

Building Peace

EED (Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst – Church Development Service)
Financed by the BMZ (Bundesministerium für
Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit – German Federal
Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)

**Peace work
during election periods:
challenges
and opportunities**



EED (Church Development Service, an Association
of the Protestant Churches of Germany)

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Photos from a workshop organised by HEAL Africa in Goma in August 2011, where young Congolese artists expressed their vision of a future for their country. They drew from historical

Introduction

We decided to devote the sixth edition of “Building Peace” to the subject of “Peace work during election periods”. This is because our partner organisations and peace workers in DRC, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cameroon, as well as the partner organisations and colleagues from AGEH in Burundi and DRC, were and remain concerned by the challenge the election process represents for those who are working to reduce divisions and build peace and stability.

The events surrounding the elections in Guinea and particularly in Côte d’Ivoire have destabilised the whole of West Africa. Sierra Leone and Liberia are greatly influenced by the situations of their neighbours, if only due to the influx of refugees they receive. Our colleague Shecku Kawusu Mansaray, CPS/EED coordinator, conducted a survey in Freetown, Sierra Leone, to gather the opinions of the population regarding the forthcoming elections and the situation in the region.

We have also included an interview of Cameroonian philosopher and political scientist Achille Mbembe on the lessons to be drawn from the situation in Côte d’Ivoire and election processes in Africa.

sources, the internet, used what they saw locally and in the global world. They want to be actors and become involved in building the future. (see also www.healafrika.org)



Burundi and Rwanda held elections in 2010. Our colleagues Apollinaire Niyongabo from the Burundi Episcopal Justice and Peace Commission and Christian Kuijstermans, coordinator of the CPS/AGEH programme in the Great Lakes region, present their analyses.

We have also included excerpts from articles published by academic Mahmoud Mamdani on the election situation in his native Uganda.

The elections in DRC and Cameroon are scheduled for the end of 2011. In April 2011 in Goma, the members of the CPS network in DRC, partner organisations and peace workers of EED and AGEH, devised principles for peace actors during election periods, which we are also including.

Also featured in this publication is an article from Onesphore Sematumba of Pole Institute in Goma on the electoral issues and challenges facing DRC.

Marie José Mavinga, national CPS/EED coordinator in DRC, gives an example of the role of peace workers in such a situation.

Desirée Lwambo and Albert Mushiarhamina Kengo of HEAL Africa in Goma share the results and analyses of their research on women's participation in the political process in DRC.

Angèle Mazimi and Pierre Fichter of CRAFOD in Bas Congo elaborate on their organisation's work in preparing the elections.

Odile Bula Bula and Jessie Bohr of the RIO in Bukavu summarise their organisations' initiatives during the last elections in 2006.



Flaubert Djateng, coordinator of the Zenü Network and member of the CPS/EED mobile team, focuses on the exclusion of young people from political life in Cameroon.

Christiane Kayser from the CPS/EED mobile team and Pole Institute analyses the links between governance, democratisation and elections in Africa.

As CPS support staff in several African countries and consultants committed to population-driven change we advocate fundamental work on governance based on elements of legitimacy and accountability rooted in African cultures, while at the same time including governance initiatives and skills developed in other parts of the global world. The stakes are not restricted to the results of individual election processes but consist in the appropriation of political processes by a large part of the populations concerned, particularly young people and women.

The start-up of the CPS programme in Cameroon which was recently added to the programmes in the Great Lakes and Mano River regions, should enable our series of publications to make an even greater contribution to facilitating discussions and experience sharing among African countries. We hope that this publication will help to promote constructive dialogue on this important subject and create synergies between stakeholders in French- and English-speaking countries in Africa.

*Flaubert Djateng, Christiane Kayser
August 2011, Bafoussam, Les Barthes*



Elections and peace work: a difficult equation...

by Christiane Kayser, CPS/EED mobile team

Free and transparent elections are often considered the fast track to democracy, a guarantee of democratisation, the fundamental criterion for distinguishing “good” regimes from “bad” ones.

In his speech at La Baule in June 1990, François Mitterrand intimated to the African leaders assembled at France’s instigation that from then on — after the fall of the Berlin wall and the end of the Cold War — they would have to adopt “democracy” to be able to enjoy good relations with France and her allies. Even beyond France’s “sphere of privileged interest”, the repercussions of the events in Europe were felt in French- and English-speaking Africa: the African regimes began to show signs of “vague democratic leanings”, unfortunately rarely driven by popular movements for change. Mali is one of the most notable exceptions: a movement that emerged in civil society swept away the dictatorship and reorganised the country. In general, however, and in spite of the large number of national conferences, the dictators in power began to



*“There are
no real role
models
for today’s
youth”*



paint shiny veneers of democracy, particularly by organising more or less transparent and free elections as if they were an exercise in style.

The citizen cultures existing in the different countries were and still are deeply rooted mainly in the traditional and informal where many forms of accountability and public spirit exist¹ which are in no way related to the modern State imposed by the colonisers. To date, in the experience of most people in Africa, the State only manifests itself to claim taxes, repress, and live from corruption, directing and controlling from afar and in some cases, as in DRC, for example, even pillaging and increasing insecurity through an unpaid so-called armed force. Only very rarely is the State perceived as an institution that provides a service, regulates, keeps the peace and maintains stability. This explains why citizens in many African countries feel they belong to a somewhat abstract nation encapsulated mainly in sport and music², but above all they feel accountable to a community, a clan, a region, traditions or informal groups, hardly ever to a State.³ However, the population does feel a real need for a force capable of regulating and achieving commu-

¹ See, for example: *Elvis Tangwa Sa'a, Traditional African Chiefdoms: what role do they play after the Berlin Conference?*, pages 73 to 90, in *Mapinduzi Journal* 2, Bafoussam/Berlin, December 2010

² ... which is often used as an anesthetic by those in power

³ See, for example: Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject. Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*, Princeton 1996



"We need to copy others while keeping our identity"

nity consensus. As a saying by the rural population in Burkina Faso during the efforts towards decentralisation in the 1990s goes: *State, take me, but don't touch me!* They felt that “politicians” should remain in the capital for they would destabilise and create conflicts in the rural communities that had achieved a fragile balance of power on the basis of negotiations and diplomatic efforts “in the old style”⁴. At the same time, they were and are still perfectly aware of the necessity for a regulatory force legitimised by all or at least by the majority of the population.

The simplest and most obvious way to achieve this is in Western eyes to organise elections worthy of the name. However, a phenomenon that evolved in the West from grassroots movements and the demands of the population and is still far from perfect, unfortunately arousing less and less interest in young people, has much more difficulty taking hold in countries where for the majority the State apparatus has no legitimacy, where the political class consists essentially of people who represent their own interests or those of their clan with no accountability to anyone else. It is therefore not surprising that election campaigns and elections are not experienced as an opportunity to take part in political life and change, but rather as a difficult time with sometimes violent tensions and conflicts. Many Africans fear election campaign time and elections, and they breathe a sigh of relief when the vote is over and there has not been too much damage. This is a far cry from the

⁴ See Raogo Antoine Sawadogo, *L'Etat africain face à la décentralisation: la chaussure sur la tête*, Karthala, Paris, 2001



active participation of the population in political life. People either stay away or —if they do play a role — it's as cheerleaders, being manipulated against each other, their extreme poverty taken advantage of by being bribed with gifts of cloth and beer from one or other candidate, divided according to their affinities with a region or an ethnic group. The recent examples of Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea (Conakry) illustrate the dangers related to the electoral process only too well.

As the Cameroonian academic Achille Mbembe said in an interview included in this publication: "Elections have become an instrument of division in Africa." (page 28) While in some cases "politics should be demilitarised", it is also necessary to invent new forms of popular participation in town and village administration. The resignation, apathy, indifference, or even despair of the population in both urban and rural areas is understandable but very dangerous for the future of African societies.

Without the involvement of young people and women in particular in politics as players — and not as the manipulated and divided masses — African countries will not progress in what is commonly known as development, nor in democratisation. Elections are only one link in the chain of governance.

For the organisations and individuals working for stability and peace in their country and their region, this situation is one of the greatest challenges. In 2010 elections were held in Burundi and Rwanda. In 2011 elections are being held in DRC, Liberia and Cameroon. 2012 will be the turn of Sierra Leone. All our partner organisations and peace workers in these countries are directly concerned in their daily work.

How can we remain credible and position ourselves as actors at the service of the population? How should we react to tense situations and violence that may arise? How can we contribute to the "political awareness" of civil society without playing the same game as those who "hold and monopolise power"? How can we protect ourselves against the pressure from politicians and the powerful who often requisition the support of the NGOs and the Churches by trickery or force? How can

we encourage young people and women to take an interest in a political process they have only experienced as victims of corruption, repression and violence? What lessons can we draw from the “Arab spring”, the popular movements in North Africa, the new forms of mobilisation which, in some cases, swept away dictatorships but are struggling to transform their leap forward into political systems?⁵

There is no easy recipe, but the different partners of the Civil Peace Service in DRC, Burundi, Sierra Leone and Cameroon are trying to find ways forward. Participatory analysis of the situation, of the opportunities to be seized and the traps to be avoided is always a fundamental basis of this work. The principles identified by our partners in DRC and Burundi in Goma in April 2011 (see page 65) also serve as a starting point.

Peace work and participatory governance do not begin or end with elections. The traditional and informal modes of legitimacy and accountability do not revolve around elections. They are based on contracts between the governed and the governing that are often verbal, but all the more compelling. This takes place mainly at local level and there are negative and harmful aspects, but also elements to be promoted and incorporated into governance “by the State”. These traditional and informal regulations are often losing steam and are sometimes corrupted in our globalised world, without being replaced by values and rules that are accepted by all. It is imperative not to reduce democratisation to a half-baked imitation of Western systems, but to work with the people to develop suitable modes of governance that are rooted in lived experience, so that they can be appropriated by the population. This is a long-term effort and also one of the necessary conditions for sustainable peace.

⁵ See, for example: Tahar Ben Jelloun, *L'étincelle, Révoltes dans les pays arabes*, Gallimard, Paris 2011

Elections in Sierra Leone and Liberia seen by the population

Interview with a cross-section of Sierra Leoneans on the up-coming elections in Liberia 2011 and Sierra Leone 2012

by Shecku Kawusu Mansaray, Regional coordinator of the Civil Peace Service programme in the Mano River Region (CPS/EED)

The Mano River Region has been described as the most volatile sub-region in Africa, south of the Sahara. In recent years, all four countries have witnessed violence in massive proportions either in the form of rebel wars, (in the cases of Liberia and Sierra Leone) or pre/post election violence as in the cases of Guinea Conakry and Ivory Coast. In the last two years, 2009 and 2010, the citizens of the former French colonies of Guinea Conakry and Ivory Coast conducted multiparty democratic elections with disastrous consequences on the civilian population. In Guinea Conakry, the elections nearly degenerated to a tribal war between the Mandingoes and Fullahs. In Ivory Coast, it was a split between the South backed by the military and the North backed by a rebel militia.

In the next two years — 2011 and 2012, the former British Colony, Sierra Leone (2012) and neighbouring American-English speaking country Liberia (2011) will be engaging in multi-party democratic elections. The citizens of these countries anxiously look forward to their national elections with hopes and fears. They express their growing anxiety in these interviews held in the middle of the rainy season — July 2011.

The interviews were conducted informally mostly in Krio (the lingua franca in Sierra Leone) and the prevalent local languages in various communities. The responses were translated into English by Shecku Kawusu Mansaray.

Question:

What do elections mean to you in the Mano River Region — Liberia 2011 and Sierra Leone 2012?

Response by a male university student in the Faculty of Arts:

We have seen and heard how elections went in neighbouring Ivory Coast and Guinea — Conakry in the Mano River Region. The elections in those countries were so destabilizing and traumatic to the population that were it not for my firm belief in the principles of democracy and participatory governance, I would have wished that no elections are ever held in our region again. Now to the question — to me election gives me a golden chance to determine who governs my country. I look forward to this chance though with mixed feelings — Elections may be fulfilling or devastating for our region depending on the parties, the leaders and the election commission — They have the golden opportunity to make or break the country. Guinea Conakry and Ivory Cost were literary broken into pieces. I hope the new leaders will have the patience to sew the pieces together to make one country with one vision. To say the truth, election times are times I pray for the best and prepare for the worst.

Response by a female student in a teacher training college:

Hawanatu Tejan: I am always afraid when I hear that elections are near. Its time to pray for the Liberians to re-elect Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf peacefully so they continue to build on their hard earned peace. The Liberians have made history by electing the first Female President in Africa. She has not done so badly with the fight against corruption and rebuilding their war torn country. This is how I see it. Best wishes for a violence free election — If the officers do attempt to cheat.

I hope the Liberians too will pray for us in 2012. When the campaign does not turn violent, we normally enjoy elections times in Sierra Leone.

After the results are announced we hope the losing candidates and supporters will accept. This is the part I fear the most. May God protect us in the hands of those power-hungry politicians. My experiences in our student union elections are no different from national politics. Any attempt at cheating by any player naturally leads to violence and disruption of college life. This is where I have problem with elections and the amount of money spent on it.

***Response by a male foreigner Omolankay
(Truck Pusher) – Abdulai Bah:***

I do not know what will happen — may be the government will change and get the vendors off the streets. Life is hard — we find it difficult to move with the Omolankay in the crowded streets. If the Omolankay touches their wares, they turn on the truck pusher and beat him up and take all his money.

Let me tell you this, I will not be voting in the forthcoming elections, I was not born here so the citizens will decide. If there is no fight, I will stay, if not, I will go back home to Guinea. I came here during the last election fight-fight in my country. I am Fullah, the Mandingoes chased us out of our home. My family has returned to Guinea, but I am trying here.

