Local Peace Committees and how they relate to governments and peace-agreements:

Examples from five African countries

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1. INTRODUCTION.

A great deal has been written about local peace-building in communities in places such as Colombia in Latin America or the Philippines and Sri Lanka in Asia – countries torn apart by intractable and violent conflict that have continued unchecked for many years. Much less has been recorded of the many local peace-building eforts in Africa – efforts to cope with the effects of similar intra-state conflicts and their aftermath of violence and destruction. Many local communities across the African continent have lacked and continue to lack security and justice. They find themselves under siege, threatened by violence or attacked by non-state armed groups or even the Army. Traditional ways of solving conflicts have often been sidelined, following the introduction of formal (colonial) law. Local administrations frequently cannot protect their citizens, since they are either absent or corrupt, leaving communities vulnerable, divided and polarized.

There is an initial need for early warning and preventive action. This can take many forms: confidence building, dialogue, improved relationships within and among communities – all aimed at solving conflicts. In post-conflict situations we can observe attempts at reconciliation, the restoration of security, improved community relationships – aimed at keeping the violence out of the community. All this is practiced in many African countries by Local Peace Committees (LPCs), platforms for participation, collaboration and the inclusion of all (or at the very least the main) stakeholders, especially those actors that would otherwise not talk to each other. LPC are generally informal, rooted in local civil society, its members recruited among individuals who command respect in their community.

Basically, therefore, Local Peace Committees protect their communities against violence and solve community conflicts. Most LPCs were established because the local community lacked security and justice. Governments are frequently absent from marginal regions and fail to deliver both security and justice. Peacebuilding via

LPCs thus has the potential to empower people towards delivering these at the local level.

Andries Odendaal, a scholar and writer on crisis prevention and conflict mediation has been studying LPCs extensively. He writes:
'A Local Peace Committee (LPC) is an inclusive forum operating at the subnational level
(district, municipality, town or village) that provides a platform for the collective local leadership to accept joint responsibility for building peace in that community' (Odendaal, 2013, p.6).

In an earlier UNDP discussion paper he describes their work as follows:
'LPC are mechanisms to deal with situations of crippling polarization within communities, and minimal national and local political will to make peace. In these cases, "soft" approaches such as dialogue, facilitation and negotiation are appropriate, while any form of coercion or arbitration will likely prove counter-productive'. (Odendaal 2010, p. 12)

Members of LPCs are volunteers and highly motivated. They derive their legitimacy by involving the principal stakeholders in the community, people who enjoy respect and authority within their communities, such as chiefs, religious leaders, women and youth organisers. What LPCs usually lack is a mandate from the (local, regional or national) government.

Hence, challenges face LPCs as well. To the extent that they are present, local - or indeed national - governments may judge LPCs as unimportant or illegitimate and as a result neglect them - or conversely: compete with them. They may hinder their work, for instance through bribery. For LPCs this entails a risk that relations with government compromise them. If violence and polarisation continue to increase, LPCs, lacking the instruments to counter them, may no longer be able function in the way they aimed for.

In some countries however, government and civil society have jointly established a long-lasting Infrastructure for Peace (I4P), usually with a three-layered structure: a National Peace Council, Regional Peace Councils and Local Peace Committees. These structures are interlinked and constitute a system for sustainable peace. Hans Giessmann of the Berlin-based Berghof Foundation provides the following description of I4P in his book *'Embedded Peace. Infrastructures for Peace: Approaches and Lessons Learned'*:

'A dynamic networking of skills, capacities, resources, tools and institutions that help build constructive social and political relationships and enhance sustainable

resilience of societies against relapse into violence' (2016 p.4).

If the government is involved, one can have an I4P with a national mandate and a structure that includes formal LPCs. But in most countries governments are not prepared to establish such an Infrastructure for Peace. When security and justice go missing at the local level, what happens is that communities establish informal LPCs, without a mandate from the government. I will describe a number of them in this Chapter, highlighting the many factors that influence the way they work, particularly their – often sensitive – relationships with local and national governments. I will also focus our attention on the impact peace agreements have on LPCs and their work.

The need for such peace structures is increasing. Experts foresee an increase in violent conflict on the continent, owing to climate change, the growing depletion of and competition for resources and religious extremism. 29 countries experienced globally a critical - or significant - worsening of their situation between 2007 and 2016. The Fragile State Index shows that of those 29 countries, 20 are in Africa. The 2019 Fragile States Index puts 23 African states in the Alert/High Alert/Very High Alert categories.

For this Chapter, I have chosen to examine five African countries, based on two criteria: the presence of active LPCs and the existence, past or present, of a peace agreement. Based on this, I am presenting the cases of South Africa (1991-1995), Burundi (1993-present), Kenya (1990s, 2007-present), DRC (1996-present) and South Sudan (2011-present).

I dedicate sections 2 and 3 to the cases of South Africa and Kenya respectively, as early examples of how governments and the existence of peace agreements interact with the work of LPCs. Section 4 focuses on an extensive discussion of the Burundi case. Section 5 presents examples of partial or failed peace agreements in the cases of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan. Section 6 presents a brief overview of various other types of LPCs in Africa. Section 7 analyses the sensitive relationship between LPCs on the one hand and local and national government on the other. Section 8 reflects on LPCs and peace agreements. I end the Chapter with a few reflections and concluding remarks. **1)**

We begin with two early examples that highlight the advantages and pitfalls of having the government "on board", and a nationally negotiated peace agreement in place, the two main themes of this paper.

2. AN EARLY SUCCESS; THE CASE OF SOUTH AFRICA.
2.1. History Leading to the National Peace Accord (NPA).

South Africa's National Party (NP) established Apartheid, based on racial segregation, as a system of governance in 1948. In the late 1980s, as political violence aimed at removing the apartheid system increased, the NP started secret negotiations with the African National Congress (ANC), the liberation movement it had banned. Political violence, however, only increased further after Nelson Mandela had been released from prison in February 1990, as numerous armed factions fought for and against the maintenance of the apartheid system – and against each other.

Civil society organizations played an important role in initiating the dialogue aimed at curbing the violence. In November 1990, the Dutch Reformed Church took a historic step and publicly confessed its guilt for accepting and participating in the apartheid discrimination. This occurred during an ecumenical conference in Rustenburg where 80 denominations met. The conference denounced apartheid, called for a democratic constitution and agreed on a peace conference. Around the same time, the Consultative Business Movement (CBM), a voluntary grouping of the more progressive elements from the business sector began to reflect on how the private sector could contribute to ending the violence.

In early 1991, President de Klerk attempted to organise a meeting of political, religious and community leaders to discuss the issue of violence. The move was rejected by civil society organisations as they regarded the South African state as illegitimate and held it responsible for fomenting much of the violence. A summit, they argued, should be called by an independent group. A committee was formed, consisting of representatives from religious groups and the business community. The committee also invited political representatives, one from the government, one from the ANC and one from the Inkhata Freedom Party (IFP), two parties that were, at that time, virtually at war with each other.

The committee got to work and prepared proposals for a National Peace Convention, to be held in Johannesburg on 14 September 1991. It established working groups on key topics: 1) a Code of Conduct for political parties; 2) a Code of Conduct for the security forces; 3) social and economic development; 4) implementation and monitoring; and 5) the process, the secretariat and the media. These five working groups submitted their reports, which were then collated into what became the National Peace Accord.

The National Peace Convention was then held, with the national leaders of all political parties attending, except for three right-wing parties that had declined the invitation to come. Other attendees included the leaders of the (nominally independent) homelands, religious leaders, traditional leaders, trade unions and newspaper editors. The Convention discussed and adopted the Accord, which was signed by 27 political, trade union, civil society and government leaders. Given the highly volatile context, this was a formidable accomplishment.

2.2. Objectives and Content of the National Peace Accord.

South Africa is the first country that developed a comprehensive national framework for peacebuilding that resulted in a national Infrastructure for Peace. The NPA was brought into existence within a remarkably short period with the aim to end the violence. Its other objectives were to bring about peaceful power-sharing, establish multi-party democracy and assist in social and economic reconstruction and development. The NPA recognized freedoms of conscience and belief, speech and expression, association, movement, peaceful assembly and peaceful political activity as fundamental rights. It was premised on the principles of good governance, mutual responsibility and accountability.

A three-layered infrastructure for peace was created. At the national level there was the National Peace Committee and the National Peace Secretariat. One layer below that were Regional Peace Committees. Finally, Local Peace Committees were installed; Peace Monitors emerged as the RPCs and LPCs were set up.

Representatives from all the signatories to the NPA sat on the National Peace Committee; the National Peace Secretariat was its executive arm. The Regional Peace Committees, which were present in all of the country's 11 regions, consisted of regional representatives of the signatories to the NPA as well as representatives of other relevant regional organizations. But at the heart of the NPA were the more than 260 Local Peace Committees. They existed at all local levels (districts, municipalities, villages) and were composed of local representatives of the signatories to the NPA as well as local organizations, movements or personalities, relevant to the peace process.

LPCs had several important functions. These included creating trust and reconciliation at the grassroots level, settling disputes that could otherwise have led to intimidation and violence, reaching agreement on rules and conditions for marches and rallies, and organizing other public events as well as liaising with local

police and magistrates regarding the prevention of violence. There were at least 15.000 Peace Monitors active across the country, trained in negotiation and conflict resolution techniques.

A number of other cross-cutting components were established to help connect those three layers. Among them was a Commission of Inquiry Regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation, which was later re-named the Goldstone-Commission after its chairperson, Judge Richard Goldstone. Another component was a Socioeconomic Reconstruction and Development Section. Two Codes of Conduct had been prepared as integral parts of the NPA and were intended to foster confidence-building and accountability. They were a Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Organizations through which all signatories agreed to refrain from using violence and intimidation, and a Code of Conduct for the Security Forces.

