

**The Role of Churches in
Rebuilding Community Relations in
South Kivu between
1996 and 2006**

A thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, Development & Social Sciences, in complete
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

By

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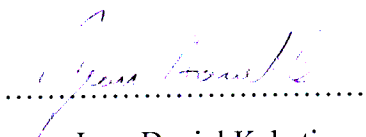
Dedication

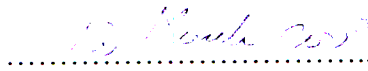
I dedicate this thesis to my mother and father and the DRC, my beloved country, whose decades of agony urged me to undertake this study. This study is also dedicated to the Churches and other stakeholders who have worked tirelessly to bring some measure of peace, intercommunity relationship and harmony into the South Kivu region and the rest of the DRC.

Declaration

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, in the Graduate programme in Religion and Social Transformation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other university.


.....
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Date

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to predict and evaluate whether the participation of the churches in the South Kivu region during the period 1996-2006 in rebuilding broken intercommunity relations and addressing problems of conflict has made any tangible contribution to final outcomes of the political crisis that led to the elections in the DRC in 2006 elections. The study submits the collected data composed of religious, archival documents drawn from the church participation in armed-conflict problem resolution, religious essays and interview response data to careful analysis in order to distil an appropriate practical theological framework methodology for the investigation. A qualitative approach was used in collecting data because the practical theological methodology applied by previous studies in this field endorses this approach as the most appropriate methodology for this type of research study. In its application of the practical theological framework, the study adopted a collaborative approach as opposed to participation involving only churches.

The following findings and conclusions have emerged from the analysis of the data collected for the five subtopics – regional politics, social responsibility, peace and reconciliation, insecurity, and cultural transformation – which constitute Chapter Five: Findings and Conclusion.

1. Regional politics

The churches' response to the political bungling that characterised the period 1996-2006 was initially confined to verbal criticism devoid of concrete efforts which finally matured into practical theological implementation measures that addressed the intercommunity relations rebuilding and reconstruction of collapsed socio-economic and political structures

2. Social responsibility

The churches' successful collaboration with local and human rights international bodies led to resolution of many conflict problems and the provision of many social services for the victims of the conflicts.

3. Peace and reconciliation

The study reveals that the churches' efforts towards peace and reconciliation through various church functions in disseminating their moral messages proved very effective in addressing problems and encouraging peace between conflicting political platforms.

4. Insecurity

Church organisations, particularly the Catholic Church, cooperated with the Security Council to enhance security measures in the areas affected by the armed conflicts and the churches became places of refuge for internally displaced persons, where the traumatized received spiritual support. The churches' messages of peace influenced some soldiers to renounce armed violence and to become re-integrated into civilian life.

5. Cultural transformation.

The church's messages on morality and peace were instrumental in shaping the cultural direction of the inhabitants of South Kivu and succeeded in creating the culture of non-violent resistance advocated by Ghandi.

List of Abbreviations

AFDL	Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ASIPA	Acts of Symposium International of Peace in Africa
AZADHO	Association Zaïroise de défense des droits de l'homme (Congolese Human rights association).
CELPA	Communauté des Eglise Libre Pentecôte en Afrique
CENCO	Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo
CEPAC	Communauté des Eglises de Pentecôtes en Afrique Centrale
COLTAN	Columbium Tentalite
DDR	Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECC	Church of Christ in Congo
ECZ	Church of Christ in Zaire
FAZ	Forces Armées Zaïroises
FBOs	Faith-Based Organisations
FDLR	Forces pour la Démocratie et Libération du Rwanda
FPR	Front Patriotique Rwandaise
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ISP	Institut Supérieur Pédagogique
MISNA	Missionary Service News Agency
MLC	Mouvement de la libération du Congo
MONUC	United Nations Mission Observer in Congo
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NNGO	National Non-governmental Organization
PT	Personal Translation
RCD	Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie
RIO	Réseau d'Innovation Organisationnelle
RPF	Rwandese Patriotic Front
SIPA	Symposium International of Peace in Africa
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugee

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Chapter 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

During the last ten years (1996-2006), South Kivu, a province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), has been plagued by violent ethnic and intercommunity conflicts that have affected the entire Great Lakes region. The social and political conflicts in the DRC were triggered by on-going political instability and sporadic civil wars that followed the political assassination of Premier Patrice Lumumba in 1961, and the military¹ takeover of the first democratically elected government by Colonel Joseph Mobutu (Mobutu Sese Seko), whose dictatorial regime lasted for over three decades.²

South Kivu was the region worst ravaged by ethnic conflict. The political instability initially created by Western powers with selfish national interests in the vast human and mineral resources of the DRC was, and is still, worsened by the ethnic strife and civil wars that flared up in Rwanda and Burundi coupled with massive inflow of refugees into South Kivu. The government which Laurent Kabila formed in 1998 after his major role in toppling Mobutu's dictatorial regime was challenged by a rebellion backed by Rwanda and Uganda, which had initially supported him. To stay in power, President Laurent Kabila had to rely on military assistance from Angola, Chad, Namibia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. When Laurent Kabila was assassinated in 2001, his son, Joseph Kabila, became President of the DRC. The root cause of the current ethnic wars in the South Kivu region is attributable to some extent to the government's mismanagement of public resources, leadership in general and failure to deal with the issue of giving citizenship to the entire Banyamulenge³ population in the DRC⁴.

The socio-political conflicts that fuelled the political violence and instability in South Kivu are made worse by the large number of indigenous ethnic groups who see their interests threatened by the massive influx of Hutus and Tutsis from Rwanda and Burundi seeking refuge in South Kivu from the civil wars that have engulfed their own countries. The

¹ Kanza, T. 1972, *Conflict in Congo, the rise and the fall of Lumumba*, Baltimore: Penguin Books, p. 312.

² Meredith, M. 2006. *The State of Africa, a History of Fifty Years of Independence*. Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers. p. 521

³ Banyamulenge, the people who originated from Rwanda and Burundi resident in Mulenge, South Kivu

⁴ Meredith, 2006, p. 529.

indigenous population (Bashi, Barega, Banyanga, Babembe, Bafuleru, Bazibaziba and others) of South Kivu regard the Hutus and Tutsis of Rwandan and Burundian origin as foreigners in seeking asylum.

