CONFLICT ANALYSIS SUMMARY

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

## Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy in Conflict-Affected Contexts Programme

This report summarizes findings from a conflict analysis undertaken as part of the UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) programme, funded by the Government of the Netherlands. The purpose of the analysis is to understand the cause and context of conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the nature and prevalence of conflict within the education system. The analysis also sought to identify the role of education in combatting conflict while building peace, as well as key mechanisms and actors in conflict resolution, and to offer recommendations for programming.

The PBEA programme, 2012-2016, seeks to build peaceful societies by strengthening the role of education in peacebuilding and integrating peacebuilding within the education system.

Methodology

The conflict analysis was based on a survey conducted at nine sites in four provinces: Dongo and Equateur, Maniema and northern Katanga (Tanganika). The sites were selected in order to have a diverse and representative sample of respondents within each province. Selected sites included Kisangani, Bunia and Dungu in Oriental Province; Mbandaka and Dongo in Equateur Province; Kasongo, Kindu and Labutu in Maniema Province; and Kalemie in Katanga Province.

The surveys were conducted by Search for Common Ground, with support from the local partner Comité Diocésain Justice et Paix (Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission). A total of 1,836 respondents were surveyed, and 147 individual interviews were conducted across the nine sites. Eighty-nine focus group discussions were held with key stakeholders such as government officials, traditional leaders, school authorities, teachers and students, civil society and security forces. Qualitative data helped enrich the analysis of the quantitative survey results. The research included 43 per cent women and 57 per cent men, and was conducted in both urban and rural areas.
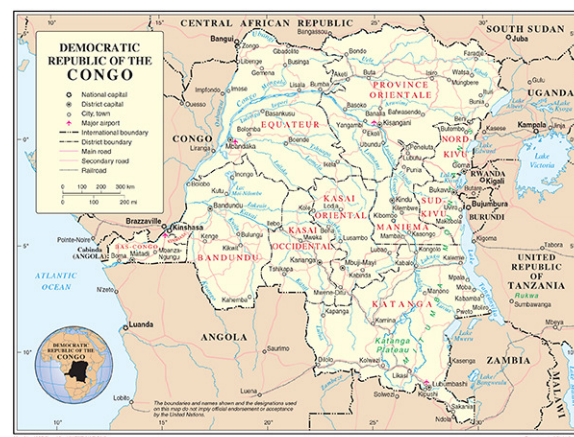
Context

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is the third largest country by area in Africa, at 2.4 million square kilometres, and has an estimated population of 66 million. The population density, of 28 people per square kilometre, is comparatively low, creating intrinsic difficulties for education service delivery. There are only nine cities with a population of more than half a million, ranging from Boma (0.6 million) to Kinshasa (7.5 million).

After civil war and extensive political instability since independence, a transitional Government was elected and a Constitution approved by voters in 2006. Conflict continued during 2006–2009, however, with ongoing insecurity and political fragility. The reach of the conflict is very high: An estimated three quarters of the population report that they are conflict-affected. Much of the conflict has been concentrated around the eastern borders with Rwanda and Uganda.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo operates as a presidential democratic republic with a bicameral legislature and a Government led by the Prime Minister. The Government, not the President, is responsible to Parliament. In theory, there is a degree of decentralization to the 11 current provinces, but the details of the planned decentralization reform are still being discussed, including such possibilities as the creation of provincial parliaments, overseen by an elected provincial governor.

There is enormous mineral and other natural resource wealth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but it has been underutilized during years of conflict and the country remains one of the poorest in the world.. Malnutrition affects about two thirds of the population, and around 500,000 have died each year since 2004 due to famine or disease.

The population is religiously diverse, with Roman Catholics (50 per cent), Protestant (20 per cent) and others (30 per cent). During the past two decades, church-based organizations and faith-based missions have been the most important education service providers at both the primary and secondary levels and have the greatest capacity to enrol pupils. French is the official language of the country for formal communication, with four other languages having national status.

Education is organized and administered at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels through three ministries: Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel (Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Professional Education, or MEPSP), Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et Universitaire (Ministry of Higher Education and Universities) and Ministère des Affaires Sociales (Ministry of Social Affairs), but only MEPSP has provincial reach.

