



A CONFLICT MAPPING REPORT

Networks for Peace:

Preventing and resolving conflicts
through early warning mechanisms in Africa.
A case of the Basongora and Batuku Minority
Communities in Rwenzori Sub-region in Uganda

July, 2020

ISBN: 978-9970-9940-0-7

Project Implemented by:

Community Development Resource Network (CDRN)

Kabarole Research & Resource Centre (KRC Uganda)

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Acknowledgement

This report was prepared by KRC Uganda and CDRN, implementing partners of Networks for peace; Preventing and resolving conflicts through early warning mechanisms in Africa. We are grateful to Bangirana Narcisio, of Shalom Mediation Institute for assistance in data collection and drafting of the report.

We are also grateful to the leadership of Kasese, Ntoroko and Bundibugyo District Local Governments who gave the guidance on the conflict hotspots and connected the research team to the respondents in the communities.

Special thanks also go to the respondents who provided the primary data upon which the findings and analysis presented in this report was based.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADF	Allied Democratic Front
CDRN	Community Development Resource Network
DISO	District Internal Security Officer
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
KRC	Kabarole Research and Resource Centre
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NALU	National Army for the Liberation of Uganda
NEMA	National Environmental Management Authority
NRA	National Resistance Army
NRM	National Resistance Movement
OBB	Obudingiya Bwa Bwamba
OBR	Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu
OWC	Operation Wealth Creation
SACCO	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization
UNRA	Uganda National Roads Authority
UPDF	Uganda People's Defense Forces
UWA	Uganda Wildlife Authority

Executive Summary

This is a report of the Conflict Mapping for the Network for Peace: Preventing and Resolving Conflicts through Early Warning Mechanism in Africa Project being implemented in Kasese and Ntoroko Districts located in the Rwenzori Sub Region of Western Uganda. The project is jointly implemented by Community Development Resource Network (CDRN) and Kabarole Research & Resource Centre (KRC Uganda) in Ntoroko and Kasese Districts respectively, with financial support from the UKaid in partnership with Minority Rights Group International (MRGI).

The objectives of the mapping study were to establish existing conflict triggers, indicators, early warning and response mechanisms and the associated challenges in addressing conflict among the Basongora and Batuku minority communities in Ntoroko and Kasese Districts in the Rwenzori sub-region of Uganda.

Consultations were made through focus group discussions and key informants' interviews with different stakeholders including the target communities, Local Government leaders at District, Sub county and lower levels, and religious and cultural leaders in Ntoroko, Kasese and Bundibugyo Districts. Though not a focus area of the project, Bundibugyo District was included in the study because the area is usually affected by spill-over effects of conflicts originating from Kasese and Ntoroko Districts.

Key Findings

The conflicts affecting the Basongora and Batuku in the Rwenzori, like most minority pastoral communities in Africa, are livelihood and resource based, politically driven, climate change motivated, and inspired by the desire for self-determination along ethnic lines. One particular aspect that is unique to the target groups is that both the Basongora and Batuku live in the neighbourhoods of wildlife protected areas under the management of Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). This gives the context an additional conflict dimension, i.e. the community versus Uganda Wildlife Authority. The early warning indicators involve political campaigns, suspicious meetings, the dry season, fallow land, movement patterns of members in neighbouring communities, population explosion, influx of immigrants and initiation of government projects.

The key actors in the conflicts are community members, leaders and Uganda Wildlife Authority. Unlike their Basongora counterparts, the Batuku have additional dimensions of cross-border conflicts, disputes over constituency boundaries, and inter-clan conflicts. The conflict triggers in the above context include: wetlands' encroachment, sale of land to migrants, fencing off roads, neighbour's land and routes to the cattle watering points, denied access to wildlife conservation areas for grazing land, disputed boundaries, influx of immigrants, marginalization in employment, political campaigns, government projects, cattle movements, stray wildlife and cross-border activities.

The above triggers are often preceded by certain indicators including informal meetings in communities, disappearance or appearance of certain groups particularly of different mono-ethnic groups, appearance of surveyors, stray wildlife in the community, among other indicators. The indicators usually provoke responses, especially from the communities which include reporting to the concerned stakeholders. Unfortunately, community outcry is usually confronted with unresponsive intervention of duty bearers.

Recommendations

In response to the above findings, the report makes a range of recommendations to the government, civil society and other stakeholders. The government of Uganda, together with her DRC counterpart should work out a conflict management framework to address cross-border conflicts, especially, on Semuliki River, lakes Albert and Edward, as well as the cattle grazing issues involving Congolese pastoralists who seasonally cross to Uganda with their herds. The government should also enhance their enforcement mechanisms in response to the community concerns, improve land governance frameworks in largely communal landholdings in pastoralist communities, and ensure security of land ownership by vulnerable members of the community such as widows and orphans. The report further recommends that civil society organizations should support communities with improved mechanisms of early response to conflict indicators, create awareness of the existing policies and legislations on UWA, NFA and NEMA among others; and empowerment of local leaders and community members with skills to address conflict and promote peaceful coexistence in the communities.

Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

In Uganda, there are 21 indigenous minority groups that have been identified so far. These include the Ik, Mening, Nyangia, Napore, Ngokutio (Karenga), Ngokutio (Orom), Lendu, Kebu, Tepeth, Batuku, Bamba, Babwisi, Bavanoma, Batwa, Basongora, Banyabindi, Bacingwe and Bagabo among others (CCFU, 2012). Out of the above nine are from Rwenzori sub-region namely: Babwisi, Bacingwe, Bagabo, Bamba, Banyabindi, Basongora, Batuku, Batwa and Bavanoma. This conflict mapping on Early Warning and Early Response Mechanisms specifically focused on the Basongora and Batuku minority ethnic groups in Kasese and Ntoroko Districts respectively. The Basongora are predominantly a nomadic pastoralist community (CCFU, 2014) who live in the lowlands of Kasese District at the foothills of Mt. Rwenzori, on the flatlands neighbouring Queen Elizabeth National Park and Lakes Edward and George. The Batuku, who are equally a pastoralist community, mainly live in the low-lands between Lake Albert, River Semuliki and Semuliki National Park in Ntoroko District. Unlike the Basongora who are an almost homogeneous pastoralist, Batuku are an ethnic group constituted of two social groups namely: the Bahuma cattle keepers and the Banyeibuga fishermen. The two economic activities are their main livelihood preoccupations.

This report is a representation of the prevailing conflict triggers, indicators and early warning mechanisms amongst the Basongora of Kasese and Batuku of Ntoroko. Besides the history of conflict in Rwenzori, it gives the methodology employed during the mapping, the challenges faced by the respective communities in responding to conflict situations as well as the recommendations that could help to improve their ways of addressing conflict, especially, in facilitating early warning and early response mechanisms.

The mapping was conducted within the predominantly Basongora Sub-counties of Nyakatonzi, Katwe-Kabatooro, Karusandara and Hima Town Council in Kasese District; Rwebisengo and Bweramule in Ntoroko District. It reveals that the conflicts affecting Basongora and Batuku are largely ethnic, resource based, governance and cross-border related. It recommends that government should improve her responsiveness to the needs, fears and aspirations of the marginalized Basongora and their Batuku counterparts; particularly, on the early warning conflict indicators and the challenges affecting the communities whenever they report to the duty bearers.

1.2 Background to Conflict in the Rwenzori

The conflict in Rwenzori is not a new phenomenon. For instance, as early as the 1980s, the study about Rwenzururu Rebellion (1962 – 1982) was included in the primary school education curriculum. Noteworthy, however, the Rwenzururu rebellion was not the first violent conflict in the Rwenzori, rather it was preceded by many others stretching to the precolonial days. Apart from the pre-

colonial wars, the Rwenzururu rebellion was preceded by the Abayora rebellion of 1919 – 1921, which ended with the execution of the three ringleaders namely: Nyamutswa, Tibamwenda and Kapolya at Kagando, present day Busongora South constituency in Kasese District, in 1921(KRC & RFPJ, 2012). According to oral accounts, the Abayora rebellion was a veiled campaign in which tribal leaders urged their Bakonzo tribesmen to produce as many children as possible so that they could increase their numerical strength to resist Tooro administration, which was considered very harsh to them.

The Rwenzururu rebellion was followed by the National Resistance Army (NRA) 1981-1986, the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) around 1988, Allied Democratic Front (ADF) in the 1990s (CCFU, 2014) and more recently, the violent clashes between the Rwenzururu Kingdom (Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu) and the government of Uganda 2014 and 2016 whereby in 2014 over eleven Basongora died in an attack that also targeted armed forces and military installations, leaving scores of Uganda police and soldiers dead (Anna Reuss & Kristof Titeca, 2016). The recurrent wars have left devastating effects including loss of life, property, livestock and massive human displacement (CCFU, 2014). The cycle of violence has created rifts, embedded trauma, narratives, stereotypes, fear, mistrust, and hate towards one another and left little room for mutual co-existence among the different ethnic groups in their communities.

1.3 Problem statement

The perpetual cycle of conflicts and the associated drivers have left communities in Rwenzori divided along ethnic lines. In Kasese, the division is more apparent between the Bakonzo and the Basongora; owing to the socio-political marginalization of the latter as well as their different Agro-Pastoral forms of livelihoods. On the other hand, the conflicts affecting the Batuku are largely intra-ethnic, and resource based involving Uganda Wildlife Authority and pastoralists over grazing land neighbouring Semuliki National Park.

The most controversial issues revolve around ethnicity, access to resources and services, then livelihoods. The ethnic divide is escalated by bad politics of divide and rule on one hand, and bad parenting through tribal sentiments passed down through generations on the other. This hatred is often overstated to the extent that controversy involving two people of different ethnicities pits an entire ethnic or nation group against the other. For instance, Bakonzo against Basongora or Ugandans against Congolese.