An additional example of conflict, which illustrates the level of hostility of the indigenous ethnic groups and foreign political leaders, was the exclusion of politicians of foreign extraction (which includes those from Rwanda and Burundi) from representation in the 1991 Conférence National Souveraine (CNS). In 1994 thousands of Hutu refugees fled into South Kivu after the genocide in Rwanda. In 1996 an ethnic war erupted between the Banyamulenge, backed by Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and other allies, and the local South Kivu population. The violent intercommunity conflicts were worsened by the abject poverty and suffering they created – inhumane socio-economic and political conditions that led to a mushrooming of churches that competed aggressively for converts and further constrained the fragile ethnic-war-torn situation.

Resolving the intercommunity conflicts sketched above has been the concern of almost all locally involved institutions including the churches. Various studies from different disciplines have been conducted to unravel the complex situation in the DRC in order to facilitate a process of reconciliation amongst the different ethnic groups. The fundamental purpose of the reconciliation process is to remove the intercommunity constraints that hamper social and political harmony and to transform the conflict-torn DRC into a strife-free society where people live in peace. It is envisaged that successful conflict resolution in the South Kivu region could bring stability to the whole Central African region.

This present study attempts to examine the role that churches in South Kivu province played during the period 1996-2006. The ethnic wars began in 1996 and ended in 2006 when the first democratic elections were held in the DRC. The study investigated the actions and activities of individuals or groups who had links with churches in South Kivu during this period. To achieve this objective, the study subjected the activities and the archival documents of churches to a critical probe. The archival analysis approach was adopted in order to explain and measure how far the activities of churches in their ecclesiastic mission have contributed to rebuilding community relations amongst the different communities of the South Kivu province. As will be shown later in this study, the peace-building role of churches resonates in the whole of the religious, social and political fabric of the South Kivu region

and is regarded by the majority of the various segments of the population as the churches' greatest contribution.

The objective of this study is to interrogate the involvement of churches in the politics affecting the various communities and to analyse their responses to social injustice. In particular, this research study appraises the involvement of churches in reconciliation and peace-building. It evaluates the interventionist efforts of the churches in the problems of inter-ethnic clashes in order to improve the ongoing process of cultural transformation.

1.2 Research problem and objectives

The origins of the research problem investigated in this study are located in the Belgian colonial rule characterised by humanitarian atrocities committed by Belgium's King Léopold II from 1844 to 1908 against the Congolese. Although the Congo, which King Leopold II treated as his private property, was transferred to the State of Belgium in 1908, the Belgian colonial administrators continued King Leopold's rule of terror and exploitation until 1961. The destructive and rapacious colonial system that took over from King Léopold II was terminated in 1961 when the Congo achieved independence under the Premiership of Patrick Lumumba. The Congo, however, was never allowed to enjoy peace and democratic rule.

The assassination of Patrice Lumumba few months after independence in 1961 triggered a series of civil wars that created a state of political anarchy, instability and sporadic armed conflicts that lasted until 2006. Colonel Joseph Mobutu (Mobutu Sese Seko), who seized power through the barrel of the gun with the backing of the US government, created a corrupt dictatorship that lasted for over three decades. Since the assassination of Lumumba in 1961 and the military seizure of power by Mobutu Sese Seko, the South Kivu region has been plagued by violent ethnic and intercommunity conflicts that have affected the entire Great Lakes region. South Kivu was the region worst affected by ethnic conflict, because of two major factors. Firstly, its proximity to Great Lakes region countries (Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, Sudan, and Uganda) that have a high prevalence of armed conflicts made it an epicentre of political upheavals. Secondly, the involvement and interference of countries outside the Great Lakes region in the civil wars of the DRC complicated the armed conflict situation in the Congo.

Despite the fact that Congo has been plagued by sporadic civil wars ever since the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1961, the research problem focuses only on the evaluation of the role of churches in the peace initiatives and the rebuilding of broken intercommunity bonds in the South Kivu region during the period 1996-2006.

The objectives of the study, therefore, are to:

- Unravel the social crisis in South Kivu and the process that governed peace-building efforts during the period 1996-2006.
- Examine the drivers, impacts and remedies responsible for taking the region from decades of violent ethnic conflicts to relative stability and harmony – albeit constantly undermined by recurrent setbacks and stumbling blocks.
- Attempt to look at the practical theology approach in the contemporary context of social devastation in order to measure the role of churches in facilitating peace-building process in the South Kivu region.
- Assess the churches' approach to peace-building and determine whether their activities have contributed in any way in advancing an ethos of stability and security for the population of South Kivu.
- Explain how the church's involvement in facilitating political transition and supporting democracy and governance literacy among their congregations and communities has strengthened the potential for free and fair elections in South Kivu and the rest of the DRC.
- Investigate whether churches continue to advance the development of peaceful co-existence of the ethnic groups in the region and how they are currently tackling the peace efforts.
- Evaluate the levels of the church engagement in peace, justice, reconciliation and social rehabilitation.

1.3 Literature review

The theoretical foundation that serves to structure all the intricate pieces of this research is provided by the practical theology framework. Complementing one another within this theological model are peace-building initiatives and communicative actions linked together by interweaving narrative patterning – constituting a set of tools crucial to the church mission. The practical theology response to the situation of South Kivu is necessitated by the problems created by the armed ethnic conflicts, where practical, relevant and meaningful responses and activities are called for that will promote peace and restoration of harmony. The conflict resolution strategy adopted concentrates on the need to send relevant messages

in a range of conflict situations in which economic, social, cultural and political structures have collapsed or been destroyed and people are on the verge of starvation to death.

Various research studies have confirmed the usefulness of the practical theological framework, which is complemented by the inclusion of peace-building strategies in resolving armed conflict problems. Studies particularly relevant to the South Kivu situation are research investigations conducted by Ho-Won Jeong⁵, David Bosch⁶, H.J.C. Pieterse⁷ and Gerald West⁸. The activities of churches described in Chapter Two of the present study explores the recommended religious group interventions, which are aimed at resolving injustice, poverty and other social problems. The research study also examines the relevance and the legitimacy of religious groups' contributions in relation to recommendations proposed by the practical theology scholars. According to Bosch, a society threatened by chronic problems of poverty, endless circles of armed violence and natural disasters constantly tests the relevance and the legitimacy of religion in order to determine whether the church has made any meaningful contribution towards alleviating the suffering of the poorest of the poor maimed by never-ending social upheavals. The study analyses the impact of the South Kivu churches in relation to Bosch's approach to the relevance of religions. West suggests that the use of a practical hermeneutic method, which focuses on social structural transformation, is the best way to deal with the rebuilding of the socio-cultural life of a society destroyed by war. In determining the usefulness of practical theology, Pieterse points out that hermeneutic interpretation can only demystify the hidden multilayered biblical texts if its application is directed at a specific context in the present and the actor of the application is moved to action.⁹ In accordance with the suggestions of Bosch and Pieterse, the study intends to determine whether the manner in which the churches in South Kivu have interpreted the biblical message has promoted the building of peace and community relations in the Great Lakes region.

