



Civil Wars and Lootings in the Congo: How the poor pay the bill

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Abstract

In August 1996, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) entered a civil war. The conflict that drew in many African forces, such as the Rwandan, Ugandan, and Burundian armies on one side and the Angolan, Zimbabwean, Sudanese, and Namibian militaries on the other, and a dozen armed groups and militias throughout the DRC as well as neighbouring countries, left more than 3,5 million civilians dead. This paper presents the role played by belligerents during the conflict in the killings and looting of the DRC. It goes on to explain

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how the looting that was previously conducted by the Rwandan, Ugandan and Zimbabwean armies and the Congolese rebels backing them has been replaced by organised economic crimes and the diversion of Congolese state funds. It explains how the Congolese poor are paying the bill for the conflict and it concludes by advocating the protection of civilians, the consolidation of democracy, the promotion of a sound macro-economic environment and social justice structures, which will lead to a stable and strong Congo.

1. Introduction

Your President is a crook and this country is going to suffer a lot in a very short time. You Congolese must know that this country and all its minerals are not yours but ours. (Arnold Kondrat of the Canadian Banro Resources Corporation, quoted in Taylor & Williams 2001:274).

The above mentioned arrogant and insulting statement of a Canadian business-person shows how international companies and multinationals are involved in several armed conflicts that are currently taking place in Africa and that are contributing to the reinforcement of people's suffering. After 43 years of internal and external state lootings in the Congo, the Congolese people have been pushed over the brink by the last civil wars with their exceptional violence and destructive effects. Over seven years, people have been displaced or killed, many have lost their income-generating activities, and life has become literally impossible in some parts of the country.

A mortality study carried out by the International Rescue Committee and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) showed that the Congo is facing a genocide. According to these organisations, 3 to 3,5 million people have died because of the conflict, most of them chopped with machetes, their bodies burnt, some thrown into rivers or forced down latrines and many buried alive. By the middle of 2000, 2,3 million Congolese were displaced throughout the country, and another 5 million completely or partially separated from their traditional supply routes, mainly because of the generalised insecurity. Those uprooted by the war were deprived

of access to humanitarian services by the same factors that caused their flight and isolation (Human Rights Watch 2003).

For nearly a quarter of a century, the DRC has undergone several crises, but the current one, which is caused by civil wars, has produced deadly consequences. Malnutrition has become apparent everywhere and not only people's health is in danger, but their economy, their education system, their housing, their supply of water and electricity and their sanitation system have collapsed. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF (2001), 42 000 women will die in childbirth alone this year, while in some areas, especially in the East and the North East, one third of apparently healthy family blood donors tested are HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) positive.

Stremmler (2000:118) emphasised the fact that conflicts in Africa, including this one in the DRC, are due to 'bad governance'. Weak, authoritarian governments lack the institutional capacity to manage factional struggles and they exclude majority or minority groups from power. This produces tensions that can generate sparks that can start a war. Indeed, the current conflict in the Congo has multiple causes. The resort to arms was the result of a continuing deterioration of the entire situation in the field, which Mobutu's government and the international community have created and were well aware of.

At the beginning of the first civil war in September 1996, Rwanda wanted to focus its arguments more on the grievance aspect of the situation in the field: Banyamulenge versus other ethnic groups in Kivu, or Tutsi versus Bantu. Later, Rwanda and Uganda justified their military interventions in the Congo on the basis of preserving their national securities and defeating their enemies. However, looking closer, the instability in the Great Lakes region is becoming more exacerbated by business purposes than by any other reason. As Reyntjens (2001:312) wrote, 'Entrepreneurs of insecurity are engaged in extractive activities that would be impossible in a stable state environment. The criminalisation context in which these activities occur offers avenues for considerable factional and personal enrichment through the trafficking of arms, illegal drugs, toxic products, mineral resources and dirty money.' It is to be acknowledged that the war in the Congo has benefited many people. Political and military leaders in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe and the DRC have used their powers and positions to exploit the situation and to get rich.

What Kuwait and Congo have in common, is the fact that 'each commemorates a painful anniversary the same day. On August 2, Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 and on August 2 1998, a coalition of Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi invaded the Congo. The difference between them is the international response. Western superpowers rushed to Kuwait's aid, driving out the invaders and punishing them relentlessly. By contrast, the invasion of the Congo went almost unnoticed' (Lokongo 2001).

Despite all the calls of the United Nations, which intervened only two years after the beginning of the second civil war by adopting two resolutions – 1304 (passed in 2000) and 1341 (passed in 2001) – condemning the invasion of the Congo and recommending that all countries involved withdraw their troops, a number of Rwandan, Ugandan and Burundian soldiers under civilian mandate are still in the Congo, occupying important parts of some provinces in the East of the country.

