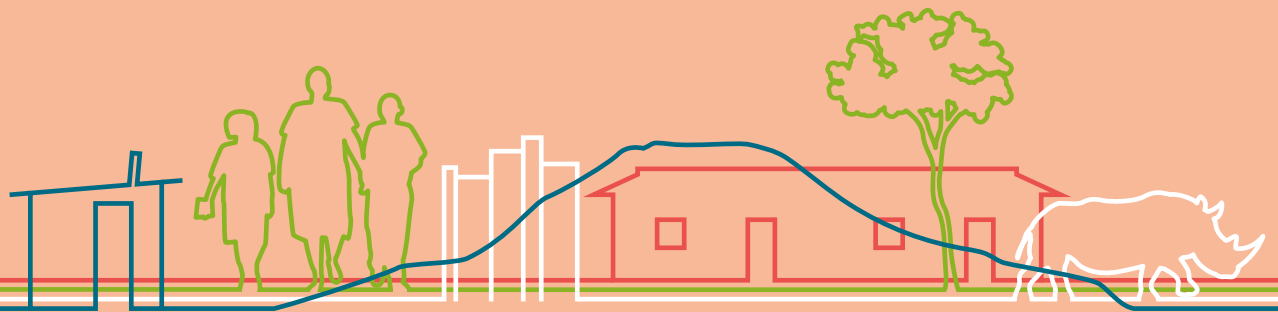


Report by Cyril Owen Brandt
Winner of the 2015 Education Development Trust **Tim Morris** Award

Constructing schools in a recurrent armed conflict in Democratic Republic of Congo



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Welcome to Education Development Trust

Education Development Trust, established over 40 years ago as the Centre for British Teachers and later known as CfBT Education Trust, is a large educational organisation providing education services for public benefit in the UK and internationally. We aspire to be the world's leading provider of education services, with a particular interest in school effectiveness.

Our work involves school improvement through inspection, school workforce development and curriculum design for the UK's Department for Education, local authorities and an increasing number of independent and state schools, free schools and academies. We provide services direct to learners in our schools.

Internationally we have successfully implemented education programmes for governments in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, and work on projects funded by donors such as the Department for International Development, the European Commission, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the World Bank and the US Agency for International Development, in low- and middle-income countries.

Surpluses generated by our operations are reinvested in our educational research programme. Please visit www.educationdevelopmenttrust.com for more information.

About the author and the Tim Morris Award

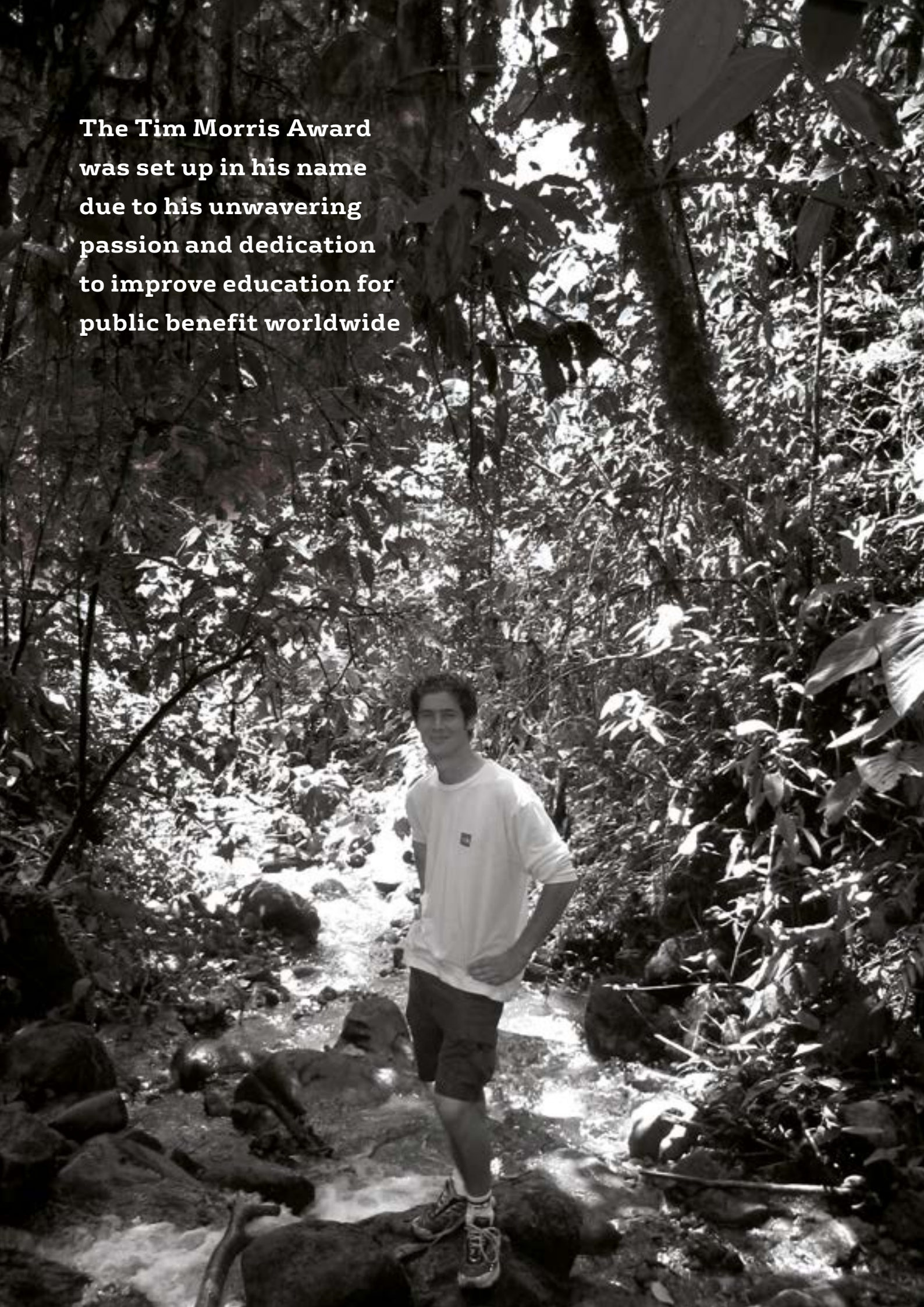
Cyril Brandt is a PhD Candidate in International Development Studies at the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (University of Amsterdam). Cyril was the winner of the 2015 Tim Morris Award.

Tim Morris (1982-2012) was dedicated to providing education to those less fortunate in the developing world. As a key player in CfBT Education Trust's (now Education Development Trust) Business Development department, Tim was instrumental in designing and providing education and employment opportunities for the world's most disadvantaged people. Tim's experience in international education and economics led to the completion of his Masters in Educational Planning, Economics and International Development at the Institute of Education. Tim's dream was to use this foundation to launch his career on aid projects in the developing world. However, Tim was just 29 when his life was tragically cut short by cancer. The Tim Morris Award was set up in his name due to his unwavering passion and dedication to improve education for public benefit worldwide. While Tim is now unable to continue working to help those most in need, his legacy will continue to make a difference.

Launched in May 2012, Education Development Trust's 'Tim Morris Award' offers £2,000 in financial support to a PhD or MPhil student in the field of Education or International Development. The award's aim is to support field research in a developing country.

Our thanks go to Tim's family for their ongoing support and involvement; to Anna Riggall and Rachael Fitzpatrick from Education Development Trust's research team, for their work in selecting and supporting the recipient; and to Cyril Brandt, PhD candidate at the University of Amsterdam, recipient of the 2015 Award and author of this report.

**The Tim Morris Award
was set up in his name
due to his unwavering
passion and dedication
to improve education for
public benefit worldwide**





Executive summary

Constructing schools in conflict-affected regions can be an important nexus between humanitarian assistance, development projects and peace-building. Nonetheless, this research implies that a range of challenges are faced by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and/or donors seeking to implement such projects.

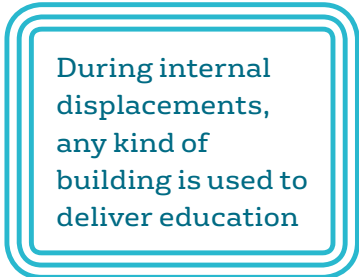
However, there are few qualitative case studies dealing with these issues. Drawing on empirical research in two conflict-affected districts in the South-Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), this report explores the following three questions in the context under study,

1. Which types of schools have existed (in terms of construction style and quality)?
2. Which actors have invested in school constructions in recent years?
3. Which challenges have arisen in school construction?

The analysis reveals the following:

The quality of school constructions can differ greatly. During internal displacements, any kind of building is used to deliver education. Most permanent schools are built by village communities using locally available materials. Constructions by international donors and NGOs can result in nicely built schools. However, in several cases, abandoned construction sites and incomplete buildings were discovered. Although, the school communities usually try to take the necessary steps to make these unfinished facilities usable. In one district, UNICEF funded temporary emergency schools, and the national government had recently invested in a few high-quality buildings in each district. Faith-based organisations, which play an important role in educational governance in the DRC, hardly invest in school constructions in the rural areas under study.