The researcher lived in South Kivu for many years and has observed and reflected upon the different socio-economic, political and historical factors that have contributed to the

⁵ Jeong, H. 2005. *Peacebuilding in Post-conflict Societies: Strategy and Process*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p. 13.

⁶ Bosch, D., 1985, The fragmentation of Afrikanerdom and the Afrikaner churches, in De Gruchy & Villa-Vicencio (eds.), *Resistance and Hope South African essays in Honour of Beyers Naudé*. Cape Town: David Philip.

⁷ Pieterse, H. J. C. 2001, *Preaching in the context of poverty*, Pretoria: Unisa Press p. 8.

⁸ West, G. 1994, The Bible and Theology, in De Gruchy, J. & Villa-Vicencio (eds.), *Doing Theology in Context, South African perspectives*. Cape Town: David Philip.

⁹ Pieterse, 2001, p. 8.

deterioration of life in South Kivu. The need for a broad understanding of the various opposing interests involved in the conflict resolution process is underscored by Jeong's comment that "Designing a conceptual model for developing a system-wide strategic plan has to be supported by a comprehensive analysis of the original conflict."¹⁰ Hence, the research design aims at conducting a comprehensive analysis of the situation actually prevailing in South Kivu.

South Kivu has been the epicentre of the majority of the conflicts which have occurred in the last ten years in the DRC. The application of Jeong's synergetic structural transformation model suggests that all the South Kivu contexts have to be considered in the peace resolution strategy developed for addressing the post-conflict situation in South Kivu. Jeong's view that a one-fits-all solution is not the best approach to resolving peace-building problems is invoked by Lizze, who argues that: "The very notion of peace is understood as social constructions shaped by a particular material and political context."¹¹ In other words, although the South Kivu region can be described as the microcosm of the larger instability problems in the DRC, an imported best practice peace-rebuilding design/model cannot be successfully implemented in South Kivu without refining the strategy to incorporate the specific post-conflict socio-economic and political factors of the particular region.

The purpose of this section, therefore, is to locate the research within the appropriate theoretical framework of peace building and social structural transformation, which Jeong calls "the synergetic model". The researcher maintains that many peace projects have turned out to be "unsustainable because of the absence of compelling goals for peace and coordinated strategies to achieve them." While the goals, according to Jeong, "have to be defined in terms desirable conditions for peace, implementation strategies need to focus on the identification of actors, coordination of activities and establishment of time frame."¹²

Studies by Kraybill, Magolin and Buchanan¹³, which focus on the principles of good peace-building architecture, reinforce Jeong's viewpoint and the importance of conceptualising an appropriate blueprint for social structural transformation in post-conflict societies. Kraybill points out that the strategy mapped for translating peace objectives into action also needs to

¹⁰ Jeong, H.W. (2008). "Peace Building Design: A Synergetic Approach".
<http://classweb.gnu.edu/hwjeeong/peace%20design.htm>. p.1.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 18.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 1.

¹³ Kraybill, R. (2000). "Principles of Good Process Design". In L. Reychler and T. Paffeholz (eds),
Peacebuilding: A Field Guide. Boulder:Lynne Rienner Publishers. Cited in Jeong , 2008

be aligned with the implementation tools that are available for achieving the intended goals. Using the suggestions by conflict resolution theorists discussed above, the researcher investigates the impact of selected church activities on structural transformation in the post-conflict situation in South Kivu.

The studies by Jeong¹⁴ have suggested that the intricacy of the post-conflict peace-building process is always rendered more difficult by the intensity of hatred amongst people in war-torn areas, and particularly in armed conflicts of lengthy duration. To assess the contribution of churches in this regard, the study examines whether the inclusion of the church activities in South Kivu has enhanced the rebuilding of broken community relations.

Conversely, what may also need to be examined is the possibility that church involvement has actually had a negative influence. The findings of the four researchers mentioned above draw attention to the difficulties of resolving post-armed-conflict problems. One of the constraints the churches have faced is the problematic nature of devising an appropriate blueprint for post-conflict peace-building efforts. The most worrying problem has been mixing religion and politics – a situation which has compounded the armed conflict environment in South Kivu. The complexity of the post-conflict climate has been further aggravated by a host of conflicting interests. These are the clashes between the victims and the perpetrators of armed-conflicts; the moral clash between the churches' pastoral activities and their duty to support the victims afflicted by wars; conflicts engineered by selfish warlords, politicians, and multinationals bent upon plundering the developing world's rich human and mineral resources vis-à-vis the struggles of the helpless victims to survive.

The complexity of the post-conflict peace-building process described (above) by the reviewed literature is exacerbated by additional conflicting factors. First of these is that missionary spiritual and moral ethics tend to veer away from the worldliness of politics. The churches are faced with a dilemma. The only way to save the lives of their congregations is to get involved in the process of rebuilding inter-community relationships, which entails inevitable confrontation with power-hungry politicians and warlords. We shall consider this dilemma in the next few paragraphs.

¹⁴ Jeong, H.W. (2008). "Peace Building Design: A Synergetic Approach".
<http://classweb.gnu.edu/hwjeeong/peace%20design.htm>.

The biggest decision the churches have to make is whether they should take sides in armed conflict situations or maintain a position of neutrality when members of their congregations are maimed and killed? In order to articulate the many conflicting views on church involvement in the post-conflict peace-building problems in South Kivu, the study poses a number of questions:

- What is the role of the church in South Kivu society?
- Should the church be involved in the politics of the society where it is located?
- What is the role of the church in conflict resolution?
- Should the church side with any of the warring factions, or remain impartial in conflicts?
- How best can churches play a mediatory or conciliatory role in conflicts?

The multiplicity of the questions raised above demands a multidimensional analysis of the problems if an effective peace resolution mechanism is to be designed. Lund¹⁵ echoes the views of Kraybill and Jeong on the complexity of the process of rebuilding post-conflict communities and the importance of a clear understanding of the diverse dimensions of peace building, and of putting together strategies for achieving sustainable peace. The studies reviewed suggest that the above questions should underpin any examination of the role of the Church in a conflict-situation context. Various research studies on the involvement of churches in peace and conflict resolution have been conducted in other parts of the African continent.

In the South African study on peace building efforts and final peace agreement, included among the case studies reviewed here, there are conflicting views on whether or not religious groups should be involved in peace-building operations. Some believe that religious groups should be involved in addressing the problems that affect the communities that they serve while others believe that the churches should avoid politics and focus only on spiritual matters. The present study examines this debate and reveals the approach the churches have adopted in South Kivu situation.