2.3. Success of the National Peace Accord and More Specifically Local Peace Committees.

The NPA and its structures played a critical role in the relatively peaceful elections of 1994 and the transition to democracy. This South African Infrastructure for Peace (or I4P) was truly innovative, as it literally built its violence-preventing structures from scratch, involving as many stakeholders as possible. South Africa was the first country that developed a comprehensive national framework for peacebuilding that resulted in a national infrastructure for peace.

'The peace process in South Africa was coordinated at all levels, with distinct but complementary roles for each track, and a countrywide network of similar institutional structures, contributing to what is now considered by other countries a success and role model for I4P. It has demonstrated that even a State and a society which was forcefully torn apart, which experienced a cruel past and began its national transition path with the highest level of mistrust and intolerance can change over time if the process is based on inclusivity, participation and ownership.' (Giessmann 2016 p. 27)

As mentioned earlier, the LPCs were very much at the heart of this well-designed, multi-track peace infrastructure, establishing new modes of interaction, creating political tolerance and showing a willingness to resolve problems through dialogue and negotiation, rather than violence. They opened up channels of communication and built a political tolerance amongst the contesting parties that had not existed before. It can indeed be argued that LPCs contributed towards containing the spiral of

violence and the escalation of violence would have been far worse if there had been no LPCs.

The new government discontinued the NPA in 1994.

(Giessmann, 2016, p.24-28; Odendaal, 2010, p.34-40; Odendaal, 2013, p.37-45, O'Mally Archives; Spies, 2002)

3. LOCAL INITIATIVE, NATIONAL IMPACT; THE CASE OF KENYA.

Kenya has experienced several episodes of conflict and violence related to deep and persistent social fault lines. Colonial policies increased the power, resources and influence of specific ethnic groups that collaborated with the state, setting the stage for the rise of ethnic politics in Kenya. Following independence in 1963, identity-based allocation of state resources by Kenya's political leadership became one of the most fundamental sources of inter-ethnic group antagonism. The process of state formation was shaped by patron-client loyalties, with some groups included within the state apparatus and others emphatically excluded. Historically, Kenyan politicians have been playing politics with ethnicity, resulting in election-related violence from 1992 onwards, with post election violence during 2007-8 as the low point.

Several factors aggravated the causes of conflict and violence: poor leadership and a lack of trust among political actors, the proliferation of small arms thanks to Kenya's porous borders, unresolved historical injustices regarding land issues and endemic corruption. The Africa Peer Review of Kenya 28 (APRM) concluded in 2006 that:

 '…among the major factors that have stoked fires of dissension in the country are marginalization of the regions as well as regional imbalances, competition for resources and access to them, and the mobilization of ethnic identities in political and economic power struggles.'

Within this context, securing executive office became vital for the well-being and future prospects of each community. Thus, national elections became a zero-sum game with deadly outcomes, never more so than in 2007 and 2008.

3.1. Post-Election Violence and Mediation.

On December 29, 2007, Kenya descended into mass violence. This was triggered by the announcement of the presidential election results, in which the incumbent, president Mwai Kibaki, was declared the winner. The opposition, led by veteran politician Raila Odinga contested the outcome, claiming the the poll had been rigged. In the post-election violence that swept through the country more than 1,300 people died and over 500,000 were displaced.

International mediation was facilitated and hosted by the African Union's (AU) Panel of Eminent African Personalities, under the leadership of former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The Panel brought the two contesting parties - Kibaki's Party of National Unity (PNU, government) and Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement (ODM, opposition) – together in a process called the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation (KNDR) forum. The KNDR's overall goal was to achieve sustainable peace and stability in Kenya, together with respect for human rights and the rule of law.

In February 2008, Kofi Annan led the signing of the mediation agreement between President Kibaki and opposition leader Odinga. In the short term, the agreement ended the violence and ensured stability, while in the long term, it promised reforms to address the underlying long -standing issue that had caused the post-election violence. The ultimate objective was to build a better and more peaceful state.

This was the four-point agenda they agreed on:
1. Immediate action to stop the violence and restore fundamental rights and liberties;
2. Immediate measures to address the humanitarian crisis and promote healing and reconciliation;
3. Steps to end the political crisis;
4. Solving long-term issues, including reforming Kenya's political system.

The two protagonists also resolved to create a power-sharing government and signed the National Accord and Reconciliation Act.

During the KNDR process it was noted that the pastoralist areas in Kenya that did not experience much of the post-election violence had vibrant "District Peace Committees" in place. The structure of these DPCs did not cover the entire country at the time of its greatest political crisis, but it was clear that where they had a presence their positive effects were clearly discernible in the form of (sometimes sharply) lower levels of violence. The KNDR agreement recommended that, as a long

term strategy, DPCs be established across the country. Their origin lies in Kenya's volatile northeast.

3.2. Wajir and the First DPC.

During the early 1990s, the district of Wajir in the northeast of Kenya was hit by conflict between different clans of Kenyan Somalis. These conflicts had their origins in an old custom of livestock raiding by pastoralist groups. The situation became far more violent and volatile following the arrival of refugees from two conflict-ridden neighbours, Somalia and Ethiopia. The ready availability of small arms and the weak presence of the government in the district aggravated matters further. The state had retreated from its role in managing security. The four years of violence that ensued left more than 1,200 people dead.

In 1993, amidst this violence, a group of women got together and started to discuss among themselves how they could put an end to the seemingly endless cycle. One of the women, Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, engaged the elders of the warring clans and set up a mediation process, at the end of which the clan elders agreed to sign a code of conduct, which effectively stopped the violence. Abdi went on to become a prominent voice in civil society.

In May 1995 the local peace initiative was integrated into one structure, in which government, NGOs and citizens' groups would all participate. This became known as the the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC), with the District Commissioner as chairperson. This was a form of 'hybrid governance', in which the state ceded some of its core functions, such as maintaining peace and security, to various local stakeholders. The success of the WPDC soon led to the spread of the model to other districts.

In 2001, six years before Kenya's worst post-independence electoral crisis, the government established the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management (NSC) with the objective to formulate a national policy on conflict management and to provide coordination to various peacebuilding initiatives (Odendaal, p.35-36, 2013).

3.3. The Peace Infrastructure of Kenya after 2008.

The National Accord and Reconciliation Act of 2008 decided that all districts should establish DPCs; in a short time some 300 were created. While

the processes of establishing peace committees from 2000 till 2008 was more organic, this was less in evidence after 2008. The government issued a circular to all District Commissioners to establish DPCs. Counties were not given enough time and space to discuss the most suitable form a DPC should assume, given traditions and capacities of the local population. According to the peace researcher Dominic Ruto Pkalya, this model was "imposed" on the counties. (Pkalya, 2017 p.17).

As another author writes
'*Greater institutionalisation of informal local peace structures and peace practice has increased the cost and reduced the efficiency of peacebuilding. In Kenya's infrastructure for peace, formalising the peace committees has negatively affected local agency, and formalising peacebuilding has inhibited effectiveness*' (JPD, vol.15, issue 3)

In 2010, Kenya held a constitutional referendum. The changes that this brought about, paved the way for devolution and the creation of new county governments. It was resolved that all 47 counties should have a County Peace Committee. These were rapidly established, first at District and then at County level. Sub County Peace Committees and County Peace Forums followed, replacing the DPCs.While this process was in full swing, devolution continued as well, shifting substantive power – and, crucially, budgets - from the capital to the Counties. Politicians in many counties grabbed the chance to be elected, obtain a position in the county administration and receive regular allowances. There was political "capture" of positions in many peace committees, rendering them vulnerable to the accusation that they promoted self interest rather than the public good. As Cox describes
" *Decentralization unleashes rent-seeking behavior and creates incentives for identity-based political mobilization at the local level.(...) The experiences of Kenya and South Africa, along with findings from the Philippines, Cambodia and Nigeria, suggest elite capture of local government institutions during decentralization processes should be anticipated well in advance* " (Cox, 2017)

Saferworld published a report *Delivering on the promise of peace ? Devolution, inclusion and local conflicts in Kenya* in 2018.
'*In the absence of institutions able to administer fair resource distribution, securing executive office became vital for the well-being and future prospects of each ethnic community, rendering national elections zero-sum. With so much at stake at the ballot box, violence- whether latent or active- has been an enduring feature of national elections.(...) Competition between ethnicities for public office - long seen in Kenyan*

national politics- has been devolved to the counties, inadvertently institutionalising and strengthening the ethnicisation of local politics.(...) Studies on the recurrence of intra-state conflict have found political exclusion to be one of the most important factors. Yet, far from its stated promise, devolution risks reinforcing social divisions. (...) The expectation that devolution would lead to peace has not come to pass. (...) The research finds several profound challenges that undermine the prospects of devolution bringing about inclusion and peace in Isiolo:

'Competition for public office is based on identity rather than policy, and pits ethnic groups against each other.
The resulting institutional service delivery is exclusive and discriminatory, with allocation based on identity rather than need.
Elite abuse of public office and legal rules in pursuit of personal enrichment.'.