More than 70 per cent of schools are managed by churches, 20 per cent by the State directly, and the rest are private schools. In theory, the State provides salaries and operational costs to all schools under the 1977 Convention and the 1986 Framework Law for education.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the security situation, always volatile in several areas in the east, continues to force thousands of people to flee their homes. The displaced population moved from 2, 626 207 as per 31th January to 2 586 389 as per 31th March 2013.

This decrease results, in one side, by an actualization of the statistics, and on the other side by an improvement of the context. More than 89 per cent of these people were displaced by armed conflicts.

The education sector has been severely affected by the years of conflict. In the eastern provinces – Maniema, Nord-Kivu, Province Orientale and Sud-Kivu, as well as Katanga – there are 4,841,000 children in more than 14,700 primary schools. Based on the results of the Out of School Children study undertaken in 2012, an estimated 1,921,000 primary-school-age children are not attending school in provinces affected by the conflict.

Although the situation in the east has been most publicized and benefits from considerable international aid, when discussing fragility in the Democratic Republic of the Congo it is important to note that provinces throughout the country have been affected by insecurity – including the border areas with Angola and the Central African Republic, which encompass six provinces and the area where the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is currently creating disruption.

Key conflict drivers at the national level

While considerable variations in the cause, priority and intensity of conflict were noted across the nine study sites and four provinces, the following conflict drivers were common across a majority of the sites.

SECURITY AND JUSTICE
• **Presence of armed groups:** The presence of armed groups in Dungu, Province Orientale, is a key conflict driver. Clashes between the LRA and military forces, and LRA abductions and attacks, create insecurity for the population and can result in significant population displacements. Certain tribes, such as the Mboboro, are accused of collaborating with the LRA, which creates further tensions. These conflicts are also evident in schools, including the occupation of school facilities by rebel groups or military forces and fear that students will be abducted by the LRA on the way to school.

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE
• **Weak and corrupt governance:** Misinterpretation of laws and disputes between traditional power and the law breeds resentment, dissatisfaction and lack of trust in governmental authorities. Access to positions of power are subject to patronage, often based on tribal relationships or wealth. Given low salaries, government authorities are susceptible to corruption.
• **Ethnic and tribal conflict:** Ethnic and tribal conflicts affect all aspects of private and public life and underpin tensions around government administration, international aid, employment, political affiliations and religious beliefs. Many land- and resource-based conflicts have a tribal dimension. Prior conflicts between tribes and characteristics assigned to certain tribes regarding traditional roles result in lingering tensions – which are evident in the school system, where dominant tribes refuse to send their children to school with minority groups such as Pygmies and Mboboros.
• **Youth alienation:** Young people's association with armed groups, either voluntary or forced, is a source of conflict with home communities. Those youth who try to reintegrate within their communities are frequently alienated and turn to crime for survival. Young people, particularly in

Kalemie and Mbandaka, are manipulated by political parties to foster ethnic divisions and hatred, and to promote destabilizing violence.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Poverty:** In quantitative surveys, poverty or economic reasons were identified by almost all respondents (95 per cent) as the main source of conflict, from which all other sources of conflict emerge. Key drivers of conflict such as corruption of local authorities, land and boundary disputes, and tensions between teachers and parents over school fees are just a few examples of the underlying role of poverty in fuelling conflict.

- **Inequitable distribution of humanitarian aid:** Conflicts in the distribution of humanitarian aid were observed mostly in Dungu, where there is a high presence of international organizations. Conflict in this regard is rooted in the practice of hiring staff who are not local, and the perception that contracts are awarded on a tribal basis. Youth recently organized a demonstration to protest against this issue.

- **Competition between farmers and stockbreeders:** The Mboboro are stockbreeders from the Sudan who herd hundreds or thousands of livestock. Conflict arises from their practice of their herds on the fields of other tribes without authorization. Traditional leaders are bribed by stockbreeders to provide access to land. Many of the stockbreeders are former members of militias, making farmers reluctant to challenge them. In certain areas, Mboboro are accused of collaborating with the LRA. The majority of interviewees consider the Mboboro to be invaders and bandits, and there is strong resentment between the communities. These tensions were exacerbated by violent evictions of Mboboro communities and theft of livestock in recent years by police and authorities.