The outcomes of such building projects can face a number of challenges. This report suggests that parents, teachers, NGOs and/or donors face a range of challenges during or after school construction. In this recurrent armed conflict, schools can be targeted repeatedly by members of militias. As a consequence, school buildings and construction sites can be damaged and abandoned.



During internal displacements, any kind of building is used to deliver education

Furthermore, the presence of militias makes the monitoring of school construction projects highly challenging. Local educational communities are often provided with little information about school construction projects, and have little power to hold NGOs or donors accountable. Similarly, the government construction programs are opaque and progressed slowly. In all cases, there is a high risk of embezzlement of funds. As a result, the quality of school buildings can suffer, and the underlying attempt to improve the provision of education and enhance government legitimacy can be hampered.

The report finishes with a range of practical recommendations and points for considerations around four topics:

- Participation and accountability
- Knowledge management
- National policies
- Conflict-sensitive construction

Abbreviations

CID	Name of Congolese NGO involved in a school construction project
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EP	Ecole Primaire (Primary school)
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MEPSP	Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel (Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PRRIS	<i>Programme de Réhabilitation et Reconstruction des Infrastructures Scolaires</i> (Program of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of School Infrastructure)

A SCHOOL BUILDING CONSTRUCTED BY AN INTERNATIONAL
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION



Introduction

Drawing on his research in South Sudan, Sommers¹ pointed out the following: “A trained teacher, a textbook, a blackboard, a piece of chalk, a classroom with a roof – all of these normal items of education are precious, and too frequently rare, school commodities”. During my research in two conflict-affected regions in the South-Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, I came to a similar conclusion. I came to understand that any building, blackboard, textbook, roof, etc., exists due to a particular set of efforts by local, national or international actors.

Constructing schools is one of the basic conditions for access to public primary and secondary education.² (Re-)Constructing schools after armed conflict can constitute part of the path from humanitarian assistance, towards more sustainable development. Schools are one of the few faces of the state in remote areas, and school construction goes hand in hand with an increased state presence and can foster state legitimacy. For donors and NGOs, school construction can be a very tangible way of measuring and promoting activities. Clearly, school buildings are valuable for a range of reasons.

Material goods required for the construction of schools are rare and precious, and cannot be taken for granted; but should be subjected to an analysis of their provenance in the local context. Their provision at a local level is uncertain, irregular and embedded in a range of power structures. Unpacking these power structures is one of the core aims of this report.

Armed conflict can negatively impact the availability of school buildings. Research shows that students, teachers and schools are subject to attacks in a wide range of countries.³ Teachers are often trapped between two sides: the militia suspect them of cooperating with the government;⁴ the government and/or military suspect them of sympathizing with the militia, especially if they live in an occupied area.⁵ Research reveals that schools are looted, burned and used as military shelters or camps for internally displaced people,⁶ with recent research suggesting similar impacts for the DRC.⁷

Schools are one of the few faces of the state in remote areas, and school construction goes hand in hand with an increased state presence and can foster state legitimacy

¹Sommers, 2005, p.65f ²Burde, Guven, Kelcey, Lahmann, & Al-Abbadi, 2015 ³Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2014b; Lopes Cardozo & Shah, 2016; Pherali, 2013; UNESCO, 2011 ⁴Lopes Cardozo & Shah, 2016 ⁵Pherali, 2013, p. 58 ⁶Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2014b; Richmond, 2014 ⁷De Herdt, Marivoet, & Muhigirwa, 2015; Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2014a; Jones & Naylor, 2014

School buildings are important for a range of reasons, and schools are severely negatively affected by armed conflict. There is a general dearth of government investment in school construction in the DRC, and for this reason, school reconstruction and rehabilitation has become the priority of donors and NGOs working at the nexus between humanitarian and development assistance in conflict-affected contexts.⁸ In reality, school construction does not always unfold as planned. While any intervention or project by governments or donors is likely to face unforeseen problems during implementation,⁹ conflict-affected contexts present particular challenges¹⁰ and school construction is no exception. Many contemporary armed conflicts, such as the one under study, have no clear beginning or end: the region under study has experienced a recurrent armed conflict since the early 2000s. Within such a setting, the construction of schools is not a once-in-a-lifetime project: maintenance or reconstruction after multiple displacements and prolonged absence is necessary, but it is also tedious and costly.

There is fairly little qualitative research on school construction in recurrent armed conflicts. For these reasons, this report focusses on a recurrent armed conflict in the southeastern DRC province of Haut-Katanga, and explores the following three questions, in the context under study:

1. Which types of schools have existed (in terms of construction style and quality)?
2. Which actors have invested in school constructions in recent years?
3. Which challenges have arisen in school construction?

The report draws largely on qualitative research in the form of semi-structured interviews and pictures (see Methodology, page 15).¹¹

By addressing these questions, the report responds to the growing importance of education in humanitarian interventions and conflict-affected contexts more broadly.¹² Regarding the DRC, there is still little research on education and conflict.¹³ Of particular relevance for this report is a study by Jones and Naylor on the quantitative impact of armed conflict on education.¹⁴ This report complements their quantitative focus regarding the costs to rebuild schools with a qualitative approach, designed to:

- a) better understand how people are coping without external assistance and
- b) better comprehend the range of problems external agencies have faced while operating within the context of the recurrent armed conflict in South-Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Such a qualitative investigation of key issues might prove helpful in creating the conditions for sustainable interventions by governments and donors. Mendenhall¹⁵ underlines this point with the following statement from a World Bank employee:

"At worst, [from a lack of sustainability] you get empty hulls of school buildings, buildings that have fallen apart right after they have been rehabilitated because there is no ownership. You get frustrated teachers, officials, students and parents because of raised expectations. If [education] is not sustainable, the

There is fairly little qualitative research on school construction in recurrent armed conflicts

⁸School construction usually goes hand-in-hand, or is accompanied by, other components such as school kitchens or the distribution of school kits ⁹Li, 2007 ¹⁰Mendenhall, 2014 ¹¹This research is part of a PhD at the Amsterdam Institute of Social Science Research (University of Amsterdam) and forms part of a bigger research project on Education, Peacebuilding and Social Justice under the supervision of Dr. Mieke Lopes Cardozo ¹²Nicolai, Hine, & Wales, 2015; Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008) ¹³De Herdt et al., 2015 ¹⁴Jones & Naylor, 2014 ¹⁵2014, p. 77

legitimacy of the state, which is usually pretty tenuous anyway, is undermined and things collapse, and that usually results in a return to conflict.” (Interview, World Bank representative, August 30, 2007)

Although the report speaks little about the impact of armed conflict on students and teachers, it is essentially concerned with the question “How can schooling in difficult circumstances be improved?” Adequate construction is but one aspect towards that objective, but it is an essential aspect that is yet under-researched.

This report seeks to make observations about the state of school construction in the regions under study, by investigating issues that led to the failure of school construction programmes at local, regional and national levels. The report is further concerned with power structures between local communities, NGOs, donors, district educational administrators, and the national and provincial government, and the report, thus, draws heavily on evidence provided through photographs of schools and their surroundings.

Outlined first within the report is the methodology applied to this research. This is followed by contextual and thematic background information on three issues: Congolese education governance, recurrent armed conflict in Katanga, and school construction costs and guidelines. The report then moves on to the empirical chapter which consists of four main sections discussing the range of contexts for school construction:

- Local construction during displacement
- Local construction upon return
- Construction by the national government
- Construction funded by international actors

Finally, the report provides concluding thoughts and finishes with a list of key findings and future considerations.

This report seeks to make observations about the state of school construction in the regions under study, by investigating issues that led to the failure of school construction programmes at local, regional and national levels



Methodology

This research took place in a range of different locations: the national capital Kinshasa; at various cities and villages in the province of Haut-Katanga (yellow); in the provincial capital Lubumbashi; and the so-called “triangle of death”, a conflict-affected region (red) in Katanga originally made up of the three districts (territories) of Manono, Mitwaba and Pweto.



Research for this study took place during two phases: January to May 2015, and December to April 2016. During my PhD research, a total of 351 semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted, of which 150 were conducted in the two conflict-affected districts. In early 2015 research started in the district of

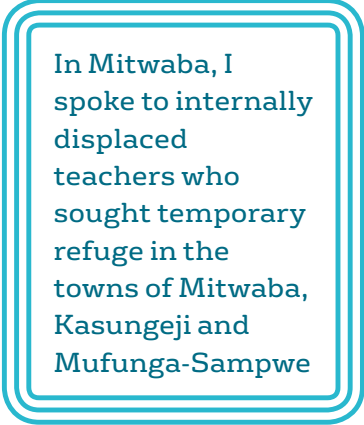
During my PhD research, a total of 351 semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted, of which 150 were conducted in the two conflict-affected districts

Pweto, where 87 interviews were conducted. A few of these were conducted with Congolese researchers. After this first stage, research continued in the district of Mitwaba (not explicit on the map, located west of Pweto) where 33 interviews were conducted. In Mitwaba, I spoke to internally displaced teachers who sought temporary refuge in the towns of Mitwaba, Kasungeji and Mufunga-Sampwe. Upon returning in 2016, I discovered that all teachers met in 2015 had returned to their villages. For that reason, I embarked on research along three main roads: from Mitwaba (district capital) to Mwema (approximately 60 km northwest), from Mitwaba (district capital) to Kisele (approximately 105 km northwest), and from Mitwaba (district capital) to Kyubo (approximately 120 km south) and conducted 30 follow-up interviews.

