

## RWENZORI MONTHLY **CONFLICT** ANALYSIS REPORT

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Cover photo: His Majesty Ousinga Charles Wesley Mumbere Iremangoma and His Highness Omudhingiya Martin Kanya pose for a photo after signing a Royal Communiqué at Mountain of the Moon Hotel in Fort Portal Town

Source: KRC/RFPJ Web based Kanga baije online Platform

*7<sup>th</sup> September 2016*

## 1. BACKGROUND

Despite the tranquillity reigning over the rwenzoris, the region has continued to experience isolated reports of tensions in various communities resulting from socio-economic, political, administrative and traditional set ups both in Bundibugyo and Kasese districts. Kabarole and Ntoroko district have equally been painted with seeming conflict situations which present potential violent situations if not attended to.

KRC conducted a number of meetings with peace actors, ridge leaders and elders in Kasese Ntoroko, Bundibugyo and Kabarole districts where a number of potential conflict triggers were cited. An online trigger was generated through the online system to assess the situation in Bundibugyo and the situation was reported to be tense. A focus discussion was further conducted with secondary school peace clubs of Bumadu Seed SS, Bubukwanga Seed SS, Good Hope SS, Semuliki High School and Bundibugyo Primary Teachers College, a rich and fruitful discussion about the conflict situation in Bundibugyo was generated and possible actions suggested by students.

This report therefore will cover diverse conflict issues related to destruction of cocoa in Bundibugyo, the melting conflict in Nyamisingiri, the 50<sup>th</sup> coronation anniversary of the Omusinga, the purported split of Kasese district, the Team No Sleep TNS and Team No Jock TNJ socio-political platforms in Bundibugyo and the unrest in Bubukwanga Sub County as well as the rift between security agencies and the Royal Guards of Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu.

### 2.0. Contextual discussions

#### 2.1.1. Economic conflicts over cocoa fields in Bundibugyo

As opposed to open fighting and killings in Bundibugyo, the conflict trend has taken a new dimension of destruction of cocoa fields. Reports from peace actors and through the online platform indicate that people have resorted to destroying flowers on cocoa trees and equally growing cocoa pods. This tendency has been cited common in Bubukwanga, Ntoroko and Busaru Sub Counties. Reporters indicate that community members have started sleeping outside to guard their cocoa fields and there is anticipated violence which may result from an attack in the name of guarding. They further indicate that even children have been involved in guarding which consequently impacts on their education since some do not therefore concentrate in class.



A peace actor in Bundibugyo testifying on cocoa destruction being a potential trigger of conflict

### 2.1.2. The Nyamisingiri conflict “a melting pot for Ntoroko and Kabarole”

There is growing tension in Nyamisingiri parish on the border of Kabarole and Ntoroko. The area since creation of Ntoroko district has failed to belong either to Ntoroko and or Kabarole. Both districts have been engaged in heavy exchanges because of this area and as a result Nyamisingiri has been left out in service delivery by both districts. Sources revealed during the meeting of the Ntoroko leadership which convened at Karugutu Town Council Head Quarters it was revealed that during the national registration some community members Nyamisingiri registered from both districts; political campaigns in February were quite challenging since candidates from both districts came and mobilized voters from this very place. That during immunization outreaches both districts deploy in this area but during supply of items under Operation Wealth creation none of the districts reaches out to the area.

It was further revealed that Kabarole Sub County claims to have built a school and health centre in this parish but does not provided any form of facilitation. While on the other hand Ntoroko district claims they have been funding all the programs and activities of these two units. Information from the Ntoroko district leadership (councillors) further indicates that most of the people living in Nyamisingiri are registered under Ntoroko district. The leadership have condemned former Local Government Minister Ho. Adolf Mwesigye who hails from within the region for having failed to pronounce himself on the boundaries and where the contested Nyamisingiri belongs when he was still in the mandated office

The dilemma currently is a purported move by the Nyamisingiri community members to storm the offices both district in quest for legal recognition as provided for by the constitution of the republic of Uganda 1995. The problem is reported to have an ethnic dimension between the Batooro and Bakonzo. To the Ntoroko leaders this appears to be a potential trigger of violent conflicts if no redress is done by the relevant authorities; that if in any case it turns violent there will be a worst experience than ever before.

