



Good Enough Context Analysis for Rapid Response (GECARR) for the Kasai-Central, Democratic Republic of Congo July 2017

An upsurge in violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Grand Kasai region has led to the displacement of more than 1.4m people. In order to better understand the background to the crisis and to ensure a proper programmatic and advocacy response World Vision and a number of other NGOs interviewed dozens of people affected by the crisis as well as civil society organisations, INGOs and UN agencies with insight into the context. The research was conducted using World Vision's Good Enough Context Analysis for Rapid Response approach. Included in this report are the potential scenarios arising from this crisis and analysis of the background. The analysis was conducted in order to ensure a rapid response to an humanitarian crisis that is deeply impacting children and communities.

Context

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) contains 3.8 million Internally Displaced People (IDPs), the highest number of displaced men, women and children on the continent of Africa, and the third highest number of displaced people in the world.^{1,2} Often described as a protracted conflict, it is rather a series of acute crises around customary power, ethnic division, and conflict over resources (land, timber, minerals) exacerbated by poor governance. The impact of protection threats on this highly vulnerable populations is significant through-out the five provinces of Grand Kasai.³

The area faces an unprecedented security and humanitarian crisis, with some 1.4 million displaced people and 30,000 refugees over the border of Angola as of 22 June according to OCHA's 10 July situation report.⁴ This is result of a myriad of auto-defense militias, anti-government insurgencies, inter-ethnic tensions and pro-government movements. The most famous however, is the violent insurgency of the militia group, Kamunia Nsapu, which gained traction following the assassination of their leader, Jean-Prince Mpandi in April 2016.

The violence in the Kasai-Central emerged from a local conflict around customary power. This, however "quickly tapped into long-running political and socio-economic frustration in the Kasai provinces, which is also tied to

national politics.^{5,6} Mpandi's Kamunia Nsapu insurrection not only targeted the state, but other customary chiefs who he labeled as pro-government or against his interests.⁷ The violence engendered by the movement, inspired numerous auto-defense and other militias groups.

The five provinces commonly referred to as the Kasai's is often seen as a bastion of opposition.⁸ There is a risk that the violence will delay the electoral registration of the Kasai population – an act that may further delay the national elections, due 31 December 2017. Such distrust of state institutions, dissatisfaction with failure to hold timely elections, and high levels of poverty and malnutrition inspired many, particularly youth under thirty, to embrace the Kamunia Nsapu movement, creating new groups.

Yet a rise in ethnic conflict between Lubaphones accused of starting the Kamunia Nsapu movement, and more pro-government Pende/Tshokwe tribes in Kasai means the violence continues.^{9,10} There is a risk that this conflict can spill over into other provinces outside the Grand Kasai Region. Ongoing military operations, destroyed health and education infrastructures, limited humanitarian access, as well as pendular and protracted displacement prevents many households in Kasai-Central from meeting basic needs. If this continues without corresponding humanitarian assistance, it could result in even higher levels of mortality, with focus on children and women and food insecurity among the population.¹¹

Beyond the crisis in the Kasai's, DRC continues to be wracked with internal conflict and political uncertainty. Eastern DRC in particular hosts a myriad of armed groups, causing high levels of vulnerability and displacement. The national government continues to delay the electoral registration process causing a political uncertainty that raises inflation and increases need through-out the Congolese population. Finally this is in the midst of a drawdown of UN peacekeepers (MONUSCO) who face up to a 20 per cent reduction in budget, leaving security vacuums in their wake.

Actors and perception

Populations interviewed highlighted that **Customary Authorities** used to be seen as the de-facto political administrators of their territories, but that they had a lost legitimacy following the crisis. Children and youth often stated that their chief recruited them to join the

movement, promising them school fees and invincibility via magical baptism. Many chiefs have either been killed or fled meaning the region will face a loss of governance. Some community members believed Customary Authorities used to solve village disputes, whereas others particularly children/youth felt there was never anyone to go to in case of need. INGOs however argued that Customary Authorities support remains key in guaranteeing access.