Additionally, the character of conflicts changed: from dealing with local conflict, peace committees now had to deal also with religious extremism, terrorism and the relationship with government and politicians. Another element that complicated the functioning of peace-committees, is the increasing politization and ethnicisation of Kenya, with the contested elections of 2017 as an alarming signal. Pkalya concludes:

'Peace committees were embraced, took root and worked in counties and or localities that had a long standing tradition of conflict management and peacebuilding and where formal justice system was inaccessible like the arid and semi-arid lands. It did not take root in counties that had no prior experience with conflict or alternative conflict resolution skill and institutions.' (Pkalya, 2017 p.1)

3.4. The 2017 election.

Since 2010, two national elections have been held, in 2013 and 2017, especially the last election was once again closely contested. However, the derailment that led to the explosion of violence in 2007-08 was avoided. A factor that contributed to this was the UWIANO Platform. This Platform has as its aim the creation of a national conflict prevention and response strategy. Its members include (among others) the NSC (formally institutionalized through the National Policy on Peace Building and Conflict Management, adopted by National Assembly in 2015), the NCIC (National Cohesion and Integration Commission), the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission and the police. The Platform enhanced coordination among a wide range of partners at county and national level and improved information sharing across agencies with regard to early warning and response. This it did by using SMS

messages, relaying security alerts to the police and facilitate conflict mediation by elders and peace committees.

For the future, broad involvement of civil society actors and initiatives, and insider mediators, are needed. New entries maybe as well County Action Plans on Countering Violent Extremism.

I agree with Pkalya when he says:

'*Despite of the challenges faced by the peace infrastructure in Kenya, most of the things that have worked demonstrate that peace committees for instance continue to be the better option for addressing the myriads of conflicts across the country that cannot be effectively addressed by the formal justice system that is, in most cases, adversarial, inaccessible and costly (p.18).*

However, given the recent developments, a rethinking of a robust peace structure seems needed.

(Aden Abdi and Jeremy Lind, 2018: Chuma and Ojielo, 2012; Cox, 2015 & 2017; Muller-Dormann, 2018; National Policy on Peacebuilding, 2015; Odendaal, 2010; Pkalya, 2017; Saferworld, 2018)

4. BURUNDI; BUILDING A NATIONAL NETWORK OF LPCS "FROM THE BOTTOM UP".

The Belgian colonial administrations in Burundi used systematic divide-and-rule strategies that contributed to disunity between Hutu and Tutsi, two peoples that had co-existed in a complicated hierarchical but otherwise peaceful order under Burundi's ancient monarchy. Following independence in 1962, Hutu-Tutsi power struggles degenerated into inter-ethnic killings and coups d'état that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. In October 1993, the first democratically elected Hutu President of Burundi, Melchior Ndadaye, was assassinated by Tutsi military. The event triggered a civil war that was to last for eleven years and claimed some 200.00 to 300.000 lives.

4.1. The Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement.
Between 1994 and 2005, various rounds of peace negotiations were initiated. The second attempt at institutionalizing power-sharing is considered particularly significant. It was the culmination of a lengthy negotiation process conducted under

heavy regional and international pressure between 1998 and 2000. The resulting "Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement" was based – among others - on a formula for a power-sharing system between what would essentially be Hutu and Tutsi political parties. The 2000 agreement was an important step to bring peace to Burundi but it was, arguably, incomplete. It did not include a cease-fire agreement with any of the major rebel groups and, even though implementation commenced, it was slow and hostilities continued.

The third and last power-sharing agreement was signed by the government and the main rebel group, the CNDD-FDD, in August 2004. The agreement created space for a grand coalition, proportionality, minority overrepresentation and elite cooperation. Still, peace remains elusive in Burundi. One of the many reasons for the limited success of all these agreements has always been that not all rebel groups were included in the negotiations. As a result, some groups continued to fight against the government. **2)** Another factor must certainly be the failure to move beyond ethnic categorization, which had fuelled the civil war. The agreements institutionalized ethnicity as a criterion for participation in the state and undermined efforts to articulate more inclusive democratic participatory politics. Lastly, the agreements were all focussed on the elite and on power-sharing at the national level, but not, per se, on peacebuilding. They completely neglected local peacebuilding and local peace committees.

4.2. The genesis of MIPAREC.

Very early on in the civil war, there occurred one of the most terrible events in the conflict, when more than 70 school children were burnt alive in a town called Kibimba. Following this, the community divided along ethnic lines into deeply polarized camps. But then a Kibimba Peace Committee (KPC) was formed in 1994, after an initial training by the Central Mennonite Committee (US). The KPC started a process of facilitating communication between different groups. Eventually, the Committee succeeded in restoring some degree of normalcy to the heavily traumatized community. The re-opening of the school and hospital, and the fact that both communities were using these facilities again, was an important indicator of its success. Today, a monument stands on the site, a constant reminder of the atrocity, with the exhortation to ensure that this never happens again.

Members of the Kibimba Peace Committee felt sufficiently emboldened by their experience to expand their approach to other communities. In 1996, the "Ministry for Peace and Reconciliation Under the Cross" (MIPAREC) was established.

4.3. MIPAREC's Tasks and Operations.

Most NGOs, when establishing and supporting LPCs, undertake a broad diversity of activities and MIRAREC is no exception to this pattern. The organisation's mission is to promote community development and social cohesion through reconciliation and other peacebuilding related activities. This involves peace education in schools, support for women's groups (especially widows) and youth activities. Women have been trained in loans and saving techniques and income generating activities. Youth groups have been brought together for development projects (building schools for instance) in combination with training in conflict management.

The promotion of peace committees is a central part of MIPAREC's institutional strategy and the organsation has helped to expand the peace committee model throughout Burundi. There are now an estimated 500 to 600 LPCs (often called "Peace Clubs"), covering some 40% of Burundi's 119 communes. They usually consist of about ten people and mixed Hutu and Tutsi membership is the norm. MIPAREC's 2016 annual report states that LPCs dealt with 1,510 land, social and family issues. 1,164 conflicts were solved, 158 were not solved and 188 are still in progress. The LPCs were highly active during the 2015-16 crisis, sensitizing communities in order to reduce tensions. Burundi's LPCs have successfully managed conflicts and rebuilt social cohesion at community level. They are respected by the community, local authorities and traditional leaders, who all draw upon the demonstrated capabilities of the LPCs for dispute resolution and mediation.

Some dimensions of the work done by MIPAREC and LPCs include:

4.3.1 Restoration of dialogue

MIPAREC's crucial mission is to contribute to dialogue and social cohesion. Members of divided communities normally failed to engage in a true dialogue on problems they were facing. This is understandable when taking into account the suffering and trauma experienced. However, this lack of communication made it difficult to verify information, for instance when it was rumoured that an attack on a given community was imminent. Building networks of communication across social fault lines proved critical to prevent conflicts. LPCs may involve local authorities or traditional leaders, and membership of both Hutu and Tutsi is the norm.

The dialogue sessions start with open discussions around crucial national and local issues, manly relating to the 1993 political crisis. After this, a three-day training program is conducted, which is focused on conflict transformation, forgiveness, reconciliation, restorative justice and leadership. This training session is most often organized at the commune level and brings together up to 30

participants. Each training ends with the recommendation to create a LPC, composed of a maximum of ten people, representing the broad community.

One month after the training, MIPAREC trainers return to the community and facilitate the process of setting up the peace committee whose members are transparently and freely elected among the participants. The process emphasizes the representation of each major social group attending the discussions and the training.

4.3.2. Reconciliation.

During the LPC-facilitated dialogues, people came up with relevant and poignant testimonies regarding their roles and responsibilities in the massacres that took place in their communities. In front of the victims and other community members, they asked for forgiveness, promised to never harm anyone again and also fully engaged themselves in the reconciliation and reparation process. In this way, LPCs provided space and support for communities to find their own way towards truth telling and reconciliation. LPCs may also organise memorials to the dead, bring victims together with offenders for reconciliation and assist efforts at restitution.

4.3.3.Conflict resolution.

MIPAREC has helped LPCs to create Community Mediation Centres (CMCs), where committee members are present twice a week for the purpose of conflict resolution and mediation. The members build these offices themselves, while MIPAREC provides assistance for materials. They fill important gaps: while local authorities are either absent or overwhelmed, access to justice is limited to non-existent, and the traditional authorities are reported to be non-inclusive (they do not let women speak) and corrupt. The CMC aim to serve the entirety of the population and to do so in an inclusive and non self-serving manner.

4.4. MIPAREC, an assessment.

Michelle Spearing **3)** has done much research on inclusive community governance in
Burundi. She finds that:

'Peace Clubs (LPCs), in all locations, have achieved a good balance between responding themselves and liaising with local authorities. This has been achieved by working together with local authorities to establish clear processes for addressing arising issues at appropriate levels' (2016 p.19).

The legitimacy of Burundi's Peace Clubs', says Spearing, is based on:

"...modelling good governance (such as transparency and accountability, crucial (incorporating all ethnic groups, ages and political tendencies) as well as their demonstrated willingness to act (…) on behalf of all.'
(2016 p.24).

A key factor in stimulating change of behaviour were the joint trainings between Peace Club members and the local administration. LPC members have been invited to Burundi's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Its president spoke at a National Gathering of Peace Committees in 2019 and he met the LPCs. LPC members have also been invited to assist the National Land Commission (NLC), which is keen to know how the conciliation model of the LPC can be applied to land conflict management.

(MIPAREC, Annual Report, 2016 & 2018; MIPAREC & CARE, 2018; Niyonkuru, 2012; Spearing, 2016; email communication with Dieudonné Kibinakanwa, President and one of the founders of MIPAREC)

5. FAILING PEACE AGREEMENTS: THE DRC AND SOUTH SUDAN.

5.1. The Democratic Republic of Congo.
The conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is sometimes called Africa's first world war; at one time the fighting involved seven other countries. By some estimates (including a 2008 report by the International Rescue Committee that claimed 5.4 million casualties, a figure that has since been contested) it is the deadliest conflict since World War II. The first Congo War began November 1996 and ended with the toppling of President Mobutu in May 1997. The second Congo War began in August 1998 and was characterized by the participation of many actors in complex alignments. In spite of the existence of several peace agreements violence persists, linked to local disputes and conflicts in various parts of the country,

5.1.1. Peace Agreements and their Failure.
The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement attempted to end the Second Congo War through a ceasefire, the release of prisoners of war and the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force. The Heads of State of the DRC, Angola, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Rwanda and Uganda signed the agreement in Lusaka, Zambia, in July 1999. This agreement was followed by further negotiations that led to the Global and Inclusive Agreement of December 2002, which attempted finally to end the war.

