Community mobilisation in Ituri: Approaches, strategies, successes and challenges

A Research Report prepared in collaboration with the Governance and Gender Programme of Trócaire-DRC

by

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Executive Summary

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) today is faced with two significant challenges – the democratic deficit which lies at the heart of governance arrangements, and national and international partners' failures to address the root causes of the country's recent wars. Given the failure of efforts at democratisation and state-building from the top-down, this research examines the potential to build a new, more inclusive and equitable politics from the bottom up. Specifically, it explores the politically transformative potential of seven diverse community groups supported by Trócaire's partners in Ituri. Drawing on a framework developed from social movement theory together with interviews and focus group discussions with over 140 group members, non-members, local authorities and local NGO representatives, the research seeks to answer the following questions.

1. Who is involved (and who is not) within a select number of community groups supported by Trócaire's partners?
2. Why are they involved? (what is their motivation)?
3. How do these community groups bring about change? / what are their strategies for success?
4. Do these community groups contribute towards building a more democratic state from the bottom upwards?

In relation to the first question, the findings indicate that most groups comprise a mix of members in terms of gender, ethnicity and class. Participation in these groups therefore, presents a valuable opportunity to shift and ultimately transform ethnic, class and gender-based identities. Three issues are highlighted and discussed in further detail in this regard – the apparent lack of mechanisms and/or procedures for ensuring equal participation in deliberation and decision-making within groups; the legitimacy of groups and the need for greater attention to be paid to forms of representation and mediation with communities; and the role and impact of male advisors in women's groups.

Examining members' motivations for participation in community groups, the findings demonstrate that members are driven by a combination of personal and collective interests. Personal motivations include the enhanced status and resources (financial and/or material) that may accrue from membership of the group. Collective interests include a strong sense of depravation and marginalisation among group members – most notably in relation to women's parity and rights, but also in relation to local development, justice and governance. Among women in particular (although not exclusively so), a strong sense of injustice and marginalisation is palpable in relation to women's rights and accepted social norms of behaviour, as is the optimism around the opportunities posed by talk of parity. While this is, to some degree, about access to posts and resources, it is also about more. As women are finally afforded a voice within their communities, there are some initial signs of changing identities and cultures.

Examining the groups' strategies for change, the findings indicate that, for the most part, the main strategy employed is sensitisation and information provision rather than mobilisation as such. While sensitisation and information provision is an important first step in community mobilisation, it is argued that it is just one in a series of steps required to mobilise community members. The findings in this section also suggest that many community groups appear to be functioning as a parallel local authority structure – carrying out local Chiefs' tasks on their behalf. While this can prove useful in resolving specific local issues, it fails to tackle or interrogate their structural or systemic root causes, reinforces traditional hierarchies, and simply adds another layer of local administration onto the existing one. This more passive, reactive approach is reflected also in the framing strategies employed which, focused on prognosis rather than diagnosis, and emphasising individual responsibility over structural shortcomings, ultimately fail to construct or influence popular understandings of the root causes of the specific issues tackled by groups. It is argued that the practice of treating these issues in a structural and contextual vacuum also misses important opportunities for harnessing one of the most potent (and cost-effective) forms of power – the power to shape minds and meaning, to build networks and coalitions for change, and to challenge and to transform structures accordingly.

Turning to the final question, the findings demonstrate that the strongest impacts of community group involvement are at individual levels. These are evidenced in cases where members have successfully managed to defend their own rights or those of some immediate family members in the face of abuses of these rights by either the authorities or others in their community. They are also evidenced in the successes reported in securing posts in local administrative structures, notably at the level of local markets, '*ten house*' heads, or in village councils. The findings also demonstrate some evidence of impacts on both ethnic and gender identities, although the degree of impact in both domains is highly variable. Overall, the findings indicate that groups' activities and actions to date have had little broader transformative political impact thereby contributing little, as yet, to building a more democratic state from the bottom up. This is evidenced in the negligible impact on both local institutions and at a broader systemic political level.

The study concludes by offering three main reasons why groups' activities and actions to date appear to have had little transformative impact at this broader level on political institutions and systems. These relate to the role of community groups – as perceived by themselves, their supporting NGOs, and their local authorities; their framing of issues, problems and conflicts; and the nature of their relationships with other community members.

Acknowledging the significant achievements of the communities groups in other areas, together with the tremendous courage, determination and generosity of spirit shown by their members, four challenges are posed to groups wishing to activate their transformative potential and take on the important and necessary work of forging spaces to imagine political alternatives and to build coalitions of solidarity and support to bring them about.

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Abbreviations

CAFOD	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
CDJP	*Commission Diocésaine Justice et Paix* / Diocesan Committee for Justice and Peace
DCU	Dublin City University
DDR	Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration programme (also called DCR – Demobilisation and Community Re-insertion in the DRC)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ETD	*Entité Territoriale Décentralisée* / Decentralised Territorial Entity
EU	European Union
FARDC	*Forces Armées de la Republique Democratique du Congo* / Congolese Armed Forces (official Congolese army)
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FNI	*Front Nationaliste Intégrationniste* / Nationalist Integrationist Front (militia group)
FOMI	Forum des Mamans d'Ituri (NGO)
FRPI	*Forces de Résistance Patriotique d'Ituri* / Ituri Patriotic Resistance Forces (militia group)
GAD	Gender and Development
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HDR	Human Development Report
HRW	Human Rights Watch
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN structure)
RDC	République Démocratique du Congo
RHA	Réseau Haki Na Amani (NGO)
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UPC	*Union des Patriotes Congolais* / Union of Congolese Patriots (militia group)
WID	Women in Development

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These contributions notwithstanding, the usual disclaimer applies and the views and opinions expressed in this report are my own and in no way represent the views of Trócaire, FOMI, the RHA, the CDJP or any of the other agencies and actors participating in the research.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research context

There is clearly a democratic deficit at the heart of governance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The reasons for this are both historic and contemporary. Historically, from its division into regional Kingdoms to its period under Belgian rule, through the assassination of its first democratically elected leader and onto the Mobutu dictatorship, the country has had no meaningful period of democratic rule. More recently, the much critiqued peacebuilding approach following the Congolese wars of the 1990s and 2000s which is rooted in elite macro-level political settlements (see Kisangani 2006, 2010; Engelbert and Tull 2008; Eriksen 2009; Marriage 2011; Trefon 2011; Larmer et al 2013) has privileged the power and authority of elite level actors over those of local communities. As a result, democratic developments have been widely critiqued and torturously slow. As noted in an accompanying report (Gaynor, 2013), the territorial re-division of the country – planned to take place by 2009 – has not happened. Local elections have yet to take place. And financial decentralisation – retention of 40 per cent of revenue generated within each province – remains stalled.

Clearly democratisation and state-building from the top-down is proving a failure. Yet, as events in 2011 in North Africa in particular have demonstrated, democracy and state-building can also take place from the bottom up. Indeed, a number of commentators argue that state building in the DRC can only occur from the bottom up. A necessary condition for this to happen is community mobilisation. The extent to which community mobilisation in the Iturian context can contribute to such an ambitious, yet necessary project of democratic state building is the focus of this research.

This research is a follow-on from research conducted in collaboration with Trócaire in early 2013 in Bas-Congo province. One of the most startling findings of the Bas-Congo research was the widespread breakdown in social structures and trust within and among communities, together with a complete lack of state responsiveness in this regard (Gaynor, 2013). During informal discussions with Trócaire partners from Ituri during the course of a planning workshop held in Kinshasa in January 2014, talk turned to their work with local community groups. A follow-on research project started to take shape. This has since been honed and refined in discussion with Trócaire colleagues in Kinshasa and Ireland.

It is often argued that community or social mobilisation in a transformative, political sense in Sub-Saharan Africa is weak because existing individual patronage networks prove more effective and therefore attractive to individuals and families (deWaal and Ibreck, 2013). In other words, given the choice between either investing in a community group as a means to access resources and justice, or negotiating through personal contacts and patrons, individuals will opt for the latter. This explains the persistence of the African neo-patrimonial state (Hyden, 2006; Cammack, 2007) despite the so-called 'third wave of democracy' of the 1990s

with its attendant focus on the 'good governance' ideals of transparency, accountability and participation. However, it does not explain the rich and complex level of associational life in many countries (see Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999 for example). In fact, it ignores this. Moreover, overly influenced by rational choice theory and implicitly imputing wholeheartedly selfish motivations on local actors, it ignores the tremendous generosity of spirit and action that is constantly manifest in many local communities. In short, as de Waal and Ibreck (2013: 306-7), citing Bratton and Van de Waal (1997) note, "*Africanist studies on democratisation have both neglected non-violent social movements and focused on structure at the expense of agency exercised by those strategically pursuing democratic change*.". And so, the actions of a wide variety of community groups and their consequences have largely fallen under the radar. We know little about who becomes involved in community groups (and who does not); what their motivation for involvement is; what it is they wish to achieve from their involvement and what (if anything) accounts for their success, however they define this. This research, rooted in a politically transformative framework, seeks to address some of these gaps.

1.2 Research questions

Following reflections in January 2014 with Trócaire partners on the findings of the local governance research in Bas-Congo and discussions thereafter with Trócaire staff and colleagues in Kinshasa and Maynooth, a research design and set of research questions were agreed. As with other pieces of research conducted by the author in collaboration with Trócaire, these aim to address the broad interests of both the author herself and the necessarily more specific, programmatic interests of Trócaire's Gender and Governance programme.

In this context, the research is focused around four principle inter-related questions:

1. Who is involved (and who is not) within a select number of community groups supported by Trócaire's partners?
2. Why are they involved? (what is their motivation)?
3. How do these community groups bring about change? / what are their strategies for success?
4. Do these community groups contribute towards building a more democratic state from the bottom upwards?

It is important at this stage to note that this research is neither a comparison of the different groups studied nor is it an evaluation of Trócaire's community mobilisation programme. Instead, drawing from a very specific set of research questions within the transformative political framework which informs both Trócaire's work and the researcher's own interests, it is a broader study into the politically transformative potential of the community groups studied.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research design

As noted above, the research seeks to capture and analyse the work of a number of different groups within the broader context of ongoing socio-economic challenges in Ituri. The overall research design involved three principle steps – two levels of secondary research and one level of primary data collection. These are outlined in more detail below.

2.2 Secondary research

Secondary research was carried out in two parts. First, secondary materials were studied in advance of the primary data collection to get a sense of the overall context for community groups' work, as well as the overriding challenges facing the region. Interviews with key district level development agency representatives during the primary data collection phase (together with more informal discussions while travelling) supplemented this contextual analysis.

Second, a framework of analysis which would guide the primary data collection was devised. Initially efforts were made to draw up a framework from community mobilisation literature. However, it was found that this literature is quite sparse and predominantly concentrated in the reformist rather than transformist conception of community mobilisation (e.g. Robinson and Green, 2011; Sommerville, 2011) – i.e. focused on reconciling people to their world rather than transforming it. It therefore offered few insights into how precisely community mobilisation might be examined within a transformative political framework. Following further reflection on this, the researcher moved on to examine the rich corpus of social movement literature. While social movements are more often associated with Latin America where vibrant oppositional politics appears more widespread, the extensive body of thinking done in this area is ideally suited to community mobilisation in a transformative sense. Community mobilisation bears many similarities with the so-called 'new social movement' wave which analyses contemporary developments within social movements as they move to operating in more formalised ways in collaborative arrangements with local authorities and political representatives (see, for example, Della Porta and Diani, 2006).

2.2.1 Towards a framework of analysis

Definitions of social movements abound. Charles Tilly (1985), one of the most eminent social movement theorists, defines social movements as neither political parties nor trade unions, but civically-embedded political campaigns. Elizabeth Jelin (1986 – cited in Ballard et al, 2005: 617) develops this definition further when she defines social movements as

"…*forms of collective action with a high degree of popular participation, which use non-institutional channels, and which formulate their demands while simultaneously finding forms of action to express them, thus establishing themselves as collective subjects, that is, as a group or social category*.". In this study I am following this position, together with that of Ballard et al (2005: 617) who, studying social movements in South Africa, define a social movement as a civic group with a series of demands or challenges to power holders in the name of a social category that lacks an established political position.

Investigations of social movements over the last few decades have focused in particular upon three core aspects. These are extremely useful in understanding motivations for and strategies of mobilisation. They are as follows:

a) The structure of the opportunities and constraints (political context) within which movements may or may not develop. Thus social movements can be about identity and fighting for rights within a particular system or they can be about trying to change that system.
b) The networks, structures and other resources which social actors employ to mobilise supporters. Movements in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are not necessarily spontaneous grassroots uprisings of the poor as they are sometimes romantically imagined. Rather they are often dependent on material and human resources, wider solidarity networks, and often external intervention.
c) The ways in which movement participants define or frame their movement and its demands. This, I argue, matters greatly because, as discussed in more detail in Section 3.6, a fundamental power struggle, and one which is very often overlooked, is the struggle for the construction of meaning in peoples' minds as this is where identities, cultures and acceptable norms of behaviour are shaped, consolidated and/or transformed.

Drawing from both this literature and the four research questions agreed with Trócaire, a framework was developed which consists of six principle areas of focus[2]. These were then discussed, amended and agreed in meetings with both staff from the Governance section in Maynooth and with the Governance and Gender Programme Officer in Kinshasa. Questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guides were then devised from this framework and these guided the field research.

[2] These are, respectively, the local governance context within which the groups operate; the history, organisation and functioning of groups; who is involved; why they are involved; their mobilisation strategies; and the impacts of their work. Each of these areas is developed in more detail within the relevant findings sections (3.2-3.7 inclusive).

2.3 Primary data collection

Primary data collection took place over a two week period in August, 2014. This included interviews with development agency representatives, including Trocaire's partners, in Bunia, as well as visits to seven different locations where, depending on time availability[3], efforts were made to interview local authorities; to conduct detailed focus group discussions (FGDs) with community group members; to conduct individual interviews with a sample of these; and also to conduct individual interviews with randomly selected community members (not members of the community group) to ascertain their level of knowledge of and interaction with their local community group. In total, interviews were held with seven agency representatives at district level and, in the sites visited, with 13 local authorities (including 2 women); 88 members of local community groups in FGDs (65 women and 23 men); 17 members of local community groups in individual interviews (13 women and 4 men); and 22 randomly selected community members (11 women and 11 men). Table 2.3.1 below sets out some more detail in this regard.

[3] Despite early starts in the morning, time in the field was limited some days due to adverse weather and road conditions.

