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Indigenous Peoples Rights and Culture in The Republic of Congo

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EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE DIGNI PROJECT: 10697 "INDIGENOUS PEOPLES RIGHTS AND CULTURE IN THE REPUBLIC OF CONGO" (DCPA)

APPROVED BY DIGNI FOR THE PERIOD 2018-2022, SECOND PROJECT PERIOD

Commission by
Digni member, the Mission Covenant Church of Norway (MCCN)
And
Implementing partner, the Evangelical Church of Congo (EEC)

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1 Summary of major conclusions

1.1 Impact

DCPA has been a holistic and ambitious project, and has certainly had impact. The most important change over the course of the project has been the widespread knowledge and acceptance of the laws protecting the rights of indigenous people, and the general support of the law and the intentions behind the law by indigenous people and bantu, and by duty-bearers and leaders.

It has resulted in improvements in access to social spaces and key services. The extent to which impact has translated into changes in the lives of the majority of ordinary people is more difficult to ascertain – and whether there is access and uptake of services, justice, land and livelihoods may be a longer term goal.

1.2 Effectiveness: What worked? What has not yet worked?

In summary, the most important successes have been:

- **Sensitisation and training of duty-bearers,** their shifts in attitudes, strong commitment to rights of indigenous people, and support to implementation of the law.
- **Increased knowledge and rights-awareness, self-esteem among rights-holders,** including increased ability and confidence of indigenous people to articulate and claim their rights.
- **Increased documentation** and better care of birth certificates has been successful to some extent. There has been an increase in the number of people with birth certificates, and the number who are aware of their importance and take care of them.

Limits to effectiveness:

- **Uptake of services and shifts in attitudes of service providers and community members:** While structural discrimination is largely removed (e.g. separate facilities, waiting rooms, entrances for indigenous people), attitudes of racism take longer to erode. There has been progress and increased awareness. Violence, contempt and open insults of indigenous people have reduced in project areas. Prejudice is deeply embedded, however, and indigenous people are still exposed to racism, bullying in schools, and less prioritisation in service provision.
- **Gender-based violence,** both violence perpetrated by bantu targeting indigenous women, and within indigenous communities, has reduced in some areas to some extent, but remains a major problem.
- **Education and use of health facilities** have increased, and some of the structural barriers and discrimination have reduced - but use of these services remains a low priority for indigenous communities and a poor cultural fit. There has been little or no real adaptation of the services to proactively meet the needs of indigenous people.
- **Protection of culture,** has been difficult. The balance between addressing discrimination and enabling inclusion of indigenous peoples in mainstream society, while also enabling traditional life-styles, knowledge, skills and practices to be expressed, does have some contradiction. Christian evangelism, and its demands on ceasing many cultural practices, has contributed to these losses.
- **Policy acceptance and implementation by EEC,** which one would have expected to be a foundation for the promotion and ownership of the project goals by the EEC as 'owner'. The policy has not been reviewed or approve by the top EEC-leadership, despite consultations on local level. At the same time, local churches are among the drivers of exclusion and discrimination.

1.3 Efficiency

- **A need to strengthen financial systems** was suggested in a qualified independent audit report, as well as being raised by respondents. It would be helpful to undertake a more detailed review focusing on financial systems and risks of mismanagement, in order to highlight specific capacity needs to assist CTPAD in planning and costing, financial management, and transparent financial accountability.
- **Organisational fractures** are deep as a result of the growing mistrust, weak management and communication, loss of team cohesion, lack of routine planning, and subtle undermining across many of the relationships in the team. Systems that were previously in place to ensure collective planning and reflection, short and long term workplans and feedback processes, have been discontinued. The spaces in which organisational coherence, team building and mutual respect where upheld have been eroded. Following clarification of the financial processes, trust can begin to rebuild, and the structures which enabled transparently, shared ownership and communication can be re-established.

1.4 Sustainability

- Some of the major achievement of the project are sustainable – the widespread awareness of legal rights is well-established, and is likely to grow with activism from within indigenous people's communities. The foundation of an accessible, translated legal framework has been an important contribution of the project, and is likely to be a resource for activists into the future.
- The training and sensitisation of village leadership and municipal managers has contributed to their already high levels of commitment and enthusiasm to implement legal and social justice. Local leaders were at the forefront of social change. For as long as these individuals are part of local leadership, their philosophies and commitment to rights should be sustained.
- Platforms for mediation and raising rights infringements were developed by the project, processes were tested, and skills raised. The role of holding these mediation spaces may transfer to government, but the principles, awareness, some of the processes and the expectations developed by the project should continue through any form or structure with this function.

Less sustainable outcomes:

- Where sensitisation did not deeply affect the attitudes of service providers - such as (seemingly) in some of the schools and health centres - only superficial, legislated physical changes will take place, and exclusion through underlying racist attitudes will prevent real transformation or healing.
- Government has had the will, but not the financial means to disseminate and promote the law. The project has been an important partner. The basic costs of transport, refreshments and venues necessary for even a low level of outreach and awareness raising are beyond government budgets, and much of the work will not continue without donor financing.
- While income generating activities (IGA) have increased earnings for many households, the legal framework means that few indigenous people have land tenure or own their means of production. Even with access to land, reliance on immediate income prevents people from managing the longer-term seasonal cycles. Where owners have power over income and labour expectations, exploitation is always a risk. Legislation aimed to redressing land and forest access, usufructuary rights, and legal tenure that enables traditional and modern options for income would be part of more sustainable livelihoods.

1.5 What to focus on in the next phase?

- The direct responsibility of the EEC is achievable and urgent. It involves the adoption and implementation of the EEC policy for indigenous people within the church. A similar model of structures, accountability, sensitisation and training to the EEC GBV project could be deployed. Training on the law should begin with pasters and be expanded throughout parishes. In addition to

legal rights, work with racist attitudes, community healing processes, facilitated community dialogue, can take place through the churches. The tensions between evangelism and working for human rights and tolerance of diversity would need to be resolved, and a multi-tiered approach which respects both indigenous Christians and indigenous non-Christians will be an area for reflection and internal work for the EEC.

- The organisational capacity regrouping for CTPAD should be the priority for at least a year. Following a thorough systems and capacity review, future programming should be considered only after CTPA has demonstrated improvements to financial and management systems, which meet a set of agreed minimum standards.
- After an estimated year of organisational recovery, a strategic planning process is suggested. It could draw on this evaluation and an updated situation analysis; but more importantly, it should be based on a strongly participatory process of problem identification and locally-inspired solutions. Having created a foundation, a more participatory design based on community dialogue, a next phase of support to indigenous people's rights and access would be a valuable contribution.

2 Introduction

This report presents the results of an independent evaluation of the outcomes and organisational elements of the Project: "Indigenous Peoples Rights and Culture in the Republic Of Congo" (DCPA)". The project fall under the Eglise Evangélique du Congo (EEC), and has been managed by CTPAD. It was approved by Digni for funding 2018-2022 as a second project period, under the oversight of Mission Covenant Church of Norway (MCCN). This evaluation is in accordance with the Digni requirement that all Digni-funded projects conduct an external evaluation at the end of each five-year project period.

2.1 National and international declarations underpinning the DCPA

Article 2 in the 05-2011 Law on the Promotion and Protection of Indigenous Peoples' Rights [1] in the Republic of Congo states that "*The indigenous populations, in groups or as individuals, are free, equal before the law and dignity as all other citizens of the country. All forms of discriminations against the indigenous populations based on their social origin or indigenous identity are prohibited in conformity with laws in force.*" The DCPA is guided both by national legislation, and also by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) of 2007 [2].

Some key UNDRIP principles include:

- all doctrines, policies and practices based on or advocating superiority of peoples or individuals on the basis of national origin or racial, religious, ethnic or cultural differences are racist, scientifically false, legally invalid, morally condemnable and socially unjust;
- indigenous peoples, in the exercise of their rights, should be free from discrimination of any kind;
- indigenous peoples have suffered from historic injustices as a result of, inter alia, their colonisation and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, thus preventing them from exercising, in particular, their right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests;
- the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of indigenous peoples which derive from their political, economic and social structures and from their cultures, spiritual traditions, histories and philosophies, especially their rights to their lands, territories and resources;
- indigenous peoples are organizing themselves for political, economic, social and cultural enhancement and in order to bring to an end all forms of discrimination and oppression wherever they occur.

[1] Republic of Congo. 2011. Act No. 5-2011 of 25 February 2011. On the Promotion and Protection of Indigenous Populations. https://www.iwgia.org/images/newsarchivefiles/0368_Congolese_Legislation_on_Indigenous_Peoples.pdf

[2] United Nations. 2007. 61/295. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

The progress in recognizing indigenous peoples' rights in African countries and in adopting and enforcing relevant national legislations has been slow. Many African states are reluctant to ratify the UNDRIP and strongly promote the rights of indigenous peoples. For example, only one African country (Central African Republic) features among the 24 signatories of the International Labour Organisation's Convention No 169 (Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention of 1989) [3], one of the most important binding instrument for indigenous people's rights. In this context, the two Congo basin countries have been exceptional in their progress. After a decade of advocacy activities conducted by indigenous peoples' organisations and their supporters, the DRC promulgated its law on protection and promotion of rights of indigenous people in July 2022 [4]. Republic of Congo passed its legislation for indigenous people's rights in 2011, followed by regulations in 2019. Republic of Congo is clearly and leader in the indigenous people's rights movement, and provides an enabling environment for development of national programming to embed the intentions behind the legalisation into the hearts, minds and practices of local services and communities.

3 The project

3.1 Overall development goal

The overall goal of the DCPA is:

> *"Indigenous people live in good coexistence with the bantu people, and their rights and culture are promoted and protected."*

3.2 Objectives

The project has specifically aimed to achieve the following outcomes:

Outcome 1: Indigenous people claim their rights.

Outcome 2: 75% of indigenous people in project locations have easy access to basic social services and civil rights.

Outcome 3: Violence against indigenous women is being fought in the project areas.

Outcome 4: Mechanisms to protect the rights of indigenous peoples and conflict resolution systems between indigenous people and bantu people are functioning and performing well.

Outcome 5: Bantu populations in the project areas promote the rights of indigenous peoples.

Outcome 6: The Documentation and Information Center for Indigenous Peoples actively works as an asset in strengthening indigenous culture and identity.

Outcome 7: Income-generating activities (IGAs) adapted to the culture and traditions of indigenous peoples and which affect their standard of living.

Outcome 8: The Evangelical Church of Congo (EEC) actively works to promote the rights of indigenous peoples in the church and society.

Outcome 9: RENAPAC (National Network of Indigenous Peoples) is strengthened in promoting the rights of indigenous peoples.

Routine monitoring, internal and external evaluation all follow the structure of these outcomes.

[3] International Labour Organisation. 1991. Ratifications of C169 - Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11300:0::NO:11300:P11300_INSTRUMENT_ID:312314

[4] Democratic Republic of Congo. 2022. Law n° 22/30 of July 15, 2022 on the protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous Pygmy peoples. https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/fr/c/LEX-FAOC213451/

3.3 Activities

The following main activities have contributed to these results in the last 5 years, across all project locations:

Establishment of local structures to lead, communicate, monitor and mediate on promotion of the rights of indigenous people:

- **Two Watch Cells and twelve Mediation Groups** established to help resolve conflicts between indigenous people and bantu community members. According to the final technical report, Watch Cells have documented twelve formally resolved cases over the last five years, with another three resolved by friends or mediators. Watch Cells were replaced by government appointed Departmental Directors for the Promotion of Indigenous Peoples' Rights in 2021, but the relationships built up between the team and the monitoring cell leaders continued until the end of the project.
- A total of 72 **other local project structures** or organisations in twelve villages across the three districts, six in each village:
    - Relais / Relays
    - Mothers' council
    - Leaders
    - Mediators
    - IGA Group
    - Culture group
- Communities have appointed 81 leaders (37% women)
- Each of the groups and leaders has been trained in rights promotion, as well as its specific function.