However, throughout Congo's history, central governments have never succeeded in establishing political order backed by the rule of law. Given its size, its geography and the lack of infrastructure, the country is practically ungovernable. Peace agreements agreed at a central level are unlikely to be followed locally; there are always other interests at play. These include meddling neighbouring countries and – crucially – the national and international competition for highly sought after resources. National and multinational corporations, chasing after highly

lucrative mining concessions, continue to fuel the wars in various parts of the DRC. The local element is often entirely overlooked. This neglect has been well described by several observers, especially by Severine Autesserre in her book, *Peacelands* (2014), and subsequently by numerous others:

'The failure of the massive peacebuilding efforts implemented in the DRC stems from "internationals" regarding local tensions and local conflict resolution as unimportant, unfamiliar, and unmanageable. Thus, peacebuilding efforts have established a one-sided, top-down unsustainable peace that ignores the micro-level and is unable to handle local violence, which has continued after the national peace agreement was signed.' (Leonardsson & Rudd p. 833)

NGOs, meanwhile, have been conducting bottom-up peacebuilding in fragile areas but there have been very few attempts to support, construct or (help) reconstruct grassroots institutions for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Many of these efforts were already in evidence as far back as the 1990s. Indeed, LPCs existed well before the Lusaka Ceasefire agreement was concluded and many of them have continued their efforts. One of them is the Centre for the Resolution of Conflicts, (CRC) in the country's Kivu province, which continues to see outbreaks of violence. 4**)**

5.1.2. The success of local peacebuilding: the Centre for the Resolution of Conflicts.

CRC is a Congolese NGO. Since it was founded in 1993 it has earned a reputation for successful community-led disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration work. CRC has helped 25.000 IDPs (internally displaced persons) to return home, rescued 900 child soldiers and played a key role in reducing the number of armed groups in North Kivu from nine to two. It has furthermore accompanied more than 4,000 former combatants in their trajectory towards re-deployment that is beneficial to the community. Some 1,300 have been integrated into co-operatives; around 1,100 into the police and a similar number into the army. CRC has created around 220 local peace committees, with respected community leaders as members. Its mediation skills are called upon by local communities, local government officials and international operators across the province.

The central tenet of CRC's policy holds that by reducing the number of active combatants and sustainably reintegrating them, the level of violence in communities will diminish, which in its turn will increase community development and bring about sustainable peace. CRC has been successful in mobilizing latent potential for social change that exists at the local level.

Key activities are community-led disarmament, demobilization and reintegration work. CRC's approach is not conceived as DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation,

Reintegration) but rather as RDD, i.e. the program design works backwards from the reintegration process. It is the effectiveness of the community reintegration process that influences militia members to disarm, as well as securing their long term demobilisation. CRC has been able to win the confidence of armed groups which have increasingly grown wary of FARDC (the Congolese army) and MONUSCO (the UN Mission in DRC). The armed groups see CRC, a local organization that has proved its commitment to local peace, as the more reliable option.

The return of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons can lead to new types of conflicts that threaten to destabilize an area anew and causing the prospect of a sustainable peace to recede. For this reason, CRC uses its network of volunteers working on DDR to address these issues as the DDR – or rather RDD - process gets under way, creating community based conflict resolution mechanisms- in case of returnees, focusing mostly on land conflict . **5)**

"Reconciliation Commissions" organised by CRC have helped communities find alternatives to
violence. They have a combined membership of 600, more than half of them women. They have monitored, identified and diffused potential conflicts, settled local disputes, raised awareness as regards rights and civic duties and liaised with authorities on behalf of victims of injustice. By 2015, some 30 such commissions were active.

CRC has also focused on income generating projects, which include activities such as agriculture, hairdressing, bicycle repair, the construction of small hydro-electric power plants and propagating seedlings for reforestation. Running a network of micro-finance organisations helps finance these activities.

More broadly, CRC has developed two main sources of social capital:
(a). Task Forces.
CRC has six Task Forces, each made up of approximately 12 people, who may include community and religious leaders, former child soldiers and even militia commanders. The Task Forces use the connections that exist between the militias and the communities that produced them to engender dialogue, negotiate the demobilization of combatants and their reintegration. Especially, the Task Forces aim to include the middle men or spokespersons that the militia depend upon for contact with the outside world. The Task Forces were specifically created to assist in negotiating with the militia, but have since taken on a wider role, acting as an early warning system assisting in local conflict resolution.
(b). Radio Clubs
Radio is an important means of communication for CRC, as it works in an area where communication and transportation services are limited. It is an especially crucial form

of communication with armed groups who are in the bush and the forest. CRC has been using radio intensively and effectively since 2009 to encourage combatants to leave armed groups. This in its turn has led to the development of Radio Clubs as instruments towards self-help initiatives at the community level. As of 2015, some 300 of the Radio Clubs exist, an extensive network of residents who get together at weekends to listen to and then discuss the CRC broadcasts that touch a wide range of themes, such as health, education, security, conflict resolution, household matters and income generating activities. Radio Clubs constitute a low-cost, two-way communications network on security and developments issues. By using radio in this way, CRC has gained trust and respect within communities.

The key to CRC's success has been the creation of co-operatives that bring civilians and ex-combatants together. Forty such cooperatives have been established, working in farming, trading and other activities. The ex-combatants are provided with support that enables them to fend for themselves but civilians are included, in order to avoid alienation and frustration on their part. The process also helps to reduce prejudices, especially on the civilian side, whilst surrounding the ex-combatants with social guidance on acceptable (moral) behaviour.

In a similar spirit, CRC also recruited ex-combatants to repair local infrastructure, including 46km of roads and sheds at six marketplaces. This work improved local attitudes towards the men: the initiative was recognized as valid and worthwhile by both communities and ex-combatants. It sparked a noticeable improvement in the ex-combatants' attitudes: with a higher earning potential, they felt better able to conduct their lives, educate their children and feed their families.

CRC is currently supporting 680 artisan gold miners, including some former combatants, in two gold mining cooperatives in the Ituri province to reduce their level of poverty and improve their standard of living. One of the accompanying objectives of the project is to help reintegrate ex-combatants into their communities - often they were potential sources of destabilisation- and help them to become agents of peace and social cohesion. Members of the cooperatives have therefore received training in the prevention, management and peaceful resolution of conflicts, on financial and savings management, and on environmental management. CRC has supported cooperative members in creating peace committees with the aim of raising awareness on peaceful cohabitation and the management of arising conflicts in villages surrounding their mines.

(Cairns, 2011; Peace Direct : Coming Home, 2011, Peace Direct, evaluation CRC, 2015; van Tongeren, 2020; email communication with Henri Bora, coordinator of CRC)

5.2. South Sudan.

Sudan has only known a few relatively short-lived periods of peace. In 1955, tensions between the northern and southern region – fuelled by southern fears of northern domination – gave rise to the first civil war, which would last until 1972. A peace accord gave the South a measure of autonomy, without breaking up the country.(See Mitchell 19 **XX**) However, eleven years later a second civil war broke out between explicitly separatist rebels from the South and the Sudanese government, which had declared itself to be fully Islamist, much to the dismay of the southern regions. The war would last more than two decades and claim an estimated two million lives.

Early in 2005, the warring parties signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Under its terms, Southern Sudan achieved an autonomous regional government and the promise of a referendum about independence. **6)** The Agreement also contained an architecture for peace and reconciliation. In practice, however, the CPA turned out to a mostly technical exercise, a top-down state building process. It paid scant attention to historical grievances and identity politics, not to mention the personal expectations of people across the country.

Essentially, the CPA was a high-level power-sharing deal between the government on the one hand, and a single armed movement on the other. The agreement neither addressed nor resolved the wide range of internal conflicts that were taking place all over the Southern region, or in Sudan as a whole. Six years after the signing of the CPA, South Sudan became a newly independent state, in 2011. But very soon, another (very predictable) high-level power struggle resulted in military confrontation in 2013. The main protagonists were president Salva Kiir, from the Dinka tribe and vice-president Riek Machar, from the Nuer tribe.

International politics again set its focus exclusively on the national leadership level. When talks were convened in 2014, they focused on three parties. By the time the August 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCISS) was signed, the war had moved on to directly involve others in the country who had been excluded from the process. Three years later, in September 2018, a Revitalized ARCSS was signed but there is little confidence that the R-ARCSS will succeed. And so the failure of national political leadership and international mediation to break this vicious cycle has led to a renewed interest in what can be achieved at local levels. At the sub-national level, a variety of informal LPCs have been somewhat effective. The peace agreements between 'sub' states were all set up from a bottom-up perspective, involving many different stakeholders. I offer a few examples here.

(CARE South Sudan, 2019; Christian Aid, 2018; Saferworld, Briefing June 2019)

5.2.1. LPCs in Jonglei, Bor and Terekaka States.

    Since 2012, ZOA, an international relief and recovery organization, has been working in South Sudan to establish Peace Committees at County level in Jonglei, Bor and Terekaka States by providing training on conflict mitigation and peacebuilding. An LPC at the County level consists of eleven members: three representatives of the Women Committee, three representatives of the Youth Committee, three drawn from the churches, complemented by one Elder and one Chief.

    This locally organised program has contributed to a strong reduction in conflicts, for instance over water and land, but also within and between households at the *Boma* level. **7)** By the end of the project, which ran from 2012 to 2017, half of the conflicts between Dinka and Mundari over resources for cattle had been resolved through inter-tribal meetings. This success has been confirmed in an interview with representatives from the Bor State Peace Commission. They acknowledge, for instance, that because of the LPC efforts the situation at all three administrative levels (*Boma, Payam* and *County*) have greatly improved.