This paper will examine the situation of the civil wars in the Congo, which took place between 1996 and 2003, and their effects on people's quality of life. It will analyse different corrupt and criminal networks and the relationship between the Congolese state and the corruption. The paper shows how poor people continue to pay the price. Finally, however, suggestions are given for a way out of the crisis and towards a better future.

2. Historical Background

In 1908, Belgium established the Congo as its colony, following the international outcry over the dictatorship of King Leopold II, who made the Congo a free state. As Young (1986:32) argued, 'Belgian colonialism was unparalleled in the continent in its control and penetration of African society, organised by the "trinity" of bureaucracy, capital and the church'. That trinity gave the Catholic Church the power to organise and run the entire education system. At independence, the country had fewer than 10 university graduates. The Congolese army, the Force Publique, was more like a police force, to maintain internal law and order among the local people. MacNulty stressed the lack of qualified and higher educated people by writing: 'Unlike Africa's other major colonial powers,

Britain and France, Belgium had done little to promote a local elite to govern on its behalf and assume the reins of state power. As a result, there was not the smooth transition to Western-favoured regimes which largely characterised independence elsewhere; instead, the Congo began rapidly to implode, the new administration faced with mutiny and multiple secessions which foreign interests did much to foment' (MacNulty 1999:57).

Structures used by the Belgians during colonisation – such as the administration, multinational companies and the Christian missions – were prone to inhibit and not promote a sense of national identity and loyalty. 'As a result of these factors, independence for the Congolese masses ultimately came to mean the eviction of Belgian interests rather than a common striving toward the construction of a viable nation-state' (Gardinier 1982:538). The decision of the French President, General Charles De Gaulle, in 1958, to grant independence to neighbouring French territories had an instant effect and a petition was produced for the same rights of determination for the Congolese. As Lemarchand (1964:158) argued, 'the political developments that occurred in other African territories stimulated the political awakening of the Congolese. It made them all the more aware of the immobilisme that seemed to govern Belgian colonial policy, and hence intensified their desire to change the status quo'. Riots in Leopoldville after a football match on 4th January 1959, savagely repressed in blood, shocked the Belgians who did not wish to be considered by other countries as using force against an independence movement. Ultimately, the country became independent on 30th June 1960.

The secession of Katanga 'made it possible for the Soviet bloc to pose as the true champions of Congolese unity, not only against Tshombe's regime but against those Western powers upon which it became so heavily dependent, politically, economically and militarily' (Lemarchand 1964:291). The intervention of the Soviet Union in support of the government established in Stanley Ville (now Kisangani) and led by Antoine Gizenga, the successor of Patrice Lumumba, made things more complicated. Therefore, the Congo became more a problem of East versus West, America versus Europe, some European countries versus others and some African countries versus others. 'The period from the installation of the Adoula government in August 1961 until late 1963 was marked by rising hope that the damage resulting from the failed decolonisation settlement

could be contained and that the state could be restored to a reasonable level of operation' (Young 1986:134).

In the political, social and economic spheres, the country suffered because of the lack of skilled people able to lead and manage it after the departure of the colonisers. As MacGaffey (1991:27) said, 'the colonial African elite thus lacked education, administrative and managerial experience, and wealth. At independence, the Belgians handed over political but not economic control, so that the new dominant class based its power on control of the state, while ownership of the economy remained in the hands of the big and foreign mining and plantation companies'.

3. Civil Wars, Killings and Looting of the Congolese Natural Resources

3.1 Background to the conflict

The last civil wars, which have dismantled the country and brought more suffering to the majority of people in the Congo, are complex sub-regional conflicts which began in summer 1996 and which involved for seven years more than seven different African countries, a dozen Congolese armed groups and several armed militias. Indeed, the genocide that took place in 1994 in Rwanda was the distant cause of the Congolese civil war. After committing the genocide in Rwanda, members of the Rwandan Army and government fled into exile to the eastern Congo, then Zaire, where the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) established them in camps along the border throughout the eastern Congo. As the defeated political and military leaders, the soldiers and militia reorganised themselves to launch new attacks on Rwanda. These attacks obliged the government of Rwanda to send its troops into the Congo. Their main motive was to stop preparation of any military and militia attacks on Rwanda and to protect the Banyamulenge, members of the Tutsi ethnic group, who rose up against the Congolese government.

To make the rebellion against the Congo national and to gain acceptance by the Congolese, the Rwandan government helped create the Allied Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo (Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaire, AFDL). Later the Ugandan government sent its

troops into the Congo to support the AFDL. The newly created rebellion elected Laurent Kabila as their leader and, backed by their Rwandan and Ugandan allies, they marched on Kisangani (the third Congolese city), Lubumbashi (the second Congolese city) and finally, on 17th May 1997, on the Congolese capital, Kinshasa.

On his way to Kinshasa while leading the first civil war in 1996-1997, Kabila signed many deals with multinationals and mining companies such as the American Mineral Fields, Anglo-American, some Belgian investors such as Texaf, George Forest International and others. Only a year later, disappointment with Kabila's government began arising among the Congolese people and his foreign supporters and allies. People were disappointed because Kabila failed to implement his promises about a return to democracy and because of the political, commercial and mining deals and agreements made during the civil war to benefit his foreign allies.