SOCIAL ISSUES

- **Witchcraft:** Accusation of witchcraft as an explanation for events that seem out of the ordinary is cited by communities as a source of conflict. For example, in cases of repeated disease in families, people accuse each other of witchcraft. People often believe that local authorities work with witches to spread diseases such as cholera to further their own advantage.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- **Land conflicts:** Disputes over access to and management of land take many shapes and forms in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and are a significant driver of conflict. Traditional heirs sell land to non-locals, who then deny residents the right to farm the fields. Swindlers take advantage of communities' lack of knowledge of property laws by selling and reselling properties, enabling wealthy people to acquire large plots of land. Gaps between traditional practices and laws governing land ownership and use occur regularly, and local authorities are accused of tribal discrimination in land distribution. Returnees who flee from conflict then seek to recover lands that belonged to them find that local authorities have given the land to others; those with claims are reliant on the same chiefs who gave away the land to resolve the conflict.

- **Competition over natural resources:** Mines and other sites of natural resource exploitation tend to be controlled by clans, and access to employment is reserved for members of the tribe managing that is managing the sites. Benefits from the resource industry, such as school or health centres, are inequitably distributed.

Conflict dynamics at the provincial level

Maniema

The main types of conflict experienced in Maniema Province are rooted in land disputes, vicinity or homestead conflicts, ethnic and tribal conflicts, witchcraft and humanitarian aid. Land disputes are identified as the main conflict in the area. In Kasongo, conflicts over access to land are based on tribalism or the sale of land by traditional heirs to parties that then restrict land use. In Kindu, land and forest disputes, particularly related to boundaries of farms, are common. Land disputes are also rooted in ethnicity and tribalism. In Lubutu, access to mining is restricted by clan. According to traditional beliefs, Kumus and landowners and Rega are residents of the river. When perceived boundaries of ascribed roles are crossed, this fuels animosity. In Kindu, conflicts between the Rega and Songola tribes are also mentioned. Conflicts over humanitarian aid are identified primarily in Dungu, where the majority of international organizations are concentrated. Tensions are related to the practice of sourcing staff from outside the region, even for low-skilled positions such as guards. Key conflict actors in Maniema include traditional authorities, who are strongly linked to land disputes, and family members, who are tied to vicinity or homestead conflicts. Political and administrative authorities were also identified as key sources of conflict, driven in part by their desire to maintain wealth and power.

Province Orientale

In the Bunia site within Province Orientale, land conflicts are closely linked to returnees attempting to recover land that has been given to other people by local authorities. Local chiefs whose role is to resolve the disputes are in many cases the authorities who gave the land away. In Kisangani, logging is a key source of land disputes between business owners and communities. For example, agreements signed with logging companies by traditional Babali chiefs in the area provide access to land that belongs to the Bamanga tribe, yet the benefits from harvesting are directed solely to Babali tribe members. Conflict with armed groups are present only in Dungu, a region that is still subjected to LRA attacks, resulting in large population displacements. In the territory of Irumu, conflict between landowners from the Bira tribe and stockbreeders from the Hema tribe are predominant. Conflict actors varied by site surveyed. In Kisangani, key conflict actors are family members, followed by traditional authorities; in Bunia, key conflict actors are stockbreeders and traditional authorities. In Dungu, given the nature of active conflict in the area, key conflict actors are identified as rebel groups, government soldiers and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Katanga

In Katanga Province, the most common sources of conflict are vicinity or household disputes, with more than 60 per cent of respondents mentioning them. Vicinity disputes are rooted in parental, child and extended family disputes, including infidelity, domestic violence and dowries. The second most common source of conflict is land disputes related to internally displaced persons and stockbreeders occupying native land. In urban areas, corruption of land administration agencies and the dysfunctional justice system contribute to the level of conflict.

