on the space in which individual and collective actions can be brought to the forefront.[111] In the DRC, the very notion of collective interest is questioned, offering a fragile basis for establishing relationships of accountability. To restore the communities' confidence, it therefore seems important to support the actions conducted by citizens, as well as evaluating the commitments and responses provided by the authorities. The development and dissemination of positive governance practices, commitments and corrective measures taken by the authorities are crucial for restoring the population's confidence in the authorities, encouraging them to continue to take action and gradually establishing social accountability practices.[112]

Finally, this study confirms the inextricable link between social, economic and governance issues, thus attesting to the importance of an approach that combines actions across these different sectors. In a context of chronic poverty, survival issues are at the heart of the general population's concerns. Economic challenges are recurrent in the conflicts that divide communities, and are visible through the concerns of the committee members regarding their voluntary status and in the appeal of projects with an economic or material dimension. The willingness of communities to engage in collective actions is based in part on the calculation of the benefits that they can draw from their involvement. It therefore seems important to include incentives for the populations to engage in, while managing the risks of clientelistic dividends. For example, Kyamusugulwa proposes that school fees paid by the community are reduced in order to reflect the contribution made by the population and thus gradually strengthen collective ownership around common interests.[113]

However, the analysis of actions implemented within the scope of the TW project reveals that the local authorities (village and *groupement* leaders) are often as impoverished as the communities that they serve and therefore incapable of mobilising the resources to respond to their needs. The involvement of authorities or structures which possess a superior leverage for pressure (hierarchical authorities, civil society actors, moral authorities) is therefore essential for supporting their subordinates in fulfilling their role, approving their decisions and using their leverage for control or counter-power in the case of an abuse of or drift in power. The involvement of the 'superior' authorities and structures, however, requires a safeguard for preventing the interests of the elite taking precedence over those of the communities and, in particular, the interests of the most marginalised.

110   J. Robinson, 2016, Op. cit., p.21.
111   D. Burns, P. Ikita, E. Lopez Franco and T. Shahrokh, 2015, Op. cit., p.43.
112   J. Robinson, 2016, Op. cit., p.25.
113   P. Kyamusugulwa Milabyo, 2014, Op. cit., p.159

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

Several lessons can be drawn from the different experiences in terms of promoting social accountability in the DRC. These lessons are based on the main successes and challenges that emerged, in particular regarding the practice of stakeholders engaged in CDD programmes in eastern DRC. These lessons learned are aimed at steering future efforts and, therefore, increasing accountability practices while strengthening social cohesion.

Social accountability projects are centred on horizontal relations (citizen-citizen) and vertical relations (citizen-authorities). Project design and implementation therefore requires social, political, and even economic dynamics to be taken into account, from the societal level through to the community and individual levels.

Understanding the context: Social accountability interventions concern the relationship between authorities and citizens. In FCASs, these relationships are generally conflictive or deficient, and the intervention of a third party is therefore likely to exacerbate these tensions. By adopting a conflict-sensitive approach, the implementation partners have, in particular, been able to mitigate conflicts through the signing of social contracts, in some cases bringing an end to more than two decades of conflict.

Strengthening the authorities' willingness to invest: Willingness is a key factor in whether or not the authorities should be involved in social accountability actions. The authorities have a tendency to tolerate social accountability actions provided that they are not perceived as a threat

to their power or interests,[114] and to contribute to them if they are able to identify intrinsic or external benefits. The authorities' willingness to get involved can also be motivated by an ambition to strengthen their legitimacy or even the idea that the investment required may guarantee them more attractive future financing.[115] Through a better understanding of these interests and drivers of action, the stakeholders can influence the authorities' willingness to invest, for example, by holding regular and sustained dialogues with them or even by ensuring that the authorities are involved in community activities. In order to prevent the authorities from appropriating the process and resources, the Tuungane project initially excluded village leaders from village development committees, the local committees in charge of ensuring the management and monitoring of community projects. However, an analysis of the relationships of power has revealed the importance of the village leaders in accessing services. A decision was therefore taken to adjust the Tuungane project by allowing the village leaders to act as 'special advisers'. This solution has been able to guarantee them a formal role, while ensuring that the decision-making power remains in the hands of the citizens/members of the village development committees.[116] This approach has also been adopted within the scope of the TW project.