His personal relations with his Rwandan allies started to deteriorate by May 1998 and at the beginning of August of the same year a second war started with all its current and coming consequences. A few days later, many other African countries were involved in the war, which was called by many around the world, '*the First African World War*'. On one side the Congolese government was supported by Angola, Chad, Sudan, Namibia and Zimbabwe, and on the other side Congolese rebels were backed by Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda.

3.2 Fighting and killings in the field

Only weeks after the beginning of the war, killings started in the east of the country. On August 27, 1998, just a few days after the beginning of the civil war, the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) World Service reported that rebels and their Rwandan and Ugandan allies killed 200 civilians in Kassika in South Kivu. This was one of the first mass killings, called today '*the massacre of Kassika*'. Later, 818 other civilians were killed in Makobola, known nowadays as '*the massacre of Makobola*'. Their houses were burnt and almost at the same time fifteen women were buried alive in Kamituga. As early as February 1999, thirty people were killed at Kilambo in North Kivu by the Rassemblement des Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD), backed by the Rwandan army. RCD rebels and Rwandan soldiers and militias tied up men, raped their wives in front

of their sons and husbands, and killed them. In May the same year, the RCD with its Rwandan allies killed at least thirty villagers in Katogota, south Kivu (Human Rights Watch 2001). In late 1999, the RCD with their allies sexually tortured and buried many women alive in Mwenga (Association Africaine de Défenses des Droits de l'Homme, ASADHO 2000).

In 2000, Rwandan and Ugandan armies fought each other in Kisangani for nearly a week, to control the Congolese third city and to have easy access to and control of diamonds, gold and other minerals exploited in the area. They killed thousands of unarmed civilians and destroyed the remaining infrastructure of the city: roads, schools, hospitals, markets and public buildings. In May 2002, some RCD-Goma troops mutinied in Kisangani against their established authorities. RCD-Goma decided to put down that uprising with the military backing of Rwandan soldiers. The operation ended in the massacre of many civilians and military personnel and, according to a UN (United Nations) report presented to the UN Security Council, more than 160 persons were decapitated and killed.

The long-lasting conflict and animosity between the Lendu and the Hema in the north-eastern region of Ituri erupted in confrontations and ethnic violence and killings in 1999 and 2000. The Ugandan army that backed the Hema against the Lendu exacerbated the conflict. 7 000 people were killed. At the same time, more than 200 000 people were displaced by the conflict in less than a year. The Ugandan army fuelled the tensions between the ethnic groups by creating a new province in the eastern Congo and appointing members of the Hema ethnic group to be responsible at different levels. Since August 2002, that province has been facing scenes of massacres and genocide. Thousands of civilians were killed in September 2002 throughout the province where Ugandan army troops were supposed to protect civilians and unarmed people. Unfortunately, they gave backing to one side in a conflict, the Union of Patriotic Congolese (UPC), a faction of militia from the Hema ethnic group, against the RCD Liberation Movement (RCD-ML) mainly composed of the Lendu and Ngiti people.

3.3 Cannibalism and anthropophagi in Eastern Congo

In mid-November 2002, rebels from the Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC) arrived in Mambassa and Mandima in the Eastern province of the

Congo. Mainly pygmies, people who are currently a protected race because of their potential disappearance, occupied these villages. As villagers fled into the bush, rebels systematically looted all their belongings. Rebels raped women and their daughters lying on the same bed, while their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers were watching. Under the command of Ramazani II, the so called 'Roi des Imbeciles' (King of Imbeciles), rebels killed, cooked and consumed pygmy meat in villages of Some, Mekimo, Makodu, Tobola, Malutu and Badisende surrounding Mambassa and Beni. Some of the killed people were grilled, and in most cases, rebels forced the victims' wives and other prisoners to cook the bodies of their killed relatives and to consume them.

As the province of Ituri was facing genocide, voices around the world, especially in France, started to criticise the UN for its silence. To avoid the repetition of what happened in Rwanda in 1994, these acts of cannibalism and other massacres and killings in Ituri obliged the Security Council of the UN in May 2003 to send a special international armed force to secure Ituri. Even the US (United States of America) and the UK (United Kingdom) governments, which are known as friends and supporters of the Rwandan and Ugandan governments, condemned the massacres and played an important role in the search of a peaceful solution to the conflict.

3.4 Looting of Congolese natural resources

As the killings and exploitation of the Congo started to shame some supporters of the Ugandan and Rwandan regimes and other players behind the scenes, the US ambassador at the UN, Mr James Cunningham, was obliged to denounce these massacres and lootings and called for the UN to intervene. Because of the mounting pressure from around the world, the UN sent a panel of experts to the Congo and other African countries to investigate the situation relating to illegal exploitation of natural resources by the belligerents in the DRC.

