Managing inter-cultural conflict in the Rwenzori Region: Interventions and aspirations

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A Introduction

In many parts of Uganda, conflicts of an inter-ethnic nature bedevil the ordinary citizen, most often around access to land and other natural resources that are essential to livelihood. Whereas conflicts in a few other areas have for some time assumed the characteristics of 'unique' cases – such as in Kibaale where *'Bafuruki'* (migrants) have been attempting to secure their future in new areas of settlement - the spread of inter-ethnic conflicts has recently accelerated in other parts of the country. These conflicts often coalesce around such contentious issues as the creation of new districts and the location of their headquarters; the restoration (or even creation) of cultural institutions; demands for shares from natural resources – such as oil – at local rather than national level; access to forests and swamps – in all of these ethnic identity assumes a defining role.

Nowhere has this been more evident in recent years than in the Rwenzori region, where conflict has assumed both silent and the more violent expressions that have regularly hit the headlines. In successive episodes, many local residents have lost lives and sources of livelihood, in spite of varied attempts at conflict resolution. Many too continue to live in a state of fear and uncertainty. What conclusions and lessons can we draw from this region, not only to help in local conflict resolution, but also to inform policy elsewhere in Uganda?

This case study briefly outlines the roots of this complex conflict situation and places emphasis on the different perspectives of the various ethnic and other groups involved on its causes and evolution. The study however principally examines the effectiveness of different methods to handle conflict and its consequences, so that a peaceful perspective is elicited, of relevance not only to the region, but to the rest of our nation.

This document relies on qualitative information, drawn from over 100 interviews carried out in Kasese Kabarole and Kampala districts in May 2014 with a wide range of respondents from local government, non-governmental organisations, cultural institutions and others.

B Background

The roots of conflict in the Rwenzori region can be traced back centuries, to the movements of peoples in and out of the area well before the advent of colonialism. While information is sketchy, the history surrounding these population movements has been used until the present day to justify violent conflict and the legitimacy of different ethnic groups to a stake in available resources, most especially land. This pre-colonial period is thus still frequently referred to by the different ethnic groups in the region – the Basongora and Bakonzo , the Banyabindi and Batooro, the Bamba and Babwisi, among others – as they trace their ancestry and establish their legitimacy.

This state of population flux was more or less frozen by the advent of colonial rule. The early colonialists could however only consolidate their rule by relying on local allies, in this case the newly re-established Tooro Kingdom, whose ascendance was then reinforced throughout a region already settled by several other ethnic groups. The later colonial period also saw the creation of forest reserves and national parks in the region, resulting in the forcible eviction of many prior residents.

The end of colonialism exposed the fractious nature of the Tooro Kingdom, highlighted by the walk-out of the Bakonzo and Bamba leaders from its parliament in 1962, claiming under-representation within the institution. These leaders soon thereafter started the Rwenzururu rebellion, mostly legitimised by the feeling of oppression said to be experienced, to varying degrees, by all the non-Batooro in the entire region.

The eventual settlement of the Rwenzururu issue, initially in the mid-1960's, then in 1982 following the creation of the new districts of Kasese and Bundibugyo in 1974, only led to a relatively short period of peace. Armed groups, the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) succeeded each other in the late 1980s and 1990s. In 2009, the government recognised the *Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu* (OBR) as the cultural institution, primarily of the Bakonzo, with a King at its head, the *Omusinga*.

Over these years of open or silent conflict, the consequences have been grave for the various groups attempting to co-exist in the Rwenzori region. Foremost have been the losses of lives and property in the course of the various episodes of violence. The 1998 Kichambwa massacre, when more than 80 young people lost their lives at the Technical Institute, is still present in our collective memory. More recently, people have also lost their lives and property in many parts of the region due to local fights over access to land, including violent episodes between pastoralists (Basongora and Batuku) and agriculturalists (Bakonzo and others). Over the years, several communities have also been displaced, deprived of services – including education - and want to return to what they consider their ancestral land.

These violent events have also led to less tangible outcomes, including a culture of violence, underlined by the prevalence of stereotypes and superiority/inferiority complexes and the emergence of

youth vigilante groups. The establishment of the OBR has – contrary to expectations - led to a period of renewed conflict, with non-Bakonzo groups in the region now decrying 'Bakonzo dominance', claiming their own cultural institutions, as well as another set of districts with strong ethnic undertones. Fears are often expressed in the region that violent inter-ethnic conflicts are not far from the surface. As one of the respondents put it *"We are now accepting low level of conflicts as normal"*. Another, pointing out the emergence of new sources of conflict around the discovery of oil and gas deposits, sums up: *"The kettle is on the boil"*.

C Understanding a complex conflict - A history with diverse narratives

While generally recognising a period of relatively peaceful co-existence prior to colonialism – with frequent stories of friendship and peaceful co-existence (at least at community level, if not between states), of effective local culturally-rooted mediation mechanisms and of inter-ethnic marriages, especially between royal families - the different ethnic groups that reside in the Rwenzori region have divergent accounts as to the causes and evolution of the series of conflicts that punctuated the post-colonial era. The existence of these varied, ethnically informed narratives provides a first step in understanding the roots of conflict in the region.

1. Cultural differences

Respondents most often mentioned cultural differences as a source of conflict, usually tracing them back to the colonial period and the centrality of the Tooro Kingdom, with its control over several other ethnic groups, besides the Batooro (Bakonzo, Banyabindi, Basongora, Bamba, etc.). Lines of division were then clearly defined between the Batooro and these other ethnic groups. The former for instance insisted on the wide use of their language, including in schools, to the exclusion of other languages, and tended to socially exclude the other ethnic groups who accused the Batooro of mis-treatment and dominance. Intermarriages between the Batooro and the other ethnic groups were not common and the former occupied decision-making posts. The youth of other ethnic groups were brought up to believe that the Batooro were mostly oppressors. This perception was, in the eyes of many, reaffirmed when the Tooro Kingdom Constitution explicitly excluded non-Batooro from leadership positions, resulting in the Bakonzo and Bamba walkout from Parliament and the start of the Rwenzururu rebellion, which brought together the Bakonzo, Bamba and others to 'secede' from the Kingdom.

This narrative, with its emphasis on cultural differences, finds further resonance in the respondents' description of the events of the subsequent decades, this time in relation to the 'victorious' Bakonzo and their neighbours. While the Rwenzururu rebellion was a violent and marked assertion of cultural identity and autonomy leading, among others, to the establishment of new districts and the eventual recognition of the Rwenzururu Kingdom, remarks are made among the non-Bakonzo to the effect that there is no ethnic group called the 'Rwenzururu' and that it was therefore erroneous on the part of government to recognise the OBR, ostensibly as the cultural institution of the Bakonzo (although it is pointed out within the OBR institution that its founder, Isaiah Mukirane, deliberately avoided naming the institution after a particular ethnic group, but rather after the mountain glaciers to include all marginalised communities in the area at that time).