Training and sensitisation on indigenous peoples' rights and non-discrimination principles:

- 223 Indigenous people trained and organised (33% women).
- 188 Bantu (17% women) received training on indigenous peoples' rights including relais, Ntouérés, neighbourhood chiefs, teachers, health workers.
- 343 Bantu people in positions of power have been sensitised on the rights of indigenous peoples, including neighbourhood and village chiefs, police force, general administration)
- 171 Health workers trained on indigenous peoples' rights and non-discrimination principles.
- 38 Teachers trained on indigenous peoples' rights and non-discrimination principles, and 176 teachers sensitised.

Training and sensitisation on women's rights and gender-based violence in all villages:

- 1498 Indigenous people (43% women) and 175 bantu (45% women) sensitised on women's rights and gender-based violence in all villages
- 54 Indigenous women trained as trainers.

Rights advocacy campaigns: 37 Advocacy campaigns on the rights of indigenous peoples conducted at local level across all project locations.

Access to services: Support to indigenous people to obtain their national identity card.

Income generation activities supported: A survey found that of the 161 households surveyed which have participated in with DCPA income-generating activity (IGA), 79% of households have gained some income, and 37% had collected small savings.

Policy development and implementation by the EEC on indigenous peoples' rights: The "EEC Policy on Indigenous Peoples' Rights" was drafted and reviewed by pastors and evangelists of the project areas, CTPAD and EEC scholars. An action plan was developed to support policy implementation. These documents were submitted to EEC in early 2021, but have not yet been adopted. Further involvement, training or sensitisation in the EEC was therefore not achieved.

Promotion and preservation of ancestral traditions

- A total of 24 groups: twelve traditional practitioners and twelve traditional dance groups were supported under the DCPA. Interventions included support to traditional medicine open days, to the organisation of groups of traditional healers in each locality, and to traditional dance performances.
- Resource centre established, which was mainly used for events, training and meetings.
- Studies conducted and reports compiled on a wide range of topics [5] related to indigenous culture.

Engagement and participation with networks and partners working in the indigenous peoples' movement: A partnership agreement was signed between CTPAD and REPALEAC, followed by informal engagement and project visits. A relationship was also developed with REPANAC, which some informants state is more strongly linked to government. These relationships are not without tensions, both internally in the networks, and in terms of which network is preferred by different project team members.

Surveys carried out in the 7 first round localities to establish whether people were able to give an account of the law 5-2011, whether conditions have changed for them, and whether they had been involved in DCPA IGAs, for example.

4 The external evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide an independent impression of the value and results of the interventions and investments, in order to learn from experience and inform the future work of Digni, MCCN, and CTPAD/EEC.

4.1 Evaluation methods

4.1.1 Document review

The evaluation follows on from the internal final reports – both narrative and technical, where the project team has shared insights and results from the work of the last few years. The organisational section of this report also cites the audit report. Correspondence, annual plans and budgets were reviewed as background. The full list of internal documents reviewed is found in Annex 1.

4.1.2 Field visit

The evaluation used an inclusive and participatory approach, facilitating conversations among participants, and with project team members and staff, and with project participants (both duty-bearers and rights-holders).

The findings are based largely on interviews, focus groups, informal discussions and observations during a field visit to Republic of Congo in January 2023. The field trip was well-planned, and well-organised, and all

[5] Proverbs of the Tsuas of the Ngo, Gamboma and Djambala districts; Law 5-2011 translated into Kitsua of Ngo, Gamboma, Djambala; Founding myth (origin of the Tsuas); Traditional medicine; Food and/or culinary arts; Prohibitions of all kinds; Sacred spaces; Marriage; Relatives; Relationship to money; Gender policy; Education methods; Mbongi (User-friendly spaces); Relationship to death; Succession and widowhood; Procedures for acquiring and transferring power; Dances; Dispute resolution; Sexuality; Witchcraft.

destinations were reached without incident. Focus groups and interviews took place as planned, and the engagement was satisfying and informative.

One of the challenges to the field work was a lack of agreement among the programme team, and a sense of conflict and mistrust between them. Project team members held different personal positions, and attempted to persuade the evaluator to share their views. Triangulation was difficult, requiring probing and cross-questioning, since many of the respondents found it difficult to be objective or to give a balanced view.

Despite the underlying currents, the atmosphere on the trip was amicable, professional and pleasant.

4.1.3 Areas included in the evaluation

The visit began in Brazzaville, followed by a field visit to three village in the Department Le Plateau (Figure 1). These included the village of Nsah; Djambala, the capital of the department; and a debriefing with the team in Gamboma.

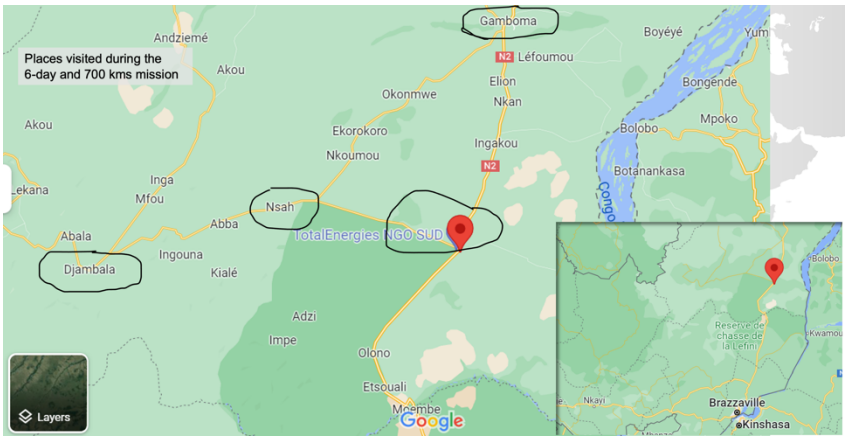


Figure 1: Areas visited during the 6-day field trip

4.1.4 Interviews

A total of 10 interviews are listed below.

Individual interviews with members of the EEC, project team and independent key informants were all confidential, and people were encouraged to speak freely. The conversations were rich and many insights surfaced, both to do with organisational concerns, and the outcomes of the project.

	Total	Indigenous People	Women	Respondents
EEC Leadership	2	0	0	GONARD, Bakoua Juste Alain - President ELENGA Guy Loko - Vice President
CTPAD	3	0	3	NKOUNKOU, Stévie - Interim coordinator MITOLO, Magalie - Secretary OSSETE, Prisca – Finance and logistics
EXECUTIVE TEAM (ET)	5	2	1	NGOMA, Jean-Marie MALANDA, Jean- Bruno, NGUIE, Marleine MASSIKA, Alain NGAMPIO, Alfred
LOCAL TEAM (L'equippe Departemental) (LT)	2	2	0	MIAMIE, Ferdinand - Departemental team leader MAVOUANDA, Rufin
Independent key informants (KI)	3	0	0	Government :- OMOMBI, Aloyse - Sous-Prefet ONGAMA, Victor - Directeur de la Promotion et de la Protection des Peuples Autochtones DIHOUKAMBA, Parfait - REPALEAC
TOTAL INTERVIEWED	**15**	**4**	**4**	

4.1.5 Focus Groups

A total of four focus groups were held, involving 44 people. Informal discussions were also held during a visit was also undertaken to the Resource Centre, as well as in the course of the road trip.

Place	Total	Indigenous People	Women
Nsah	12	4	6
Ngo	6	6	1
Ngoulayo	8	8	2
Bene Gamboma	28	15	11
TOTAL	**44**	**28**	**20**

Focus group typically lasted about an hour, started with introductions, explaining the purpose of the evaluation and an invitation to speak freely about project implementation, strengths and weaknesses, along with examples to illustrate. All relevant aspects and objectives of the project were discussed, and different views heard and recorded. Additional questions and probes were used to dig deeper into reasons and arguments for opinions, always without judgements or criticism. There were mixed groups as well as separate groups of bantu and indigenous people. Different people helped out with translation, sometimes project members since it was difficult to find external people with the right language skills.

The group travelling together, comprising local team members, CTPAD Coordinator, translator and the evaluator.

A focus group of eight indigenous people in Ngoulaya quarter in Djambala town, including Charles, the young village chief in blue jacket who was head of the IGA a traditional healer and captain of a mixed football team.

"The project started very late in 2020. Sensitisation has started but not enough to have a real impact. We have seen some improvements in the relations between bantu and indigenous people. It is not generalised, but a beginning."

A large focus group in Béne Gamboma which ended up with 28 participants (only half of them visible in the photo). A lively discussion, partly contradicting opinions and quite a challenge to hear as many voices as possible. The fact that bantu and indigenous people were sitting together and discussing community issues and shared experiences over the past few years on equal terms is in itself a remarkable result of the project activities

4.1.6 Analysis

The analysis uses two primary lenses: the OECD DAC [6] criteria; and the Digni Empowerment Assessment Tool (EAT).

OECD DAC

The evaluation has focused on the following globally recognised evaluation criteria:

Impact – The opening section on the Development Objective is concerned with Impact

Effectiveness – The findings section is primarily focused on effectiveness, and is divided according to the project objectives

Relevance – A lens on evidence that the project aligned with the interests, priorities and needs of participants

Sustainability – A discussion on sustainability will summarise any observations on this topic .

Efficiency – A section reflecting on organisational processes will highlight these results

Digni's Empowerment Assessment Tool (EAT)

The Digni's Empowerment Assessment Tool (EAT) is a project outcomes and impact assessment tool, which is used to reflect the degree to which target groups are empowered to live a life in dignity. This includes the degree of empowerment (from output to impact) along with the level of change (individual, community, or society levels) (Annex 2).

The thematic areas to be assessed using the EAT in this project were: Civil Society, Peaceful Coexistence and Gender Equality.

4.2 Limitations

Distance and time constraints meant that only the most accessible and convenient district and villages could be visited. The villages were also selected by the programme team, and are likely to present the best cases and relationships of the project. The evaluation is therefore likely to have a positive bias.

Team disagreements increased the time needed to cross-reference findings, probe for further detail, and separate facts from opinion, or perceptions driven by personal differences.

5 Findings and recommendations

5.1 The context and how it affected outcomes

Racist attitudes, as in many societies, are entrenched and conditioned among bantu people; along with conditioning for a sense of inferiority being part of indigenous people's experience. In addition nomadic peoples and forest dwellers have historically been disenfranchised, and continue to be marginalised in multiple ways.

The level of racism in Republic of Congo is extreme, and even proved to be a practical challenge to project management

[6] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm

"There was the problem in the beginning to find hotel that would accept indigenous people. They were not accepted in restaurants at the time." (ET)

Another point made is that working for indigenous people's rights, and with indigenous communities, is not easy. The challenges that projects aim to address are profound and pervasive, and even small gains should be celebrated. There are major gulfs in trust and culture, mutual expectations and priorities.

"There have been so many projects with the indigenous people. They have never had any impact. We translated the law 05-2011. It is now, thanks to the project that they are meeting and eating together." (ET)

5.2 IMPACT

PROJECT OVERALL DEVELOPMENT GOAL:
Indigenous peoples live in good coexistence with bantu people, and their rights and culture are promoted and protected.