The recognition of cultural institutions of the Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu (OBR), Obudingiya Bwa Bwamba (OBB), restoration of Tooro Kingdom as well as the self-determination aspirations of Busongora and other minority communities in the region also drive the persistent conflicts in the region (CCFU, 2014).

The commissioning of this conflict mapping study is intended to fill a knowledge gap on early warning systems of ethnic conflicts in the Rwenzori region and the early warning infrastructure thereof, that should provide systematic conflict mitigation in the region.

1.4 Objectives

The mapping was designed to:

- * Identify the existing conflict triggers and indicators among the Basongora and Batuku ethnic minority communities.
- * Identify the Early Warning and early response Mechanisms among the Basongora and Batuku communities.
- * Identify the challenges encountered in addressing conflict and how they could be mitigated.

1.5 The Scope

This mapping was conducted in Rwenzori sub-region of Western Uganda specifically, among the Basongora community of Kasese District and the Batuku community of Ntoroko District in line with conflict trends, triggers, indicators and challenges experienced between 2015 and 2019.

The study was conducted in the Basongora dominated Sub-counties of Nyakatonzi, Katwe-Kabatooro, Karusandara and Hima Town Council in Kasese District, and Rwebisengo and Bweramule Sub-counties & Rwebisengo Town Council in Ntoroko District.

In Bundibugyo District, interviews were conducted with the victims affected by the landslides in Harugale and Tokwe Sub-counties. This community was included in the study because despite facing challenges of forced displacement by natural disasters, the tribal peoples had refused to stay together in the same displacement camps due to persistent ethnic conflicts between the Bakonzo and Babwisi.

Uganda Wildlife Authority, Civil Society Organizations working with minority communities, the police and Local Government leaders at the District and sub-county levels were also part of the respondents to contribute knowledge and understanding of their constituencies.

The focus of the study was to explore the existing conflict indicators, early warning mechanisms and responses to conflict in the traditional community, the mechanisms for feedback and relations building with the respective stakeholders.

Methodology

The conflict mapping exercise used largely qualitative approach to collect and analyze data.

2.1 Inception meeting and task planning

An inception was convened between CDRN and KRC project staff to plan the activity and discuss field logistics and the dynamics involved. Among issues discussed were the scope of the work: the areas for data collection, the numbers and categories of respondents, the tools for data collection, the time scope for accomplishing the assignment, the procedures and ethical issues to be followed in conducting the exercise.

2.2 Sampling

Purposive sampling was carried out in sub-counties deemed to be dominated by the Basongora and the Batuku . The sub counties included Nyakatonzi, Karusandara, Katwe Kabatooro and Hima Town Council in Kasese, Rwebisengo, Bweramule sub – counties and Rwebisengo town council in Ntoroko, and then Harugale and Tokwe in Bundibugyo district. Respondents included men, women and youth above the age of 18. Other respondents were leaders of Civil Society Organizations, Police and Local Government Councillors.

District	Male respondents	Female respondents	Total respondents
Kasese	45	27	72
Ntoroko	51	19	70
Bundibugyo	11	11	22
Total respondents	107	57	164

Respondents were sampled basing on the fact that they were knowledgeable on the variables the study examined. For instance, women respondents were sampled because it was assumed, they could tell the behaviour of their husbands, youth and their domestic workers in the face of an impending conflict or during the conflict itself. They could tell that a conflict was imminent or had deescalated depending on the behavioural trends they observed in their communities. The youth were sampled because it was assumed they knew their behavioural patterns of their counterparts and in case of a confrontation, and because they were always on the frontline of the conflicts. Local government leaders and civil society organizations were sampled because it was assumed they had experience of involvement with the respective minority groups over a range of issues affecting them, including conflict prevention and in some cases, post conflict interventions.



2.3 Data collection

As a start, contact persons were identified from within both the Basongora and Batuku communities with the help of district authorities who linked the researchers to the communities. This helped in reaching out to the respondents that were better placed to give reliable information. In-depth interviews were conducted with focus groups and key informants. Respondents of various categories including women, youth, men and elders were contacted to establish the existing conflict triggers, indicators as well as the early warning mechanisms.

The interviews also explored the challenges faced by community members not only in responding to conflicts and the early warning messages but also on accessing the kind of services that would prevent the conflicts from occurring and/or recurring. Interview schedules and a semi-structured interview guides were used to collect data from the various respondents. Analysis was done using the qualitative approach.

2.4 Validation

Upon completion of the mapping, findings were presented in validation workshops to different groups from both Basongora and Batuku ethnic groups, local government leaders as well as leaders of civil society organizations in Kasese and Ntoroko districts. This was done in order to verify if the findings reflected the true picture of what actually happens in the respective target communities. Additional input was provided through feedback and was used to produce final report.

Analysis and Interpretation of the findings

3.1 Conflict Triggers among Basongora and Batuku Communities

It has been earlier pointed out that the conflicts affecting the Batuku and Basongora minority communities in Rwenzori revolve around power, resources and ethnicity. Whereas the two ethnic groups share most of the conflict issues in their communities, the Batuku have additional dimensions, which are not among the Basongora namely: cross-border conflicts, district and Sub-county boundary conflicts, and inter-clan conflicts. While the inter-ethnic conflicts are rife between the Bakonzo and Basongora in Kasese district, it is less pronounced between the Batuku on the one hand and Bakonzo and other ethnic groups on the other in Ntoroko District. On the other hand whereas there are some Batuku who are so much opposed to being associated with Tooro kingdom, there are some Batuku who are comfortable being associated with the kingdom, and in fact, some are serving under the kingdom in leadership positions as Saza (county) and Gombolola (sub county) chiefs. This is not so with the Basongora because in Kasese, one can hardly find a Musongora who would like to associate themselves with the Bakonzo kingdom of Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu. Below is the presentation and discussion of the conflict triggers that are existent among the Basongora and Batuku communities of Rwenzori

3.2 Cross-Border dynamics

Cross-border issue is one of the conflict triggers that are particular to Ntoroko and Batuku but does not feature among the Basongora of Kasese. There are Congolese citizens who have settled along the river Semuliki but on Ugandan territory. Technically, the River Semuliki marks the national boundary between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, this river keeps changing course and has progressively eaten deep into the community on the Ugandan side thereby reducing on the land that Ugandans in Ntoroko have been using for generations for cultivation and for other production purposes. This has not only been a source of conflict between residents of Ntoroko district and their DRC neighbours who have literally taken it that the river is the natural boundary, but is also likely going to be a source of conflict between Uganda and DRC in the future.

The Semuliki river course and the neighbouring settlements disputes: As already noted, the ordinary Congolese in the neighbourhood of Ntoroko believes that neighbours River Semuliki is the border between Uganda and the DRC. As a result, they have continuously extended their land holding into Uganda based on the behaviour of the river. This has pitted Ugandans whose land have been affected by the river movements against their Congolese counterparts from the DRC as more and more Ugandans in Ntoroko District become landless.

The Rukwanzi Island border disputes. At Rukwanzi Island fishing village, there is conflict between the Batuku fishermen and Congolese fishermen. This is triggered by different dimensions; there is the national boundary issue whereby the Congolese claim the whole island is on their side of the border while Ugandans claim that part of the Island belongs to Uganda. This often causes friction on fishing grounds where either party is accused of fishing in the other's territory. The other dimension is the security of the fishing gears and the fish caught therein. It was alleged that the Congolese fishermen were aggressive and arrogant towards their Ugandan counterparts. With this attitude, they often grabbed fishing nets together with the fish therein, the boats and boat engines of Ugandan fishermen. A related incident was reported at Katwe-Kabatooro fishing village in Kasese district where Congolese fishermen were reported to often steal fishing gear, including boats and boat engines on Lake Edward from their Ugandan counterparts.

The study established that settlement of conflict between Congolese and Ugandans over grievances on the lake is quite complex. This is because of the variation in the governance structures, which make the dispensation of justice in conflicts involving cross-border parties difficult. Whereas Ugandans have the local council system, their Congolese counterparts reportedly do not have clear administrative structures. It is therefore difficult for Ugandan fishermen to find justice whenever they clashed with their Congolese counterparts.

The study also established that the other cross border conflict arises from movement of cattle from DRC to Uganda by Congolese herdsman in search of pasture. Often, their arrival becomes a source of tension as Ugandan residents allege that Congolese cattle come with livestock diseases that lead to the death of their livestock of the hosts. This is also not helped with the challenge of scarcity pasture particularly during the dry season.

3.3 The community – UWA conflicts

Both Batuku and Basongora communities share boundaries with Semuliki game reserve and Queen Elizabeth national park which are managed by UWA. The common sources of contention between the Batuku and Basongora communities on the one hand and the UWA on the other hand are pasture and water in the park, and security of persons and property in the communities when it comes to wildlife-human interaction. In both cases, either herdsman take their animals to graze and water in the reserves or cows wander to the reserves in search of pasture and water thus breaching park regulations. In the case of Basongora, however, particularly in Nyakatonzi sub-county, even when it is not necessarily a dry season, the cattle watering grounds are located within the national park. It is therefore possible that cows can feed on the park pasture on their way from the watering point, thus posing high potential for conflict between cattle owners and park authorities. On one hand, wildlife also wanders to the community in search of food, especially when maize fields have started flowering, thus causing destruction of crops and other property of community members. This phenomenon has been persistent and there seems to be no clear solution in sight soon, thereby making this situation a persistent trigger.