History in a sense thus repeated itself, with a focus on culturally-inspired conflicts, but this time between the Bakonzo and their neighbours, with a wide range of cultural differences mentioned.

With respect to the Banyabindi, differences that are regularly highlighted include language, marital and naming practices, dress, and selection of food, although their cultural 'proximity' to the Batooro is equally often pointed out. For another group, the Basongora, in addition to language and cultural practices, traditional occupation and lifestyle as cattle keepers with distinct customs and spiritual beliefs, are underlined to distinguish them from the Bakonzo. Such differences quickly descend into stereotypes and used to explain that not all participated in the 'liberation movement'. A group of Bakonzo elders for instance stated: *"The Banyabindi despised the Bakonzo as backward, so they did not join our rebellion"*.

With the establishment of the OBR, a widespread perception has emerged among the non-Bakonzo ethnic groups in the region that they have been marginalised within the traditional governance system, an exclusion viewed by some as retribution for not having taken part in the rebellion: *"Our Banyabindi forefathers did not help their Bakonzo counterparts to fight for freedom and as such the Banyabindi are not part of the current administration and leadership in Kasese district"*. Further, as had been the case with Batooro, the Bakonzo are said to impose the widespread use of Lhukonzo language and of their naming practices on the other ethnic groups. This is an emotive issue: as a Musongora stated, *"When we heard that the district council had passed a resolution to teach Lhukonzo in lower primary schools, we knew that our language was buried. We felt it was a plan to assimilate the Basongora into Bakonzo so that we get extinct."* In addition the non-Bakonzo feel excluded from access to land, to scholarships from the President's Office, from employment opportunities in the local governance system, and from political representation.

Such perceptions are countered by representatives of the dominant group: some Bakonzo point out that other groups have representatives in the OBR parliament, that no Munyabindi has been evicted from land by Bakonzo and that some district councillors are Basongora and Banyabindi. A group of Bakonzo youth met explained: *"They say they are marginalised, but they do not want to participate"*. Local leaders reject accusations of unequal provision of services and point out that *"there have been deliberate efforts to implement projects in areas of Banyabindi and Basongora communities, such as the construction of valley dams for cattle keepers who are Basongora."*

Another "layer" of cultural identity stimulates conflicts amongst the Bakonzo themselves. While the Rwenzururu rebellion was fought in the name of the entire ethnic group, not all were involved or equally supportive. As a result, upon the recognition of the OBR, new lines of division have emerged between the freedom fighters, mainly residing in the mountains, and the lowland Bakonzo who were less active in the rebellion and were known to co-exist more easily with other ethnic groups in the plains. While the Omusinga is expected to consult a council of elders on community concerns and governance issues, a tendency to consult mainly chiefs and elders who were part of the rebellion and less so with those in the lowlands was for instance mentioned by some respondents.

2. Mindsets and social dimension

Recent history has also led to reversals in social status that are not easy for all to accept. In the distant past the Bakonzo were for instance said to co-exist harmoniously with the Basongora, but in a subservient position. The former were known to construct shelters for them in the plains – before returning to the mountains upon payment for this service. With the establishment of the OBR, the

Bakonzo sought to assert their authority, leading to resentment and tensions, especially when the Bakonzo attempt to settle in the lowlands. In July 2012, when the Busongora cultural institution attempted to express its distinctiveness by hoisting a traditional flag, this was forcefully brought down by Bakonzo youth, taken along with the royal drum and destroyed. A large sum of money for the construction of the leader's palace was also allegedly stolen. The police intervened, and while the Basongora claim not to have reacted violently, they remain offended and demand an apology from the Bakonzo as the first step towards restoring peace in the region, short of which, in the words of the head of the cultural institution, conflict *"will remain a chronic disease"*.

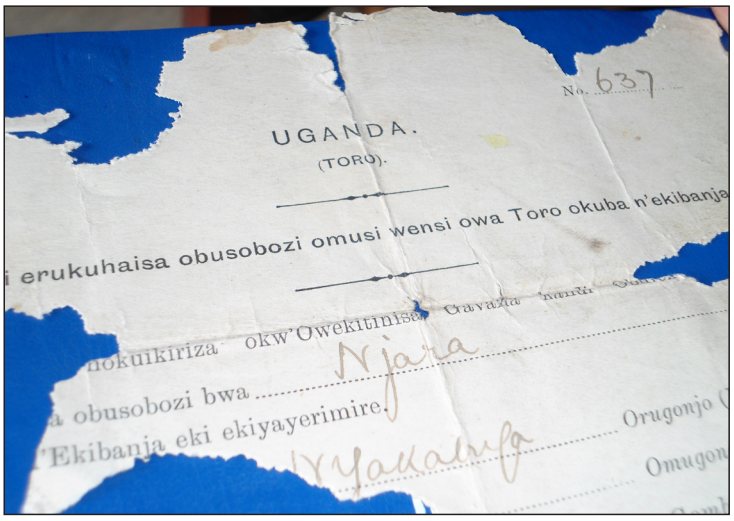
Minority groups have clamoured for recognition of their cultural institutions as a means to assert their collective identity – the leader of the Basongora group.

Interviewees also mentioned silent tensions and conflicts between and within the Batooro and the other ethnic groups borne not only from historical claims of oppression and marginalisation, but from inferiority and superiority complexes derived from their cultural affiliation and reinforced by the colonial administration. The Batooro for instance are still said to consider themselves superior to the other ethnic groups in the Rwenzori region, emphasising their advanced non-formal education, traditional governance system and organisation. The Bakonzo were for long perceived as inferior as they generally offered labour services to the Batooro. During the colonial era, they were for instance assigned manual work while the Batooro were given clerical work and preferential treatment. These reinforced the complexes that prevail to date and provide a source of latent conflict in the region, with a tendency on the part of the Bakonzo to paint a uniformly negative picture of "Tooro domination" although, as a group of Bakonzo elders acknowledged, *"OBR forgets too quickly that Tooro educated us"*. Within the other groups, the Basongora are also said to continue and consider themselves 'superior' to the Bakonzo and closer to the Bahima with whom they share a common language and cattle keeping tradition.