Extreme levels of racism gradually reducing

Impact refers to achievement of the overall goal of a programme – where sustained and meaningful change is seen in the lives of people, and in their communities. In a case where racism, discrimination and marginalisation are so extreme, even small shifts and achievement of some of the most basic rights and humanity are progress. The fact that progress is seen when indigenous people not being beaten for riding a bicycle, being permitted to touch produce in the market place, or having a chair to sit on at school, highlights just how extreme racism has been, and continues to be in most areas of the region. Activism and education against discrimination and racism will be needed in these communities for many years to come.

"In schools, indigenous children were put in the back before. Now they get real seats." (ET)

"In the markets indigenous people are treated correctly. Before they could not touch anything because nobody then wanted to buy it. … In the restaurants there were plates and glasses marked "P" for the pygmees - dirty. This is gone." (ET)

"Before the project, when an indigenous person went to the village, they gave them water in a separate bottle, but now we get it in normal glasses. We have no problem living together." (FGD)

Reduction in violence against indigenous people

With communication of the law, violence against indigenous people is now known to be illegal, and carries consequences. Attacks are therefore much less than before the project, and much lower in project areas than elsewhere.

"Before an indigenous person could not enter a village on his bike. Both the indigenous person and the bike would be beaten. Now they can cross the village riding their bike. In other villages, outside the project, it is still not possible. (FGD) (another informant confirmed this, saying that being beaten to death for cycling rather than walking was not unknown.) (ET)

Pockets of community cohesion and respect

There has certainly been progress in this regard, and there are now more pockets of real community cohesion, mutual respect and friendship.

"People know and claim their rights. Bantus now see the indigenous people differently. They have improved their relations towards indigenous people; they drink together, and play football together." (ET)

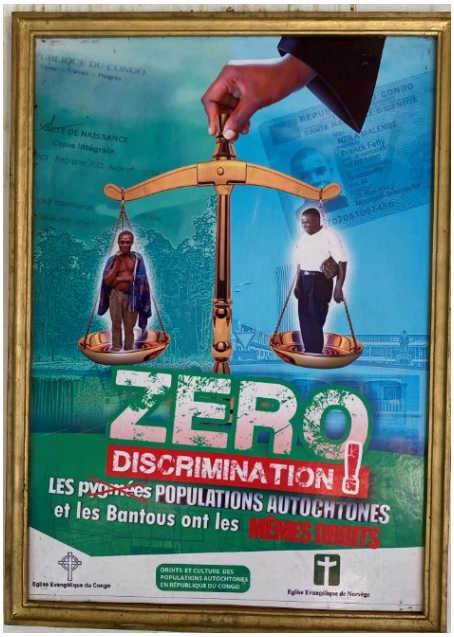
"We are now together - indigenous people and bantu. That did not happen before. We live together, eat and drink together."

Removal of structural discrimination

Structural changes, such as dismantling the local rules for unequal and discriminatory access to facilities and spaces, prohibiting exploitation and hate-speech, and enabling both indigenous people and bantu allies to know and demand equal rights has produced impact in terms of indigenous people's use of shared spaces and services.

Addressing labour exploitation

In one example: *"Mr A had 20-30 indigenous people exploited like his slaves for manual labour, inherited from his father. He publicly announced that this is ending and from now on we are all treated equally. This is a direct result of the project." (KI)*



Behaviour and attitude change among bantu people towards indigenous people

While legislation against is critical, it can take generations to shift the deeply held beliefs and attitudes that uphold racism – both among indigenous people and bantu. Without this, there are likely to be tensions in co-existence and cross-cultural differences.

With relatively few bantu people and communities being reached, attitude change among general bantu society is unlikely to have changed.

"There are still bantu who don't consider indigenous people as full human beings." (FGD)

5.3 EFFECTIVENESS: Outcomes against the specific objectives

5.3.1 SO 1: Helping indigenous people claim their rights under Law 05-2011

Specific objective 1: Indigenous people claim their rights.

DCPA was well-timed and highly relevant for the Republic of Congo. The country has been a leading nation in the African movement for the rights of indigenous people, and is one of only two countries to ratify and domesticate UNDRIP. In the villages where it has operated, the project has been extremely valuable in helping to disseminate the law to duty-bearers and rights-holders, and the outcomes in this theme have been excellent.

Effective approaches

Translation and distribution of the indigenous people's protection law

The project was largely based on dissemination and support to implementing of the 05-2011 law for protection of indigenous people's rights [7]. The law has been translated into Kitwa, the language most widely spoken by indigenous people in these departments. It has been produced in print form, and widely disseminated.

[7] Republic of Congo. 2011. Act No. 5-2011 of 25 February 2011. On the Promotion and Protection of Indigenous Populations. https://www.iwgia.org/images/newsarchivefiles/0368_Congolese_Legislation_on_Indigenous_Peoples.pdf

Training Community Outreach people - Relais

The project trained local resource people, Relais or Relays, on different topics. They have supported the Executive Team to coordinate and organise in communities, and have gone to communities that the team cannot reach, providing a cultural and language link with participants, local leaders and structures. The system of local institutional arrangements and structures, which are financed by the project, and which have a clear role in delivering the objectives is effective.

Market-place public awareness raising

The project used a market-place approach – entering into public spaces with mixed-ethnicity, deploying peer groups as lay-educators, providing information, distributing booklets on the law, and answering questions in public spaces.

This has been highly successful, and is a relevant and accessible form of communication – reaching large numbers of people, who in turn become interested and seek their own information and knowledge on the ideas shared.

Covering participation costs

A very practical, but essential investment is project costs of travel for coordinators and meeting costs for participants. While participation has benefits, people may have to take time from their work and fields, and are very likely to need a refreshment to remain engaged.

> *"We (relais) will continue and move far away if we can find transport funding (they talk about villages 30-40 kms away). There had to be a small snack like a fish, a cigarette or something else to encourage those who come. If you invite indigenous people for a full day you have to give them something to encourage that they stay away from the field." (FGD)*

Outcomes

Indigenous people demanding legal rights

Indigenous people are seen to engage with, carry copies of, refer to and demand application of the law. Awareness is high, and many indigenous people have a far stronger sense of expecting and demanding rights, with legal backing. This has enhanced indigenous people's advocacy for their own and their community's rights. For some people, this has led to changes in how they present themselves and in how they are perceived.

> *"They had internalised the idea of inferiority. There are even people who walk around with a copy of the law to show bantu people that harass them. They claim their rights increasingly. Indigenous people's general approach has changed - how they dress and behave. They are not harassed in the street in the same way." (ET)*

Bantu acknowledging and respecting indigenous people

Although the project worked with a focus on indigenous people, and did not do much outreach or public awareness raising in majority bantu areas, the news of the law has spread. Mass media, government officials, project leaders and indigenous people have helped to inform bantu people, and there have been shifts in attitudes and behaviour. These changes are gradual, and naturally uneven, but the protection of the law has been one of the most powerful interventions for indigenous people's rights and safety.

> *"Most bantu in Djambala know that indigenous people have rights that have to be respected. People now understand that there are consequences if you mistreat an indigenous person. In one case a bantu was upset because an indigenous person came in front of them to smoke. He*

told him not to come in front of them. He took a broken bottle and struck the person. The police arrested the man, but the police knew the aggressor, and they set the man free. But this has created a precedent, and these things don't happen anymore." (KI)

Challenges

The project offered patience and persistence in the face of scepticism and reluctance among indigenous people, who tend to be suspicious of engagement.

> *"When I arrived for a session – the indigenous people wanted to see what the people or project brought them. If there was nothing they left right away. The project kept working, gained their confidence and now they come for discussions and sessions. The project team has visited regularly and done a great work in awareness-raising. They brought some snacks to motivate them and now they come willingly since they also know there will be something for them." (KI)*

Recommendations

i) Following an organisational focus during Year One of the next project period, Year Two should expand the roll-out of the market-place approach using mixed-ethnicity, peer-led lay-educators, to stimulate discussions, share information, and identify people in need of legal advice and support.
ii) Also extend the awareness-raising and conversations about race to majority bantu communities.

5.3.2 SO 2: Basic social services: Documentation, education, health

Specific objective 2: 75% of indigenous people in project locations have easy access to basic social services and civil rights.

Approach

Wording of the objective

The use of a percentage target strongly conveys the intent of the programme, but is not clear without a very clear denominator. For example, does it mean that 75% of the full indigenous population of an area has access to all basic social services (e.g. schools, health facilities, ID providers, municipal services, police, justice, etc), if an indigenous person needs this service? Or does it mean that out of the indigenous people who feel they need the service, 75% find that they have access. Or, as it seems to have been used in the project – 75% of all indigenous people of school age are at school; 75% have birth certificates and IDs; and 75% use formal state health facilities if they are ill or giving birth, although the level of illness is not clear.

In addition to the difficulty of a clear target, measuring against this target would need a fully randomised community survey both before and after the project, with detailed questions about service needs and service accessibility. A survey has been conducted at the end of the programme, although it produces data which were not aligned with the baseline, making it difficult to measure progress quantitatively.

Although the objective wording could change, the intent is clear and accepted. Qualitative data and discussions are adequate in describing progress – indeed – to correctly and scientifically use quantitative data in this context would be highly technical, and often not possible in complex social settings such as this project.

Training and sensitisation

Training and sensitisation of educators and health care providers was a major thrust for this objective. In addition, awareness-raising and persuasion of indigenous people to obtain their documentation, send their children to school, and give birth at hospital maternity facilities were part of public messaging. These

processes were both public and general, as well as personal and targeted to particular service providers, and were a strong programme element.

Financial support

Another aspect of the approach was filling small financial gaps, such as school fees, the costs of birth certificates, and lamination (plastification) of birth certificates. While racism is a major deterrent – indigenous people still gain a large portion of the livelihoods from the forests and fields, and available cash is limited. Fees or other costs for any of these services are generally not a priority.

Outcomes

Increase in access to ID documents and birth certificates

The final report suggests a large increase in the number of people who have identity documents (reaching about 45% by 2021) or birth certificates – but does not share the baseline or the denominator clearly, so the increase is difficult to quantify.

Birth certificates can be obtained relatively easily, although at a small fee, and the main role of the project seems to be to encourage people to do so, describe the benefits of being documented, and pay the fee. This is in a setting where documentation is a very low priority, and the benefits are not always clear or felt.

> *"Before the project they used the paper for cigarettes but now the certificates are plastified." (FGD)*

> *"Some even don't have a name. Nobody knows when she was born - they have to guess. There could be 20 kids without name or birth date. Giving birth in the hospital will help organise this. The government had another project with similar objectives in 33 villages for ID and citizenship. We bought 4 plastic machines to preserve the papers. All birth certificates are now plastified." (ET)*

Presumably people do have a name, and it is the system that suggests that one is nameless unless registered. The link to hospital births also seems like an excessive approach to administration, where most home births may be safer, cheaper and more culturally appropriate.

Adults obtained documentation with project support, and particularly birth certificates. Applications are still not usually made for new-borns. This is partly due to the cost. Also, once the time period for infant registration has lapsed the process becomes more complicated - people tend to procrastinate and documentation is not obtained until much later in life.

Increased access to schools and formal education

The project was able to encourage and inform school leaders on the legal requirements for non-discrimination, that they were successful in removing structural discriminatory systems, such as separate waiting and seating areas, exclusion or direct obstacles to access. There also seemed to be moderate success in changed attitudes of many educators, who were said to be less likely to ignore indigenous children in class, and no longer used racist ideology or language. This was accepted as good progress and a first step towards greater access to formal education.

In parallel, encouragement and awareness raising in communities has supported sending children to school, and there has been more uptake.

> *"Before there were only 3-4 children in the village who went to school, now they are some 20 who go to school. I (relay) come and bring them to school." (FGD)*

The sustainability of this level of support might be questioned, although at least some children and families may continue to use schools if the experience is positive.