On 16 April 2001, the UN panel published a report concluding that the governments of Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, whose troops occupy parts of eastern DRC, were profiting from the conflict by looting diamonds, gold, coltan (Colombo tantalite), and other precious minerals, timber, coffee, pharmaceutical plants, elephant tusks and tax revenues. The experts also found that those foreign forces allied with the Congolese government, namely Angola,

Namibia and especially Zimbabwe, were also profiting from the conflict through economic deals and agreements, exploitation of mines and one-sided contracts on several goods and merchandises.

That UN panel report made allegations that the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) of Uganda, the Patriotic Army of Rwanda and other armed groups were engaged in massive plundering of the Congo in the guise of fighting Ugandan and Rwandan rebels in the north-eastern DRC. The Ugandan army and especially commanders directly linked to President Museveni were still making great fortunes in the Congo. When senior officers of the UPDF arrived on Congolese soil, their first activities were to get involved in business deals. One of them, wrote the *New African* (May 1999) of London, was 'Major General Salim Saleh, half-brother of President Museveni. General Saleh deployed gold diggers in the Congo and has been involved in gold deals, in tandem with Lieutenant Colonel Jet Mwebaze, a leading Ugandan general in the Congo, with dealers from Israel'. Salim Saleh has very important links with high-ranking officers operating in the field in the Congo.

During its investigations into the looting in the Congo, the UN Report named officers implicated in these shameful exploitations. On the Ugandan side, they named Major General Salim Saleh, Brigadiers James Kazini Takamanyire (cousin of Museveni's wife), Colonel Otafire, Colonel Mugenyi and Lieutenant Colonel Noble Mayombo as those who have profited most from the war and have led the exploitative activities. What is shocking is the fact that, to facilitate their illegal exploitation of the country's resources, Brigadier James Kazini Tinkamanyire, chief of the Ugandan army staff, appointed in June 1999, a governor, Adelle Mugisa Lotsove, for Ituri district to make it autonomous from Kisangani. In the same way, willing to punish local people in Kivu, Rwanda and their RCD allies created a new district of Minembwe.

'An UN official in eastern Congo counted 64 airplane movements in an ordinary day in Shabunda (Kivu). 150 tons of coltan leave eastern Congo each year and are exported worldwide via Belgium or Dubai' (*Le Monde* August 2001). Paul Kagame of Rwanda has never denied the plundering of the Congo by his forces. During his genocide commemoration speech in April 2001, in order to mock the UN Security Council which called his troops to withdraw from the Congo, Paul Kagame attested that 'plundering of Congo started a century ago.

Those western countries, which are importuning us now with this question, are those that started to plunder the Congo. If they are complaining, it is because we are now doing what they have always done' (quoted in Remy 2001).

Clearly, economic objectives have always been in the centre of Rwanda's continuing presence in the Congo. As Reyntjens (2001:312) wrote, 'Rwanda considers the Congolese Kivu region as a "natural" zone of expansion. For the Rwandan elites, who live well above the means their country can afford, the wealth generated in the DRC has become essential. At least in part, this is government policy: the "Congo desk" of the Rwandan External Security Organisation includes a section called "Production" which is in charge of the exploitation and trade of Congolese resources'.

The same experts concluded that the main reason behind the civil war in the Congo was the looting and illegal trade of its wealth, especially diamonds, copper, gold, cobalt, timber, coltan, coffee, cocoa, and many others. Since the beginning of the second civil war in August 1998, belligerents illegally exploited and traded 3 962 kg of Colombo tantalite (*coltan*) worth US\$ 793 millions, 13 millions of carats of diamond worth US\$ 427 millions, 30 000 kg of gold worth US\$ 265 millions, 6 millions kg of cassiterite worth US\$ 24 millions, niobium worth of US\$ 1,5 million, carving timber worth US\$ 164 millions, agricultural product, especially cocoa and coffee worth US\$ 51 millions. According to the same report, the looting of the Congo provided Rwanda and Uganda with an income of more than US\$ 320 millions per year (United Nations 2002).

According to many sources in the Congo and in the West (Association Africaine de Défenses des Droits de l'Homme, ASADHO and Human Rights Watch, HRW), Zimbabweans close to President Mugabe (generals, politicians and high ranking members of ZANU–PF¹) have invested millions in several economic activities, especially in mining in the Congo. In its issue of August 11, 2001, *Congovision* stressed the fact that after 6 months of exploitation, the Congolese and Zimbabwean diamond exploitation joint venture sold diamonds valued at US\$ 85 millions. At the same time, a Belgian auditor who worked

1 Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front, the ruling party.

on the volume of Congolese diamonds sold in Antwerp in Belgium, asserted that the joint venture should have produced and sold US\$ 100 millions worth of diamonds per month, that is to say US\$ 600 millions after 6 months instead of the US\$ 85 millions declared (www.congovision.com, accessed on 11 August 2001).