What is more intriguing in this relationship is the intensity of UWA restrictions on access to the park whether for pasture, water or game for the hunters. UWA regulations are so strict that actually it was alleged that if one is caught in the park illegally, they are killed and the body is not given to

the relatives for a decent burial. Although UWA denies this allegation, communities reported that a number of people had lost their lives in the national park, particularly in the Semuliki game reserve. Communities in Ntoroko alleged, that in the last two years alone, more than fifteen (15) people were killed in the park either by game rangers or by crocodiles, 10 at Kibira in Makando Parish, in Rwebisengo Sub-county, and five people at Kasungu in Butungama Sub-county. One of the local leaders in Ntoroko district reported that what was still saving the situation is that those killed in the park had been migrant herdsman and not children of the indigenous Batuku in Ntoroko. To quote his own words, 'what keeps the community a little calm is that those who are often caught and killed in the park are herdsman who are hired from outside the Batuku community but not biological children of the cattle owners. If it had been the biological children of the Batuku, the community would have long responded violently to UWA rangers, probably killing every staff they bring and even burning up the park or destroying the staff houses and other facilities at UWA'. Community members also reported that when game wardens kill someone in the park, the perpetrators would be transferred and a new team of wardens brought to the station to take over. They argued that this is done to avoid reprisals from the community in revenge for the killed person(s). It is our view that this situation needs to be paid attention to, as it has potential of sparking serious violence in the future.

On the other hand, the two communities reported that they suffer constant loss of human life, livestock and property to the wildlife without any compensation. The study was informed that several people lose their lives to crocodiles when they go to water their animals or when they go to fetch water for domestic consumption. They also noted that wild animals such as hippos destroy crops and houses but the victims are not compensated at all. They reported that in Katwe-Kabatooro Town council, two people were disabled by the buffalos and a Hippo destroyed a residential house of one of the citizens. In another case, a buffalo killed a man at Hamukungu, then 35 cows in Nyakatonzi were confiscated and auctioned by UWA, while 150 cows were reportedly killed by crocodiles in Bweramule sub-county. For all such losses to community members, there was no compensation to the affected. This further sours the relations between UWA and the community, as the constant losses increase the intensity of the latent conflict.

3.4 The intra-ethnic conflicts

One of the outstanding intra-ethnic conflict issues for both the Batuku and Basongora is that of loyalty to the cultural institutions/kingdoms. The Basongora have loyalty conflict of two dimensions: there are Basongora who are opposed to the establishment of Basongora Kingdom while others are in support; the second are Basongora who are in support of the establishment of the cultural institution/kingdom but are not in support of the current leadership. The latter group would rather another person was king, not the current one. The Batuku on their part have a group that subscribes to Tooro kingdom and another that is opposed to this loyalty, but there are also the Batuku who are interested to establish their own cultural institutions, which is also opposed by a section of the Batuku. The intensity of this conflict in either community is quite high that it affects the human relations at community level and the initiatives and services that the cultural institutions would bring to the communities. Among the Batuku for example, the group opposed to the loyalty to Tooro kingdom will oppose any initiative that is brought to Ntoroko. It was reported that this group at one

time disrupted an immunization program in Ntoroko, simply because some of the staff working on the program were associated with Tooro kingdom. The effects of such reactions could have far-reaching and destructive impact on the community.

The other inter-clan conflict that pits the three dominant clans of the Beihayo, Bahinda and Babito against the smaller clans has generally polarized the Batuku community. It was reported that the dominance of these three clans against the smaller clans of the Basita, Barungu, Bacwezi, Bacaki, Bacwamba and Bayaga among others, is so pronounced to the extent that even if there was a job advert at the district, Batuku from the smaller clans, however well qualified, would not bother to apply because they long lost faith in the partiality with which the recruitment exercise would be conducted. This situation has created a grudging section of the community, which constitutes the majority population of the Batuku. This state of affairs has also muzzled the voices that would speak out against the vices orchestrated by the rich Batuku who encroach on wetlands, fence off roads and pathways as well as routes towards the cattle watering points at the riverbanks. This status quo is ground for implosion as different subsequent conflict incidents continue to pile pressure on the underlying conflict.

There is also the issue of cattle thefts, witchcraft and human security. This comes about in a way that there are known suspects from within the community who steal cows from their neighbours. Whenever they are taken to police, they are bailed out by their rich relatives who in turn take issue with the owners of the cows who would have reported the suspected thieves to police. Because the cow owners are unable to obtain justice and fairness from the police against their rich neighbours, they resort to witchcraft to punish their aggressors. It was alleged that sometimes the witchcraft works and the suspected thieves either die or some bad things happen to them. When this happens, the relatives of the deceased or affected suspects threaten the suspected witches with death or retaliation. Although this was reported in Bweramule Sub County only, the study established that it is a practice that is widespread throughout the district, particularly within the Batuku community, and that it had caused polarization in the community. While it is difficult to prove witchcraft, the polarisation that it has caused has the potential of exploding into a violent conflict among the Batuku of Ntoroko as it is perceived to continue putting people's lives at risk, hence the tendency to revenge by the affected section of the community.

3.5 Domestic and interpersonal conflicts

Apart from the intra-ethnic conflicts, the study established that the Bakonzo and Bamba/Babwisi who were affected by the recent landslides also suffered other intra-community or inter-personal conflicts that could escalate to violence. The landslides did disrupt social life in manifold ways. For example:

- * Some people who had borrowed money from money lenders and financial institutions could not be waived from their obligation to pay back the loan.
- * Brokers in the cocoa business chain lost money in the floods. This money had been given to them by companies and individual wholesalers to bulk cocoa. Many of these brokers were being pressured to refund.

- * Tailors who had received cloth and financial deposits from their clients had both their sewing machines, the cloth items deposited with them and the down payments lost to the floods.
- * People who had uncompleted land sale transactions and where portions of the lands in question were swept away by landslides and the land no longer suit its monetary value.
- * Further conflict triggers on the issue of the land were boundaries that had been distorted by the floods and landslides.

The above issues, including many others were reported to birth interpersonal conflicts amongst the people involved and indeed disasters can indirectly result in social grievances and resource scarcities which can trigger social conflicts.

The other conflict issue identified around Kirindi community in Harugale Sub-county in Bundibugyo District was the high incidence of domestic violence, victimizing both men and women. Whereas the men were accused of neglecting the children and other family responsibilities, especially when it comes to providing for the family; the women were accused of fuelling conflicts within the home so that they could separate with their husbands and share the family property. Some respondents alleged that the women want to separate with their husbands, share the property and get married to other men so that they could have access to more property in the new marriage in addition to what they already acquired in the previous marriages. It was alleged that during the cocoa harvesting season, many male farmers had a tendency of marrying new wives whom they “enjoy” life with during that season, only to abandon them as the cocoa harvests go down. Consequently, women also want to separate from their husbands so they could have a chance to be picked on by a different man in the next harvest season. This was reported to have created turmoil in many homes in Bundibugyo, which had left the state of the family and the future of the children at stake.

3.6 The Inter-ethnic conflicts

In order to delve deeper into ethnic identity related conflict dynamics in Rwenzori, the mapping was not limited to Kasese and Ntoroko alone, but also extended to Bundibugyo District from which Ntoroko District was curved. During the initial consultations, we had been informed that there existed cases of identity related violent conflicts in Bundibugyo, where several people had reportedly lost their lives. We had also been informed during the initial consultations that when landslides occurred in Bundibugyo a couple of months before, some communities had been displaced and attempts by the district to establish an internally displaced person’s (IDP) camp for the victims had been met with resistance from the two ethnic communities (Bakonzon and Bamba/Babwisi). Whereas the two communities have lived together for ages, this time round they could not tolerate living side by side during the encampment, something that shocked local authorities. As such, we found it necessary to visit Harugale and Tokwe sub-counties of Bundibugyo District where these people had been displaced in order to understand the dynamics of identity related conflicts.

The displacement by the landslides was not so much of interest to this study group but the reasoning behind victims of the same disaster being unable to stay in the same IDP camp at a difficult time became very critical. When the victims who had since returned to their villages were asked about the reasons for their inability to stay together even when they were facing the same problem, they cited a number of issues that bring discord among them as explained below. These include: a

history of animosity, political factors, and persistent recurrences of violent conflict in Rwenzori. It should be noted that ethnic related conflicts, which occur in Bundibugyo usually have spill over effects in Kasese and Ntoroko Districts. Similarly, conflicts that occur in Kasese have ripple effects in Bundibugyo and Ntoroko Districts given that the dominant tribal peoples inhabiting the three districts were once in a united front against Toro administration. Either way, the conflicts whether political or cultural have implications for the Basongora and Batuku minority groups.

In Harugale and Tokwe sub-counties of Bundibugyo where people were affected by the landslides, the inter-ethnic conflicts were obvious, specifically between the Babwisi and the Bakonzo. Whereas the District Local Government (DLG) had established an IDP camp for the landslide victims to host them as normalcy returned to their villages, the people refused to stay together citing historical conflicts existent between the two ethnic groups that would not favour peaceful coexistence, in spite of the hardships they were already experiencing. They argued that in staying together, violence could easily erupt within the camp because all they had to share were experiences of the previous conflicts, which were still fresh in their minds. Therefore, there had to be two places; with the Babwisi being relocated from Kizahura village near Semuliki Secondary School to Humya in Tokwe sub-county. The fact that the two ethnic communities could not afford to live in the same IDP camp even when they had been hit by disaster shows the intensity of the conflict between them, and an indication of a conflict of great magnitude that should not be ignored.