Citizen mobilisation: As with the authorities, citizens' willingness to participate[117] is a crucial element for mobilisation in citizen actions. The citizens' degree of confidence in their leaders constitutes a determining factor in citizen action. The less trust citizens have in the authorities, the weaker their willingness is to take action. Citizens' lack of trust can result in a negative perception of their leader, who they may judge to be corrupt or not receptive to their needs. They may even fear being reprimanded if they express themselves. In conflict-affected regions, populations generally have a negative perception of their leaders and therefore limited confidence in them.[118] The (re)-establishment of relationships of trust between the populations and authorities requires time, regular meetings and positive, tangible outcomes. The Tuungane project observed an improvement in the behaviour of authorities and service providers towards citizens thanks to the establishment of long-term collaborative relationships, ultimately contributing to improved access to state services, as well as the quality of these.[119]

Organising incentives for engagement: The authorities', as well as the citizens', participation in collective actions is enhanced if they perceive an economic or social gain. Conversely, their willingness to participate is undermined if the cost of their involvement is perceived as being too high, whether this is in terms of the time or risk involved. An injection of financing into the community constitutes an effective way of incentivising both citizens and authorities to get involved. This principle is based on CDD/CDR projects, which are rooted in the construction of community infrastructures to generate a participative, inclusive and transparent management process. To avoid the appropriation of project resources for the benefit of a few, or the emergence of conflicts around the management of funds, different accountability tools have been developed. Cordaid has, for example, designed an online tool that enables communities to evaluate the results achieved and, on the basis of this, decisions are taken about whether funds should be released.[120]

114   J. Robinson, 2016, Op. cit., p.22.

115   P. Kyamusugulwa Milabyo, 2014, Op. cit., p.138.

116   GPSA, 2016, Op. cit., p.17.

117   Information, technical and political knowledge, competencies and social capital, in particular, influence citizens' capacity. Regarding citizens' willingness, this is determined by trust in the authorities, as well as intrinsic and external motivation factors connected to social accountability interventions (joint economic interests, for example, which financing enables) or, conversely, the perceived cost of these interventions. See World Bank Group, Strategic framework for mainstreaming citizen engagement in World Bank Group operations, Washington DC: World Bank, 2014, p.12; and H. Grandvoinnet, G. Aslam and S. Raha, 2015, Op. cit., p.120.

118   Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, Tracking change in livelihoods, service delivery and governance: Evidence from a 2012–2015 panel survey in South Kivu, DRC, Working paper 51, 2016, p.94.

119   GPSA, 2016, Op. cit., p.16.

120   GPSA, Learning in social accountability: Reflections from GPSA's Brown Bag Lunch seminars, 2014–2015, p.1.

However, these accountability tools must be accompanied by measures that aim to establish equal access to these infrastructures, an essential condition for guaranteeing their ownership by the communities.

Building the capacities of authorities and citizens: In contexts in which public resources are limited, the level of education is weak and governance relations are determined by allegiance to a leader rather than making improvements for the benefit of all, local authorities do not generally have the political leverage to act and respond to citizens' requests. Building the capacities of the authorities, as well as of citizens, is therefore essential for facilitating their active involvement in the social accountability process. Training spaces are also an opportunity for strengthening the dialogue between authorities and citizens. A participative evaluation tool, and one which also improves state services, the community score card approach, combines training that is aimed at citizens and state authorities/officials (knowledge about rules, standards and laws) and spaces in which users and service providers[121] – as well as citizens and authorities[122] – can discuss and seek out joint solutions. The TW project has proven that the participation of the authorities and communities in joint training was able to reduce the knowledge asymmetry (or the impression of asymmetry), in turn strengthening the confidence of populations in holding the authorities accountable if they did not respect the rules set out during these training sessions.