Kabila granted concessions for the sale of oil in the Congo to the Angolan national oil company, Sonangol. Hence, Sonangol has established many sales centres and built several petrol stations in Kinshasa. Its profits are growing quickly as the Congo regularly faces shortages of oil products. Moreover, according to Taylor and Williams (2001:276), ‘Namibia’s \$25 million trade deal with Kabila, which stands to benefit key players associated with the Nujoma regime, similarly played a role in Windhoek’s decision to enter and remain involved in the war’.

4. How the Poor Pay the Bill

‘The panel of UN experts was certainly right in concluding that *the only loser* in this huge business venture is the Congolese people’ (Des Forges 2001). Once in power in 1997, Kabila acted like his predecessor. Indeed, Mobutu and Kabila and their politico-commercial bourgeoisie have systematically used their political power and positions in the state to plunder Zaire’s vast wealth, squandering their nation’s resources in flagrant and unscrupulous pursuit of personal fortune. The neglect and deterioration of existing infrastructure and the agricultural sector, the ‘white elephants’ and the rapidly deteriorating external terms of trade disarticulated the formal economy (Marysse et al 1996:10). Moreover, the civil wars have brought more misery to people around the country, especially those living in the occupied territories of the North, the North-East and the East of the country.

4.1 Public finance

While public infrastructure was deteriorating and poverty increasing, the fortunes of Kabila, his generals and close supporters and clients, the Rwandan, Ugandan and Zimbabwean generals and elites, were growing. Under Kabila’s rule, the ‘Présidence de la République’ was said to control 18-23% of the national

budget for his personal use and his close supporters while the Health Department budget was less than 5%. The Congolese currency has also collapsed. In 1972, the rate of exchange for Zaire (Z) was US\$ 1.00 = Z 0.50. Kabila introduced a new currency, the Congolese Franc (FC) on 30 June 1998. When the second civil war started in August 1998, 1 US\$ equalled 2,45FC and now, three years later, 1 US\$ = 345FC.

Traffic of precious minerals has never stopped, the printing of banknotes from the Central Bank continues and president Kabila with his allies, followers and loyalists are still getting richer while the poor are still getting poorer. Under the current Kabila's regime, the politico-commercial class in the Congo is continuing to amass more and more wealth. While civil servants are being made redundant, and the major services for the majority of people (especially education, health and public transport) are cancelled, the members of government, Kabila loyalists, rebel leaders, Rwandan, Ugandan, Burundian, and Zimbabwean generals are getting more and more wealthy with the dirty money from the war, the illegal exploitation of Congolese resources and different commissions from arms dealers around the world.

As in the past, the Congo under Kabila is still, by complicity, more governed by International financial agencies and some western countries (such as Belgium and France) than by its political leaders. As Claude Ake (1996:133) wrote, 'everyone can see how agents of international financial institutions take over significant functions of government, approving tariff regimes, decreeing the level of social services, and deciding on subsidies, privatisation, issues of trade, wage levels, the location of industry, the choice of consultants for government projects and so forth'. To date, the Congo is still being used as a field of experimentation for policies to be implemented elsewhere around the Third World by these organisations and governments. Currently, the country has just accepted, under the pressure of the so-called international community, the appointment of four vice-presidents to work alongside with president Kabila. This first world experience of political cohabitation is being experienced in the Congo and all political analysts can forecast its result.

4.2 Health

In the field of health, state expenditures in absolute terms are six times lower

than the Sub-Saharan African average. Few hospitals have been built since 1960, while the number of inhabitants is increasing at a rate of 3,3 percent per year, worsening the health conditions in cities and facilitating the emergence of slums. According to the 1996 survey of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), only 26 percent of inhabitants have access to health service, many families get only one good meal per day and 142 children out of 1 000 births die before the age of 5 (United Nations Children's Fund 2001).

Pharmacies and laboratories in public clinics and hospitals are without any medicine most of the time. Patients going to different hospitals for medical care or operations have to provide everything from medical gloves, laboratory reagents, cotton wool, and sutures to all medicines. In some hospitals, dead bodies rot in mortuaries because of the lack of electricity and freezing facilities. Entire clinics, health centres and hospitals have closed for the lack of medicine, medical equipment and funding as famine, malnutrition, and diseases have reached unbelievable levels. In 1991, a report of the Food and Agriculture Organisation indicated that approximately 44% of the population suffered from malnutrition, a condition in which people take in only half the calories required to provide the energy necessary to sustain their basic metabolism (Schatzberg 1991:41). The current war has worsened the situation and an important number of displaced people are still hiding in the bush without shelter or medical care, most of them dying from treatable and minor illnesses.