In the interviews, four topics were addressed:

- Teacher salaries
- School constructions
- Attacks on teachers and subsequent displacements
- School accreditations

These topics were discussed with a range of government and faith-based administrators, as well as staff from international and national donors and NGOs. In some cases, it would have been useful to track down even more voices from donors and NGOs, to include their version of events. However, this was not possible due to practical limitations. Further to the interviews, this report draws on photographic materials of school buildings.¹⁶



In Mitwaba, I spoke to internally displaced teachers who sought temporary refuge in the towns of Mitwaba, Kasungeji and Mufunga-Sampwe

¹⁶ All photographs, unless otherwise stated, were taken by Cyril Brandt, author of this report, or Cyril's research assistant





Thematic background

Educational governance and a recurrent armed conflict

The DRC is a large country with little reliable or high-quality infrastructure for transportation, water, energy, etc. Delivery of public services operates at a minimum level. Together with the fact that the country has existed with substantial internal political violence for many years, the DRC is often considered a weak, fragile or failed state. However, the state still has an active role in people's everyday lives.¹⁷ The education system is performing well in terms of key indicators, such as adult literacy rates,¹⁸ and millions of students attend primary and secondary schools every day. Hundreds of thousands of teachers attend school to teach, regardless of whether they are officially registered or not, and tens of thousands of schools have been accredited by the state.

In such a context, assumptions about state failure do not explain how, why, and with what results the education system is still functioning. In the context of the DRC, scholars have set aside normative assumptions about statehood, and have started to explore how state formation, the negotiation of public authority and the delivery of public services take place empirically.¹⁹

Due to historical reasons, faith-based organisations such as the Catholic Church or various Protestant denominations, manage about 75% of all public schools.²⁰ Each educational network has its own inspection and administration, and hires and deploys its own teachers. Poncelet and colleagues²¹ therefore refer to the DRC as a "concessionary state". All educational networks follow the National Curriculum, and the state is officially obliged to pay these teachers' salaries and provide schools' functioning costs. However, under this hybrid governance structure, the state's decisions, laws and norms can also be opposed, negotiated and adapted.²² This is what certain researchers refer to as the "real governance" of education within the DRC.²³ Since the 1980s, the state has increasingly retreated from funding public education,²⁴ and since 1992, parents fund the larger chunk of the education system directly at point of delivery, especially through direct top-ups on teacher salaries.²⁵ Curiously, this community-sourced money is not only used to pay teachers, but moves vertically and is shared with administrators at the sub-provincial, provincial and national level also.²⁶

The education system is performing well in terms of key indicators, such as adult literacy rates, and millions of students attend primary and secondary schools every day

¹⁷Trefon, 2010 ¹⁸De Herdt & Titeca, 2016 ¹⁹Titeca & De Herdt, 2011 ²⁰André et al., 2010; Boyle, 1995 ²¹Poncelet and colleagues, 2010 ²²Titeca & De Herdt, 2011 ²³Olivier de Sardan, 2008; Titeca & De Herdt, 2011 ²⁴De Herdt, Titeca, & Wagemakers, 2012 ²⁵Ibid ²⁶Verhaghe, 2007a

Since the early 2000s, the government has regularly raised the monthly teacher salary and added new teachers onto the payroll. Despite this, according to government documents from October 2015, over 140,000 recognized teachers did not receive a salary from the government. Distributing salaries in remote and conflict-affected areas is challenging.²⁷ Given that teacher salaries make up about 90% of all government expenditures in primary and secondary education,²⁸ it is not surprising that the government allocates a mere US \$50 per month for schools' operational costs. Coupled with the fact that tens of thousands of schools in the entire country have been accredited by the state since 2004 without a clear planning process,²⁹ parents and teachers usually have to construct and maintain school buildings by their own means.

This combination of schooling provision by faith-based organisations, together with a standard practice of community-sourced funding, sheds some light on to the reasons why the Congolese education system has survived throughout the decades. At the same time, it points to a fragmented educational governance. Since the early 2000s, in what is commonly depicted as an era of post-conflict reconstruction, international donors such as the World Bank have invested heavily in the Congolese education sector, e.g. through school constructions. On the one hand, donors advocate for new norms and laws regarding school constructions, whilst on the other, they have directly funded the construction or rehabilitation of educational facilities.

In the region under study, the so-called *triangle of death* (*triangle de la mort*), these already difficult circumstances are exacerbated by a recurrent armed conflict. The triangle of death is a region in the Katanga province originally made up of the three districts: Manono, Mitwaba and Pweto. This recurrent armed conflict is part of what has been described as "new wars", i.e. civil wars and intra-national conflicts. These conflicts often reveal structural inequalities and injustices, most often among different ethnic or religious groups, who are deprived from socio-economic opportunities or suppressed even more directly.³⁰

The conflict within the *triangle of death* dates back at least to the beginning of the Second War in the DRC in 1998. In 1997, Laurent Kabila ousted Mobutu and took his place as President, with the help of Rwandan and Ugandan troops. One year later, Kabila turned against his former allies and suddenly faced these same troops during an invasion of the DRC. He rapidly turned to strategies involving the mobilization of popular self-defense forces. He provided arms to existing local groups, thereby enabling them to fight the aggressors independently of the regular army. These groups were known as *Mayi Mayi*,³¹ and initially fought against the invading Rwandan and Ugandan troops.

However, the *Mayi Mayi* have never been fully disarmed, and since then their goals and political leadership have become increasingly obscure.³² Somewhere between top-down political instrumentalisation and bottom-up grievances of the population, these groups increasingly turned against the Congolese population. Major attacks by militia groups evolved from the *Mayi Mayi* took place in the *triangle of death* between 2001-2006, and included attacks on educational infrastructures.

This combination of schooling provision by faith-based organisations, together with a standard practice of community-sourced funding, sheds some light on to the reasons why the Congolese education system has survived throughout the decades

²⁷ Brandt & De Herdt, forthcoming; Brannelly, 2012; Verhaghe, 2007 ²⁸ MEPSP, 2015 ²⁹ Brandt, forthcoming ³⁰ Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008, p. 475 ³¹ The name Mayi Mayi (Water Water) refers to a ritual of "sprinkling young soldiers with 'magic water', the mayi, which is believed to protect warriors from bullets." (Jourdan 2011, p.90). Instead, Mayi Mayi believe that these bullets are transformed into water. ³² Berghezan, 2016

Between 2006 and 2011, the situation was rather calm, and it is during this time that international donors came in to invest in the construction of school buildings. Since 2011, after the liberation of their leader *Gédéon* from the *Kasapa* prison in Lubumbashi, attacks by the militia have increased significantly. The militia now calls itself “Bakata Katanga”³³ and their corresponding political message is to fight for the independence of Katanga. The Bakata Katanga have devastated many villages and attacked civilians, leading to a humanitarian catastrophe. Attacks in the areas under study were most fierce between December 2012 and October 2014.

According to the local people, these attacks took place because of a divergence between the militia and the local peoples in terms of both ideologies and corresponding living habits. The militia live in the bush, and anyone living in urban centres or villages is considered their enemy. These groups suspect anyone living in populated areas of being in contact with and supporting the Congolese military.

Within the context of attacks on communities, the key targets for the militia include representatives of the existing social infrastructure: village chiefs, policemen, and teachers. Teachers and the schools they work in, are symbols of state presence and power and are therefore subject to harassments and attacks.

More specifically, there are three main reasons for the focus of attacks on teachers: firstly, teachers are seen as intellectuals who are able to read and write and who might thus communicate with the government. Frequently, they are described as “agent de l’ANR” (agents of the National Intelligence Service). Secondly, among the poor rural population teachers are the most likely to own a cell phone, which is perceived as making communication with ‘politicians’ even easier. Finally, teachers frequently commute between villages, urban and semi-urban centres as part of regular administrative activities, e.g. in order to withdraw their salaries. Simply going to the city often turns one into a “politician”, in the eyes of *Mayi Mayi*.

Armed conflicts have had a significantly negative impact on educational provision within specific regions. Looking at data yielded through the RESEN (Rapport d’Etat du Système Educatif National [Report about the State of the National Education System]³⁴), the six provinces affected by the conflict have the lowest primary school completion rate; 65% of all out-of-school children live in conflict-affected provinces (which is higher as well in relative terms).

Aid is currently focused on certain provinces: 87.5% of all children that have ever received humanitarian aid in education live in three provinces (North Kivu, South Kivu and Province Orientale), whereas Katanga only counts for 5.61%, which equates to 30,855 children receiving support in that province.³⁵ Furthermore, quantitative research by Jones & Naylor suggests that 724 schools in the region have been damaged between 2009-2012, with a further 19 schools destroyed and at least 20 schools damaged in 2013.³⁶

Although it is difficult to clearly show how many children have not received support, my own empirical data shows that entire sub-provinces did not receive any systematic assistance until 2015.