Establishing open and secure spaces for dialogue: In Uganda, the analysis of the Lakes Edward and Albert Fisheries (LEAF) Pilot Project I and the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) Project II demonstrated the usefulness of supporting intermediary structures, outside of the existing governance structures, in order to help communities express themselves and bring them closer to the authorities.[123] A similar finding was observed during the analysis of the community forums initiated by the TW project.

Facilitating the inclusion of groups that are generally excluded from decision-making spaces: In traditional societies and/or those affected by poverty and violence, the social organisation dynamics tend to marginalise certain groups, or even discourage or prevent their participation in public life.[124] This mainly concerns women, who are the poorest, and certain ethnic groups. The inclusion of these groups represents one of the objectives of social accountability projects. The integration of women in local mediation structures has contributed to building their self-confidence, as well as strengthening their recognition by their communities. If women are involved in mediation, the agreement is perceived as being more durable, thus their presence is often requested by beneficiaries.[125]

Strengthening marginalised groups' capacity for action: The inclusion of marginalised groups is more effective when it is accompanied by building their capacity to take action. In the NUSAF and LEAF projects in Uganda, providing information to women and encouraging their participation was facilitated through access to basic communication technologies (mobile phones and radios).[126] Similarly, according to the local partners of the PSCRP project in the DRC, women's literacy contributed to building their confidence to participate in community life and, in turn, changed the way that they are perceived by their communities.[127]

121   G. Labrecque and I. Batonon, 2015, Op. cit., p.12.
122   G. Labrecque, Social accountability in states of fragility: Practical lessons from the International Rescue Committee, GPSA, 28 July 2016, http://www.thegpsa.org/sa/news/social-accountability-states-fragility-practical-lessons-international-rescue-committee.
123   J. Robinson, 2016, Op. cit., p.23.
124   A. Poteete, 2003, Op. cit., p.7.
125   O. Lazard, 2015, p.35.
126   J. Robinson, 2016, Op. cit., p.23
127   United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Promoting Stabilization and Community Reintegration Project (PSCRP), Final report, USAID, 2012, p.33.

Allowing time: Be it the regulatory, behavioural or systemic level, achieving the changes envisaged by social accountability projects requires time,[128] a certain iteration and continuity.[129] By establishing different accountability mechanisms in the same locality (each attached to a specific sector of intervention), multisectoral programmes such as TW, Tuungane or even the PSCRP enable social accountability to be developed by increasing the 'opportunities' to activate these mechanisms. The existence of different mechanisms enables positive 'competition', which is conducive to increasing the motivation of the members of these structures, as well as to sharing good practices. Successful ad hoc mechanisms can therefore emerge in the mid to long term around institutionalised social accountability practices and mechanisms.

These women are members of farmers' organisations supported by the project.

128   World Bank Group, 2014, Op. cit., p.18.
129   USAID, 2012, Op. cit., p.5.

4.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations aim to inform the financing, design and implementation of social accountability projects.

Given that the TW project is designed with a view to capitalising on the lessons learned from previous projects, in order to maximise the efforts already invested, we recommend:

- **To donors, agencies, international organisations and Congolese civil society representatives:** When designing intervention strategies and projects, ensure that previous investments are capitalised on and already documented good practices are taken into account.

- **To agencies, international organisations and Congolese civil society representatives:** During project implementation, if possible, ensure that activities are joined up with previous community participation initiatives conducted in the intervention areas and, if this is not possible, explain the choice of the new strategy to the communities.