The issues that were reported to affect the two or three ethnic communities to the extent that they could not stay together even in times of difficulty were linked to the relationship between two cultural institutions of the Bakonzo's Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu and the Bamba/Babwisi's Obudingiya Bwa Bwamba (OBB). Since inception of the two institutions, the Bamba/Babwisi argue that for the Bakonzo to celebrate their cultural institution within Bundibugyo was equivalent to denying the OBB institution and disrespect to its 'jurisdiction'. On the other hand, the Bakonzo feel that denial to celebrate their culture in their homeland was not only a denial of the right to exercise one's culture but also a high level of discrimination by their Bamba/Babwisi neighbours. These differences have since escalated animosity between the two groups to the extent that even in difficult times, they would not feel the need to be cooperative with one another.

The Bamba/Babwisi asserted that their Bakonzo neighbours were hard-hearted people who were bent on dominating and annihilating other ethnic groups within Bundibugyo. They argued that the Bakonzo had exhibited extreme levels of hostility, which had been exemplified by their attack on a military barracks at Kanyamwirima in 2014. They said that even the attack on the military had been instigated by the perception that the government of Uganda favoured the Bamba/Babwisi as opposed to the Bakonzo as it could recognize the cultural institution of Obudingiya Bwa Bwamba when there was already Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu existing in Rwenzori generally, and Bundibugyo in particular. Therefore, by refusing to stay with the Bakonzo at Kizahura IDP camp, the Babwisi were making a statement to the authorities that they did not want to be bullied or even killed while in the camp.

It is reported that following the attack on Kanyamwirima Barracks in 2014 by a group of Bakonzo fighters, it was believed that as they fled from the firepower of the military, a number of them had

been killed by Bamba/Babwisi who lived in the villages where the fighters passed. This was another issue said to have not been resolved to date, and for that, the Bakonzo hold a grudge against the Bamba/Babwisi, which would not allow them to stay in the same camp with their 'killers'. The Bamba/Babwisi further argue that the enmity between them and the Bakonzo was exacerbated by the Bakonzo versus Governments attacks in 2016, which left the king of the Bakonzo and about 200 of his royal guards incarcerated to date. They argued that the Bakonzo who remained in the communities were still embittered and that they felt the use of state power had left them feeling defeated before their Bamba/Babwisi haters, while the latter live in fear that in case the Bakonzo King and his royal guards were released, they might cause insecurity by 'revenging' against them. In a nutshell, the two groups are mutually suspicious of each other and as such have now love lost between them. Until their issues are resolved, it appears they will never feel secure living next to the other, even in their current homesteads.

There was also potential for conflict over the sharing of relief items owing to government's failure to clearly track and document loss caused by disasters. Since there was no proper record of property lost by individuals to the landslides, it was noted that the lack of proper records might trigger conflict during the sharing of relief items. While narrating her ordeal, one the flood victim said that at the time she was pursuing compensation over a disputed land, her house was swept away by the landslides, which put her in a vulnerable situation as the would-be evidence to assert her claim was no more. In a situation where there was no proper recording of the items that had been lost by individuals to the landslides, chances were high that she might not be compensated. In general, the poor recording of the losses during the landslides posed high risks of conflict amongst communities and even government as some parties might put false claims while others that had genuine claims might lose out on compensation.

In Kasese District, the inter-ethnic conflicts are also more pronounced between the Basongora and the Bakonzo. Apart from the claim of assimilation of minority Basongora by their Bakonzo neighbours, the Basongora complained of marginalization in every aspect where they deserved access to resources and public services. The areas of marginalization cut across all sectors where the benefits of the citizens should be; from participation in political leadership to access to social services among other benefits. According to one male respondent from Kasese District Local government:

"..... the Bakonzo believe that the existence of Kasese District was a result of the blood that was shed during the Rwenzururu rebellion, a war which was fought by the Bakonzo and not Basongora or any other ethnic group in the district. Therefore, they perceive other ethnic groups as parasites that are enjoying the services and opportunities in the district without shading any blood. Consequently, this perception is responsible for the apparent animosity towards other ethnic groups, particularly the Basongora in the district, who they see as favoured by the Government of Uganda (GOU)-.

In Ntoroko District, the Batuku experience intra-ethnic conflicts whereby the dominant clans overshadow the smaller clans in every aspect of public interest; while in Kasese, there are inter-ethnic conflicts and marginalization of the minority whereby the Bakonzo dominate the Basongora in every aspect in the administration of the district.

3.7 The land issues

One of the primary conflict triggers among the Batuku and Basongora is the issue of land. The land issue has a range of dimensions including access, ownership, management, and use among others. Some of the conflicts over land are domestic, gendered, and communal while others are inter-ethnic in form. In all its forms, this range of dimensions contributes to the escalation of conflict for the two minority communities in the two districts.

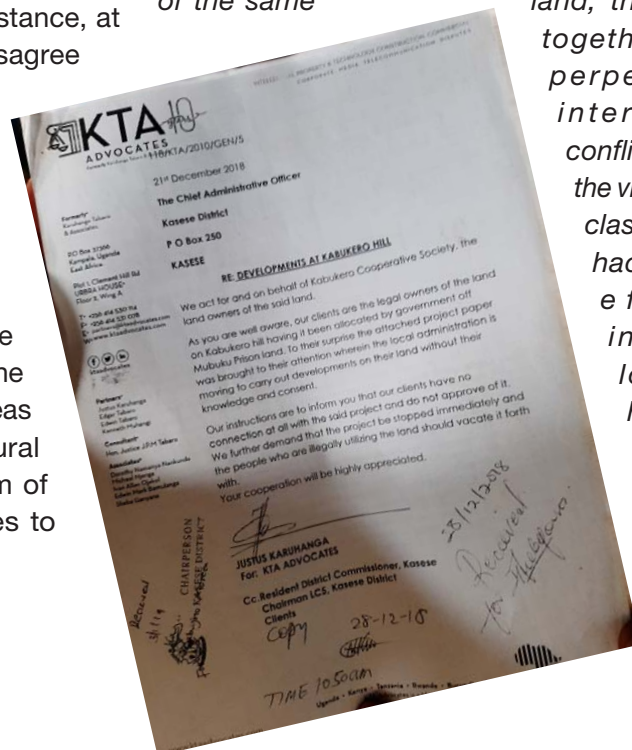
The Basongora complained of government irresponsiveness to the respective land conflicts where the community members have sought intervention. In the letters below, the community members reported that they have made endless efforts to seek government intervention, specifically from the District Local Government and the office of the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) but they have not been helped. Instead, the conflicts have raged on. Consequently, they resorted to seeking redress from the courts of law which has become so costly. This is because the cases take a very long time to be resolved in courts of law. Such unresolved conflicts have triggered yet other conflicts. For instance, at the family level, where they often disagree over pursuit of the court justice and abandonment of the case so that they lose the land all together. Such resultant conflicts have resulted into family splits thus a perpetual cycle of conflict.

Land management and land use were another form of controversy within the Basongora community in that, whereas the current leadership of the cultural institution has introduced a system of issuing land ownership certificates to

A case of inter-ethnic land conflict between the Basongora and Bakonzo over access and use

In Kabukero village – Karusandara Sub county for instance, there is a stretch of land measuring about 100 acres between Kabukero East which is predominantly inhabited by Basongora cattle keepers and Kabukero West which is predominantly inhabited by Bakonzo cultivators. The two ethnic communities have been in conflict over access and utilization of the same stretch of land for a long time. At the same time, the Basongora community amongst themselves have conflicted over occupancy and utilization of the same land. While some would like to occupy it and use it for both grazing and cultivation, others in the same community would like it to remain farrow, arguing that occupation and cultivation would prompt Bakonzo to also come and lay claim of the same

land, thus living together and perpetuating inter-ethnic conflicts within the village. The clashes have had serious effects including loss of human life and cattle.



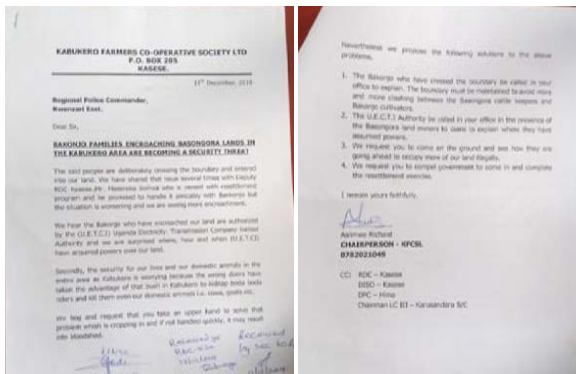


Figure 1: A copy of one of the letters to the authorities over one of the land conflicts in Busongora – Kasese

Basongora, some of them have rejected the idea and won't have the certificates while others have accepted them and they were using such certificates to access loans from money lenders. On the other hand, some people would like to have their land fenced while others would like it to remain open since it is communal land. This causes friction within the community, almost on a daily basis because those who fence their crop gardens would have the fences destroyed by those opposed to the fencing; eventually crop gardens would be destroyed by livestock thus causing clashes between crop farmers and their pastoralist neighbours.

Land grabbing by the rich from the poor was reported among the Batuku in Ntoroko. It was reported that most of the land is fenced without consulting the stakeholders and in disregard of the boundaries of their poor neighbours, who cannot afford to buy fencing materials and finance fencing activities. They also fence off the pathways and riverbanks, which are meant for public use. In so doing they also pay surveyors and process land registration in personal names thus laying hold of ownership on land that is grabbed from the public and their poor neighbours. These land grabbing tendencies have created tension among the Batuku communities of Ntoroko District, with those who do not have hopes of justice from the government resorting to witchcraft to avenge their loss of land. This does not solve the problem but can only help to escalate tensions amongst neighbours.