Armed conflicts have had a significantly negative impact on educational provision within specific regions

³³ “Bakata Katanga” stands for “cutting/separating Katanga” and their corresponding political message is to fight for the independence of Katanga. They draw on political claims from the 1960s in relation to the independence of Katanga (Kennes & Larmer, 2016). Besides the Bakata Katanga there are other insurgencies taking place in Katanga. These are not subject of this report.

³⁴ MEPS, 2014b ³⁵ MEPS, 2014b ³⁶ Jones & Naylor, 2014

School construction: agendas, guidelines and costs

School construction can yield benefits for all major educational stakeholders. Properly-built schools are essential for an adequate and safe learning and working environment for students and teachers.³⁷ Naturally, properly-built schools do not automatically lead to a higher quality of learning, but they constitute a necessary contributing factor. Research in the DRC³⁸ and elsewhere³⁹ suggests that school construction programmes are a popular choice for local communities in participatory rehabilitation projects. Gichuhi underlines the importance of school infrastructure in contributing to the quality of education and learning, especially in conflict-affected contexts.⁴⁰ Ideally schools are places to foster students' and teachers' psycho-social stability before, during and after emergencies.⁴¹ Well-maintained or rehabilitated school buildings have the potential to contribute to teacher retention.⁴² School reconstruction is a common response in post-conflict settings and can contribute to the legitimacy of a (post-conflict) government,⁴³ and can signal a "return to a state of government".⁴⁴ Furthermore, construction offers a quick possibility for international donor agencies to re-introduce access to education and present tangible results of their activities. As shown within this report, however, within conflict-affected settings, the construction of schools is not a once-in-a-lifetime project: reconstruction after attacks and following prolonged community absence is generally regarded as a necessity.

Ideally, each primary and secondary school contains a minimum of six classrooms (one per school year), furniture and blackboards, an office for the school's headmaster, a depot, a schoolyard, and separate sanitary latrines for boys and girls.⁴⁵ The buildings should be constructed in solid materials, have a sufficient number of closable windows, a solid and closable door, a roof that resists weather phenomena such as heavy winds, and a solid floor. Furthermore, each classroom needs desks, benches and a blackboard. In 2005, the World Bank report stated:

"The stock of classrooms in the DRC is old, with many rooms being in need of substantial repairs".⁴⁶

According to the Annual Educational Yearbook 2013-14, 33.40% of all schools nationwide, and 42.8% of all schools in Katanga, were built in solid material. Clearly, there is a huge need for properly built schools.⁴⁷

In the context of the DRC, in 2005, the World Bank⁴⁸ estimated the costs of construction per standard classroom in rural Congolese primary schools at US \$10,000. Jones and Naylor argue that this estimation was made according to outdated and rarely applied official norms.⁴⁹

A detailed guidebook on school construction, funded by a World Bank programme, outlines the costs of building a school block with three classrooms.⁵⁰ The guidebook helpfully distinguishes between four different environments that influence the construction costs. These environments are as follows:⁵¹

Within conflict-affected settings, the construction of schools is not a once-in-a-lifetime project: reconstruction after attacks and following prolonged community absence is generally regarded as a necessity

³⁷ World Bank, UNISDR, & INEE, 2010 ³⁸ Kyamusugulwa & Hilhorst, 2015 ³⁹ Nicolai et al., 2015 ⁴⁰ Gichuhi, 2015, p. 54 ⁴¹ Davies & Talbot, 2008 ⁴² Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; World Bank, 2010, p. 23 ⁴³ Dennis & Fentiman, 2007, p. 25; Novelli & Smith, 2011; World Bank, 2010 ⁴⁴ Wilson, 2000, p. 5 ⁴⁵ Pedagogic material is not dealt with at this point ⁴⁶ World Bank, 2005, p. 67 ⁴⁷ On a side note, my research shows that schools in the DRC are frequently used during two shifts a day. In those cases, a primary school can function in the morning and a secondary school in the afternoon in the same building (interviews with various principals and teachers in 2015 and 2016). Therefore, the total need of buildings does not equal the number of accredited educational institutions ⁴⁸ World Bank, 2005, p. 67 ⁴⁹ Jones & Naylor, 2014 ⁵⁰ Urbaplan, 2010 ⁵¹ Urbaplan, 2010, p. 95

- **Sector 1:** Urban, procurement is connected to the international market
- **Sector 2:** Urban, good connection to sector 1
- **Sector 3:** Difficult access, procurement via small vehicles from sector 1 or 2
- **Sector 4:** Very difficult access, often not accessible by vehicles

School construction in sections three and four,⁵² which are relevant to this report with an expected duration of 30 years, incur total costs between US \$16,500 (Type 3) or US \$27,000 (Type 4). The cheaper and less durable versions, with an expected duration of 15 years, incur costs of US \$14,250 (Type 3) or US \$21,750 (Type 4). Recent government planning documents and strategies include school construction as an important element.

Prior to 2010, the government did not have an education sector strategy. In 2010, a strategy for primary and secondary education was published⁵³ and the more detailed Interim Plan for Education (PIE) 2012-2014⁵⁴ followed in 2012. The PIE served as a guideline for both government and donor activities, and the sub-section on "Increasing system capacity to offer access to education"⁵⁵ included plans for the construction of schools. It is surprising to see that the PIE indicated construction costs that are not in line with the calculations made by the guidebook mentioned above.⁵⁶ For a primary school, the PIE assumes US \$50,000 if built by a company or US \$25,000 with community support.⁵⁷ More recently, the education-sector strategy for the years 2016-2025 includes a section for the "construction and rehabilitation of classrooms" but does not provide details on costs (section 3.1.1.1).

On top of these country-specific cost calculations and policy objectives, a range of reports point to the necessity to adapt school constructions to their context.⁵⁸ In the words of UNICEF and other's⁵⁹ *Safe schools in safe territories* report, "The structure of the building or buildings should have been designed and constructed in consideration of any natural, socio-natural or anthropic dynamics that may impact on it sporadically or in an ongoing manner." Similarly, the INEE Minimum Standards document⁶⁰ suggests the following:

"Inclusive and disaster-resistant design and construction: international planning and building code standards for schools (or local codes when they are of a higher standard) should be applied to temporary and permanent construction. School facilities should be designed, constructed and maintained to be resilient in the face of known hazards and threats such as fire, storms, earthquakes and landslides."

These recommendations point to a more general pattern regarding school building programmes: much attention is paid to constructions vis-à-vis natural disasters, but there are few references to empirical research on the realities of school construction in armed conflict.⁶¹ UNICEF's report on its temporary learning spaces is an exception to this.⁶²

With all of the above in mind, what does the reality for school construction initiatives in a conflict-affected region in the South-Eastern DRC look like?

Prior to 2010,
the government
did not have an
education sector
strategy

⁵² Urbaplan, 2010, p. 158 ⁵³ *Stratégie pour le développement du sous-secteur de l'EPSP 2010/11 - 2015/16* ⁵⁴ PIE, *Plan Interimaire de l'Education* ⁵⁵ *Renforcement des capacités d'accueil du système* ⁵⁶ Urbaplan, 2010 ⁵⁷ MEPSP, 2012, p. 104 ⁵⁸ INEE, 2012; UNICEF, *International Strategy for Disaster Reduction*, & Central American Educational and Cultural Coordinator, 2008; World Bank et al., 2010 ⁵⁹ UNICEF et al., 2008, p. 57 ⁶⁰ INEE, 2012, p. 69 ⁶¹ see e.g. list of further references in World Bank et al., 2010, pp. 107-129 ⁶² UNICEF, 2013

PICTURE 1: SCHOOL EP A, A BUILDING FROM THE COLONIAL ERA



PICTURE 2: SCHOOL EP B, FUNDED BY MISSIONARIES



Constructing schools in a recurrent armed conflict

Sustainably-built schools are rare in the districts of Pweto and Mitwaba, where fieldwork for this report was conducted (see Methodology, page 15). The oldest school facilities constructed in stone are buildings from the colonial era, usually built in proximity to an important parish (picture 1).⁶³ In a few cases, there were clergymen from other countries who worked in the area and subsequently funded constructions (picture 2).