Response by a Taxi driver in Freetown:

Election will not do any bad or good. It's the fuel price that is the problem when those producing fuel are fighting and fighting (the Arab world and Nigeria) — election will not make fuel cheap. People grumble when government changed fuel price and gallon to litre. I like the gallon system. This litre has made fuel expensive and the passengers are angry and complain everyday. Sometimes, they fight with drivers. They do not want to pay the small addition.

When election comes, I am going home till its over. This city is too

full of crazy headed people. I do not know what is happening in Liberia. I hear a woman is the President. They stopped fighting; that is good for them and for us.

Response by a female trader in farm produce on Bo Freetown Highway:

Eh! I am going to vote for my party again — Red for this constituency. I will vote. I will lead or join the singing and dancing. I will not allow the other party to take power again. They delayed too much to make this highway we now enjoy. Liberia too, that woman will win. We have not heard of war since she won. She will win again. I hope Charles Taylor goes to jail and not come again and disturb the peace of the people of Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Response by a male farmer in Southern Sierra Leone:

The politicians will come around with all they have to beg for our votes. The other time, they said the tractors and power tillers were waiting at the port. After they won, we did not see the tractors, they disappeared. We still use our hoe and cutlass.

However, I like to vote if there is no fight. There was no fight in 2002 to now. All elections I voted for my candidates. Sometimes they win and the last time, they lost. For 2012, we are watching. If there is violence, I take my family to a safe place till it's over.

Response by a male teacher in Rural North:

To me, the coming elections are test cases for both governments in power. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, Both the governments have served their first terms and want a second term in office. They both ascended to power through peaceful transition in post conflict situations. Depending on how they manage the elections for their second term, there will

be peace after all. If not, I will be disappointed in them. Things are hard for me and my family since the cost of food items has been rising and the salaries remain in the same place. They say our country has no money to pay good living wages, so we the poor workers have to show patriotism and manage what they pay us, no matter how little. How for do? Elections come and go; we still do not get school supplies and respectable salaries.

Response by female teacher in Rural North:

Well, sometimes election disrupts the normal school system; that is not good. Some teachers go away to work as election officers. I just vote and pay no attention to the lie-lie campaign talk. Who ever wins will not care about teachers and the children, so I vote for my party, because I want my own people in power. If I were a Liberian, I will vote for Mrs Sirleaf. She is a good example of a successful woman. I like her. I will pray for her.

For Sierra Leone, I am seeing a lot of work going on, may be because of that people will not want to change the present government. As for me, I want change, because new teams coming in will change a little before it goes bad again. The cost of school materials and charges has gone up. The parents grumbles too much — especially those who have many children in school.

Response by a fish seller living in Kenema, Eastern Sierra Leone:

I do not know why elections are held — Because things never get better for the poor people. We buy raw/fresh fish very expensive here in Kenema by carton. Every year, the cost per carton goes up by Le 20,000 – 35,000. That means we have to charge more for each piece. Its difficult to sell to poor people here. Only diamond dealers can afford raw/fresh fish.

Now there are cheap frozen chicken, so, some people buy chicken instead of fish, but some still prefer fish but can only buy less quantity

because the pocket is not so “deep”. Things are hard. Let those who want election, pay for it. As for me, I want that money for election to be given to market women as micro credit, so we buy more “market” and re-pay the loans after a good profit. Election is for politicians.

Response by a vegetable seller of Garrison Street, Freetown:

Election will bring peace and we can sell without harassment by the City Council market due collectors. The due collectors are unreasonable — They keep asking for more. At election time, they take it easy and leave us alone — but after, they will come back with tickets. When there is problem like fighting among supporters, the thieves plunder our goods and police don’t care. For this reason, election is not a good time for me. When campaign and voting are peaceful, like the last election, we enjoy — the Ashoibi and dancing. Oh! That is always welcome, but next year, I am not so sure. They want to drive us from where we are selling for our daily living. Any politician who does not want to see us get our daily bread, he will not win in this central one! Traders Oh yeah!!

Response by a shoe maker living in Kenema, hailing from Zimmi — Sierra Leone Liberia boarder:

Me, I come from Zimmi. I moved to Kenema during the war. I stay here because there is a lot of shoes to repair here, more than in Zimmi.

The good thing about election is that we can choose our leader we like. For me, I will still be making shoes, no matter who wins the elections here, I will still make shoes.

During election, I get more work when people dance and break their shoes — They bring them to me to mend. I charge them and they are happy to pay. If there is no fighting and killing, I enjoy election time. For Liberia election, there is no problem, that woman — Ellen? She will win. Since she came to power, we have not seen Liberians in Sierra

Leone hunting monkeys. Let me tell you something. Before the war started in Liberia, the first sign we saw was monkey hunters — they came and took permit to hunt monkeys in my village. Behold life had become so difficult that they cannot afford cow beef. When people start eating their own cousins, then you know things are really hard. After hunting the monkeys, they started the fighting with the same guns. That woman has now made life easy for Liberians and they are not coming here for our monkeys. As for me, I am making shoes even now. That is all I know how to do. I repaired shoes for the soldiers for free during war when no one had money to pay me. It was hard. To sew those soldiers' boots when the owner is waiting with a gun in his hands. Well, it is all over now if they do not start another fight during elections.

Response by a tailor in Magburaka, northern Sierra Leone:

Election means that there will be plenty of Ashoibi for women to sew. Ah! The other time, I suffered in prison cell for a whole day because I did not finish sewing the dress for the women supporters. The women called the police for me that I sabotaged their candidate. It was only by the grace of God that I did not sleep in that dirty cell with those criminals. Election bad Oh — It's bad when people get too drunk with power and take advantage of other poor people.

In the last years, not much work people so things are hard. As for me, I will not talk because they will say I sabotaged their government. They love T-shirt, when there is an event, so they do not have to pay a tailor. In fact many people do not bring cloths to sew these days. The rich people buy ready-made in the shops, the poor ones buy "Junks" (used clothing from abroad). This "junks" has spoilt the tailoring business. I will not complain. I will wait for election. If I am allowed to vote, I will vote — I know what to do with my vote.

***Response by an Okadar Rider in Freetown
(commercial motor cycle rider):***

I do not know how a new government will treat us, the motor-bike riders. So I prefer to have the present government. As for this government, they let us pay fines to the police. The police are always checking us and charging us Le 30,000–50,000 for riding on prohibited roads. Even though there are no signs to show which roads are out of bounds for commercial motor bikes. They still fine us heavy amounts. They are sometimes too hard with us—they can be violent, to say the truth. They grab our clothes from behind if we attempt to avoid arrest—sometimes we fall with our passengers. They are quick to snatch the key from the switch and you have to push the motor bike all the way to the police station and pay the fine. But they let us do our business although it is hard in the crowded city traffic if they stop this commercial motor cycle business it will be worse for us. Well not only we the riders. Even the police will suffer from want of someone to arrest everyday.

Response by an Okadar Rider in Rural East:

I am not the one to talk to about elections in Liberia and Sierra Leone. I am a poor motor cycle rider. Ask the police who arrest us every day for carrying extra passengers. I carry three persons on my victor motor bike— one for the police, one for my master (owner of motor cycle) and one for me. When I am not caught, its two for me, one for my master and zero for hungry belly police. This election will go on like the last one if the leaders want it that way. If the leaders want chaos, they will get it, if they want peace, they will get it. Any way, the motor bike businesses is good up here because it's faster— quick money. It is just risky for our health and our lives in case of accident. How for do, there is no other job and we need the cash.

Election in Liberia will be the same here. Not as tense as it is second term for the incumbents. Interesting eh? Woman in Liberia and Man

pikin (*young man*) in Sierra Leone. No worries for Mano River Union countries. The troubles in Guinea-Conakry and Ivory Coast will not come here. We are done with fight-fight.

***Response by a school administrator age 60 plus
in Eastern Sierra Leone:***

Election in Sierra Leone means the regional divide will deepen again. As usual, people will not vote for issues, but on party lines and regional alliance. This will not bring any change unfortunately. Not much will change. Regarding the conduct of the elections, it will depend a lot on the players — that is the ruling party, the opposition parties and of course the electoral commissioners — well and the supporters but these are secondary players. Their actions depend on the leaders. We look forward to a peaceful election in the region. The violence that happened in the two French speaking countries will not recall in Sierra Leone and Liberia because we have had our own fair share of fighting for people who want power. At the end of the day, nothing changes for the people. I tell my pupils and staff that no one's ambition for power and status is worth their blood, so they avoid violence.

***Response by Philip Koroma, a politician in Local Government
in Tonkolili local council:***

Why do you ask me? Ask the common man in the street. Election for me is for the people to exercise their franchise. It's not for politicians to say. This time, the people will assess our performance and vote us in or vote us out. Our party is in power, both at local and national levels. We are at the service of the people of this country. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, our elections are a crucial test for democracy. Our leaders were democratically elected and we wish to maintain this golden tradition. The voice of the people is the voice of God. The wishes of Sierra Leoneans will be respected in the coming elections. We do not wish to

see a destabilized Mano River region. We are hoping to win, if we do not win, we will leave power peacefully because the world is watching us. When the UN troops were here, both local and national elections were conducted peacefully. So also in Liberia, now, we have to show that we have matured in the art of self governance.

For me, I am contesting the second time. The first time I contested, I did not know my people much. Now after my first term, I know what my people want and that is peace and Development. I am ready for the tasks ahead even though we do not have money to do everything at once. This is a post war country with so much to rebuild and rehabilitate. My campaign is against youth unemployment. The young people need jobs, but there are none, so this time around, its job creation and youth training especially female youths. This will be our platform for the coming elections — local and national.

For Liberia, all is set for this year after their referendum. When they have a peaceful and credible referendum, they will have a good election. I trust that lady man Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

Response by a male opposition local politician, Robert Fortune:

For me, the coming election will be very important. The “mis-ruling” party has campaigned for us with their shortfalls. They have failed to deliver on their promises to the people of this country. For the first time in the history of this country, our local currency has weakened against all major international currencies: for example, the Pound Sterling has exceeded Le7,000; the US Dollar goes for Le4,500 and the Euro over Le6,000. That means the cost of living is sky-rocketing daily. Tell me the truth, what will stop us from clinching power in the coming elections? We are going to win. If the “mis-ruling” party does not stage the “Gbagbo” drama here. We will be back in power come 2012 — 12 o’clock sharp. The mis-ruling party should hand over power and leave the state house with their heads down. Yes, yes, this election will be a test for the ruling All Peoples Congress (APC). As a party, the APC has never

tasted the bitterness of losing an election. If they lose, it will be their first time and they will have to show us that they are “man enough” to let go of power without a fight after losing. Election is not about ourselves, but the people we represent. We lost the last election because our impatient post war population in the congested city of Freetown perceived us as too slow to restore the pre-conflict basic services, and our international backers agreed with them — Believe me the international community in Sierra Leone in 2007 somehow prompted the regime change. Well, with the help of the Electoral Commissioner Ms. Christiana Thorpe. That was why the SLPP sued her to court and now she has admitted having violated the constitution by canceling the election result of a whole stronghold district of the ruling party without organizing a bye election. We could have refused to hand over, but we are too civilized. We went to court. This time around, she will do better than that — I hope!

For Liberia, we are watching and praying for them. We are in the same region. If anything goes wrong, they are more likely to seek refuge here than the French countries. We will pray for a peaceful election in Liberia. Sierra Leone is the smallest member of the Mano River Region, I mean in terms of size and population. When our neighbours are in distress; the effect is felt by our small population directly and intensely. We hope all goes well in Liberia later this year and Sierra Leone next year.

Response by a house wife in Freetown, 42 years:

It means we have to get ready incase the youths go on the rampage for their candidates. In the last elections, I thank God, I voted for the very first time in my life in 2002. It was peaceful! So I went out to join the line to vote. I did not know the candidates, but my husband knew him and told me to vote for him because he is in our party. I would like to vote again so that my party will win and continue the good work going on around the country. It's just the cost of rice and petrol that is too

high. But my husband says its “global” I do not understand what its all about, but the cost of living is high and life is not easy — How for do? It has always been like this — last year better than this year — never getting better. Salone a gains! (Sierra Leone, am disgusted).

***Response by a nurse at under fives clinic –
Florence Finda Bockarie:***

May be things will change after this election. Or shall I say people will change their attitudes for the better. This government has popularized the free medical care facility for lactating mothers and children under five years of age. Now we have to handle the mess without proper salaries. Because of this free medical service, every sick woman is a lactating mother — some of them borrow children to claim free medical services. We have had to introduce measures to spot them out. For others, the children never get to five years — too bad for Salone people. But we do not blame them, the medicines and other services can be quite expensive if you have to pay for them. Things are hard and not getting better.

Our Ports Authority is not helping the health services. The other week, thieves were caught stealing the medicines at the Port after the authorities at the medical stores failed to clear the drugs forty-three days after landing. If the drugs are delayed that long in the sheds of the entry port, thieves naturally try to snatch some to sell in the open market. Anyway, election will not change this. The people themselves have to change their attitudes. They have to sympathize with the recent past of Sierra Leone and empathize with our leaders who are helping us pick up the threads of our lives and show understanding.

That is what the Minister told us when we went on strike for better conditions of service for doctors, nurses and other health workers. The Minister should also talk to the ports workers and the thieves, may be the fake lactating mothers too!

***Response by a Clergy in Freetown –
Rev Georgiana Maligi:***

For me, election means time for fervent prayers for God to give us the leader for a suffering nation. Only He can guide us choose the right person. The hardship of today is temporal in the sight of God. It will vanish as God wishes.

Sierra Leoneans deserve whom god appoints as leader. Let us pray for Gods divine guidance as we approach another election year.