Schooling also depended on project financial support, which proved difficult to sustain, and decisive in whether or not schools functioned.

In an account for one village:

> *"The project decided to support the school from 2014 to 2019, when it stopped. From then on there are no children who go to primary school. Those in upper primary have gone to another school." (FGD)*

> *"The school then restarted in November 2022 with parents' support (for the first three years of primary). But the parents did not manage to pay so the teachers work as volunteers. I come here on my own funds. There are 134 children and 3 teachers. We will need support otherwise it will be difficult." (Educator FGD)*

Other than financing and school fees, other obstacles to education include:

i) Bullying among learners in ethnically mixed schools, where learners come from homes, churches and communities which perpetuate racism.

ii) In ethnically mixed schools, traditional seasonal activities remove indigenous children from school, and create differences between bantu and indigenous learners in their school-based social and educational lives – although these activities are presumably an enriching part of indigenous learners' social and educational lives in their culture and community: "*There is a problem of collection of caterpillars or mushroom since they can leave for two months and have problems reintegrating the school after."*

iii) Indigenous people do not trust, respect or feel a sense of relevance or value for formal education. Havig been excluded both from education and the benefits of education in the past, they may prioritise cultural education and traditional skills, practices and knowledge, above the offerings of formal education.

iv) Few indigenous people consider investing in education or contributing to school upkeep in either time or money.

As a result of these, and perhaps other factors, progress towards increased access to education has been minimal.

> *"Theoretically, schooling should be free but schools have no funds and ask for a fee. There is a school in their village (a indigenous people's village) where the project paid for teachers for some time to get it working. A condition was that parents should repair the class room, which they didn't. The indigenous community had to mobilise to get the kids to school, but it didn't work. We gave some materials, like school-kits, but that did not help." (CTPAD)*

There seems to be a great deal of reluctance to engage in education and the full reasoning is not well understood by the project:

> *"We did not dig enough to understand their lack of motivation to invest in school." (CTPAD)*

Increased use of hospitals in general and particularly, maternity facilities for birth

There were some accounts of people being better received at hospitals (FGD), and some respondents suggested that there was greater willingness to use hospitals in some areas. Overall, however, this has not been a highly successful outcome in terms of the project's goals. Indigenous people still reported that health services are racist and unwelcoming, and *'people make fun of us'.* (CTPAD)

The project seems to have prioritised hospital births as a campaign, and it is not clear whether the community members themselves of the project highlighted this (rather than, for example, diarrhoea in children, malaria or other diseases, infections or parasites, for example).

Given practices of traditional birth attendance, the normality of home birth, and the vulnerability and costs of travelling to facilities to give birth, we would question whether this choice of priority was participatory,

and whether indigenous communities themselves ranked maternity problems as their most pressing health issue.

While attempting to promote public health and address child and maternal mortality and birth complications, there is a risk of negative impact through undermining healthy traditional practices, traditional health practitioners and indigenous medicinal knowledge. It would seem that a different approach might have been more successful, with greater participation on priority setting, and basic, broad health education rather than the focus on hospitalised childbirth alone.

Recommendations

Overall: Across all of these themes, indigenous people are being asked to adopt the existing systems, and the systems seem not to be adapting to be relevant to their needs. Changing the systems, increasing accessibility and acceptability in the systems, and finding flexible ways the meet people's needs would be as important as public information and encouragement of indigenous people. We would suggest that the next phase asks indigenous people to prioritise and make recommendations, and attempts to campaign to service providers to develop compromises as a form of rights.

Documentation: Compromise –

i) Community outreach and community-based "Documentation Days" can be arranged in partnership with the relevant government departments;
ii) Include traditional birth attendants and local leaders in developing locally based systems to capture information on births, deaths and marriages.

Education:

i) Create and develop indigenous people's parent associations to engage in community dialogue to identify specific needs and solutions for indigenous learners, give input to relevant curriculum and educational processes, discuss logistics and practical matters that might allow compromise school terms to enable at least partial access to seasonal harvesting. Even a few committed parent champions, whose children are not disadvantaged in community activities, would be better advocates for education than outsiders – if the system can adapt to at least part of their needs.

Use of public health facilities:

i) We suggest greater participation in priority-setting, with community ranking of health issues to help decide when health facilities are appropriate.
ii) Bring holistic health education and awareness-raising into communities, from hygiene to recognising dangerous illnesses.
iii) For the great majority, trained traditional birth attendants or experienced older women delivery safely and normally. It would be more appropriate to promote education of birth attendants and other community leaders to identity birth complications early and ensure access to health facilities when needed.
iv) Use participatory facilitation to discover the real obstacles to using health care services, along with acceptable solutions; and encourage local systems to, for example, provide safe and convenient transport to facilities, while reducing obstacles around clothing and cost.

5.3.3 SO 3: Addressing violence against women

Specific objective 3: Violence against indigenous women is being fought in the project areas.

Approach

Training, sensitisation, awareness-raising

In communities that are deeply patriarchal, and where alcohol abuse is a major social problem, violence against women is frequent. In addition, where bantu regard indigenous women as inferior, race-motivated rape and attacks against them are also not unusual. The project has attempted to raise awareness on the

rights of indigenous women to be protected from gender-based violence (GBV), and to draw attention to their exposure to GBV perpetrated by both bantu and indigenous people.

A full GBV response was not part of this project plan. Confronting and addressing these problems has focused on messaging and access to mediators, highlighting the equal rights of indigenous women to protection from violence under the law. There have been no further interventions, although women's groups have been established, but do not seem to be functioning yet.

"There are 'maman-guides' and counsellors but they only talked about it but did not actually help them make it happen. They were not motivated." (CTPAD)

Outcomes

Addressing patriarchy

Responses suggest that indigenous society is conservative not only through adherence to traditional ways and reluctance to participate in mainstream economy, but also as a strongly patriarchal society. Discussions have not only enlightened indigenous society on rights to equal access and non-discrimination, but have also confronted the values and ways of behaving within that culture. The project has exposed these communities to concepts that are both emancipating and threatening. Patriarchy, and its expression in GBV and a lack of rights for women, is one of the themes that ask for change and growth most urgently.

In one of the areas people described outcomes in reduction of patriarchy, as a step towards indigenous women claiming their rights. This was driven by the active involvement of indigenous women in project management [8].

"Indigenous women now speak up in front of people. In the beginning males and female did not mix and a woman should not speak or walk in front of men. The project has broken all those limitations. Both women and men speak." (ET)

"Women from the project's localities now have the right to speak publicly, and participate in meetings on an equal footing with men." (Final report of DCPA project 2018-2022)

Awareness and possible reduction in GBV

Awareness and legal understanding have been helpful for the most accessible layer of violence against women, which does account for many cases, and has produced relief from extreme and frequent violence against women.

"Since the project raised awareness, we have not heard about rape. But we hear about women being beaten if they make any mistake." (FGD)

"Back then, when a woman was sleeping bantu men came, made a hole in the house, and took the women by force. This is no longer the case." (FGD)

GBV continues to be a major concern

Although some people's observed that basic awareness raising has reduced GBV, other respondents described the GBV work as having weak outcomes (FGD).

"Bantus do approach indigenous women unofficially. If she gets pregnant they will not accept responsibility. They are taken in front of the mediators and told to take responsibility. They still refuse." (FGD).

Similarly, domestic GBV in indigenous communities has also continued, although at reduced rates, despite awareness and information. Alcohol abuse is a major driver of violence against women.

[8] Final report of DCPA project 2018-2022

"It has not stopped. Some people have been informed about it and started behaving in a better way. In some families it has stopped, other refuse to change. Violence is still a reality." (FGD)

"Women are beaten especially when the men drink." (FGD)

Shame and silence

As in any society - shame, silence and family control perpetuate GBV in indigenous communities. Only a specific and targeted intervention, which deeply and comprehensively addresses GBV, is likely to influence more deeply embedded habits and systems of violence. Although awareness-raising gave people the information they needed to seek recourse to justice, many cases continue to go unreported.

"It is too shameful, so they prefer not to speak about it. There is also sometimes a family relation involved, maybe an uncle, and they don't want to create a problem in the family." (FGD)

The project team confirms that there is a great deal yet to do. They suggested specialised partnerships to focus on GBV, such as with the Blue Cross, which works against drug abuse and alcoholism, and has the necessary structures and competencies.

Recommendations

i) Continued information sharing on GBV could be a project role.
ii) We would agree with the team, however that in-depth interventions should be run by specialists, and should involve community-based organisations with the support of NGOs.
iii) In the absence of more professional interventions, supporting local CBOS, and developing a framework with local leadership to raise awareness, and develop community justice systems, and provide access to formal legal and health interventions could be a theme.

5.3.4 SO 4: Conflict resolution between indigenous people and bantu people

Specific objective 4: Mechanisms to protect the rights of indigenous peoples and conflict resolution systems between indigenous people and bantu people are functioning and performing well.

Approach

The Watch Cells and Mediators

The establishment of 'Watch Cells' has been seen as a valuable contribution in two areas, Gamboma and Ngo. Watch cells are community conflict-resolution groups, providing a fair and transparent space to air grievances and resolve conflicts. As a people's tribunal, all key officials of the area are represented, and a recognised authority - The Head of Justice (Procurer) - is the Chair. Indigenous people appoint and approach representatives, and there seems to be general respect for the neutrality of the space.

Substantial cases are dealt with in Watch Cells. Two examples shared in the final report:

i. A public trial demanding that a bantu man assume responsibility for the pregnancy of a young indigenous girl (although subsequent conversations suggest that this judgement was not enforceable)
ii. A case of human trafficking and enslavement, where indigenous people were removed from their home area to another part of the country, subjected to work without pay or food. On their escape the enslaver was required to pay compensation and relocation costs.

Mediators, or Ntueres, have also been elected and trained as a first approach to conflict resolution. They form a cadre of informal representatives of the local government official, the Sub-prefect. There were few recorded resolutions by mediators – but it is possible and likely that mediations are not documented. There is less documentation on this system than the Watch Cells. There were accounts of some mediators ignoring larger problems and focusing on more trivial concerns, that they could more easily resolve. Some respondents felt that the structure needed to be more formal to be effective. Despite this, the local government official who was interviewed was supportine, and suggested exporting the system to other areas.

Outcomes

Institutional strengthening

Local governments have been enthusiastic in their support of the structures, and the DCPA is acknowledged to have strengthened local institutional capacity to organise and support justice. Whether inspired by the concept, or as a coincidence, government has also rolled out a system of equivalent tribunals, convened by a local government official known as the Directeur de la Promotion et de la Protection des Peuples Autochtones. Leaders and trained participants in the areas where the project has operated have a clear grasp of the value, processes and relevance of this type of structure.

> *"Compared to all other projects, this is the best model because they have involved everybody. They have involved political representatives in the department cell/cellule d'éveil. They supervise everything and all activities. They are engaged in the awareness raising. During a surprise visit I found the mayor (sous-prefet) of Ngo promoting this work and how they should always work and live together in this way. They have solved a lot of problems on the local level." (KI)*

Uptake and outcomes of the work of Watch Cells

While the structures are admired, they are very seldom used. Only twelve cases have been tabled at a Watch Cell in five years, across two areas. This is despite racism being a major social challenge; heightened awareness of the law; and how common injustices are known to be. At an average rate of only slightly more than one case per year per area, the Watch Cells were hardly used.

Research would be useful in order to understand the mechanisms and obstacles to claiming rights. Information would be useful on where else, if anywhere, conflicts are being resolved, and the roles of mediators, police, or traditional leaders. Without use of these strengthened institutional capacities, long-held customs which accept and permit violence and racism will rapidly re-establish, and awareness of the law will have little lasting impact.