Both types of constructions are rare, and the role of faith-based organisations in school constructions in the region under study has been negligible. The following, therefore, analyses school constructions along four lines:

1. There are local constructions during displacement.
2. Communities reconstruct or rehabilitate schools upon their return.
3. The government recently started to invest in a large-scale reconstruction program which also targeted the districts under study.
4. Several school constructions were funded by international actors.⁶⁴

Even if the physical school building is destroyed during an attack, the school as an institution survives

Local constructions during displacement

This report shows that the armed conflict in the districts under study has occurred repeatedly since the early 2000s, and entire village communities have been displaced. This research suggests that displaced teachers from the same school usually try to re-settle in the same location in order to re-open their school. With the help of a government administrator, faith-based organisations or other people, teachers either build a temporary barrack or use an existing building. Even if the physical school building is destroyed during an attack, the school as an institution survives: the school usually remains accredited and teachers still receive their salaries during those times.⁶⁵

⁶³ EP stands for *Ecole Primaire* and figures in the name of all primary schools ⁶⁴It is noteworthy that a few school constructions were funded by politicians as means of patronage, and one school was constructed through the help of a social responsibility scheme of a mining corporation. However, these marginal observations do not figure in the analysis ⁶⁵Interviews with teachers, principals, and bank employees in 2015 and 2016

Case study: EP C

Interviews with principal and teachers in April 2015

Picture 3 is an example of such a displaced and re-opened school in the district of Mitwaba. Constrained by visible material shortcomings, teachers try to make the best of the circumstances. This school was re-opened in the grounds of a church community. The building is ramshackle, but has a locally produced blackboard. Even if the school exists in a very poor material condition, it continues with the enrolment of students and the provision of lessons. This school has maintained its official matriculation number, which means that the school’s teachers are eligible for state funding.

Constrained by visible material shortcomings, teachers try to make the best of the circumstances



PICTURE 3: SCHOOL EP C, CLASSROOM WITH LOCALLY PRODUCED BLACKBOARD

Case study: EP D

Interviews with principal and teachers in April 2015 and April 2016

Another example of a displaced school is EP D in Mitwaba. This example is not so much of school construction, but instead shows alternatives to the temporary constructions shown in picture 3. The house was originally built as part of a women's empowerment project by a European donor. The people in charge made it available to the primary school. Students have to sit on stones, which even extend beyond the house's shelter. Picture 4 points to hardship, and implies a humanitarian tragedy.



PICTURE 4: SCHOOL EP D, CLASSROOM OF A DISPLACED SCHOOL

The principal's office (picture 5) is right next to the stones. It tells a somewhat different, or complementary, story. It is so colourful: wallpapers were brought along when teachers fled the village. This leaves a stark impression that armed attacks can indeed have devastating effects on schooling, but people still have some possibilities to cope with these effects. The principal and teachers invested time and energy to carry visible resources and pedagogic material with them, to make the school feel like a school. If such is the situation during displacement, how do people re-construct their schools upon return?



PICTURE 5: SCHOOL EP D, PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE IN A DISPLACED SCHOOL

Armed attacks can indeed have devastating effects on schooling, but people still have some possibilities to cope with these effects

Local construction upon return

Overall, by far the highest number of schools in the visited parts of Pweto and Mitwaba have initially been built by local school communities. Such construction activities are usually directed by the school's parental committee, working in collaboration with teachers and the principal. Parents and students together collect the necessary resources. Besides the investment of labour, this kind of construction requires material inputs. The most basic community-constructed school buildings are built with non-heated mud bricks, roofed with palm leaves and have a mud floor. Higher-quality construction can be achieved through heated mud bricks. Tin roofs are extremely rare. There is usually no wooden door, but a hole in the wall. Benches are made of mud without tables. Blackboards are frequently crafted through a mixture of dried cassava (manioc), coal and water.

Such construction takes place under different circumstances and for different purposes. For example, building construction for a newly-opened school; re-construction of school buildings destroyed by militias; re-construction of school buildings following abandonment resulting from longer periods of community displacement. The following case studies provide more insight into these circumstances.

The highest number of schools in the visited parts of Pweto and Mitwaba have initially been built by local school communities

Case study: EP E

Interviews with principal and teachers in April 2016

EP E is a school that functions in a small village, on the road between the provincial capital of Mitwaba and the town of Kisele. It used to function in a neighbouring village (interviews with principal and teachers in April 2016). However, due to community displacement and issues internal to the school community, the school was divided into two institutions that function with the same accreditation decree, issued in 2008. None of the teachers working at the school were included in the government's database on teacher salaries (they are non-mécanisé in administrative terms) and therefore did not receive a government salary. Parents support teachers in-kind or, very infrequently, with small monetary contributions. The school does not possess any textbooks or other standard learning material.



PICTURE 6: SCHOOL EP E, HAS NO TEXT BOOKS OR OTHER STANDARD LEARNING MATERIAL

Case study: EP F

Interviews with principal and teachers in April 2016

Picture 7 shows a building of the school EP F on the road between the provincial capital of Mitwaba and the town of Kisele. EP F was targeted by an NGO for a school construction project. However, this project was interrupted and not finished (see 'Interrupted constructions,' page 45). Therefore, the school community had to construct a temporary building, drawing on locally available resources. The report will return to the case of EP Kwiwongo when discussing the role of international organisations in school construction projects.



PICTURE 7: SCHOOL EP F, TEMPORARY BUILDING CONSTRUCTED USING LOCALLY AVAILABLE RESOURCES



PICTURE 8: SCHOOL EP F, CLASSROOM

Case study: EP G

Interviews with principal and teachers in April 2016

EP G is located approximately a dozen kilometers north of Mitwaba, on the road to Mwema. The primary school was established only a few years ago. Parents and teachers constructed the main building with bricks. The building provides only enough space for two classrooms.



PICTURE 9: SCHOOL EP G, MAIN BUILDING

In order to expand classroom space, the community rents a room in an adjacent building. Picture 10 portrays this room, which in reality is as small as it appears. Teaching ten or more students in this room is the everyday reality of teachers at EP G.



PICTURE 10: SCHOOL EP G, CLASSROOM IN AN ADJACENT BUILDING

In order to expand classroom space, the community rents a room in an adjacent building. Picture 10 portrays this room, which in reality is as small as it appears

Case study: EP H

Interview with principal of EP H, principals of neighbouring schools and village chief in February 2015

EP H is a primary school in the district of Pweto, on the road between Pweto and Kilwa. The school was burned down when militia troops entered the village. Together, with about thirty other houses, the school was completely destroyed. The school's principal supposes that her school was subject to attack because she sheltered IDP. Interestingly, the secondary school next-door also sheltered IDP, but was not subject to attack. The principal of the secondary school assumed that sustainable materials used to construct the secondary school protected the school from attack. Similar observations were made throughout the research, which suggests that properly built schools in a low-intensity armed conflict can be a sustainable investment.

When returning to their village, the local educational community rebuilt the school. However, the new buildings are of poor quality. One of the structures collapsed and a child was harmed. The IDP no longer live in this building because it could not fully protect them from rain.

Properly built schools in a low-intensity armed conflict can be a sustainable investment



PICTURE 11: SCHOOL EP H

Case study: EP I

Interview in April 2016

The following school in this section is EP I, which is located between Mitwaba and Kisele, in the private concession of a mining company. According to the principal, this was the reason why the school was never attacked and remained open to provide education while neighbouring communities had to flee the conflict. Despite this, the buildings are in a very poor condition, as picture 12 reveals.



PICTURE 12: SCHOOL EP I, CLASSROOM

In front of the school there is a sign which contains the school’s location, the school’s name, the educational network and its official matriculation number (N°SECOPE). SECOPE is the national department in charge of controlling teacher payments and identifying teachers. The reference to the SECOPE number signifies community pride in the fact that the school is included on the government’s database for teacher payments, which makes it eligible for state funding.

Picture 13 is another reminder that we should not mistake the poor quality of buildings for an absence of educational material. Similar to the image of EP D (see page 27), the principal’s office is stuffed with colourful posters of football teams, Congolese presidents and UNICEF’s education-for-all campaign. The school possesses a range of pedagogic material, such as a globe, a clock, chalk, and textbooks. All of these materials were distributed by UNICEF, unmistakably represented by its light blue signature colour.



PICTURE 13: SCHOOL EP I, PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE

We should not mistake the poor quality of buildings for an absence of educational material

The seven primary schools in Pweto and Mitwaba suggest the following:

- Many schools in the districts under study are constructed solely by local means without any external support.
- Buildings are ramshackle and hardly provide shelter of frequent heavy rain.
- Blackboards are made of local materials or cardboard.
- In some cases, UNICEF has provided packages of pedagogic material.
- The efforts and investments of the people point to a high value attached to education.

It is important to add that these dynamics can also be found in other, non-conflict-affected, parts of the country. However, the magnitude of the problem is exacerbated through the multiple displacements and re-constructions, the difficult accessibility and the overall insecurity. At the same time, accessories such as colourful posters or calendars, suggest a resilience during this depressing situation.

In the following section the report turns away from the local constructions, towards the much less frequent constructions by the national government.

Accessories such as colourful posters or calendars, suggest a resilience during this depressing situation

Constructions by the national government

As explained within 'Educational governance and a recurrent armed conflict,' page 19, the Congolese government has funded very few school construction programmes in the past, and still allocates few resources to constructions now. However, the subsequent section, 'School construction: agendas, guidelines and costs,' page 22, highlighted that school construction receives increasing attention in contemporary national educational planning documents. How does this translate into actual projects?