“The democracy that is emerging in Côte d’Ivoire is devoid of ethics”¹

Cameroonian historian and philosopher Achille Mbembe shares his views on the crisis in Côte d’Ivoire.

Achille Mbembe and Sabine Cessou

Achille Mbembe, a historian and philosopher from Cameroon, gives a revealing analysis of the situation in Côte d’Ivoire. With fellow Cameroonian Célestin Monga, a leading African intellectual who works as an economist for the World Bank, he penned a remarkable article on the “bazooka democracy” emerging in Côte d’Ivoire.

Today, he denounces military involvement in the politics of the country led by Alassane Ouattara. Highly critical of the fiftieth anniversary of independence celebrations, often quoted by the French media, this thinker is not one to equivocate. On the subject of democracy in Africa, he believes “*we have to start all over again, re-think it through*”.

In his latest essay on decolonised Africa, *Sortir de la grande nuit*, (La Découverte, 2010), Achille Mbembe recounts a childhood marked by death in all its forms: funeral rites, the aberrant death of a relative, Pierre Yém Mback, a nationalist executed by the French Army in 1958, at the same time as Ruben Um Nyobè, and who was refused a burial place by an independent Cameroon led by Amadou Ahidjo.

The young Mbembe arrived in Paris in 1982, a History degree under his belt, to study for a postgraduate diploma at the Sorbonne and get to know France. “*A proud old country with a dark side*”, he wrote, referring to the racial prejudice that persists despite the universalist pretensions of the birthplace of human rights. Moving to New York in 1986, he

¹ Source: www.slateafrique.com/2767/achille-mbembe-cote-d-ivoire-democratie-sans-ethique

found the *melting pot* and the effervescence of Black America somewhat more stimulating. He has been living in Johannesburg, South Africa, since 2001, exploring “*the foundations of an Afropolitan modernity*”, while teaching at the University of the Witwatersrand.

“Afropolitanism” is a concept he invented, and is neither the Pan-Africanism of the fathers of independence, nor the Négritude dear to Senghor and Césaire. This Creole citizenship, as experienced daily by the author in South Africa, “*is a way of being in the world that refuses, out of principle, any form of victim identity*”.

The author proposes that we free ourselves of the colonial definition of the other, which is marked by racism, and also rid ourselves of the ideals of the past, including the “*negro solidarity*” which grew out of Pan-Africanism. His aim: to adopt another “*cultural and political position on nation, race and difference in general*”.

Achille Mbembe is working on a concept that is open, in progress, capable of serving a France that “*has not decolonised itself*”, in his opinion, as much as a contemporary Africa. Resolutely optimistic, the philosopher dismisses two forms of discourse that he helps to render totally obsolete: That of the Afro-pessimists, convinced that Africa is intrinsically incapable of progress, and that of a certain African radicalism that holds the West responsible for all of Africa’s problems.

* * *

SlateAfrique – *Do you consider Laurent Gbagbo a great African nationalist?*

Achille Mbembe – No, he sold off a large part of the resources of Côte d’Ivoire to the French conglomerates everyone knows. Laurent Gbagbo could have followed the example of Mathieu Kérékou in *Benin*: accept his electoral defeat, leave, withdraw from politics, settle in the north of Côte d’Ivoire and say no more, the better to prepare for a potential comeback.

To his credit, didn't Laurent Gbagbo lead the struggle for democracy, with his party, the Front populaire ivoirien (FPI)?

You have to remember how that turned out in the end! Chaos! In my opinion, that is not the most important question. Democracy in Africa cannot come about as the result of external intervention. Nothing in the history of Africa, not a single example, shows that an initiative of this kind created even the conditions for democracy. It is up to Africans to introduce a democratic regime in Africa. They cannot offload this responsibility onto other people.

It is important to demilitarise politics, separate the art of politics from the art of war. As long as elections are just another form of the art of war, we won't succeed. We have not given enough thought to the question of violence. Recourse to violence may be inevitable in certain situations, but it always a sign of a lack of imagination. The opposition parties want power at any price, through a coup d'état or foreign military intervention. For the moment, if we truly want progress, we have to reduce the levels of violence in the continent.

Didn't Guinea emerge bruised from the last elections, with a deeper chasm between the two largest communities, the Fula and the Malinke?

Elections have become an instrument of division in Africa. The question requires fundamental thinking that no-one wants to hear about or undertake, because everyone is focused on the moment and on seizing power. Many people think that the crisis has been solved in Guinea, when this is not the case.

We have to stop posing African questions in terms of emergency, and military and humanitarian intervention. There are no discussions between African liberals and the nationalists, the anti-imperialists. The real debate, in Africa, takes place between the people who think it is our responsibility to engage in long term work to introduce the conditions for African democracy, and those who won't hear of this.

In your opinion, is there a gulf between the good intentions at work in civil society, and the disenchantment with politics on the part of the young generations?

There is a tremendous loss of energy and knowledge! Many people are spurning politics, including in countries such as South Africa, which are nonetheless complex and based on positive foundations. We need to reformulate relevant, complex proposals which could draw people back into politics. The type of proposals put forward by the government and the opposition can be summed up as follows: “Get out of there so I can take your place!”. This is fully in line with the predatory politics that dug us into the pit we are in now.

Are there no exceptions to this?

There are variations, of course, but basically, they are democracies with no choice. The inability of African political parties to make proposals is partly responsible for this, but so too are the neoliberal times we are living in. The same goes for Europe, Latin America and elsewhere: we are living through a period of democracy with no choices. The question of how to reinvent democracy is in fact global. We have to answer it depending on our history and our position on the global chessboard. Without this enormous intellectual investment, we’ll continue to go round in circles.

Should we look towards democratic societies before colonisation, by revisiting Soundiata Keita’s Kurukan Fuga charter, for example?

We have to look everywhere, open up a vast imagination that draws on our history and other histories; in India, China and elsewhere. Imagine elections in another way and put a stop to the politics of winner takes all! Imagine hybrid forms of representation that take into account the different social statuses as they exist in the local mindsets. This effort of anthropological immersion, no-one takes the trouble to do it, because everyone just wants power. And those who achieve power are simply those capable of mobilising the greatest force.

What does the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire represent in this context?

It is a caricature of an African dilemma, of a combination of elections and armed movements. Some Africans think that the military from Nigeria or Burkina Faso can instil democracy in Abidjan. This is astonishing! The tropism consists in gaining power at any price. Nobody considers the question of matching ends and means. In Côte d'Ivoire, the democracy that is emerging is devoid of ethics.

What should they have done in Côte d'Ivoire?

I don't know... The main thing is to think it through so that the scenario is not repeated in other countries, in *Cameroon*, *Senegal*, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (*DRC*)... **The elections have become the most direct vehicle for triggering conflicts in African societies. They do not in any way fulfil the function of legitimising they are supposed to fulfil in any democratic order. On the contrary, they are factors of division. How can we break out of this system?**

Do you fear a major crisis in DRC with the elections scheduled for November 2011?

Of course! I took the time to study *elections in Africa* since 1990. It's incredible! The ones that end in the destruction of property and the loss of human lives are much more numerous than the peaceful alternations or transitions of power. We can't behave as if this were not the case. But we continue to organise voting, we spend vast sums of money, as in Côte d'Ivoire...

Would you conclude that the democratisation that began at the beginning of the 1990s with the end of the Cold War has been a total failure?

No, not necessarily, but we must admit that it is unbalanced and we must give thought to the question of representation. Many people believe that in Africa, there is no need to think. The situation is urgent. We have to put a stop to the logic of urgency and invest in thinking for the long term. We are faced with societies that are fragile, complex and ancient,

which have roots in the far distant past and which are a part of several different worlds at the same time. We always simplify, instead of working on the basis of complexity.

Should the responsibility for the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire be laid at the feet of Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who did not properly regulate his succession?

The question of succession is the Achilles heel of pre-colonial African empires and kingdoms. These States imploded and were often dissolved over questions of succession. This is a very old problem. Colonisation only made it more complex, and then independence even more so.

In this age of economism that reduces everything to numbers, who wants to talk about the culture of power? We are blocked by mental processes that create tragedies. Africa represents one billion young people, and the only markets they have access to are the military markets, or the migration markets. People may say I'm a Utopian and I sometimes have the impression I'm preaching in the wilderness. But we will have to create other modes of redistribution of wealth, which do not involve predatory behaviour!

Interview recorded by Sabine Cessou

Elections in Cameroon: the exclusion of young people

by Flaubert Djateng, coordinator of the Zenü Network and member of the CPS/EED mobile team

Soon there will be elections in Cameroon. The presidential election is scheduled for October 2011 and the municipal elections for 2012. In the first case it is about a president being elected to set up a government to: manage the future of the country. Preferably someone who will implement an agenda not only to improve the living conditions of 20 million Cameroonians, but also to represent and defend the interests of Cameroon in the global world. A global context which is undermined by crises, but also one where the strategic interests of national and international pressure groups take precedence over human and ethnic considerations. The municipal elections will appoint the people in charge of the local councils, responsible for assuming power in a context of decentralisation. The new laws place the municipal magistrates at the heart of development at the local level. New functions accompanied by new challenges are assigned to them.¹ These events are important because citizens are going to choose the people who will have great influence over their daily lives.

¹ see Journal de la Décentralisation 2, March 2011, Zenu Network, Bafoussam, Cameroon

Background

A brief look at the background to these elections shows the following salient features:

Decentralisation: the 1996 Constitution transferred extensive jurisdictions and powers to the local authorities. The regulatory arsenal has gradually been implemented for translating this constitutional principle into reality, which gives more power and resources to the local elected representatives; the local councils will be called upon to play a more important role in the lives of the citizens.

The laws of 2004, in particular law no. 2004/018 of 22 July 2004 setting the rules applicable to the local councils, realised an unprecedented transfer of State powers and responsibilities to the decentralised local authorities. In 2010 and 2011, the field of municipal action now incorporates the activities of 13 ministerial departments with a budget of almost 23 billion CFA Francs. In total, the decentralised local authorities have become the nerve centre of local development and the improvement of the living conditions of the population.

The census figures published in April 2010 show that the population of Cameroon is young, with more than 50% under the age of 18. We are on the eve of important elections. How is the largest age group in the country behaving? Some observations illustrate the young generation's lack of enthusiasm or constructive involvement in political life.

Observations

Dire poverty

Beyond the euphoria of Cameroon reaching the “completion point” of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, the citizens have returned to the same rigorous daily life and the same struggles to meet their basic needs. “*Times are hard*”, is the daily motto of many Cameroonians. So there is nothing new under the sun, the same lack of response to social demand for basic services, water and electricity, the same lack of legibility of the future in terms of jobs, health and education. Young people are the most adversely affected by these failings.

Disaffection and disillusionment among citizens

Citizens are less and less concerned by questions of public affairs. They are not really interested in the administration or terms of office of their representatives in general, or in the mayors and local councillors in particular. Over the years, the citizens have become apathetic and indifferent about questions that nonetheless affect their daily lives. Resignation and scepticism about the usefulness of voting or about democratic change are observable at every level: “*the elections don’t make any difference*”; “*they’re all robbers and they can’t change anything anyway*”, they say. Perhaps this is partly the fault of the first people to benefit from the transfer of sovereignty of elections that marked the return to democracy for Cameroon. They were mostly unprepared, uninformed or incompetent, and they created disappointment and disillusion through their administration which failed to improve the population’s quality of life.

A lack of citizenship education and practically non-existent opposition parties

The political parties outdid themselves in incompetence in conveying a vision that would mobilise the citizen. There were some signs of activity on the eve of the elections, which people assumed were a token gesture. Very few actions that would enable the Cameroonians to understand what is at stake in terms of political power. No work to encourage political activism, although the leaders' actions tend to put dampers on any movements that claim social rights. Any action undertaken in this respect is immediately catalogued as perturbing the peace. Today in Cameroon, asking to be registered on the electoral roll is no longer a part of citizenship education, but is equated with campaigning for the party in power. The opposition parties are absent from the political analysing and debating arena; they are relegated to struggles for positioning in order to be included in the "presidential majority".

In-fighting among candidates of the same party

The behaviour of certain candidates leads us to wonder what motivated them to enter politics. Within the party in power that dominates the entire political scene, we observe, at various levels, the formation of rival clans that are antagonistic. It is within this party itself that the struggles are the most bitter. The central committee is often called in to "separate" the factions when conflicts degenerate into fist fights. In fact it is within the ruling party that we find "opposition" but it is in no way constructive opposition.

No political agenda, uncertainty about candidates and dates

Three months before the presidential election, no one in Cameroon can say with certainty when the elections will take place. There is no discussion about political agendas; we don't even know who the candidates will be. The question seems to be surrounded by a wall of silence. Opposition party meetings are regularly disrupted by the police force. All meetings are subject to the "declaration" system, an administrative term used to control meetings and prohibit them when necessary. The Arab Spring has no doubt also had an effect, otherwise why would the authorities be so afraid when a meeting is organised? The screening of films arouses fear; public and even private film sessions are prohibited.

Despite — or perhaps precisely because of — these observations, we persist in thinking that young people should be concerned by and involved in the election process.

The importance of the vote and of the electorate

In a democracy, voting is the method used to appoint leaders/representatives and the means of legitimising their powers. By voting, the citizen transfers his power to a representative for a period of time, a term of office. This explains why the electorate is the real holder of sovereign power. The vote is the method of political participation *par excellence*, the sign of belonging to a political community. Lastly, the vote should be a means of pacifying social relations. For this to be the case there are, however, minimal conditions that all the players in the process must accept and master and on which they must agree. Deprived of this fundamental right, the people can only express themselves through violence. Without a minimum of transparency and consensus on the rules of the game, voting is meaningless. Marginalising young people creates processes that leave the majority of the population on the sidelines. The divergences and tensions surrounding the body in charge of the elec-

tions, ELECAM, do not facilitate things. The contradictory information about its role and its “neutrality” reinforce young people’s suspicions. If the leaders succeed in achieving a consensus about the neutrality and integrity of ELECAM, it would be a wager won for a serene future.