There is a tendency to discriminate against women in regard to owning property, particularly land. This is not only against the law but also rather dehumanizing and could lead to social disintegration, moreover in a minority community that is reportedly faced with hostility and discrimination from the neighbouring ethnic groups and Local Government Authorities. For example, one widow respondent from Karusandara Sub-county reported that her neighbours were threatening to grab her land because she lost the only two sons she had in life and was now left with only daughters. These neighbours claimed that she did not deserve to own land because she no longer had sons to inherit it. This kind of perception was not only found to be traumatizing to her as she was subjected to multiple discrimination but also depriving her of the right to own land and use it for sustenance. Besides, this attitude threatens the existence of the family and preservation of cultural heritage, as such a widow would be denied an opportunity to bequeath land and other property to her daughters.

Wetland encroachment by wealthy Batuku cattle keepers is another form of land grabbing that was reported to have caused discontent among the majority Batuku. This was reportedly common in the

areas of Kiranga, Rwebisengo Sub-county, Ibaare, Kayanja and Kiyanja, Bweramule Sub-county. Before the encroachment, community members would extend their herds to the wetlands during the dry season; a practice that had been common with most cattle keepers in the community. However, rather than leave the wetlands and return to their lands with the coming of the rains, some community members opted to fence-off large chunks of wetlands and claim it as their personal land. This left the poor who could not afford to buy fencing materials and pay for manual labour to do the job unable to access the wetlands during the dry season as had been the norm. This pits the rich cattle keepers against their poor neighbours who would like to access green pastures from these wetlands during the dry season but now wont, and the fishermen who used to get fish from the wetlands. This rift ripped the once harmonious Batuku into a tense community that is now prone to violent conflict.

3.8 The political issues

The political conflicts too, like land and ethnicity have their triggers manifest in different dimensions. What was found out to be common was that of the community against state institutions. This was where government was not found to give due consideration to the pains of the community. For example, the communities neighbouring Queen Elizabeth National park in Nyakatonzi Sub-County and Katwe-Kabatooro Town Council were not receiving royalties of the designated 20% of the proceeds from the National Park; yet, houses, lives, livestock and crops had been lost to wildlife without compensation from the Uganda Wildlife Authority. In a related development, respondents from Rwebisengo Sub-County in Ntoroko District alleged that communities neighbouring Semuliki National park did not receive the 20% royalties of the proceeds from the National Park, nor were they involved in decision making over how such a percentage is determined. They blamed the District Local Government of side lining them in matters where they are key stakeholders.

The other dimension reported about was that of the interference of the management of the fishing village associations by the fish protection unit of the UPDF. For example, in Katwe-Kabatooro Town council, it was reported that the fish protection unit collects fish worth 8,000-12,000 Uganda shillings from every fishing boat on a daily basis. Katwe-Kabatooro fishing community has 120 active boats from which they collect that money. This implies that the unit collects between 960,000 – 1,440,000UGX per day from the fishing boats. Prior to the coming of UPDF fish protection unit, this money was used to support community works and the nearby primary schools as welfare. Since the UPDF took over the collection of the welfare fees from the boats, it was reported that for the previous twenty months the Katwe-Kabatooro fishing community welfare committee had not received the money. This tendency therefore, destroyed the welfare scheme of the fishing community in the Sub-county.

There was also the issue of the contested Sub-county and district boundaries around Kisege and Nyambega villages between Bweramule and Karugutu Sub-counties, Ntoroko District, which are mainly inhabited by the Bakonzo. It was alleged that during elections, either Sub-county claims ownership of these villages because they are densely populated and constitute a big population of electorates. In Karugutu, a similar issue exists at Nyamisingiri, which Kabarole District claims belongs to it while Ntoroko also claims the same area. It was alleged that some of the residents

of this area are registered as voters in both Ntoroko and Kabarole, and that during elections they vote in both districts. The Electoral Commission however said that allegation was false. It said a voter appears once in a voter's register and there was no possibility of the same person voting in two districts during the same election. Besides the wrangles over the boundaries, the Batuku also claim that those lands were illegally occupied by the Bakonzo, mainly from the DRC, who came and settled there and continued to bring in their relatives. At one time, the Batuku tried to resist this form of settlement by torching some of the houses that had been erected by the migrants. This, however, was met with fierce resistance from the government and the conflict was averted. The issue nevertheless remains contentious and could be exploited by local politicians to cause violence amongst the communities.

3.9 Effects of Prevalent Conflict Triggers

The different forms of conflict triggers among the Batuku and Basongora discussed above have had wide-ranging effects and continue to be potential sources of adverse effects that could be a hindrance to development. The effects discussed below vary in a way that some are overt yet others are implied, which means that if appropriate interventions are undertaken, the potentially adverse effects could be transformed into constructive and developmental undertakings.

The inter-clan conflicts among the Batuku have not only pitted the dominant clans of Bahinda, Babito and Beihayo against the majority Batuku, thus breaking the social cohesion but also created a gap between the rich and the poor. This is so because the dominant clans are the ones who can access jobs in the civil service at the district and elective positions. Consequently, they are the same ones who can easily get business tenders at the district thus enhancing their opportunities for economic advancement. This widens the economic gap between them and their counterparts from the smaller clans.

Secondly, this economic and power gap has increased levels of impunity and corruption within the Batuku community. For instance, it was reported that it was the same wealthy people from the dominant clans that were reportedly encroaching on wetlands, grabbing land from their poor neighbours while their children were suspected to steal cows from the poor yet they could not be reprimanded by the government authorities. This trend, if not checked, could lead to further community rifts.

The poor relations between the communities and Uganda Wildlife Authority have caused despicable loss to the communities. In a space of two years, it was reported that about 13 people had been killed by UWA rangers around the villages of Kibira, in Rwebisengo and Kasungu in Butungama, while two people had been killed by crocodiles.

It was also reported that about 150 cows had been confiscated by UWA while more than 38 cows had been killed by crocodiles around Haibare Parish in Bweramule Sub-county. Hippopotamuses were said to have destroyed people's crops while buffalos had disabled three men in Rwebisengo Sub-county alone. Land grabbing and impunity related to cattle thefts led to the loss of valuable land and well over 500 cows belonging to the poor Batuku.

In Katwe-Kabatooro, it was alleged that five people from the fishing community and three cultivators had been killed by wild animals, particularly buffalos and elephants around Katwe Salt Lake while a hippopotamus destroyed a house in Katwe-Kabatooro Town Council and the family occupants were displaced. In the Nyakatonzi 35 cows had been arrested and auctioned by UWA while a good number of cows and goats had also been killed by crocodiles at the drinking harbor. In lake Katwe Sub-county, a buffalo killed a person at Hamukungu village in late 2019 when he was going about his normal business.

All the above losses go uncompensated while the people killed by the game rangers are not given to their relatives for a decent burial. Although UWA officials denied that there were killings committed by the park rangers and claimed there were efforts to build harmonious relationships with communities through the local leadership, the community members insisted that their relationships with the park authorities were very poor and could worsen if not remedied.

Inter-ethnic conflicts have led to loss of lives in Rwenzori. The earlier clashes notwithstanding, it was reported that in the last two years, two young men from the Babwisi ethnic group had been killed in Kirumya sub-county under suspicious circumstances and their relatives suspected that they could have been killed by people from the Bakonzo ethnic group. In Nyakatonzi, a herdsman was killed over cows wondering into a Mukonzo's crop garden, while in Kabukero West, a boda-boda rider of Bakonzo ethnicity had been killed on suspicion that he was leaking plans, especially about intended attacks to their Barongora neighbours in Kabukero East.

The conflicts have severed relationships between the two ethnic groups and loss of trust to the extent that even professionals cannot be trusted when going about their professional duties. For example, one respondent alleged that Bakonzo health workers were capable of depopulating the Basongora by disabling the reproductive systems of the fertile Basongora women who seek medical services from health centers staffed with Bakonzo health workers. He claimed that if Bakonzo medical workers realized that a Musongora woman was very fertile to the extent of producing say two children with the potential to have more, they would devise means of disabling her reproductive system so that the Basongora could not multiply through reproduction. Although this allegation was not verified by any physical or scientific evidence, many Basongora who participated in the interviews testified that they no longer seek treatment from Kasese hospitals because they are dominated by the Bakonzo. They seek medical services from Mbarara or Fort Portal medical facilities which are quite distant from their communities.

A number of properties too were reported to have been lost by the Basongora in conflict related contexts. In Nyakakindo for instance, a male resident lost land measuring 25 x 100 feet. In December 2019, the fishermen at Katwe-Kabatooro fishing village lost one boat engine to the Congolese raiders, about 60 acres of land were reported to have been lost to cultivators in Kabukero. Maize and tomato gardens as well as fencing materials destroyed by UMEME in Nyakakindo, while those of Kabukero reported to have lost millions of monies in court cases over the controversial land.

Apart from the Kabukero land cases, Basongora from Nyakakindo in Hima Town Council pointed out that they had lost money to their own tribesmen who claimed they were organizing to pay the surveyors to survey the land and get individual land titles for the community members. Each

household head was required to pay 500,000/= (five hundred thousand) to facilitate the surveyor. This money was collected from approximately 250 persons. Unfortunately, the community members who paid the money said that they had neither been refunded nor got their land surveyed. Rather than help their colleagues by having their land surveyed, those who collected the money fleeced their community members of the hard-earned money, thus increasing the loss and perpetuating the insecurity associated with land ownership among the Basongora.

3.10 Conflict Early Warning Indicators

For the people who live in Rwenzori region, conflict has almost become part of their way of life to the extent that it is not difficult to detect an indicator that serves as an early warning sign of an impending clash. The respondents who participated in the mapping gave a wide range of conflict indicators that would vary according to the conflict context. Like the conflict triggers discussed above, it could also be possible to categorize the indicators into governance, ethnicity, cross border among others.