According to UNICEF 2001, malnutrition has hit many families severely and a substantial number of young children in Kinshasa are chronically malnourished: their height is systematically less than the height of normal children of the same age and their weight lower than those of normal children of the same age. Malaria, measles, malnutrition, respiratory infections, goitre, typhoid, and other diseases are killing people daily, especially women and children, as health care throughout the country has plummeted. The recent report of the Ministry of Health emphasised the fact that malaria is currently the country's biggest killer. It killed 1,5 million people in the Congo in 2000 and for the same year, people suffering from malaria used 16 percent of beds in hospitals throughout the country (Ministère de la Santé Publique 2001).

4.3 Employment situation

In the field of employment, there have been important job losses as factories have been dismantled and taken away to Uganda or Rwanda. In 1999, the sugar cane factory in Kiliba, the biggest in eastern Congo, was dismantled and transferred to Jinja in Uganda. Many parts of factories in the Office d'Or de Kilomoto (the Congolese national company exploiting gold in the North and the North East) have been dismantled and transferred either to Rwanda or Uganda and their workers have been made redundant. In November 2001, the biggest private employer in the country, MARSAVCO-UNILEVER, had to close several of its factories in the North and end its commercial and administrative activities in Kinshasa, making more than ten thousand workers redundant, as it became impossible for the company to operate because the majority of its plantations and other productive activities were located in the occupied territories.

4.4 Education and literacy

There is no doubt that illiteracy is a great impediment to development. In spite of progress made since 1960 by improving the quality of the education system and increasing the number of intellectuals in the country, the Congo is now facing a miserable situation in the field of education.

A report of the National Teachers' Union notes that, in 2001, the level of non-enrolled children was 33% in cities and 54% in rural areas (Syndicat 2001). With the current civil war, each school or university has its own academic calendar. For many years now, students have had to pay all tuition fees and from 1994, professors have been paid by parents' contribution. The state has stopped paying scholarships to students and parents have to give full financial support to their children if they want them to study. In this situation, the lack of financial means has kept many intelligent students at home.

Increasing illiteracy worsens poverty in the country and actually, many children of school age do not study. Many, especially girls, are sacrificed because people think that they will get married even if they are not educated. When they are enrolled in schools, they face serious sexual harassment and other physical abuse.

4.5 Household consumption

The country's mismanagement, dictatorship, tyranny and wars continue to produce deadly effects for Congolese households. The monthly price index change for consumption was 88% in 1988, 39% in 1989, 26% in 1990, 4 134% in 1991, 2 990% in 1992, 4 652% in 1993 and 6 682% in 1994 (Gamela 1996:119). While different warlords are getting rich, consumer prices are still rising at an annual rate of more than 100% a year. In 1998 they rose at 107%, in 1999 at 207%, and in 2000 at 554% (*Economica* 2001).

Moreover, when the Congolese currency, the Franc Congolais, started to float in May 2001, the gap between the fixed official rate and the parallel rate was 545%, while in June 1998 when the currency was launched, the gap was only 45% (*Le Potentiel* 2001). At the same time, civil servants have remained unpaid for more than six months in cities and for more than 8 months in rural areas. National income per capita has decreased from US\$ 375 in 1956 to US\$ 102 in 1994 while the legal minimum wage decreased from US\$ 100 in 1990 to US\$ 18 in 2001. With this salary, most Congolese can no longer afford even the relatively low fees now required for medical consultation and the first dose of prescribed medicine against malaria.

This financial and income situation has dramatically reduced the level of consumption in the Congo. People struggle only for food and neglect other goods of secondary importance such as clothes, shoes, good housing conditions. Houyoux showed in 1986 (Houyoux 1986) that the proportion of food in the total family budget was 62,1%. The National Institute of Statistics (1985) found 65,3% in 1985, and during my field research in Kinshasa in November 1996, my data showed that the proportion was 63,3% (Iyenda 2001:233-242).

4.6 Human rights abuses

The humanitarian consequences of lootings initiated by a financially driven civil war had had horrific consequences on people in the Eastern Congo. According to the UN, the number of excess deaths directly attributable to the Rwandan and Ugandan occupation since the outbreak of war up to September 2002 had been dramatic. Destroyed farm production had resulted in food insecurity, malnutrition and high mortality rates for the displaced and host populations,

while malnutrition, in turn, had substantially increased the exposure of the population to life-threatening illnesses of all types (United Nations 2002).

In the field of human rights, the civil war has exacerbated the suffering of the Congolese people. Ugandan and Rwandan troops and their rebels allied are still committing grave human rights abuses in the north, the north-east and the east. The Rwandan army used prisoners from its jails and children to contribute to its illegal exploitation of resources by forcing them to mine resources. As Des Forges argued, 'while Ugandan commanders were plundering gold, looting timber, exporting coffee, and controlling illicit trade monopolies in the Ituri district, their troops were killing and otherwise abusing the local population. Absent international pressure, the situation can only get worse' (Des Forges 2001).