A turning point in the history of Cameroon

The forthcoming elections mark a turning point in the political history of Cameroon. The international context has shown that a situation can change totally in record time. The future candidates must do everything they can to win the confidence of the citizens. It is urgent that the next elections mark the return of the citizens into the political arena. Whether or not they are on the electoral registers, voters or not, they should commit to challenging the candidates, following their actions, making them accountable, in a word, acquiring a culture of participation and responsibility in political life.

How can confidence be regained and citizen participation be encouraged?

The basis of the political alienation of many citizens and especially young people seems to be the gulf between the reality of their daily lives and political speeches and actions. But without these young people, who are today fleeing the country *en masse*, the future of Cameroon will be very sombre. What place do we, adults and mature citizens, reserve for them in our society? What are the values we show them through the example of our actions and decisions?

The political class has a special responsibility in this respect.

The candidates must commit to triggering frank and honest dialogue with the citizens and especially young people. Unless they want to confirm the negative prejudice many people already have against them, politicians have to discard their shells that distance them from the



Citizens waiting in line in front of Elecam's Bafoussam 1 polling station

citizens and make them act as if they were deaf and blind to young people's actual concerns. Which contributes to discrediting political action. The future elected representatives should make a new pact with the citizens, all the citizens, especially young ones and not only with their voters or party comrades. Only such a pact could really create confidence and solidarity around shared values.

However, at the moment, there are only “perverse” bonds between young people and politicians; at the most, young people are recruited to act as a crowd or fan club.

If we do not want to end up with even greater resignation and violence born of despair, it is urgent to recreate a movement which makes the system legitimate and reinforces the confidence of citizens, particularly young ones.²

² To this end, Zenu Network — with the support of EED — has for the last three years been running a programme on “Youth, Culture and Citizenship”, see also www.zenu.org

Political life in our country should draw a new breath and regenerate so that we can achieve a lively, productive citizen culture.

We have to face the facts and identify the obstacles that prevent citizens from committing to public life. What lessons can we draw from events around the world, from Tunisia to the United Kingdom? These events show that in a world that has become a global village from the communication point of view, we are not the only ones to have lost the part of our society which holds the most potential for the future: Young people.

Citizenship participation and democracy do not begin or end with elections. They are only one, admittedly critical, component of the democratic process. Let us not restrict ourselves to accompanying or observing the elections. Let us make efforts to draw from our cultures of traditional and informal governance. Let us facilitate the development of the creative and constructive potential of young people. Let us take part in the emergence of a new Cameroonian citizenship culture driven by all the generations. The future of our children and of our country depends on this.

The Great Lakes Region: the electoral stakes

by Christian Kuijstermans AGEH

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Civil Peace Service Programme Coordinator in the Great Lakes Region

2011. Once again we find ourselves in both a post-electoral period (in Burundi and Rwanda), as well as in a pre-electoral period (in the DR Congo). The elections are expected to play a critical role in peace building: the construction of a society governed through the voice of the people should theoretically enable the establishment of rule of law as well as the transparent management of the country's wealth and resources. What conclusions can we draw from the elections and electoral campaigns held in the region?

The stakes...

The campaign of the various political parties who took part in the elections in Burundi was abundantly clear: "Vote for us, so that we can serve you by developing peace, building roads, hospitals and schools, by supporting the country's economic development, ensuring the end of corruption and of the mismanagement of public property." We mustn't forget that at no point the different candidates did bother to explain how they were going to put these promises into practice (remember the "111 commitments" put forward by Leonard Nyangoma's CNDD party as a political agenda in disguise during their 2010 election campaign¹).

In the DR Congo, in the run up to the presidential election on 28 November 2011, President Kabila recently declared: "If you do not

¹"111 ENGAGEMENTS Fondamentaux du Parti CNDD et de son président Leonard Nyangoma pour la PAIX, et le Développement du Burundi Moderne", CNDD, Bujumbura, April 2010.

believe in me, at least believe in my works!” Quite a few people asked themselves what works he was referring to. The building of a few roads thanks to the Chinese (and at what price?)? The continuation of violence, rape and the pillaging of natural resources in a third of the country declared “post conflict”, despite military operations weakening the FDLR, but at the same time causing an increase in atrocities against the population by all of the armed groups (including the Congolese army)?

Similarly in Rwanda, which experienced tremendous development 16 years after the genocide, but where the FPR sees itself as the only party capable of serving the public interest, protecting the country against the violence of the FDLR militias (the victims of whom have for years been 100 % Congolese) and preventing a return to chaos and ethnic and genocidal conflicts.

...and their consequences

The 2010 election year in Burundi. A diverse political landscape vying to contest the elections was visible before the elections. The pre-electoral period was nevertheless marred by violence, intimidations, confrontations between young members of the political parties and a general disrespect for the rules of the game². Neela Goshal, a Human Rights Watch researcher, was expelled from the country after publishing a report on the situation³. On May 24th 2010, the municipal elections proceeded peacefully and transparently. Alas! The opposition parties refused to acknowledge the victory of the CNDD-FDD, on accusation of foul-play, and withdrew almost completely from the remaining elections. Nkurunziza remained as the sole candidate for the presidential elec-

² See “Rapport de monitoring sur la situation des droits civils et politiques pendant la période préélectorale au Burundi (November–December 2009 and January–February 2010).” CEJP, Bujumbura, February 2010 and April 2010 and “We’ll Tie You Up and Shoot You. Lack of Accountability for Political Violence in Burundi”, HRW, May 2010

³ “We’ll Tie You Up and Shoot You. Lack of Accountability for Political Violence in Burundi”, HRW, May 2010

tions and for the parliamentary elections — apart from the CNDD-FDD — only two other parties (Uprona and FRODEBU Nyakuri)⁴ were contesting. Consequently, Nkurunziza won the Presidency again and his party CNDD-FDD took an absolute majority in both Parliament and the Senate. The opposition declared itself “extra-parliamentary” and forms the Alliance of Democrats for Change in Burundi (ADC-Ikibiri). The state of affairs nine months after the elections is worrying. There has been no serious rapprochement between the political adversaries. Despite several initiatives to establish dialogue, the leaders of three opposition parties of ADC-Ikibiri (Agathon Rwasa — FNL, Alexis Sinduhiye — MSD and Leonard Nyangoma — CNDD) remain outside the country. On the contrary, violence has increased since the elections, and the followers of the governing parties, as well as those of the opposition are found murdered regularly.⁵ There is even talk of a new rebellion emerging. On the other hand, the government has become increasingly sensitive to criticism from civil society and seems to be heading towards the creation of a one-party state⁶. The promulgation of a new law requiring all political parties to register again seems to have the hidden objective of blocking the return of the opposition parties⁷. The “zero tolerance” policy against corruption, which was introduced with much noise, has unfortunately not shown any tangible results to date.

⁴The FRODEBU Nyakuri (the “veritable” FRODEBU) is a dissident party of the party who won the 1993 elections under the presidency of Melchior Ndadaye.

⁵See for example “*Mouvement constant d’hommes en armes à travers tout le pays*”, ARIB news, 07 June 2011 and “Burundi: At least five dead in three separate attacks”, AFP, 22 June 2011 and “Burundi: 4 civilians killed in an attack on the outskirts of Bujumbura”, AFP, 29 May 2011.

⁶See “Burundi: From elections boycott to political impasse. Rapport Afrique No. 169”, ICG, 7 February 2011

⁷The opposition parties with their representatives outside the country are the ones who will have the greatest difficulty complying with this demand. The law requires, among other things, that the leaders of these parties be resident in Burundi, which they are afraid to do. This law also requires all the parties to have a minimum of 100 “founding” members in each province, 1,600 founding members in total. This is a problem for certain political parties which are more regionally based. Even the demand that political parties which have been in existence for years (UPRONA for 50 years) should re-register and “add” founding members is somewhat strange.

Some corruption related arrests have been made in September and October 2010, but since then nothing much was heard of these or other cases. On the contrary, there new accusations of corruption perpetrated by people in power have surfaced⁸. It is difficult to identify any other areas where the governing party has realised its election promises.

As for the presidential election in Rwanda, the government made use of a law against “divisionism” to prevent opposition parties from taking part in the elections. The same law also served to suppress any criticism from civil society or the media⁹. After an election campaign with only one serious candidate contesting, Kagame was re-elected President in August 2010. Ten months later, the political landscape remains closed in a country where a single political party holds all power. There is are no signs of the opening up of a political spaces, or spaces for the expression of diverging opinions. Civil society remains silenced. Media that are too critical are closed and journalists are being threatened and even incarcerated. Each diverging opinion is automatically qualified as “genocidal” or “divisionist”. Self-censorship becomes a survival strategy.

Meanwhile, the DRC is preparing for elections. The presidential election is scheduled for November 28th 2011. The first problems are already becoming evident. Having adopted an unconstitutional electoral calendar (the investiture of the new president will take place 2 weeks after the term of office of the incumbent president Kabila ends), the CENI has already exceeded the deadline — end of May 2011 — for pre-

⁸ See “*Tolérance zero contre la corruption: slogan ou volonté politique ?*” in the Journal IWACU of 17 December 2010 where 14 NGOs accuse top personalities of corruption, or “*Le cahier de la honte*” in IWACU of 11 March 2011 on the embezzlement of funds relating to notebooks from Uganda for schools in Burundi.

⁹ See “*Safer to Stay silent. The chilling effect of Rwanda’s Laws on ‘genocide ideology’ and ‘sectarianism’*”, Amnesty International. The laws on “divisionism” and “genocide ideology” are ambiguous and vague. Amnesty International draws the conclusion that these laws are used (among other things) to suppress all political opposition. This is the case, for example, of the president of the UDF-Inkingi Party, Victoire Ingabire, who was arrested on the basis of these laws before the elections, and is still being held in prison today without a trial. Two other parties — the *Parti Social Imberakuri* and the *Pacte de Défense du Peuple* were also not able to register as political parties in Rwanda before the elections, also because of these two laws.

senting the new electoral law. Added to this come the questionable logistical and financial preparation of the electoral process. The elections may very well not take place in 2011 at all. We may also ask the question whether the different parties depositing their candidatures for the elections are doing so in the interest of the Congolese people. In January 2011 a change in the constitution was already imposed to reduce the presidential election to a single round. Of course this change makes the elections less expensive, but the main objective seems to be rather to ensure the victory of the incumbent president¹⁰. Apparently it has been forgotten that it is the candidate best capable to advance the country and the interests of its population should be chosen by the people.

At the same time, other candidates for the top seat don't seem to be concerned by anything other than advancing their own interests. According to them, the government in power does not meet the needs of the population, but they are unable to band together to support a single candidate and a single political agenda in order to overturn the power in place. It should also be known that the DR Congo is going to the ballot without having held local elections due for 2007. These elections, which could serve as a catalyst for local governance and development, were they not desirable? Could it be that one fears that local elected representatives could be more difficult to manage (or control) by a central government in Kinshasa?

¹⁰ During the elections in 2006 President Kabila did not win in one round. But he may believe he is the most popular candidate, even if he has only 30% of the vote. This means Kabila could win if there is only one round in the election. But in 2006 we also observed the formation of coalitions for the second round. In 2006 Kabila won. In 2011 he may be less popular, and even if he is still the most popular among many candidates, there is no certainty that he would win if the opposition unites to support a single candidate against Kabila. For the opposition the opposite is true. It is in the interests of each opposition party to propose their own candidate in the first round before discussions about coalitions take place for the second round. See also "Country Report. Democratic Republic of Congo", EIU, March 2011.

The population sidelined

Somehow the strategy of elections as an instrument for building peace does not seem to result in the improvement of the general situation of the people in the sub-region. The population is not even really involved in organising the elections, but seems rather to be an instrument for the promotion of the interests of one or the other. How can we choose leaders at the top when there has been no reconciliation at local level and when conflicts at local level continue to oppose the adversaries; when the security of the population is not guaranteed; when access to basic needs (food, jobs, health care, education and land) is still not a fact for a large part of the population; when, as in DR Congo, the central authorities continue to refuse the population the right to choose its representatives at local level? The risk is — if it is not already a reality — that the population cannot see why they should take part in the elections, if it is only to further the partisan interests (ethnic, tribal, regional and other) of their candidates.

A bottom up approach?

Has the approach aimed too much at putting a democratically elected government in place without having ensured the participation of the population? Is the strategy too much on a macro scale? To succeed, the population would have to be empowered. Not just able to choose its representatives, but also able to educate their representatives on their priority needs. A population that is capable of educating its elected representatives and those who intend to stand for election. This is the reason why more stress should be placed on the local level and on the level of interconnection between local and national governance. Kinshasa, Kigali and Bujumbura are not the DR Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. The leaders and the different representatives of the international community and certain international NGOs seem at times to confuse the two, and this in a region where the majority of the population are still peasants.

There are existing civil society initiatives to address the situation at local level. Actions such as the establishing of local governance, but also initiatives to monitor the respect for human rights at local level should be reinforced and need to be better known. At the same time, these experiences could serve to guide the democratisation process. This is an appeal to integrate elections into a longer, less intermittent strategy based on the needs and priorities expressed by the population. We need to avoid elections that are based solely on the ambition to access power. Let us start to take the voice of the people more serious.