Recommendations

i) The success of Watch Cells may have been over-stated, since the ultimate test is whether they uphold justice and address conflicts. Understanding how conflicts are or are not resolved in the light of greater awareness of the law would be useful. There may be value in normalising and marketing the Watch Cell, or tribunal, type spaces through the police and hospitals, outreach into communities, while also identifying and referring cases.

ii) There is no budget for the routine operations of similar structures to Watch Cells under government. Discussion on small, but focused financing of local government operational needs may be useful, although sustainability strategies would be essential to their long-term success.

5.3.5 SO 5: Confronting racism towards indigenous people and encouraging allies

Specific objective 5: Bantu populations in the project areas promote the rights of indigenous peoples.

Approach

Sensitisation and training of officials

Support, training, sensitisation and partnerships with local government officials and service providers was a cornerstone of the work with duty-bearers.

> *"They have worked with all the chef du quartier (who are all bantu). They have trained and engaged them to fight discrimination. The project called them repeatedly to stress the message that they should work together in harmony. The project has trained the police and gendarmes to explain the situation of the indigenous people - that they are behind and how to deal with these problems." (CTPAD)*

Community outreach and activism

The project has deployed ethnically mixed outreach or coordinators' groups, which deliver marketplace awareness in both indigenous and bantu communities. Coordinators are community members themselves, and have been able to inspire and encourage greater community cohesion through their work and advocacy.

> *"The project has sent us to educate our peers in other villages". (FGD)*

The Final Report states that in addition to the twelve project localities, a further 26 villages or neighbourhoods were visited by relais for awareness raising, reaching a total of 1 825 people, including 815 indigenous people and 1 010 bantu.

Resources developed for training and sensitisation

The training package is an output of the project, which could become a valuable outcome if shared, downloaded and further disseminated by others. Materials, modules and content have been produced by the project. If this has not already been done, we would recommend packaging the content in a user-friendly and print-friendly form, and making it freely available online as a training pack. It would then be worth monitoring downloads and visits to the site to track the uptake of these resources.

Outcomes

Active leadership and engagement by local government

Engagement of local government officials was very high, with many taking a leading role in the project and proactively working on dissemination of the law. Local government officials have been among the most committed champions of indigenous people's rights. For example, the Sub-prefect in Ngo has been actively involved from the outset, and has delivered awareness-raising in communities, schools and churches. The Prefet in Djambala, a key area of the department of Le Plateau, described how she has engaged with indigenous people for many years, and was fully endorsing the project. The Directeur Departementale in Djambala is an ombudsman and the government representative for indigenous people's affairs, and has also worked closely with the project.

There is both symbolic and practical value in leaders setting the example of how bantu people are allies to indigenous people and oppose racism. While the project and local government were mutually supportive and shared the same goal, the project can take some credit for helping to support the enthusiasm, knowledge and work of local government.

Despite positive attitudes and leadership, outreach and work in communities by local government is limited by lack of budget. When the project was offering funding for activities on the ground, it enabled local government partners to also do their work at local level. The last year in which local project coordinators have not themselves had funds would have impacted on the work of local government partners.

"As a government representative I don't have the money to do this. The awareness-raising that I tried did not work, I had nothing to offer (e.g a snack)." (KI)

Although local government officials have been among the most active supporters, training and sensitisation of educators, health workers, and members of the public has also led to the law being widely known and respected. There are still cases of ignorance or prejudice among health care workers and educators, but this is decreasing and there is more accountability for removing at least the structures of discrimination.

Working with the general population and society

Relais comprise both indigenous and bantu members. Although most outreach and public education has been in predominantly indigenous communities, there has been some outreach in bantu communities. There was also an example of indigenous community members and relais taking the initiative to go and raise awareness in the bantu villages where they are being harassed.

For the most part, however, discussions on racism and rights have mainly been with indigenous people and indigenous leaders, indigenous people allies and indigenous communities. Confronting racism in society at large would be the next step, and promoting anti-racism as a social norm, is a broader social campaign.

"We could have done better if we had involved religious groups and local existing associations (dance, football etc) to strengthen awareness raising. We have only worked with the indigenous people, and involved some bantu people and administrative structures. Many bantu could have been reached naturally in those structures." (CTPAD)

Behaviour and attitude change among indigenous people

Bantu mediators and coordinators have observed changes in dress, hair and hygiene among indigenous people, which they saw as having benefits both in the way the indigenous people engage, and in the way they are received. These ideas around socially acceptable norms have been part of the emphasis of project training and messaging.

"We teach them about cleanliness and how to behave." (FGD)

While rather patronising, focusing on basic health education around hygiene in a way that is factual and non-judgemental, has positive outcomes. For indigenous people, the encouragement to become more proactive and confident in society, and accepting certain compromises, seems to have been helpful to community relationships.

"Indigenous people were dirty. They did not wash. They had dirty clothes but now things have changed and they are clean." (FGD)

In a further shift in confidence and a sense of claiming rights and space, indigenous people have sometimes shifted where and how they live, and have spent their earnings in more permanent housing, with an impression of wealth and stability also reducing the level of harassment they are exposed to.

"Back then the indigenous people built their houses behind the bantu people's houses. After advice, they now also build their houses along the main road. Some move from mud and grass houses to more modern houses of burned bricks and steel roof. Young bantu people don't harass young indigenous people anymore because they know it will become a big problem (have consequences)." (FGD)

Tensions between cash and subsistence cultures

Having been largely side-lined through the processes of colonisation and independence, indigenous people seem to have managed to remain at least partly outside of commercial financial systems. They can still function, to some extent, within natural ecosystems with very low cash needs. They have been able to remain embedded in tradition and cultural practices, despite the forces of modernisation and capital. While they value these traditions, they also feel the pressure and desire to be part of the mainstream economy. Generating a cash income takes people out of the forest – both as custodians of the forest and as users.

The discussions above shows how carefully cash is prioritised – often in the direction of alcohol use it has been noted – and not in the ways that mainstream society would prefer (school fees, documentation, clothing, hygiene and hospital use). This difference in values is profoundly felt in the project – where mainstream society has highest regard for cash and financial wealth, and little regard for the wealth of sustainably used forest resources and the social, spiritual and material value that comes from the forest.

> *"When we go to the forest and gather something there is very little money and we cannot afford to pay for the schooling. We need other income." (FGD)*

Recommendations

i) Immediately, in order to scale up training and sensitisation on the law, and principles of non-racism in general, make the materials, content and training process widely and freely accessible on-line, and provide links to the materials in all networking and related online spaces.

ii) Following an organisational focus during Year One of the next project period, Year Two should continue and expand the roll-out of training and sensitisation to duty-bearers. Expand both into new villages and departments with training and sensitisation, and also into including other types of duty bearers. Other key local government functions were identified by indigenous people as important to sensitise, as well as EEC pastors and other church leaders.

5.3.6 SO 6: The Information Centre for Indigenous Peoples

Specific objective 6: The Documentation and Information Center for Indigenous Peoples actively works as an asset in strengthening indigenous culture and identity.

Approach

A building was rented from a school, equipped with a computer, and set up as a resource centre intended to be a site and repository for indigenous knowledge and communications on indigenous people's culture and traditions.

Outcomes

Meeting space

The building has occasionally been useful as a meeting and training space, and a few cultural events have taken place here.

An asset in strengthening indigenous culture and identity

The resource centre has not met its goal. Even if the very limited documentation in the centre was increased and improved, a repository does not represent a living history and culture. While there might be scope for the anthropology and museum work of collecting and preserving the cultural practices and traditions of indigenous people, this is not a very compelling contributing to the project's overall development goal of indigenous people realising their rights in today's world. In a culture

rooted in narrative, music and dance traditions, it is unlikely that indigenous people themselves would choose written, electronic formats. While these might be important work for academics, the project needs to be guided by community members.

The next strategy would need to consider how best to uphold indigenous culture in a way which is more vibrant, and which helps to value culture as it lives in society and community. The use of the centre as a venue was only part of the work behind the intent to uphold and re-energise respect for local culture. The ethic with which parts of the project were delivered worked towards this goal, and some major parts of the project's approach focused on rejuvenating traditional practices.

> *"In the beginning the indigenous people were ashamed to speak their own language. We have focused on their language as the vehicle for their identity. All activities have been implemented in Kitwa. Their old dances that they abandoned for christianisation, we have made efforts to valorise those which are not for "debauche". Traditional medicine - we identified their own medical doctors (epilepsy, hemmoroides, sterilité, faiblesse sexuel, palu) and organised a week, where they went on local TV to explain what they were doing, and they received patients at the information center. They also practice divination or deliverance. Christianity broke that, but there is nothing satanic." (ET)*

Threats to culture and indigenous knowledge

Mainstream social education and social norms have infiltrated indigenous society, and have helped them to be more accepted. So too has Christianity. This has come at a greater cultural cost than hygiene and dress codes alone, however.

> *"In this village the culture starts to disappear. They have all become Christians and can no longer practice their traditional culture. The church has stopped the dancing and other cultural aspects. I am sorry to see that disappear. They throw away all the traditional culture and associate it with 'sorcellerie' (witchcraft). People in the project zones say that it because of the church that they have lost their traditional culture. There are still some villages where the indigenous people keep their traditional culture." (ET)*

> *"We work with them in tolerance and believe that with time they will live with the faith. They have a song that talks about leaving idolatry when you follow Christ. There are cultural things that we accept, like plant-based drinks. The church is not rigid. In the catechism they are taught what they can keep and what they have to leave behind." (EEC)*

Find alternative approaches

The resource centre will be disbanded, since the hosting school needs the building for other purposes. This is in line with the project direction, having experimented with the idea of a physical resource centre, and found it lacking.

A highly participatory approach should be taken to defining how indigenous people themselves see cultural practices being promoted and supported. One example from these findings which stands out clearly is inflexibility in the school systems which disadvantage learners who collect in the forest in certain seasons. Another is imposing hospital births on all women, instead of only complicated births – meaning that support, traditions and rituals around birth are lost.

Indigenous communities themselves would need to agree on the aspects of modernisation that have advantages which outweigh the costs and losses (possibly like stronger houses, better clothing and hygiene, confronting patriarchy, for example). Agreement would be needed on the most valuable of traditional practices (perhaps, upholding traditional healers and traditional birth attendants, animist religion, fetishes, dances, forest collecting, rituals around birth death and marriage, language, etc). As in any society, it is up to each individual to choose their cultural practices.

The project could offer to support private spaces where cultural practices are acknowledged, and the obstacles to these practices discussed; and then to help to advocate for social systems which accept and value cultural practices.

The churches, as the most immediate threat to culture, would be an important advocacy audience, in an attempt to reduce the sense of threat and accept different forms of spirituality, both among Christian indigenous people and non-Christian. As a leader in society and the holder of this project, the EEC has a direct responsibility to find ways to respect indigenous culture, while also upholding the beliefs that are core to the institution. These compromises may be difficult. The church also has a responsibility to teach basic human rights and tolerance, whether or not a person has converted to Christianity.

> *"It was clear for us in the project that we should not impose anything and not evangelise them. If some people dance the pastor may preach against that or against traditional healing." (ET)*

Recommendation

i) Support a conversation on which valuable cultural practices are being threatened, and the reasons for their decline, to support advocacy for the rights of indigenous people to cultural practices, tolerance and diversity.

5.3.7 SO 7: Income-generating activities (IGAs)

Specific objective 7: Income-generating activities (IGAs) adapted to the culture and traditions of indigenous peoples and which affect their standard of living.