The dictatorship that followed after the independence of the Congo was based on political oppression and exploitation. Crimes against humanity were committed by the Mobutu and Kabila tyrannical systems. Up to date, Kabila's regime is still one of the most criminal in Africa. The Congolese army, the FAC (*Forces Armées Congolaises*), often crushes unarmed civilian and student demonstrations. Violence in the country, especially caused by the army, the secret services, and the police, regularly violates human rights. During this war, villages have been burned, people killed, women raped by the Congolese forces with their Angolan allies. Without warrants, soldiers, police officers, and security services repeatedly looted, arrested, tortured and raided civilians, often under the unlawful instruction of a commander. The army and secret services that are specially managed by Kabila's relatives or loyalists help him to perpetuate dictatorship and commit many crimes by keeping people under intimidation and fear. The expression '*le pays est en guerre*' (the country is at war) is used to justify all the atrocities faced by the innocent civilians.

5. The Way Forward

The Congolese crisis, instability and suffering continue as time passes. As said earlier, more than 3,5 millions of Congolese have already perished directly because of the war. Until now, the Congo's resources are still being looted by

occupying forces and by the incompetent and tyrannical government in place in Kinshasa. Killings, rapes, torture and human right violations in the field continue. At this time when many questions are still unanswered about the future of the country, scientific work is needed on its way forward. Although Laurent Kabila brought a fresh hope to the Congolese people when his rebellion overthrew Mobutu's regime and he claimed to be the successor of Patrice Lumumba, he failed to bring democracy in the country. As a Rwandan and Ugandan puppet at the beginning of his regime, Kabila started a new page of Congolese sufferings with a civil war, which is failing to be ended completely.

5.1 Promoting democracy

As the United Nations Development Programme (2002) argued in its 2002 *Human Development Report* on Democracy, 'enjoying political freedoms and participating in the decisions that shape peoples' lives are fundamental human rights: they are part of human development in their own right'. There are evidences around the developed world that democracy is, even in an imperfect state, a better form of governance. In most developed countries, democracy has the power to guarantee the political and civil freedom of different communities in a country, and to allow members of different communities at all levels to participate in the process of decision-making and therefore to improve their ways of life. In a democratic regime, people have the opportunity to press for changes that affect their lives, and the poor are empowered to press for policies that may shape and improve their welfare.

Indeed, the lack of democracy in the DRC has hampered the lift of people from poverty, inequality and social fragmentation. The dictatorship and tyranny have stopped the improvement of social lives and have taken away any hope towards development. Since the early 1970s, the critical importance of democratic governance in the development of the Congo is still highlighted by academics, researchers and development activists. As the country has lost millions of its inhabitants because of the lack of democracy, the Congolese government, the civil society and all national and international development practitioners working in the Congo should spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law throughout the country. The Government should

mainly commit itself to respect all internationally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to welfare and development. These values should be recognised and the Congolese people should be aware of the fact that improving the quality of democratic institutions and processes across their country will lead to peace and stability. They should get involved in managing the changing roles of the state and civil society in an increasingly globalised world. This will underpin national efforts to reduce poverty, sustain the environment, and promote human development and peace.

It is clear that when a democratic regime fails to respond to needs and aspirations of the majority of its people, tension and violence erupt and people may take the law into their own hands. The Congolese government should increase its efforts to address the many dimensions of human development. It should create its own national poverty eradication strategies based on local needs and priorities. Advocacy for nationally designed solutions to fight dictatorship, tyranny, poverty and destitution and promote local solutions by ensuring a greater voice for the poor should be a great concern not only for the government but also for the local people.

5.2 Promoting the protection of civilians and the respect of human rights

The protection of civilians from the devastating effects of armed conflicts was among the cornerstones of the United Nations Charter at its foundation. The spirit of the UN Charter therefore obliges all UN members to protect innocent civilians from any kind of violence from soldiers or armed groups. In addition to this obligation, the DRC has to provide the most vulnerable with access to humanitarian assistance, health services and shelter, and has to restore the rule of law and justice where anarchy and violence dominate.

In the last nine years, the DRC has been ravaged by the most violent conflict in its history, which has claimed the lives of many millions of civilians and left millions of others permanently homeless and in a state of continuous displacement. In its efforts of moving from war to peace, the Congolese government should act responsibly by bearing in mind that it has the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians. It should dedicate greater attention to protecting

civilians than to complying with international obligations. More emphasis should be put on advocating for the respect of rights of children, women, the elderly, the disabled and other vulnerable groups.

In the East and the Northeast of the country, millions of civilians have been expelled from their homes. Most of them are still living in hiding and face a lack of food, medicine and other basic needs, as during the entire conflict, civilians were the primary targets of attack from all the belligerents. To stop the recurrence of these atrocities for good, the Congolese people and their international partners should put more emphasis on the importance of protecting civilians and on the involvement of the civil society in political dialogue between different communities around the country. The civil society should also get involved in actual negotiations about peace and in providing humanitarian assistance to people in need.