June 2011

Mamdani on Uganda

April 28, 2011, by Sean Jacobs

(published on

africasacountry.com/2011/04/28/mamdani-on-uganda/)

The Ugandan intellectual Mahmood Mamdani is back in Uganda—since last year he’s been heading up the Makerere (University) Institute of Social Research (MISR) in the capital Kampala—where he has already pronounced on the “**consultancy culture**” in Ugandan (and continental) universities. Mamdani, once close to Uganda’s Life President Yoweri Museveni (in power since 1986) has also just published an opinion essay on the stand-off between the Ugandan government and the “Walk to Work” protests by opposition forces:

In Uganda today, prevailing governance seeks to divide the population by politicising ethnicity. The motto is: one tribe, one district. Inside the district, an administrative tribalism divides the bafuruki from those designated as indigenous to the district. As a mode of governance, tribalism institutionalises official discrimination against some citizens and in favour of others.

New ideas nurture new practices. Given time, even the most revolutionary idea can turn into a routine divorced of meaning. Think of how we have managed to reduce the practice of democracy to routine rituals.

The remarkable thing about the events we know as “Walk to Work” is that they have followed on the heels of a national election whose results were anything if not decisive. Whatever its outcome,

“Walk to work” must make us rethink the practice of democracy in Uganda.

For a start, one is struck by the spread of cynicism among both rulers and ruled. More and more in the population thinks of elections not as the time to make meaningful choices but as a time to extract dues from politicians who are unlikely to be sighted until the next election season!

Similarly, more and more in the political class are coming to think of elections as a managed exercise where the outcome is decided not by who votes but by who oversees the counting of votes. What does it say about contemporary democracy that even an election where those in power can win support of a vast majority of people, over 90 % in Egypt and over two-thirds in Uganda, does not give you any idea of the level of dissatisfaction among the electorate?

Consider one remarkable fact. In spite of the growth of universities and think tanks worldwide, researchers and consultants have been unable to forecast most major events in contemporary history.

Why? This was true of [the] Soweto 1976 [uprising in South Africa], it was true of the fall of the Soviet Union and it was true of the Egyptian revolution [earlier this year]. What does it say about the state of our knowledge that we can foretell a natural catastrophe — an earthquake, even a tsunami - but not a political shift? The rule seems to be: the bigger the shift, the less likely is the chance of it being foretold.

I think this is so for one reason. Big shifts in social and political life require an act of the imagination. They require a break from routine, a departure from convention. That is why social science, which is focused on the study of routine, of institutional and repetitive behaviour, is unable to forecast big events.

Herein lies the challenge for Uganda’s political class.

No matter how small the numbers involved in the developments we know as “Walk to Work”, there is no denying its sheer intellectual brilliance. That brilliance lies in its simplicity, in its ability to confer on the simplest of human activities, walking, a major political significance: the capacity to say no.

The irony is that many in the opposition, and perhaps just as many in government, seem to think of “Walk to Work” as a shortcut to power, which it is unlikely to be. The real significance of “Walk to Work” is that it has broken the hold of routine. In doing so, it presents us with a challenge. That challenge is to come up with a new language of politics, a new mode of organization, and a new mode of governance.

From this vantage point, I would like to offer a few reflections by way of conclusion.

We should resist the temptation to think of Tahrir Square — as Soweto before it — as a road map. Rather, let us think of Egypt as a vision, a democratic vision, as both event and process. Remember that it took nearly two decades for the Soweto Uprising to deliver a democratic fruit in South Africa. When it comes to Egypt, the democratic revolution has just begun. None knows how long it will take to institutionalise its fruit.

Today, we need to acknowledge that Tahrir Square has not led to a revolution, but to a reform. And that is not a bad thing. The lesson of Egypt — unlike that of Libya next door — is the moral force of non-violence. Unlike violence, non-violence does not just resist and exclude; it also embraces and includes, thereby opening up new possibilities of reform, possibilities that seemed unimaginable only yesterday.

The challenge before the Ugandan political class today is not to close ranks for a final struggle, as it is habitually prone to doing. The real challenge is to forge possibilities for a new politics, on the

basis of new associations and new imaginations. The real challenge is not revolution but reform. The jury is still out on whether it is government or opposition that will take the lead and provide the initiative.

2011–2013 elections in DRC: Background and challenges¹

by Onesphore Sematumba
Pole Institute, July 2011

1. As long as the towns are calm...

On Tuesday 19 July 2011, the population of Shabunda, in the province of South Kivu, eastern DRC, committed an act that was unusual in Congolese culture. Exasperated by the insecurity it has been exposed to over the past few years and the de facto slavery it is subjected to by the Rwandan rebels of the FDLR, the population tried to prevent the return to Bukavu of an important delegation which had come to their area for a brief visit. With inadequate means, men and women from this martyred town blocked the road and threw stones to try to prevent the visitors from leaving. The delegation included Roger Meece, United Nations Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and Marcellin Cishambo, the Governor of the Province of South Kivu. The delegation was only able to leave thanks to the police firing to disperse this manifestation of long contained anger.

By daring to attack two symbols of power, the population expressed that they were sick and tired of insecurity and in despair about being abandoned by those who are supposed to ensure their safety.

Two days before, it was the fishermen working on Lake Tanganyika who issued an ultimatum — or strike notice — if the harassment they were suffering from a local Mai Mai group did not cease. “General” Yakutumba’s Mai Mai group had in fact threatened to board any fishing

¹ Source: www.pole-institute.org

vessels that did not pay them a monthly fee of \$ 500. These fishermen also expect a minimum of protection from the government to be able to shuttle between Uvira (South Kivu) and Kalemie (Katanga) to ensure their livelihood.

In Beni territory, in the northern part of North Kivu, whole villages are being abandoned by the population because of an attack warning delivered to them by Ugandan rebels from the ADF-NALU. Further south, in Lubero territory, men in military uniforms abducted Doctor Paluku Mukongoma from his consulting room at Oïcha hospital in broad daylight. He disappeared at 16:00 on 1st July 2011 and has not been seen or heard from since.

As for the crossing of Virunga National Park from Rutshuru territory to Lubero territory, travellers put their lives at risk; the road is frequently blocked by highway robbers who operate with impunity on a route that is important for the economy of the province of North Kivu. The perpetrators of these acts are often attached to the Rwandan FDLR, but very poorly paid soldiers of the regular army and idle youths in search of subsistence also operate under this label.

This is unfortunately not an exhaustive portrait for entire areas of the Kivus and Eastern province in particular are under the heel of foreign rebels who escape practically all government controls. More details? 7 of the 8 territories in South Kivu for example. This fact is nonetheless usually obscured as if there were an unspoken consensus that, as long as everything is calm in Kinshasa and in the other major towns, the rest of the country and the population is of no importance!

Given this situation, speaking of elections is something of a provocation for the men and women who live with their worldly goods in bundles on their heads and whose life expectancy is literally “a renewable term of twenty four hours”.

This being said, the elections will be held and must be held not only because, as Ivoirian writer Ahmadou Kourouma wrote in his novel *Pending the vote of the wild beasts*: “the croaking of frogs does not stop the elephant from drinking” but also because the representatives elected

in 2006 have reached the end of their terms of office, which must be renewed or new representatives elected for 2011–2013, otherwise the attractive democratic facade erected with the International Community will be in danger of crumbling.

2. The CENI's millions

If we are to believe Mr Daniel Ngoy Mulonda, chairman of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), all the lights are green, just over four months from D day, 28 November 2011, when all Congolese citizens of voting age will once more slip their precious ballot papers into the ballot boxes to choose the future President of the Republic and members of parliament.

In less than four months from its effective installation, the figures produced by the CENI, it must be said, are quite impressive. It has succeeded in exceeding its self-assigned target of 31 million voters, including 3 million in Kinshasa, which represents almost 6 million more than in 2006. Another achievement, to be chalked up to the Congolese government, is the \$110 million in funding found for the CENI to date. If we add to this the funds assigned to the CENI's predecessor, the defunct Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), the government's share in the funding of the 2011–2013 electoral cycle amounts to \$190 million, the DRC's ambition being to contribute 60% of the budget instead of the 10% in 2006. Another sizeable contribution: France has just trained a first contingent of 500 Congolese policemen out of a total of 1,000 to be assigned to policing the elections, for a budget of 2 million Euros. In exchange for these phenomenal sums, the CENI promises irrefragable elections—free, transparent, democratic and on schedule.

3. The stakeholders and the issues at stake

By definition, at an election, “the population concerned *transfers*, by a majority vote, to chosen representatives or agents, *legitimacy* for holding the power assigned to the function occupied, through the intermediary of a political *contract*.”² The population therefore plays a key role and constitutes the main actor in the electoral scenario, whereas the candidate seeking election negotiates legitimacy, a term of office, and tries to sell a social project which, if it is accepted by the voters, constitutes the basis of a contract. What about the Congolese experience?

First let us remember that, contrary to broad opinion, the 2006 elections were not the first to be held in the Congo. There were others, before that, under the country’s various regimes and successive denominations. As journalist Marie-Soleil Frère observes,

“...even before independence, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Republic of Zaire between 1974 and 1998) held municipal elections in 1957, communal elections in December 1959 and legislative elections in May 1960. After the country gained independence on 30 June 1960, the Congolese people were called to the ballot box to ratify the constitutional referendum in 1964, for the legislative elections in 1965 and the constitutional referendum in 1967. Then elections were held under the single party system — MPR — in 1970, 1975, 1977, 1982 and 1987, and for the referendum on the new constitution of Zaire in 1973. Mobutu Sese Seko, the sole candidate, was elected by the citizens in 1977 and 1984.”

The DRC therefore does have a history of elections, but this has evidently not left an indelible impression on the collective memory for two main reasons. The first is that elections around the time of independence happened before most of today’s Congolese voters were born; the second is that elections in the time of Mobutu were so farcical they were a joke and the voters forgot all about them as soon as they stepped out

² Source : Internet, Wikipedia.

of the polling station. For more than forty years, the population has been swindled and their power confiscated by elites who quickly reversed the roles, turning the voters into beggars and the elections into a big market for fools where votes were exchanged for crates of beer, yards of cloth and scarves with the portrait of the candidates on them as well as other similar trivia.

The same people are voted in again and it's business as usual!

The 2006 elections were an opportunity for the Congolese "Primary Sovereign" to win back the power that had been taken from it by repositioning itself as mandatory instead of beggar. This was not the case. The candidates, all imbued with the Mobutu culture that the majority had helped to implant, flooded the people with crates of beer, sacks of flour, bales of cloth, headscarves and other trinkets against a background of empty rhetoric and speeches that were often demagogic, sometimes inflammatory. The day after the elections, the population realised, a tad late, the extent of the damage: for a few short-lived gifts they legitimised, for five long years, those same men and women who had been defrauding the country since 1960; fathers sitting in the Senate while their children debated in the National Assembly, a minister removed from office who gave his place in the government to his wife. Lastly, an East-West split was remarkable according to the votes gained by the two challengers in the second round of the presidential elections, Jean-Pierre Bemba having collected all the votes in the west and Joseph Kabila in the east.

This fragmentation at national level barely concealed the more insidious divisions, at the level of the communities, consequences of a vote that was ethnic in several regions. In fact, in a situation where the State has failed in its traditional missions of ensuring basic security and minimum services such as health care and education, the bonds between families, clans and ethnic groups operated as protective structures for

individuals and regulated social life and, in a way, political life. The candidates largely played on the ethnic fibre, inviting the populations to vote for “their child”, “the son/daughter of the land”, sometimes adding the promise of defending your brothers and sisters against the “others”. In Goma, we still remember the campaign of a provincial member of parliament who swore he would not shave his beard until “all the Rwandans in North Kivu go back home”, alluding to the Congolese people speaking “Kinyarwanda”. At the end of this term of office, the honourable gentleman still has his flourishing beard and can gamble with it again in the coming month for another term in parliament.

For, unfortunately, this divisive scenario may well be repeated during the electoral cycle. First of all, at the top: We will certainly witness an inflation of candidates for the presidential elections as in 2006 when the Congolese people had a choice of 33 candidates in the first round. Their agendas were vague but each candidate claimed a “home territory” corresponding to their birthplace, the contest was reduced to a race for fixing territorial boundaries rather than a combat of ideas. For example, the candidacy of two biological sisters — same father same mother, as they say here — in Bas Congo appeared incongruous to some, when in fact the two ladies belonged to different political parties. Later, in the second round, we witnessed a re-composition of national territory through the buying up of land with a view to the final victory. Two major blocks were formed. Furthermore, the Alliance for the Presidential Majority supporting Joseph Kabila, which included important players from the west, including the Unified Lumumbist Party (PALU) of the patriarch Gizenga, which had stocked up on votes in his native Bandundu and the Union of Mobutist Democrats (UDEMO) of Nzanga Mobutu, the son of Marshal Mobutu himself, who had been toppled by Joseph Kabila’s father. This surprise alliance allowed the MPA to gain votes in the province of L’Equateur, fief of the other finalist, Jean-Pierre Bemba. The latter, who had filled up on votes in the capital, was counting on his block, the Union for the Nation (UN) to win the presidential seat. But for lack of a significant ally in the mountains in the

east, he lost the election, with 42 % of the votes. Subsequently, his past as a rebel leader caught up with him. Accused of crimes committed by his troops in the Central African Republic, he was arrested while staying in Belgium and transferred to The Hague where he will be brought before the International Criminal Court (ICC). Orphaned and divided, the young opposition in the Congo will play only a marginal role in institutions dominated by the Head of State's henchmen.