Witchcraft is also mentioned as a source of conflict in this area. Local authorities are sometimes perceived as complicit with people accused of being witches to further their own advantage. Conflicts related to armed groups or access to natural resources were seldom or never mentioned. Key conflict actors are identified as family members first, followed by farmers and stockbreeders.

Equateur

Of all the provinces surveyed, Equateur reports the least number of conflicts. Those conflicts that are identified related to ethnic and tribal disputes, land disputes and vicinity conflicts. In Dongo, lingering impacts of inter-ethnic conflict from 2009–2010 continue to be felt. Discrimination between ethnic groups continues to affect all levels of society, including in the school environment. Land disputes related to returnees are also identified in Dongo. In Mbandaka, land disputes arise from illegal selling and reselling of land to local populations unfamiliar with laws and procedures. Vicinity disputes are also mentioned, related to disputes over boundaries of both farms and schools. In both sites, key conflict actors are identified as members of other tribes, followed by family members, traditional authorities, government authorities and non-natives.

The role of education in peacebuilding

From both the quantitative and qualitative surveys conducted for the analysis, education-related factors play a key role in fuelling conflict. Education is also viewed as having high potential to contribute to peace. Both sides of education are discussed in this section.

Poverty, and in particular low wages for teachers, are at the heart of many conflicts within the education system. The children of parents who are unable to pay school fees will be expelled, in some cases right before examinations. In other cases, children are required to work at the school or for teachers as compensation for fees. This is exacerbated by the free education policy, which has declared 'free' primary education but has not provided the necessary resources to support it: Education becomes available to those who can pay. These expulsions are not applied universally as some students can be favoured by a headmaster and allowed to stay in school while others are pushed out, creating inter-group tensions. Another factor attributable to poverty is the need for teachers to take on other work in order to supplement their limited or even non-existent income from teaching. School authorities dock the wages of teachers and headmasters and often demand a portion of training per diems in return for selecting teachers to participate.

Weak governance is another conflict driver in the education system. The decentralization of the education system to the provincial level is an important source of conflict both between schools and authorities, as well as between levels of the education system. Rivalries exist between local-level and centrally appointed authorities, who are perceived as being appointed through patronage not experience. Overlapping responsibilities and poor communication between the various levels of the education system create confusion and breed resentment. Lack of consultation and inclusion of local communities and authorities in key decisions – such as the location of schools and appointments of teachers – is another source of tension. The operating costs for new decentralized structures are placing additional demands on already stretched

school-level resources. Roving inspectors are sometimes accused of taking money from the schools they are inspecting.

The management of school-level funds, either from school fees or government funds, is not transparent and lacks accountability. Many principals do not provide accounts of how funds are being used. Government funds intended to go towards school construction are sometimes diverted and misused. Promotions, appointments and training often depend on the payment of bribes. Decentralization has caused confusion of roles and responsibilities among key government authorities, resulting in overlapping functions and resentment between various levels of government.

Lack of transparency in the distribution of aid and poor communication of selection criteria are sources of tension present in many sites. Local government officials and school-based authorities are sometimes left out of the decision-making process, fuelling resentment. In some cases pupils, even within the same school, benefit from the distribution of materials while others do not, creating tensions between students and families. In cases of displacement, humanitarian aid is often directed towards infrastructure and supplies that support displaced children and not children within the host communities.

Other factors that drive conflict include the practice of teachers demanding sexual favours, largely from girls, in exchange for marks; tensions over shared school facilities; and poor infrastructure, leading to frequent school closures and, in some cases, injuries of staff and students in schools. Issues of ethnic discrimination and tribalism also extend to the school system. Conflict is encountered in efforts to integrate Pygmies and Bantu groups with schoolchildren from other tribes, with parents often refusing to send their children or withdrawing them to send to another school site.

Several conflicts are specific to the site of Dungu, based on the presence of LRA rebels and military operations against them. These conflicts are related to such factors as the occupation of school premises and facilities by rebel soldiers; fear of abduction both in schools and on the way to school, which results in parents' reluctance to send their children to school; displacement; and challenges in reintegrating former child soldiers.