¹⁵ Lund, M. (2001). "A Toolbox for Responding to Conflicts and Building Peace." In L. Reyhler and T. Paffeholz (eds), *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Although none of the reviewed literature on this topic specifically focuses on the South Kivu ethnic clashes, Raymond Khumalo's investigation¹⁶ of the role of clergy in the facilitation of the peace process in Mpumalanga that led to the signing of the South African peace agreement in 1990 raises useful questions around the role of the church in reconstruction. In it he cites Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu's view that the church must not be neutral. Instead of being neutral in conflict resolution situations, the church, Tutu contends, is expected to support the cause of the powerless and the weak in order to uphold truth and justice. Tutu conveys his position on this debate as follows:

If an elephant is sitting on the tail of the mouse, it does not help for the observer to say, no, I am neutral. If one takes that attitude, the marginalised continue to be brutalised and oppressed. The role of the church is clearly to take sides with truth and justice.¹⁷

The present study postulates that the dynamics of the ethnic conflicts in the DRC suggest that an approach which takes a declared side against identified perpetrators of violence could impact either positively or negatively upon the churches' primary role and concern in the building of harmonious community relations. The crucial aspect in the study is how the churches can be involved without exposing themselves to negative criticisms from competing interests.

Pieterse provides a further endorsement for the employment of pastoral and hermeneutic tools in interpreting activities aimed at resolving constraints that divide the society. In his work on preaching in a context of poverty, Pieterse posits that priests should theologically sensitise themselves to traces of God's praxis in daily occurrences, which they must interpret in accordance with the biblical message and proclaim to the members of their congregation.¹⁸ It is my contention that the review of the overall range of studies cited here can provide a theoretical pathway to aid the effective evaluation of the churches' peace-nurturing *modus operandi* in South Kivu insofar as these studies help to illuminate the political, social and economic platforms created by the churches within the conflict zone.

The next problematic and contentious debate is what constitutes the "notion of just war". The present study reflects on the idea of "just war" in an attempt to understand whether this notion has influenced conflict resolution activities of the churches in DRC. Those who

¹⁶ Khumalo, B. G. 1996. *The Role of Local Clergy in the Facilitation on the Peace Process in Mpumalanga Leading to the Signing of a Peace Agreement in 1990 and Beyond*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu Natal, p. 67.

¹⁷ Khumalo, 1996, p. 68.

¹⁸ Pieterse, 2001, p. 2.

subscribe to the idea of “just war” believe that the church should only support the group that stands for peace in the context of war and conflict. This way of thinking has its roots in the year 310 BC, when the 24-year old Constantine became first Christian Emperor of the western half of the Roman Empire. When Emperor Constantine assumed the further office of the Supreme Pontiff (Pope Constantine I), he began to play the role of the protector of Christians. The view of Astley¹⁹ on what constitutes “just war” re-echoes the early Christian traditional belief that the church must wage war in defence of peace, particularly if Christianity was under threat. Astley’s argument, which is summarised below, is challenged by Jeong. The research specialist on post-conflict peace building and structural transformation design argues that “Ending conflict with military victory creates unbalanced power relations that in turn lead to difficulties in democratic governance as were exemplified by Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo”²⁰. Astley, on the other hand, contends that the early Christian church acknowledged God as the invisible power responsible for the Pax Romana and saw in it the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. According to Astley, the rationale for the “just war” tradition is that the reasons for conflict are less important than securing victory and that, if “peace” can be imposed by means of war, then it can be argued that the means justifies the ends.

Whether such imposition of “peace” on war-torn communities achieves the expected objective is doubtful. Studies on war and armed conflicts suggest that there is no consensus on the definition of the concept of a “just war”. This creates a conceptual problem that undermines its successful implementation in real-life situations. The connotation of the right motive for waging the just war, which informs the definition by Harries, highlights the problem of going into war in the “just war” tradition. The following comment by Harries exposes the practical limitations of this stand:

The war is to be waged with the right intention, not for aggrandizement or even honour but for a just peace ... the whole thrust and spirit of the ‘just war’ tradition, whilst not exclusively Christian, is properly Christian.²¹

A number of issues are posed in this formulation. First, what is morally difficult about this proposition is that almost all politicians, warlords and ethnic group leaders have different hidden agendas when armed and violent operations are planned. This raises the most critical and complex question: Whose perspective might one justifiably adjudge to be “the right

¹⁹ Astley, J et al. 2003. *War and Peace*. London: T & T Clark Ltd, p. 43.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 2.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 47.

intention” for waging war? The present study will explore this issue in its investigation of the South Kivu clergy’s adjudication of “right intentions” in the context of the conflict in the DRC.

How the churches should respond to the question of “right intentions” is suggested by Jeong.²² Chapter Two of the present study describes in detail the state of the South Kivu situation. The question to investigate is what is the best way to rebuild the war-ravaged social fabric in South Kivu? The present researcher asserts that rebuilding a society ravaged by war involves restoring mechanisms that have collapsed and re-aligning them with the clearly defined goals of the post-conflict peace restoration process. According to Jeong the primary objective of the restoration and re-alignment of socio-economic and political structures is to enhance public security, generate economic recovery, facilitate social healing and promote democratic institutions. The aim of national integration and peace-building activities should be to re-build shattered relations in devastated communities. This view, advocated by Jeong, is endorsed by the literature reviewed. As Jeong points out, “stable relations between communities can be created through efforts to rebuild political, economic and social structures that have collapsed or are dysfunctional.”²³ Since violent conflict obstructs reconstruction of community relations, Jeong contends that the “control of violence at the interpersonal and inter-communal level is a prerequisite to establishing a constructive relationship.”²⁴

Jeong concludes that the causes and conditions of conflicts should be considered in putting together conflict resolution initiatives aimed at rebuilding a sustainable peaceful society because the realities of conflicts in various societies are different. Therefore Jeong warns that, although the dynamics of conflict resolution allows those engaged in conflict resolution to use the best models from different cultures in other societies, the implementation of peace agreements may not necessarily be linear or orderly and may not even guarantee a desirable outcome.²⁵ Jeong suggests that best way to “prevent a recurrence of violence,” is to tackle “the root causes” of post-conflict problems by utilising the peace-building design of “structural transformation”, which the writer calls “the synergetic model”. Jeong asserts that “In the synergetic interaction [model], the total effect is greater than the sum of the individual

²⁴ Jeong, 2005, p. 13.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 4.