In 2012, the Congolese government announced the "Program of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of School Infrastructure" (*Programme de Réhabilitation et Reconstruction des Infrastructures Scolaires*, PRRIS).⁶⁶ The program intended to rebuild and rehabilitate 1,000 schools per year, in two phases of 500 schools each. This is a laudable undertaking, but on a national level, there are four main problems with the program.

1. Construction costs
2. Size of the project
3. Transparency
4. Monitoring

Firstly, the program's costs were estimated at CDF 100 billion or US \$151.045.000.⁶⁷ Thus, the per-unit costs of constructing one school would be US \$151,045. Compared with the costs of school construction outlined within 'Educational governance and a recurrent armed conflict,' page 19, this figure is extremely high. At the same time, one of the harshest critiques is that the national government takes ownership of this project, while provincial budgets are used to finance the constructions. According to financial decentralisation, every province is entitled

⁶⁶ Bufordi, 2014; World Bank, 2015b, pp. 44 & 154 ⁶⁷ Bufordi, 2014; MEPSP, 2014a

to a share of the revenues it generates. Instead, Members of Parliament claim that the central government uses part of that money for the PRRIS program.⁶⁸ Consequentially, the money does not appear in the national education budget.

Secondly, given that the total number of pre-primary, primary and secondary schools in 2012-13 was 60,922,⁶⁹ the number of school buildings to be built through the proposed new construction plan represents a total increase in school buildings of about 1%: a relatively small amount against the perceived need.

Thirdly, access to data, such as the full list of selected schools, was not easily available from the National Ministry of Education. Congolese colleagues were as unsuccessful in this endeavour. Although the education sector is officially decentralised, this project is initiated and managed exclusively by the central authorities in Kinshasa. While administrators of educational sub-provinces were consulted in the process of selecting schools for construction or rehabilitation, this research suggests that not all of their selections were followed. The actual criteria governing the final choices are nebulous. The final list of selected schools was simply sent from Kinshasa to the provinces as a *fait accompli*.

Lastly, the central authorities in Kinshasa also maintain any direct links with the construction companies, through the "parastatal executing agency BCECO" (Bureau Central de Coordination; Central Coordination Office).⁷⁰ Hence, provincial authorities have little access to details. Their role in overseeing progress at the working sites is difficult as the construction companies claim that their contract is with Kinshasa, rather than any provincial representative.

Further general issues raised by the provincial government's reporting on the programme include that the *Cellule de Gestion des Projets et des Marchés Publics*,⁷¹ does not participate in the PRRIS-project, thereby violating laws on public deals. In addition, there are reports of unpaid taxes by the construction companies, and a lack of inclusion and training for communities as set out in the programme strategy.

It can therefore be argued that the project exhibits little transparency, does not respect existing decentralisation reforms, and does not engage or give accountability to local actors.⁷² Hence, this case is one example of what is referred to in this reports introduction as "power structures".

In terms of achievements realised under this school construction programme, in the first phase 61 schools (12.2% percent of the total 1,000 schools) were supposed to be built in Katanga.⁷³ According to the provincial ministry, four schools were selected for rehabilitation in each of the two conflict-affected districts (Pweto and Mitwaba) in the first phase. The two executing companies are the NGOs ECC-SADRI and GADIC. At the time of an evaluation by the provincial government in 2014, two constructions per district were finished, while the remaining four hadn't started. Concerning ECC-SADRI, it was stated that "part of the budget is already available but the insecurity poses a problem for the work."⁷⁴ During the visit to Pweto in 2015, GADIC had not started the construction of its two schools. SADRI had successfully constructed the two primary schools: EP J and EP K, but the schools were not equipped with furniture (interview with government educational administrator in February and April 2015).

Given that the total number of pre-primary, primary and secondary schools in 2012-13 was 60,922, the number of school buildings to be built through the proposed new construction plan represents a total increase in school buildings of about 1%: a relatively small amount against the perceived need

⁶⁸ Presentation of Members of Parliament at a civil society meeting in Kinshasa, March 2015 ⁶⁹ MEPS, 2014a ⁷⁰ World Bank, 2015b, p. 35 ⁷¹ Translation: managing unit for projects and public deals ⁷² Bufordi 2014 ⁷³ Bufordi, 2014 ⁷⁴ Internal government report

PICTURE 14: SCHOOL EP J



PICTURE 15: SCHOOL EP K



In the case of Mitwaba, four schools were selected but only two constructions had started in 2015. The same two NGOs were in charge of construction, and again, ECC-SADRI had already erected the walls, whereas GADIC had not started the works. All four schools had been built (Interviews with government educational administrator in April 2015 and March & April 2016). However, this achievement must be seen with a pinch of salt: in total, twice the number of schools should have been built a quarter of the time.

Furthermore, school furniture was included as part of the rehabilitation. For the targeted schools in Mitwaba, furniture was reportedly fabricated in Kamina, a city about 700 km from Mitwaba. This decision was made by the central government in Kinshasa, and shows a lack of sensitivity for the local context.⁷⁵

The construction of schools is a prestige project for the government. These schools stand out for their size and construction style. Given the country's history, the government invested in large-scale school constructions for the first time. In total, these constructions are nothing but a drop in the ocean. Moreover, the strong centralisation results in poor outcomes at the local level. In this final section, the report will now turn to school constructions funded by international donors.

Given the country's history, the government invested in large-scale school constructions for the first time. In total, these constructions are nothing but a drop in the ocean

Constructions by international actors

The single largest school reconstruction project, whether from government or non-government actors, has been funded by the World Bank under the "Education sector rehabilitation support project" (*Projet d'Appui à la Réhabilitation du Secteur de l'Éducation*, PARSE), which ran between 2007 and 2014. 1,467 primary school classrooms were constructed as part of this program.⁷⁶ However, the program did not target the districts under this study. Construction or rehabilitation of another 900 classrooms were planned as part of a project funded by the Global Partnership for Education that were designed to run between 2013 and 2016.⁷⁷

Several other international organisations have invested in the construction of schools in the region under study. First, UNICEF led the construction of durable schools based on a model made of bricks, a tin roof and a stone floor. Second, there is another type of school funded by UNICEF: the so-called *emergency school* which is constructed with wood sidings and covered with corrugated sheets.⁷⁸ Third, other donors invested in durable school constructions. In addition, UNICEF also advocated for the government to contribute to the construction of schools in these regions:

"May the provincial government and its educational partners make an effort to re-/construct and equip schools that have been affected by the armed conflicts, and facilitate temporary spaces according to necessities."

In general, it is difficult to monitor all construction programmes or general progress over school construction. So, how does the construction of schools by NGOs look in reality? The following three sections will delve deeper into this question.

⁷⁵ Local production of such goods would be possible, as other projects have shown (interview with employee of an NGO in April 2015, who was involved in funding the construction of classroom furniture in Mitwaba) ⁷⁶ World Bank, 2015a ⁷⁷ World Bank, 2016 ⁷⁸ UNICEF, 2013

UNICEF/CID-led construction

In 2011, UNICEF entrusted the construction of seven schools, or 28 classrooms, in Mitwaba to the Congolese NGO CID. CID was supposed to start its activities in 2011, but actually commenced in 2012 and then disappeared in 2013. At the time, the region was under militia attack (see 'Educational governance and a recurrent armed conflict,' from page 19). Since, for security reasons, UNICEF staff did not have permission to enter the conflict zone, they relied on CID to monitor and report on progress, in accordance with the contract tender process. Throughout the construction period, CID sent pictures of the construction process to UNICEF regional headquarters in Lubumbashi. These pictures reportedly showed completed school buildings (interviews with UNICEF staff in 2015 and 2016).

However, as soon as it was permitted for UNICEF staff to visit the area, one of their employees went to the sites of construction. He found that none of the seven buildings had been finished in full (interviews in April 2015 and March 2016). CID claimed that the UNICEF employee went to the wrong sites, and that they had indeed constructed the schools. Observations from this research underline that none of the schools had been fully-constructed.

The following pictures (16, 17, 18 overleaf and 23 on page 43) document the schools built by CID.⁷⁹ Besides the unfinished construction that can be seen, it is important to realize that no office for the principal and no latrines have been built, although these were included as expected outputs from CID's mission.

The four schools; EP L, EP M, EP N and EP O, were almost finished by CID.

It is in these schools that construction work went furthest. One can see that the outside walls were not properly plastered, and windows were not completed. The bricks that today make up the windows were bought and built in by the school community. The wooden doors were also added gradually by the school communities.

CID was supposed to start its activities in 2011, but actually commenced in 2012 and then disappeared in 2013

⁷⁹ One school, in Mazombwe, was not visited

PICTURE 16: SCHOOL EP L (CID SCHOOL)



PICTURE 17: SCHOOL EP M (CID SCHOOL)





PICTURE 18: SCHOOL EP O (CID SCHOOL)



Next to these incomplete constructions, there are more severe cases of project failure. The following pictures of EP P show that CID left the school in a very poor state.

Picture 19 (EP P 2015) shows the state of the construction site. As can be seen by looking closely, the bricks in the first few rows have a different style to those above. This is because CID only provided these first rows of bricks and then left. Since then, the principal started to fund the fabrication of bricks with the oven seen in picture 20. Picture 21 shows the developments made over a period of one year.