    In other work, ZOA has facilitated a peace agreement between Jonglei and Boma states, which has long been one of South Sudan's most volatile regions. In 2016, ZOA organized its first peace conference, which attracted 500 people from Jonglei State to participate in efforts to identify the driving forces behind conflict, and preconditions for peace. During this conference, the classic and predominantly top-down approach made way for a more inclusive one. County-level Peace Committees (comprised of traditional and church leaders, women and youth representatives), State-level Peace Commissions and government authorities all came together around a common engagement for peace. On December 4th of that same year, a formal Peace Agreement was signed between Boma State and Jonglei State. A large public gathered to watch the ceremony; they included governors, ministers of local government and from law enforcement, and paramount chiefs. Resolutions in this peace agreement included the ending of child abductions and cattle raiding, as well as improving living conditions and recognition of the shared responsibility to actively keep the peace.

The Chairperson of the Peace Commission in Jonglei reports in 2019 :

- the road from Bor to Pibor was indeed re-opened and it is operational especially during the dry season;
- trade between the Murle and the Dinka resumed again;
- over 20 initially abducted children have been returned;

- incidences of child abduction and cattle raiding have significantly reduced;
- a joint border security force has already been established.
There is more dialogue between the political leadership of both states compared to before the conference.
Since the ZOA supported peace conferences in Bor and Pibor, two more conferences have been organised in Pibor, two in Manyabor and three in Bor.
Generally, there is political will to maintain peace and stability amongst the political leaders of either community. They often coordinate with each other whenever there are child abductions and cattle raid reports to arrest the perpetrators of such criminal acts, return the stolen cattle and abducted children.

(ZOA, 2017)

5.2.2. Borderlands project in South Sudan, Uganda and Kenya.
In the borderlands of South Sudan, Uganda and Kenya, (semi-) nomadic cattle-herding communities have been living at odds with each other for many years. In search of pasture and water, these communities migrate with their cattle from one region to the next. In spite of the absence of limited basic governance, PAX, a Dutch peacebuilding organization and its local partners have been able to develop strategies for peace to bridge a governance gap while promoting peaceful coexistence across borders, both within and between communities and tribes.
Important partners are Kotido Peace Initiative (KOPEIN) in Uganda, the Justice and Peace commission of the Catholic Diocese of Torit in Eastern Equatoria state (JPC-CDoT) and Kuron Peace Village in Eastern Equatoria state, South Sudan, founded by Bishop Paride Taban. Kuron Peace Village played a central role, together with these partners, in the establishment and strengthening of this peace network and LPCs in the region, working closely with them in monitoring security, community mobilization and conflict mitigation. These LPCs consist of chiefs, elders, youth and women who are representatives within their village, and who are in contact with kraal leaders and youth warriors. This cross border peace network slowly expanded to different neighbouring regions in Torit, Kapoeta and Boma State (South Sudan), Karamoja (Uganda) and Turkana West (Kenya). Whereby nowadays the LPCs in eg. Kotido district (Karamoja) function by themselves and closely collaborate with authorities and security actors.

 (PAX, 2017; PAX, 2018)

5.2.3. LPCs in Unity State and Lake State.

The implementation of this project is enabled by Assistance Mission for Africa (AMA) which PAX supports. The project in Unity State aims to promote peaceful coexistence across borders, both within and between communities and tribes. Community relations between Nuer and Dinka locals have improved significantly.

AMA has managed to assist in re-opening cross border communication lines between communities and authorities. It has also played a part in the re-establishment of and capacity-building for more than a dozen LPCs, making these LPCs more inclusive of women and youngsters in the process. These peace committees have taken ownership of security issues. In practical terms this means that cattle raiding incidents are addressed: counter attacks or retaliation attempts are rendered unacceptable. Another way in which these LPCs attempt to improve security is through increasing border patrols, for which community policemen are deployed. As an overall result, the different communities involved have become more trustful of each another and this, in its turn, has led to another positive side effect: an expansion of cross border trade and movement.

(PAX, 2019)

5.2.4. Joint Community Peace Committee in Abyei.

Abyei is a contested territory on the border of Sudan and South Sudan. It is home to about 120.000 Ngok Dinka and its land has provided water and grazing for Sudanese Misseriya Ajaira herders for centuries. At the national level, the territory is contested between Sudan and South Sudan. In 2005 a referendum was agreed on whether to be part of Sudan or South Sudan, but that referendum hasn't taken place. Relations between Misseriya and Ngok Dinka groups completely broke down after the conflicts in 2007 and 2012 and the assassination of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief in 2013.
In 2014, Concordis, (UK), began the slow process of rebuilding peace in Abyei, listening to the grievances, fears and aspirations of each side and slowly earning their trust.
On 25 February 2016 the first meeting in over five years took place between Ngok Dinka and Misseryia at Noon in the Abyei Administrative Area (AAA). It was attended by over 500 people from both communities.
At the meeting the communities agreed :
- the importance of peace and the necessity of co-existence
- formation of a Joint Community Peace Committee (JCPC), comprising 14 Ngok and 14 Misseryia
- identification of three corridors along which Messeryia pastoralists can bring livestock into the AAA for pasture and water
- establishment of a joint market to be run by Ngok and Misseryia
The meeting was facilitated by Concordis International and supported by UNISFA.

The JCPC has resolved peacefully a number of incidents.
Previously displaced Ngok have been returning to their villages.

The two communities of Ngok and Misseryia have common interests that bind them, such as trade and grazing land.

A joint market has been established. The Amiet market is widely seen as a reason to keep the peace, despite the political pressures over the contested territory, since it resulted in the creation of livelihoods and the lowering of food prices. 3.000 tonnes of goods are traded every week by 500 stores-holders, and up to 10.000 people use the market each day. The market has created a large number of jobs for women and youth. The market provides a point of reference for communication between north and south when all other channels have broken down. It also provides a model for effective local governance, as revenue is collected from store-holders and used to provide public goods and services for the benefit of all market users.

The UN Secretary General reported on 12 October 2016 on the remarkable results of this work to the UN Security Council (UN Report on Abyei, 2016, p.10)

'The resumption of trading activities at the Amiet joint market is the most visible symbol of the commitment of both communities to reconciliation"

The Stockholm Policy Group evaluation of Concordis' Project, *'South Sudan Community Cooperation Agreement Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in 2016'* found

Concordis is instrumental in supporting local mechanisms for peaceful cross-border migration, in the context of ongoing conflict between and within two countries.
Concordis has been rather successful in manoeuvring in a complex reality. It maintained presence and engagement in some border areas during the intense period of civil war, which is a commendable achievement in itself. Cross-border migration continued during the period of civil war in South Sudan, and Concordis is described as instrumental in supporting local mechanisms for peaceful management of the processes.

A gap in funding forced Concordis to cease work in Abyei for two years, leading to a gradual degradation of the peacebuilding capacity in Abyei. In November 2019 it could re-launch its programme.

6. LPCs IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES

I have spent a little time describing local peacebuilding activities in five African countries, but the diversity of LPCs on the African continent is much larger than I have been able to highlight so far. We take a little time out to very briefly highlight some more of them.

6.1. Community Cohesion Committees in Ethiopia.

Competing interests regarding access over water resources and dry season grazing grounds historically led to conflicts across the continent, for example between Nuer clans and between Anyuaa in south-western Ethiopia.

These cycles of events occurred six times since 1995 but this began to change in 2013-14, when a substantial number of conflict displaced Nuer households returned from Wanthoa, where they had fled, to their home villages in Akbo. Initially, the ability to resolve conflicts was very limited. The Regional Bureau of Justice - a government department- was tasked with promoting community cohesion and justice. ZOA, an international relief and recovery organization, was asked to support the Bureau. The Bureau has taken the lead in the discussions on conflict and community cohesion in the *Kebeles,* or sub-districts. It supports the establishment of so called *Community Cohesion Leadership Committees (CCLC's)*

Some 40 CCLC's were established in sub-districts. They are chosen by the community and trained in traditional and modern approaches to conflict resolution. They have resolved conflicts over land use, fishing rights and cattle raiding.

Some of the CCLC's roles are :

- identification of conflicts at district level
- resolution of local conflicts in and between districts
- creation of awareness and training of the district population on topics related to community cohesion.

In addition, the community appoints Community Cohesion Facilitators (CCF's), who have a supportive role in writing and implementing community cohesion agreements that serve as means to reduce or resolve conflicts. The presence of well-respected CCF's is crucial for the Community Cohesion approach. The CCF's are volunteers who receive a small incentive.

In 2015 the first community cohesion agreements (with 16 bylaws on specific types of conflict) were signed by representatives from the districts and the Bureau of Justice. The signing ceremony (a colourful celebration including traditional songs of peace and harmony) was a major event. After reading out each article the participants agreed and voted to accept it.

(Van Tongeren, 2020; Van Uffelen, 2015)

6.2. District Platforms for Dialogue, Mano River Region.

The border districts of the four Mano River Union countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea) have witnessed more than two decades of instability and insecurity, with political tensions spilling over from one country into another. Since wars started in 1989, this region has attracted militias, which sometimes launch damaging cross-border attacks. Four national NGOs (ABC Development, IREDD, NMJD and WANEP) and Conciliation Resources (UK) have established and empowered a network of 18 locally owned peacebuilding structures, called District Platforms for Dialogue (DPD's). In the majority of cases, one DPD is partnered with another in a community across the border.