²⁴ *Ibid*

²⁵ Jeong 2005, p. 5.

efforts.”²⁶ This approach is relevant to this study because it deals with different dynamics that are involved in the in peace-building block. Despite his warning against the limitations of adopting a fit-all-solutions approach, Jeong provides a general model for rebuilding a war-torn society.

The reports and archives consulted on the situation of South Kivu reveal dangers that faced church leaders and members who got involved in the conflict-resolution process. A good example is the Amnesty International report on justice and war crimes which highlights large numbers of people who were killed. The conflicts of South Kivu have in one way or another affected all institutions in the region, including the churches. Church leaders were active in peace-keeping in 1996; one of the most important of these leaders to fall victim to the armed conflict, as mentioned in the Amnesty International Report, was Christophe Munzihirwa (see picture in appendix 3), the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bukavu (the capital of South Kivu), from the Bashi ethnic group. He was killed after he strongly criticised the AFDL for instigating a war in the eastern DRC. The Amnesty International reported that

early in September 1996, fighting broke out in South-Kivu region between the ZAF (Zairian Army Forces) and a Tutsi-led armed group linked to the Banyamulenge Some 83 bodies were counted by Western journalists, including that of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bukavu, Christophe Munzihirwa, who had publicly criticized the ADFL (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo) and its alleged support by Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA).²⁷

The killing of Archbishop Christophe Munzihirwa appears to suggest that the Archbishop of Bukavu might have played a role that was interpreted as a threat by those who vied for political power and control of South Kivu. His brutal murder highlights the need to demystify the difficult and complex role of the churches, then and now, in their attempts to resolve constraints that continue to hamper the full and lasting restoration of peace and harmony in the South Kivu and the rest of the DRC.

Apart from the views of the abovementioned studies on church neutrality versus support for victims of conflict, a study by Levis Ngangura²⁸ analysing church participation in the conflict-resolution process identifies peace as one of the responsibilities of the churches in the DRC. Ngangura contends that a priest who ignores the importance of peace and testifies

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 4.

²⁷ Amnesty International, “the Quest for International Justice: Defining the Crimes and defences for the international Criminal Court”, February 1997.

²⁸ Ngangura, I. 2004. Church and Engagement for Peace in Democratic Republic of Congo after the war. Goma: ULPGL, p. 98.

for Jesus Christ in a society whose peace is under siege by armed conflicts should be perceived as having refused to accept his moral responsibility towards his congregation:

The responsibility towards peace is currently considered by the church as an essential form of the Christian testimony. Thus, to testify for Jesus Christ one must, in front of the severe threats weighing on the peace in DRC, necessarily take the concrete form of an active responsibility in favour of peace. What is at stake in the acceptance of this responsibility in favour of peace? ²⁹

Whilst Ngangura promotes the view that building peace is the essential form of Christian testimony, he does not cover the different steps and aspects through which churches were involved in rebuilding South Kivu communities. In this context, the present study seeks to fill the gap in the extant literature. The reports from international and local organisations and articles published in newspapers operating in South Kivu – the United Nations Mission Observer in Congo, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, *Englise du Christ of Congo*, *Heritier de la Justice*³⁰, the Human Rights Service of the Catholic Church and *Conference Episcopale National du Congo* – commented on the various issues that impacted on the conflict. The listed local and international organisations record the participation of the South Kivu churches in voter education, which constitutes an important element of this research. These organisations provided data on different aspects of the work of the churches in building peace and preparing communities for democratic governance. According to Jeong, an understanding of the many factors that affect the post-conflict situation is crucial to designing the appropriate peace-rebuilding and structural transformation post-conflict synergetic model.

Apart from the above reviewed literature, many recent studies have also investigated the contribution of churches in the preparation of the population for the democratic elections in the DRC. These include an electronic article on the DRC³¹ and a study by Collette Braeckman.³² This Belgian specialist reporter on affairs in the Great Lakes region interviewed several local priests about their contribution to the elections and reported his findings.

The role played by churches in ASIPA (Acts of Symposium International of Peace in Africa) is another important consideration. Churches in the DRC organised a symposium entitled SIPA (Symposium International of Peace in Africa), which was attended by politicians and other community members. Although the report of the proceedings in ASIPA provides a

²⁹ *Ibid*

³⁰ The human rights branch of the protestant churches operating in South-Kivu www.heritiers.org

³¹ Braeckman, C., *Elections: The citizens and Churches are mobilising* <http://www.enjeux-internationaux.org/articles/num11/en/elections.htm>

³² *Ibid*

detailed dialogue between church leaders and community members on the South Kivu conflicts that took place in Butembo in 2001, the report does not provide detailed cases of how the churches responded to the situation. Each of the documents embodied the SIPA Report provides information on certain aspects of the community conflicts, but does not offer an in-depth analysis of the engagement of churches in the process of reconciliation and reconstruction. The opening statement of the SIPA Report reinforces the importance of the peace efforts towards reconciliation as follows:

*En effet la seule arme valable contre la guerre, est la paix. Le temps était arrivé pour l'Eglise Catholique de Bukavu, L'Eglise du Christ au Congo et la Société civile du Sud-Kivu de se mettre à l'œuvre pour bâtir la paix et devenir le point de départ du grand projet pour la paix en Afrique.*³³

[English translation]: In fact, the only valuable weapon against the war is peace. The time has come for the Catholic Church of Bukavu, the Church of Christ in the Congo and civil society in South-Kivu to work on building peace and on becoming the starting point for a greater peace movement in Africa.

Another important study that attempts to unravel the complex armed-conflict situation in South Kivu is a work by Rafti. Although the research study by Rafti covers³⁴ the important factors that contribute to the insecurity in South Kivu, it focuses only on the role of Rwandan Hutu refugees. Rafti's research on the development of FDLR in South Kivu argues that it will be impossible to rebuild community relations if the different militias that operated in South Kivu during the period of ethnic clashes are still operational during the post-conflict period.³⁵ It could be concluded that Rafti's argument suggests that the presence of FDLR militias and other movements stem from the fact that they are exploiting the state of insecurity and political instability to perpetrate further atrocities in the South Kivu province, particularly in the rural areas.

The greater part of the literature concerning South Kivu and DRC in general has focused on the political institutions as well as peace-keeping institutions. Some of the case studies provide only superficial accounts of the role of churches. Although South Kivu is the most significant province in this whole conflict, only a few studies have been devoted to the study of the province. These studies have failed to provide the multi-dimensional approach necessary for explaining the many competing variables that influenced the South Kivu situation.

³³ ASIPA (Actes de Symposium International sur la Paix en Afrique), Butembo, North Kivu, 2001, p. 4.