Context

Discrimination against indigenous nomadic forest dwellers goes back centuries. History and nomadism also mean that they have never owned land or territory, and have always used resources seasonally. They may return to the forest in some months of the year, and work in fields or as labourers in other months. They may not have tenure or established ownership or legal usufructuary rights of either forest or farm land.

Indigenous people are generally cast as low-wage workers by land-owners, some in a state of semi-enslavement, sometimes for generations. There is a tendency for employers to try to keep indigenous people in a situation of dependency as labourers, and there has been pushback against their campaigns for land rights by government, private owners and bantu community members. They may be refused the opportunity to rent land or machines, or their produce may be boycotted, for example.

> *"People say (to local government leaders), 'The indigenous people don't have any respect for us anymore, this is your fault'." (KI)*

Approach

Training and information

The project has tried to be bold and holistic. It has worked with indigenous people's attitudes, knowledge and beliefs about land, ownership and business. There has been engagement around how to work their own land and own their own businesses. At the start, an agronomist showed indigenous farmers how to prepare the field and plant manioc (foufou). Although the findings below cast some doubt on these assumptions the project's message was:

> *"Indigenous people lived from collect and hunting animals but the project showed them that they can live better by growing foufou which they even go to Brazzaville to sell." (FGD)*

Partnership

In the village of Nsah, the government partner organisation PADEF gave plants, some material and support, as part of their existing project in the area. As a result, indigenous people's farming in this area increased from one field to three fields. The challenge with the model is that there seems to be continued dependency on PADEF and a lack of support to develop sustainable and autonomous farming. As well as sustainability, the model is also difficult to take to scale, since PADEF itself is a small and localised government agency, only working in a few sites. This, and other partnerships have potential to be identified and explored.

Outcomes

More cooperative relationships with landowners

Moving into independent farming depends on landowners accepting the competition and possibly some loss of labour, and agreeing to rent parcels of land to indigenous people. Encouragement and community building through the project has allowed this to happen.

> *"With the project, landowners have accepted to hire out land for cultivation, which did not happen before." (FGD)*

Although as seen above, the land areas were miniscule, and decreased greatly in the second harvest season.

Successful farming practices for small numbers of indigenous people

In one example (at least) a cooperative system successfully completed a planting and harvesting cycle, and distribute profits. One presumes that the cooperative also invests in the following year's crop, and that the cycle is being managed sustainably.

> *"They can rent tractors, harvest foufou and sell their produce. Some move to the next step and invest in raising animals. There are no problems with sharing the money, they have lists. There has been one conflict where a project counsellor took some money when he sold the produce. He has been forced to pay back. They are able to construct houses, pay for health care, send their children to school. In the last visit we asked them if they would continue and they said 'you have opened our eyes and we will continue after the project'." (ET)*

> *"In order to be independent, you need your own money. They have already sold two sets of crops. They have a field which is growing. The first harvest gave 25 sacks (1,5ha) and the second time 15 (on 0,5 ha). In Nsah there are 15 people involved in the agriculture problem." (FGD)*

> *"In Lomé there are 18 people involved and the first harvest gave 18 sacks and the second harvest was 10." (FGD)*

An estimated price per sack is 15 000 FCFA. Depending on the number of people and the harvests, the income from this work seems to range from about 25 000 FCFA to about 8 000 FCFA per person, per season (12-40 euros per farmer per season). The formal sector minimum wage in Republic of Congo is around 90 000 FCFA (135 euros per month). Using these very small parcels of land - even with the exploitation common to indigenous people, informal economies and rural areas - labour is likely to generate more income than independent cooperative farming. With restricted access to land, control of resources in these examples does remain firmly with the landowners.

Conflict between indigenous people and bantu on cooperative projects

The project seems to have tried to create the IGAs as a space for indigenous people and indigenous people to work together, build relationships and create more unified communities. This agenda did not prove successful, and respondents shared conflicting accounts of how local business partnerships between indigenous and bantu people had dissolved. Only indigenous people remained by the end of the season.

Immediate income needs

Investment in farming depends on capital to maintain a household through the season. The change from daily wages to seasonal harvests is not an option for most people, and conflicts arose as members of cooperatives expected and needed to be paid "*in the traditional way when they work as labourers*". (NSA)

Outcomes in business management and entrepreneurship

The final report shares results that 127 out of 161 (79%) households surveyed had received small earnings from IGAs that were developed or stimulated by the project. The financial estimates shared here suggest that these were unlikely to be profitable - but that as side-lines, or surplus food, the additional source of livelihood could be valuable.

The process of earning through IGAs may also have been educational, and knowledge of the principles of costing, sales, profit and marketing of products and skills may be sustainable. Alternative livelihoods may also have boosted self-esteem and confidence.

Project bias

As an aside - the small amounts mentioned also cast doubt on harvesting foufou being the income source for houses, health care or school fees. A second respondents also suggested that IGAs have dramatically increased livelihoods, and we begin to doubt the credibility of these informants. Also, as discussed above, it is doubtful that these would be priorities even if there was an increase in income. The bias of the project team should be taken into account throughout these results and the final report – and it is clear that the information given to this evaluation is a selectively optimistic view of the project.

> *"Many indigenous people now have built stronger houses, have electricity, parabols, pay for their children's schooling thanks to the IGA (income generating activities)." (ET)*

There were also multiple accounts of failed and discontinued IGAs in agriculture - although in any context, it is immensely difficult to succeed in a new businesses.

Evaluators discussion point

The premise of the IGAs is on land rental from owners, and harvests being bought and sold between indigenous people. The deeper challenge, however, is about land-tenure and access to land and forest rights, which would be essential to both enduring cultural and traditional practices, and to secure livelihoods. The role of the project may be better placed in advocacy for enabling indigenous people to have real power in partnership and decision-making on forest management; access to sustainably protected forest; and prevention of logging and forest destruction (while IGAs based on sale of forest products would lead directly to unsustainable harvesting – see the point made below).

> *"For example, when they kill an animal we teach them not to eat the whole thing alone, instead of selling and getting money for schooling, for example." (FGD)*

Recommendation

i) We would question the messaging and rationale in the project around IGAs – in terms of: the top priorities for income being school fees and hospital care; profitability models of cooperative farming that are not tested; the unsustainable sale of forest products as an income source, rather than for subsistence and livelihoods. A more carefully thought through IGA approach, which is more integrated with rights, tenure, government small business stimulus, and where more profitable niches might be identified, could be part of a consulted sub-strategy on livelihoods and local economic development.

ii) A more detailed evaluation specifically of people involved in IGAs would be needed to assess the outcomes of IGAs, both positive and negative, and the sustainability of these ventures. This information would be essential to deciding on how best IGAs should be part of the project strategy.

5.3.8 SO 8: The way the church relates to indigenous people.

Specific objective 8: The Evangelical Church of Congo (EEC) actively works to promote the rights of indigenous peoples in the church and society.

Context

Differences in cultural practices mean that many church members and leaders regard indigenous people as 'heathen' and mistrust and reject their cultures. There are large differences in worldview between most church-goers and non-Christian indigenous people, and it is difficult for Christians to resist translating different beliefs into a sense of superiority. Rather than being part of a movement for tolerance, it is not unusual for some churches and their congregations to perpetrate racism, and to accept and tolerate racist attitudes.

"The church is against the fetishes." (FGD)

Even Christian indigenous people are sometimes subjected to discrimination within the church. There were accounts, for example, of segregation between indigenous people and bantu members of the choir for meals.

Approach

The project team developed an EEC policy in 2020 on the church's approach to indigenous people, which was a substantial piece of work, and is the main achievement under this objective. The EEC is aware of it, and has expressed its commitment to tabling the policy, making amendments, and adopting it.

Although they have stated their intention to engage; so far EEC leadership has not reviewed or adopted the EEC policy on indigenous people.

Lack of outcomes

Although it could have been one of the most achievable project areas - adoption and implementation of an EEC policy on indigenous people has yet to be seen. The policy has not been tabled or adopted by the EEC (Bureau Synodal and Synode), and this awaits their attention in 2023. Because of this, policy implementation has not yet been included in annual plans for the EEC budget, or in pastors' roles or preaching programmes.

Tensions between diversity and evangelism

Different from the more universally accepted values of objecting to GBV and the 5Ss - embracing tolerance around ethnicity and culture poses a dilemma to the church. The main entry point to working in other cultures is evangelism. In the case of ethnic and cultural differences, it is very difficult for a Christian organisation to be non-judgemental. The church is very conscious of the differences in belief systems, which speak to differences for them in fundamental values.

"Their religion is synchretist. God is not accessible, so you have to go through intermediate spirits. Some give you knowledge about the forest, signs, language etc. They invoke spirits and teach all about healing trees. Their culture is closed, secret." (EEC)

While the heartfelt desire to save souls is central to the values of the church – it is also in direct conflict with acceptance of different cultural values, many of which are rooted in religious diversity. How then does the church sincerely accept other cultures, and therefore other religious practices, and preach against racism?

"The only contact between the church and indigenous people is in terms of evangelisation." (EEC)

"Promotion of the culture of the indigenous people is not about christianisation. They should keep their identity as a human being. The project is about establishing a basic respect. We should not impose our culture. They have their own. If they become Christians, values have to be selected and rejected if they are not compatible with the Christian faith." (EEC)

Potential for a constructive role in indigenous people rights promotion.

The church clearly has capacity to influence attitudes and to promote more positive society, as seen in the GBV programme. Also in the GBV programme, the EEC was able to confront internal accusations that pastors and congregation members could be perpetrators of GBV, and that there were instances where pastors could abuse their positions of power and take sexual advantage of members of the congregation. These were not easy conversations. This attitude of sincere concern and self-reflection, and an ability to uphold morality even when it is uncomfortable, suggests that the church will be able to work through prejudices and attitudes to traditional and cultural practices, and to address negative stereotypes around ethnic and cultural diversity

A role of the project in this and other controversial positions for the church is partly to extract principles of non-racism from the scriptures, in order to demonstrate to pastors and believers that diversity, tolerance and love are Christian values. In the case of racial and cultural tolerance this is not as straight forward. The church has a legal and social responsibility, nevertheless, to diffuse the differences between religious beliefs, and encourage tolerance of diversity, even where people do not share the same practices and spiritual systems. The EEC pastoral movement would greatly enrich this role by presenting such values in terms of the texts.

"I have personally understood the problems around discrimination and that this is a question of love towards our neighbour." (EEC)

There is also a role in sharing the law, supporting texts and values of equality with Christian indigenous people. Indigenous people do find that membership of the church, and baptism into Christianity improves their acceptance by society and the treatment they receive. This is partly because they adopt more acceptable ways of engaging in society.

"With pastor training they would get the vision of the project, so they could explain those values; understand which are their rights, what bantus should not do towards them, what it takes for harmonious interaction. People accept a pastor's teaching." (EEC)

Recommendations

i) Immediate and urgent way forward: The EEC could and should drive the role of the church in confronting discrimination. This should include:

- adoption and implementation of the EEC policy on indigenous people discrimination;
- inclusion of activities, preaching schedules and content, and awareness-raising in the annual EEC workplan;
- intensive sensitisation of pastors and church committees on the law and discriminatory attitudes;
- participation of pastors in Watch Cells (or the local government equivalent structures);
- support local promoters and coordination teams, as in the GBV programme, to address discrimination and enable knowledge and application of the law and principles of equality;
- develop safe spaces to report and address discrimination and conflicts within congregations, similar to the GBV project.

ii) So far, the project has remained separate from the church, and has not strongly associated with or been led by local pastors. Although some have criticised this, we would recommend that this separation between the core EEC, and CTPAD as a development organisation under the church, should continue - in order to ensure that this project, and perhaps others, remain secular. It also ensures that the work of pastors remains focused on their core business as leaders of congregations.