Nyamisingiri formally belonged to Kabarole district before the creation of Ntoroko; the shift of boundaries has brought untold confusion which has brought a development bias to this area.

### 2.1.3. The move to split Kasese district

As the situation tries to calm down, there has been a move to split Kasese into 5 districts namely; Kasese, Bwera, Kikorongo, Hima and Busongora districts. This move by a group which constituted itself into “elders” allegedly under the auspice of former Minister of Defence Dr. Chrispus Kiyonga who is also Chairperson NRM Kasese district has met a lot of resistance by the six members of parliament from within the district, key district political leaders and the cultural institutions as well as some Bakonzo extremists. Recently a council session discussing this very agenda dropped the motion saying it was not the right time to split Kasese. The minority district council members led by Mr. Thaddeo Muhindo Matwese former LC V Vice chairperson recently angrily walked out of the council session and have vowed to lead a move seeking council to reconsider and concisely re-discuss the proposal.



Curtsey photo: Kasese MPS addressing a press conference in Kampala last month about the split of the district

The action of council has met a lot of divergent opinions from diverse communities and some members of the general public are seeking open discussions of the proposed move to ascertain justifiable reasons for the split. General opinions show that the public is not against the planned split but the proposed boundaries. There are however seemingly cropping tensions that are anticipated to result into untold conflicts.

Clandestine sources indicate that the reason for splitting the district is aimed at installing cultural leaders for each of the district. The July online report did hint on a segment of individuals seeking to be true claimants of the Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu. All these are early warning signs of potential conflicts that may not only affect Kasese but may spread to the entire region especially some parts of Kabarole and Bundibugyo.

This is the second time a move to split Kasese has been plotted and resisted. The first one was plotted by former LCV Chairperson Rev. Can. Kithaghenda in 2011 upon losing



the chairmanship position to Rtd. Col. Adula Mawa Muhindo who is also out of politics having lost to counsel Sibendire Bigogo



Kasese district LC V Chairperson Geoffrey SIBENDIRE Bigogo Geoffrey while addressing a gathering in Buhuhira Sub County recently. He strongly condemned the pupated split of the district which he said was not proper since there have not been any consultations from the public

#### 2.1.4. 50<sup>th</sup> Coronation anniversary of Omusinga Charles Wesley Mumbere Iremangoma

Omusinga Mumbere of Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu will on October 19<sup>th</sup> be celebrating his 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as king since the death of his late father Isaya Mukirane Musabuli Kibanzanga (RIP). Preparations are under way at the Buhikira Royal Palace in Kasese. However reports from peace actors in Bundibugyo indicate that there are scattered individuals and groups of people who are vowing to disrupt the preparation and the event itself. The common word used to describe the situation is that the day is anticipated to turn “bloody.” There has not been a deliberate reason to why the day is expected to turn blood as reported but given the tribal sentiments in Bundibugyo this report cannot be ruled out, it comes through as an early warning sign that needs to be responded to by all stakeholders including responsive and proactive security measures to apprehend the situation.

Below: King Mumbere at His Buhikira Royal Place in Kasese



### 2.1.5. Socio-political structures

The socio-political landscape in Bundibugyo has been shaped by amorphous structures that have been greatly blamed for fuelling tribal sentiments across the district. During a focus meeting with community based peace actors from Bundibugyo it was revealed that initially the district was united by a socio-political platform locally known as Orujegere literally meaning chain. This was formally a platform which involved people of all kind irrespective of parties, ethnicity and level of education. However during the NRM primaries in October 2015, there copped a purely Bamba/Babwisi driven platform referred to as Team No Sleep TNS which is said to have been a platform that was segregative, tribalistic and only rallying political support for Bamba/Babwisi candidates and who were equally supportive to the local cultural institution. The platform is said to be headed by an elite group of people including some district officials (civil servants). During plenary sessions at the meeting the participants noted with concern that TNS has had deep roots in Bubukwanga Sub County thus a possible reason to why there are irreversible violent tensions which are even anticipated to worsen.