³⁴ Rafti, M. 2006. *South Kivu: a Sanctuary for the Rebellion of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda*. Antwerp: University of Antwerp, p. 4.

³⁵ Rafti, 2006. pp. 16-18.

Analysis of the literature reviewed in this study suggests that the successful post-conflict community relationship rebuilding design exploited by the churches in the South Kivu region is collaborative methodology: a structural transformational strategy that entails a partnership between the churches and all other stakeholders in resolving the ethnic-war-torn problems that hinder peace. A large number of studies endorse this holistic approach aimed at engaging every member and group of the strife-torn South Kivu society. One of the advocates of this all-embracing approach to peace and reconciliation is the South African theologian, Pato.³⁶ He argues that African theologians should collaborate with members of civil society in addressing problems of armed conflict in the African continent. Scriptural emphasis on the importance of the collaborative approach in reconstructing shattered social and political institutions, is conveyed by the Jewish writer, Nehemiah³⁷, who invites all the citizens of the war-ravaged City of Jerusalem to rebuild the shattered walls of the city. The studies by Mekoa³⁸ and Barth³⁹ also recommend the collaborative method that involves all the conflicting parties and incorporates all the diverse factors competing for attention in constructing an appropriate holistic approach for peace-rebuilding and structural transformation of post-conflict societies.

A limitation in the extant literature on the role of churches in post-conflict peace-building processes is that only a few studies deal specifically with the involvement of churches in conflict resolution. The scarcity of relevant literature on church involvement in peace resolution efforts is particularly notable in the South Kivu situation, with very little having been written on the DRC post-conflict peace-building and social transformation efforts. This present study being case-study-oriented, it has had to be conducted in the absence, broadly speaking, of pre-existing literature that specifically deals with the South Kivu and DRC armed-conflict upheaval. A further restriction is that, although many other religious denominations and variables have played an important role in addressing problems generated by the ethnic conflicts in the South Kivu region, the study focuses only on the peace interventionist activities of the Catholic Church, since there is sufficient data available on the activities of Catholic Church leaders in South Kivu.

³⁶ Pato, L. L. 1994. African Theology. In De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio (eds), *Doing theology in Context: South African Perspectives*. Cape Town: David Philip, p. 159.

³⁷ Nehemiah 2:17 (NIV 1999)

³⁸ Mekoa, I. 2005, Africa in the Twenty-first Century, In Johanes A. Smit & Pratap P. Kumar, edition. No.2, 2005. *Alternation*, Durban: CSSAL, p. 419.

³⁹ Barth, K. 1939. *The church and the Political problems of our day*. London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd.

The significance of the present study is that the lessons learnt may offer a church participation model for future research studies in the field of conflict-resolution in other conflict-ridden societies. Secondly, the findings of a study focused on the investigation of the South Kivu armed conflicts and the role of the churches might become a peace-rebuilding case-study template for resolving post-conflict problems in other societies and also fill the gap in the existing scholarship in the field.

1.4 Practical methodology

This study employs the qualitative approach and data collection techniques that entail participant observation and gathering, and analysis of conflict-related comments, criticisms and views of local people. In order to observe the inter-community experiences and their impacts on the reconciliation initiatives the researcher visited some of the South Kivu congregations – a real-life field observation that enhanced an articulation of an undistorted perspective of the everyday practical engagement of the churches in promoting the communal harmony and wellbeing of the members of South Kivu society.

Because the thesis focuses on the role of churches in rebuilding community relations in South Kivu, case-studies drawn from prominent church leaders who are committed to improving the wellbeing of their congregants and communities were utilised. It is hoped that focusing on the “everyday communicative acts” as exemplified by these leaders may provide some insight into the broader role of churches in advancing peace, justice, dignity and truth within the society. The case-studies are supported and enhanced by the applicability of the practical theology approach based on the analysis of communicative acts within this area of research. The implementation of this methodology entails analysing how the South Kivu churches and their leaders viewed and responded to various aspects of social dynamics in promoting the transformational process.

The use of case-studies is a non-experimental or descriptive form of research where the focus is more on description and explanation rather than on predictions based on cause-and-effect⁴⁰ investigation. This approach was found to be relevant to this study because it was aimed at describing how God’s praxis has worked in favour of Christian communities in different

⁴⁰ Marriam, S. B. 1988. *Case study research in education. A qualitative approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, p. 7.

situations, particularly in war-ravaged problem areas. Against this backdrop, this study focuses on the issues from a theological perspective, adopting Pieterse's approach which he describes as a "practical theological theory of praxis which might improve the communicative acts in the service" of spreading the gospel.⁴¹ These communicative acts are acts that work toward serving the community. Merriam states that in this form of research it is neither possible nor feasible to manipulate the potential causes of behaviour, but rather to set oneself the objective of examining events or phenomena. Based on this reasoning, the thesis examines the acts of churches in different events in line with the project's framework.

The study uses the case-study of the Roman Catholic Church of Bukavu's involvement in the reconciliation process in the South Kivu region as a model. The Roman Catholic Church was represented by its two Archbishops, Munzihirwa and Kataliko (see appendix 4) who openly engaged in the socio-political affairs of South Kivu in 1996. The two Archbishops conveyed their peace objectives in the South Kivu society through declarations on radio and public speeches and sermons in the church. The archival material that embodied their speeches could be downloaded from different organisational websites. This study also draws from the activities of other local Protestant Churches that belong to the ECC group of churches, such as the local Philadelphia Church of CELPA (*Communauté des Eglises Libre Pentecôte en Afrique*.) These churches were also involved in addressing the socio-political problems that overwhelmed the region. Also used in this study is other relevant archival data, stored in the offices of the Catholic Church and the ECC group of churches, on the participation of religious institutions in the reconstruction process. The data collection also involves interviewing the clergy about their current preoccupations in the South Kivu region

The practical methodology approach requires the careful and detailed collection of various statements, speeches and records, embedded in rhetoric, liturgies, deeds and writings of other actions of church leaders and members. This data was accessed from a range of documentation: conference proceedings, newsletters and United Nations reports. The relevance of this methodology was reinforced by the realisation that, whilst experimental research measures the cause-and-effect relationship between the experimental group and control group, case-study research, on the other hand, focuses on viewing the situation as it is found. This method was found to be relevant to this research because questions revolving around the "how" and "why" are essential to the case-study method. The advantage of this

⁴¹ Pieterse, 2001, p. 15.

approach was that, whilst these questions help in the process of understanding the meaning of the phenomena in a particular situation, the use of interviews further enhances the understanding of the different phenomena under scrutiny. The case-study method is usually used to examine a specific phenomenon such as a programme, an event, a person, a social group, a process⁴². That the case-study method is appropriate for this study is demonstrated by the participation of church representatives in the different phenomena that characterised the South Kivu events of the armed conflicts.