The 2011 scenario appears to be more complicated. First of all because the rules of the game have changed since January with the hasty revision of the Constitution by a National Assembly under the influence of the current Head of State and candidate for his own succession, Joseph Kabila. According to the new provisions, the presidential election will now take place in one round only, irrespective of the winner's score. In spite of the uproar caused by this constitutional tampering in the opposition and within Civil Society, the powerful Catholic Church in particular, nothing can be done. The irruption into the arena of two opponents whose possible alliance in the second round could push the current President into an unfavourable runoff certainly counted for much in this revision. First of all, there is Etienne Tshisekedi. The old leader of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) declared himself a Presidential candidate, after boycotting the ballot in 2006. With Jean-Pierre Bemba held by the ICC in The Hague, Kinshasa, plus the two provinces of Kasai (in the centre), could well swing towards the old opponent. Then there is the effervescent Vital Kamerhe, former Secretary General of the presidential party and former Chairman of the National Assembly, today at the head of an opposition party, the Union for the Congolese Nation (UNC) and of the Alternance Vital Kamerhe (AVK) coalition, which will hunt for votes on the same Kivu territories where Joseph Kabila was voted in in 2006 when the main propagandist was... Vital Kamerhe.

The mining province of Katanga (South-East), Joseph Kabila's native province, seems to fall naturally to him through the support he enjoys from local leaders such as the President of the Provincial Assembly,

Kyungu wa Kumwanza, infamous for the pogrom against the Kasaiens under Mobutu, the wealthy national member of parliament Jean Claude Muyambo and the equally wealthy governor Moïse Katumbi Chapwe. The latter, who announced that he was retiring from politics completely at the end of this term of office, continues to declare his loyalty to the Head of State. Bas-Congo (far west) will certainly open its arms to the candidate supported by the Bundu dia Mayala party of member of parliament Ne Mwana Nsemi whose ambitions of autonomy are a secret for no-one. As for the province of L'Equateur, home of the Mobutus and Bembas, it will be bitterly fought over, as neither of the clans has a potential presidential candidate.

In a context like this, the most likely scenario would have been a consensus among the opposition around a joint candidate and programme to face up to the candidate in the presidential camp and thereby avoid a dispersal of the votes and the division of the electoral territory. Such a schema does not yet seem to be emerging, with each opposition party believing its hour of glory has arrived. Other candidates have even been announced, including Dr Oscar Kashala, who came fifth in 2006, and François Muamba, a dissident from Jean-Pierre Bemba's MLC. This cacophony arising from the war of egos is surely beneficial to the outgoing President who will only have to win the first round in 2011, irrespective of the number of Congolese citizens who vote in his favour. However, an opposition alliance at the last minute is not totally impossible nor is a vote against the president in power who has not kept his promises in terms of security and improving the living conditions of the population. In this eventuality, the new elected representative would face the challenge of sticking back together the territories of the country and preventing it from falling back into the situation it was in prior to 2002, so fragile remain the balances in DRC.

An incomplete process: when will the local elections be held?

We are embarking on the 2011–2013 electoral cycle when in fact the 2006 elections were never completed. First there was a constitutional referendum, the presidential election, the direct suffrage for national and provincial legislative elections and indirect ballots to appoint senators and provincial governors. And then, nothing else. The urban, municipal and local elections, which were scheduled, were never held, whereas they would have served as an impetus to the decentralisation preached by the new Constitution. It all took place as though, according to the logic of the strictly vertical pyramid in place since independence, the grassroots institutions, especially in the rural areas, were of no political importance whatsoever. Unless it was a deliberate strategy on the part of the elected powers. In fact, while the populations were deprived of an opportunity to choose local representatives who would have been all the more accountable to them that they would not have abandoned them to go and do politics “elsewhere” — once elected, the members of parliament took up their positions in the national or provincial capital and only came back at the end of their term of office to ask to be voted in again — the fact that local elections were overlooked allowed those in power to appoint, by decree, the local administrators (mayors, local councillors, territorial administrators and district commissioners). This administrative apparatus could repay the favour by possibly influencing the vote of the administered in favour of the candidates in power who put them in their current positions. According to the current schedule, the local elections will be held in 2013, at the end of the process, with all the risks of “forgetting” them again, unless the memory of Pastor Ngoy, the current chairman of the CENI, is more reliable than that of Abbé Malumalu, the ex-chairman of the defunct CEI. Again, the volatility of the security situation in the countryside will have to be taken into account, where even foreign armed rebels such as the FDLR have been enrolled and could influence the process,

either by disturbing the elections through military activism, or by distorting the results with their votes when we know that in DRC resident foreigners, just like expatriate Congolese, do not have voting rights.

What is a political party for?

Meanwhile, although the electoral campaign hasn't started yet, they are all sharpening their weapons for the elections. On the pretext of mobilising citizens to have them register to vote (enrolment), the future candidates have come back to “their bases” and, killing two birds with one stone, have implanted their current parties. For, in the meantime, most of the national members of parliament have joined other groups or created parties intended to procure themselves another term of office. This inflation of parties will certainly add to the confusion and the divisions mentioned above, as the vast majority of Congolese people are not well enough informed to navigate through the labyrinth of acronyms, especially when the standard-bearer (the local son/ daughter) is — already! — calling on the voters to vote for someone else, in the presidential elections. As was recently remarked by an analyst of the political life in North Kivu, “in 2006 we elected members of parliament; in 2011 they have all become political parties”!

This migration from one party to another, this continuous quest for a “moral authority” and fertile creation of acronyms (the Interior Ministry has to date counted 400 political parties) illustrate the words of Mr Djoli Eseng'ekeli:

“The political parties in the Congo, in the past and today, remain ephemeral and fragmented. They are circumstantial, the property of individuals, essentially urban, with no precise vision of a political agenda nor clear ideological foundations; they are ‘everything but the kitchen sink’ with connotations of tribalism, regionalism, opportunism and nepotism.”³

³ DJOLI Eseng'ekeli, quoted by OBOTELA RASHIDI N., “Elections 2011: Profil des candidats et des partis politiques”, in *Congo-Afrique* no. 456, p. 415.

4. A history of shattered illusions

On 30 June 1960, the Congolese people celebrated an independence they were expecting miracles from. The next day, 1st July 1960, no miracle happened and the witnesses of this era assure us that, on that day, the country began a dangerous backward slide. In 2006, the descendants of the witnesses to independence and the survivors of the backward slide were jubilant, on the occasion of the first free, democratic and transparent elections. Didn't the candidates promise us, during speeches doused in beer and decked out in scarves, "a country more beautiful than before" the day after the vote? Peace, bread, water, electricity and jobs, nothing was left out in the string of promises. Five years later, there is great disillusionment and tangible disgust. "I won't be voting, it serves no purpose other than to make those in power wealthier", states someone who was disappointed in 2006. A feeling that is largely shared, despite the observed keenness to get on the voters roll and the noisy processions that welcome and accompany the politicians at the airports and docks during their pre-electoral tours. The enthusiasm for registering on the voter's roll is due to the fact that voting cards act as provisional identity cards, and registering to vote therefore confers a civil status that is as much of an incentive to the Congolese as the possibility of voting. As for the mobilisation of the politicians' followers, no-one is fooled: It is proportional to the financial capacity of the candidate who fills the tanks of the motorcyclists with petrol, rents trucks and buses, and gives food and drink to anyone who turns up.

The overall impression is therefore that "the elections serve no purpose", not even for giving birth to an embryo of democracy. The embryo could only grow in a milieu where the population has sufficient political culture to dare to challenge their elected representatives who, as we said above, owe them their legitimacy and are therefore indebted to them and accountable to them. Efforts should therefore be made to accompany the Congolese people towards this political culture, which starts with the setting up of a global education system resolutely ori-

ented towards training the citizen, which is unfortunately not the case at present. Furthermore, the rebellions such as those witnessed in South Kivu where the population in despair expressed their discontent with those who owe them protection, are a small step in the right direction. For we believe that without a small dose of “constructive revolt”, no positive changes could occur for the Congolese.

July 2011

Principles and rules for peace work in election times

by the Civil Peace Service Network in the DR Congo and Burundi (Goma, April 2011)

This list was established—on the basis of their experiences—by partners and peace workers in the Great Lakes Region (DR Congo and Burundi). It is a work in progress to be completed by experiences and ideas from other regions.

Principles

- Individual political commitment is a right but as a prerequisite for peace work in the civil society one has to avoid taking sides in party politics.
- One cannot hold a position in Church or an NGO and become a politician at the same time.
- We want to be stakeholders for change and not victims of political processes.
- Our aim is to be Impartial.
- We work for integrating all sides, fight exclusion and hatred against “the others”
- Unite and not divide.
- Analyse the situation regularly.
- What are we committed to? People’s rights.
- We work in order to make people’s voices heard.
- We focus on political contents: programmes, etc...
- We promote social dialogue based on clear demands and claims
- We always ask whether our actions contribute to reinforcing viable democratic institutions
- We continuously monitor how our action is perceived

- Sometimes it is better not to act than to do harm!
- We aim at reinforcing a “citizen’s culture” based on certain values
- We want to find ways to make elected officials accountable to the public
- We have to base our work on facts not rumours
- We support one another in our networks
- We fight against the culture of clientelism
- We aim at reinforcing our Churches and NGOs legitimacy and credibility

Risks

- We may be misunderstood and perceived as “partisan” for one side
- Conflicts may arise between the role of our Church or NGO and our personal roles
- Sometimes we tend to sensitise and influence people before listening to them
- Resignation and apathy, rejection of politics and violence can be triggered by our actions even unconsciously

Challenges

- We have to work in a dangerous environment and nevertheless stick to our principles

The elections and identity issues: what role can CPS peace workers play?

by Marie José Mavinga Kumba,
national CPS-EED coordinator, Kinshasa, DRC

During the 2006 elections, civil society in DR Congo was confronted with many problems of manipulation of the population, including a large part of the youth, and was nonetheless able peacefully to maintain social harmony and cohesion among the population. Today in 2011 new elections are approaching. What emerges from the discussions I had with young people in Kinshasa is a high expectation of change but they doubt and despair that it will come one day. This is a situation that requires great delicacy and a strategic vision if we want to work with them, without giving preference to a particular candidate, without discouraging or manipulating them.

But for the CPS professionals or peace workers who support us the question has to be seen from yet another angle. They are foreigners in our country. The “identity” issues which exclude people on the basis of their origins are unfortunately becoming increasingly frequent. What constructive role can the professionals play at election time without interfering inappropriately but by making use of their distance which can sometimes help us to have a clearer picture of a situation?

The situation I’m describing took place in 2006 before the legislative and presidential elections in DRC. During this election period, several civil society organisations were involved in citizen education to raise awareness and invite citizens to participate in the electoral process. These citizen training and support programmes aimed at encouraging open-mindedness and analysis to allow citizens to make responsible choices in selecting the people who would run the country and manage public affairs. During this same period, we observed two trends: On the

one hand, those who possessed power and money believed they could buy everything and even silence the factions opposed to their ideology and, on the other hand, those who used party political manoeuvring by instrumentalising the population to incite it to rebel.

This nebulous context had allowed a local leader to mobilise the population, inciting them rightly or wrongly to rebel against what was qualified as the monopolisation of positions of authority by “outsiders”. According to this leader, the positions of authority in the various institutions in the province were occupied by outsiders which in his opinion led to injustices, harassment and other types of bullying experienced by the population. This way of looking at things led to the assimilation of what is spreading increasingly in the Congo that “only insiders can ensure the development of the province: the province should belong to the natives”. They should therefore be responsible for managing it. Now, this would prevent the construction of a Nation state and encourage tribalism and ethnic divisions...

Faced with this potentially explosive situation, a non-governmental organisation working in this province committed to helping to resolve the conflict between natives and non-natives. It was felt that if such a situation were to persist it could have harmful consequences for the peace and harmony of the province.

The NGO therefore invited several stakeholders from the province to a brainstorming workshop to clarify the problem and find out how to develop strategies for intervening with the local population groups and creating synergies in their actions.

The day the workshop opened, a participant who was a member of a political party and an influential executive in the NGO’s decision-making body made a personal contribution to the organisation in the form of a batch of materials to be used during the work which very visibly displayed the logo of his political party. Seeing this gesture, certain members of the organisation and the peace worker (an expatriate who had come to work within the organisation) challenged the gesture and discussed the issues at stake in relation to the situation on the ground

but none of the Congolese colleagues dared to move the materials. It is important to stress that the organising body is apolitical, and a member of civil society. The activity was supposed to remain neutral with no political connotations whatsoever.

Aware of these issues, the peace worker made the personal decision to remove all of these materials. The problem was not that the contents were not useful but rather the propaganda aspect related to a political party. The aim of the workshop was to create a forum for exchange and negotiation to allow people to express themselves freely and compare their points of view in order to find alternatives. The distribution of these materials could have prevented these objectives from being met. Neutrality of the framework of the meeting had to be maintained, as it was a central component for the workshop to take place in the right conditions and lead to results that could effectively contribute to restoring and consolidating peace.

Analysis of this act on the part of the peace worker yields a wealth of information:

- The concern for the neutrality and impartiality of the meeting: She did not wish to compromise the meeting by giving the impression that one political trend was being favoured over another. She gave preference to the interests of civil society which was inclined towards divisions and whose harmony had to be preserved,
- She showed courage in opposing a “force”, an influential person, in the name of the public interest.
- She refused to be intimidated by a participant who wished to exploit his influential position within the organisation and thereby introduce bias into the exchanges and even the final results.

At the end of the day, the members of the organisation met and delegated a manager to explain to the participant in question why it had been necessary to remove these materials given the issues at stake and objectives that had been assigned. The act performed by the peace

worker was not aimed at him personally but was in the interests of the workshop.

Some questions:

It is evident that the Peace worker's act was appropriate. However, it raises the following questions:

1. How can we move beyond a situation where you apparently have to be an outsider to be able to act according to certain principles?
2. Why do we, the Congolese people, not dare to do it? Is it fear of the authorities? Are these cultural restraints, given that the influential person was older than all the other members of the organisation and held an important position in the decision-making bodies?

These questions are important because they show the significance of the role support from outsiders can play in certain domains such as governance in the current stage of development of our country.