Each DPD has a designated focal person responsible for maintaining regular contact with their counterpart, by mobile phone or sending messages through family members or with traders. The DPD's consist of anything between 12 and 24 local people. They utilise a focal point system linking the 18 DPD's to some 170 remote communities and serve as a liaison.

The DPD network aims to mitigate local conflicts by identifying emerging conflicts and facilitating dialogue to prevent escalation of violence.

(Conciliation Resources, 2016)

6.3. Guinea-Bissau : Regional Spaces for Dialogue to Peacebuilding.

From 1980 onwards, the country has been one of the most unstable on the African continent, witnessing at least a dozen (failed or successful) coups, a civil war and political assassinations. In the absence of a functioning state, grassroots initiatives have become of great importance to prevent local conflicts from spiralling out of control. In 2007, Interpeace (an international peacebuilding organization) and its Guinean partner Voz di Paz (Voice of Peace) established 10 permanent dialogue groups all over the country. They are known as Regional Spaces for Dialogue. Since 2011, they have resolved some 100 local conflicts annually -as an average- by using dialogue as a tool for peaceful conflict management. These may range from conflicts between individuals, within families, between communities and between local authorities and the population. Voz di Paz is engaged in a nationwide consultation process for a comprehensive conflict analysis.

The RSD's comprise a trustworthy institution. A relative moderate annual financial package of about 30.000 Euros would enable all members of the 10 RSD's to solve their problems in the areas of transport, communications and access to the people.

(Interpeace, 2015; Albert and Eze, 2017)

6.4. Central African Republic (CAR) : Local Peace Cells.

The Central African Republic has been affected by chronic, protracted conflict and insecurity for more than 50 years. Since the current crisis erupted in 2013, huge efforts have been made to bring CAR back from the brink of armed conflict. But this is still a fragmented country, with armed groups controlling huge areas of land and a deeply rooted sense of insecurity and mistrust.

In 2014 and 2015, Conciliation Resources (UK) helped establish 12 Local Peace Cells (LPCs). In a society dominated by divisions and mistrust, these LPCs play a vital role in leading community-level reconciliation processes and in building the trust and knowledge to become links between communities and armed groups. Run by volunteers, they identify conflict issues in their neighbourhoods, and work with conflict parties and other stakeholders to find peaceful solutions.

The government through the Ministry of Social Affairs and Reconciliation started establishing a Reconciliation Structure known as Local Peace and Reconciliation Committees (LPRCs).

Members of the LPCs Conciliation Resources is working with, have also been elected on the new committees being set up. The expansion is now going to be more in line with the establishment of the new LPRCs. The introduction of LPRCs was somehow politicised.

This initiative constitutes an opportunity for the newly formed LPRCs to become an important interface between the government, community leaders and civil society in CAR.

(Conciliation Resources, 2016a & 2018)

6.5. Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe counts some 150 LPCs currently in existence, the majority established by the Ecumenical Church Leaders Forum (ECLF) and others by the Zimbabwe Civic Education Trust (ZIMCET).

There are LPCs in many more countries, with different names and with often similar tasks.

7. THE LOCAL AND THE NATIONAL; LPC'S AND LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT.

LPCs tend to enjoy relatively high levels of legitimacy because they are composed of respected members of local civil society. Their authority, therefore, does not result from the visible power presence of a state with security forces and arms, but rather from the respect they get from their community. More than anything else, LPCs project "soft" power and are usually first established at the local level, often after transparent selection and proper consultation of main stakeholders. As a result, LPCs tend to be fairly representative of the local communities from where they come. Being mostly informal and without a national mandate, it is actually beneficial for LPCs to be seen as impartial and independent. Any affiliation with government or political parties may hamper that position. Of course, as Spearing describes with regard to Burundi, LPCs often liaise at local level with local government, as this is either inevitable, a strategic necessity or simply expedient. If an LPC decides to integrate a local official as a member, they will have to make sure that the candidate in question respects the LPC's impartiality and independence.

LPCs are often established because the state is absent and not delivering security

and justice at the community level. It also occurs that the state is part of the conflict, corrupt and lacks (sufficient) legitimacy. Once an LPCs obtains tangible results (for instance by managing to solve existing community conflicts, prevent further violence and/or contribute to sustainable peace) there is a need to establish or re-establish a social contract between citizens and the state. From a formal perspective, the state must deliver security, justice and basic services at local and national levels. Locally, LPCs might even gain from the presence of the state, receiving official recognition and resources. This may give them more leverage, enable them to link local and national peacebuilding efforts – as has indeed happened in for instance Kenya - and may coordinate with the formal judicial system.

But there is a serious dilemma. If, as is often claimed, the state has no legitimacy and LPCs collaborate with state officials, or include them in their membership, will the Committees not lose the respect of the local community from where they came? Such actions may compromise their legitimacy and neutrality as well as their ability to facilitate consensus at community level. They may become susceptible to political influence and political capture.

Van Leeuwen et al. reflect on LPCs in Burundi and DRC :

'Various interviewees on both sides of the border strongly distrust the state, and point out the need to remain independent of (local) government structures, fearing that association with the state would undercut their local legitimacy. Interviewees in Burundi describe how local representatives of political parties have tried to use local peace structures as platforms for political mobilisation' (Van Leeuwen, 2019)

Top-down appointments of LPC chairs from government or from political parties will undermine the raison d'être of a Local Peace Committee, as the Kenya case has also shown. After the newly decentralised infrastructure for peace had been decreed by law, the ensuing creation of new LPCs became vulnerable to capture by political operatives, as we saw in section 3.*These incentives opened up the peace committees to capture and manipulation by political elites'* (Abdi and Lind, 2018)

These considerations are serious dilemma's. But we have to see the broader picture as well.

Strengthening local governance is needed for many reasons. The climate crisis is one of them. This crisis will cause many extreme challenges and numerous conflicts. Local governance will have to increase. Local governance will be a necessary element of adapting and responding to climate shocks amidst the climate crisis.*'How can we prepare locally based mediation teams, humanitarian leadership, and build the response mechanisms necessary for the decades ahead ?(...) Peacebuilding isn't just a crisis-oriented set of tactics to prevent violence or reach peace agreements.*

*Peacebuilding that pays attention to local governance is essential for imagining a future of managing climate shocks and chronic mass migration'. (*Schirch, 2019, 3)

A good balance has to be found, involving key stakeholders, strengthening local governance and having LPCs, with local ownership and legitimacy. **8)**
There is, as always with LPCs, no one-size-fits all solution to this dilemma as two examples will show.

7.1. Government-LPC Relations in Eastern DRC: the CISPE program.

Prolonged land disputes, the presence of armed groups, a weak state and the meddling of neighbouring countries have all contributed to the continued instability of eastern DRC. The Consortium for the Integrated Stabilization and Peace of Eastern DRC (CISPE) has been created in order to stabilise eastern Congo through a process of dialogue. The idea is to provide support to local government, the police, justice sectors and to local communities.

CISPE was a creation of three Dutch organisations.**9)** in conjunction with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). CISPE implements a program called Pamoja Inawezekana ('Together it is possible', in Kiswahili) in North-Kivu and Ituri. It started in 2015 and ended in 2019.
The program focuses on what it terms the drivers of peace: on the one hand there is the comprehensive dialogue CISPE wishes to promote (with it the empowerment of the local population), on the other hand there is the state, an entity whose accountability and performance (especially in matters concerning security) the program aims to improve. The end result will be, it is hoped, the establishment of better relations between the community and the state. It is encouraging that several Congolese ministries are collaborating within the framework of this program, most notably the Ministries of Interior, Planning and Justice.

PAX has worked on community security with civil society in Ituri for over a decade and is well connected to existing networks. In collaboration with FoMI (Forum des Mamans d'Ituri), Justice Plus and the Justice and Peace committee of the Mahagi Nioka Diocese it has worked to create dialogue in communities and between communities and authorities. PAX has been focussing on 4 of the 5 Territories of Ituri, a total of 38 Chefferies, affecting an estimated 4 million people. **10)**

VNG works on the endorsement and dissemination of the Local Security Action Plans (PSL) throughout the seven territories where CISPE is operational: three in North Kivu and four in Ituri. State actors and civil society, including LPCs **11),** are collaborating in these PSLs and are actively involved in the monitoring of the security situation in their respective areas. After the violent conflict in Ituri during the Second Congo War, an early warning mechanism was established to identify and

resolve conflict before it escalates. The LPCs are part of the network that emerged from this early warning mechanism and have existed for over a decade. They are the principal instrument for community organising in Ituri. The primary functions of the LPCs are:
- conflict mediation & reconciliation
- monitoring of security incidents
- lobby & advocacy at chefferie, territorial and provincial levels, together with the Comitées de Securité. **12)**

The CISPE approach is interesting because it takes the long perspective. Addressing the links between poor governance and insecurity by providing support to local government, police, justice sectors and to local communities requires such a long-term perspective. An integrated approach, designed to make previously dysfunctional and uncooperative sectors both perform and work together can only be medium or long-term. The project re-positions the population and their communities as agents of stabilization and peace. This appears to be working. In 2017, through their mediation work, the community security structures have been able to solve 43% of local conflicts in Ituri and 67 % in North Kivu.

One of the conclusions of the study 'Complementarity and Competition, State and non-state peace and security structures in Ituri and North Kivu' states:
'It should be noticed that in practice the differences in implementation are not so pronounced as policy might suggest. For instance, in the identification of members to peace and security structures in Ituri, village and groupement chiefs were often selected by community members to participate in these structures anyway. Peace and security structures themselves identified the need of developing relationships with state representatives. In these instances, state

The CISPE program started in 2015 and ended in 2019.
An 'End off project evaluation' was held in 2019.
Some of the conclusions are
- the overall outcomes of the evaluation shows that the participatory security management approach was very successful : "all stakeholders involved in the project, authorities and citizens alike, show enthusiasm for the participatory approach to security management. Well maintained participation has led to constructive collaboration between population and authorities".
- Improved services delivery lacked behind. Stabilization and peace needs time to develop and this process start with a democratic dialogue.

