Conflict Factsheet

Conflict over the Kiywebe water scheme in western Uganda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of conflict</th>
<th>Intensity</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Locality</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>–ongoing</td>
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Available Resources

Water

Conflict Summary

The Kasese district in Western Uganda is characterized by a long history of armed conflict between ethnic groups and tensions over limited resources. With water scarcity and accessibility increasingly strained due to a growing population and climatic changes, government and third party organizations are working to ease tensions over and improve access to safe and clean water in a conflict-sensitive manner. One example of where these actions are being implemented is in the Kasese sub-counties, Mahango and Rukoki.
Conflict History

Kasese, a district in Western Uganda that shares a border with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), has a long history of armed conflict and displacement stemming from tensions between ethnic groups vying for self-governance. Tensions peaked in the 1960s, when the Bakonzo ethnic group felt marginalized and underrepresented by the Batoro-dominated Toro kingdom. From the Bakonzo's resentment emerged the Rwenzururu Movement, which instigated a period of violent conflict that displaced many and eventually led to the division of the region into five districts along ethnic lines, one of which became Kasese. Despite the creation of smaller districts, the region remains divided, and tensions over access to resources persist; activities by external development actors sometimes inadvertently aggravate these divisions (Harris, 2008).

Water in Kasese

Only one third of Kasese is legally habitable, since over 60% of land is taken up by conservation and government projects (Harris, 2008). Currently, 60% of the district has access to safe and clean water, but access ranges, for example, from 36% in the Kitswamba sub-county to 95% in the Lhandiro sub-county (World Resources Institute, 2016). A growing population, coupled with climate-related events such as extreme weather patterns, and floods, have exacerbated the already strained resource (Harris, 2008; Nuwagaba & Namateefu, 2013). In 2013, Kasese was among a handful of districts that reported rainfall below their long term annual averages (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2014). In Uganda, recent climatic trends show decreased average annual rainfall and increased annual temperature; however, future climatic projections are uncertain since changes are often affected by the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (UNDP, 2006).

While many development actors in the district, including the Kasese District Government (KDLG), NGOs and INGOs, have recognized the need for more water points, “demand far outstrips delivery”. Limited KDLG resources means that prioritization of those in needs is often interpreted as favouring socio-cultural ties, a viewpoint which has damaged many minority ethnic groups’ perception of the KDLG (Harris, 2008).

Furthermore, the implementation of water schemes can fuel conflict ranging from issues related to the location of the tap stands to the demands from farmers for compensation concerning the destruction of crops caused by the construction of taps on their land or by the increased number of people who must cross their land to access the taps (Harris, 2008).

Water Conflict plays out in Kasese Sub-counties

While conflicts over access to water are widespread in Kasese, a more specific example of this tension is apparent in the case of the Kasese sub-counties, Mahango and Rukoki, which have had a history of strained water accessibility. The people of Rukoki sub-county experience serious difficulties in water access and are forced to travel up the mountain to the Mahango sub-county to collect water from a few already-strained sources (Harris, 2008).

Frequent disputes occur at the source of the water points between communities from Rukoki and Mahango over who should have first access to the water. Both communities also complain about poor sanitation and hygiene around water points and often fight with landowners, commonly resulting in the
destruction of those farmers’ crops. Competition and conflict over scarce water is exacerbated during dry seasons when rivers and springs run dry (Harris, 2008).

**The Kiywebe Scheme**

In the Rukoki and Mahango communities, the KDLG District Water Office (DWO), along with Saferworld, CECORE and REDROC developed the Kiywebe scheme, a gravity flow scheme (GFS) for the Rukoki and Mahango communities, which will connect approximately 10,000 people with water (Harris, 2008). While plans for the scheme were undertaken along with participation of numerous actors, the process has not been easy.

Some of the most common conflict issues with the project included relationships between communities and those communities’ trust in local government. The first proposal for the water scheme was designed to transport water from Mahango to Rukoki; however, the Mahango community felt the scheme only benefitted the Rukoki community, causing tensions between the two groups to heighten. To soothe tensions, the DWO determined that both communities should benefit from the scheme and sent the proposed project back under review (Harris, 2008).

**Resolution Efforts**

Conflicts like those listed above demonstrate the criticality of understanding and formulating conflict-sensitive solutions for areas like Kasese through processes of participation, conflict analysis, planning, feedback, communication, transparency and correction of mistakes; and also the importance of maintaining this conflict-sensitivity moving forward.

Issues arising from the planning stage, including consultations and conflict-analyses, showed that communication was crucial for avoiding conflict (Harris, 2008). When it was decided that the project would be implemented in two phases over a longer period of time due to financial constraints, both REDROC and the DWO learned that informing the beneficiary communities of these plans would greatly reduce tensions. By striving to fit in as many community consultations as possible, REDROC and the DWO were able to effectively communicate with the communities and address potential issues before they escalate into conflict (ibid).

Moreover, REDROC and the DWO worked on fostering a positive relationship between the surveying and construction companies, and beneficiary community members. This allowed residents to voice their concerns, which helped the DWO to anticipate and ease tensions before conflict occurred (ibid).

Finally, although issues were identified at the beginning of the project and efforts were undertaken to avoid conflict, it was still critical that the project was monitored throughout its implementation. Follow-up meetings were conducted between groups so that all actors understood the status of the project and could continue to voice any concerns they had (ibid).

**Conflict-sensitivity at the District Level**

Though this case happened at the sub-county level, actions have also been made to increase conflict-sensitivity at the district level. Activities such as trainings, awareness-raising, policy dialogue meetings with district authorities and experience sharing were carried out in order to inform various Ugandan districts how to implement and advocate for conflict-sensitive development. These efforts have also
worked to educate and prompt a range of civil society organisations to integrate conflict sensitivity into their work (ibid).

**Outlook**

Overall, implementing conflict-sensitivity in Kasese produced benefits such as higher beneficiary participation, increased understanding of the project by outsiders and increased responsibility felt by service providers to understand potential impacts of their actions, to name a few. These benefits observed in Kasese have provided a better understanding of the best methods of approaching conflict-sensitive development; however, it is also important to consider the different levels and types of conflict, since places with more tension could potentially be aggravated much more easily (ibid).

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**Intensities & Influences**

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<tr>
<th>Intensities</th>
<th>Influences</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Environmental Influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Societal Influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Violent Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
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**Resolution Success**

- International / Geopolitical Intensity
- Human Suffering

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Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

**Dialogue**
Policy dialogue meetings with district authorities and experience sharing were carried out in order to inform various Ugandan districts how to implement and advocate for conflict-sensitive development. These efforts have also worked to educate and prompt a range of civil society organisations to integrate conflict sensitivity into their work.

**Social inclusion & empowerment**
Integrating all stakeholders in the processes of participation, along with conflict analysis, planning, feedback, communication, transparency and correction of mistakes helped establish a peaceful initiative and promote trust in the implementing organisations.

Resources and Materials

References with URL

Further information
https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/conflict-over-kiywebe-water-scheme-western-uganda