To this picture must be added the feeling, among the Basongora and Banyabindi especially, of displaced societies (especially by the now-dominant Bakonzo) whose collective identity and cultural institutions have been undermined by years of oppression – *"we are victims of cultural genocide"* said one of the respondents, pointing out that people resort to alcoholism, to violence, and to a denial of their cultural heritage, with some resorting to assimilation into the community of Bakonzo. A Munyabindi used equally strong words: *"The Bakonzo wronged us during the Rwenzururu rebellion days. They killed our people, confiscated our property, including land, and displaced us"*. Claims of dominance can however easily be brushed aside by the Bakonzo: thus the interviewed youth dismissed any secessionist desire on the part of OBR and their elders rejected the Banyabindi's description of marginalisation by stating that *"they were unwilling to go for education, so they have not been able to access jobs – although the few educated ones are given jobs"*.

3. Settlement and "original" inhabitants

Closely connected to the 'cultural narrative' is one related to land and its original occupancy. The Basongora for instance claim to be one of the oldest kingdoms in the region, with a chronology of 23 kings, which was forcefully absorbed by its neighbours. They are proud of a genealogy which they claim makes them one of the oldest indigenous communities inhabiting the Rift Valley and the foothills of what is now known as the Rwenzori Mountains, long before the colonial era. They also claim that the Bakonzo later migrated and were accommodated by the Basongora, eventually relocating to the mountains while the lowland grazing areas were called *'busongora'* from which the ethnic group derives its name. With time, the Bakonzo, aided by their larger numbers, came to believe, according to the Basongora interviewed, that they were the original inhabitants of the region, a claim that has fuelled conflicts with their neighbours: *"Many young Bakonzo believe that the Basongora never existed before and are an invasion force"*.



Land ownership has proven to be an important dimension of cultural identity and legitimacy – a land title rescued from en episode of violent eviction and carefully preserved.

A similar narrative prevails among the Banyabindi, according to whom there is evidence of long occupation of the land, including land agreements dating back to the 1930s and photographs of their forefathers who guided the first European explorers to the area over 100 years ago. They point to the names of places in Runyakitara – as testifying to their original occupancy of the region – although, with the establishment of the OBR, there have been recent attempts to change these names into Lhukonzo. The Banyabindi also claim to have welcomed the Bakonzo in their midst. With time, because of their larger population, the latter have come – according to the Banyabindi respondents - to believe that the land is theirs and that the Banyabindi are the immigrants. In contrast, some of the Bakonzo retorted that *"In the 1960's the Banyabindi sold their land willingly - we never chased them"*. In an attempt to reclaim their land, the Banyabindi took legal action, were successful, but their lives were threatened when they attempted to return to the land they claimed. As a minority group with 15,000 people in the region, the Banyabindi have been protected from harassment by the State but generally continue to feel marginalised.

4. Land ownership and resource sharing

Connected to the history of settlement, current land use and distribution also provide important sources of conflict in the Rwenzori region. The Chairperson of the Kasese Land Board thus points out that the conflict is between economic and occupational activities within the same area where there are cultivators and cattle keepers: *"Crops and animals have never been friendly. The problem is between the activities and not the people, for example, wild animals and crops, cows and maize"*.

With regard to cultural identity and land ownership, gazetting land for conservation purposes by the Uganda Wildlife Authority has, for a start, led to conflicts and to the loss of cultural references. New conflicts have emerged as a result of the displacement of people from their ancestral land, resistance from 'hosting' communities and conflicts between the conservation authority and communities living on the boundaries of the protected areas. It was also noted by several respondents that the demarcation of protected areas does not accommodate population growth and the consequences of relocation. In addition, conflicts have emerged in respect to restricted access to heritage sites, although there are now attempts to allow access, under specific circumstances.

Different means are used to express grievances and to press one's rights. A group of Basongora pastoralists enact their history with regard to land eviction and resistance against 'encroachers'.

The expectation of valuable oil resources in the lowlands is a further source of friction, as it is accompanied by claims of ownership and demands for compensation. In addition, as the Basongora, who are predominantly nomadic pastoralist communities in the lowlands, traditionally did not mark land ownership by their permanent physical presence, some Bakonzo descended from the mountains and made claims on large tracts of their land in their absence. Finally, what is often considered as the politics of division promoted by politicians has deepened conflict related to access to allocation of land. A traditional cultural head ('ridge leader') for instance stated that *"Government is responsible for introducing an ethnic dimension to land, by allocating more land to the Basongora as "pastoralists"*.

5. Political competition and cultural institutions

While the colonially-supported recognition of the Tooro kingdom eventually led to violent resistance, the establishment of the OBR led to the expectation that conflict in the region would subside. Yet, the underlying historical and latent conflicts are not easily erased, as evidenced for instance in the uneasiness with which the news of the King of Tooro's recent visit to Kilembe, within the Rwenzururu Kingdom, was received by the Bakonzo and the OBR.

It would indeed appear that the leadership of the different cultural institutions in the region – recognised or not by the State - have recreated systems and structures that suit their purpose but contribute to intra-ethnic tensions and divided loyalty. The establishment of cultural institutions was perceived by some respondents as a mechanism to reduce ethnic tensions and conflicts or as a defence mechanism. Thus a ridge leader interviewed stated: *"It is a relief to have our own kingdom now"* while a Musongora felt that *"Declaring our own institution is a useful mechanism; we feel proud and fight the image of the Basongora as bad"*. The genesis of these institutions, their growing numbers

and their contested legitimacy however nourishes scepticism. One observer thus queried *"How many anthems can we sing?"*

In the case of OBR, the Bakonzo were earlier governed through a decentralised leadership system, where people on 4-5 mountain ridges constituted a 'chiefdom' whose affairs were overseen by a ridge leader. This system has now been converted into a centralised kingdom in which the ridge leaders have lost much of their power. The OBR has in effect established a new parallel governance structure of traditional but 'modern' educated leaders in each sub-county: *"there is only one ridge leader now – the king"*. The OBR and other such institutions are thus to an extent 're-invented', as one head-teacher interviewed observed: *"Cultural leaders are new here and OBR is not inclusive; it was rushed and misconceived, and has to some extent left behind the lower level cultural leaders, as did the rebellion. Now even youth in my school are being recruited – what message will they get from OBR?"*

Secondly, by publicly declaring an unwillingness to parcel out his kingdom, the King not only marked territorial boundaries, but also provided a justification for future resistance to any attempts by the other non-Bakonzo ethnic groups to demand physical or cultural autonomy and by so doing has laid the ground for conflict. Demarcating the 'territory' or area of jurisdiction for a given traditional kingdom does not provide a solution to the current conflict, especially where limited impartial information is available. An NGO leader thus observed: *"Yes, conflict is around the corner, especially because the youth can be easily misled (they authored the recent violence and they led the demonstrations) and the creation of new cultural institutions provides a fertile ground. OBR actually wants a separate State. Many of the leaders and youth are uneducated and have hate mindsets, and they are killed by poverty."*

Third, cultural institutions, such as OBR, can easily appear to be driven by a political and economic agenda, with the promotion and preservation of culture as a secondary objective. In such cases, the cultural legitimacy of the institution wanes in the eyes of the majority of the people, as their concerns for heritage preservation are not addressed, besides state recognition of their cultural identity. Some of the newly recognised cultural institutions are indeed victims of political agenda (real or imagined) beyond their control. A group of Bakonzo youth interviewed for instance remarked: *"Our problem is Government manipulation to dismantle OBR".* This leads to insecurity about retaining a newly found status and access to the associated benefits, and to a reduced concern about conflicts and their consequences. Thus, despite the influential position cultural leaders are thought to hold, their potential role in subduing or managing conflict is sometimes compromised by their actions either by omission or commission.