Dry season and the flowering of crops in the fields; Indigenous communities versus UWA conflict indicators are manifest in the appearance of wildlife such as elephants near the communities in the advent of the dry season and the flowering of crops in the fields. Whereas the dry season forces cattle keepers to sneak into the national park for pasture and water, the flowering of the crops especially maize attracts animals, especially the elephants into the communities. In either case, there is potential for clashes between UWA and the community members. This is because in the former case, the community members trespass in the national park while in the latter, crops are bound to be destroyed by the wild animals thus intensifying clashes between UWA and the communities.

Land left fallow, unmarked or unfenced land, increased numbers of Bakonzo in Basongora neighbourhoods, and the advent of the rainy season; were identified as indicators relating to land access and use among the Basongora community. Whereas the cattle keepers believe in having land left uncultivated for the growth of pasture and future grazing, the cultivators consider any open land suitable for tilling and planting of crops. Therefore, whenever there is land left unutilized, especially in Kasese where the Bakonzo are zealous cultivators, such land is a potential source of conflict as in most cases it is encroached on by the Bakonzo cultivators. Relatedly, whenever the rains come, which are associated with the increased numbers of Bakonzo in the Basongora dominated communities of Nyakatonzi and Hima, the Basongora know that land related conflicts are bound to occur as the chances of land encroachment and cattle trespassing on people's gardens are high.

The sight of surveyors in the community; Among the Batuku of Ntoroko, the appearance of land surveyors in the community sends chills in the spines of the poor. This is because surveyors are associated with the rich land grabbers. Therefore, their appearance in the community is an indication that a portion of the land for a poor man is going to be grabbed by their rich neighbour. Another aspect of conflict that is related to the surveyors is that if they are mapping out the oil rich areas, the tempers flare among the Batuku, particularly those who are opposed to the loyalty of Batuku to Tooro Kingdom. It is widely believed among this section of the Batuku that Tooro Kingdom and OBR would like to claim ownership of Batuku land in Ntoroko so that when extraction of oil and

other minerals starts, the royalties would go to Tooro and the OBR while the Batuku in Ntoroko wouldn't benefit. Therefore, they count the oil survey a serious conflict indicator.

Suspicious informal meetings, use of threats, rumours and hate language, predictions by soothsayers and the disappearance of Bakonzo from neighbouring villages; are some of the key indicators of an impending inter-ethnic conflict. Whereas the predictions of soothsayers is particular to Batuku and the disappearance of Bakonzo is particular to Basongora, the rest or the signs for a potential inter-ethnic clashes cut across the ethnicities of the Basongora, Babwisi and Batuku in the areas of Rwenzori region. According to the respondents who participated in the mapping, it is often not difficult to tell that a clash or an insurrection is imminent in the community.

The advent of political campaigns and advertisement of jobs in the districts: are indicators of politically motivated conflicts. This is when the Basongora leading candidates – both for jobs and elective positions, are sidelined in Kasese while the members of the small clans among the Batuku begin to feel that they are as good as second-class citizens in their own community. The people who have ambitions for both elective positions as well as those qualified to compete for civil service jobs at the district are not 'eligible' as long as one is a Musongora in Kasese, or a member of the small clan in Ntoroko. Participants in the study alleged that during the campaign period, cliques and alliances begin to form in a way that the differences between those who are privileged and those that are marginalized, typical polarization, are clearly evident.

Government interventions that are associated with Tooro Kingdom in Ntoroko; prompt discontent among the Batuku community, specifically those opposed to Tooro Kingdom. It was reported that government programs, especially if a staff of such program is linked to, or even rumoured to have a relationship with Tooro, real or imaginary, such is regarded as an enemy and an agent of subjugation. They cited examples of NAADS, Operation Wealth Creation and family planning programs. According to this group of Batuku, a person who comes with any such programs is perceived to promote discrimination and marginalization of the majority Batuku and only meant to benefit the members of the dominant clans; or comes to depopulate the Batuku by making the women barren. It was reported that such interventions had previously sparked controversies in the district before, forcing the project staff to run for dear life.

The construction of the cross-border road from Ntoroko to the DRC, participation of migrants in local politics and conflicts in the DRC; were reported as conflict indicators affecting cross-border relations. It was reported that the surveys for the construction of the Ntoroko-DRC road sent chills in the spine of some of the Batuku in Ntoroko. According to them, the existence of the good road would facilitate an influx of Congolese into Ntoroko in case of occurrence of conflict in the neighbouring DRC. Such influx results into exerting pressure on the already scarce land resource, thus causing more land related conflicts, while the participation of Congolese migrants in local politics would suffocate their political space and further decrease the chances of the indigenous Batuku to ascend to political administration of their country.

3.11 Community-Based Early Conflict Responses

In the case with detecting conflict indicators, the community responds to the different contexts, sometimes spontaneously and other times consciously. Some of the reported responses to conflict contexts included the following:

Sharing information among the community members about the identified signs. The sharing of information usually begins between individuals and soon spreads to the community. When information is shared in community dialogues, usually consensus is drawn on the course of action; and the agreed measures expedited to address the situation.

Community members report the indicators to the District Internal Security Officer (DISO), Police, UWA, the office of the Resident District Commissioner and other local leaders. This was found to be common among both the Batuku and Basongora who in some cases, report to Kampala offices where they have contacts, including State House, as they claim. In fact, during this conflict mapping exercise, the researchers were reported to the DISO as soon as they were cited in Rwebisengo Town Council, allegedly because some of the community members suspected that the researchers were linked to Tooro Kingdom. The DISO had to first verify that the reported were not associated with any of their conflict related issues/fears. This was the first sign of proof that actually, the community members are sensitive and report the different forms of conflict indicators to the authorities.

The Batuku of Ntoroko encourage intermarriages between the dominant and the small clans. This a community deliberate strategy intended to avert conflict between the two categories of clans



Photo 2: Basongora in Nyakakindo with the sticks the youth use to fight their enemies in case of attack

that tends to result into marginalization by the bigger clans. The strategy of intermarriage however, is not employed by the Basongora when dealing with their Bakonzo neighbours. They insist that the Bakonzo culture is very different from that of the Basongora and as a result, they wouldn't like to dilute their culture by encouraging intermarriages with a different tribe.

The Basongora youth mobilize themselves and stand guard in strategic locations in evening hours for a period of time. In the event of an expected threat from a neighbouring Bakonzo community, the youth organize and arm themselves with their traditional sticks. They distribute themselves in groups and each group stands guard on specific routes to the community that the potential attackers might use. They also alternate on the number of hours one may be on guard such that one group retires at a certain hour, a new team takes positions. This is done for a period of time until they get signals that the intended attack has been foiled.

The women in both Basongora and Batuku communities organize community prayers at a church or any selected venue and petition God over the impending conflict. This is organized for a period of time, just like the Basongora youth, up to such a time when they feel that God has heard their prayers, and would avert the attack planned by their enemies.

The Basongora use media houses outside Kasese that have a listenership within Kasese to send messages to counter the planned attack from their Bakonzo neighbours. They use media houses outside Kasese because they believe that most of the radio stations in Kasese are either sympathetic to the Bakonzo or employ workers who are not Basongora and would not support their cause. In a situation of an impending attack, they might risk putting their messages to a station that would not broadcast them, thus frustrating their preventive efforts.

3.12 Challenges Encountered in preventing Conflict in Rwenzori

The efforts to counter conflict in a situation where indicators have been identified could be easy to organize. However, the minority Batuku and Basongora encounter a number of challenges in preventing conflict in spite of finding it easy to identify the respective indicators. Below are some of such challenges:

The Basongora in Kasese as a minority group do not occupy decision making positions in the district. This is because they are reportedly discriminated against in areas of employment at the district both in the political and civil sectors. This makes it difficult to influence decisions, especially, in situations where institutional measures could be employed to address conflict indicators, thus preventing impending conflicts. On the other hand, the Batuku from the smaller clans are also not well represented in the political and technical offices. Therefore, it is difficult to influence decisions in their favour thus becoming incapable of expediting early warning responses to avert potential conflicts.

The district authorities in both cases are quite irresponsive to the reports, petitions and requests made by the minority groups. Inappropriate response in any situation deters peace efforts and does not help to avert an impending conflict. Besides, apart from the security section, there is no peacebuilding or disaster response officer at the district that would be charged with direct responsibility to deal with social conflict. It becomes more difficult if the security forces are involved in the conflict. For example, the fish protection unit at Katwe-Kabatooro had spent well over 20 months without remitting money meant for the welfare to the fishing village. Consequently, workers in the neighbouring schools that were benefiting from the scheme lost out on their welfare because the district authorities could not enforce remittance of such monies to the intended beneficiaries.

In Nyakatonzi Sub-county, it was reported that there was almost constant shortage of water throughout the year to such an extent that if the cattle keepers did not go through the national park for water, and sometimes pasture, the cows might die. This tended to tempt them to trespass in the national park, thus provoking conflict between the community or individuals with the National Park authorities.

Poor land management practices. Both the Batuku and Basongora communities largely live on communal land, which makes the land susceptible to land grabbing or abuse because there is almost no personal attachment to the land as a person would always expect that another could do something to secure or preserve it. Besides, the cultural institution of Basongora does not have legal control over administration of land. This made it hard for the cultural leaders to administer certain controls that would help the people prevent conflicts over land use and management.

The discordant legislative and administrative approaches between Uganda and the DRC; make it difficult to address cross-border conflicts. Conflicts often occur between Ugandans and Congolese on lakes Albert and Edward; then between Batuku cattle keepers who sometimes graze across the border. Such conflicts are also detected because they are known but the challenge mainly reported was that Congolese do not respect Ugandan laws and legal procedures in addressing conflicts yet, they do not hesitate to provoke Ugandans. Such conflicts become difficult to avert or even resolve because they are subject to two legal regimes where one is hardly observed at all. At Rukwanzi Island for instance, the local residents do not have the capacity to address the conflicts that often occur between the Congolese and Ugandans. The UPDF is the one that usually gets involved in addressing disputes. This alienates community members from preventing conflicts that affect them because they are quite detached from them.