One of the main pillars of accountability is the construction of an information system that takes different points of view into account and favours access to information by as many people as possible. To promote the circulation and production of information, we recommend:

- **To agencies, international organisations and Congolese civil society representatives:** During project implementation, ensure an increase in and diversification of information channels. Access to new social media through mobile apps is a sector to invest in. Social media still has a limited, but growing, place in the DRC (particularly among young people) and has significant potential in facilitating access to national or even international information, and the production and circulation of information by citizens themselves. Furthermore, this strategy can strengthen the participation of women. A study conducted in North Kivu in 2011 demonstrated that women had more access to media/communication methods than men.[130]

- **To agencies, international organisations and Congolese civil society representatives:** During project implementation, facilitate communities' access to adequate, credible and easily understandable data in order to manage public action.

Since its creation, the DRC has been characterised by a patrimonial system of governance, in which the interests of certain groups and relationships of allegiance take precedence over public interests. Exacerbated by two decades of war, this situation translates into communities having a severe lack of trust in their leaders. To strengthen the relationship between the authorities and the populations, we recommend:

- **To agencies, international organisations and Congolese civil society representatives:** During project implementation, integrate the dissemination and publicity of positive initiatives, such as activities, in their own right. By equipping communities to engage in good practice and undertake commitments, this contributes to strengthening the trust that populations have in their leaders and the legitimacy of authorities and their willingness to invest. This, in turn, ensures that communities have full ownership of the decisions they make, and therefore builds the capacity of citizens to take action in the event that commitments and laws are not respected.

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130   La Bretxa, 2011, Op. cit.

- **To donors:** Restoring the relationship of trust between leaders and populations is a long-term process. As a consequence, plan long-term financing strategies that ensure that an iterative process is triggered, in which social cohesion and accountability are mutually reinforced, and establish sustainable accountability mechanisms.

- **To agencies, international organisations and Congolese civil society representatives:** The communities' lack of confidence in the authorities also affects their relationships with CSOs (national and international), which are regularly accused of corruption. Ensure that implementation partnerships rigorously respect the governance principles that they espouse and that, in the event of poor management, they are held accountable. To limit suspicions and controversies, establish clear and accessible communication and complaints mechanisms, with a contact person who is involved in monitoring activities within the community. The regular presence of teams on the ground and limiting staff changes contribute to establishing relationships of trust.

The local level enables the establishment of social accountability practices that are closely embedded in the realities experienced by the population. However, resources and political action capacities of local authorities are extremely limited. It therefore seems important to join up local social accountability initiatives with actions aimed at the higher levels of decision-making. To initiate a "virtuous cycle" of accountability,[131] we recommend:

- **To Congolese civil society representatives:** During project implementation, support and extend collective actions beyond the local level, ensuring that they are joined up with initiatives and are relayed through the different media and civil society networks. Several local groups exercising joint pressure on the provincial or national government is potentially more powerful than a single group putting pressure on local authorities.[132]

- **To agencies, international organisations and Congolese civil society representatives:** During project implementation, consolidate the results obtained at the local level by ensuring these are relayed at the provincial and international levels. The coordination of actions across these different levels should contribute to strengthening the chain of governance and accountability, thus assuring an improved consideration of the needs of the populations when public policies are being drafted (bottom-up). It should also contribute to a strengthening of the hierarchical mechanisms of management and monitoring in the application of legal and political decisions (top-down).

- **To donors and Congolese civil society representatives:** Maintain a strong and consistent engagement to request political developments from the Congolese government, mainly regarding local elections being held and the completion and harmonisation of the decentralisation process. Citizen mobilisation and actions must succeed in eliciting a response from the authorities; otherwise this runs the risk of discouraging citizens. Indeed, popular pressure has little impact if it is not accompanied by legal and political changes. Inextricably linked, local elections and decentralisation processes are fundamental instruments for building the capacity of populations to participate in decision-making and to hold the authorities accountable.

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131   J. Robinson, 2016, Op. cit., p.21.
132   D. Burns, P. Ikita, E. Lopez Franco and T. Shahrokh, 2015, Op. cit., p.42.