At local level, 'state politics' and the politics of the cultural institution are frequently enmeshed, as illustrated in the fact that many 'cultural' leaders are simultaneously 'political' leaders. In the Rwenzori region, politicians (and some religious leaders) were also frequently blamed for the existence of conflicts. Instead of being impartial with regard to the common concerns of the people, political leaders were seen to exploit historical conflicts to instigate divisions in the community. Some respondents noted that on the one hand the politicians promise benefits and profess to be supportive of unity in one place, and on the other hand emphasise ethnic differences, fuel division, and even discourage intermarriages when they are in a different community. With their political agenda at the fore, politicians also play one ethnic groups against each other – including, as noted above, with regard to land. Some respondents also stated that *"To a great extent this is happening because there is a 'head in the*

sand' attitude and the leaders are not directly affected by the conflicts. They will have to be blamed when all this erupts". As a group of Bakonzo elders shared, *"Politicians nourish our conflicts for self-interest, so have not taken the initiative to promote peace. They are aloof: they do not give advice to the people"*. The hidden hand of central government is also pointed out. A school headmaster explained:

"Now Government is to blame – by ever splitting districts and wakening selfish interests and demands by people to have their own districts, placing ethnicity at the forefront of any consideration, so leaders dance to their tune and violence is round the corner. If you do not know how to say a goat with long horns in Lhukonjo, you cannot be a political candidate."

Similarly, the LCV Vice Chairman in Kasese notes that the emerging demand for a separate district for the Basongora is an area of contention: *"the quest for a separate kingdom for the Basongora has led to the quest for a separate district. [But] Rwenzururu fighters consider that the current Kasese district was granted status after bloodshed and therefore should not be divided just like that."*

D Interventions and outcomes

In recent years, several interventions have taken place to recognise cultural diversity and address inequalities between the different ethnic groups in the Rwenzori region. Some of these have resulted in increased enjoyment of a sense of belonging, self-determination and expression; others have – sometimes inadvertently - led to further conflicts.

1. Government interventions

Uganda's national legal framework recognises the nation's cultural diversity and allows the existence cultural institutions. The 1995 Constitution of Uganda provides for the recognition of *"cultural and customary values that are consistent with the fundamental human rights and freedoms"* as well as the right to belong, enjoy, practice, profess, maintain and promote any culture, cultural institution, language, tradition, creed or religion in community with others. The Traditional or Cultural Leaders Act 2011 provides for the existence of traditional or cultural leaders in any area of Uganda in accordance with the Constitution, and provides for their privileges, benefits and mandate. The legal framework is however silent on the scope and nature of authority of such institutions over territorial space or a cultural community, leading to varied interpretations and contributing to conflicts between established and emerging cultural institutions. To date, the State has recognised three cultural institutions in the region (the Tooro Kingdom, OBR and the *Obudhingya bwa Bwamba*).

Government has also attempted to investigate the root causes of conflict in the region, as evidenced by the Kajura Commission, interventions by Parliamentary committees, by the Army and Intelligence agencies. The findings arising from these investigations have however either not been fully shared or not been seen to be acted upon, leading to the perception that the government is unwilling to respond to the issues raised and is therefore biased.

An important governmental intervention has been the creation of new districts. While their proliferation nationwide may be attributed to increased civic consciousness and participation in governance or biased political motivations, it has generally been legitimised by the assertion that this results in improved and accessible infrastructure, public services, participatory decision making and enhanced cultural identity. In reality, in addition to the high public administration costs, new districts have frequently been understood from an ethnic perspective and their growing numbers contributed to increased divisions along and within ethnic lines. With new districts come a redefinition of cultural identities even within the same group and claims to ownership of heritage resources within a given district, fanning new sources of conflicts internal to a particular group.

Thus the Kasese local government administration is seen to be dominated by the Bakonzo and is perceived by many non-Bakonzo as incapable of being impartial in resolving conflicts that might affect their interests and in providing services equitably. Neither central nor local government have been involved in initiating dialogue between the conflicting groups despite the fact that representatives

of these groups seek intervention from central government. The politicians, though well placed to represent and speak on behalf of the community as a whole, perceive Kasese as an area almost exclusively settled by Bakonzo and will rarely speak out on the concerns of the other ethnic minorities in the district.

Compensation for resettled or vacated land, or allocation of land, have also been an important action by Government: this is however often open to the criticism that the most vocal and well-connected are favoured. Not everyone met, for instance, agreed that a Musongora family "deserves" more than an agriculturist Mukonzo, while the pastoralist's contention is that more land is 'obviously' needed to ensure survival, given his mode of life.

2. Interventions by cultural leaders

Several respondents saw the recognition of cultural institutions as an initial solution to resolving ethnic conflicts. The existing traditional institutions, as well as the more recent demands for recognition from the Basongora and Banyabindi communities are indicative of an increased desire for autonomy as cultural entities. This desire is driven by various considerations, ranging from preservation of dying cultural identity; resistance to assimilation and domination; a desire for state recognition and associated benefits; and to recovery of heritage properties and related economic benefits.

The consequence of state recognition of different cultural institutions without clearly defining the scope of their authority (territorial or virtual), has however resulted in inter-ethnic conflicts which remain unresolved, leading some of the respondents to find that: *"Conflicts were less intense before the establishment of the OBR"* or even that *"The Kingdoms are the main culprits for our problems"* and that they are *"divisive"*. Another observer noted that *"Mono-ethnic cultural institutions become a problem; they are inward-looking and lead to a situation where pride will lead to extinction"*. These criticisms can partly be attributed to the fact that some of benefits of recognition have led to the emergence of cultural institutions that may reinvent themselves carrying the label of a 'kingdom'. We have seen above that newly recognised cultural institutions that were not founded on existing kingdoms have been seen to readjust their internal structures to suit their new found identity. The Deputy Resident District Commissioner, Kasese district, thus observed that some of the leaders in the cultural institutions hold titles that have no relationship with culture, such as Honourable, Minister, or Minister of Local Administration. Similarly, the Chairperson of the Kasese Land Board noted: *"Some people serving in the OBR cultural institution seem not to understand what they are serving under, state or a cultural institution, because there was no transition from a liberation movement to a cultural institution."*

The restoration and recognition of cultural institutions is accompanied by benefits and privileges that are determined by the state. This support is also not always consistent and it was reported to vary according to the relationship and political affiliation with central government. For instance before recognition, a majority of the Rwenzururu were said to be non-NRM supporters, however with state recognition of the cultural institution and associated benefits, there have been changes in political affiliation.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, cultural institutions are increasingly drawing their legitimacy from the state that recognises and sustains them, rather than from their constituencies. According to some

respondents, the recognition of the Rwenzururu King by the state gives him a new status, propelling him to national prominence, away from his original traditional role. Newly formed kingdoms thus grapple with the challenges of repositioning themselves in a new context. Their functions in the modern era are not clearly defined and in some cases traditional governance structures such as the councils of elders who play an advisory role to the leader were side-lined.