Table 2.3.1 Research participants

District level agency representatives (Bunia)	- CDJP – Abbé Alfred Ndrabu Buju - CDJP – M. Gedeon Kivi - FOMI – Mme. Jacqueline Dziju Malosi - RCN – Mme. Ange Merilli – Head of Bunia section of PARJ-E (Support Programme for Justice Re-inforcement in Eastern Congo - RCN – M. Emile Darribere – Coordinator of programme dealing with land tenure issues and justice infrastructure - RHA – M. Eric Mongo Malolo - UNDP – M. Freddy Kasongo – Social Cohesion Expert			
Total	**7**			
Local levels (Site)	**Local authorities**	**Community group members (FGD)**	**Community group members** (indiv. Interviews)	**Non community group members** (indiv. Interviews)
Site A	- Secretary of Chiefdom - Judge of Chiefdom* (Chief's sister and President of community group)	7 women & 5 men	2 (female President & male ordinary member)	0
Site B	- C/*Groupement*	1 woman & 4 men	2 (2 women)	4 (2 women and 2 men)
Site C	C/*Groupement*	14 female members & 3 male advisors to group	5 (3 women and 2 men)	4 (2 women and 2 men)
Site D	- Sector accountant* - President of Peace Court - Secretary of Peace Court	17 women & 1 male advisor	1 (woman)	4 (2 women and 2 men)
Site E	- C/village - Village judge - President of another community group (& School Director)	3 members community grp; 9 local women leaders	4 (2 members & 2 women leaders)	4 (2 women and 2 men)
Site F	- C/Chiefdom - Secretary of Chiefdom	3 women & 7 men	4 (2 women and 2 men)	4 (2 women and 2 men)
Site G	- Sector Secretary	11 women & 3 male advisors	0	2 (1 woman and 1 man)
Total	**13**	**88** (65 women & 23 men)	**17** (13 women & 4 men)	**22** (11 women & 11 men)

* Female local authorities. The chiefdom judge is the sister of the traditional chief (and is also the President of community group). The Sector accountant in Site D claims to be the only female accountant at Sector level in Ituri.

2.4 Data coding, analysis and documentation

Focus group discussions and individual interviews at all levels, excepting those with randomly selected community members, were recorded and transcribed in full. Interviews with randomly selected community members were recorded manually. The resultant data was coded manually following the mobilisation framework derived from the social movement literature and is presented below in Sections 3.2-3.7 inclusive.

3. Research findings and analysis

The research findings are set out in the following section. The section is divided into seven sub-sections. The first provides the broad context to the study, discussing both the complex, interlinked causes of the egregious war and unrest of 1999-2003 and its ongoing legacies and remaining issues today. The second sub-section sets out both the structure and role of local authorities at different levels within Ituri, together with their knowledge of and views on the local community groups examined. Sub-section three then moves on to examine the history and functioning of the groups themselves following which a breakdown by gender, ethnicity and class of participants within each group is provided. Having examined who is mobilising, the fifth sub-section turns to the question of why they have chosen to do so. The sixth sub-section then examines the different strategies employed in mobilising and the final sub-section analyses the impacts of community mobilisation at a number of different levels.

3.1 Ituri: The political economy of conflict

Taking its name from the Ituri river, Ituri is a richly endowed district of Orientale Province with highly fertile land, pristine forests, large gold deposits, both fish and oil reserves in Lake Albert and also deposits of diamonds and coltan (Pottier, 2003; IKV Pax Christi and RHA, 2012; Fahey, 2013). One of five districts in Orientale Province, it has an area of 65,658 km² and a population of over four million. There are ten principle ethnic groups, with the Alur (27%) mainly concentrated in Mahagi; whereas the Lendu (24%) and Hema (18%) are in the territories of Djugu and Irumu (the two territories included in this study); and the Lugbara (12%) are concentrated in the Aru territory (IKV Pax Christi and RHA, 2012: 9).

Although conflict has waged in Eastern Congo since 1996, Ituri was the scene of some of the bloodiest fighting and gravest atrocities in the DRC between the years 1999-2003, with an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 killed and a further 500,000 displaced by 2003 (HRW, 2003; Amnesty International, 2003: 15). Some dozen non-state armed forces emerged during this time, many organised along ethnic lines (Anten, 2010). While the most intense period of conflict was from 1999-2007, violence resurged in Bunia in 2012[4] and violence and unrest continue in South Irumu territory at the time of writing (see also OCHA, 2014). Banditry and looting remain common problems and low lying insecurity remains in many areas.

[4] See "Why rioters in Bunia, Kinshasa and Kisangani target Kabila and MONUSCO", http://Alexengwete.blogspot,com/2012/11/why-rioters-in-bunia-kinshasa-kisangani.html, November 20, 2012. See also "Bunia, DR Congo: November 20, 2012", http://jmasselink.blogspot.com/2013/11/evacuation-2.html.

3.1.1 Causes of conflict

There is a general consensus that the outbreak of violence in 1998 was linked to deeply rooted, historic local grievances and antagonisms over access to land, economic opportunity and political power (Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers, 2004). Beginning as what many local commentators describe as a small-scale ethnic dispute over land boundaries in Djugu territory (author interviews, August 2014; see also Ndrabu-Buju, 2002; Kivi, n.d.) , over time the conflict exploded across the district, acquiring a regional dimension as both neighbouring Uganda and Rwanda began to exploit local groups for their own economic interests (Tamm, 2013a, 2013b; Kivi, n.d.).

Although it is difficult to disentangle the root causes, three main inter-related factors may be identified as underlying the outbreak of war. The first of these is land. Land in Ituri, as elsewhere in the DRC, matters greatly. It matters because for most people it is the resource which feeds the family and so, is key to survival. For some, it is also a means of securing natural resources. Conflict over land has existed in Ituri from the time Belgian agents appointed local Chiefs, re-drew boundaries, and physically separated populations (Hochschild, 2008). In the post-colonial era disputes over land rights, access and ownership were incorporated into local struggles for political and economic power – notably between the pastoralist Hema and the agriculturalist Lendu. Pottier (2003) argues that mineral-rich land constitutes the chief cause of the war, highlighting the role played by the ambiguous 1973 *Bakajika* land law which, introduced by Mobutu so that he could reward loyalty with large tracts of resource-rich land, did away with people's right to ancestral land and passed ownership of all land, whether vacant or occupied, following a two year access entitlement to occupants, to the state for sale if the state so wished (see also RCN, 2009: 24-25). This began a pattern whereby the Hema elite began to purchase land that the Lendu considered ancestral and rightfully theirs, building large scale *concessions* or ranches and leaving many Lendu landless and homeless. Huggins (2012) also focuses on the issue of land ownership, highlighting the structural link between claims to land ownership by ethnic communities, and claims to political autonomy and power. Communities that have lacked local representation have long made claims to land ownership ('ethnic territories') in order to have their own Chiefs, and these claims have often been resisted by neighbouring communities. Huggins notes that while land is essential to most rural livelihoods, it is also bound up very strongly with issues of identity and power.

The second related factor is poverty and horizontal inequalities between the dominant pastoralist Hema and the agriculturalist Lendu communities in the territories of Djugu and Irumu. As noted above, this is closely inter-linked with the land issue but also includes other resources, notably gold. In 1903, geologists working for King Leopold confirmed the existence of gold deposits in Ituri on the Agola River near the colonial outpost of Kilo. Production began in 1905 and, with an extension in mining further north in present-day Haut-

Uele district, the Kilo-Moto gold mining complex was born. With the liberalisation of the mining sector in 1981, local businessmen came to dominate the market, forging alliances of convenience with militias to secure their access to sites and to trade routes to Kampala, the primary destination for Ituri's gold (Fahey, 2013). Over the course of the Iturian war, members of the Hema community gradually increased their access to these resources (land and gold), as well as dominating the trading markets for these, securing assistance from the Ugandan army in this regard (Anten, 2010).

The third factor is the inevitable ethnic tension resulting from such unequal access to land and other resources, notably between the pastoralist Hema and agriculturalist Lendu. Pottier (2009) has argued that these tensions stem from colonial racist narratives of ethnic superiority (Hema) and inferiority (Lendu) which were quite out of sync with the intricate realities of the time. In the post-colonial period, these persistent narratives exacerbated tensions and frustrations as Hema came to occupy positions of power and wealth in administration as well as in the Churches. Ndrabu-Buju (2002: 13-20) documents some of the struggles by Lendu groups for greater equality in this regard during the post-colonial period. More recently, during the war, a report of a UN Panel of Experts confirmed that the control of Ituri's wealth continued to have a strong ethnic dimension with the majority of transporters and traders coming from the Gegere Hema[5] group and, forging close links with a succession of Ugandan commanders and troops, organising the transport of a wide range of primary goods (cattle, gold, diamonds, coltan) from Ituri to Uganda under strict Ugandan military supervision (UNSC, 2002). As well as fuelling the war, such horizontal inequalities also served to further fuel local tensions.

These internal factors notwithstanding, the predominant view within Ituri is that, while local tensions and conflicts certainly bubbled, the key factor which precipitated their escalation into a full-scale war was the arrival of armed troops from Rwandan and Uganda. These exploited and exacerbated local tensions by trading in arms in return for cattle, gold and other primary resources. Vying for control of the mineral-rich lands and resources and heavily involved in terrorising the population, they led to the establishment of a wide range of local militia groups including the UPC (*Union des Patriotes Congolais / Union of Congolese Patriots*), the FNI (*Front Nationaliste Intégrationniste / Nationalist and Integrationist Front*) and the FRPI (*Forces de Résistance Patriotique d'Ituri / Ituri Patriotic Resistance Forces*) (Tamm, 2013a; 2013b). Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers (2004) argue that the involvement of Rwanda and Uganda in Ituri has led to the development of a new political economy and a new political complex of actors in the district which is characterised by a shift from traditional to military rule, to privatised, non-territorial networks of economic control, and to the consolidation of ethnic bonds in the economic and social sphere. The meticulously detailed study of Henning Tamm on the external militarisation of local politics - with the

[5] It is important to note that, for all the talk of an 'ethnic war', ethnic categories are not neatly bounded – the Gegere Hema speak KiLendu and Gegere and Southern Hema are reportedly locked in a vicious political battle.

Hema UPC attracting support from Uganda first, and then Rwanda (Tamm, 2013a), also highlights the role of regional power-brokers in moulding the local political economy and its elite actors.

3.1.2 Key issues remaining

Ituri's militia groups, angry at being excluded from the Sun City powersharing negotiations of 2002, continued to fight their way to the negotiating table through war in Ituri. In 2003 the international community responded and launched a military intervention into Bunia[6]. Over the coming years this international intervention succeeded, to some degree, through a combination of disarmament, integration of rebel leaders into the transition government and its army - the *Forces Armées de la Republique Democratique du Congo* (FARDC), and sanctions against military leaders, in stabilising the district. However, a number of rebel leaders continued to feel marginalised and under-represented in the national arena (Anten, 2010; Tamm, 2013a; 2013b); the process of DDR was messy and ultimately largely ineffective (Bouta, 2005; Veit, 2010, 2011; author interviews with local implementing agencies), and, perhaps most importantly for the purposes of this study, the root causes of the conflict were not addressed (Anten, 2010; Autesserre, 2010; Tamm, 2013b; Hellmueller, 2014).

The broader criticisms of the liberal peacebuilding approach which argue that internationally sponsored peacebuilding efforts aim at securing national and regional stability rather than, and at times to the detriment of, local security and stability (Kisangani, 2006, 2010; Englebert and Tull, 2008; Eriksen, 2009; Marriage, 2011; Trefon, 2011; Larmer et al, 2013) apply as much to Ituri as they do to the rest of the DRC. Anten (2010: i), writing about the situation in Ituri, notes that:

> *Although local civil society initiatives for conflict mediation emerged and have had some effect in de-escalating tensions, they are unable to solve key problems such as land conflicts and inequalities between ethnic groups, because higher levels of political power are involved and national regulations (land legislation, decentralisation) have still to be completed.*

Consequently, many of the issues that ignited or sustained the Iturian war remain. As the RCN (2009: 9) puts it, Ituri today is "*a zone of neither war nor peace*". FGDs and interviews with community members, local authorities and NGO leaders point to four principle issues which remain or have emerged as a legacy of the war.

The first of these is ongoing fear and suspicion of the ethnic other. Despite local efforts at reconciliation and peaceful cohabitation, suspicion and animosities are deep seated and difficult to displace. These are exacerbated by the fact that many have lost everything in the

[6] The European Union-led military operation, named 'Artemis', was conducted in accordance with a mandate set out in a UNSC Resolution and was deployed from June to September 2003. It paved the way for the subsequent UN mission, MONUC (Veit, 2010, Kivi, n.d.).

war, returning to find their belongings gone and their houses burned to the ground and/or somebody else occupying their land. Compounding this, as families try to find their feet, are the daily difficulties associated with the escalating cost of living. Almost all interviewed for this research spoke of difficulties in meeting rising school 'fees'[7]. The Sector Secretary from Site G outlines the complexities of daily life for residents in his sector.

> *When we look in a general way, we have serious difficulties after the war. The people were displaced pell-mell and we returned to level zero, to begin again. We lost everything. People displaced themselves, agriculturalists, pastoralists, they lost everything. Now fortunately we have some NGOs which help us a little*[8]*. We have started to rebuild little by little. It has been almost seven years. It has improved but not totally, because there are some villages where people have not come back and there are difficulties to return. When you return you find somebody else on your land. A problem arises at this level. People fled elsewhere and some find they can stay over there so they do not come back.*
>
> (Individual interview Sector Secretary, Site G)

The second issue, as indicated in the above excerpt, is the land issue. Not alone has this key driver been ignored by internationally sponsored peacebuilding initiatives, but as people return following the war to find others have come and occupied their land, in the continued absence of clear legislation to deal with ownership issues, this has to be dealt with locally. As the Chiefdom Chief in Site F outlines:

> *This is the most thorny form of conflict, when there are people who return. It is everywhere. We have three places where it is especially complicated* [cites these three villages]. *So how do people manage to resolve these problems? It can be done with agreement - if somebody has occupied your land, you wait and you ask for some money, and you go and get land nearby. And people arrange themselves that way. But there are others that do the reverse. Me* [new occupant] *– 'since I have invested in this land, you must reimburse me and I will find another place'. This causes conflicts here, particularly with the concessionaries* [large-scale ranchers].
>
> (Individual interview Chiefdom Chief, Site F)

According to the RCN, an NGO with a section specialising in land issues, the legal system in relation to land ownership is 'largely theoretical' and a *de facto* land market exists where cases of individual ownership vie with cases of community ownership in a legal vacuum, leading to conflict after conflict (RCN, 2009: 10; also author interview RCN representative).

[7] The lack of state investment in education, as in all other social sectors, means that teachers' salaries remain extremely low and sporadic and there is no public infrastructural expenditure. Education has consequently been, *de facto*, privatised. In the sites visited, primary school 'fees' are approximately $3/month; secondary school fees approximately $6/month; and university fees approximately $450 per annum.

[8] The majority of NGOs which began to operate in Ituri following the war engaged in humanitarian aid. Many of these have now left and local agencies are finding it increasingly difficult to sustain their work (author interviews local NGO leaders).

Detailed case studies of land conflicts in Irumu and Djugu conducted by the RCN (2009: 33-35) reveal a complex range of situations and actors (including a conflict between Church institutions in Irumu) in conflict over *concessions* (where local residents claiming customary ownership seek to source water, fuelwood and/or mine gold); over field boundaries; and over wider tracts of land claimed by different ethnic groups or clans. While most of these conflicts (39 per cent) are between individuals or between one group and an individual (a further 28 per cent), as the RCN notes, these inevitably escalate into wider community conflicts as in the case of the conflict in Djugu which sparked the war in 1999. While local authorities and associations do their best to manage these conflicts locally, the continued ambiguity in the overarching legal framework means that such conflicts are destined to arise repeatedly.

The third issue is the so-called 'gender issue'. Although often narrowly referred to as war-related sexual violence, the roots of GBV run deeper and are to be found in the deeply patriarchal culture which rigidly delineates roles and responsibilities between women and men, embedding these in entrenched social and political hierarchies of inferiority and superiority. With the emergence of 'women's' NGOs and community groups during and following the war, these roles are being challenged, leading to further conflicts at home and within communities as traditional power-holders resist the changing political dynamics. A leader of a local NGO explains the resistance she routinely comes up against.