Laxity by the Uganda government in sorting the settlement patterns along River Semuliki. Congolese have continued to settle on the Ugandan territory following the changing river course. This unabated settlement pattern continues to anger Ugandans neighbouring the river who feel their land is being taken away under the guise of the river marking the international boundary between Uganda and the DRC. This laxity can only postpone the brewing conflict between the communities neighbouring the river on either side.

The uncoordinated centres of authority on the side of the DRC. This is mainly faced by the Batuku who graze from the DRC. Whereas they get permission from the Local Chief who allocates them grazing lands, the community members on the Congolese side, as well as the security forces do not seem to recognize such grazing permission granted by the Chief. Consequently, those Batuku usually get attacked by local groups, and sometimes security forces in the DRC, who grab their cows and confiscate them without being reprimanded by their chiefs. In some cases, the herdsmen also face life risks whereby they are either killed by the Congolese robbers or by crocodiles or by water torrents in the Semuliki as they flee the wrath of the Congolese robbers.

The ever-changing course of river Semuliki into the Ugandan side. The Batuku neighbouring the river do not have the capacity to tame it and stay its course. Automatically, they move away from it whenever it digs into their land while the Congolese on the other side follow the movement of the river way beyond the national border into the Ugandan side. Locally, the Congolese take it that the

river is the boundary that divides Uganda and the DRC irrespective of how deep it has extended into Uganda. The Batuku on the Uganda side, because they have no capacity to tame the river, look on helplessly as their land is gradually taken and occupied by their Congolese neighbours. This however does not stop them to get enraged as the river cuts into their land as their neighbours across follow suit. This continues to create potential for cross border conflict if the government, especially on the Ugandan side does not intervene in time to save the situation.

The intra-ethnic challenges too have varying dynamics including land, political governance and social cohesion issues. There are generally poor land management practices within Batuku communities which makes it difficult for them to utilize their land for economic gain and environmental protection. In the first place, Batuku land was supposed to be communally owned but people decided out of their own preference to own the land around their homesteads. They fenced such lands and this limited communal access to any part of the community as individuals have fenced off what they considered to be their land. This fencing however did not involve stakeholders such as local leaders, government surveyors or institutions like NEMA. As a result, some people fenced off roads, wetlands, and routes to the watering points on the River Semuliki. This practice therefore favours the rich who can afford to buy fencing materials or pay surveyors thus leaving the poor at the mercy of their rich neighbours. Associated challenges include government irresponsiveness to the complaints of the poor who cannot even access watering points. Related to this was the settlement of Congolese migrants in the areas of Nyambega, Kisege, Itojo and Rwamabare which has left the indigenous Batuku with almost no land where to graze their cows. Incessant cries to local leaders to restrain the Congolese influx have yielded no fruits thus posing a serious challenge to the local community.

Dominance of the three clans of the Beihayo, Bahinda and Babito political governance while leaving out the smaller clans among the Batuku has caused disparities in the community. This dominance is not only limited to the elective jobs but also extends to civil service jobs in the district thus discriminating the smaller clans in areas of employment and other opportunities at the district. This has left the Batuku community polarized along the dominant and smaller clans such that even developing consensus on the promotion and advocacy for the recognition of the Batuku cultural institution is quite difficult. This makes the social context among them so complex that it is very hard to sustain social cohesion.

Failure to access services and government programs such as NAADS and OWC, by the smaller clans while they are accessible to only the rich and the well-connected, especially from the dominant clans. This too has created a rift between the Batuku and government on one hand then magnified that between the dominant and small clans.

There is a tendency to give away young girls in marriage. This has pitted parents against teachers and human rights activists. Whereas the teachers and children's rights activists try to follow up child-marriage and defilement cases in the communities, they are always frustrated by the parents and police who do not arrest the suspects, and if they do, they soon release them thus creating enmity between the suspects and those who report them to police.

Irresponsiveness by NEMA and local authorities on issues to do with wetland abuse. The cases that are reported to NEMA, District leadership and police for encroaching on wetlands, fencing off roads and river banks are never reprimanded. This puts the community members at risk of being affected by the people they report and they live a life of resignation as it is apparent to them that there is no government to protect them and listen to their problems.

There is also a challenge that comes with neighbouring with the National Park. Whereas the Batuku are predominantly cattle keepers and the park has a lot of pasture, they are not allowed to graze in the park area even if their cows are dying of hunger. Whenever cows stray to the park, they are arrested and auctioned. If the herdsman is caught by the park rangers, he is killed and buried so that the relatives are not allowed to claim the dead body for a decent burial. The other challenge communities have with UWA is that when the wild animals kill a person or destroy property, the victims are not compensated. This leaves the community at the mercy of the Uganda Wildlife Authority in all aspects no matter how grave the situation is. There is no convergence point of peaceful coexistence between UWA and the Batuku community.

The Batuku people are not knowledgeable on policies and laws that govern protected areas. Despite the fact that the community lives alongside the national park which has policies and regulations that are considerably harsh to the neighbouring communities, the ordinary citizens are not knowledgeable about the specific regulations to which they often fall prey. On the part of involvement and participation, an example is drawn from the cases involving Batuku and their neighbours from the DRC. Rather than let the community members interact and dialogue with their cross-border neighbours, it is the army that gets into negotiations with the Congolese, disregarding the involvement of Ugandan Batuku who are directly involved in the context either as victims or perpetrators. Civil society organizations that have had interventions in the area have not adequately undertaken comprehensive understanding of the local context. They have instead implemented piece-meal activities that are not able to build the capacity of community members for engagement whether in advocacy or conflict transformation. This alienates community members from participating in providing solutions to their own problems.

Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Unresolved land governance issues among the Basongora and Batuku communities is responsible for the high intensity conflicts in the communities and if not urgently addressed could escalate to violence in both communities. This is partly due to the largely communal land form of ownership which is being disregarded by those who have the potential to improve the farming methods and tend to devise their own ways of land management. This brings about mixed perceptions and land management practices thus causing confusion in the community that could lead to implosion.

The negative gender perceptions that deny women the right to own land and pass it on to their children is archaic and undesirable. It breaks and disregards the family institution which is the foundation of peace and security in society. The destruction of the family institution can lead to multiple deprivations, destitution and eventual lawlessness. This should be seriously resisted.

The laxity by government to address the issues of settlement along Semuliki River by Congolese nationals as it continues to change course into Ugandan territory is dangerous. Ugandans neighbouring the river are angry that the river continues to take portions of their land while Congolese continue to settle on it. Naturally, those who settle tend to identify with land and any attempts to resettle them in future will be perceived as deprivation even when the land is on the Ugandan territory. If this issue is not urgently addressed, it will trigger inter-community conflict which might escalate into interstate conflict between Uganda and the DRC.

The relationships between UWA and the community among both the Batuku and Basongora is poor. This puts the lives of people working with UWA and those of the community at risk, owing to the strict UWA regulations *visa-viz* the inevitable dependence on the park for water, medicine, fuel and other resources. The poor relations also pose a threat to Uganda's tourism industry if the neighbouring communities have to be hostile to the park. Cordial relations between the park and the community are paramount because the two institutions are highly interdependent.

The intra-ethnic conflicts among the Batuku and Bakosongora, the inter-ethnic conflicts between Basongora and Bakonzo in Kasese as well as inter-ethnic conflicts between the Bakonzo and Bamba/Babwisi in Bundibugyo are bad for the peace, security and prosperity of the respective communities and could lead to national instability in the long-run because they serve as breeding grounds for conflict and violence. Establishing conflict prevention and early response mechanisms in these areas is instrumental in stemming the destructive consequences of conflict.

4.2 Recommendations

In view of the above shared context, the community members recommended the following measures to improve conflict early warning and response mechanisms:

The central government and Uganda Wildlife Authority

- * The governments of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo should work together to institute effective governance systems and guidelines at the fishing villages of Kanara and Rukwanzi, specific to the fishing village communities, to ensure that the fishermen observe cooperation and constructive conflict resolution methods within their communities.
- * The central government of Uganda should institute people-friendly land management policies that would allow the ordinary citizens, particularly the Batuku in Ntoroko and Basongora in Kasese Districts who are living on predominantly communally owned land to be protected against exploitation and displacement by land grabbers in the respective communities.
- * The government, through Uganda Wildlife Authority should constitute guidelines to compensate genuine victims that lose their loved ones, those maimed, the loss of livestock and other properties to the wildlife; especially crocodiles, hippopotamuses and buffaloes.
- * The government should provide safe drinking water in Ntoroko, and in collaboration with community members, extend protected water to the farmlands to avoid taking cows to the rivers for drinking. This will not only save the cows and herdsman from crocodile attacks but also reduce conflicts between UWA and the community, where the park is a passage for cows as they go to the watering points during the dry season.
- * Uganda Wildlife Authority should fence the national park in order to prevent cows from straying into the park and wild animals from straying into the communities. This will help curb persistent conflicts between the community and UWA.
- * Government should put a cattle corridor within Semuliki National Park for the community members to use in order to access water for their cows. This should be done as a transitional measure, as they work on establishing sustainable water sources in people's farm lands.
- * The government could consider legitimization of the minority Batuku and Basongora cultural institutions in order to give them power for cultural self-determination against marginalization from populous tribal communities.
- * The electoral commission and Human rights commission should intensify civic and voter education in Ntoroko District so that people at the grassroots are helped to overcome the clan and migrant's phobia. This will help those that have lost self-esteem to freely and ably participate in competition for elective positions as well as apply for civil service jobs, thus neutralizing the polarization between the "big" and "small" clans among the Batuku.