The ridge leaders and elders are more closely in touch with the people and their concerns, especially given claims that the King tends to prefer consulting rebellion veterans. Thus, ridge leaders and elders – where still active - tend to be involved in handling localised conflicts and in promoting culture and unity while the king and his institutions tend to focus on issues of national concern and their relationship with central government. The newly recognised institutions therefore exclude the original traditional governance actors and systems as well as other ethnic groups residing within the scope and jurisdiction of the cultural institution.

Most respondents recalled that traditional governance structures and mechanisms for conflict resolution were effective, especially for domestic conflicts where compensation and reconciliation – such as involving exchange of livestock or other items – were the norm. The elders were known to initiate talks and create an environment conducive for dialogue but this is only currently done by a few, well respected and credible leaders who are not associated with any controversy. Today these mechanisms are no longer very visible as they have been overtaken, to a large extent, by new players in the field. A ridge leader lamented this situation: *"The Ekyhanda (clan) solves conflicts easily and quickly. They have information on land and they arbitrate in disputes, as they are more trusted than LCs. They also have a role still on domestic conflicts. When there is inter-ethnic conflict, they reach out to others and inform the respective clan leaders to resolve it. Ridge leaders are well placed to resolve conflicts because they know the people"*. Further tensions thus emerge where youth are elected as Local Councillors and often do not consult the elders, especially ridge leaders; they are neither mobilised nor coordinated to take collective action in resolving conflicts before these escalate into violent confrontations.

3. The Uganda Wildlife Authority

With the demarcation and gazetting of protected areas in the region, the Uganda Wildlife Authority subsequently established a revenue sharing mechanism through which 20% of the park entrance revenue is granted to communities neighbouring the protected area for livelihood projects, channelled through the local government. This, in addition to capacity building and partnerships in conservation protection initiatives and in allowing selective access, was designed to diffuse conflicts between the Park authorities and the communities.

With regard to the revenue-sharing scheme, it was pointed out that decisions on the use of funds and entry points into the communities should ideally be the ridge leaders for the mountains and other cultural leaders in the lowlands. Yet, although they have traditionally been responsible for managing community affairs, there is no legal framework that recognises them; and local government officials tend to exclude them from participating in decision making. Nevertheless, there was a recognition that ridge leaders play an increasing role, as one explained: *"If the conflict is with UWA, it used to be through the LCs, but now they recognise us. They can allow ridge leaders to accompany people to their sacred sites in the park"*. A respondent however pointed out that the revenue sharing policy indicates

that revenue will be granted to the majority, thus excluding the ethnic minority communities from accessing these funds and leading communities to crowd the boundaries of the protected areas so as to access the funds, and endangering the local natural resource base in the process. In practice, it was also pointed out that projects do not necessarily reflect communities' priorities, but rather the wardens' preferences and are mainly of an infrastructural nature.

With regard to access, cultural issues have been incorporated since 2010, but tensions persist. Thus hunting (though cultural) is completely disallowed; some conflicts over sacred sites are among clans and families, rather than ethnic groups. A respondent pointed out that agreements – and these are not always followed - might cover bamboo but not *mutuba* bark, as resources are identified by UWA, rather than by the local people or "resource-user groups" and the park Management Committees (with elected representatives) are in fact dominated by UWA. Local representatives are often there for personal benefit and there have been accusations of corruption and collusion with UWA's 'informants'.

4. NGO interventions

Non-governmental development organisations have engaged in a variety of initiatives, including dialogues involving various stakeholders, public moderation of debates and sponsored radio programmes. Seminars to share findings on the causes of conflict and possible recommendations to address these have been held by organisations such as the Kabarole Research Centre (Kasunga meetings), the Rwenzori Peace Bridge of Reconciliation, the Rwenzori Forum for Peace and Justice and the Shalom Mediation Institute (inter-cultural dialogues). NGOs have also provided specialised trainings on alternative dispute resolution and have promoted community and school-based peace clubs.

Many respondents pointed out that the effectiveness of these NGO interventions depends on the maturity of the organisation and how objectively information is communicated. NGOs are often perceived as apolitical and impartial, thus making it possible for them to create neutral spaces where the ethnic minority groups and others can meet and interact peacefully. If NGOs are unbiased, providing critical insights with carefully selected speakers and neutral spaces for dialogue, they tend to be effective. Even interventions and dialogues that do not focus on a particular event at least provide an opportunity to share information about each other which the different groups otherwise have limited opportunity for. The use of mediation, dialogues, and radio programmes on managing diversity was considered useful, especially if there is balanced representation of different ethnic groups and if there is sensitivity to ethnic tensions.

Respondents however noted that NGO mediation rarely has depth as it rarely addresses core problems, such as the dominance of one group over others. Thus NGO interventions were likened to *"panadol"* which eases the situation temporarily but does not cure the disease. Several respondents were of the opinion that the conflict has to be resolved internally and quoted a local proverb: *"the stick from outside cannot kill the snake in the house"),* implying that NGOs have a limited role because they are viewed as external actors.

Two NGOs have used traditional negotiation mechanisms, based on cultural processes and principles, to resolve conflict. In one case, this is done directly with the ridge leaders and the OBR Minister

Dialogues facilitated by the Shalom Mediation Institute have entailed prior consultations (as above, with a group of Banyabindi), as well as larger engagements, as with a cross-section of cultural, religious and political leaders (middle and bottom).

of Culture who (it is assumed) informs the King accordingly. The issue is put to the elders who then take the lead in guiding the discussion. The negotiation process involves traditional rituals and blessings from the elders, followed by advice on how to relate with the other, or how to preserve cultural heritage and sites. While this method has been relatively effective, it has not been used to resolve conflicts beyond the community, for instance between two or more ethnic groups. The second NGO has also made use of cultural rituals for conflict resolution and worked with ridge leaders and other local leaders under a 'peace tree' as the tradition dictates, leading to community action peace plans.