5.3 Strengthening accountability, transparency and good governance

Bad governance, corruption and mismanagement are being increasingly regarded as root causes of civil wars and instability in most African countries. Nowadays, scientists and experts from different fields of public life are convinced that the promotion of good governance and the fight against corruption are among the most important reforms to be undertaken in Africa if the continent needs to live in peace.

Indeed, good governance implies many aspects within the political arena of each country. The most important are: participation, accountability, transparency, the rule of law, effectiveness, dialogue and inclusiveness.

In the DRC, more emphasis has to be placed on advocacy for the implementation of the above-mentioned principles, which support good governance. Among these principles, accountability remains a key requirement of good governance. The government, the civil society and the private sector in the DRC must be accountable to the Congolese people. The Congo must also be ruled on the basis of fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. The judicial system needs to be independent, impartial and incorruptible. Decision makers at all levels of power need to be transparent and need to make information freely available and accessible to the majority of people who are affected by their decisions. In countries where good governance, transparency, and

accountability are a reality, it has been proved that transparency, the rule of law, tolerance of minorities and opposition groups and political freedom have acted as the basis of peace and human development.

5.4 Promoting a sound macro-economic environment and social justice structures

As unemployment and poverty are allowing people to be easily recruited to serve in different rebellions, programmes of training and reinsertion of former militias and former soldiers should be organised throughout the country to give a second chance of a better life to these categories of people. The education system for adults should focus on the understanding of human development, social development, rural development and urban development, with special reference to the informal sector, gender and human rights.

To bolster the Congolese development process, fighting unemployment is essential and urgent. A combination of policies will produce better results than a single policy or a single strategy. The Congolese should focus more on the central role of the state in finding appropriate solutions to create jobs, as the state is very important in the process of influencing people's behaviour within groups and communities. The state strategy of employment creation should focus in three main fields: infrastructure building and repairs, support of, collaboration with and renovation of the public sector; support of and cooperation with the private sector; and innovation of the self-employment and the informal sector, including urban agriculture.

At local and municipal level, state action is needed – to allow groups to increase their capacity to participate; to promote efficiency, equity, and welfare; and to support any development action for the benefit of the communities. Through education and civic campaigns, the state has the power to promote cooperation between members to find solutions to problems posed by underdevelopment. My argument follows Sen's (1997:37) position when he pointed out: 'Positive state activities have played quite a considerable part in the historical process of economic development. This applies even to early economic development in Europe and the United States, not to mention the later experiences of Japan, and more recently, east Asia, where the state has very actively assisted industrial development'.

My argument is that if the Congolese need to live in peace, the state still has a central role to play in employment creation and job promotion in the Congo in general. The Congolese government can sensibly put in place different plans and programmes to combat unemployment and create jobs, to update employment laws and rules in favour of workers, to improve security for foreign investors and investments and to fight corruption and mismanagement. Furthermore, at this level, the central state should allow local authorities the collection and management of some types of taxes to deal with the issues concerning employment. Therefore, drawing on local skills and local knowledge, local municipalities should focus their actions on the reinforcement of social capital among people in their process of job creation. Ultimately, employment should be seen as the state's first concern. The central state should share responsibilities of job creation and provision with local municipalities.

6. Conclusion

Almost nine years of civil and brutal war have virtually destroyed the few Congolese infrastructures that remained after thirty two years of mismanagement, corruption of plundering of the country by the Mobutu regime. Health, judicial and educational services, and roads and communication networks have been totally destroyed and the country is facing serious difficulties.

To avoid this kind of situation being repeated, development assistance provided by the United Nations system and other bilateral donors needs to focus on decreasing the key structural risk factors that fuel violent conflict: such as inequity – by addressing disparities among identity groups; inequality – by addressing policies and practices that institutionalise discrimination; justice – by promoting the rule of law, effective and fair law enforcement and administration of justice; and insecurity – by strengthening accountable and transparent governance and human security (United Nations 2001:24).

Throughout this paper, I have highlighted the fact that since the beginning of the civil wars in September 1996, nearly 5 million Congolese people have been driven away from their houses and displaced. Nearly 3,5 million people have been killed and the wars have destroyed what was left of Congo's public

services and infrastructure after 32 years of mismanagement by Mobutu and Kabila I and II – which brought the entire economy that had already collapsed to its knees.

One of the main goals for the return of peace in the DRC is to ensure that civilians return to their homes and continue with their activities and livelihoods. More emphasis has to be placed on advocacy for protecting civilians, consolidating democracy and ensuring prosperity, not only for a few people but also for the majority of the population. As is well known, a sound macro-economic environment, a democratic and political regime, and a social scheme can provide structural stability in a post-war era. A sustainable economy and political system, a democratic regime which respect human rights, and viable social structures, should be goals for anyone who wants to establish peace in the Congo and make it a better place to live. The challenges facing the Congolese are numerous and complex. At the same time, however, the country has much potential and opportunities for growth and development.

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