Local government (District and Sub-counties)

- * The Ntoroko District Service Commission should desist from the influence of local politicians, and employ citizens on merit in public service jobs. The same should be observed by the District tender boards to award contracts on merit, irrespective of the clans or ethnicity one comes from. This should go a long way in fighting inequality within the district.
- * The local leaders, especially the office of the RDC, should ensure that government projects such as NAADS and Operation Wealth Creation reach out to the grassroots poor who need to be uplifted rather than benefiting the rich who already have what could sustain them economically.
- * In Bundibugyo District, there should be proper recording of the losses encountered by the landslide victims to ensure that they are appropriately supported to recover from the losses. Besides, there should be deliberate initiatives, particularly with support from civil society organizations, to promote peaceful coexistence within the Babwisi and Bakonzo communities. The same should be replicated between the Basongora and Bakonzo in Kasese District.
- * NEMA should protect the existing wetlands in Ntoroko and guard against them being fenced off and occupied by wealthy members of the community. Wetlands are helpful to the general community for environmental protection, sinking flash floods, handcraft materials, fishing, and medicine and also as rescue points for the cattle keeping community during the dry season.
- * Police, while enforcing law and order particularly in Ntoroko District, should observe equity and fair treatment in execution of their duties to ensure that people's lives and property are protected. This should be meant to specifically address their alleged complacency in the way they handle cases of theft and defilement, where the wealthy members of the community are involved.

Civil society

- * Civil society should create awareness on the laws, policy guidelines governing natural resources, the national park, migration and cross-border relations among the relevant stakeholders including the community, police, UWA staff, cultural, religious and local leaders so that they are able to prevent conflict by observing the laws and regulations. The awareness should also guide the stakeholders on their responsibilities so that they understand how to refer matters to the relevant authorities, as well as how to relate with one another.
- * Civil society organizations should undertake post-conflict interventions such as forgiveness and reconciliation, conflict transformation, trauma healing, and community reconstruction among the communities that have been affected by the various forms of conflict.
- * Civil society organizations should continuously engage the community and other stakeholders such as security, police and politicians through dialogue and seminars to create awareness on conflict prevention and early warning mechanisms.
- * Civil society organizations should encourage intra and inter-community dialogues for analysis of the conflict issues and reconciliation first among the Batuku, Basongora in their different factions, then between the Bakonzo and Bamba/Babwisi over the previous and current conflicts, including the issues around the attack on Kanyamwirima and its aftermath.

- * Civil society organizations should sensitize the community, especially that of the Batuku, against the dangers of early marriages not only for purposes of giving these girls a brighter future but also to avoid clashes between parents, police, teachers and child rights defenders
- * The cultural institutions, particularly for the Basongora and Batuku, should liaise with the central government to modify land governance regulations, especially in communities where communal land ownership still exists. Where necessary, the government could partner with them to work out tenable strategies for land management.

The community

- * The minority communities should establish community boards from amongst themselves, facilitated by civil society organizations where possible, responsible for holding the local leaders accountable to their constituents. This board should work closely with the facilitating civil society organization(s) to reach out to the communities for creating awareness over a range of issues such as the existing laws, regulations, current campaigns, and relevant institutions that address issues obtaining in the community. There should be constant feedback to the facilitating organizations and the community.
- * The community members neighbouring the national parks should be involved by representation, in the determination of the amount worth the 20% proceeds from UWA transactions. The remittances should also be timely, and there should be measures to monitor delivery of the same to the projects they are meant to serve in the neighbouring villages.
- * The community members in Ntoroko, particularly the poor who are unable to pay for surveying services, should petition government where necessary, to facilitate land surveying and registration for individuals in order to protect them against exploitation by the rich land grabbers.

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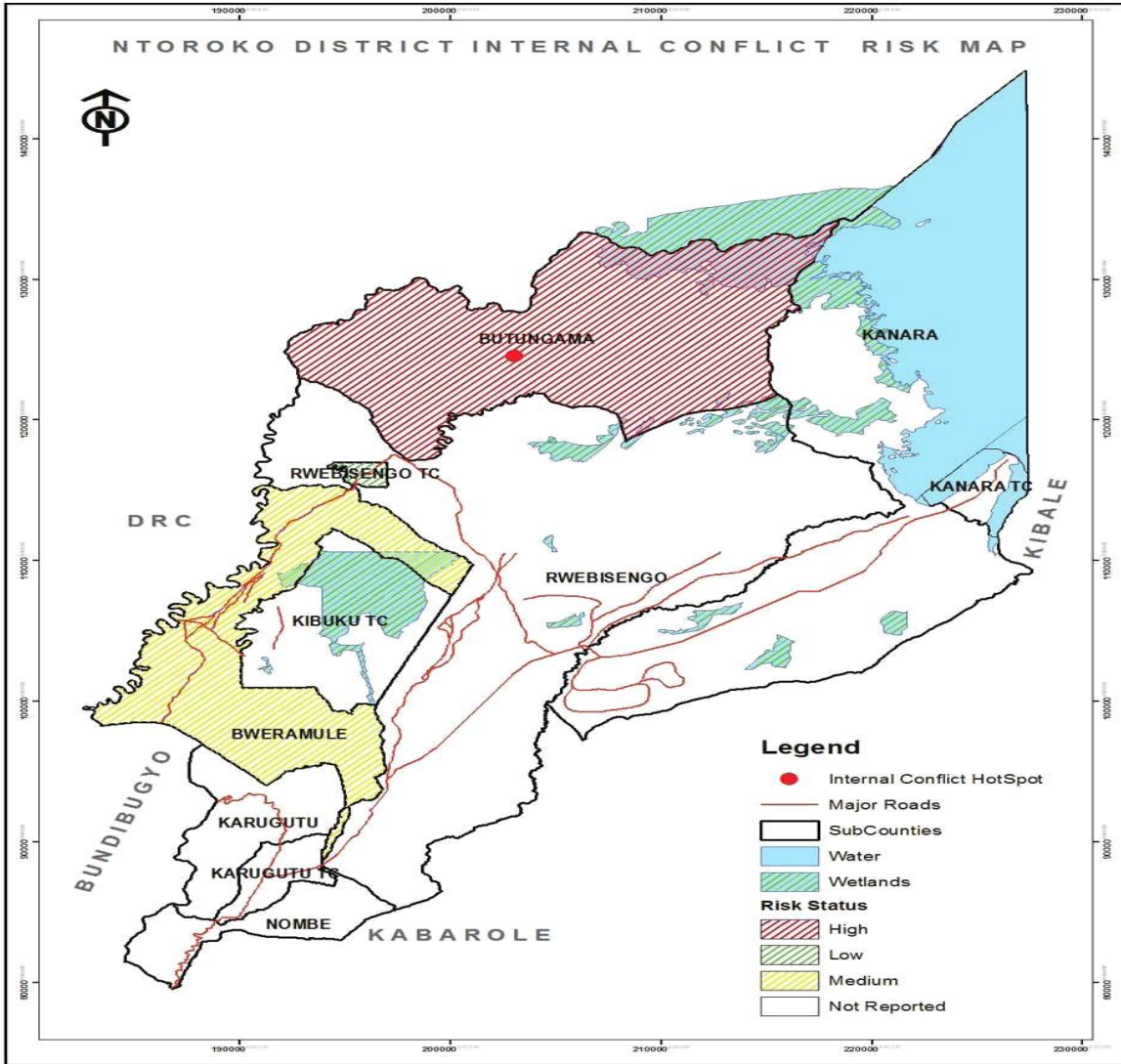
Appendices

Appendix 1: The Trigger-Indicator Matrix

Conflict triggers	Hotspots	Indicators	Actors	Intensity
The Cross-Border dynamics	Semuliki river, Rukwanzi fishing village,	The changing course of River Semuliki, thefts of fishing gear, violence in the DRC	UPDF marine unit, DRC security, fishermen, community	Medium
The community – UWA conflicts	Katwe, Nyakatonzi, Rwebisengo, Bweramule and Butungama	Arrest and auctioning of cows, deaths, stray animals, drought, flowering of crops and appearance of the moon	UWA staff, community members (victims), local leaders	High
The land issues	Karusandara, Nyakatonzi, Bweramule, Rwebisengo, Butungama, and Karugutu	Killings, destruction of boundary fences and crop gardens, fencing off wetlands, advent of the rainy season, population movements	Community members and local leaders	High
The intra-ethnic conflicts	Ntoroko generally and pockets of Busongora	Suspicious deaths, threats, cattle thefts, land grabbing, discrimination	Batuku and Basongora community members	High

Conflict triggers	Hotspots	Indicators	Actors	Intensity
Domestic and inter-personal conflicts	Kabukero, Kirindi and Humya, Rwebisengo, Bweramule	Family fights, marriage break-ups, police and local court cases, petitions to civil society organizations	Basongora, Batuku, Bamba and Babwisi community members	Medium
The Inter-ethnic conflicts	Kasese and Bundibugyo generally	Suspicious meetings, population movements, use of hate language, threats, suspicious deaths	Bakonzu, Basongora, Babwisi, Batuku, Lendu	Medium
The political issues	Ntoroko, Kasese, Bundibugyo districts	Non responsiveness of leaders, population movements, political campaigns	Community members, local politicians	High

Appendix 2: Ntoroko District Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability Profile 2016



Source: Ntoroko District Hazard, Risk and Vulnerability Profile 2016

Notes

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ISBN 978-9970-9940-0-7



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