Outsiders, particularly from the North, can say and do certain things that we cannot do because of negative constraints and regressive cultural forces that are still very strong.

Our work in the CPS network is based on two major objectives which are:

- Contributing to overcoming regional, ethnic, political and religious divisions
- Reinforcing local initiatives by working with the population as actors rather than victims of change.

The commitment of this NGO for peace allowed it, after a thorough analysis of the context, to organise this workshop and develop ideas towards a solution to the problems that are inherent to this environment. One of the roles of the peace worker is to reinforce the organisation in terms of knowledge, know-how and people skills in order to break through certain barriers.

Our network's vision is:

- The emergence of a culture of peace and citizenship which puts an end to the culture of impunity and violence
- The reinforcing of the institutions that facilitate the construction of a State of law
- The improvement of the population's situation through better management of resources and an end to pillaging
- The DRC develops an identity shared by all its citizens and finds its place in the sub-region and in the world.

Women's participation, but in which systems of governance?

A study of local level decision-making bodies in eastern DRC

by Albert Mushiarhamina Kengo and Desiree Lwambo,
HEAL Africa, Goma, DRC

In the field of peace building, it has been found that “women tend to raise a broader range of political and social issues, help to ensure that civil society and victims are listened to, and generally have a positive effect on the negotiation climate”¹.

The involvement of women guarantees, in most cases, that the concerns of women and children are included and provides a more solid basis for negotiation and decision-making processes.

In Eastern Congo, it's hard to find a village without a women's association. The causes they defend are as diverse as the women who run them. While some concentrate on transforming conflicts and consolidating peace or on mobilising the community around citizen rights and responsibilities, others promote economic development and self-sufficiency, and yet others partake in the struggle to prevent violence against women. Some of the associations have religious affinities while others are based on common interests, such as widows' and farmers' associations. Even if their commitment is often based on particular interests and ethnic and family relations, it is nonetheless deeply rooted in the realities of their daily lives.

This major involvement in civil society has not, to date, been converted into direct political influence. Although DRC is a signatory to the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination

¹ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011), *Women, Peace and Security: Norway's Strategic Plan 2011–2013*, p. 6.

Against Women (CEDAW), obliging the State to take all the appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country (chapter III, article 7), Congolese women are absent from almost all important decision-making instances leaving their potential to consolidate peace untapped. Unfortunately, DRC is not alone in marginalising a large part of the population in the field of political participation.

From 10 to 22 September 2010, the NGO HEAL Africa, through the programme “Gender and Justice Maniema” (GJM), carried out a qualitative and participative research on local decision-making bodies in the province of Maniema. The study examined state, customary, religious and civil society decision-making bodies. The main objective was to identify conditions which promote or discourage women’s access to local power. This main objective was to be met through three operational goals:

1. Map institutions or individuals at local level who make decisions which have an impact on the community and its members, including different religious and ethnic groups;
2. Analyse the interactions between the different bodies and their relations with the population;
3. Measure the extent of women’s participation in decision-making bodies.

The mapping of institutions and individuals involved in decision-making showed that in each community, there is a different landscape of bodies and institutions that influence each other reciprocally. The population employs numerous strategies for gaining influence or capturing resources from those who hold power. Often, those who hold power use the decision-making bodies as strategic instruments for acquiring personal wealth.

The relations between the different bodies are often marked by conflicts of interest. There are conflicts primarily between the customary bodies and the state bodies, but also between customary bodies and

religious bodies. Civil society is often in conflict with the state authorities, because it presents itself as a protective barrier against the injustices of the State. Sometimes, very arbitrary or brutal decision-makers are replaced after much protest from civil society (as was the case in Kasongo).

The results of the study show that women are under-represented in most of the decision-making bodies, but especially in State and customary bodies. Although women are well represented within the Churches, their presence is mainly at grassroots level. The leadership positions are generally held by men. Only in civil society do we find large numbers of women in leadership positions, as activists, spokespersons and leaders of associations.

At the customary level, the influence of women is often more indirect. Although women often had a tendency to present themselves to agents from the local and international NGOs as powerless, devoid of rights and with no voice, they actually do hold a share of power and men listen to what they have to say. Women have their own elders' councils, whose leaders are often invited to the men's *barza* (village council) to give their opinion. Also, the women in the Customary Chief's family have influence within the community. Nonetheless, tradition generally prohibits women from holding an official position in customary authority, which makes these bodies difficult for women to penetrate.

We believe that the State bodies are a domain with a high potential for including women. In view of women's high involvement in civil society, it would be logical and useful for women to cross the bridge to state authority and become more involved in the political and administrative institutions. Nonetheless, this integration is still problematic. From the policeman to the member of parliament, from the local chief to the school headmaster, men seem to dominate.

We identified three main causes behind women's lack of participation in state bodies. First of all, there is the perception of public authority that Congolese women do not find very attractive. Some of the women interviewed argued that management of these decision-making

bodies is characterised by corruption and dishonesty. They feel that involvement in the local state offices takes a lot of time and effort, but will not be rewarded except through extortion and corruption. They fear that if they become involved, they will also become corrupt, and will therefore be criticised by the community. Does this mean that first a reform or reconstitution of the state system is necessary before women's participation can be considered? We believe that such a reform or reconstitution could not succeed without the extensive involvement of women who are responsible for the country's future in the same way as men. The critical question is how can we mobilise women without manipulating them in favour of individual interests in power struggles within a corrupt, obsolete system?

Another problem for women is that they feel less capable than men because in their opinion they do not have the intellectual capacity to compete for state positions. According to Congolese women, access to these decision-making bodies requires a level of education that most of them do not have. Does this mean we have to wait until a new generation of women is adequately educated? Although we are successfully promoting enrolment of girls, we believe women should enter politics even if their level of study is not considered sufficient. It is a question of common sense, honesty and integrity. Women are generally considered more reliable and accountable than men. The fact that they are often elected or nominated treasurers of the grassroots associations attests to this. Unfortunately, the culture of an education based on appearances and diplomas still dominates the mindsets of both men and women. And yet so many African and European male politicians with university degrees have turned out to be corrupt and criminal predators.

The third cause is women's lack of trust in each other. According to the interviewees, local women prefer male leaders because female leaders often arouse feelings of "jealousy" and "suspicion".

Nonetheless, the study revealed that some women are considered good leaders for resolving conflicts in family councils and in the churches. It is felt that women who are mothers are generally wise and

that they are supreme advisers to men. When the men don't succeed in reaching a compromise, they often call in the female "guardians of custom" to intervene. Does this mean we can define a style of "female leadership", which is based less on authority through intimidation and confrontation, but more on consensus and dialogue? We were able to observe that "masculine" qualities (rigour, aggressiveness and pride) are criticised in a woman. This is why some women leaders advocate another form of leadership for women, which they call "acting like a mother".

HEAL Africa, as an NGO, does not have the capacity to improve the state organisations or their reputation. We cannot guarantee that including women in state bodies would prevent corruption and local conflicts. Nonetheless, the decisions made at local level — by the courts, the land registry office and in the schools — concern women just as much as men, and it is important that they be represented to defend women's interests. The effects of such a change would have to become visible to be assessed.

Since the Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) launched the revision of the electoral file for the organisation of elections at the level of towns, chieftaincy, local authority, sector and village, we focussed our community mobilisation action on encouraging qualified women to enrol so that all women can not only possess a voter's card, but also gravitate towards women candidates whom they consider to be serious and honest. The GJM project has an extensive network of women (and also of a few men) who have organised themselves into an associative movement within the Wamama Simameni network. For a better representation of women in politico-administrative positions, we organised community mobilisations of women association leaders, also cooperating with colleagues and women involved in North Kivu. HEAL Africa is also planning discussion sessions with holders of authority (state and customary) to define the mechanisms for encouraging women who wish to become involved in public affairs and providing them with a framework.

The political landscape in DRC is certainly not particularly attractive. The decentralisation of this vast country was stopped abruptly and most of the resources are concentrated in the capital and a few urban centres, leaving the majority of the political and administrative authorities as well as the so-called army with insufficient resources to provide local services and ensure security. But by drawing on cultural resources and making use of local conflict management mechanisms, women can be highly effective in transforming social relations and in this way create pressure to improve the state institutions. For at local level, “the State” is not an abstract concept, but consists of real people who occupy the positions of authority. It is now essential to prepare women and the broader society for female leadership so that they may make their contribution to a general reconstruction of communities. This will be facilitated by initiatives that incorporate a culture of citizenship and accountability into peace building, such as community peace projects in the schools and villages.

CRAFOD and election support to population groups to promote peace culture in the Bas-Congo province

by Angèle Mazimi and Pierre Fichter

The Regional Support Centre for Training and Development (CRAFOD) has taken on the mission of accompanying the population of Bas-Congo province to improve its living conditions, out of the profound conviction that sustainable human development can only be achieved through action that incorporates economic, cultural and political aspects.

The project to provide election support to population groups to promote peace culture in the Bas-Congo province is part of this perspective. Having monitored the local context from the last elections in 2006 up to the current pre-electoral period, CRAFOD strives to develop an approach based on the participation and expression of the population with the main aim of promoting dialogue among citizens for the construction of a democratic culture and the holding of peaceful elections.

Everyone in Bas-Congo remembers the events that followed the elections in 2006 and 2007. At that time, the Bundu Dia Kongo (BDK) movement attacked the symbols of the Congolese government in the wake of the disappointment of the results of the vote. The authorities riposted with violent repression.

Today, a large part of the population is still traumatised by this bleak episode in the history of the province. For since these events, many people have lost faith in the State and in the building of democracy in the country. Indifference towards politics in general and the future elections seems to be increasing, in particular among young people. And even if Bas-Congo was one of the first provinces to organise voter registration with a degree of success, many people who now hold a voter's

card state that they do not intend to head for the polling stations at election time.

The electoral support project implemented by CRAFOD should, on the one hand, help to build up the knowledge of these groups in terms of democracy, citizenship and conflict prevention while at the same time encouraging young people and women to take part in the elections and contributing to transparency and the smooth running of the different polls which will be organised theoretically up until 2013 (presidential, national and provincial legislative and municipal elections).

To do this CRAFOD bases its intervention strategy on the building of citizen dialogue aimed at improving communication between the population and the political-administrative authorities. This is because part of the reason why the population loses interest in elections is the consequence of a lack of trust in the State, and also we observe that most of the time politicians do not take the interests or aspirations of their fellow citizens into consideration. This approach therefore requires preparation upstream of the direct work on the elections which is done in the months leading up to the popular vote.

Preparing the intervention: Identifying and reinforcing the grassroots organisations

The CRAFOD team has been working with the grassroots organisations for two years to prepare them to intervene and prepare the population. Three types of structures have been given support from CRAFOD: Youth groups in the Cataractes district, urban animation groups in Matadi and Commissions for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation from the communities of the Church of Christ of Congo (CCC Bas-Congo).

Among these organisations, some have been able to initiate cooperation with the local authorities. This is the case for Matadi's "Action

Groups for Popular Participation” which have created frameworks for cooperation with the municipal authorities.

This is also a way of legitimising these organisations so that they may work more serenely during the election period. For working on the elections in DRC, as in many countries in the world, comprises risks for the organisations and individuals involved. This means it is necessary to identify the structures and people with whom we wish to undertake activities.

The preparatory work done upstream was therefore an opportunity to test the determination of the members of the grassroots organisations to invest their efforts in specific activities regarding the elections, to identify the structures which, despite their apolitical status, are actually sponsored by politicians, or members who themselves have political ambitions and are therefore likely to lack objectivity in their work.

These organisations were then reinforced by CRAFOD among others in the fields of citizenship education and the analysis of the socio-political context. They in turn then raised the awareness of the population on the topics of Human Rights and the duties and powers of the citizen.

Since they took part in the workshops CRAFOD organised in 2010 to revitalise the provincial CJPIC, the Commissions for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation from the evangelical communities of CCC/ Bas-Congo have implemented citizenship awareness raising actions at the level of their parishes.

Preparing the activities with the grassroots organisations: context analysis, timing and appropriation

From this starting point, activities specific to elections can be planned with the grassroots organisations and strategies drawn up which each partner operates. In this respect, timing is of the essence. Working for

too long in advance with the beneficiaries means running the risk of the messages delivered and the contents of the activities being lost by the time the elections come round. Working just before election time means running the risk that the authorities will not allow the activities to be organised.

This work is therefore based on a participatory approach with a concern for the appropriation of the concepts and activities by the beneficiaries. The members of the organisations are invited to produce their own ideas on the topics covered, to analyse the socio-political context and design the activities they will in turn implement.

The beneficiary organisations therefore develop their own activities to propagate the knowledge acquired through the workshops in order to reach the widest possible audience. Supporting these organisations in the implementation of the activities also empowers them and shows the surrounding population that individuals can become dynamic actors in the democratic process with a view to furthering the common good.

The expression of the people: the role of the citizen and the role of the politician

The work of the organisations supported by CRAFOD therefore consists in accompanying the target populations throughout the election period; that is to say up until 2013.

This work commences within the framework of workshops and local meetings by awareness-raising regarding how the polling system works, the usefulness of voting and the importance of an election for building democracy. What is the significance of the concepts of citizenship and public spirit in an election period and what are the responsibilities related to the role of citizen? What is the citizen's duty (civic duty) and power (the power of the polls)?

These activities are interactive and not simply an awareness-raising

campaign. The facilitators question the participants about their vision of the elections. Then the people present at the sessions express what they expect from the elections and from the different candidates and future elected representatives.

This is where the concept of accountability should be introduced. People must be made aware that they should elect a political agenda, a long-term vision of development rather than voting for an individual whether because of reputation, capacity to distribute money and promises during their campaign or membership of an ethnic group, clan or religion.