> *At times there are men who come to me and who say 'Maman X, men do not like women in your category'. And I ask them, 'What do you mean?'. They say, 'You are among the women who take the control from the men*[9]*. This - men do not like. 'You are also causing trouble among the women', they say. 'Men like women to submit to them, to respect them, and to obey them but you are among the women who take the control from the men, and this we do not like'.*
>
> (Individual interview, NGO leader)

As the findings in the coming sections reveal (see in particular Section 3.6), gender-based discrimination and violence remain deep-rooted and those seeking to challenge this risk considerable resistance and antagonism, both within their communities and at home.

The final issue is the continued exploitation and expropriation of the district's natural resources by new networks of internal and external 'resource entrepreneurs'. Although, with the eventual withdrawal of Ugandan and Rwandan forces and the arrest or reintegration (into the FARDC or local political structures) of rebel group commanders, local rebel structures have been weakened, new constellations of actors have appeared leading to unrest and instability in certain areas. The illegal timber loggings in the forests of Mambasa (author interview and correspondence RCN), the insecurity around the gold mines towards which former militias are increasingly gravitating (author interviews Kilo, RCN[10]; see also

[9] "*…qui tient la tête aux hommes"*

[10] Companies include the British companies Kibali Gold Mines, Ashanti Gold Kilo, (AGK), Auris Gold and Kilo Gold; the British and South African company, Muana Africa; and the Canadian company Loncor.

IKV/RHA, 2012), and tensions around the secret oil deals reportedly signed between Kinshasa and a range of international oil companies for prospecting rights in Lake Albert (Pottier, 2003; Cafod and Trócaire, 2012; author interviews RHA and RCN[11]) all serve to fuel local grievances and heighten local tensions.

Overall therefore, although on the surface many parts of Ituri now enjoy a degree of relative stability, scratch beneath the surface and many of the same underlying tensions remain, now overlain with new some tensions fuelled by the shifting political relations – in economic and social spheres – brought about as a result of the war and its more immediate consequences. How these tensions are negotiated and managed is the subject of the next section.

[11] Companies include Heritage Oil, Tullow Oil, Total, Divine Inspiration Consortium, H-Oil Sud, Congo Petroleum and Gas, Caprikat and Foxwhelp.

3.2 Local governance in Ituri

This section sets out the local governance structures and functions in Ituri. Drawing on interviews with local authorities, it goes on to discuss their awareness and knowledge of community groups' activities.

3.2.1 Local governance structures

Ituri is sub-divided into five territories – Aru, Djugu, Irumu, Mahagi and Mambasa. Each of these are further sub-divided into a number of collectivities of which there are two types. *Chefferies* or Chiefdoms are part of the customary administration with the Chief of the Chiefdom coming from the reigning family (generally, although not always, passing from father to eldest son). *Secteurs* or Sectors are parallel administrative branches with Sector Chiefs currently nominated by District or Provincial authorities. Practically all Hema collectivities are traditional Chiefdoms while practically all other collectivities are Sectors. It is anticipated that, with the advent of the long-awaited local elections, Sector Chiefs will be elected as will three advisors to each Traditional Chiefdom Chief.

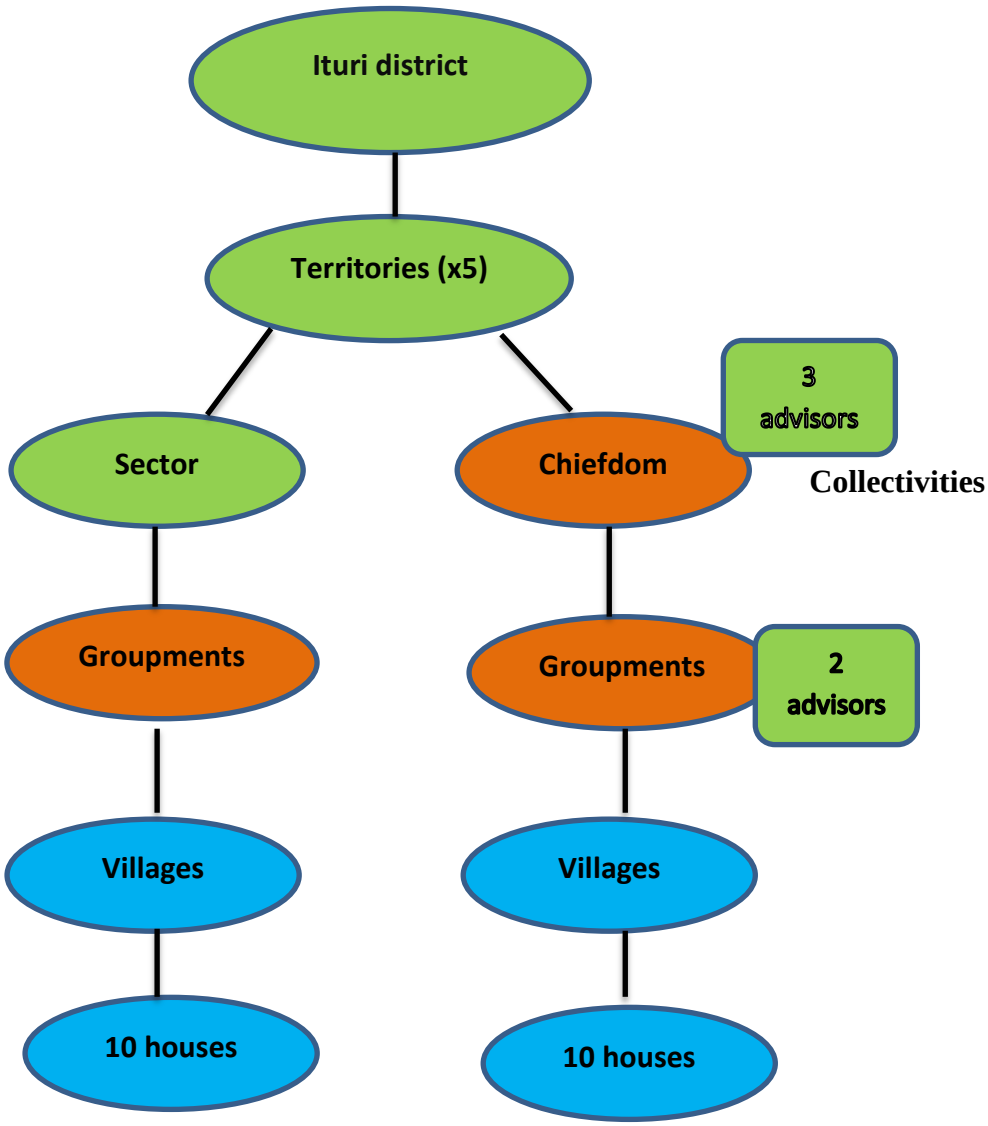
Collectivities are further divided into *Groupements* and these, falling below the ETD (Decentralised Territorial Entity) level[12] are all headed by Traditional Chiefs. Again, it is anticipated that two advisors to each *Groupement* Chief will be elected positions in the event of local elections taking place.

There are two further sub-divisions at village *(localité)* and sub-village levels with the sub-village level bringing together groups of 10 adjoining houses *(dix maisons)*. While the heads of both these structures are generally traditional or nominated positions, local populations appear to also wield some influence, from having a say in the nomination of, to directly electing village and *dix maisons* Chiefs depending on the village.

Figure 3.2.1 below sets out these local governance structures.

[12] See Gaynor, 2013 for an explanation of ETD and sub-ETD level structures.

Figure 3.2.1 Local governance structures in Ituri



Legend

To be elected in local elections

Traditional positions from within a reigning family

Traditional/nominated positions yet local population appears to have some say/influence on final selection

3.2.2 Role of local authorities

Interviews with local authorities highlight four principle roles for local authorities. The first is the most commonly cited role – that of conflict and problem management at local levels. This is primarily a reactive role – i.e. the aim is to manage the conflict or problem, not transform the conditions that gave rise to it. This is the role primarily of the Chief but all Chiefs have groups of officers and/or advisors around them to assist them in this role.

The second role is a reporting role. Chiefs at all levels report upwards to their superior authorities. At times, if a problem or conflict is deemed sufficiently serious, superior authorities will summon people to their offices to address this[13] or may come to the village / groupement / collectivity to try to address it there.

> *We do reports to the Territory and to the District. The Territory Secretary comes and he tries to address the conflicts and, if he can, he resolves these. If he cannot, he asks the District Commissioner to come, and it can even go as far as the Governor if it is necessary.*
>
> (Interview Executive Secretary, Chiefdom, Site A)

The third role is described simply as maintaining power. This is particularly important in the case of reigning families. Chris Huggins' (2010) excellent account of the linkages between land, power and ethnic identity in Eastern Congo demonstrates how traditional or customary leaders, who traditionally held the land "*in the name of the community*" have essentially privatised this communal resource and pocketed the proceeds from the land which they have sold to wealthy and powerful individuals or foreign and Congolese companies. Thus, customary power is the doorway to tremendous potential wealth as well as prestige. As the *Groupement* Chief in Site C notes, his role as Chief and that of his advisors is *"to hold the power, as the elders of the clan".*

The fourth role is to bring about development. For authorities within villages and *Groupements*, this is done in the absence of any external support from state structures and there is no expectation of receiving any support of this nature. Thus, all contributions for any local development initiatives, in the form of labour and/or monetary contributions, comes from local residents. While discussing the recent construction of a primary school in the village, for example, the Village Chief in Site E, when asked about the possibility of securing some support from the higher level authorities for this, responded that "*there is no*

[13] For example, the Chief and a number of his officers and advisors from the Chiefdom in Site A had been summoned to the Territory office in an attempt to resolve an ongoing dispute within the reigning family in relation to who should inherit the Chiefdom during the time of field research. Such disputes over power and territory are reported to be commonplace.

opportunity to do this. We are in a very inferior position here in the village". The only opportunity, he went on to add, was during the election campaigns, when candidates come to distribute cash as part of their campaign (or 'propaganda' as it is called in the DRC). In contrast, at the level of the ETDs – the Sector and/or Chiefdom, some funds are available from local tax collection. As the Customary Chief in Site F outlines,

> *All the activities that happen in my Chiefdom, I keep an eye on these. I also work on the development of the Chiefdom, because I have a budget, a budget for my use.*
>
> *Me: And where does the budget come from?*
>
> *It is a local budget. We have a little Republic here of our own, which we call decentralisation. We live off our own tax. We take our own tax. We manage this ourselves.*
>
> (Interview Chiefdom Chief, Site F)

In Site G, the Sector Secretary also mentions tax collection although, like the Chief in Site F and others interviewed elsewhere, remains coy about how much money is available to the Sector and how it is used. He also notes that the Sector budget needs to be approved by the Provincial Governor although the Sector receives minimal (and somewhat arbitrary) support from the Province.

> *I have principally two roles. First of all, I am the manager of taxes. We are in a decentralised Sector. The state gives us practically nothing and so we must follow the money that comes from the population, and we do something coming from this. I am also the Secretary. I manage the correspondence. And I also represent the Chief and administer when he is gone out, because the area is very big.*
>
> *Me: And do you get some money from the province?*
>
> *Yes, but unfortunately I cannot tell you how much. This is usually put straight into the bank where we have an account. Or it is given in the form of donations, for example a motorcycle, material to fix the road, some bricks. They do like that also.*
>
> *Me: And do you have a budget, how do they decide how much to give you?*
>
> *We have a budget. After elaborating it we give it to the Governor. If he accepts we do work. Despite the difficulties we have on the ground we do some work.*
>
> *Me: And does he accept to give everything you ask for, or a percentage?*
>
> *No he gives us, through services, a percentage. Even at a national level it should be given, but unfortunately up to now at the national level nothing has moved since a number of years. But at provincial level, even if it is symbolic, something moves.*
>
> (Interview Sector Secretary, Site G)

None of the groups or individual residents interviewed are familiar with the local budgeting system which, others report[14], is an extremely delicate and sensitive topic. As one group member notes, "*the* [financial] *management* [of the Sector] *is in flux. We don't know anything about it. Up until now we do not know how much resources come in or how they are used.*[15]".

Overall therefore, local authorities form part of a dense network of administration made up of both nominated and customary authority which has been in place since the colonial era. It functions, as it always has done, as a system of administration, accountable upward in all aspects of its day-to-day functioning yet receiving little in the way of material support. Although functioning in the absence of any mechanisms of downward accountability, Sectors and Chiefdoms (ETDs) are, for the most part, dependent on local revenue generation and local resources. At lower levels (*groupement* and village), authorities have no revenue at all at their disposal and are completely dependent on local contributions for any activities that take place. The opportunities for local employment generation, local service provision, and local poverty alleviation are thus severely limited.

3.2.3 Knowledge of and views of role of community groups

Generally speaking, most authorities interviewed are aware of the existence of the different community groups but appear more uncertain on their role and activities. When asked what the groups do exactly, all authorities mentioned sensitisations and a number mentioned the fact that members are trained. Local authorities are unclear on the specific themes promoted during these sensitisations, with some suggesting themes they feel groups should be covering.

Thus, speaking about the mixed community group in Site F, the Collectivity Chief stresses the importance of sensitising them to come out and vote in elections, as well as contributing to local development projects promoted by the authorities (what the Chief terms 'good governance').

> *The population has a need of sensitisation. We went through a dictatorship. After this we had a war. Now we have democracy. All these changes require sensitisation to prepare the population. When we have elections here the community group must help the population, explaining the importance of the elections to them because a lot of them seem to neglect the right to go and vote. They say 'well even if I don't go, nothing will happen to me', and so they must be sensitised to go…. there is also good governance. In the good governance, the population does not see everything that the power* [the authorities[16]] *does for them, because the power on high comes and they build, without involving the beneficiaries. This is why we want to sensitise the*

[14] Interview Ange Merelli, RCN Justice et Democratie, August 14th, 2014.
[15] Male participant FGD, Site F
[16] Tellingly, these terms (power and authority) are often used interchangeably.

population – so that they involve themselves in all the projects of development in their area.

(Individual interview, Chiefdom Chief, Site F)

The village Chief in Site D focuses more on a behavioural form of sensitisation, where women are sensitised in their traditional gender roles within their home and village.

These women [the local community group] *do sensitisation in the village. They organise meetings with women and with the women Chiefs* [village women nominated by the village Chief to work on his behalf] *in each village. They sensitise them on cleanliness, on how they should comport themselves, on how they should maintain their village and their field. They sensitise for sanitation… If there are problems with women, if these problems are brought to the village Chief he calls the woman Chief to deal with these problems with the women.*

(Interview village chief, Site D)

In Site G, the Sector Secretary is particularly keen on the training aspect within the group as, in an extremely common yet erroneous conflation of training with intellectual capacity, he sees this as a way forward for members.

As we are in a rural area, we often need training. Because, you see, in rural areas you find very few intellectuals, or people who are trained in this way. So when they go in the field they start to ask 'what will we do?'. Here there are literacy classes. We want women to evolve because we want people who are trained. Fortunately there are good trainers, old teachers who were trained before. It is positive. There are some who started to speak French after one year here[17].

Me: Why is it important to train people like that?