In another initiative, a formal partnership for conservation and heritage preservation was arranged which involved the OBR, a local community based organisation and the Uganda Wildlife Authority. This required clarity on the overarching authority held by OBR for heritage resources, and eventual claim of responsibility for implementing the programme, but interest in the programme waned when no funds were forthcoming. Results were limited, as attested by the incomplete establishment of an ancestral heritage site in Bulemba, next to the Rwenzori park boundary.

5. Interventions by religious institutions

Respondents noted that, while religious institutions tend to preach peace and unity and attempt to influence social behaviour, they have undertaken few initiatives on conflict resolution and peaceful co-existence, in spite of being well positioned, with extensive "grassroots" structures. National faith-based organisations, such as Inter-Religious Council of Uganda and Uganda Joint Christian Council, are considered to be more concerned with national matters and less visible at district level. Some churches have established schools for orphans and vulnerable children but are at times perceived not to offer assistance to ethnic minority groups. In some instances, religious institutions also are closely intertwined with politics and are involved in supporting political leaders, thus heightening ethnic divisions. Some are said to be money-driven seeking to attract influential people to their churches and are easily manipulated. There only a few exemplary religious leaders who are practically involved in mediating conflict and promoting peace. As one group of respondents put it *"Our bishop keeps quiet if there is a problem" and another observed: "Religious leaders have not been sensitised. So the Koran and Bible messages on diversity in unity are not used."* The leadership in some of the religious institu-

Cross-Cultural Dialogues – the case of the Shalom Mediation Institute

The Shalom Mediation Institute is a Kasese-based non-governmental organisation dedicated to peace-building in the region. It has recently organised five cross-cultural dialogues (as well as radio programmes) with a range of stakeholders in the region, including religious, cultural and leaders, to foster understanding and peaceful co-existence across lines of ethnic divisions. B. Baingirana shares: *"Our dialogues have proved effective at different levels: to raise consciousness on particular issues and the need to tackle them, to provide a platform for people of different ethnic backgrounds and interests to meet, to promote their own analysis of – and solutions to - problems and to suggest solutions to them; and to hold leaders accountable. Of course, dialogues are not solutions in themselves; they are not meant to be representative, and there is a tendency to select participants those who are articulate and vocal. It has been difficult to have sufficient women and youth, and elderly men."*

Shalom staff feel they have made a difference, including:

- Enabling access by non-Bakonzo to radio programmes: the door was opened by Shalom, seen as a neutral, but local actor.
- There has been a change in the OBR's tone, which is now less confrontational – because some of the Kingdom ministers attended the dialogues
- OBR youth are more "level-headed" and have sought Shalom's help to influence the 'extremists' within their ranks. OBR has also raised its recognition of other groups – they plan to invite them for a meeting.
- Individual respondents are taking steps to accommodate difference, as for a priest who adapts his sermon language according to language group, after attending dialogues or a formerly aggressive youth leader who now seeks peaceful resolution of issues.
- There is more discussion now on the need for ethnically balanced political and church appointments.

How has this been possible? Shalom's practice has included the following:

1. **Local legitimacy:** Identifying with local people and their problems as a local stakeholder and being perceived as solely and explicitly motivated by peace. Shalom community mobilisers from each ethnic group with local legitimacy accompany the process and problem identification is seen as valid in local eyes.
2. **Prior preparation:** much time is invested in meetings, even individual meetings, with participants before the dialogues, as preparation to 'neutralise' conflicts.
3. **Sequencing:** good sequencing of topics– e.g. from land, to governance, to cultural sites and to the teaching of indigenous languages at lower primary school– goes hand in hand with the sequencing of meetings – working with individual groups (e.g. Basongora only) to share issues earlier identified, then bringing them together (across ethnic lines): it now becomes difficult to deny earlier assertions, builds rapport, confidence and a spirit of cooperation.
4. **Ownership:** Letting people build on their own ideas and recognising every person as important – Shalom acts as catalyst and creates conditions to make people freely interact with each other across cultural differences.
5. **Create and look for areas of agreement** – e.g." your issue affects a Mukonzo, but also a Munyabindi."
6. **Link dialogue to an advocacy issue** e.g. follow-up on recommendations made at dialogues, such as a change in the council policy on language of instruction in schools
7. **Combining approaches:** Dialogues can be more effective when combined with training (e.g. on conflict analysis tools), with radio programmes (as reminders of undertakings made) and individual counselling (e.g. on other, but related topics, such as domestic violence).

Testimonies:

- *"I have attended three workshops organised by Shalom. In the first one, I went with a feeling that people who talk about ethnic groups and conflicts just want to bring confusion among the people, and I went to defend the position of the district council. At the end of the meeting however, my fears were proved baseless, and I realised that Shalom does not set out to divide the people. Instead I found*

that Shalom consults stakeholders about the issues disturbing them with an intention to bring this awareness to the leadership authorities so that they can act. I have since gone ahead to make presentations in their workshops and on radio on issues of the council resolution on the teaching of indigenous language in Kasese District. Let us deliberate on the issues as this will give us an opportunity as members of the district council to know where people are not satisfied with our services and also explain our progress to our constituents". [Hon.Bomera Richard is a district councillor; he belongs to the Bakonzo community. Subsequently, Hon. Bomera guided the councillors to make a number of commitments and resolutions.

- *'The workshop I attended awoke my conscience. I have been celebrating mass without minding people's feelings on language. When I went to Muhokya two weeks after the leaders' workshop,I realised that I was talking in lhukonzo and the congregation was answering in Runyakitara. There was a sort of disconnection between me and the congregation. [So] I switched to Runyakitara and at the end of mass, a Munyabindi woman who was part of the congregation came to me and said "Father, thank you for the effort you have put in communicating today". This made me happy. I appeal to all of us religious leaders to drop the prejudice and work on unity in diversity. There are many things we can do to build peace'* - Rev.Fr. Peter BasalizaMubungais a mukonzo priest and the coordinator of Justice and Peace programme of the catholic Diocese, Kasese.
- *'As people of Kasese we have been living together but looking at each other as enemies.We have never come together in a forum to discuss issues that affect us as people of different ethnicities. In today's meeting, I realised that the Bakonzo also have issues affecting them, yet as the minority cultural group (Banyabindi) I thought they had no issues at all. Yet these issues they are facing are real. It is possible that the Omusinga is not fully informed of what his people go through every day. My appeal to Shalom is they maintain what they have already started: continue bringing the people together and also make our leaders aware of what the people go through"* -Guma Chris Ateenyi is the Omuhikirwa (Prime Minister) of the Banyabindi cultural community.
- *[The Bakonzo] have never apologised to us. Now that we have got the opportunity to meet them today we want to show them that we need an apology, compensation, we are mourning our loved ones whom we lost and that we are not happy at all'.*Benuza Jane is Coordinator of the Banyabindi Cultural Development Trust. During the workshop, the Banyabindi walked out on the Bakonzo leaders who had come to the meeting to represent OBR. The dialogue gave an opportunity to vent anger, to create mutual awareness of grievances and to prompt opportunities for redress.
- *'I am pleased to see that we were allowed to talk about our culture on Radio. Radios in Kasese have been rejecting even paid-for programmes to talk about our culture but through Shalom radio programmes, we have been able to communicate that we are unique even though we live together with the Bakonzo".*Beatrice Monday is Minister for Gender in the Basongora cultural leadership and has been attending cultural diversity workshops.
- *When the inspector of schools explained in the workshop that there were opportunities for the school management committees and parents to explore options for their children's learning where there are not many Bakonzo children, we were relieved. We are also happy with the district education department to learn that they are flexible in posting teachers who are conversant with Runyakitara to the Basongora dominated schools. We are now going to address this issue, and this is nolonger going to be a conflict issue among us".* Steven Mbeera is a Musongora who has been attending dialogue meetings.