The armed group of Kamunia Nsapu was made up primarily **of children and youth between 8-18 years old**,¹² meaning that community members and NGOs were likely to cite them as an important actor.¹³ Children who have recently left the movement expressed genuine fear upon returning home. Many have nothing to go back to, having lost families and support structures in their home villages. Destruction of education facilities as well as high levels of poverty and food insecurity mean that many will struggle to support themselves in the short and long-term. Finally, they fear revenge attacks from various militia movements. Community members in turn worried that without finding ways to occupy youth via education or livelihood programming as well as helping them recover from trauma may reignite the conflict.

The Provincial and National Government alongside state security forces are also noted as important actors. State security forces are generally mistrusted by the population, due to repressive tactics. Political manipulation plays a large part in the ongoing ethnic conflict, with some ethnicities referred to as native whereas others are seen as interlopers. INGOs however credited them with enhancing security in the zone via 'protection by presence.'

Communities continually mentioned **pastors and priests** as influential, whereas key informant interviews felt the power of the Catholic Church was waning. Priests are seen as the primary mediators at village level. Militias elements attacked numerous Catholic Churches accusing them of maintaining Kabila's power via the 31 December agreement.

Communities see **local NGOs** as trusted local actors within their communities, saying that they provide a certain level of assistance particularly around Kananga town. International NGOs therefore place high importance in using local NGOs to ease access to vulnerable populations. Community members and customary leaders expressed uncertainty around international NGOs, stating they did not understand their mandate nor why these gave assistance to some and not others. This is because Kasai's has never before experienced a crisis of this magnitude, and it is only now

that international actors are arriving in Kasai-Central.

What unites and divides

Land conflict, ethnicity, politics, poverty and customary conflict divide the population of Kasai-Central. Conflict around resources, particularly water points, land, and NGO distributions causes tension and debate in villages marred by extreme poverty. Customary conflict and ethnicity are also seen as huge dividers in the community, and as the primary motivation for the creation of armed groups.

Communities are united by a shared grief and tragedy, as many have lost a family member or experienced extreme violence. Priests are seen as bringing community members together to discuss differences, but religion was not frequently mentioned. Markets, shared agricultural tasks and community activities like sports are also seen as potential connectors.

Current and imminent humanitarian needs

Currently the most pressing needs in the Kasai's are for peace, security, people protection followed by food security. Food security includes food, but also seed distributions as the last three agriculture seasons have been missed due to both displacement, and burning and raiding of fields. There is also a need for non-food item (NFI) distributions. The complete destruction of health and education structures have also resulted in high needs in these sectors.

The population requires emergency psycho-social support coupled with reintegration programs for demobilized children and youth. It is unclear what the long-term effects of this crisis will be, and therefore social cohesion and grassroots peacebuilding and dialogue mechanisms are needed to address social fragmentation.

Children and youth were consistently seen as the most vulnerable. Not only are they the primary victims of violence, either from recruitment into various armed militias or repressive measures from government security forces, but young children also suffer from the effects of pendular displacement. Interviewees gave examples of children staying in the bush for weeks on end, walking hundreds of miles for safety or succumbing to diarrhea and malnutrition frequently. Pregnant women and older people were also mentioned.

Scenarios Respondents identified three scenarios for the next six months:

- 1) Reintegration assistance is not distributed in an efficient manner;

- 2) the return of displaced in a pendular manner;
- 3) an increase in customary conflict due to “Chief Duplication.”

Participants agreed that all trigger events could occur simultaneously and would be further aggravated by the National Governments failure to adhere to the 31 December agreement and the exclusion of the Kasai’s from the elections. The return of refugees and displaced was seen as the most probable, whereas customary conflict due to chief duplication was seen as having the highest impact, and even reigniting the conflict.

Scenario 1: The necessary assistance, is not disbursed quickly

The gravity of the Kasai crisis caught the international community unawares. Not only did Donors not see such an increase in their annual planning for DRC, but most international NGOs and UN agencies only started arriving in May, with a nine months’ delay since the crises started. At the time of writing, the Flash Appeal is around ten per cent funded and the common humanitarian funding has yet to be released.¹⁴ This coupled with overall lack of humanitarian access indicates a high chance that the necessary assistance is not disbursed quickly, nor to sufficient levels.