In an area like we are in here, from our culture here, if there is no supplementary training to school, you stay at the bottom of the ladder. In our culture there are some things that are adapted to the reality of women, but there are other things that are not adapted to the reality of women. And somebody who has sat on the bench [been trained], *that reinforces the people. Somebody who has not been trained, there is a very big difference… When they are a bit trained they will go and train others and there will be some change. In the contrary case no…. Because with our culture here, the women are behind. They stay in the home, they go to the field, they do little business and so now money no longer circulates. You have to get on in life to have something, if not life is complicated.*

In terms of his own dealings with the group, in common with two other sites, he notes that the group is useful in preparing food for visitors to the office.

[17] The ability to speak French is a commonly used proxy for both intellectual capacity and leadership ability.

> *We are often with them here. They help us. When we have visitors, we go to them and they come to help us. They prepare food for the visitors, with little services. But when they have problems they also come, we try to sensitise them, to conscientise them.*
>
> (Interview Sector Secretary, Site G)

Overall therefore, local authorities are aware of the existence of the different community groups and view them as complementary to their own work, sensitising the community to be more involved in development projects and to adhere to the directives of local authorities. This collaborative, complimentary approach, which envisages community groups reinforcing existing hierarchies of authority, knowledge and power, together with prevailing gender identities, tallies to some degree with the view set out by group members themselves (see Section 3.7 in particular) although, as noted later, groups have made some significant first steps towards challenging some of these existing hierarches. We now move on to examine the motivations, actions and impacts of community groups in more detail.

3.3 Community mobilisation in Ituri

The following five sub-sections draw from FGDs with community groups together with individual interviews with select group members and non-members (randomly selected) as set out in Table 2.3.1 previously. Each sub-section begins with a brief explanation of the aspect of the groups examined. It then synopsises, in tabular form, the key findings in this regard before going on to discuss these in more detail. Again, it is important to reiterate that there is no 'right' entry for each of the tabular columns and that this is not a comparison of groups. Rather, this is simply an attempt to synopsise key findings. With a view to the broader research questions and aims of the research, each sub-section then finishes with a discussion of the key issues arising from the findings.

We begin with an examination of the history, organisation and functioning of the different groups.

3.3.1 The history, organisation and functioning of community groups

The history, organisation and functioning of groups is extremely important in relation to the broad research question on their role in building democracy from the bottom up. In this context, FGDs with all community groups included a general discussion on the merits of participation in political parties versus administration versus community groups (for women and men). Although views differed both between and within groups on this question, the lively discussions it sparked uncovered two important common insights. First, participation in these fora is viewed primarily as a route towards employment and income (see also Section 3.5). The question had to be reformulated in most cases to investigate which forum carries the most power and influence as this was not the criterion by which most first assessed participation in these fora. And second, a hierarchy exists, with participation in a community group viewed as a step towards a post in local administration which, in turn, is viewed as a step towards engagement with a political party (necessary to secure support in upcoming elections, should they happen), with an elected political 'post' widely seen as more remunerative than an administrative post.

Discussions around women's political participation in particular (an objective of a number of groups) yielded important insights into the necessity for 'not just any woman' to be included for the sake of numbers when it comes to wielding influence. There was unanimity that women need to be competent and articulate and to be at a level where they will engage on an equal footing with their male counterparts in political spaces. This view echoes warnings in the literature that the 'add women and stir' approach does not necessarily yield ready dividends as many other factors shape political interests and positions – notably political party affiliation and hierarchies of power within these. For example, Anne Phillips (1995) points out that if the political parties that women join do not advocate an explicitly 'woman-friendly programme', then there is no guarantee that women will represent women's interests.

Moreover, as experiences in neighbouring Rwanda and Uganda suggest, how women become member of political parties (and indeed community groups and administrative posts) matters greatly as, if their membership is determined by patronage (selection by a party/particular group/individual), their allegiances may well be to party authorities rather than in representing a 'common good', however defined.

While the approach favoured by many local NGOs in promoting women's participation is the selection of 'competent', educated women to be trained in workshops, it is important not to lose sight of the potential for community groups to function as spaces for political apprenticeship for women. This may take the form of either preparing them for participation in more formal political spaces or, and this perhaps merits greater consideration, laying the ground for a new community-driven form of politics which sees politically-savvy women mobilising, engaging and transforming political spaces from outside. As Jane Mansbridge (2000) has argued, in situations marked by histories of distrust, 'laboratories for interest articulation' are needed where women can begin to develop and consolidate their competencies in the necessary skills of argument formulation, debate, negotiation and bargaining which lie at the heart of all political deliberations. Community groups such as those examined in Ituri can function as such laboratories.

For this reason, the research explored a number of factors relating to the history, organisation and functioning of each of the groups. Both the dates of establishment and the purposes of the different groups were explored. For more established groups, the aim was to explore if their purpose had changed and evolved over time. This is because, while communities often mobilise around immediate issues, these issues are not fixed and groups can and often do evolve over time as they mature structurally and politically. Also, the basic functioning of groups was explored including the regularity of meetings, how agendas are set, how deliberations take place and how decisions are made. These issues are crucial to the notion of community spaces as political 'laboratories' as the procedures and practices around these can either develop the transformative potential of these spaces or reinforce the hierarchical status quo. Table 3.3.2 below presents a synopsis of the findings in this regard.

3.3.2 Groups at a glance

Table 3.3.2 A summary of the history, organisation and functioning of groups

Group	When established	No. members	How became members	Purpose of group	Regularity of meetings	How meeting agenda set	How decisions made
Site A	September 28th, 2009	10 (5F;5M) *[14 in FG – 7F; 7M]*	Election (paper) at public meeting – org. by supporting NGO	- Sensitisation on women's parity - Decentralisatn - Local problem solving	3 per month (although 3 weeks ago since last)	By Secretary	- Generally consensus - Rarely by majority vote (raise hands)
Site B	After the war	7 (1F: 6M) (11 originally) *[5 in FG – 1F; 3M]*	Election (paper) at public meeting – org. by supporting NGO	- Promotion of dialogue in community - Local conflict management	One meeting every 2 months	All members bring conflicts they have heard about to meeting	Consensus – prioritise conflicts to be tackled based on potential level of violence
Site C	2010	10F (7&3 from literacy centre); 3M advisors	7 elected from membership of 'Catholic Women' – 3 more 'taken' from literacy centre	- Women's parity - Bring local problems to chief	1st Tuesday of every month	By all – bring problems and this forms agenda	Consensus – but cannot provide criteria by which problems are prioritised
Site D	2010	21 (20F;1M advisor) *[18 in FG – 17F; 1M]*	Some selected by local chief; others joined on own initiative	- Sensitisation for women's leaders - conflict mgmt (by case) - accompany victims GBV	Don't meet formally	N/A as don't meet formally	N/A as don't meet formally
Site E	2008	3F group members 9 F leaders 2 M advisors	Some invited by school Director & Chief; others joined on own initiative	- Conflict mgmt. - local development - accompany victims GBV	On the 30th of every month	By President – consulting with others	Consensus – but cannot provide criteria by which problems are prioritised
Site F	May 5th, 2014	10 (3F; 7M) *[all in FG]*	Elected from among 27 church & local leaders who were invited by supporting NGO	- 'good governance' (local dev; fin. mgmt.; link bet. community & authorities) - sensitisation for women's leaders (in politics)	Twice a month	Secretary	By majority
Site G	2011	24 (20F; 4M advisors) *[17F; 2M in FG]*	Evolved from 'Catholic Women' – local authorities added some more	- Sensitisation on women's rights - conflict mgmt. on domestic prbs - lobbying village chief	Twice a month – once to plan and once to write report	No clear agenda – 'we plan together'	Vote if no consensus

As the data in Table 3.3.2 illustrate, some groups have been in existence for some time while others are quite new. There appear to be three principle ways in which people have become members of groups. In a number of cases, elections were held among either an open or an invited group of people. A second way is through selection/nomination by either local authorities (including School Directors) or existing members themselves. And a third, more recent manner, is by individuals approaching group members themselves and asking to be involved. In some cases, members have left the groups – remaining members say this is either because they have died, they have moved elsewhere, or they are unhappy with the lack of remuneration for participation in the group.

In relation to the purpose of groups, five main issues are apparent. These are local conflict management/problem solving; local development; sensitisation on a number of issues - notably women's parity; self-help – notably accompanying victims of sexual violence; and 'good governance'. These issues are reported as reflective of the purposes for which the groups were initially established and there does not appear to have been any significant evolution over time. Again, some excerpts below provide more of a flavour of these purposes.

> *The objective of the group is to make peace. What we are trying to do is to resolve family conflicts or conflicts between neighbours. When we created the group, the neighbouring communities did not come here and we did not go there. But when we created this structure they started to visit each other. First of all the women through the markets, and looking for firewood from this hill to that hill, and this helped with the peaceful cohabitation.*
>
> (Female FGD participant, Site E)

> *It* [The purpose of the group] *is to find peace, to teach people how to live together, to teach people how to forgive people who do bad to them. If there is a problem which comes, we put people around the table and we bring them to live like we did in the past. To help people forget what happened. And to sensitise the community in regard to different laws in the country.*
>
> (Male FGD participant, Site B)

> *Our role is to see the evolution of the village and, if there is a problem, that we will involve the Chief of the area directly… Before we did not work with the Chief. But now we work with Chief. So now if we want to construct a house, we do this with the Chief.*
>
> (Female FGD participant, Site G)

We go to sensitise the women so that they know to be together with men in the village. The Groupement Chief sends the message that we will come to this village to sensitise the women. And we select people from among us to go to that village to do the sensitisation.

Me: What is the objective of the sensitisation that you do?

The principal objective of Community group is to increase the presence of women in the public functions, in the public service, so that the presence of women will be everywhere, in decision-making everywhere. Everywhere where the men participate the women should also participate.

(Female FGD participant, Site C)

First there was a community group which was created in every Groupement to manage conflict. After this, as the group only involved men, this group was created. As there were only men in the community group, FOMI saw that among the women there were also women who had capacity to manage conflict. This is why we created this group, to work with the other group. The objective is to manage conflict, to accompany victims of sexual violence. The men in the other group did not have this capacity, and the women could not open up to these men and so this was the job of the women in this group.

(Female FGD participant, Site D)

In terms of the organisation and functioning of groups, different groups meet with different levels of regularity (often determined by distances members need to travel) and one group no longer meets formally, with group members carrying out different work on a more individual basis. It is a little unclear how agendas for meetings are set – therefore who decides what issues are up for discussion (and what are not) within groups. In some cases this appears to be the remit of the Secretary alone. In others it appears any member can introduce an issue (generally framed as a problem to be solved) but there appear to be no formal mechanisms for ensuring all get a chance to speak. A question which all groups found difficult to answer was the question of how decisions are made within groups. The initial response tended to be 'by consensus'. However, when posed with the problem of what to do when confronted with competing issues or priorities among members (a crucial question as to how different interests are mediated and negotiated – concrete examples were given), FGD participants found this difficult to answer. In a number of groups, participants simply said that this type of case has never arisen – there are never competing priorities. One (recently formed group) opted for a majority-based procedure should this arise although, in practice, this has not yet been invoked.

If there are divergences in opinion, we agree on what is priority. So the things that are not priority we put off until the next meeting.

(Individual interview, Femme leader and community group member, Site E)

We are a group, I can have my opinion, the other can have his opinion, but democratically, in the majority, we go with the majority.

(Individual interview, Male member of community group, Site F)

3.3.3 Issues arising

Three main issues arise from the findings to date. The first is the complex question of accountability and interest representation. With groups being established by local authorities or NGOs (albeit through elections in some cases), the issue of patronage versus 'common good' perhaps arises. Who are the community groups accountable to and, in this context, who are they representing? In this regard, it is noteworthy that there appears to be a keen interest in being involved in local groups and that many members continue to be involved after a considerable period of time.

Second, and allied to the question of accountability to NGOs and their objectives for the groups, there is little evidence of an evolution in function or role, even though in some instances the context in which the groups were founded has changed somewhat significantly. The over-riding purpose within groups appears to be how to survive within a dysfunctional system rather than to change it – i.e. an adaptive/survivalist rather than transformative role.

And third, although a good level of participation in FGDs was apparent in most (although not all) groups, hierarchies were readily evident and, in larger groups, some members did not speak at all unless explicitly called upon to do so. In this context, the absence of mechanisms and/or procedures for more equal participation in determining the issues and parameters of debate and the criteria for decision-making around these is problematic. While undoubtedly effective in addressing select problems presented to the group, it remains unclear whose problems count and whose do not. Moreover, the full potential for the groups to function as 'learning by doing' laboratories in political deliberation, debate and negotiation is not being realised. Intrinsically linked to these issues is the question of just who is involved. This is examined in the following section.

3.4 Who is mobilising?

While the term 'community' appears all-inclusive, the reality is that communities are comprised of a wide range of individuals with varying interests, resources, and motivations. Community groups therefore may (and often do) represent particular strata from more diverse communities and may, if afforded preferential access to decision-makers and local authorities as is the case here (see also Section 3.5), end up reproducing and reinforcing an inequitable status quo rather than transforming it. This section draws from initial introductions requested in FGDs to present a profile of community group participants in terms of gender, class and ethnicity.

3.4.1 Gender, class and ethnicity

While the gender of group members evidently proved easy to ascertain, efforts were also made to ascertain both the ethnic and class composition of groups. A proxy for the latter division (class) is made up of a combination of profession, church affiliation and NGO linkages. While individuals' professions provide some idea of economic capital, church and NGO linkages were explored to gain an idea of social capital. The 'value-added' of community group membership (one dimension of mobilisation) was explored by examining membership of local (non NGO supported) associations – the assumption being that community group members would be active in local associations also. Table 3.4.2 blow provides a summary of community group stratification.

Groups at a glance

Table 3.4.2 A summary of the stratification of community group membership

			Class				
Group	**Gender (in FG)**	**Ethnic composition**	**Farmer (& small market[18])**	**Teacher or public sector employee**	**Member of church**	**Member of other association (supported by NGO)**	**Member of local association**
Site A	6F; 7M	Hema and Lendu	3	1	5	2	2
Site B	1F; 4M	All Hema (Lendu have left)	1 (F)	4 (3 local chiefs & 1 veterinary)	1	3	1
Site C	14F; 3M	Hema and Lendu	6	2	7	2 (1 in group)	1
Site D	17F; 1M	Alur, Hema, Lendu & Nyali	12	3	6	3	11
Site E	12F (3 grp members; 9 F leaders); 2M	Alur, Babira, Lendu & Wangiti	9	2	10	3	4
Site F	3F; 7M	Buri	6	2	10	3	4
Site G	17F; 1M	Hema and Lendu	9	-	12	4	5

As the data in the second column indicates, all groups are comprised of a mix of women and men. The original idea was to have five women and five men in mixed groups. While this appears to have worked to some degree for some groups, membership of others – where membership was determined by local authorities – ended up predominantly or exclusively male. For this reason female groups were established alongside these groups in many areas.