Furthermore, the case-study method is appropriate for this research because of the techniques used. Yin in Merriam defends the value of the case-study research method as follows:

Thus, the case study relies on many of the same techniques as a history, but it adds two sources of evidence not usually included in the historian's repertoire: direct observation and semantic interviewing. ...the case study's unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artefacts, interviews, and observations.⁴³

The appropriateness of the techniques applied in the case-study research was confirmed by the fact that the resultant data presentation explained clearly how the churches dealt with social problems in South Kivu. As mentioned earlier, the interview technique was used to collect data. Pieterse advocates interviews as a suitable research data collection technique for to gathering information for research that has practical theology as its methodological basis, with

tentative interviews with people working in the area of our specific problem. From these we might compile a semi-structural schedule of questions which could be used for successive rounds of interviews, until no further information is forthcoming from these sources. The information thus obtained will help us to grasp the reality of the situation in that problem area.⁴⁴

Following this recommendation, interviews were accordingly conducted with church leaders and members of various congregations in an informal and unstructured way in order to have an in-depth understanding of their activities. In this study 45 people were interviewed individually. In addition to the individual interview group of 45 interviewees, the researcher also held group discussions. Some of the participants were interviewed in South Kivu, while others were interviewed in South Africa. The researcher grouped the 45 interviewees who participated in the peace-rebuilding process in South Kivu into three groups. The three groups were categorised according to their profession and socio-economic status indicators.

⁴² Merriam, 1988, pp. 9-10

⁴³ *Ibid*

⁴⁴ Pieterse, 2001, p. 15.

(1) The first group consisted of Roman Catholic Church leaders and other active members of the clergy from different denominations in South Kivu. The objective in putting key religious role players into this group was to aid the data processing and also to explore their inside views on the roles they played in the resolution of the armed-conflict problems and to collect information on their activities during period 1996-2006.

(2) The second group of individual interviewees was composed of politicians, medical doctors, former military officers, academics, and other prominent figures in South Kivu society. The intention of the researcher in grouping together interview data from these categories was to understand their views concerning the ethnic wars in the South Kivu region and to collect information on any activities in which they were involved during the period under study.

(3) Lastly, the third group comprised ordinary young people on the street and university students. The reason for the inclusion of this segment of the South Kivu population was to evaluate the views of the youth concerning the churches' involvement in the ethnic armed-conflicts in South Kivu.

To gain the trust of the interviewees and avoid arousing unfounded suspicions when sensitive issues were addressed, the researcher explained to each interviewee the purpose of study. To ensure the protection of those who participated in the interviewing process, the identities of some of the interviewees were withheld. The informal context of the conversations allowed for informants to speak freely. A voice-recorder was used to record the interview data. The researcher interviewed people from different professions and socio-economic levels – members of South Kivu society from all the socio-economic sectors, irrespective of their level of education. The researcher considered the rights, values, and the desires of the informants during the interviewing process. No formal questionnaires were used in this data collection process.

In addition to the individual interviews, the researcher also conducted group discussions with some members of the South Kivu society concerning their views on the role of the churches in the province. These discussions were both very informative and lively. Some of the participants in group discussions freely revealed their identities, but the majority of participants from both the individual interview group and group discussions preferred to remain anonymous.

This is a qualitative study that utilizes the methods of Interpretive Social Science. It employs a practical theology approach that focuses on the interaction between the data and the concepts, which are identified structures within which meanings are constructed. The data was collected as soon as the proposal was approved. The researcher arranged a visit to South Kivu to meet the informants for interviews and to observe their inter-community activities within their social environment. During this visit the researcher studied the way the daily activities of the church leaders were conducted by surveying their calendars and documents (speeches, homilies, memos, archives and publications). The researcher recorded relevant details related to recorded field trip observations in notebooks. A field diary was also kept so that the researcher could chronicle his own thinking, feeling, experiences and perceptions throughout the research process. The type of research method used could be described as qualitative.

The qualitative approach of collecting, processing and interpreting information was used because it is relevant to the instruments used in the data collection process. According to David Wilkinson, "Qualitative data include observations, interviews and life-history accounts. They enable the voices of those being researched to be heard. Qualitative data is usually analysed by subjecting it to some form of coding process".⁴⁵ Throughout the data-analysis process the information was organised chronologically, reviewed repeatedly, and continually coded. The different pieces of information were thematically grouped for analysis, and then discussed, reviewed and organised in a chronological order. A list of major ideas that surfaced was chronicled. The translated interview data and the participants' recorded diary were transcribed verbatim.

The crucial *modus operandi* employed in this project to ensure external validity is the provision of richly detailed descriptions to enhance the replication of the results. In other words, the data techniques and presentation are consciously designed so that other researchers will be able to test the veracity of the analysis and research results. It is argued that this multilayered description is the appropriate vehicle for communicating a holistic picture of the experiences of the churches in a society plagued by armed conflict. The final part of the project entails the construction of the informants' experiences and the meanings they attach to them.

⁴⁵Wilkinson, D. (ed). 2000. The researcher's toolkit - The Complete Guide to Practitioner Research. London: Routledge Falmer, p. 79.

1.5 Theoretical methodology

The research relies on the practical theology approach, which Pieterse⁴⁶ defines as the “study of communicative acts in the service of the gospel within the context of modern society”. For Hawkes, “practical theology includes the critical study of contemporary activities and experiences of Christians and of the church in relation to God have will and purpose for them.”⁴⁷ This approach was found to be relevant for the study because it enhanced the researcher’s focus on the actions of the churches in the context of South Kivu’s ethnic armed conflicts:

Practical theology applies critical theory to praxis, which is meant to be communicative acts in the service of the gospel, in order to direct such acts towards the goals of justice and righteousness, human dignity and freedom or, rather, to make accord with the values of the kingdom of God, in order to promote the coming of that kingdom.⁴⁸

The testing of this approach in the context of the case-study of South Kivu was undertaken by investigating how churches in South Kivu supported the population in building a society structured around dignity, righteousness and freedom through the evangelical praxis. This approach was used in South Africa by Anglican Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, who asserted that “the role of the church is clearly to take sides with truth and justice.”⁴⁹

Adopting the practical theology approach aided the process of understanding and critiquing the activities of the churches in terms of the communicative evangelical praxis. To put it differently, this methodology enhanced the researcher in constructing meaning from the participant’s communicative data composed of people’s everyday practice in words, deeds and writings⁵⁰. The acts that are studied in the service of the gospel are described as interpersonal, free and equal, and are aimed at mutual understanding⁵¹. The researcher believes that practical theology is an action science. Pieterse confirms the above formulation as follows: “the actions studied are performed by all believers in every sphere ... Practical theology studies acts in order to improve them against the background of theological theory and the reality of the context and society in which we live and work.”⁵² This approach has been applied to other issues, such as poverty, by Pieterse in his book titled *Preaching in a*

⁴⁶Pieterse, 2001, p. 8.