tions are of Bakonzo origin, who are said to keep silent so as to maintain a status quo of inequality in the community and are then perceived as fuelling bias and a potential source of the conflict.

The view from the Churches is different: at the Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice for instance, while it is recognised that shortage of resources constrain activities and that religious institutions rarely work together, it is pointed out that training on justice, peace and conflict resolution, good governance and human rights takes place. *"We have also sensitised the parishes; we have met with the RDC on peace issues in the district, on corruption and cultural conflicts; we also have a weekly radio programme to give voice to the voiceless. We fought against the further split of the district, petitioned the government in court and this succeeded"*. Some religious institutions have deliberately and successfully posted their leadership to locations they do not originate from. The Anglican diocese of South Rwenzori has discouraged appointments and transfers based on ethnicity while encouraging non-Lhukonzo speaking members to attend theological colleges despite their limited qualifications. Church parishes have also been established within Basongora and Banyabindi communities.

6. Media and public awareness

The media are potentially very instrumental in providing objective reporting and in raising consciousness about ethnic diversity and its attendant challenges in the region. The media control what is aired and therefore are in a position to contribute to positive public consciousness, emphasising peaceful coexistence.

It was however alleged that most of the media houses in Kasese are influenced by the dominant ethnic group and have unwritten policies not to air full information on the conflicts. They then tend to be reluctant or even refuse outright to air issues of cultural diversity and the concerns of ethnic minorities. Respondents said that, while a few journalists have gained the trust of ethnic minorities and obtained objective information, many others prefer to maintain the status quo. Attempts to present more objective reporting is perceived as bias, and if the reporter is a Mukonzo – s/he is labelled a "traitor". Some media houses do not permit broadcasting of music or information in the languages of the ethnic minorities. In one instance, playing praise Lusongora songs on one radio station led to the prohibition of airing all cultural songs as potentially contentious.

A few successful objective programmes have nevertheless contributed to reduced discrimination in the form of public verbal and physical abuse, especially against the Basongora. The media workers interviewed felt that working with the media on conflict prevention and resolution however presented *"a missed opportunity"*.

E Respondents' recommendations

Given the complexity of the conflict and the challenges with the different interventions that have been made so far, respondents were asked to suggest a way forward. There was a general yearning for peace and a feeling that much effort is needed to tackle actual or impending conflicts. Respondents stressed unity *("We need to agree that we are one"; "We must all understand that we are all humans and must build a nation")* and addressed the following to a variety of actors:

Central and Local Governments

- **Recognition of, and capacity-building for, cultural institutions** Government should clearly define the authority of cultural institutions in respect to their territorial or 'virtual' scope, to ensure their peaceful co-existence. An instrument describing the process of recognising cultural institutions should be developed and publicised. The state should thus rigorously verify requests for such recognition, including consulting as many stake holders as possible, to be able to ascertain the likely consequences of their approval. A need was also pointed out for Government to be actively involved, at national and local levels, in anticipating potential conflicts resulting from the recognition of cultural institutions, diffusing them and facilitating dialogue and compensation where these have already occurred. Government should also train the cultural leaders on culture and the law, on their role with respect to natural resources; it should explain the Cultural and Traditional Leaders Act and support the development of a cultural institution charter so as to avoid mixing culture with partisan politics.

- **Access to natural resources** Central government needs to explain rights to land and natural resources, and clearly define any revenue sharing regulations to prevent a scramble for land and other natural resources and allay fears that fuel conflict in this respect. There were strong pleas for resettlement by Government on the part of groups that felt they had been displaced.

- **Healing, truth and reconciliation** is needed for lasting reconciliation but this requires government intervention as this may involve compensation of land and property. The Kajura Commission report attempted to strike a balance between those for and against the cultural institution and made recommendations that present opportunities for healing. Thus, as a first step, it wa proposed that the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development should operationalise and spearhead the recommendations of the Kajura report to commence a healing process for sustainable peace. Some respondents felt that the ownership of assets (previously owned by the Tooro Kingdom) should be clarified and their recovery facilitated.

- **Impartiality, diversity and affirmative action** Government at central and local levels should be impartial – and follow through the implementation of policies for equitable distribution of power, education, employment and other resources, especially where one group dominates positions of authority at local government level. It was recommended – including by some Bakonzo respondents – that, where necessary, mechanisms for affirmative action should be established

given that the current majority system will continue to marginalise ethnic minorities (It was for instance suggested that students from minority communities could be offered preferential access to scholarships for higher education). Senior decision makers should also participate in capacity building events to enhance their appreciation of diversity and inform impartial decision making. Demands were made by some groups for new districts.

- **Effective and equitable service provision** Some voices to the contrary suggested that that the solution *"is not in money and power – not more districts, but better infrastructure and services, since conflicts thrive on ignorance and poverty."* Job opportunities for the youth were repeatedly mentioned as an important demand for government to consider.

Cultural Institutions

- **Mutual co-existence and identity** While it was not considered possible (or desirable) to reverse the restoration of cultural institutions, it was thought necessary to support their peaceful coexistence and interdependence. To do so, emphasis should be placed on the link between cultural institutions and "their" communities wherever they exist, rather than making claims to territories. All ethnic groups should be permitted to establish their respective institutions – according to well-defined rules - and mark their heritage sites. Cultural institutions should be cultural in nature, composition and appearance, and need to be helped to do so.