These 'women's groups' also include one or more male members. According to members and supporting NGOs, they operate as 'advisors' to the women in the group. They also report that they accompany the female members when doing conflict management or sensitisation in the community. A male advisor interviewed individually explains his role below:

> *Me: can you explain to me your role as an adviser to the group?*
>
> *Because I am a trainer in the literacy centre I am automatically an adviser to the group. Our role is especially sensitisation with the population and with the apprentices which we train in the literacy centre. With the women's group we work together. We go together into the village when authorised by the Chief. If there is a problem in the village for example, we go to lobby the Chief. Sometimes the Chief finds a solution and sometimes he sends us to do the sensitisation. And so we work together with the Chief.*

[18] *'petit commerce'*

(Individual interview male advisor to female group, Site C)

Most groups are also made up of a mix of ethnic groups although one of the groups (in Site B) is now exclusively Hema. There appear to be no inter-ethnic tensions within groups although this proves difficult to definitively ascertain. When asked about changes in how they relate to each other over time (in terms of both gender and ethnic differences), group members claimed that there were never any tensions, even at the start. Individual interviews with two members of two separate groups did uncover some level of jealousy however (in relation to who is selected for workshop training).

In terms of class, a high number of group members (51) are also members of churches. This is perhaps unsurprising given church authorities' roles in the establishment of some groups. Some of the women's groups evolved from church structures known as '*Mamans Catholiques / Catholic Women',* an evolution which involved opening their membership to women from other churches (denominations) also. Many of these have specific roles and responsibilities within their churches, sitting on different committees. This would indicate that they represent something of an elite within their communities. This status as 'community leaders' is further supported by the fact that 20 group members are also involved in other structures supported by NGOs. It is noteworthy however that a high number also (46) are farmers *('cultivateurs'),* many of whom sell some of their produce at the local market (*'le petit marché'*), while just 14 hold public sector posts. Moreover, 28 are members of local associations (generally local self-help savings groups) which are self-organised and receive no external support. Generally, educational attainment appears to be one of the principle criteria for membership and the associated 'community leader' status, with 'competency', confidence and a level of articulateness also deemed important traits. A *'woman leader'* from Site E explains:

> *The invitation* [to the meeting where members of the group were elected] *came through the Director of a school here. He chose the women based on their competence and how well they can express themselves, and that is how I was chosen.*
>
> (Individual interview, Femme leader and group member, Site E)

3.4.2 Issues arising

The findings presented in this section show that most groups comprise a mix of members across the three levels of stratification examined. Participation in these groups therefore, presents a valuable opportunity to shift and ultimately transform ethnic, class and gender-based identities. Three things are important in this regard.

First, the level and quality of participation of all within the group. As noted in the previous section, the lack of mechanisms or procedures around this within groups risks some voices being louder than others and some remaining silent altogether.

Second, the issue of representation is critical. While there can be a tendency to assume the relatively 'poor' will be more likely to represent or mobilise other 'poor' people in their community, this is not necessarily the case. Whose interests do members represent? Whose do they not? And how do they do so? These questions are examined in the following section.

And third, the role of male advisors within 'women's' community groups perhaps merits closer reflection. While, undoubtedly useful in opening the door to local authorities as well as supporting women in their communities and domestically by advocating on their behalf with community members and husbands, the evidence for this role being carried out is mixed. Moreover, there is no great evidence of an evolution in views towards these women leaders in communities where groups and their advisors have been active for some time. One might expect to see a phasing out of male advisors over time if they were effective in their sensitisation role. Yet there is no discussion of such an evolution. Instead, despite time spent in the groups and participation in training workshops, a reinforcement and consolidation of patriarchal attitudes among some male advisors is evident. This is evident in the reproduction of widely held (among women and men) values and norms on women's subservient position and status within the home as emphasised by a male advisor to the Site C group below.

> *It is also the role of the community group to sensitise the other women not to raise themselves above the level of their husbands. With the advice that they give, also in the churches, they give advice to women to obey their husbands. That is the role of the community group.*
>
> (Male FGD participant (advisor to women's group), Site C)

It is also evident in the reinforcement of gender-based hierarchies of knowledge and authority, and in the persistent framing of gender inequalities in personal rather than structural terms (see Section 3.6 for more on such framing). As the excerpt from a male advisor to the women's group in Site D outlines, difficulties are women's own and the responsibility for addressing them are also women's own. Notwithstanding this, the advisors (as the appellation suggests) appear to have superior knowledge to women on how to do this….

> *We support the women to reinforce their capacity around the different trainings that we have received from FOMI. We are here to hold sensitisations. The essential thing for the women is that they come out of obscurity ….I am interested in accompanying the women because they have a lot of information to impart - all <u>their difficulties</u>. We can also show them an orientation, to show them – 'how will you do to address <u>your issues</u>?'* [how to address your issues].
>
> (Male FGD participant (advisor to female group), Site D – emphasis added)

3.5 Why mobilise?

An important issue relating to the purpose, impact and transformative potential of community groups is the motivation of group members – why do they decide to join (or, where nominated/elected, accept to join) their respective groups? Are they principally interested in pursuing personal interests and agendas or do their motivations lie in the broader area of structural transformation and social change? This section again draws from FGDs[19] and individual member interviews to explore the different, and multiple motivations for involvement.

3.5.1 Different motivations for mobilising

The motivations of individuals who become involved in social movements is a key focus of the social movement literature. Empirical studies of different movements have revealed a range of motivations and reasons for the emergence of such movements. One of the key motivations or drivers for collective action emerging from empirical studies is a sense of individual or collective *deprivation or inequality*. This sense of deprivation may be in relation to others or in relation to one's own expectations. This generally arises when individuals identify others as having more power, resources or status and seek to acquire these same things for themselves as a collectivity / community (Gurr, 1970). Ballard et al (2005) found this factor to be the principle driver in social mobilisation in South Africa.

A variant on this factor is *resource mobilisation*. This is where a group realises that it has more scope and potential to acquire and deploy resources to meet its goals as a group rather than as individuals. Such resources can be material (financial and/or physical capital), organisational (through other networks), human (volunteers, staff, leaders), and/or cultural (experience of collective action).

A third factor emerges from *rational choice* theory. Rational choice theorists view individuals as rational actors who strategically weigh the costs and benefits of different courses of action, choosing the course of action which proves most effective to their needs and/or interests. This raises the interesting question (known as '*the collective action dilemma'*) of why individuals would choose to join in collective action if they can benefit from its outcomes and impact even if they do not participate (see for example Olsen's (1965) classic work on this).

A fourth factor is *political opportunity.* This focuses on instances where certain political contexts prove conducive to collective action. Such opportunities can include changes in the political climate which afford increased access to decision-making structures and authorities; access to key elite allies (who can assist the group in its demands); an instability in the

[19] Each FGD member was asked, during the initial round of introductions, to explain why they became involved in the group. The findings presented here combine this data with data from the broader discussions around the activities and impacts of the different groups.

alignment of ruling elites or conflict between elites (opening a political space for other groups); and/or a declining capacity or propensity of the state to repress dissent (Meyer, 2004).

Finally, a fifth factor identified within the literature is where individuals and/or groups seek to develop new individual or collective *identities*, moving beyond those ascribed to them within their communities or by power-holders and authorities.

This range of motivations is set out in Table 3.5.2 below which synopsises the findings in this area from the seven groups studied. A tick (✓) indicates that the motivation was raised by group members.

3.5.2 Groups at a glance

Table 3.5.2 A summary of motivations for mobilisation / becoming involved

Group	Sense of deprivation / inequality	Resource mobilisation	Rational choice	Political opportunity	New collective identities	Other
Site A	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Site B		✓		✓		
Site C	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Site D	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Site E	✓	✓		✓		
Site F	✓			✓		
Site G	✓	✓		✓		

As Table 3.5.2 indicates, the three principle drivers of community engagement across the seven groups studied are a sense of deprivation / inequality (both individual and collective); resource mobilisation (mostly individual but also at a collective level); and the political opportunity afforded by the supporting NGOs facilitating introductions to and organising meetings with local authorities. The possibility to forge new or, at the very least, develop current personal identities also proves an inducement.

Group members' sense of deprivation / inequality is manifest in four different ways. First, it is raised by three groups in relation to women's parity – discussed in terms of access to administrative posts – a key issue for some groups, as well as women's rights more broadly. This is raised and discussed by group members in both individual (members aspiring to access posts themselves) and collective (the general principle that women are equally entitled to these posts) terms. In this regard, an individual motivation identified is access to training,

a necessary precursor to the possible acquisition of a post. Second, a sense of collective deprivation is apparent in the motivations and interest of one group in relation to local development (including transparency in the use of local taxes and NGO resources). Third, the inequality of the justice system is discussed by one group. And fourth, the need for the population to have a voice in decision-making in areas that concern them is mentioned by one group. Some excerpts from FGDs and individual interviews below give a flavour of some of these issues – notably in relation to views on and reactions to the most commonly cited issue of women's parity and women's rights:

> *What interested me* [to become involved] *was that when I learned that a woman can pose as a candidate, can direct. That struck me a lot, because men always put us to one side. Even if I live with a man, I can also participate in decision-making, even in the home. And so I invested in the group so that I could have information on this.*
>
> (Female participant FGD, Site D)

> *Through the sensitisation* [carried out by the supporting NGO] *what interested me was that we now talk more about the rights of women. Before women did not speak before the men. And I learned that women have the right to do that, and then I realised that it was important to enter into the group.*
>
> (Female participant FGD, Site E)

> *What forced me to be involved is that the Village Chiefs are very violent towards women. If there is a problem that concerns that woman, they do not judge that clearly* [justly]. *Even if the fault is with the man, the fault is always said to be with the woman. That always shocked me. And it motivated me to be one of the defendants of the women in the face of the men at a local level.*
>
> (Female participant FGD, Site E)

> *Our country in the Congo, we have lived for many years under a dictatorship, and we did not get a result, a satisfactory result, so that the country would go and develop. Back then decisions were made on their own. It was a dictatorship. It is important that the population is involved, and that it is not just the authorities which take decisions. The authorities have to learn to listen to the needs of the community so that the country progresses. We must also interest the population, that they have a word to say, that they express themselves on the development of their village,*
>
> (Male participant FGD, Site F – in response to a question asking what does he mean by 'good governance')

In relation to the allied issue of resource mobilisation, three main levels of motivation are apparent. The first level involves personal advancement and/or enrichment. One of the most commonly cited motivations in this category is the increased likelihood of gaining posts in local administration (particularly for women) which comes with group membership. The training taken as a group member, the associated enhancement in status to a 'Femme leader' and the access afforded to local authorities by virtue of membership are all key factors in this regard. Another is the potential for some individual remuneration for group participation, as some of the following excerpts indicate.

> *All that we do even in the level of the parish, it is free, involuntary, but the children they need some support. I have a child already at the University, and another in secondary school, and this weighs heavily in terms of paying for their education.*
>
> (Individual interview, Femme leader Site C[20])

> *Where I do have a difficulty is I have no remuneration. I work with the men and the Chief but I do not get any remuneration or a very small one compared to what the others are getting… We are not paid monthly, but we are paid per case. So if there is the payment from somebody of Fr.10,000, the others are paid more. For example I will only get Fr.1,000 of that.*
>
> (Individual interview woman leader, Site E)

> *Up until now we have been working on a voluntary basis. I would like to see financial visibility and some support for transport for our sensitisations.*
>
> (Individual interview male advisor to women's group and member of male community group, Site G)

A third motivation at this level is a little blurred as it relates to the potential for personal enrichment following conflict management interventions (as the second excerpt above also indicates). Some group members claim not to seek payment for conflict resolution work, while others claim they do. A particularly perplexing paradox exists in the case of one group which is composed primarily of local Chiefs. They claim that when resolving conflicts as Chiefs, they charge fines, but when resolving them as group members, they do not. They prove unable to answer the obvious question of what inducement there is to intervene in their capacity as group members in this context.

[20] It is revealing that this woman gave up her job as a primary school teacher as she claimed at have 'too much work at home' (she has 11 children), yet she stays on as Vice President of her community group.

A second level of motivation involves potential access to resources for groups as a whole. Although participation in all groups studied is on a purely voluntary basis, the need for more material resources (notably transport, a building for meetings and expenses for sensitisation sessions) were commonly raised in FGDs (either in response to a query on challenges faced by the group or, at the end, when asked was there anything else they wished to add). The third level of motivation is about securing resources for the community. Water resources and a local maternity were mentioned in one site.

Interestingly, when faced with the 'collective action dilemma' conundrum (why bother being a member if you can benefit indirectly from the group's impacts?), members of all groups stressed that it is important that they be part of the group and that their voice and views be heard. This may indicate any of a number of things. It may indicate a low level of trust within communities where members do not trust others to represent their interests and therefore feel they need to be present themselves. Allied to this it may indicate that members themselves are more interested in bringing their own interests and agendas to the group than those of their communities. It may also indicate that the benefits to be accrued from membership are more personal than collective.

As we have already seen in Section 3.3, the history and origin of all groups – whereby they were established by external NGOs who facilitated introductions with local authorities – mean that political opportunities pose a key motivation for all members. As we will see in Section 3.7 later on, the enhanced personal status and authority resulting from this increased access also constitutes a key motivation and driver for individual members.

In relation to evolving identities, four main issues arise. The first relates to personal identity and is the enhanced status derived from membership of a community group. As we see in Section 3.6 on further, this, together with increased confidence and knowledge of rights, translates into personal acts of defiance in the face of some officials' abuses of power. The other three issues relate to new collective identities made possible through either membership of the group or through its impacts. These new collective identities involve working within a group (a somewhat new experience for many women); working in a mixed (male and female) group (reportedly a new experience for all); and working in groups with mixed ethnicities (a new experience for all also). A female FGD participant explains the attraction of this latter issue for her.

> *When X* [supporting NGO] *came here, there was a training in the form of a seminar. They asked the local authorities to bring women and men from this area. There were also the two ethnic groups* [Hema and Lendu]. *Up until then the two ethnic groups didn't work together. At this meeting I was one of the ones that prepared the food,*

and I participated in the meeting. And when I saw that the two groups were sitting together - we sat together and ate together which I never saw before, working together which did not happen before – that gave me the courage and the inspiration to join the community group.

(Female participant FGD, Site E)

In addition to the motivations raised in the literature and within empirical studies of other collective action groups, another issue raised (by women) is the desire to personally assist victims of sexual violence. This emerged as a core motivation for a number of members of Site D's group in particular where reported cases of sexual abuse were particularly egregious.

I became a member because in the community group there were many cases of violence. This is why I became a member - to accompany the victims to be treated. Sometimes there is trauma and it must be treated.

(Female participant FGD, Site D)

3.5.3 Issues arising

This section demonstrates that community group members are driven by a combination of personal and collective interests. Personal motivations include the enhanced status and resources (financial and/or material) that may be accrued from membership of the group. This helps explain the continued popularity of membership and the fact that few groups claim to have lost members over the years. It also helps explain why members are not happy to leave others work within the group on their behalf. Instead, they are adamant that it is important that they are there to speak for themselves. This also indicates low levels of representation of community interests and priorities – an issue discussed in greater detail in the following section.

While personal interests are undoubtedly a key driver in membership, this section also demonstrates that collective interests also constitute an important motivation for members. This is evident in the strong sense of depravation and marginalisation among group members – most notably in relation to women's parity and rights, but also in relation to local development, justice and governance. Among women in particular (though not exclusive to female members) a strong sense of injustice and marginalisation is palpable in relation to women's rights and accepted social norms of behaviour, as is the optimism around the opportunities posed by talk of parity. While much of this is about access to posts and resources, it is clearly also about a lot more. As women are finally afforded a voice, there is some sign of some new identities and cultures emerging. However, as discussed in detail in the following section, optimism in this area should be tempered somewhat in that 'women's difficulties/problems' are framed by practically all (women and men) as just that – their own

problems to be addressed through women's own agency and responsibility. As with a number of other issues, they are framed in structural and cultural void. This framing is arguably one of the most important aspects of community groups' work in that it can serve to either reproduce and indeed increase inequalities, or it can transform them. This issue is discussed in further detail in the following section.