Despite the many conflicts that arise as a result of issues affecting the education system, 95 per cent of those surveyed for the conflict analysis believe that good education contributes to peacebuilding. Many young people indicated it is the lack of education that contributes to illiteracy, delinquency, the rise of gangs, and other negative factors that leave youth vulnerable to participation in violence. In addition, teachers are recognized by students as important role models in communities.

The extent to which schools are able to impart peacebuilding skills to young people varied across sites. Teachers noted there is a curriculum in place to teach moral and civic education, but these subjects are not strongly weighted in the curriculum. The vast majority of teachers lack training and materials to support their instruction, with the exception of a few respondents who had received training from UNICEF in the child-friendly schools programme. Perhaps most importantly, teachers are expected to model positive values and behaviours but are constrained in these efforts by large class sizes, poor employment conditions and lack of appropriate

qualifications. The courses that were considered to be most useful for imparting peacebuilding values are peace education and conflict resolution.

Peacebuilding entry points in education and learning

Based on the conflict analysis, the following programming recommendations are made:

Political and policy responses

- **Strengthen communication among various levels of government:** Provide support to the Ministry of Education to develop and implement strategic communication that reaches education authorities at the local, provincial and national levels. These efforts should clearly communicate new laws, ensure consistency of messages, clarify roles and responsibilities, and increase accountability and transparency at all levels of the education system.

- **Strengthen governance of local-level parent and school committees:** Build on current trust and capacity within parents' committees to help prevent or manage conflicts between parents and teachers, and ensure greater accountability within the education system by encouraging transparent management and communication between the parent and school management committees.

Structural and education reforms

- **Provide training for teachers:** Strengthen teachers' capacities to implement the existing curriculum in moral and civic education through refresher training and updates to the materials, and reinforce the importance of moral and civic education within school systems. Provide additional training to support teachers in analysing conflict, developing strategies for peaceful conflict resolution, and understanding the concepts and principles of peace education. To ensure training is provided in a conflict-sensitive manner, the selection of trainees should be based on transparent and objective criteria that are well known to all stakeholders. To avoid creating new sources of conflict, per diem payments for expenses should be based on local realities.

- **Increase financial support to teachers:** Provide increased financial support to teachers to ensure that their compensation provides an adequate standard of living. Link these payments with efforts to uphold the minimum qualifications for teachers.

- **Align education interventions with economic and community development initiatives:** Given the consequences of poverty as an underlying conflict driver, and the negative impact of poverty on teachers' and students' attendance, align education interventions with economic and community development initiatives wherever feasible.

- **Integrate marginalized groups within schools**: For groups such as Pygmies, Mbororos, internally displaced populations and child soldiers, provide teachers with refresher training and updated materials that promote understanding and sensitivity and meet the education needs of diverse groups. Ensure these efforts integrate host communities and the internally displaced equally in the benefits of education interventions. Develop special programmes for child soldiers to support their reintegration in the school system, and for Mbororos children currently excluded from the

education system.

- **Improve school infrastructure** to increase access to education and to ensure students learn in safe environments.

- **Strengthen child protection systems:** Develop measures to monitor sexual abuse against girls within schools. Ensure punitive sanctions are in place for offenders.

Individual and interpersonal changes

- **Strengthen the capacities of community-based stakeholders:** For example, build the capacity of local leaders, including traditional leaders, in conflict management and good governance. Organize popular and participatory activities that convey messages of peace, moral values, transparency and accountability.

- **Develop peace education activities in schools:** Provide support for a variety of recreational, cultural and peacebuilding activities in schools to promote cross-cultural sensitivity and engage young people in positive activities, teach healthy competition and reinforce peace. Examples of potential activities include peace clubs, recreation days and school-based sports competitions.

- **Train implementing partners and staff:** Ensure organizations and staff engaged in education programmes participate in training on conflict analysis and sensitivity, and the importance of transparency and community in selection of schools, trainees, etc. Support the engagement of local staff wherever feasible. Encourage continuous conflict analysis and allow for flexibility to respond to changes in context.