Finally, picture 22 shows EP Q. CID completely abandoned the school after erecting the foundation and bars. The carpenter in charge of the construction added that “the construction of EP Q was very difficult because of insecurity. We fled again and again” (interview in April 2016).

Several elements of this UNICEF/CID story are difficult to explore in detail, as CID disappeared and contact with their representatives was difficult. UNICEF did not facilitate access to its dossier on the case. Lines of inquiries suggest that the CID representative responsible for delivering on the contract was arrested and incarcerated at the prison in Mitwaba for some time, but was released without further process. CID was banned from the official list of United Nations partners as a consequence, but the lost money has never been reimbursed or reclaimed. Three years later, in 2016, school communities in the affected schools were still struggling to produce bricks in order to finish the buildings. As a result of this experience, UNICEF Lubumbashi have decided not to invest in school construction programmes anymore (several interviews with UNICEF staff in 2015 and 2016).⁸⁰

It is surprising, however, that further systemic quality assessment procedures were not in place to ensure that such circumstances could be identified and addressed quickly.

As mentioned above, the CID representative responsible for the project tricked UNICEF by pretending to send pictures of the on-going constructions. In such a context, UNICEF would have benefited from developing a clearer system to prevent such a level of fraud and embezzlement. As is pointed out in UNESCO’s 2011 Global Monitoring Report, “NGOs have adapted their systems to this model by working through village councils. Because it is often impossible to visit schools in highly insecure areas, the groups frequently manage projects remotely using mobile phones, local staff and local partners.”⁸¹ Arguably, the situation in Mitwaba did not facilitate easy contact per mobile phones due to a lack of antennas. However, quality assessment mechanisms might have been established through engagement in monitoring, and evaluation by beneficiary community representatives, local partner agencies or regional government administrators. A more successful UNICEF school construction project in the region are the so-called emergency schools.

The CID representative responsible for the project tricked UNICEF by pretending to send pictures of the on-going constructions

⁸⁰ With a grant they received from OCHA/CERF, they instead equipped various schools in Mitwaba with pedagogic material and school furniture ⁸¹ UNESCO, 2011, p. 210

PICTURE 19: SCHOOL EP P, CID PROVIDED FIRST ROW OF BRICKS ONLY



PICTURE 20: SCHOOL EP P, BRICK OVEN



PICTURE 21: SCHOOL EP P, DEVELOPMENT OF BUILDING AFTER ONE YEAR



PICTURE 22: SCHOOL EP Q, ABANDONED BY CID



UNICEF: emergency schools

During the same period as the CID project in Mitwaba, UNICEF also invested in at least five school constructions in Pweto. Here, the decision was made to build 'emergency schools' (écoles d'urgence), a type of school that plays a particularly important role in conflict-affected areas and after natural disasters.⁸² Built with local timber poles, plywood boards or plastic sheeting, and CGI sheeting,⁸³ these schools are seen as temporary solutions. Costs are estimated at US \$2,565, which includes material, labour and transport. As EP R was built when militias were still very close by, the Congolese military secured the construction site.

Other donors

The case of the UNICEF/CID programme raises the important question of accountability. This question is also very relevant for cases where other international donors/NGOs (CRIS, GTZ/GIZ, IRC/Tuongane, Oxfam, World Vision, and others) were involved in school construction programmes. The goal here is not to provide a complete list of all schools constructed during this period: rather, to discuss issues associated with poor construction quality and the interruption of construction work through armed conflict.

Poor construction quality

Pictures 25-28 (opposite) of a school located in the Kyubo district of Mitwaba, show a comprehensive and successful construction: two buildings of three classrooms each (pictures 25), an office for the principal (pictures 26) and a latrine (picture 27). Picture 28 shows a hut built to store food and goods received regularly through the World Food Program's school feeding program (*cantine scolaire*). This school, EP S, was recommended by an educational administrator as a positive example of NGO-led construction (interview in April 2016).

However, in the majority of review contexts, NGOs appear to possess a lot of decision-making power over the construction of school buildings. This generally seems to result in a low quality of construction. All other cases encountered were either unfinished or lacking substantial parts of the infrastructure. Pictures 29 and 30, overleaf, present the case of EP T, and show that this construction by an international NGO undertaken two years ago is still lacking doors and windows.

In other cases, the external structure appears acceptable from the outside, but the wastewater system was badly constructed so that the latrines soon stopped working (picture 31).

In terms of school furnishings, when NGOs did not provide benches and chairs, or when they were stolen during displacement, the school community offered

In the majority of review contexts, NGOs appear to possess a lot of decision-making power over the construction of school buildings. This generally seems to result in a low quality of construction

⁸² UNICEF, 2013 ⁸³ UNICEF, 2013, p. 35

PICTURE 23: SCHOOL EP N (EMERGENCY SCHOOL)



PICTURE 24: SCHOOL EP R, UNICEF EMERGENCY SCHOOL



PICTURE 25: SCHOOL EP S, ONE OF TWO CLASSROOM BUILDINGS



PICTURE 26: SCHOOL EP S, PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE



PICTURE 27: SCHOOL EP S, LATRINE



PICTURE 28: SCHOOL EP S, HUT (COLLAPSED AFTER STORM) FOR STORING FOOD AND GOODS FROM THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM



PICTURE 29: SCHOOL EP T, BUILDING LACKS WINDOWS AND DOORS



PICTURE 30: SCHOOL EP T, CLASSROOM



PICTURE 31: SCHOOL EP U, LATRINES NO LONGER WORK



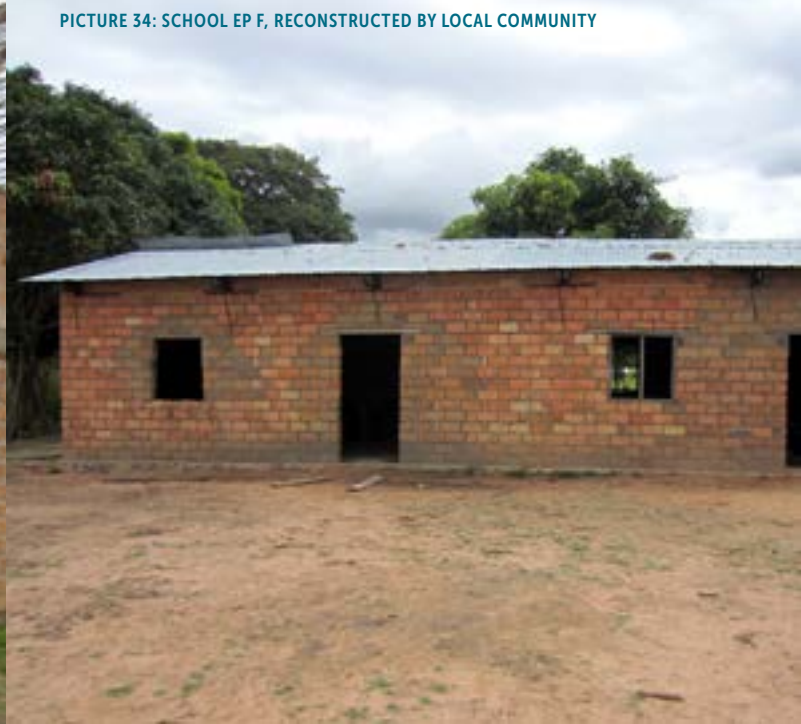
PICTURE 32: SCHOOL EP V



PICTURE 33: SCHOOL EP F, ABANDONED SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION



PICTURE 34: SCHOOL EP F, RECONSTRUCTED BY LOCAL COMMUNITY



other solutions out of necessity. There are often makeshift benches. This usually means that children learn under extremely different circumstances. Pedagogic material provided by external assistance cannot be properly used due to a lack of complementary physical infrastructure.

Interrupted constructions

As shown in the case of EP Q, which was part of the CID-project, construction work can be interrupted through an outbreak of armed attacks. When the current conflict recommenced in 2011, it was reignited so suddenly that NGO workers abandoned some of the construction sites. In the case of EP V (picture 32) in the district of Pweto, the responsible NGO only managed to finalize one building of three classrooms, while the construction of the remaining three classrooms, the principal's office and the latrines had not been started.

A final example is the primary school EP F (see 'Local construction upon return,' page 29). Construction took place between 2008 and December 2011, funded by the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) project *Tuungane* and carried out by Entreprise Congo Construction. As is common for IRC's community-driven reconstruction (CDR) projects, village councils (comité du développement de village; comité de développement communautaire) are elected to supervise the construction of a school, thereby increasing the voice and ownership of the local community, and ensuring the executing agency is accountable to the beneficiaries.

What was most striking about this project and the interrupted construction is the fact that while these councils existed and operated, the school community had no information about the state of the construction or had any further communication with the NGO leading the construction. Similarly, the government educational administrator claims not to have been involved in the project at the time, and claims to have had no information about budgets or envisaged outcomes for the school construction programme.