3.6 Strategies for mobilisation

This section again draws from FGDs and individual interviews to explore the different strategies used by different groups in their work. Groups were asked to explain what their main activities were and how they went about organising these. The section also draws on interviews with randomly selected individuals (non-group members). The findings are, once again, analysed within a framework drawn from the social movement literature.

3.6.1 Different strategies for mobilisation

Depending on their overall aim and purpose, collective action groups employ different strategies of mobilisation. One of three principle strategies (or a mix of these) is generally employed and each reflects a slightly different approach to how change happens. First, linked to the political opportunity motivation discussed in the previous section, groups may choose to focus on their ties to political elites and focus their energy on lobbying and advocacy efforts by building relationships with elites. The thinking here is that change happens through elite level negotiations and persuasion. As noted earlier, the success of such a strategy can be dependent on a number of factors – the relative openness or closure of the institutionalised political system; the stability of elite alignments; the presence of elite allies; and/or the state's capacity and propensity for repression (McAdams et al, 2006). While, in the contemporary era of 'good governance' where many institutionalised systems are finding it necessary to open up to civic actors, this strategy has become a favoured one of many so-called 'new social movements', political ties and relations need to be delicately balanced. Groups need to be careful to ensure that their efforts to maintain constructive political relations do not result in co-option and a resultant consolidation of the inequitable status quo. This requires carefully honed skills in negotiation and bargaining as well as a degree of political influence.

The other two strategies focus more on how groups increase their own level of political influence and draw from a theory that change that focuses on the role of ideas, ideologies and practices within broader society and the influence such a critical mass can have on decision-makers. The first strategy in this regard is framing. This draws from the view that there are two forms of power in society – coercion (the monopoly on violence) and the construction of understanding and meaning. Framing is the construction or re-construction of understanding and meaning across society. Benford and Snow (2000: 614) characterise it as "*an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction*". Put simply, it refers to the messages conveyed in relation to particular issues and their influence on popular opinion. While often applied to the media (for example the depiction of Africa in the Western media very much influences how the Western public views it), framing is used – either consciously or unconsciously by all social actors – and, in shaping how we think about and interpret the world, is a powerful political tool. And so, how problems are framed matters greatly. They may be framed in diagnostic terms – 'injustice frames' are often used in this regard by collective action groups together with 'blame frames'

(who is responsible). Or they may be framed in prognostic terms focusing on a solution or a plan of action. Precisely how they are framed is critically important because, although all individuals construct their own meanings and understandings by interpreting the messages and information they receive on their own terms, their mental processing is nonetheless conditioned by the nature of the message they receive. Collective action groups often exercise their counter-power to the dominant power of the marginalising and exploitative institutions of the state or of large financial or commercial corporations by constructing alternative meanings and narratives around the issues they are targeting. This generates alternative understandings, norms and meanings across society, challenges the *status quo,* and opens the door to more transformative change. According to Benford and Snow (2000), successful frames employed by civic groups draw on shared cultural understandings but also seek to challenge and transform these.

The third strategy involves networking with other groups. Networking is a core activity of many collective action groups as power grows and spreads through numbers. Moreover, networking builds communities - communities of togetherness, of solidarity and of change. Such communities are hugely important as they help to overcome trepidation and fear. And, as Castells, speaking of collective movements more broadly points out, "…*overcoming fear is the fundamental threshold for individuals to cross in order to engage in a social movement, since they are well aware that in the last resort, they will have to confront violence if they trespass the boundaries set up by dominant elites to preserve their domination."* (Castells, 2012: 10).

3.6.2 Groups at a glance

Table 3.6.2 below summarises the different strategies employed by the different groups studied. A tick (✓) indicates that the strategy is employed by the groups

Table 3.6.2 A summary of strategies employed by groups

Group	Political opportunity / ties to elites	Networking	Framing	Other
Site A	✓ Meeting with authorities organised by supporting NGO – although purpose of meeting unclear among members.		✓ Legal frame	Sensitisation (night markets)
Site B	✓ Local elites are members of group		✓ Benefits frame Personal responsibility frame Biblical frame	Sensitisation (although unclear degree to which this actually done)
Site C	✓ Sensitisation at village meetings and meetings with village Chief	✓ with other community group in site	✓ Personal responsibility frame	Sensitisation (on dev prbs, GBV, straying animals & laws)
Site D	✓ Sector accountant is member of group		✓ Legal frame	
Site E	✓ Good ties to Village Chief – information role		✓	Sensitisation
Site F	✓ Recent ties to Collectivity Chief – initial meeting organised by supporting NGO		✓ Legal frame	Sensitisation (planned)
Site G	✓ Reported lobbying of Village Chief	✓ with three other community groups on site	✓	Sensitisation

Political opportunity

As the summarised data presented in Table 3.6.2 above indicates, all groups have some sort of ties to political elites. In some cases, this is due to members of the groups being local authorities themselves; in others it derives from introductory meetings with local authorities organised by the supporting NGO; and in others it is due to locally fostered relations with local authorities. As we have seen previously in Section 3.2, in a number of cases these ties are quite tenuous however, with local authorities interviewed somewhat vague on the role, function and activities of their local groups. Where ties are stronger, the nature of the relationship between groups and their authorities is one of collaboration rather than

contestation. In these cases it appears that the groups are functioning as parallel authorities – agents of the local authorities, in some cases perhaps consolidating rather than transforming a culture of authority. For example, when asked to cite some successful actions her group has taken, a member from Site E cites two instances of local conflict management – one with the Chief and one on his behalf.

> *The first case is when a man left his home and went and took another wife. Our woman* [group member and member of Village Council] *and the Chief reconciled the original couple. The second case is an argument between two men and a woman on the boundaries of their fields. And when we brought the woman* [Village Council member], *she judged the problem and she found an intermediary solution on the boundaries.*
>
> (Individual interview female group member, Site E)

In Site F, where activities are about to commence with a newly formed group, the plan is to consult with the local authority to select themes for sensitisation.

> *Each time* [we will do a sensitisation] *we will have a meeting with the authorities first. We will have a theme that we will discuss with the authorities so we do not go and discuss with the people themes that the authorities that have not adopted…*
>
> *We count on sensitising the population on how the population can pay the state tax, this is already planned, and we have discussed this with the authority so he will allow this. And also, another theme* [for our sensitisation], *that the population supports the plan of development put forward by the Chief – the construction of bridges, the construction of schools, where the community can contribute to bringing the something for the construction, that is what we have planned.*
>
> **(**Male participants FGD, Site F)

In Site A, when asked about ties and relations with the local Village Chief, a female group member responds that

> *We come to give him* [Village Chief] *a report on how we have managed the conflicts if he is not present.*
>
> *Me: But is that not his role as Chief?*
>
> *Even if there is a Chief in the village, perhaps the Chief is not there where the problem is and so we go to manage it.*
>
> (Female FGD member, Site A)

Networking

The summarised data above also indicate that two groups are networked with other similar groups. The groups they network with are supported by the same three NGOs – FOMI, RHA and the CDJP. In some cases, members are members of more than one of these groups. While the rationale for having a number of similar groups together in the same site is explained by one NGO leader as creating a critical mass, some members themselves appear unsure what the rationale is, as exemplified in the extracts below.

> *Me: So there was already a community group, then you created a second. What is the difference between the two? Why have you two?*
>
> *There is no big difference we are all citizen committees,*
>
> (President community group, participant in female FGD, Site C)

> *Me: What is the difference between this group and X* [a second group]*?*
>
> *Male advisor to women's group (& member of group X): There is no real difference between the two. We work in synergy. We do the same work because it is the work of development. We sensitise people to wake up the population in the area…*
>
> *Female member: Group Y* [a third group also working here] *and Z* [a fourth group also working here] *work more on land conflict. Our group and group X are more for development.*
>
> *Me: So can I ask again my question for group X and your group, why are there two?*
>
> *Female member: Group X was the first. It was per Groupement. But then we needed to create a team of women, at the level of the parish.*
>
> *Me: And why did you need that at the level of the parish?*
>
> *Female member: It was the recommendation of the funders.*
>
> (Male and female participants FGD, Site G)

In some places however, group members (particularly women for whom participation in a group carries far more risk) readily recognise the importance of numbers and networks. A woman leader and group member in Site D explains this.

> *As a woman leader, to be on your own with five or six* [other women leaders] *is not enough. You need ten or twelve women so that you have others to multiply it* [your actions]. *Because when you speak between yourselves, you are in the same village. There are other villages around. And the women in the other villages cannot hear*

what you are saying. There are others who have not been to school, they are not interested in this. If they were grouped like we are, if you are together with them village by village, they can understand also these things.

(Individual interview, Femme leader and group member, Site D)

An important point to note however is that, although linked to sister networks supported by the same NGOs and engaged in similar work, the level of public knowledge of these groups is extremely low. Just two of the twenty-two individuals randomly interviewed across the same seven sites were familiar with these groups, describing their primary function as being sensitisation. The community mobilisation function of the groups appears somewhat limited therefore and, as we will see below, very much focused on sensitisation and information provision rather than representation or mobilisation. Groups report no linkages to wider networks – a factor which might also account for the lack of political and systemic analysis or action (see Section 3.7 on further)

Framing

On the strategy of framing, although this is not necessarily a conscious strategy employed by groups, four types of frames are nonetheless commonly used. These are all prognostic – i.e. they focus on what to do rather than engaging in diagnoses of what the causes of problems and issues being tackled are or attributing responsibility on any particular authority or political structure. The four frames employed can be characterised as legal, personal responsibility, biblical and benefits.

The legal frame is extremely common and appears extremely effective – most particularly in relation to both the issues of parity and to raising debate on the issue of GBV. Drawing from the explicit rights-based approach employed by Trócaire and hence, presumably its partners (community groups' supporting NGOs), it focuses on provisions within the Constitution in particular, and training in this area has been provided to group members. In a context where legal provisions appear to wield some influence on norms and behaviours at local levels (if not at provincial or national), group members have made much use of this framing in shaping attitudes and behaviours. The following excerpts provide a little more detail on how this is done.

Before 2008 [when the group was established and trained] *men did not listen to women. They did not consider them. But after 2008, with the installation of our group by X* [supporting NGO] *and the training of Y* [a second supporting NGO], *people are now more convinced. What has convinced them the most is what is in the Constitution. So that is what convinces them. Even if they are not happy with this* [talk of parity], *they do listen to us.*

(Individual interview, Femme leader and group member, Site E)

We would like to change the tradition that puts the woman to one side and says that a woman cannot become a Chief.

Me: How can you change this?

There is already a law which has articles which say that women and men have the same access to protection from the law, and the law says we cannot discriminate against women, and so we will militate so that this becomes the reality.

(Female participant FGD, Site A)

Before the custom did not allow us women to sit with men but now, after the Constitution openly authorised this, we take our responsibility and we sensitise other women so that they will work with men.

(Female participant FGD, Site C)

A second frame employed appeals to people's rationality and emphasises the benefits or losses accruing from particular actions. This was employed particularly by groups attempting to foster inter-ethnic reconciliation following the war. The excerpt below from a FGD in Site B where participants are discussing factors which have contributed to the success of their work exemplifies this. Participants also reference a third popular frame, that of Bible teaching.

We insisted on the fact that nobody won anything from the war even though everybody participated in it.

We also made reference to the part of the Bible that says if somebody does bad to you, revenge belongs to God [and not you].

(Male participants FGD, Site B)

A final frame employed is people's own responsibility, in particular in relation to local development, but also in relation to women's parity and GBV. A male advisor to the women's group in Site C frames the group's role in this light.

Me: What is the role of your group?

As I understand it, it is to bring up the women who are in the home. These women are chosen <u>to develop themselves</u>. They go everywhere in the villages to sensitise other women, to give them advice and pressure them on what they cannot do themselves. So they help them to develop themselves - on sanitation for example. They do all the development of the village. Together with the Chief, they are there for the development of the village.

(Male participant in FGD - advisor to women's group, Site C – emphasis added)

Often the personal responsibility framing appears interlinked with other framings. For example a female participant in the FGD in Site D links a rights discourse with a personal responsibility discourse.

> *For me, it is from knowing my rights that has allowed me to send all my children to school without discrimination. And now I say to other women that 'you should not wait for your husband to pay for the school, you should pay for the children in school instead of buying clothes etc.'. If you have money you should help their father to send the children to school.*
>
> (Female FGD participant Site D – emphasis added)

Sensitisation

Overall, by far the most common strategy employed across all groups is that of sensitisation or information provision. As the excerpt below illustrates, aimed at individual and collective behavioural change, this is intertwined with the framing of issues in terms of personal responsibility.

> *What we do the most regularly with the community are sensitisations. We sensitise people to discourage them from going to the market at night because here people have the habit of going to the market late*[21].
>
> *We also did sensitisation in three villages on how to avoid it catching the illness HIV/AIDS*[22]
>
> *Me: when you do sensitisations, why do you do sensitisations? What is the aim of this?*
>
> *To change the mentality, to wake the population.*
>
> (Participants in FGD Site A – emphasis added)

Sensitisations occur on a wide range of topics. As the excerpts below show, these range from animals straying (*divagations des bêtes);* to hygiene and sanitation; to sexual health; to general adherence to laws; to payment of taxes; to marriage conflicts… As noted in Section

[21] A common problem in all sites is that of 'the night market'. Although framed in terms of personal responsibility for going to the market before dark, the problem is actually one of sexual assault and rape – the incidence of which increases after dark. The consequences of this framing are apparent from the response of one group who, when asked if men should also be sensitised on this issue, after a pause responded that yes, men can also, in rare cases, be subject to assault.

[22] This was following contact from another local NGO which employs local community groups to increase awareness on health issues.

3.3, in the absence of agreed deliberation and decision-making procedures within groups, it remains unclear how these topics are chosen.

> *We sensitise that the animals should be brought into a collective pasture. If your herd is bigger than seven, you need to bring them to a collective pasture. And you should tie them up instead of leaving them loose in the village.*
>
> (Female participant FGD Site C – emphasis added)

> *Sensitisation on hygiene and sanitation* [is an important sensitisation theme]. *Because when you walk in the community, you find the community is in ignorance of hygiene, of sanitation. And the water that the community uses is not sanitary. And the community does not want to force itself to get a proper pump. So these are the themes personally I would like to see treated.*
>
> (Male participant FGD Site F – emphasis added)

> *At the start women did not look after the children's health. But with the sensitisation of our group we learned the importance of following the medical care for the children, and also for hygiene. Before it was men who should follow hygiene, but this was not reasonable. And the group taught us that we need to follow this as well as for drinkable water.*
>
> (Female participant FGD, Site G)

> *As the community group also has a mandate to sensitise on sexual violence, I went to talk to prostitutes to sensitise them. And I brought them to the health centre and the doctor consulted with them and gave them medicine.*
>
> (Female participant FGD, Site D)

3.6.3 Issues arising

Three main issues arise from the data presented in this section. The first is the nature of community mobilisation as carried out by the different groups. For the most part, this constitutes sensitisation and information provision rather than mobilisation as such. While sensitisation and information provision is an important first step in community mobilisation it is just that, a first step only. A second step is to explore perceptions, experiences and analyses of community members in relation to the particular issue being focused on – to probe, explore and above all listen, rather than to talk. A third step to develop a strategy for negotiating and prioritising the analyses and positions presented. And a final step is to develop a strategy for mobilising people around these agreed priorities – through framing,

through building a critical mass through networks, through relations with local authorities, or through a combination of all three. The networks developed so far across some different groups certainly aid in this, as does the awareness raising and re-framing in relation to parity and GBV carried out to date. However, steps two, three and four appear somewhat under-developed or absent at the moment across all groups.