5.3.9 SO 9: The National Network of Indigenous Peoples

Specific objective 9: RENAPAC (National Network of Indigenous Peoples) is strengthened in promoting the rights of indigenous peoples.

Approach

The project worked with members of both REPALEAC [9] and RENAPAC [10], and has a partnership MOU with REPALEAC. Some respondents felt that RENAPAC has more relevance to the project, and stronger connections with government as an advocacy partner. There is merit in partnership with both organisations, and others at different levels, to the extent that they are functional and representative.

Outcomes

Networking and mutual value

Both of these organisations have regional and national presence, and are connected with the campaigns for implementation of UNDRIP. It was therefore useful to receive their support and inputs. It is also valuable to the networks to have active membership (such as programme participants), and be participating in implementing interventions to meet common goals.

There has not been much cooperation with either of the networks in practice, possibly because of unclear partnership objectives and a lack of common activities. A process of understanding their respective roles, and identifying opportunities for cost-effective and beneficial partnership would assist so that partnerships are natural and unforced, and there is visible mutual benefit.

Recommendations

i) Identify areas of common interest with potential partners; build clearer, more strategic partnerships, with functioning networks; and participate in advocacy campaigns as an active supporter, assisting with emerging campaign demands and themes.

ii) Also network and form partnerships with other relevant community structures. Some possible examples, as they seem to have emerged from the findings (and so not limited to these) include: local traditional healers; midwifery groups; local women's leadership associations; organisations promoting and enabling IGAs and small business development; project and organisations led by indigenous people themselves to address GBV, alcohol abuse and violence. Partnerships should not be forced, and should have clear mutual benefit. Openness to communicating and cooperating is an important project capacity to develop.

5.4 RELEVANCE

5.4.1 Engagement as a sign of relevance

The project has been adopted by indigenous people in target communities. The active engagement of is in itself a major achievement, since these communities are often guarded and cautious about relationships with mainstream society. The entry point of the law was ideal. It is a neutral, nationally acknowledged, objective point of entry, and translation into Kitwa and dissemination of print copies helped to build a bridge to trust and engagement.

In the next stages, the wise and respectful use of that trust will be critical, and will depend on the principles of meaningful involvement, ownership and power balance.

[9] Network of Indigenous and Local Communities for the Sustainable Management of Forest Ecosystems in Central Africa

[10] National Network of Indigenous Peoples of the Congo

5.4.2 Participation as a route to relevance

Inclusive systems and participatory structures

Meaningful involvement requires that agendas are strongly and directly influenced by participants. Unless the constituency has been able to genuinely influence priorities, actions and messages of the project, there is a good chance that relevance will be low.

In the case of the DCPA, the strongest part of the approach to ensure participation at the beginning, was to invite people to be part of structures for representation.

> *"It would be possible to involve indigenous people more for future planning. For example, regarding awareness of their rights, instead of having the project team do that. They should mobilise youth in local, existing structures to spread the word in their normal structures. Chiefs of villages and quarters have been engaged, but they should be more in the lead, and suggest methods and strategies that can be discussed and guided by the project team." (CTPAD)*

Relais communautaire

The main structures are the local committee, chef de village, an income generation group, maman-conseillere, relais-communauraire. These were formed and functional to varying degrees. The most effective representatives were the community coordinators (relais communauraire). This was a combined group of trained indigenous people and bantu peer educators, who conducted outreach and communication campaigns. They were trained to deliver information and stimulate discussion. They received travel and convening funds while the project was functioning well, and were a motivated group that drove the project at local level.

The Executive and local Team supported relais with training of trainers, planning and joint outreach, and mentorship – helping them to remain engaged. This was a positive part of the project until the coordinating team's dynamics reduced programme engagement at community level in the final year.

Top-down approaches were less effective

There seemed to be less participation in the additional messaging, beyond the explanations of the law. There were several project themes that have not been accepted by the indigenous communities, and we suggest that this might be because they are not felt to be as relevant, have been imposed as external values, and are sometimes in direct conflict with local culture.

The most notable of these is a focus on hospital births in a culture where traditional birth attendants and home births are normal. The resource centre also seems to have been inspired without consultation with local communities. Some of the other project aspects that were challenging might seem reasonable, but were developed without consultation - such as payment of school fees, consistent school attendance, and even dress and hygiene and patriarchy.

These aspects of the project come across as being top-down, and designed to 'educate' indigenous people into mainstream society. As a result they risked a lack of cross-cultural understanding, and a lack of ownership and buy-in among indigenous people. The discrimination and sense of superiority among respondents was still entrenched, as a quoted respondent shared their perception of indigenous people:

> *"They have problems keeping clean. They even sleep straight on the ground – even if they have a bed. There was somebody who could build beds, but he did not finish it. He preferred sleeping on the ground, dirtying his clothes. The project provided some materials for indigenous people every year. There was a big box with school material but it was stolen by young PA who sold it in order to buy alcohol." (KI)*

Even if an idea such as sleeping on a bed or sending children to school might seem justified to an outsider – a participatory approach would be preferable for finding shared priorities, or acceptable solutions to agreed difficulties. This is far more likely to succeed than focusing on priorities that come from other cultures.

Community dialogue or participatory process.

In the beginning there was no entry point for consultation. The law was therefore a good strategy to open the conversation. Respondents said that indigenous people have often been closed off from communication and unwilling to engage in discussion. Being involved in the dissemination of the law, and in discussions on legal and human rights has created an opening.

Now that there are relationships, the strategy could become more participatory, and therefore more relevant. Priorities could now be set with indigenous people's ownership and leadership. The next strategic design process has potential to be more participatory – and for this a more skilled approach to participation and dialogue would be needed.

Community dialogue and facilitation require skills. Simply asking people to give input is not likely to produce a meaningful discussion – especially when the topic is a workplan prepared in advance. While indigenous people have little experience of knowledge of project planning, it would appear from the quote below that the facilitators also lack sufficient skills in facilitation of community dialogue, and in participatory methods which help people to consider options, priorities and concerns.

> *"They were quite free to propose a strategy for the project. There was a council (conseil, large group meeting 2t/y) who validated the work plans and budget. They did not really change anything and did not have much experience of this kind of planning and work. We did not really help them to play their role but simply reported activities and challenges. The indigenous people were there but did not quite know how to question or play an active role. (CTPAD)*

The field of participatory processes is rich, and training of facilitators in these methods would add great value to the skills base in CTPAD, local government and community organisations.

Community dialogue: Participatory strategic planning in the future

For future programming it is recommended that local level strategies should be developed through participatory community dialogue, and should not necessarily be standardised across all communities. While the project might be able to offer a menu and would present a certain principled position, the choices for final programme design would ideally be made by community members themselves through a transparent and inclusive process.

Facilitated Community Dialogue [11] processes ask participants, for example, to think about improvements or problems that affect their lives, and then consider i) the solutions that are within their control; and ii) solutions which need the environment to change or need inputs from the outside. Facilitating dialogues which identify solutions which indigenous people can directly implement are directly empowering. The programme or duty bearers can also learn from participants about their perceived obstacles to self-realisation. This greatly helps to ensure that programmes are relevant.

These dialogues should also be conducted among bantu allies, who best understand the dynamics in their own ethnic groups.

Community healing

Taking community dialogue and solutions further, Community Healing [12] using trained facilitators is also a space for inter-racial dialogue and shared experience. Having cleared the way with legal and structural changes, there is an important process of confronting deep racist beliefs and assumptions. A more profound process, which goes beyond superficially changing behaviour and reducing violence and discrimination, is needed in order to bridge cultural misconceptions, and to develop mutual respect, understanding and empathy.

[11] https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=how+to+facilaite+community+dialogue&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8

[12] http://paren.org.za/site/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/IJR-Community-Healing-Manual-web.pdf

5.5 EFFICIENCY

CTPAD management, the Executive Team and local structures were able to deliver the project effectively and ambitiously in the first five years of the Digni grant (2013-2017). In the most recent phase, however, communication and transparency have decreased, and further capacity is needed for leadership and coordination. By mid 2022 a lack of strong project management, team work and oversight has led to poor programme delivery and inefficiency. A great deal of time and energy has been invested in conflict, or has been wasted through lack of coordination. We describe these problems in more detail below using the lenses of firstly, financial processes, and secondly, project structures and management.

5.5.1 Inefficient financial flow

Without strong financial systems for disbursing and accounting for local expenditure, all operating funds were kept and managed by the national team. Funds were only disbursed during site visits, training sessions and campaigns. The project might have been more efficient with more open, team-based and transparent planning, and more of the budget allocated at the local level; although the choice to keep financial control centralised is a fair reflection of the high risks of fraud that are part of this landscape. A balance is needed between managing financial accountability rigorously, while allowing local team members to conduct a flow of activities. Stronger financial systems could consider how best to disburse, and whether there are secure alternative systems to on-site disbursement and direct payments.

5.5.2 Lack of financial transparency

Much of the loss of trust and cohesion was related to a lack of information on major financial decisions, and structures for budgeting and financial accountability being weakened or dismantled. The project received a 'qualified audit' [13] in 2022, which highlighted concerns about financial capacity, and provision of receipts and records. Concerns were also raised in a letter from four project managers in May 2022, asking for intervention by EEC and Digni. The points were considered, and EEC was asked to address what was regarded as an internal issue.

As a result of these fractures the project has been largely stalled and activities have been halted. The stoppage did not greatly reduce expenditure, since much of the total budget was allocated to salaries, and labour law requires that these continued to be paid while information about the allegations was being collected.

Respondents in Norway shared their own difficulties in acting as mediator from a distance and as outsiders. The parties within the conflicts are volatile. Accusations are contradictory and "flying in all possible directions", and clarity and objectivity are difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, Digni and Misjonskirken Norge have responded, asked for follow up, and pursued enquiries. Their inputs have not always been communicated through the local structures, however, and dissatisfied local players have expressed frustration at perceived complacence in Digni and Misjonskirken Norge. There is, however, a limit to the extent to which these Northern organisations feel they can intervene in internal organisational wrangles, and they have no wish to engage directly with different elements in the conflict.

Recommendations

During the first year of the next phase, it is urgent and important that organisational issues are resolved, and systems put in place. Most of the project activities cannot continue before MKN together with the partner has strengthened the financial management systems. We suggest the following possible process:

i) A thorough investigation of financial trails is recommended.

[13] Meaning an audit which could not confirm that the necessary standards of financial management were being met, and which raised some problems. A 'clean audit' would be desirable – one which states that all systems and records met accounting practice standards

ii) Institutionalise policies and procedures for basic financial management and transparency. Stronger protocols and implementation are needed for, e.g. procurement processes, budgeting and budget management, systems to finance field teams, authorisation and accounting systems, and regulations for conflict of interest and nepotism. Many of these systems were in place and practiced under the previous management of CTPAD, and they need to be re-established and enforced.
iii) This will involve salaries for a skeleton staff, and a financial technical assistance consultant. It should be regarded as organisational development. Minor project activities could be continued, but no substantial budget for implementation should be allocated until systems are established, tested and approved.

5.5.3 Organisational fractures and internal conflict

Another limitation in the last phase of the project has been poor communication, conflict between different levels of the project management team, and lack of management support to local level Project Coordinators. Functionality was substantially weakened from June to October 2022. The EEC was asked to lead on a conflict resolution process, but did not engage with the issues. Two severe fractures have developed in relationships within the organisation and the project. Firstly, CTPAD Coordination and Administrative teams are in conflict with parts of the Executive Team over complaints about communication and transparency. Secondly, the line relationship between the local team and the Executive Team is strained, with local team members stating that they had not been involved in planning, had not been supported to do their job, or allocated working funds - while the Executive Team had occasionally arrived unannounced in their villages, and even asked them not to participate in local activities.