Different kinds of NGOs (especially Doctors without Borders) have a strong presence in this area. Hence, for the NGO that commenced and interrupted the construction, it would have been possible to communicate with the community. Even before their return, contact would have been possible via the government or faith-based educational administrator. Such an abandonment (picture 33) makes communities very sceptical about the seriousness of NGO and donor involvement, and harms the perceived integrity of the agencies in question.

Next to this main building, the NGO funded a smaller building (picture 34). When *Mayi Mayi* attacked the village, they turned to this building and tried to damage it. Bricks around the windows and door were affected (note the different colour and type of bricks around the doors and windows), but were replaced by the local community upon their return. This final case suggests that low-quality buildings are destroyed by militias more easily than brick buildings such as this one.

When the current conflict recommenced in 2011, it was reignited so suddenly that NGO workers abandoned some of the construction sites

THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE AT A SCHOOL BETWEEN MITWABA AND KISELE



Conclusion and key findings

The report has made a wide range of observations based on qualitative research in a region that has experienced a recurrent armed conflict since the early 2000s.

Educational facilities are either directly affected by attacks and looting, or they become dilapidated due to a lack of maintenance while communities are displaced. Much investment is needed, however, investment is only one side of the coin and higher investment does not automatically lead to an improved situation. In order to shed light on the other side of the coin, this report explored the roles of governance, institutions, and power dynamics around the construction of schools.

In order to summarise the main arguments of this report, we refer back to the three research questions posed in the introduction:

1. Which types of schools have existed (in terms of construction style and quality)?
2. Which actors have invested in school constructions in recent years?
3. Which challenges have arisen in school construction?

Higher investment does not automatically lead to an improved situation

Key findings 1: Types of schools and actors

- Locally built during displacement and upon return
- Donor/NGO construction (failed)
- Donor/NGO constructs (poor quality)
- Donor/NGO construction (interrupted)
- Emergency schools
- National government (PRRIS) schools

In the region under study, the majority of all schools are built by local communities, with locally available means. These constructions are usually of a low quality, hardly provide shelter from rain and other external influences, and are easily destroyable. Nevertheless, they clearly show parents' and teachers'

willingness to continuously provide education despite difficult circumstances. NGOs and international donors invested in several constructions. This report does not claim to evaluate all constructions. It merely points to the frequent observation that constructions funded by donors and/or NGOs were often of a low quality. In the case of one project, no construction was completed and communities were left with the remainders. Other constructions were interrupted due to armed conflict and internal displacements. An example of a successful intervention is the UNICEF funded "emergency schools". Finally, the national government invested in a few schools. They seem to be in a good condition and stand out for their size and style. All of these actors met certain obstacles and challenges when constructing schools.

Key findings 2: Challenges in school construction

- Lack of possibilities to hold NGOs/donors accountable
- Interrupted constructions due to armed attacks
- Lack of inclusion of local stakeholders
- Difficulty to monitor construction sites due to insecurity
- Abandoned construction sites
- Poor quality of constructions
- Embezzlement of funds
- Lack of overview

This report does not intend to claim that NGOs or donors always deliver poorly. UNICEF's emergency schools and EP S are positive examples, and IRC successfully constructed masses of schools in the neighbouring district of Kambove which was not affected by the conflict. This report does not imply that any particular institution or person is responsible for the project failures encountered in the field. Nevertheless, the fact that so many constructions were incomplete was remarkable. Such a low quality of service delivery can weaken the reputation of NGOs and is not likely to strengthen the legitimacy of state authorities, and it certainly does not create a context conducive to high-quality education.

Communities appreciate external help and aid. However, they have few means of holding NGOs or funding bodies accountable when they deliver low-quality services. NGOs seem to lack strategies to exit the region when armed conflict breaks out, and to re-enter the region when armed conflict ceases. Poorly monitored projects can facilitate the embezzlement of funds. Of course, there is no magic formula and inclusion of educational stakeholders does not automatically exclude corruption. All in all, if project monitoring and follow-up procedures hardly take place, local communities have to cope with abandoned construction sites and poor quality of constructions. Finally, the patchwork of actors involved in this makes monitoring and transparency difficult to quantify. No one interviewed in provincial or sub-provincial offices had a full overview of these activities. A government employee in Lubumbashi stated the following when asked if he

If project monitoring and follow-up procedures hardly take place, local communities have to cope with abandoned construction sites and poor quality of constructions

possesses a full list of schools that were built in the province by external partners:

"There are problems, the national government constructs, the provincial government constructs, the minister constructs, even NGOs. In order to send us information, that's very difficult, sometimes they surprise us, when we get the information we make field visits, either norms are respected or not respected, we have problems to constitute a database because of this communication." (Interview in April 2015)

The report now concludes with some considerations for the future.

Future considerations

The context under study is certainly challenging. Focusing on attacks on schools and challenges for reconstruction should not deter from the hardship, traumas and suffering that students, parents and teachers are going through. There are certainly no easy solutions, and the attention given to people's capacity to cope should not emphasise their resilience over the enormous structural inequalities faced.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, there are a few points to consider when thinking about constructing schools in a conflict-affected region, such as the one under study. Innovative solutions to school construction are imperative, and there are brilliant examples in other regions.⁸⁵

Participation and accountability

- Donors and NGOs might find it beneficial to cooperate more systematically with local, provincial and national educational authorities. On-going communication with the affected communities is necessary and possible, for instance via educational administrators. This seems like an obvious consideration, but it is ever more surprising to find that administrators are not aware of all projects in their districts. With appropriate engagement, the participation of local actors could deliver significant change in the quality and rate of school construction.
- Abandoning villages with half-finished buildings can make communities cynical about donors and/or NGOs and their promises. When the region is stable again, the construction work ought to continue. Funds should be allocated in a way that ensures that they can be frozen and still be used in the future. The inclusion of stakeholders and the engagement in a conflict-affected context should be a dynamic and adaptive process that does not simply stop if/when conflict breaks out (again). Realistic assessments of local power structures ought to be a necessary aspect of participation and inclusion.⁸⁶ For example, the inclusion of administrators from both government and faith-based organisations and civil society is likely to create some checks and balances in the monitoring process.
- Such an approach could improve the collaboration between the humanitarian education cluster and the Ministry of Education.⁸⁷

Knowledge management

As demanded in a recent government study,⁸⁸ Education Management and Information Systems should include indicators regarding attacks on educational facilities, staff and students.

Innovative solutions to school construction are imperative, and there are brilliant examples in other regions

⁸⁴ Shah, 2015 ⁸⁵ examples such as the work of Diebedo Francis Kere in Burkina Faso (Hales, 2005) ⁸⁶ Kyamusugulwa & Hilthorst, 2015 ⁸⁷ MEPSP, 2014b ⁸⁸ MEPSP, 2014b

National policies

- Conflict-affected zones, such as those covered by this report, should receive extra attention in national frameworks, and should receive proportionally higher amounts of the education budget – out of the little budget that is left after paying teacher salaries.
- Donors should not be discouraged by the length and recurrence of the emergency status. It is worth 'investing' in these zones, as militia groups are mainly made up of local people. If people living in these zones have better socio-economic opportunities, they will be less likely to adhere to armed groups.
- Education is certainly no panacea, but the support of education in conflict-affected areas occupies an important position in this puzzle.

Conflict-sensitive construction

This report points to the necessity to build on existing guidelines for the safe construction of schools⁸⁹ and the guidelines on safe learning spaces,⁹⁰ and to use these to formulate guidelines on the construction of educational facilities in conflicts and protracted crises. For example, the INNE Minimum Standards point out the following:

"A risk analysis report proposes strategies for risk management of natural and human-made hazards, including conflict. Strategies may include prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, reconstruction and rehabilitation. For example, schools or learning spaces may be required to have contingency and security plans to prevent, mitigate and respond to emergencies." (INNE Minimum standards p.37)

In practice, this could involve:

- The elaboration of planning and construction strategies that take into account the potential of newly erupting armed conflict. In such contexts, the interruption of construction must not be a surprise, it needs to be anticipated. Exiting and re-entering strategies ought to be part of any engagement in such contexts.
- The investment in constructing schools is a long-term venture that connects a humanitarian with a development perspective. Militias in this region tend to focus on destroying locally built schools: they often don't have the means to seriously damage solid buildings.
- Investing in pedagogic material without adequate space to store or protect it from attacks is an unsustainable waste of resources. Frequently, militias burn or rob all kinds of documents, reportedly in order to have rolling papers for cigarettes. It might be worthwhile to reflect on the possibility to have built-in safes or similar spaces where principals can hide important documents in case of an attack.
- Any removable piece (chairs, benches, doors, roofs, etc.) can be removed. It does not even have to be the militia or military who engage in robbery. Civilians are often said to steal these pieces, especially when the school community is displaced and one does not fear sanctions. Engineering ideas on how to tackle this question, while still sourcing resources locally, are more than needed.

This report points to the necessity to build on existing guidelines for the safe construction of schools and the guidelines on safe learning spaces

⁸⁹ World Bank et al., 2010 ⁹⁰ UNICEF, 2013

MAIN BUILDING OF A PRIMARY SCHOOL,
12 KM NORTH OF MITWABA



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