The second issue arising is the nature of ties to local authorities and the identity of community groups vis-à-vis local authorities. In many cases, community groups appear to be functioning as a parallel local authority structure – carrying out local Chief's tasks on their behalf. While this can prove useful in resolving specific local issues, it fails to tackle or interrogate their structural or systemic root causes and simply adds another layer of local administration onto the existing one.

This more passive-reactive approach is reflected also in the framing strategies employed which, focused on prognosis rather than diagnosis (where usually the latter needs to precede and inform the former), and emphasising in particular individual responsibility over structural shortcomings, ultimately fails to construct or influence popular understandings and meanings of the specific issues tackled by groups. The practice of treating these in a structural and contextual vacuum risks resulting in a continual cycle of fire-brigade action where the same problems arise again and again nothing ever really changes. It also misses important opportunities for harnessing one of the most potent (and cost-effective) forms of power – the power to shape minds and meaning and to challenge and transform structures accordingly.

3.7 The Impacts of community mobilisation

One of the most difficult aspects of community mobilisation and action to assess is impact. This is due to problems of both perception and causality. On the first, the level of impact in different areas is generally perceived very differently by different actors. One way to attempt to overcome this is through triangulation – collating the views and perspectives of a range of actors. However, due to resources and time restrictions, this is necessarily always restricted. On the problem of causality, it is difficult, if not impossible, to prove that a community group caused a certain outcome, as opposed to other actors, developments or social phenomena. Hence the adage applied to all research "*correlation does not imply causation*". With these limitations in mind, this section draws on FGD and interviews with the range of actors set out in Table 2.3.1 earlier in an attempt to assess the impacts of group participation and action.

3.7.1 Different levels of impact

Although impacts are most often considered and studied at a political level (given the focus on collective action in the public sphere), it is important to note that impacts can occur at a range of levels, from individual, to cultural, to institutional to political. As discussed previously, community groups provide a solidarity network for individuals wherein individuals' fears may be allayed and their confidence built. As members connect with others concerned with the same issues, shared values may develop and new groups and networks may form.

Groups may also impact on social cultures and identities. This has notably been the case of the feminist movement, which explicitly aims at transforming attitudes, norms and practices around women and men's roles and status within society.

Allied to this, various state or non-state institutions may be targeted by collective action groups. An example of this in Ituri are the multinational companies which have invested in, or are seeking to invest in, oil exploitation in Lake Albert[23].

And finally, through their engagement – either directly or indirectly – with political institutions and actors, collective action groups can bring about profound changes to political systems by opening up and reframing debates, building coalitions for change, and ultimately democratising and transforming these systems. Table 3.7.2 below draws from the findings to summarise these different levels of impacts in relation to the seven groups studied.

[23] Unfortunately, for security restrictions, it was not possible to include community groups from Lake Albert in this study although this had been the original plan.

3.7.2 Groups at a glance

Table 3.7.2 Summary of impacts of community mobilisation

Group	On individuals	On cultures / identities	On targeted institutions	On political systems	Other
Site A	- Training, status and posts (2 female judges in chiefdom; 1 female market chief) - Confidence for women - Defence of personal rights		Impact negligible – meetings reportedly held with Deputies but no reported outcomes	Impact negligible – a step towards entering these systems but not transforming them	Local conflict management
Site B	- Status for women	- Ethnic tensions reportedly eased	- Local Chiefs in group yet report no impact on their work as Chiefs	- Not the remit of the group	Local conflict management
Site C	- Confidence of women – can speak out among men - Status and posts (3 female heads of 10 houses)	- On gender relations? - Intl women's day fête - but parity problem framed as 'women are not awake'	- Impact negligible – Group and Village Chiefs unclear on the role of group		Jealousy
Site D	- Status and posts (1 female village judge; 1 female head of 10 houses)	- On gender relations? - Intl women's day fête; reduction in GBV	- Negligible - conflict management with customary village Chief's family		- Jealousy - Ad hoc assistance to other individuals
Site E	- Status and posts (3 female heads of 10 houses; 2 female village 'sages' – 1 on village council)	- On gender relations?- reduction in GBV	- Woman on village council but resistance from Chief		- Jealousy - Resistance from some men in village - Health centre
Site F	- Status - Training (for women)		Developing good relationship with Chief of Chiefdom but role?		
Site G	- Literacy and training - Status - Confidence (for women)		Negligible – Sector representative talks of sensitising group members & having them prepare food for Sector guests.		- Improved health practices and facilities

Individual impacts

As the data in the table indicate, the most significant impacts have occurred at individual levels among group members. Four main impacts can be discerned at this level. First, and at the base of all other personal impacts, is the enhanced status and prestige which comes with group membership. This is due to a) participation in training workshops and b) closer relations to local authorities forged by virtue of membership. This status and prestige leads to three other impacts – increased confidence (most notably among women but also cited by a number of men); increased access to local posts (most notably for women within local voluntary structures); and the ability to use the information provided in training sessions to defends one's rights. Some excerpts from FGDs and interviews when asked about impacts of membership on them personally give a sense of these issues.

> *The big benefit for me is to work for others. More than that, there are the different trainings. I will*[24] *understand things that used to go over my head.*
>
> (Individual interview female group member, Site F)

> *Since I have grown up I have not had the chance to study but, thanks to X* [supporting NGO], *they talked about the importance of education. And so this gives me a chance, <u>even if it is with women</u>, to study more. I was in obscurity, I did not know how to read and write, but I joined the literacy centre. Now I can write and I have the joy of being able to continue with the literacy centre.*
>
> (Male participant FGD, Site G – emphasis added)

> *There are a lot of benefits* [of membership]*… We have this privilege to reach the authorities. With the participation of the community group, I can approach the Chief, even the police commander, I can approach him. Before this I could not do that.*
>
> (Individual interview male group member, Site F)

> *The advantage of being a member* [of both the women's group (as an advisor) and the mixed community group] *is that we are closer to the power… As a member of the community groups, I am given an honour on the road, the military people, the police. I am known as a member of this association.*
>
> (Male participant in FGD Site G)

[24] This is a new group and has not yet done any training, hence the future tense.

What impresses me the most is the relationship with the authorities. At the start I was afraid of these people. But when I am at the head of the group, in meetings for example, I speak. People know me. And even people when they meet me on the road, they say 'X [name of group] *how are you?'. I am very proud of that.*

(Individual interview, Femme Leader, Site C)

I am a widow. After the death of my husband, following the custom, they had prepared a little brother of my husband who was now to be my husband. But thanks to the training of the community group on the rights of the widow, I defended myself in front of the family who wanted to give me a husband by force and I defended my own rights and those of my children.

(Female participant FGD Site A)

Some contradictions are apparent between the testimonies of group members and those of non-group members randomly interviewed, together with the testimonies of local authorities. The vast majority of non-group members interviewed (20/22) claim not to know of the groups. Moreover, as we have also seen in Section 3.2.3, local authorities, while aware of groups' existence, are generally unclear as to their specific role. This throws into question assertions of proximity to and close relations with these authorities. These apparent contradictions perhaps highlight the fact that membership of a group and the status this confers (a local community leader) is more important than the actual activities of the group. This would also help explain the levels of jealousy (see 'other' column) which came through in random non-member interviews.

The 'value added' of parity

Given the importance of the goal of group members (particularly female) ascending to administrative and political posts among both members themselves and their NGO supporters, it is perhaps worth examining more closely group members' ambitions and objectives around this. As noted earlier, discussions around the merits of posts in political institutions versus administrative institutions versus community associations such as the groups studied were held with all FGs. In particular, the research sought to explore participants' views on what 'value added' women might bring to these respective institutions. Asking first why they should be involved, responses invariably centred around the parity and rights discourse.

It is necessary that a woman is in a political party because it is her right.

(Female participant FGD, Site D)

There are articles in the Constitution that say that women should be there with men in political posts.

(Female participant FGD, Site G)

For one FGD participant who is already in an administrative post at the level of the Sector, the next logical step in her career progression is to move into a political party. As she notes…

As I am the Head of Gender and Family [department within the Sector administration]*, it is not good to stay there. It is better to go to politics because then I can get access to other posts.*

(Female participant FGD, Site D)

Moving on to a specific question on what additional contributions (to those of their male counterparts) they might bring to their institutions, the response was often silence. When prompted, although no clear consensus on this emerged, the general view (among women and men) tended toward women not being suited to political life as it is too corrupt and violent and therefore they would not survive in that environment; women being ideally suited to administration as they are less corrupt, harder working and more efficient; and women also being suited to community associations as they are afforded a voice within them. Participation in associations builds confidence and skills, and it proves a useful first step on the way towards administration.

For me I think it's important to have a good number of women in associations because it is the members of these associations who will become candidates for political parties and who will go into administration.

(Female participant FGD Site A)

I think that administration is best. Naturally the woman is made just as intelligent as man. In administration now a woman can see which things work well. She orients, she analyses, and it works. And when we see how she manages the home, she coordinates more things than the husband. With the experience that she has, she can go into lots of enterprises, women are often very successful in enterprise. But when it comes to something that is a bit complex, like the politics, it is not easy for woman to do. Because often politics can lead to bloodshed, and for a woman who is involved in that it is not easy, she will regret many things. So where often politics can lead to bloodshed, when women get involved, they often do not succeed. In political parties there are only men who can survive in that, but in administration, I think women can succeed. In politics, she may have a place even at the head, but she will not succeed in doing anything.

(Male participant FGD, Site F)

I also agree with the participation of women in administration rather than politics because, as the others have said, in administration there is a certain logic. But in politics there is an ethic, what I might call an ethic - a certain immorality, where you can easily lie and cause bloodshed, but in administration it is better.

(Female participant FGD, Site F)

It is best to have women in associations, because an association is a place to exchange and to share ideas where people can complement each other or can contradict each other, but they do this to get to an objective. For me it is important that women are more visible and more active in associations.

(Female participant FGD, Site F)

On culture / identities

Two main impacts in terms of changes in culture and identities are apparent. The first is the reported reduction in inter-ethnic tensions. While this is undoubtedly due to the intensive inter-ethnic reconciliation work carried out by a range of NGOs following the war, it is also inevitably attributable to a range of other factors, including the retreat of Rwandan and Ugandan forces together with the passage of time. While group members are keen to stress that relations have improved significantly, other commentators[25] note the persistence of underlying tensions and the ethnic nature of many of the local conflicts mediated by group members.

The second area of impact is in relation to gender relations. Although not successful in all sites, in some groups women and men discuss and plan together. This is reported to be a significant difference to practices of the past when, as noted earlier, before the war women did not participate in formal community groups at all (although informal self-help associations have been in existence for some time).

The fact that we work with men, we see all of us as equal. There is no difference between men and women. We are all here together.

(Female participant FGD, Site A)

[25] Author interviews NGO leaders Bunia; See also Pottier 2009; Huggins 2012.

Before, when you put your finger up to speak, the men shut you up and asked you 'what are you thinking of doing?'. But now that we can read and write, that makes a difference.

(Female FGD participant, Site C)

The one specific area in this regard which appears to have seen some change is the level of public debate around the issue of GBV. While again, this is clearly attributable to enormous international attention in this area[26], at a local level – among group members and local authorities alike – it is highlighted as an important issue to be tackled.

In the case of sexual violence we have seen a decrease in cases.

Me: Is that because of your work or is it because of the passage of time?

It is because before we hid it, and we did not want to denounce it. Even if it is the family who knows who is the victim and who is the perpetrator. But thanks to the sensitisation we now have denunciation, and we can talk about it openly, and there are people who say 'look there is a case here'.

(Female FGD participant, Site D)

There are other women, and other men, who refuse to live with women who have been victims of sexual violence. Even though they have followed their treatment. So we have identified these men and we would like to invite these men and to speak to them so that they will not abandon their women. It is not these women who wanted to be victims. It is just the consequence of war.

(Individual interview, Femme leader and group member, Site E)

These significant developments are tempered somewhat however by the framing of these issues. Specifically, a return to the WID (Women in Development) approach of the 1970s is apparent where the emphasis was on the addition of women to development projects and processes to increase efficiency and productivity with no attention paid to the specific barriers that they face – what has been aptly characterised as the 'add women and stir' approach (see for example Pearson, 2005). This is apparent in both interventions which stress women's roles within development in their communities and in the framing of gender inequalities in terms of women's personal responsibility (see also the previous section (3.6) on framing). Some extracts below illustrate this point.

[26] The high level of international attention, while welcome in providing a supportive platform for local condemnation of GBV, proves something of a double-edged sword in that its simplistic linkage of GBV to the war negates its basis within the wider patriarchal culture and also simplifies the complex social and political relations underpinning this, together with the role of the international peacebuilding system in supporting and reproducing these (see also Baaz and Stern, 2013).

In the first case, a 'woman leader', member of the local women's group and accountant in the Sector office outlines the importance of women in the area in classic WID terms by describing women's role in constructing a water point.

> *The woman Chief* [community leader] *organises the water point, the transport for this.* [She organises] *the water for fixing the road, the gravel for the road… Women do that with men. Men are there to put the gravel in the sacks for the women, but it is the women who do the transport. They are extremely important, especially here in the Sector, for the transport… Even for the Groupement, for the village.*
>
> *In addition, the* [Sector] *Chief can use them if there are visitors, for the Welcome* [food preparation]. *They prepare* [food] *for a delegation of ten or fifteen people. The Chief can take this woman and that woman for the preparation of the food, so they are very important.*
>
> (Individual interview, Femme leader and Sector accountant, Site D)

In the second case, a female participant in a FGD in Site C claims that a customary reigning family selected a female member to be the Groupement Chief. Asked how this happened given that, traditionally, this role passes to a male family member, it was stressed that the problem here is not cultural or traditional, but personal.

> *Me: Why did it happen* [that a woman was selected by the family to be Groupement Chief]?
>
> *This woman was happy to be voted. The problem is that women are not awake and do not want to be voted, but this woman was happy to be voted.*
>
> *Me: So it is the women are the problem?*
>
> *Yes*
>
> (Female participant FGD, Site C)

Again, in the same vein, a male advisor to a woman's group in Site D claims that the lack of women in administrative posts is due to their own reluctance to apply for these. Interestingly, this view is contested by some women in the group who raise the issue of male resistance to such a move.

