



Post-Election violence interventions in the Rwenzori Region



Strengthening Conflict Prevention and Transformation Mechanisms in Rwenzori Region

With Financial Support from



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Cover Photos: Eminent Persons pose for a photo with Mr. Jolly (C/P LCV Bundibugyo) and his family members at his residence

Introduction

The post-election violence in the Rwenzori region has so far claimed 36 lives as a result of tribal reprisal attacks. These attacks have mainly taken place in Kasese and Bundibugyo district. On the fateful morning of 27th February 2016 through the community based peace actors, KRC learnt of the horrible killings in Bundibugyo that followed altered declaration of the LCV election results by the district returning officer of Bundibugyo. The double declaration of various winners for the same elective office immediately sparked off anxiety which resulted into 12 deaths on that very night. The situation quickly took an ethnical dimension between the Babwisi and Bakanzo.

Similar reprisals later spread to Kasese district following declaration of the LC III results of Hima Town Council. The race which was between Mr. John Katura incumbent winner of the race and Wabukombi Maate who had initially accepted defeat turned violent when Wabukombi didn't accept the results and was purportedly supported by the Busongora North Member of Parliament Hon. William Nzoghu. The MP was alleged to have joined Mr. Wabukombi and publicly uttered statements that they would not accept the results of the electoral commission and said they would vehemently protest against the results. Indeed the protest resulted into supporters of the two candidates clashing, and in the process, 2 civilians were killed in Kikonzo village. A bar of Mr. Katura's supporter was burnt and later a 5 roomed house belonging to Mr. Kamanyire a supporter to Mr. Katura was set ablaze. The violence would later spread to Buhuhira Sub County, where a commissioner of Police, Apolot was injured.

The violence would later draw in the Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu, and on April 3rd, 2 soldiers and 2 royal guards were killed in a scuffle at the Omusinga's

palace in Kasese. Before this incident, another royal guard had been killed by flying squad, in the middle of the market after resisting arrest and attempting to grab a gun from a military officer who had come to arrest him.

Many of the civilians that lost their lives in this post-election violence were killed using machetes and some of the killings bore marks of genocidal actions of children and pregnant women killed and their wombs slit open.

The interventions

Kabarole Research and Resource Centre (KRC), the Rwenzori Forum for Peace and Justice (RFPJ) and the Committee of Eminent persons¹ in the Rwenzori region have since been busy helping different groups to talk.

The trio has held one-on-one sessions with leaders (cultural, political and civil and community) of Bundibugyo and Kasese districts. In Kasese, the one – on - one meeting were supplemented by focus group meetings with the peace actors and a situation room meeting in Fort-Portal with top security officers from the region which was convened at Kalya Courts in Fort Portal Town and later a reconciliation dialogue in Kasese. These meetings have served to reflect and critically assess the situation and at the same time provide a healing environment for various groups of people.

¹The group of eminent persons chaired by the Most Rev. Bishop Reuben Kisembo of Ruwenzori Diocese is composed of 2 presidential advisors, 3 Bishops, 3 Sheiks, 2 Pentecostal Pastors, popular opinion leaders drawn from all districts and selected peace actors.



Figure 1: Eminent persons in a meeting with Mr. Mutegeki LCV elect at Hotel Vanilla-Bundibugyo

The Concerns

- In Bundibugyo the conflict situation had taken a blame game amongst the electoral commission, the cultural Institution (Obudhingiya Bwa Bwamba), the incumbent and the newly elected political leaders, the two dominant ethnic groups Bakonzo and Bamba/Babwisi and security agencies as well.
- While the office of the RDC and DPC tried their best to respond, the central government seemed to take forever to respond and re-enforce both police and the military action on the ground. Besides, there were allegations that, many of the police officers and SPCs deployed to support the election process were part of the conflict and could hardly protect the people from attacks.
- The Obudhingiya Bwa Bwamba cultural institution was heavily blamed for being partisan and taking sides during the February general

elections. It emerged that the OBB supported the incumbent LC V- Jolly Tibemanya who had contested as an independent after being defeated by Mutegeki Ronald the new LC V elect.

- The manner in which the electoral commission handled the declaration of results caused confusion, anxiety, unrest and consequently sparked off violence. It is alleged that the results were declared twice, first by announcing Jolly Tibemanya as winner and later Ronald Mutegeki.
- The media was accused of spreading a lot of propaganda and taking sides (selective broadcasting) and escalated the conflict. UBC-FM was particularly mentioned to have been mismanaged during this period.
- The team also found out that the current conflicts have a direct link with the July 5th 2014 attacks and the elections were the trigger for another attack.
- The pronouncement by the president to create Bughendera district seemed to have added salt to the injury. The Bamba/Babwisi argue that district will weaken their cultural institution. This was in addition of the Prince Kibanzanga factor becoming MP of Bughedera and a member of the Obusinga family and therefore increasing the influence of OBR in Bundibugyo.
- It was also alleged that, there were over 700 militias training in the



Figure: Bishop Reuben Kitembo speaking at the Situation room organized by the eminent persons, KRC and RFPJ.

Mountains- most of whom were drawn from the July 5 attackers.

Process achievements so far;

- The actions of the Eminent Persons, KRC and RFPJ have provided government agencies with additional information that they urgently needed to respond to the violent situation now. With the work of the eminent persons, the military approach by government can as well be supplemented by dialogue currently being led by the eminent persons. It seems that, this interaction and demand resulted into the re-enforcement of security personnel in the region.



Figure 2: Lt. AMOS Nsamba UPDF Spokes person-Rwenzori Region while making submission on the state of pursuing the alleged militia in Bundibugyo during the conflict situation room meeting at Kalya Courts

- The committee of eminent persons in conjunction with Catholic Justice and Peace Commission of Kasese, the Uganda Episcopal Conference Secretariat and selected representatives of the various ethnic groups, cultural institutions, popular opinion leaders, peace actors and selected political

leaders have come together into an adhoc commission to make a write up on the conflict situation in the region to be presented to the president of the republic of Uganda.

- The eminent persons Group supported by KRC and RFPJ in conjunction



Figure 3 *Rt. Rev. Bishop Aquirinus Kibira covering himself with a Bible while he broke into tears during a presentation on the Rwenzori Killings at a reconciliation dialogue in Kasese.*

with Association of Military Christian Fellowship of Uganda AMCF-U is organizing a series of post-election ecumenical prayer discussions across the five districts as part of the healing and fostering reconciliation in the region. These prayer sessions are slated for 6th, 18th 27th April and 3rd May in Kasese, Bundibugyo, Kabarole and Kyegegwa districts respectively.

- KRC has also supported University student associations of Bamba and Bakonzo to appeal for peace in the region and participated on radio talk



Figure 4 some of the Bakonzo-Bamba students posing for a photo after a charity walk to Buhinga Hospital in Fort Portal Town where they visited and raised some material and financial support for Election violence victims.

show on KRC FM.

Finally, although some efforts have been made to restore peace in the region, tensions are still high and it is unlikely that they will subside soon. In the short run, there is need for the two cultural institutions to meet over the matter and resolve the impasse emerging out of the February general elections. Such discussions should be facilitated under the chairmanship of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Uganda. The results of this meeting should be widely communicated to the general public in the region.

In the medium term, peace building efforts need to target clan leaders and ridge leaders in Bundibugyo, Kabarole and Kasese districts