In this scenario the lack of assistance would result in communities being unable to rebuild, and thus unable to reintegrate demobilized ex-combatants, including children into their communities. There would be even higher levels of mortality, malnutrition, and potentially a famine due to the three missed agricultural seasons. If assistance does not materialize it will not only dissuade combatants from laying down their arms, but it will also prevent communities from rebuilding themselves and engaging in activities that bring them together (markets, education and agricultural activities).¹⁵ Moreover, lack of assistance could considerably contribute to exacerbate tensions and the consequent intensification of the conflict. This means that one would expect to see both an increase in ethnic and community tension, as well as corresponding limit in humanitarian access.

The lack of buying power by the demobilized and communities will cause an overall dip in the economy. This could further weaken the health and education services.

Finally, failure to quickly improve the quality of life of the Kasai population could increase overall feelings of resentment toward the national government, potentially leading to more organized movements against Kinshasa in the lead up to the 31 December election deadline.

Scenario 2: Relatively sustained calm in Kasai-Central results in cautious returns

In this scenario, community members sent on observation missions will report back to their families in the bush that relative stability has returned. As a result there will be a continued cautious increase in returns. These “cautious returns” will most likely cause an increase in tension over scarce resources, livelihood, and basic services, particularly health. Different communities, in turn, may clash over food and humanitarian assistance.

If not mediated quickly, these communal level conflicts will impede another planting season as people will not be able to farm contested land. If the conflict is between two different communities this will increase ethnic conflict, and make aid increasingly difficult to disburse due to community accusations of partiality. As seen in other parts of DRC, villages may demand a blanket distribution to avoid clashes, something that cash-strapped NGOs will be unable to do. These types of conflicts could encourage some community members to return to the bush. The overall result would hinder market development, and weaken the economy of Kasai-Central.

The current lack of health infrastructure, medicine and personal will negatively affect the returns, have spent months in the bush. Many have sustained injuries either in conflict or flight and will need immediate medical attention, failure to do so could cause outbreak of disease or death.

Scenario 3: “Chief duplication”

This scenario would have the biggest negative impact on the humanitarian situation. In certain villages, the posts of traditional leaders lie vacant following the incursion of various militias, having either fled or been killed. Their posts are taken up by “pretenders” or other members of the same royal family. The increased level of stability in the area – due to Kamunia Nsapu signing peace accords, a higher security force presence, and the return of community members of Kasai-Central – the original chiefs will return to their posts, to find them occupied. Both sides will most likely raise personal militias in defense of their customary seat.

It is likely that different chiefs will tap into already established recruitment patterns, and engage groups of recently demobilized combatants, including children. This would in turn increase insecurity through-out Kasai-Central. These different contexts could be easily manipulated by the provincial and national governments to fracture the opposition.

At the same time outstanding customary conflicts will increase around land and identity. Customary chiefs will dispute the borders of their territory.¹⁶ The lack of credible local leadership will mean these land conflict between individuals will not be resolved. To gain supporters and add legitimacy to their conflict, chiefs will demonize other ethnicities to gain popular support. Customary conflict thus solidifies ethnic and political grievances in the zone, leading to an increase in recruitment, including recruitment of children, and consequently entrenched conflict. This ongoing conflict, both between leaders, and with the unresolved community conflicts that linger due to this, will hinder trade among communities, lowers the overall buying power of communities, and further prevents a fruitful planting season and harvest.