In response to the above, during the February general elections another platform called Team No Jock TNJ also emerged, it is allegedly inclined to non Bamba/Babwisi. The team is believed to have determined the general elections especially the positions of the current LCV chairperson, Bughendera County Member and district woman members of parliament. The intentions of these groups did not end with the election period but have become permanent platforms working underground to destabilize communities including planned community based and or public functions.



A female youth councillor from Bundibugyo making a presentation at Rain Bow Guest House; She strongly condemned the socio-political structures which during a group discussions had been referred to as peer groups for lack of a better word.

### 2.1.6. Alarming tensions in Bubukwanga Sub County

In spite of the good and cherished work of the peace actors and interventions by KRC to advance peace in the region the political landscape in Bubukwanga Sub County has remained fragile posing potential triggers of violent conflicts. The unrest follows the altered declaration of the LC V sit results by the electoral commission in the district which sparked violence that claimed over 10 lives. Intricacies have remained high amongst the Bubukwanga Community upon declaration and swearing in of Mr. Mutegeki as LC V chairperson. Reports from peace actors indicate that all votes from Bubukwanga Sub County were not declared by the electoral commissions citing grave malpractices, that voters within this sub county were purely supporting candidates who lost elections at parliamentary and LCV levels.

It was further revealed during discussions with students from secondary schools in Bundibugyo and equally with local leaders that the current LCV chairperson can hardly access and or chair a meeting in Bubukwanga. There is a general defiance campaign against the regime of Mutegeki in Bubukwanga; the campaign is said to be led by individuals even without the consent of Mr. Jolly and Hon Mutegeki. The most accused are the LC III Chairperson of and the area councillor to the district.

From the training of students in Alternative Dispute Resolution ADR, Training of Councillors on land policies and the meeting of Bakonzo/Bamba/Babwisi elders and ridge leaders elders it was revealed that some politicians from Bubukwanga have vowed never to enter the office of the current district chairperson until his regime ends!. This is an early warning signal of deep-rooted conflict that requires a concise trauma healing and reconciliation approach before it explodes and or escalates.

Below: Leaders from Bubukwanga S/C during a group discussion at Rain Bow Guest House. They critically condemned the sentiments in Bubukwanga and said would retard development.







Participants from Mantorobo discussing the conflict situation in Bundibugyo; They condemned the cultural institution for rallying support for specific political leaders.



Students of Bubukwanga Seed SS; Decry the growing socio-political sentiments roaming their Sub County and the extent to which it likely to affect service delivery.

2.1.7. The plight of Royal Guards of Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu in Kasese district despite the relative peace currently seeming to reign over Kasese district, there has been a silent but yet salient issue between the OBR Royal Guards and the security agencies the Uganda Police Force in particular. Following the unprecedented shootings and exchange between the Police and Royal Guards in Kasenyi Buhuhira Sub County that followed the declaration of the mayoral elections in Hima, there has grown a sharp rift between police and the royal guards. The former and the latter have been involved in exchanges causing deaths of either party. In all these skirmishes the royal guards cry foul as being direct targets of shootings by police specifically the flying squad.

Sources from within the district including peace actors and the general public indicate that at times royal guards have been attacked even where they have not been in conflict with anybody. As they try to fight back they have eventually been shot at and lost lives. That there has not been deliberate redress in line with these killings by either government and or any agency; It is further revealed that since the February insurgence there are some Royal Guards who have never accessed their families for fear of being arrested and or killed a reason to why they have decided to remain the palace. Security agencies have also gone ahead to question the legal mandate of the royal guards in



terms of which security department they belong and are accountable to in government, definition of ammunitions they are supposed to hold, level of exercise of power, skills and training to enable them to tactfully carry out their work and the chain of command to which they subscribe. There is potential conflict that may result from this bitter relationship and someone should be able to find out why the two are in conflict.