The results of these awareness-raising and popular expression activities should then be communicated to the politico-administrative authorities, to the different candidates but also to the other stakeholders in social development (NGOs, donors, etc.). The point of view of the citizens and their expectations should be shared with the political sphere but also through civil society networks to make known the aspirations of the electors and show that they are responsible citizens and fully-fledged dynamic players in Congolese political life.

The importance of working in a network

At this stage of the project, the concept of alliance and of network becomes very important. How can a strong, credible message be delivered? How to appear legitimate in the eyes of the politicians? This form of advocacy should be conducted in cooperation with other partners. CRAFTOD and the organisations it supports should therefore share this work with other groups within networks.

For example, the Protestant Church's Commission for Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation is already starting to work on joint communication strategies with the Catholic Church's Justice and Peace Commission. This collaboration between the two major Churches in the Congo

may represent a major asset when addressing the decision-makers with the message from the population.

Similarly, all these groups constitute a monitoring system before, during and after the elections, with the mission of observing changes in the pre and post electoral context and alerting the players in civil society in the national or international networks to any tensions at local level.

As a focal point, CRAFOD therefore propagates the information it receives from the grassroots organisations and resource people via the networks it is a member of, the Civil Peace Service and Mbongi Ya Nsobolo networks. This could make it possible to prevent an escalation of violence or at least inform the international players of a serious local situation.

The issues at stake in democracy at a local scale: a long term task

Is the population support implemented by CRAFOD adequate to ensure totally peaceful elections? Regarding the presidential elections, our action certainly cannot have an impact on the context of Kinshasa and the other provinces, however, at local level it can help to reduce the risks of an escalation of violence. But above all it should lead the citizens to reflect on the value and the fragility of the democratic process underway in their country and on their role as voters and players in the political construction of the country.

As we said previously, election support to the population should not stop as soon as the results of the presidential election are known. And on the local level, the issues at stake in democracy at the provincial scale are just as important as the national political stakes. Within the framework of the decentralisation of the DRC, the provincial powers take on more weight. Lastly, between now and 2013, the first municipal elections are expected to be organised.

These local elections will be an opportunity to reach the local candidates more easily and initiate with them real work on local governance. It is therefore for this precise moment that the population should be ready to decide by whom and how they wish to be governed.

RIO's Experience in Terms of the Elections in DR Congo

by Odile Bula Bula and Jessie Bohr

The Organisational Innovation Network (French acronym RIO), a technical service of the CCC/South-Kivu which works to promote the culture of peace in the African subregion of the Great Lakes.

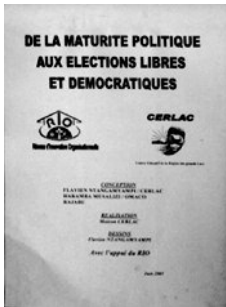
For the 2006 elections, our experience concerned

- The organisation of a workshop seminar on the involvement of Protestant women in the election process in DRC. 35 women community leaders and representatives of the women and families department and 5 pastors attended a 3-day workshop. The work involved preparing Protestant women to respond to the wishes of the population regarding the possibility of electing freely-chosen candidates. Competent candidates useful to themselves and to society. The aim of the session was to provide the female leaders of the CCC/South Kivu member communities with an awareness of and instruction on democratic values and principles, good governance and the organisation of free and transparent elections in DRC. Women were targeted because they are the most exploited by politicians who hand out printed fabrics, salted fish, etc.
- As this is a global question, RIO resolved to provide a certain number of materials for raising the awareness of the population and informing them about elections:
 - The picture box “from political maturity to free and democratic elections” was produced. This tool was placed at the disposal of the players in civil society for their events and actions. Some organisations used them in the Walungu and Uvira districts.

- The music album “bic rouge anti mihali” expressing the fact that the population should use a red pen for approving and disapproving the candidates, produced with the organisation *Synergie des artistes musiciens de Bukavu*. This album was distributed to the community radio stations in the province to play the songs on the air. The track called “tuchague sisi sote” which means “let’s all vote” calls the population to join the electoral roll and explains the procedure to follow to be able to vote. The track called “twa wajuu” meaning “we know who they are” describes the profile of a good candidate to vote for. These songs enjoyed a lot of success during the election period given that the public radio stations only relayed the campaigns of those in power whereas the community radio stations promote awareness of the elections and the profile of the good candidate.

Bukavu, 28 June 2011

From
RIO's
picture
box



The Catholic Church, via the Episcopal Justice and Peace Commission (CEJP) – Burundi, played a key role during the last elections

by Apollinaire Niyongabo,
CEJP Burundi

The first elections in Burundi since independence took place in a tense political situation characterised by political intolerance. Rivals began to insult each other as soon as the political contest began. We should not forget the not too distant past, in 1993, when Burundi organised its first truly democratic elections.

At that time, the election campaign was beset by ethnic hatred. This was animated, on the one hand, by the FRODEBU (Front for democracy of Burundi), then the leading opposition party which turned out to be powerful as soon as it was created. The State-party, Uprona, which had previously been the only party, on the other hand, gave in to the provocation and fell into the trap set by its rival by whipping up a hate campaign in retaliation. The consequences were tragic for, once elected, the FRODEBU candidate, Melchior Ndadaye, was assassinated 100 days later. This fatal blow gave rise to an avalanche of tragedies in which thousands of innocent people were massacred, villages burnt down and property pillaged. A rebellion was formed one year later and imposed a deadly war on Burundi for 12 long years.

The so-called peace and reconciliation agreement bitterly negotiated over a period of more than 2 years in the town of Arusha in Tanzania and signed on 28th August 2000, did not put an end to the hostilities. New negotiations between the government of Burundi and the principal rebel movements, the CNDD-FDD, were required to obtain

a relative appeasement. Once they left the bush in November 2003, the fighters from this party attracted the sympathy of the population and enjoyed landslide victories in the communal, legislative, presidential, senatorial and even hillside elections in August and September 2005.

The administration of the country by the winners of the 2005 elections was somewhat disorderly: A wave of arrests and imprisonment of political leaders was observed, including former president Domitien Ndayizeye, his former vice-president, Alphonse Marie Kadege, and a system of embezzlement, fraud and corruption was adopted as a mode of government. The party in power suffered various splits following the dismissal of the former party president, Hussein Radjabu, on 27th February 2007, a system was instigated to muzzle the opposition and the media, and targeted assassinations were perpetrated. In other words, a system of terror was established in Burundi throughout the first legislature of the CNDD-FDD to the extent that some citizens were obliged to flee the country, including President Domitien Ndayizeye's former spokesman, Mr Pancrace Cimpaye.

The 2010 elections were organised in this uncomfortable climate of insecurity. Even the nomination of the members of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) was problematic initially, for the party in power tried to impose the composition of this body against the wishes of the opposition parties. It took a considerable amount of time to reach a consensus. In the same vein, the election schedule was the subject of contention, as the CNDD-FDD wanted to begin by the presidential elections whereas the opposition parties wished to have the presidential elections after the other votes. And so it was in the wake of these trials and tribulations that the national and international communities turned their attention to the 2010 elections.

Having learnt from past experience, the Catholic Church of Burundi, through the Episcopal Justice and Peace Commission (CEJP), which emanates from the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Burundi (CECAB) and whose mission is to promote a culture of law, justice and reconcili-

ation through education on peace and justice and by the promotion and defence of human rights in the light of the Gospel and of the Social Teaching of the Church, wished to contribute towards peaceful, free and transparent elections. A number of actions were conducted through its “Elections” project. The aim of this support was to contribute to the holding of free, peaceful elections with a view to establishing a State of law in Burundi. The activities carried out within this framework extended from the pre-election period (prevention of electoral violence, awareness raising on the importance of citizen and democratic values), through the election period (observation of polls), and for the moment on the post-electoral period with a view to accompanying the new elected representatives.

The activities related to the “Elections” programme were spread mainly over two periods, that is to say the pre-election period and the election period. The pre-election period was marked by the activities of preparing for the polls. This mainly consisted in monitoring the civil and political rights related to the elections, awareness raising on topics related to citizen and democratic values, Active Non Violence, and the merits of disarmament as well as the training of election observers and supervisors.

Concerning the monitoring of civil and political rights, thanks to funding from TROCAIRE (overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland), the CEJP monitored the civil and political rights related to the elections to gather all the data related to the different violations related to elections committed during the pre election period in order to prevent possible conflicts through advocacy for changes in behaviour. To carry out this action, the CEJP identified and trained a network of 75 monitors spread across all the communities who noted the various violations of civil and political rights committed in the communities they were assigned to. This data allowed the CEJP to produce 4 monitoring reports which were used to highlight all the irregularities related to civil and political rights during the pre election period and to engage in advocacy with the people concerned in order to

prevent election conflicts. Still within the framework of the prevention of electoral violence, the CEJP, in cooperation with civil society organisations (national and international) carried out in partnership the AMM (Amatora mu Mahoro) Project, that is to say “elections in peace” which is a project for monitoring democratic principles similar to the monitoring of the respect of civil and political rights. With this partnership, the number of monitors was increased to 450, spread across all the communities. 5 reports were produced, including a global report covering the period from 26 April to 12 September 2010. These reports were also used globally to map the areas at risk of electoral violence and prevent it, as far as possible.

During this same pre election period, the CEJP carried out awareness raising operations on topics related to the holding of the 2010 elections. Three subjects were selected: citizen and democratic values, Active Non Violence and the merits of disarmament. These subjects were developed for around 560 community leaders from the different provinces of Burundi, chosen from among the leaders of local organisations, occupational groups, the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commissions (CDJP), and the Parish Justice and Peace Commissions (CPJP). In addition to the awareness raising sessions, the CEJP also broadcast messages on the three subjects, through the media (awareness raising spots and public broadcasts), and advertising posters were displayed in public places.

The other activity concerned the training of supervisors and observers to ensure the monitoring of the different polls. The election agents were divided into three categories. First of all, the diocesan supervisors. These supervisors were given training in election observation. In addition, they were invited to all the meetings to prepare the elections and were fully involved in the conception of all the systems and tools to facilitate the observation work.

Then there were the community supervisors: In total, 152 supervisors were trained in all the Catholic dioceses on the techniques of observation and supervision of election monitoring. They were responsible, among other things, for training the observers in observation techniques

and supervising them during the observation of the polls to make sure they performed their task properly.

Lastly, there were the observers: The observers were distributed among the various Polling Stations, and had been given 2 days training on election observation techniques. Their mission was to observe the polls and for this purpose they had an observation sheet to fill in after each vote and submit to the supervisor of the diocese, who in turn sent all the sheets to the CEJP. It is important to stress the fact that at the end of each poll, the Catholic Church issued a statement of what was noted in the field thanks to the supervisors and observers. Other activities conducted as part of the “Elections” project concerned the broadcasting of educational and awareness raising programmes. In this respect, broadcasts, round tables and multiplexes were produced to reinforce instruction on citizen and democratic values during the election period, but also to promote the culture of dialogue as a method for peaceful conflict resolution and the prevention of election violence.

During the election period, the Episcopal Justice and Peace Commission played a key role, for it deployed around 2,400 electoral observers all over the country. On the sidelines of the activities carried out by the CEJP, the Catholic Church, through the bishops, called on the people of Burundi not to vote for “people driven by greed”. According to the Agence France Presse (AFP) on 26 December 2009, the Catholic Bishops of Burundi were forthright in stating that “it would not be natural to follow people who use deadly language, who deploy violence, who are driven by greed and demagoguery, who have no political agenda for rebuilding the Nation”. However, they refrained from categorising anyone, for they stressed the fact that they did not want to “point the finger at the people you (the voters) will vote for, or reject, (...), but we sincerely hope that Burundi is entrusted to leaders willing to sacrifice themselves for the real development of our country”.

Today, efforts are being invested to help the new elected representatives to fully play their part to everyone’s satisfaction. At least this is the purpose behind the Good governance programme being run in sev-

eral communities. The monitors trained, as well as the former election observers and supervisors are still supporting the CEJP in carrying out this programme. The Catholic Church's contribution to improving the atmosphere in Burundi is not a recent phenomenon. The Church has always conveyed messages of peace through its publications (the newspaper NDONGOZI), its radio stations (Radio Ijwi ry'amahoro "the voice of hope" and radio Maria) and through the CEJP review. Youth forums have been organised at parish, national, and even regional level, as well as peace marches all over the country to calm troubled spirits. This has considerably contributed to instilling, in Christians and even in the population at large, a spirit of conciliation and fraternity during a difficult political period.

In the end, despite the fact that the 2010 elections in Burundi generated electoral contention that remains unresolved today, the Catholic Church may congratulate itself on having contributed, through its election monitoring and observation, to relatively peaceful elections. Some political leaders decided to abandon the elections after the community polls on 24 May 2010, accusing the party in power of having cheated, but at the level of the grassroots community, the population remained nonetheless serene.

Civil Peace Services (CPS) Partners of EED in the DR Congo:

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- **CEFORMAD (Centre de Formation en Management
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- **CRAFOD (Centre Régional d'Appui et de Formation pour
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- **HEAL Africa**
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- **RIO (Réseau d'Innovation Organisationnelle)**
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EED Partner:

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Civil Peace Services (CPS) Partners of EED in the Mano River Region (MRR):

Sierra Leone

- **SLADEA (Sierra Leone Adult Education Association)**
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- **SLOIC (Sierra Leone Opportunities Industrialization Centre)**
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- **CCSL (Council of Churches in Sierra Leone)**
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- **YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association – Sierra Leone)**
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- **MADAM (Mankind's Activities for Development Accreditation Movement)**
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Liberia

- **CHAL (Christian Health Association of Liberia)**
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- **LCC (Liberia Council of Churches)**
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