Recommendations and needs – Programming

1. INGOs must scale-up response and go into new areas in Kasai-Central, focusing immediately on securing funding for and developing programming on protection, developing markets, strengthening the agricultural sector, emergency education (including vocational training) and livelihoods. This should have a particular focus on children and youth. Such programming will not only prevent famine but also address root causes of violence, and increase social cohesion between fragmented societies and generations
2. Explore emergency psycho-social programming for traumatized children and youth coupled with longer-term response to aid their social reintegration.
 - a. Social cohesion activities to encourage community healing and acceptance of ex-child soldiers.
 - b. Conduct research on countering violent extremism in youth. It is assumed that children and youth join rebel movements due to lack of employment and educational opportunities, however studies in other countries have proven this to be false. Understanding recruitment networks and patterns will go a long way in designing appropriate responses.
3. Invest in tailored Do No Harm strategies along with a local level communication strategy to illustrate the mandate of humanitarian actors, and beneficiary selection process.
4. Consider peacebuilding initiatives (stand-alone or integrated) at the local level, including when appropriate, supporting already existing dialogue structures and re-enforcing the leadership and managerial capacity of local chiefs particularly in the

areas of land, and water conflict.

5. Commission a scoping study to look at ways to strengthen and support the existing early warning network.
6. Ensuring all NGO staff are trained in Psychological First Aid Training (PSA) for working with traumatized community members, particularly children.
7. Promote the active involvement of local NGO in the assistance delivery by valorizing their knowledge of the context. As well, this approach will ensure a progressive shift from emergency assistance to development programs in a middle terms view.

Advocacy

1. Ensure that advocacy messaging includes a focus on the following:
 - a. A cessation of violence against civilians from all parties of the conflict
 - b. Encouraging MONUSCO to continue and increase support to the Consultative Commission for the Regulation of Customary Conflicts (known as CCCR) at the sectorial level to ensure that customary conflicts are solved quickly in a non-violent manner. Donors should be encouraged to feed into this process, including via the stabilization funding as appropriate.
 - c. Funding that gives the flexibility to slide back and forth between humanitarian and early recovery depending on the security and economic situation.
 - d. Encouraging UNHAS, Congo Airways and ECHO to increase flights to the region to improve humanitarian accessibility and to coordinate to the relevant donors and partners to make this happen.
 - e. Reminding the government of their responsibility to provide a secure environment for humanitarian actors, as well as an efficient visa process
 - f. Failure to provide quick assistance for the social reintegration of demobilized soldiers, including children will cause more conflict.
 - g. Reminding Donors that a quick disbursement as well as an increase in funds whether bilaterally or through the Humanitarian Fund will diminish the risk of re-emerging conflict
2. Strongly encouraging NGOs to speak jointly on violence against civilians to raise media awareness of the crisis.

Security and Coordination

1. Develop security procedures in light of the fluid security situation, tapping into the existing expertise of local NGOs. This should include crisis management procedures, active engagement security coordination forums, security risks assessments for all programming, security tree communication procedures and other information forums.
2. Regularly participate in meetings with customary leaders in Kasai-Central to pass along messaging on role of humanitarians and the process of beneficiary selection to ensure safety of humanitarian actors.
3. Use decision making tools such as the WV HISSCAM tool at the operational level to determine engagement with armed actors and map appropriate humanitarian access strategies.
4. Encourage INSO to establish a base in the Kasai's, and advocate to donors for the necessity of such a forum.
5. Design and share inter-agency context-appropriate humanitarian access strategies, including working with local partners, traveling to the field with other NGOs, and hiring as much as possible local staff.

Methodology

World Vision and other NGOs interviewed 133 people from 12 June to 5 July. This included 14 focus group discussions, and 15 key informant interviews in Kananga, Lubondaie, Dibaya, Goma and Kinshasa. The mix of those interviewed including community members, displaced, demobilized children, donors, local NGOs, international NGOs, UN agencies and religious and customary leaders.

An inter-agency workshop took place on 4 July with 20 external participants including cluster leads for health, education, protection and wash, seven local organizations, four UN agencies, three international organizations and one donor to decide upon three likely scenarios for the upcoming six months. The team triangulated the data with the following sources: internal reports and situational reports, UN and NGO reports. This report reflects the findings made throughout the process and is not intended as a fully comprehensive analysis, but to provide a snapshot perspective from the communities and agencies involved. The report does not necessarily reflect the formal positions of any agencies involved in the process.