### 3.0. Potential triggers of conflict in the region

As already discussed above, conflicts in the region seem to unfold in different shapes day after day, it is therefore prudent that despite the ongoing interventions by all stakeholders an emergency plan be put in place to respond to these ever cropping sentiments.

Other than the above, there is need for all stakeholders to jointly focus on the following issues that appear potential to spark further conflicts just not far from now;

#### 3.1. Claimants of OBR Kingship

As already mentioned in 2.1.3 and 2.1.4, the early warning signals of claimants of OBR might spark conflict in Kasese which may consequently affect the entire region. There has continued to be growing tension over the existence of other people claiming to be enthroned true cultural leaders of the Obusinga. Sympathizers and loyalists to these claimants are in place and have an agenda known to them which if unveiled may lead to a similar situation as of the early and late 60s. This situation has been amalgamated with the recent partitioning of Kasese into 4 security administrative units of Bwera, Katwe, Kasese and Hima police divisions under one region of Rwenzori East

Courtesy phone photos of some of the claimants of obusinga bwa Rwenzuru during a TV broadcast



### 3.2. Move to split Kasese

The move to split Kasese into five districts is at present the most outstanding potential trigger to a horrible conflict situation. Despite the recent ruling by the district council which dropped the motion there are underground moves to push for council to revisit the minute. At every community event it is not surprising to people in small groups discussing the intended split.

### 3.3. The Bubukwanga tension

The tension in Bubukwanga Sub County if not attended to may result into an unbearable and regrettable situation. It is therefore prudent for an immediate intervention to be taken.

#### Moving forward

Given the above analysis, KRC proposes the following

- Some peace interventions by government have been received with a lot of criticism from various stakeholders claiming that they appear to be plastic and hybrid in nature thus not addressing real problems. However there is need to popularize and Implement the recommendations in the Royal Communiqué that was signed between the two cultural leaders before a government minister at Mountain of the Moon Hotel in Fort Portal Town. This will help to reduce on the gap between the communities and the cultural leaders and also strengthen the relationship between the two brother leaders. The Queen of Rwenzuru Nyabaghole Agness Ithungu was recently on a royal tour in Mahango Sub County where as a mother she preached and called for peaceful and harmonious living. She was applauded by a mammoth crowd.  
The central government should as a matter of concern revisit the recommendations of the Kajura Commission Report of 2005 which provides a roadmap to combating most of the conflict issues in Kasese and the region as a whole. There is no need why a lot of commissions should be put in place to respond to emerging conflicts while the agreed acts are never implemented. It appears as if there is entrepreneurship of conflicts.
- There is need for an immediate dialogue meeting between the Police and the Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu cultural Institution to bring them to reconcile with each other as one way of restoring the lost glory between the cultural institution (community) and the Uganda Police Force bearing in mind that these royal guards have a right as Ugandans to access and live in any part Of Uganda
- The conflict situation in Bundibugyo especially referring to Bubukwanga Sub County requires an immediate response before it goes out of hand. The purpose of this report id to avail information to stakeholders so as to respond to the early

warning signs of conflict and not to handle only emergencies and or post mortem situations when information is readily available.

- The local authorities in Kasese should treat the split of the district as a matter that can generate both positive and negative situations but also can be hijacked by people of divergent intentions to cause conflict. It is therefore necessary for the district leadership in conjunction with the members of parliament to open up debates about the intended split of the district. The opinions of the public can then be used by a small representative commission or committee to take a neutral satisfactory decision.”
- The district commercial office and community based services department of Bundibugyo should treat the matter of cocoa destruction as a matter of potential conflict and therefore lay strategies to apprehend the situation.

In conclusion security agencies should closely work with the stakeholders in the region specifically in Kasese and Bundibugyo district to handle the tensions that are deep-rooted and continue manifesting every other day. There is also need for demobilization/trauma healing sessions amongst community members in the entire region for positive peace.