- the Security Action Plans (PAS) with its elaborate process of inclusion and various steps are not easily changed.
- CISPEs work on land conflict is seen as most relevant however has not much effect when armed groups and political parties are present and interfere.
- the evaluation concludes that, in the current circumstances of fragile governance, the widespread, voluntary, and independent Ituri LPS-es have the most potential for value for money.

The new project will be called *Ensemble pour la Securite et la Paix a l'Est de la RDC (ESPER)*, and will be implemented by VNG International and Cordaid.

(CISPE, 2015 & 2018; Edburgh, 2019; Van Leeuwen, 2019) **13)**

7.2. Government-LPC Relation in Ghana ; working within a National Mandate

Ghana has a reputation as one of Africa's most democratic and stable countries. However, it has also experienced intense local conflicts. Between 1990 and 2002 there were 14 violent clashes between various communities, mostly in the northern region. One of these, the 1994-1995 Konkomba-Nanumba war, killed 5.000 people. It was eventually resolved as a result of a dialogue process that was initiated by a consortium of NGOs and lasted for two years, resulting in a signed accord between the previously warring communities.

In 2002, a conflict broke out in Dagomba Kingdom which killed the King of Dagbon and 40 others. Government and civil society actors commenced a process of dialogue and negotiation that defused the conflict.

Following this success, the government -previously prone to suppressing communal conflict by using force- set out to create a national mechanism to prevent, manage and resolve conflict. The government decided in 2006 to set up institutionalised peace structures at national, regional and district level. It wanted to reconcile tensions emerging from the existence of two states within one: a traditional state controlled by tribal chiefs without formal political authority, and a modern state, controlled at the local level by a district chief executive. The ensuing peace architecture was a genuine effort to achieve this.

The National Peace Council Act of 2011 established a National Peace Council, a non-partisan platform for consultation and cooperation among main stakeholders with the aim of promoting reconciliation, tolerance, trust, confidence-building, mediation and dialogue. It is explicitly tasked to find indigenous solutions to conflicts. The NPC has 13 members, eight of whom represent the different religions. These individuals enjoy the respect of citizens and bring moral authority to the NPC. Ten Regional Peace Councils and District Peace Councils have the same composition. Six more Regional Peace Councils will be set up. The Interior Ministry includes

a Peacebuilding Support Unit, which coordinates the collaboration between government agencies and the several components of the peace architecture.

Article 30 of Ghana's NPC Act states on the NPC's independence:

'Except as provided in the Constitution, the Council shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority in the performance of its function'. (Government of Ghana 2011)

One study made this comment regarding the issue of the peace architecture's legal status:

'Having the peace councils enshrined into legislation, as is the case in Ghana, is also essential in order to both formalize the structures and to ensue that the government will continue to officially support and finance the structures in the event of a change of government. Such legislation will safeguard the sustainability of the peace councils' (Giessmann, 2016, p.14).

Further commenting on the Ghana example, Odendaal adds this thought:

'The role description with the best long-term sustainability is that of the NPC as mediator in
political and social conflict. In order to play this role, the NPC has to maintain a profile of political impartiality and of trusted interlocutor' (Odendaal,2012, p.51).

Ghana is the first African country that has an official peace structure in place, which has proved its usefulness and is still in force.

(Bombande, 2007; Giessmann, 2016, p.27-29; Giessmann, 2017, p.11-15; Odendaal, 2012, p.40-53; National Peace Council Act, 2011*)*

Another recent example of an Architecture for Peace is Malawi. **14)**

8. LPCs AND NATIONAL PEACE AGREEMENTS.

This section of the Chapter looks for answers regarding the theme of new obstacles and opportunities that may confront LPCs once some form of national peace has actually been achieved. It makes a quick tour of past peace agreements in five African countries, realising only too well that, for some countries, notably DRC and South Sudan, we can show only a few 'spots of peace' that have a limited representativity and cannot be said to stand for the situation in the whole country.

8.1. The National Peace Accord, South Africa, 1991.

The National Peace Accord of 1991 was, in many ways exceptional, one being that the Government was not the key partner, and the NPA was signed by 27 signatories. It established a peace architecture and hundreds of Local Peace Committees were the core of this structure.

These LPCs contributed greatly to the reduction of violence and facilitated relatively peaceful elections in 1994. On a global scale, the national Peace Infrastructure with its three layers was the first Infrastructure for Peace of its kind. The South African example is a good illustration of what can be achieved given clear links between a national peace agreement and LPCs and the peace infrastructure was established by the NPA.

(Spies, 2002)

8.2. National Accord and Reconciliation Act, Kenya, 2008.

The National Accord stopped the violence but had a few side-effects that had repercussions on the national peace architecture. One of the outcomes was that all districts should have a District Peace Committee. This meant that the National Accord had a strong link with the LPCs. But the model felt 'imposed'. When peace was further formalised, the peace committees were perceived as state administrations, open to to capture and manipulation by political elites. In short, the actual result of the National Accord on the Peace Infrastructure was a bit mixed.

(Campbell, 2017; Pkalya, 2017; Wainaina, 2018)

8.3. Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, Burundi, 2000, 2004

The Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement aimed to institutionalize a democratic system for power-sharing between Hutu and Tutsi political parties, but it included no cease-fire agreement with rebel groups and no attention was given to local peacebuilding. Civil society was neither present nor represented. They were requested to participate as part of the delegation of the political parties they were affiliated to. Their exclusion as independent participants reinforced the idea that peace making was solely the prerogative of political parties and rebel movements, not the collective responsibility of the people.' (Daley, 2007, p.342)

This view is echoed by Siphamandla Zondi, who states:

'...negotiations (in Burundi) led to the bankrupt idea of elite pacts involving top leaders of major political parties. This elitism undermines the role of civil society actors, indigenous structures on the ground and the rooting of peace in communities'. (Zondi, 2017, p.5)

'The African Union (AU) policies and protocols pay lip service to enabling citizen involvement in the implementation of AU programs. (...) As a result, efforts from

below function mainly because citizens pursue them rather then because governments enable them…'

'It is clear that like the states that constitute it as an intergovernmental organization, the AU is still trapped in state-centric approaches to peace, focussing more on rebuilding the state, that was never authentic in the first place, than on transforming society as a whole. It has been about establishing the semblance of a functioning nation-state in the form of governmental institutions for providing services and security rather than re-orienting citizenry or boosting indigenous civil society structures that form part of social capital for peace and development. (Zondi, 2017, p. 9-10)
(Daley, 2007; Nantulya, 2018; Zondi, 2017)

8.4. Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, DRC, 1999/2002.
'Ten years of seeking and brokering peace in the DRC have resulted in very limited justice. (...) Broad and deep impunity is the rule' (Davis and Hayner, 2009, p.38)
(Ahere, 2012; Aljazeera, 2015; Davis & Hayner, 2009; Nantulya, 2018)

8.5. Comprehensive Peace Agreement, South Sudan, 2005, 2015.
The CPA, both in its original and its revised form, was a top-down and mostly technocratic exercise that did not take into account the many layers that constituted the conflicts it was supposed to solve. These included issues relating to identity, history, and peoples' security concerns. Nor did it acknowledge the work that had already been done at the local level to create what one might term "islands of peace", on which broader efforts could arguably have been built. As a result of this and other factors, the CPA failed in both of its iterations and the violence continued.**15)**

In summary, three of the five major national peace agreements failed, at least partly through lack of inclusiveness and being top-down focussed. Recent years show an increasing trend in favor of inclusive peace processes:
*'One of the principal reasons groups resort to violence and protest is to contest their exclusion from social, political or economic power. A wide range of research has found that more inclusive societies are generally more stable, harmonious and developed. Research has also found that the inclusion of additional actors or groups next to the main conflict parties (such as civil society or political parties)
in negotiation processes is crucial in making war-to-peace and olitical transitions more sustainable.'* (Paffenholz and Ross, 2015)

9. LESSONS – AND A FEW CONCLUDING REMARKS.
I would like to start my final remarks by quoting some 'guiding statements' from

50 long-term peacebuilding practitioners in South Sudan. The quotes have been taken from the Christian Aid report entitled: 'In it for the long haul? Lessons on peacebuilding in South Sudan',. (2018 p.5):

- Peace is a long-term transformative process: situate initiatives in a long-term perspective.
- Strategically include both 'key' and 'more' people: engage both leaders and citizens in an inclusive approach.
- Invest in local capacities, including understanding and building on what already exists.
- It's not what you do, it's how you do it- integrity is key. 'Soft' skills and commitment are as valuable as technical expertise.

A consolidated evaluation of ZOA's Reconstruction Projects (2016) in seven countries concludes:
- Combining conflict mitigation and peacebuilding with other sector interventions, such as food security, WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) and education, through a human security lens works. Conflict mitigation and peace building, and improved livelihood outcomes are seen and experienced by communities on the ground as interdependent and mutually reinforcing.
- Investing in community based conflict mitigation and peacebuilding is fundamental to promote broader human security. Communities reported a strong increase in trust and confidence in conflict mitigation and peacebuilding through LPCs as essential for more effective working relations with traditional and formal authorities and working conflict prevention and peacebuilding with other communities.
- Establishing or strengthening LPCs is instrumental for conflict mitigation and peacebuilding and can bridge the gap between local structures and formal state institutions at local (LPCs) and regional level (Peace Commissions or Councils). To increase its effectiveness, it is essential that LPCs represent different groups including faith based groups, women and youth.

Below, I attempt to draw some lessons from the cases that were discussed.