Limitations

The inter-agency aspect of the GECARR meant that the scenario planning workshop was held one week after the collection of focus group data. This was mitigated by doing catch-up interviews and integrating them into the report the week of 3 July.

Contacts

World Vision DRC
3888 Boulevard du 30 Juin
Gombe
Kinshasa
Democratic Republic of Congo

Amagana Togo, Interim National Director:
amagana_togo@wvi.org

Caitlin Hannahan, Interim Advocacy and
Communications Director:
Caitlin_hannahan@wvi.org

Helen Barclay Hollands, Eastern Zonal Director:
Helen_barclay-hollands@wvi.org

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¹ <http://www.unocha.org/story/drc-number-internally-displaced-people-rises-38-million-highest-africa>

² <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2017/>

³ This report refers specifically to the province of Kasai-Central. However, the conflict affects all five of the provinces within Grand Kasai including; Kasai-Central, Kasai, Kasai-Oriental, Sankuru and Lomani.

⁴ https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/ocha_drc_kasais_situationreport_10072017_fr.pdf https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/ocha_drc_kasais_situationreport_22062017_en_0.pdf

⁵ Hans Hoebeke, "Kamunia Nsapu Insurgency Adds New Dangers to DRC," International Crisis Group, (21 March 2017).

⁶ The main armed group involved in the violence, Kamunia Nsapu, takes its name from the title of the hereditary chief in the area. It became established following the national government's refusal to grant sovereignty to the communities' choice of leader, Jean-Prince Mpandi. His Traditionally Chiefs in the area are chosen by the ruling family and then approved by the community. This decision is then sent to the provincial and then national government for approval, giving them a double legitimacy. In the case of the Kasai's poor governance led to a backlog of some 300 customary disputes, which remained blocked at the provincial and national level. This meant that conflict created by these power disputes was led to fester, often degenerating into violent conflict. Kawmina Nsapu was just one of these conflicts.

⁷ This incident preceded a number of occasions where the provincial and national government had stalled in the solving of various customary conflicts over the last several years. These local level disputes were instead allowed to fester, and often violent. At the beginning of the conflict there were some 300 unsolved customary disputes.

⁸ The Grand Kasai is the birthplace of the recently deceased opposition leader, Etienne Tshisekedi as well as the ex-Prime Minister Evariste Boshab.

⁹ The conflict continues despite the peace accords between the National Government and the Royal Family of Kamunia Nsapu, signed on 17 March 2017. This is because numerous militias and bandits do not subscribe to the hierarchy of the movement.

¹⁰ Kamunia Nsapu originally started in Dibaya, Kasai-central within a Lubaphones tribe. For this reason other ethnicities in the area blame them for instigating the violence. <http://www.latimes.com/world/africa/la-fg-drcongo-war-kasai-20170626-htmlstory.html>

¹¹ According to OCHA's latest sitrep report (10 July) multiple zones in Grand Kasai are in Integrated Food Security Phase 4, meaning at least 20 per cent of all households are food insecure.

¹² Rough estimates state that some 40-60% of militia members are under 18 years old.

¹³ In Kasai province children are the main victims of violence, at risk of injury or death in combat. Boys and Girls between the ages of 5-18 years old are being forcibly recruited into both Kamunia Nsapu, as well as other armed militias and local auto-defense groups either as soldiers or human shields according to OCHA's latest situation report. Youths are then being incarcerated and killed by state security forces accusing them of participating in the violence.

¹⁴ <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/democratic-republic-congo/document/dr-congo-situation-report-n%C2%B08-complex-emergency-kasai>

¹⁵ The first batch of demobilized combatants received a bike and 500 USD, but more recently demobilized soldiers were given nothing. As one interviewee said this type of reintegration assistance is enough to "buy a Kalashnikov on a bike." In addition, demobilized child soldiers said they did not feel comfortable returning home without assistance for their impoverished families.

¹⁶ The duality of Land Law in DRC makes it very easy to contest who owns what, and represents a principal root cause of conflict in the country.