- **Inclusive decision-making** Given the ethnic diversity in the region, cultural institutions such as OBR need to liaise with the government and other ethnic groups to ensure equal representation and inclusive decision-making in matters that affect all stakeholders. They should form committees with representatives from the different ethnic groups to this effect. Representatives of elders' committees or councils should also be included to advise the current governance actors on development concerns and establishing peaceful coexistence. As one respondent pointed out: *"Traditional ways of forgiveness and reconciliation – this is important because very old grievances are still in peoples' hearts."* In addition, the cultural institutions should emphasise that a source of conflict, being between traditional cultivators and cattle keepers, is often about livelihood resources, rather than between cultural identities. It was considered important to provide guidance to clans too, in part as valued institutions for social protection.

Religious institutions

- **More visible, impartial action** Religious institutions should play a more active and impartial role in facilitating peaceful reconciliation processes and bring people together. A need was pointed out to see the churches and other religious institutions practice their doctrine to protect, respect and tolerate all people. One respondent thus said: *"The solution is also with biblical teachings. Religious leaders have a good instrument at their disposal to preach peace and reconciliation down to grassroots structures"*. Other recommendations included joint radio programmes (Churches, NGOs and Government) and joint action by all religious institutions, such as common dialogues.

- **Embracing diversity** Diversity within religious institutions personnel was stressed and language ability should be encouraged, through affirmative action where necessary. *"Religious leaders should also ordain priests from the minority groups."*

Non-Governmental Organisations

NGOs were considered useful external mediators, especially to avoid silent conflicts, provided they were rigorously impartial.

- **Capacity-building** NGOs were also urged to recruit as many people as possible from the minority ethnic groups, to train them in the skills of co-existence by adapting their mindsets. They need to identify people who fuel conflicts and to train them in skills of conflict management and sensitivity. They should also address identity and ethnicity issues amongst the cultural leaders, clan leaders, youth, opinion leaders, political leaders and veterans through meetings and trainings. As neutral, non-political actors, NGOs are well placed to conduct seminars and dialogue to build the capacity of policy makers to understand the sources of conflict and to facilitate reflection on their role in fostering harmony or in fuelling conflict in their search for votes. Development partners should facilitate training events to inform the public about managing diversity and changing attitudes, including media workers, on conflict resolution to support responsible reporting and engagement with diverse players.

- **A localised approach** There was a feeling that NGOs have much to de-learn and re-learn to 'reach the unreached', including *"using indigenous knowledge, which is both abundant and neglected (e.g. proverbs");* and integrating economic empowerment approaches as part of conflict resolution strategies. Training peace agents at different levels and having peace building committees at village and district levels were also suggested.

- **Focus on the youth** The youth were seen as energetic and as often instigated to trigger violent conflicts. It was suggested that NGOs should organise multi-ethnic youth camps as opportunities to learn about the causes and consequences of conflict in a neutral environment, to restore a sense of friendship and team work across ethnic groups, and thus to promote peaceful coexistence. Training youth in conflict early warning, analysis and alternatives-to-violence skills and sports competitions was also suggested. The absence of information for youth was pointed out, including by the youth interviewed themselves – this includes information on constitutional rights, and on culture.

- **Advocacy** NGOs should also advocate for support to ethnic minorities and apply pressure on government, other actors and the international community to treat these minorities fairly.

Media

- **Training** Journalists should be trained to be sensitive to issues that are likely to fuel conflict. While some media house owners may be interested in their profit margins, they too should be sensitised to be socially responsible and to ensure that the content disseminated through their house is not a source of conflict as a consequence of irresponsible reporting.

- **Radio programmes** were seen as essential to change attitudes and to convey information, provided it is well researched and balanced, given the general dearth of correct, accessible information in the district.

UWA

- **Changed model** A more holistic model than is hitherto the case could be developed by UWA to reflect the local context in all its dimensions (combining culture, economics and sustainable use and including education, traditional beliefs and indigenous knowledge).

- **Decentralised co-management** with ridge leaders could be taken up, including the latters' monitoring systems and real alternatives investigated, e.g. to hunting and to access other resources in the protected areas. One ridge leader interviewed stated that *"Ridge leaders should be involved in land conflict resolution and in sensitising people on rules for access to parks and on the preservation of park animals".*

F Conclusions

Although inter-ethnic conflicts in the Rwenzori region appear diverse in their causes and manifestations, they generally revolve around a sense of marginalisation with regard to political representation within state and traditional governance systems; recognition and respect of diverse cultural identities within the same space; and unequal ownership and access to resources, especially land. While these conflicts may, in part, be attributed to historical factors, their perpetuation is due to a continuous manipulation of this sentiment of injustice by different players and results in a 'kettle on the boil' situation, where any spark can lead to violence, especially carried out by poorly informed youth.

The 1995 Constitution and the 2011 Traditional and Cultural Leaders Act recognise Uganda's cultural diversity and the traditional frameworks within which this diversity could be effectively managed. The unclear process of recognising cultural institutions and the poor management of the consequences of this action, especially in heterogeneous communities, also provides a source of uncertainty and conflict. While the limitations of the mandate of cultural leaders in terms of executive and administrative functions are clearly stipulated in law, their limitations of authority with regard to people's cultural rights are not, hence creating conflicts.

While these legal instruments represent a conducive framework for cultural institutions, the operationalization of these laws has resulted in a number of important unintended outcomes. First is the increased insecurity of ethnic groups that have not been recognised by the state and a quest for recognition that is not primarily driven by a desire for cultural heritage preservation. Second is the increased tension stemming from assertion and suppression of cultural expression and identity; and third is the tendency to create territorial boundaries, thereby further fragmenting any sense of cohesion and common identity.

The appeal of State recognition by cultural institutions and the perceived financial and material benefits this comes with - as well as, in some cases, district status - has created new dynamics between the executive, administrative and cultural spheres of authority, as some individuals hold dual roles and pay allegiance to common authorities. The prominence gained from a combination of political, administrative and traditional authority has contributed in part to increased demands for cultural institutions and subsequent demands for associated districts. This not only reinforces the territorial tendencies of particular ethnic groups, but also leads to the oppression of emerging cultural institutions which are also driven by the same appeal.

The diversity of the interventions that have been made to address the conflicts in Kasese district by the state, development workers, cultural and religious institutions, and the media to a great extent reflect a cross cutting desire to resolve them, although central government is not seen to play an important conflict prevention and resolution role. The depth of interventions, the credibility and perceived motivation of institutions implementing different initiatives and the follow through of any commitments made however influence their effectiveness. All the interventions mentioned have registered a degree of success which gives hope for strengthening existing initiatives and forging partnerships between actors who aim at enhancing peaceful co-existence in the region.

This publication is part of a series of case studies illustrating the importance of adopting a cultural approach for sustainable development that reflects our nation's diversity.

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