Project management

Management skills and style, along with team cohesion, have been challenging during this project. Individual performance management has not been accountable, or tracked. Relationships and conflicts between individuals are not being managed by line management or governance structures, and clashes between individuals have impacted negatively on performance.

> *"We have not sat down and discussed our roles. …. we were naive and nothing was signed. There has been no contract."*

Stronger leadership and management are needed, creating trust and transparency, ensuring that performance is supported and managed, communication is clear and flows well, and professional conduct and job description requirements are met.

Project management structure

In previous phases, a project management structure was in place. It provided inclusive and transparent work planning, budgeting and reconciliation. It also functioned as a team-based governance structure, working with feedback and strategically guiding operational decisions. This has been discontinued, and with it the system of regular committee meetings and guidance, strategic discussions and planning, and continuous transparent communication of activities, plans and budgets. The change has resulted in loss of communication, lack of information between different project functions, loss of trust, and closing off of funding and communication to the local coordinators at the front line.

> *"Five years ago, there was openness. There were weekly meetings with all project coordinators, peer review of plans, planning and budget presentations for both learning and accountability. When money came from Norway the team was cc'd and invited to open discussions on project planning. There would always be follow up, and accounting for money used on a mission."*

Project coordinator support

As a community-based programme, the Project Coordinators and local teams were key to its success. Since the stalled implementation in the second half of the project they have not received running costs or support, and have been actively excluded during field visits by the Executive Team. The last year of the project has been inefficient and under-delivered, and has not deployed this cadre well.

"People responsible for implementing the project don't know what is going on. They have been excluded where they should be directly involved as coordinators."

The project was designed for cost-effective, sustainable and stream-lined delivery, led by a local team. When project activities were suspended, this was not well-communicated to the field team – which had implementation plans and did not receive funding to run activities. There was further confusion when visits were made to the area by the Executive Team, despite the project being suspended, and at far greater expense than local interventions - sometimes without informing the local coordinator.

Conflict and mistrust

Connected with a lack of communication and a lack of financial transparency, trust among the team members is very low. There is intense conflict between virtually all leadership and management levels for different reasons, including profound mistrust between CTPAD and the Executive Team, and a lack of communication and coordination between the Executive Team and the Local Coordination teams.

Recommendation

i) The systems losses since the end of 2018 need to be reviewed and better organisational systems agreed and formally operationalised. Basic governance and management practices need to be improved, using updated versions of good practices from the past. These should apply especially to strategic and operational planning and accountability.

5.6 SUSTAINABILITY

Two impacts: i) grasp of the law, and activism for its implementation among indigenous people; and ii) institutional strengthening, sensitisation and motivation for rights among leaders in local government, are possibly the most sustainable and influential of the project's intentions. To the extent that they are sustained, other longer term benefits are likely to be felt, and the conversation and social movement in these areas should continue, and expand to other areas. Other project elements had less impact, and will be less sustainable in terms of the outcomes they did have. While there has been progress, it is clear that the challenges are vast, and deep change may take generations to achieve.

The Sous-prefet in Ngo, Mr Omombi Aloyse

"The cohabitation will continue and the behaviour of those who have changed through the awareness raising. Those who are won for the cause will continue." (FGD)

One site, Djambala, only began in the final phase, which was even shorter as a result of the internal challenges. In the other areas changes were more visible.

As for sustainability in CTPAD and its longer-term leadership of the project, sustainability will depend on re-invention. With internal issues at present is not a constructive member of the drive for indigenous people's rights, although the local coordinators who have been trained are likely to continue to be champions in their communities, and a legacy will be felt.

"The PA can continue on their own but this project cannot continue in the current condition."

Where activities depended on project funding, such as outreach, the functions of the project will not be sustained at the same level. This means that expansion will be slower, and will need word-of-mouth to continue. It also means that funded structures and meetings, such the Watch Cell or its new format, will not have financing to meet or to enable groups of indigenous people to meet. If training and sensitisation and outreach continue, they will take a different form.

> *"The watch cell is funded for transport and some food. This will stop with the project, but the government is there and will keep it up at a lower level because lack of funding." (KI)*

6 Conclusion

The DCPA has been a holistic and ambitious project, targeting themes that are critical for the rights and culture of the indigenous people in the country. It has built a solid foundation in Law 05-2011, the translation and dissemination of which has given the project legitimacy, weight and an entry point for engagement with both indigenous people and bantu as well as mobilizing government officials for the cause. The EEC was bold to accept responsibility and ownership of the project, and has shown its ability to innovate and lead at a national level in matters of global importance, and a strong foundation in human rights and influence. The EEC could take this bold initiative further, since it has not yet formally engaged or assumed reflection and adoption within its own organisation.

Although the project has made valuable impact in the lives of indigenous people in these areas, especially through creating awareness of legal and human rights, and galvanising a movement for advocacy and assertiveness from within indigenous communities, there have been problems. These problems began at the very beginning of this project phase, in 2019, and related to leadership culture, communication and financial transparency. They culminated in the final year of the project with a severe loss of functionality, which has damaged trust among the team members at all levels. There has been conflict between virtually all leadership and management levels for different reasons, which has brought the project to a halt. Addressing this conflict, and supporting organisational reforms and capacity rebuilding will require in-depth organisational work before a potential continuation.

Despite difficult conditions, the project has proved its relevance, produced innovative approaches, emerging and tangible results that should be celebrated along with many valuable lessons learned for future interventions.

Annex 1: Digni analysis

All Digni-funded projects are required to complete the Digni Empowerment Assessment Tool (EAT) to ascertain the level of outcome or impact achieved. There are two mandatory themes to be evaluated using the EAT: Strengthening Civil Society and Gender Equality. Additionally, the DCPA project works within the thematic area of Peaceful Coexistence.

To assess the level of achievement against these themes the Digni frameworks uses criteria of: resourcing, agency and changes in the situation to describe results from minimal (Level 1 = Outputs only) though to sustainable and substantial (Level 5 = Impact). Based on the findings of the evaluation, we suggest that the project was largely around Level 4 – Substantial outcomes, but with questions around sustainability at this stage. These are elaborated in the table below.

The EEC DCPA Project assessed against the Digni EAT

	Degree and level of empowerment				
Project themes	**Level 1: Output** Project resources, but no substantive change to agency or situation	**Level 2: Output** Some local contribution of resources, increased personal power, but little change in behaviour or situation	**Level 3: Outcome** Some local contribution of resources, increased collective agency, some documented actions, and some changes in situation.	**Level 4: Outcome** Substantial local contribution of resources, collective action, some changes in both local situation and structural or policy context.	**Level 5: Impact** Substantial local contribution from stakeholders and members. Collective action and influence, and substantial, sustainable change to drivers for rights
Peaceful coexistence					

Level 4: Considering the context of extreme racism, exclusion and marginalisation of indigenous people, the achievement of widespread knowledge and advocacy for the law protecting indigenous people is exceptional. The law itself was a major structural change for the country ten years ago. Implementation has been slow, and local level structural discrimination remained severe in the early stages of the project. Translation of the law into Kitwa was of itself a ground-breaking intervention. The project can also claim to have contributed to local officials being motivated and enabled to disseminate and enforce the law; local duty bearers (teacher, police and hospital staff) being sensitised and removing structural discrimination such as separate waiting rooms or meal spaces. Although confronting violence against indigenous people through local justice structures has been minimal – systems have been set up and precedents have been set.

Overturning the long history of deep-seated mistrust, cultural division and racist attitudes could take generations – but pockets of cross-cultural harmony are being seen, rooted in local initiatives and outreach among individual indigenous people and bantu.

An area of low achievement under this theme is the inertia being seen in EEC to adopt and implement the EEC policy on indigenous people, which asks the church to: firstly create non-racist churches within the EEC; and secondly to preach tolerance between different cultural and religious belief systems.

Civil society					

Level 3: Local resources, agency and collective agency have produced much of the energy behind the project's achievements. The system of using local coordinators for awareness raising and information sharing has been successful. This energy may continue in some respects and forms, and collective agency and solidarity have taken root in the first round of villages involved in the project. Sustainability will also be supported by the commitment of local government to lead coordination will have impact.

Where the outcome reaches its limit is, firstly that the different forms and layers of structure which the project planned do not seem to have been firmly established – and may have been too complicated, top-down and separate from normal local structures to become part of community practice. Another limit is where the project only had two years, mostly during Covid, local agency and civil society were not particularly reached. Finally, in terms of sustainability - without project funding to convene and be coordinated, these loose collectives may have difficulty continuing to work purposefully in their own and neighbouring communities, and the lasting civil society outcomes may be mostly informal outreach by activists.

	Degree and level of empowerment				
Project themes	**Level 1: Output** Project resources, but no substantive change to agency or situation	**Level 2: Output** Some local contribution of resources, increased personal power, but little change in behaviour or situation	**Level 3: Outcome** Some local contribution of resources, increased collective agency, some documented actions, and some changes in situation.	**Level 4: Outcome** Substantial local contribution of resources, collective action, some changes in both local situation and structural or policy context.	**Level 5: Impact** Substantial local contribution from stakeholders and members. Collective action and influence, and substantial, sustainable change to drivers for rights
Gender equality					

Level 2: Gender equality was not a core aspect of the programme, although there were interventions to address GBV, a plan for structures that included women's groups, and all activities were intended to be gender representative.

There are localised examples of increased gender equality and women's empowerment, and a slight reduction is gender-based abuse. Women in the project felt more able to speak in front of men, and were more vocal and confident than is the norm in the strongly patriarchal culture of indigenous people.

There was also agreement that the frequency of rape of indigenous women by bantu has noticeably decreased, and that domestic violence amongst indigenous people has slightly reduced.

GBV remains a major problem, however, and work is needed specifically on GBV, including structures and spaces for women to regain power and access justice; as well as intensive sensitisation of men in both bantu and indigenous communities.

It should also be noted that the project could have inadvertently had a negative impact on gender rights. The use of hospital births as an indicator and messaging theme related to access to health services. Although the project intended to encourage uptake of health services and to facilitate non-discrimination by health facilities, the choice of indicator around maternity seems to have influenced the interventions on the ground. The idea that correct health seeking behaviour leads to 100% hospital births does not seem to be in line with consideration of traditional birth attendants; family support before, during and after birth; and the spiritual rituals surrounding women, families and new-borns. Instead, an emphasis on generalised healthy lifestyles, including identification of at-risk births as just one aspect, would reduce the targeting of pregnant women in an attempt to bring about health reforms. Engagement with traditional birth attendants and more shared knowledge in both directions on safe birthing would be appropriate.

Annex 2: Documents reviewed

2018 Project overview

2018 DCPA Plan annuel francais

2019 DCPA Plan annuel francais

2019 DCPA rapport narratif francais

2020 DCPA Plan annuel francais

2020 DCPA Rapport annuel francais

2021 10697 DCPA Financial report to Digni

2021 Mid-term evaluation report of the project "Rights and culture of populations indigenous people in the Republic of Congo" / Rapport d'évaluation à mi parcours 20

2021 DCPA Plan annuel francais

2021 DCPA Rapport narratif francais

2021 Independent Auditor's Report on the Financial Statements of the CTPAD

2022 10697 DCPA budget

2022 DCPA Plan annuel francais

DCPA Project document 2018-2022 English

Karta / Letter from the Executive Team to EEC on tensions in the DCPA

Policy of the Evangelical Church of Congo on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Rapport tecnhique du projet DCPA periode 2018-2022

Rapprot final du projet DCPA 2018-2022 / Final Report on the DCPA Project 2018-2022