> [Male advisor] *Me, I would like to see…, there are posts in administration that are out there. After the sensitisation men see that it is true, that it is women's right* [to have access to these posts]. *But what woman will take the position? So I would like that women would take the posts. The posts are there. Even at the level of Groupements, we need them. All that is needed is that women themselves will open themselves to this.*

[Female member 1] *It depends from one area to another, there are areas where there are women who are capable, where they are who women who have the art to direct, but where the men are resistant. And so it is necessary to sensitise the man, using the FOMI advisors…*

[Female member 2] *In administration, men may accept, but otherwise* [at home] *they can oppose.*

[Female member 3] *There was a women leader near Nitzi. She was very, very good, but her husband said 'niet'!*

(FGD participants, Site D)

As we might expect, as the second and third members' interventions above indicate, changes in culture and identity within the home are more difficult. This is particularly the case as the legal framing of equality issues – rooted in the parity provisions of various texts – refers to roles and responsibilities within the public sphere and the home is still regarded as a private sphere apart. And so, some female community group members have experienced resistance from their husbands, while, in other cases, husbands appear to have shifted position on this.

My husband is happy because at the start I was illiterate. But when I started to study in the [literacy] *centre he was happy*[27]. *We changed the lessons from 10 hours* [10am] *to 13 hours* [1pm] *so that we could go to the field and do work first. Then we go to the centre, and then we come home and we bring our copybook with us. When my husband sees the copybook he is very proud of this.*

(Female participant FGD, Site C)

At the start it was very difficult with my husband. But today, he sees what we are doing is good work and he says 'no, you are working for the community, it's ok'. There are still some disputes but I continue nonetheless.

(Individual interview, last remaining female member Site B group)

Sometimes he [my husband] *is drunk, so there are annoying words from his side. Sometimes he wants to start at me, to hit me, but mostly it is just words. I do not listen to what he wants to say. As for other things, before going to a meeting I do all the work that is needed. If it is the food, I leave it all at the house. As I am on my own, I do not have the children that can help me, they are dead. So I am with two children, one with epilepsy and the other quite grown* [but is mentally disabled]. *So they are not people who can do something in the house. And so I am there alone to do everything. When he* [husband] *is drunk, I leave it. I don't pay any attention to what he has to say to me….*

[27] In Site C, many group members begin by taking classes in the literacy centre also supported by the external NGO. They then may 'graduate' to the community group.

(Individual interview group member, Site D)

An explanation for this resistance among men to 'allowing' women take up administrative posts or indeed join local community groups combines the WID and personal responsibility frames. As the following extract demonstrates, it is often explained as being the consequence of women's 'misunderstanding' of the rights frame in relation to its impact on women's work in the home.

> [Female member 1] *The resistance of the men depends on the women. If they leave their home and they have not organised the work and left it to children who are too young to do the work, that is what makes certain men revolt. They cannot organise the home, they go off to a workshop of two days or a full day. They have not organised work in the home and the men say 'that is FOMI who makes you headstrong and you have not organised your work at home'.*
>
> [Female member 2] *Women are starting to understand in a wrong manner their rights, in relation to what they should be doing in their home. What they should be doing they have replaced by their rights, and this is what makes the confusion. They know their rights but they forget what they should be doing in their home, their responsibilities. So it is necessary to make them understand more of their responsibilities in their home.*
>
> (Female FGD participants, Site E)

On targeted institutions

While there appears to be little impact on targeted institutions at a higher level than the village, some groups do appear to wield an influence on village level institutions. For example, in Site D, the President of the local women's group intervened recently in a dispute over power within the customary village authority's family.

> *There was a conflict in the reigning family, the village chief, two brothers were quarrelling over power and there are others who are not from the reigning family who are also part of this conflict. So we had to organise an election to regulate the power* [manage the conflict]. *The brother wanted to take the power by force. We did this last week. So, as President of the community group, I made them understand that they had to get on together until the population decides which candidate should continue. It is now regulated in favour of the eldest son.*
>
> (Female FGD participant, Site D)

In Site E the local group has succeeded in gaining a place for a woman on its Village Council. As one member outlines below, this followed training organised by the supporting NGO.

> *After I followed the sensitisation I went back to my village and I organised a meeting with other women to show them that in the local administration there are just men who take decisions, why cannot women take these decisions also? We were trained on the rights of women and the leadership of women. So there we took a decision to send a Sage* [wise woman/woman leader] *from the village and to present her to the local administration. We went to see the* [Village] *Chief with this woman that we chose and we told them* [the Chief and his Council] *that they cannot work without women. And now we have a representative of women that must sit with them in the local Administration and she works with the men in the village. And now she takes part in decision-making in the village.*
>
> (Female participant, FGD, Site E)

However, as the Village Council member herself attests below (specifically requesting that her testimony go into this report), her role on this Council is opposed by the Chief and she is encountering much resistance in this regard.

> *I am a woman leader and I am also an adviser to the Village Chief. … When I was working with men in my village, there was my field that was destroyed by an animal from the neighbouring village. When I followed this, my Village Chief said 'now you are trying to sit with men together and you, you have become too headstrong as a result of this'. And this shocked me but I wanted it to go into the report because my Chief does not respect me and shows his resistance and does not want me to have a voice.*
>
> (Female participant, FGD, Site E)

And so, while groups have had some impact on village level institutions, problems and resistance remain. At higher levels, groups appear to have had less impact however. For the most part, and as also set out earlier in Section 3.2.3, while local authorities at these levels are aware of the existence of community groups, their understanding of their role and activities is very limited – often expressed in vague terms as sensitisation of the population with no real clarity on the precise themes treated in these sensitisation sessions. The following excerpt from an official in the traditional Chiefdom of Site A gives a sense of this.

Me: What is the principal role of Group X in your opinion?

[pause]

Official: They do their propaganda with the population, they sensitise the population.

Me: What themes do they sensitise on?

Official: I don't know

(Interview local authority Site A)

In Site D the group has targeted the local military to request that the road blocks requiring payment for passage be removed or, at least, reduced. However, as they outline below, they have had no success with this. Probed on what further action the group could take on this, group members respond that although the fault lies with 'the President of the Republic' for not paying adequate military salaries, there is nothing more they can do as the President is too far away and local protest would lead to both retaliation from the military agents at the road blocks and would also block women from getting to the market to sell their produce. It is noteworthy that the problem is identified in pragmatic terms as being the cost of the multiplicity of fees to be paid rather than in a justice frame – that they should not have to pay this in the first place.

Participant 1: Another thing that we try to change were the blockades set up by the military on the roads. We tried everything to change these but that has not worked

Me: And what did you do to try to change this?

Participant 1: We did a lot of lobbying to the commander of the military but that didn't work…. We pay that [the fee imposed for passage at the road blocks] *from fear because they can also shoot you if you do not pay. The biggest problem is there is a multiplicity of these blockades. So if you are going a long distance you are obliged to pay the Fr.500 per blockade and it becomes very expensive.*

Participant 2: It is from these Fr.500 that the population pays, this is how the military get rich. They have their motor bikes and so on. And if we protested against it, they would attack us.

Participant 3: If you do not pay the Fr.500, you will not get to the markets. And then your children will not study because you will not have sold your merchandise.

(Female participants FGD, Site D)

It therefore appears that, while groups have made some (albeit not without resistance) impact on local, village level institutions, they have failed to make any impact on any higher level institutions. As we might expect, their influence on political systems overall is therefore

negligible. It should be noted that some groups (those aimed at inter-ethnic reconciliation) do not aim to have any impact on political systems although it could be argued that, given the importance of these systems on local conflict dynamics (see Section 3.1), it would be useful to do so.

On political systems

There is no evidence of groups impacting on broader political systems. This is due firstly to the geographic and political distance of these systems from community groups themselves. Much authority is invested in the 'President of the Republic', yet he is over 3,000 kilometres away in Kinshasa. As we have seen, even at Sector level, the role and activities of groups is poorly understood. The second reason for this appears to be the prognostic rather than diagnostic framing of problems as discussed earlier. Following this approach, the emphasis is on managing or resolving immediate issues through representation to immediate authorities rather than contemplating any systemic analysis or action. We have already seen this in the case of Site D's group and the military road blocks. Another example of this approach is apparent in Site F, where one group member considers, when prompted, how the group might tackle the major issue of school fees which is raised by both himself and many others interviewed as one of the main difficulties for families across all sites. As with the road block issue, although the problem of low or non-payment of teachers' salaries, together with zero public investment in education is understood by all, the solution is seen to lie in negotiating with the local school authorities rather than developing any broader strategy on public education spending within national, provincial or sectoral budgets.

> *Me: And for the payment for education, do you think it is something that the group could influence? Could the group do something about this?*
>
> *Yes, the group could involve itself. Because we are participants of governance. We should talk to the managers of the school to debate the issue. Lately here, there is no money in the hands of the population. Each day that the cost of living goes up, to have money is very difficult. So the group could involve itself in the negotiation of the payment of education. Because there is no money, because soon there will be very few children in school.*
>
> (Individual interview, male group member, Site F)

Other

Impacts in other domains as synopsised in the final column in Table 3.7.2 have been raised already. These mainly relate to the main strategies employed by the groups (sensitisation in specific areas and local conflict management on behalf of or in the absence of the local Chief) and some jealousy that appears to exist among other individuals, presumably due to the

perceived benefits accruable from membership of the group and proximity to both local authorities and NGOs based in Bunia.

3.7.3 Issues arising

With the caveat that it proves very difficult to assess impact given the twin problems of perception and causality, three principle issues arise from the findings and analysis presented in this section. First, the strongest impacts of community group involvement are at individual levels. These are evidenced in cases where members have successfully managed to defend their own rights or those of some immediate family members in the face of abuses of these rights by either the authorities or others in their community. They are also evidenced in the successes reported in securing posts in local administrative structures, notably at the level of local markets, ten house heads, or in village councils.

Second, there is also some evidence of cultural impacts or impacts on both ethnic and gender identities although clearly the degree in both domains is highly variable and undoubtedly closely linked to associated shifts in power relations and access to resources or the various means to secure them.

Third, groups' activities and actions to date appear to have had little transformative political impact. This is apparent in the negligible impact on both local institutions and at a broader systemic political level. In relation to the former, in cases where group members (notably female) have entered these institutions, no change in their norms or practices is reported. Although it is possible that increased female participation in local village institutions has led to greater attention being paid to so-called 'women's issues' or problems / conflicts involving women, the practice for addressing these remains unchanged. There is also evidence of continued resistance to women's participation in these structures in places. In relation to the latter (political systems), the lack of impact is explicable due to a) geographic and political distances from the centres of power – exacerbated by the limited embedding of community groups in wider networks; and b) the emphasis on prognostic rather than diagnostic framing which leaves groups focusing on the symptoms rather than the causes of many of the issues treated.

These findings suggest that community groups have made some invaluable and critical first steps towards meaningful and potentially transformative political change (notably in relation to important shifts in gender relations) but are ultimately stopping short of taking the remaining necessary steps. The important first steps include the skills of communication and argumentation developed within different groups, together with the growing level of confidence and self-belief required to make use of these skills. However the remaining missing element of political and analysis and contestation is limited in two respects. First, it is limited by the tendency of groups and group members to operate as parallel local authorities. Doing so while adopting the same norms and practices as local authorities risks consolidating the hierarchical political relations which prove antithetical to transformative

change. And second, it is limited by the persistent prognostic rather than diagnostic framing of different issues. Community groups therefore, generally speaking, appear to have the confidence and skills to mobilise and transform local political relations, yet the necessary analytical step is missing to move them to such transformative action.

4. Conclusion and some points for reflection

This research has examined the politically transformative potential of seven community groups in Djugu and Irumu territories in Ituri. It has found that while group membership has had a significant impact on individuals within groups, as well as some level of impact on shifting ethnic and gender identities, groups' activities and actions to date appear to have had little transformative impact at a broader level on political institutions and systems.

The principle reasons for this are three-fold. The first relates to the role of groups – as perceived by themselves, by their supporting NGOs, and by local authorities. For the most part, established at a time of profound upheaval and crisis following the war in a context where international peacebuilding efforts focused on elite settlements rather than addressing the root causes of conflict at local levels, community groups' activities were necessarily more survivalist than transformationalist. Today, in a significantly changed context, their humanitarian roots are ever present as they aim at either helping people survive within a dysfunctional system or – in the case of the parity issue – incorporate themselves into it. Operating in collaboration with local authorities, their role is to reconcile people to their world, rather than to contest and transform it. Moreover, their actions as parallel authorities risk reproducing and consolidating existing inequalities and hierarchies of authority, knowledge and power, thereby supporting rather than challenging and transforming these political institutions and systems.

Second, groups' framing of issues, problems and conflicts (including gender-related issues) leaves little or no scope for an analysis of their structural or systemic underpinnings. While the rights-based approach with its strong legislative basis proves an extremely powerful frame within the community, the emphasis on personal responsibility leaves no scope to explore or interrogate the responsibilities of state structures and authorities. Solutions to systemic problems are promoted within a political and cultural vacuum. As such, they tend to address symptoms rather than causes. At best, such solutions can lead to some temporary respite for some but, at worst – notably in relation to the framing of gender parity as being women's sole responsibility – they can add to the already significant demands (physical and psychological) on individuals' and families' energy and resources. In addition, with the responsibilities and agency of political authorities rendered all but invisible and the same problems and conflicts doomed to repeat themselves, people's tendency to vent frustration and anger at the ethnic / gendered / regional 'other' is exacerbated.

Third, the nature of community groups' relationships with other community members, with a focus on information provision and sensitisation rather than mobilisation (talking at rather than listening), leaves little scope to explore perceptions, experiences and analyses of community members, to formulate strategies around these, and to work together to address them. In short, it misses valuable opportunities to explore and imagine alternative futures and to build coalitions of support for these.

This is not to deny the significant achievements of the community groups, operating as they do in extremely difficult and challenging circumstances and, although at times somewhat arbitrarily, rendering important and, in some cases, life-saving services to their friends and neighbours. Nor is it to deny the tremendous courage, determination and generosity of spirit displayed by their members. Such activism shows that communitarianism is alive and well in Ituri and flies in the face of simplistic, reductionist theories of individually motivated action. The points are made with a view to the evolving paths of the different groups and the transformative potential they offer to both their members and their constituent communities. In this regard it is worth reiterating that groups such as those examined in Ituri can function as political laboratories where, operating via agreed clear and transparent democratic mechanisms and procedures, members can develop and consolidate their skills in argument formulation, debate, mediation, negotiation and bargaining – skills, in other words, to equip them to engage with wider political interest groups in forging a new, more inclusive and democratic politics. Drawing on the comments just made, four issues/challenges/questions are perhaps worth reflecting on in this regard.

First, in terms of framing, how can the framing of issues/problems/conflicts be broadened from prognosis alone (how to manage) to a diagnosis of their root causes? Second, in terms of responsibilities, how can the field be broadened from individuals' responsibilities to those of economic and political structures and authorities? Third, in terms of so-called 'women's' or 'parity' issues, how can the approach be broadened from the apolitical WID 'add women and stir' approach to one which interrogates the root causes of women's marginalisation and discrimination in the context of roles and hierarchies inscribed in and reproduced by dominant social norms, practices and discourses? And fourth, in terms of mobilisation, how can groups move from sensitisation alone to collaboration with community members and individuals to build networks of solidarity and support in challenging and transforming inherently inequitable systems and structures?

The evidence of the past ten years demonstrates that greater equality, justice and freedom for Iturians will not come from the top down. It has to be forged from the bottom up. And, in a context where this has never been allowed or facilitated, this requires both space to imagine political alternatives and it requires coalitions of solidarity and support to bring them about. The challenges in developing such spaces and coalitions are certainly significant, but in a context where the root causes of the war remain simmering beneath the surface, the costs in not doing so are most certainly more.

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