1. Building peace almost always starts at the bottom.
LPCs fulfil important functions and their existence can constitute important elements of a road towards peace. The cases we have described give examples of how LPCs solved conflicts, established social cohesion and prohibited small conflicts to escalate into far more dangerous conflicts. The case of MIPAREC in Burundi, for instance, makes clear how from the bottom up, over twenty years, a local network of

500 to 600 LPCs could be established, gradually expanding, getting more clout and respect. This is promising.

2. Inclusivity, participation and collaboration are essential points of departure.

LPCs derive their legitimacy primarily from the fact that they are – or at least attempt to be – highly representative of the community where they work. This is reflected in the representation within the LPC, where traditional and religious leaders collaborate with representatives from (among others) women and youth groups. Broad representation makes it more likely that the whole of the community will support the work of an LPCs, as more community members will feel they have an active stake in the process. As the examples of Burundi and South Africa show, inclusivity is a key element for the success of any peace effort.

3. Peace Infrastructures with a national mandate are relatively successful.

I described three different cases of a peace infrastructure with a national mandate: South Africa, Kenya and Ghana. These have three layers, at national, regional and local level; they also link local peacebuilding with regional and national levels. All contain some cooperation between government and main stakeholders and have been relatively successful. These structures can be really innovative, especially if and when they involve the greatest possible number of stakeholders. However, as both the Kenyan and the South African case have shown, they are also vulnerable to the vagaries of national politics, which in both cases impacted heavily on the way LPCs could work and function. In post-apartheid South Africa they simply were disbanded, together with the entire I4P; in Kenya, they became subject to political wrangling after the structure of local governance was redesigned in 2008. In the Kenyan case LPCs became props for politicians with ambitions that had little to do with the original remit, ambitions and activities of LPCs. The Ghana example shows that only with a legally enforceable and guaranteed independent status LPCs can be expected to continue working in the way their founders envisaged. The number of national peace infrastructures established with a mandate of the government is disappointingly small.

4. Government has to be and remain impartial.

If a country has an Infrastructure for Peace, with a national mandate, it is important that the Peace structure is (semi-) independent from the government; so it can play the role of an impartial mediator. For this reason alone, LPCs should not be steered from the national capital; this is counter-productive and undermines local ownership. They should remain locally owned, with locally respected stakeholders. In this way, an LPC can play its role as a neutral mediator (honest broker, if you will)

and bring local partners together in divided communities. In this particular context it is interesting to observe the amount of care informal LPCs exercise when liaising with local government and political parties.

5. *The impact of LPCs is local; i.e. there is a limit to what they can do.*

LPCs have been able to make important and tangible differences in communities in places as far apart and diverse as the Kivu Provinces in the DRC and South Sudan. In Burundi, it can be argued that while the political crisis that started in 2015 continues, LPCs have been remarkably successful in keeping the peace in the localities where they work. But their case is a good illustration of the point alluded to earlier as well, which is that as long as the national level has not sorted out its political differences, even a national network of LPCs will not bring lasting peace. A law can be passed that abolishes LPCs, a president may be ruthless in his pursuit of continued power, political violence can be organised nationally and LPCs will not be able to do much about any of these things. The same applies in even more poignant ways to the situation in next-door DRC, where violence is tied up with political dysfunction in the capital and the relentless quest for resources fuelled by forces from beyond Congolese borders.

6. *LPCs are vulnerable.*

They face many challenges, in terms of local acceptance and when the security situation deteriorates. This is when they may find themselves unable to keep the peace they so instakingly put together. Without legal guarantees regarding their independence, LPCs are particularly vulnerable to capture by ambitious political operators who may be part of a state bureaucracy that (re)establishes itself, or may have been part (and in some cases even continue to be part) of armed organisations that may seek to influence the workings of LPCs through bribery, intimidation or violence.

7. *More peace infrastructures are needed.*

Many parts of the African continent are free of violent conflict. In most of Southern Africa and the Mano River Union in West Africa encouraging steps towards peace have been made over the past decades. However, other regions remain vulnerable to the continuation or intensification of conflicts, there is always a danger of war returning or breaking out anew. The reasons can be local – but they also lie beyond the control of African actors on the ground, for instance climate change, the competition for resources and the growing influence of violent extremism. However, political instability has grown as well, thanks in part to the overarching ambitions of individual politicians or the activities of armed groups,which sometimes

overlap. '*After decades of decline, there has been a recent increase in violent conflict. In 2016, more countries experienced violent conflict than at any time in nearly 30 years and this trend continues*' (Conciliation Resources, Annual Report, p.32)

Many states on the African continent remain fragile and where there is a concentration of many of these and other factors present, conflicts are set to multiply. This appears particularly to be the case in the Great Lakes region and the Sahel.

Given this volatile context in many parts of the African continent and the largely positive track record of LPCs that are rooted in local communities, it stands to reason to conclude that these are highly useful instruments that have a great potential.

We should nourish them; they are highly needed.

Endnotes

1) This article has been written from the perspective of a peace practitioner. What this means is that our discussion departs from the practices found in the communities where the LPCs under discussion do their work. We are looking at the wider (national and sometimes regional) context from that perspective.

2) In the past four years, the government of Burundi has been moving into an authoritarian direction. In 2015 President Nkurunziza forced a change in the Constitution that made it possible for him to opt for a third term, which is in contradiction to the Arusha Agreement. Weeks of protests and unrest followed, further worsening the situation. In September 2019, the United Nations reported human rights violations being committed on a vast scale by security forces and CNDD-FDD militias.

3) During the latest political crisis, which started in 2015, LPCs attempted to address the potential for conflict and violence during the electoral period through different forms of civic education and sensitization (Spearing, 30) They sensitized the community on what conduct to adopt to reduce tensions. The ability of Peace Clubs to monitor and respond to conflict risks was crucial. Interestingly, this work to sensitize the community around elections was enabled by the local authorities in many local communities.

4) Similar problems emerged in the province of Ituri, which was plunged into open warfare in 2003 and where a large number of different militias began operating. Community-based organizations requested a program for inter-community reconciliation by organising barzas. Some 800 rapid alert systems operating at local level were established as a result. (Van Tongeren, 2013, p.7-11; Van Tongeren, 2020)

5) Between 1998 and 2004, a period of major instability in eastern DRC, the **Barza Inter-Communautaire** in North Kivu was successful in resolving disputes over land ownership. A *barza* is a traditional meeting involving large numbers of people, at the end of which the participating communities are invited to elect up to 12 members into a local peace initiative (ILP), who will then engage in mediation and conflict resolution. In this particular case,

the *barza* assembles leaders from North Kivu's nine major ethnic groups to discuss issues central to community life and help to resolve low-level conflicts before they escalate to violence. (Clark, 2008; van Tongeren, 2013)

6) A contributing factor to the north-south divide is that the majority of the people in Northern Sudan are Muslim, while the majority of the population in Southern Sudan are Christian or adhere to traditional beliefs.

7) A *Boma* is the third local administrative layer in any given *County;* a *Payam* is being the second.

8) See as well Learning Paper of ZOA, SUDIA and Saferworld, 2020,*Working with government and customary authorities : considerations for peacebuilding practitioners.*

Sustainable peace and security depend on functioning institutions and relationships of trust and cooperation between people and the authorities that serve them. However, protracted conflict has damaged or destroyed many institutions and undermined state-society relations. Building (or rebuilding) trust and cooperation takes time and requires skills and resources, and must be done in a way that ensures all relevant groups are included.

9) The Dutch Association of Municipalities, VNG, the peace movement, PAX (till 2019), and the Catholic Peace & Development Organization, CORDAID.

10) Frerks, 2007; Van Tongeren, 2013, p.9)

11) The LPCs were elected in *barza* communautaires, the traditional meetings described in note 5.

12) Local security councils are comprised of police, military officials and justice officials, led by chiefs.

13). On a similar issue, VNG International and the Rift Valley Institute published *Governing local security in the eastern Congo : Decentralization, police reform and interventions in the chieftaincy of Buhavu (South Kivu)*

14) **Malawi**

Malawi gained its Independence in 1964 and was ruled by its first president, Hastings Kamuzu Banda, for 30 years. During that time Malawi was a tightly controlled one-party state. In 1992, the faith community aligned itself with calls for multiparty democracy. A National Dialogue was initiated and facilitated by Catholic representatives. It resulted in the establishment of a National Consultative Council with representatives from all parties. 1994 saw Malawi's first ever multiparty elections, in which Banda was defeated but subsequent elections in 1999 and 2004 were marred by violence. In 2012, a Civil Society Task Force led twenty-two consultative dialogues in order to develop a draft peace architecture. The Task Force then engaged the Government with the proposal to establish a National Peace Architecture; the government endorsed the idea and published the *Development of a National Peace Architecture for Malawi* (2013).The government of Malawi published   a *National Peace Policy* in 2017, drawn from the 2013 NPA publication. The process of formulating the Policy involved extensive consultations with traditional leaders, political leaders, government officials, CSOs/NGOs, faith-based organizations, academia, media, women and youth. In the meantime, a few Local Peace Committees were established to service identified hotspots in leu of a formally established.

March 2020, the government announced that with UN/UNDP support, they were working on a Draft Bill for the formal establishment of the Malawi Peace Commission (MPC). The MPC will be a nine-member (3 men, 3 women, 1 youth, 2 persons with special needs) independent body, tasked with establishing the DPCs, whose composition must mirror that of the MPC.

(Malawi, Government of-, 2013 and 2017)

15) A recent Saferworld report on South Sudan highlights ineffective law enforcement and justice delivery at state and local levels, a culture of impunity and a lack of clarity and understanding of the

distinction between the jurisdictions of statutory and traditional/customary courts (Saferworld, 2019, p.2)

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