⁴⁷ Hawkes, G. 1989. The Relationship between Theology and Practice in Southern Africa. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, No.68, pp. 29-39.

⁴⁸ Pieterse, 2001, p. 10.

⁴⁹ Khumalo, 1995, p. 68.

⁵⁰ Van der Ven, J. A. 1998. *God reinvented? A theological search in texts and tables*. Leiden-Boston-Koln: Brill, p.37.

⁵¹ Pieterse, 2001, p. 11.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 9.

Context of Poverty, which argues that churches can transform impoverished conditions through working on the acts of daily life.

From this framework, a model of the role of churches in the situation of a war-torn society was developed to show how the churches located in South Kivu engaged themselves in the mission of rebuilding community relations in order to transform an armed-conflict-torn country into a peaceful society based on justice and truth.

The role of churches in the South African conflicts that characterised the era of struggle against apartheid and the fight for peace and reconciliation, canonized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, is the best success story model that informs this research.⁵³ A range of articles and discussions that formed reportage on the role of churches in South Africa were consulted to develop a model for the South Kivu situation. Such comparisons will draw from theories that were developed in other parts of the world concerning the role of churches in building peace. However, such comparisons were made only to illuminate the situation in South Kivu, rather than to conduct a full-blown comparative study of the two regions. Such a comprehensive comparative study might best be reserved for separate research undertaking.

1.6 Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation is structured as follows:

The first chapter covers the research design and presents the background information about the whole research project.

Chapter Two provides an empirical analysis of the crisis of South Kivu.

Chapter Three considers various ideas that have influenced the intended framework of the churches in the context of serious destruction (economic, social, cultural and political), so that the churches' responses to these crises can be evaluated.

Chapter Four presents a theory of the church praxis role in addressing the crisis of community relations; this covers the different aspects of the churches' participation in social

⁵³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Final report, presented to president Nelson Mandela 29 October 1998, Volume I

affairs, peace-building, creating security, political transition, development, reconciliation and cultural transformation.

Chapter Five, the final chapter, draws conclusions from the study and presents the findings that could promote the readers' understanding of the challenges and contributions of churches in the transformation process of the present situation in South Kivu. The chapter presents ideas that could help to effect changes in the lives of the Congolese people.

Chapter 2: Context of Study

2.1 Introduction

As indicated in chapter one, this study follows the practical theology approach, which requires analyzing real life situations, followed by the use of a hermeneutic framework essential for rendering the biblical message and its inspiration intelligible in a particular context, and devising a theory for praxis that enhances our understanding of the role of churches in the South Kivu crisis. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to present the critical state of the intercommunity relations that impacted on the different aspects of the situation of the DRC and particularly South Kivu province during the ten-year period. Although this chapter deals with historical, physical, social, economical and political issues, it does not mean that it has nothing to do with theology. In fact, it touches on theology as this is relevant in the lives of those affected by social tragedies like war and other social upheavals:

Theology only becomes real to those who actually suffer poverty, oppression and marginalization in any society if it also connects with quite specific material and historical conditions which shape their local context of life.⁵⁴

The church serves the communities in real-life situations that destroyed the lives of people who suffered tragedies created by violent conflicts, political unrest, poverty, and lack of infrastructure. It is vital to understand the complexity of the problems of South Kivu so that one does not lose sight of the important role played by the church in promoting community relations in South Kivu. As this study dwells specifically on the issue of rebuilding intercommunity relations, it is necessary to have an understanding of the elements that describe the situation of this province.

The study is based on analysis of archival reports of activities undertaken during the period 1996-2007 by various local and international NGOs operating in South Kivu, including students, scholars, and governmental institutions. It is important to acknowledge the fact that, owing to political instabilities and the lack of infrastructure in the DRC, collecting

⁵⁴ Cochrane, J. R. 1994. Theology and Faith: Tradition, Criticism and Popular Religion, in De Gruchy J & Villa-Vicencio C., eds., *Doing Theology in Context South African perspectives*, Cape Town & Johannesburg: David Philip, p. 34.

research data drawn from surveys and statistics around different issues is very difficult. Most surveys and statistics were conducted in the 1980s and much has changed since then to affect research productivity in the DRC.

This chapter provides a brief overview of the geographical location of South Kivu and the historical background of the DRC. It also provides insights into the social problems, the poverty profile, and the impact of the conflicts, their replications and other issues that have contributed to the armed-violence crisis in the province. The objective of this chapter is to provide the background information that elucidates the situation in South Kivu. It covers briefly certain aspects of the South Kivu situation that are relevant to the study.

2.2 Geographical location of South Kivu

South Kivu is located in the Eastern part of DRC. It borders Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania. It used to be known as the tourist province of Congo because of its coastal location on the banks of Lake Kivu, Lake Tanganyika and within the Kahuzi Biega National Park, flanked by mountains and the home of the mountain gorillas. The province of South Kivu is surrounded by North Kivu, Katanga and Maniema. A clear location of South Kivu region is provided in appendices 1 and 2 at the end of the dissertation.

The violent and armed conflict dynamics of South Kivu, the focus of the study, is shaped by a multiplicity of contexts and variables that dictated the holistic and collaborative approach adopted by the churches for resolving the ethnic strife. This section focuses on one of the contexts that affected the course of events in the ethnic armed-conflicts: the geographical location of South Kivu. The relevance of the geographical location of South Kivu to Chapter Two and the study as a whole stems from the fact that South Kivu borders Rwanda and Burundi, and this proximity to strife-torn neighbouring countries played a major role in the prevalence of armed and violent conflicts in South Kivu. The regional conflicts cannot, therefore, be understood without the determination of the impact of the geographical location of South Kivu on the course of events in the DRC and the Great Lakes region, renowned for its political instability and constant state of insecurity.

2.3 Historical background of the DRC

In 1885, after much manoeuvring, King Leopold of Belgium obtained international approval to take over the DRC and to treat it as his personal property, which he re-named the Congo Free State.⁵⁵ It was later established as a Belgian colony in 1908. The Congo gained its independence in 1960 with Patrice Lumumba as Prime Minister. The Congo's early years of independence were marred by political and social instability that can be traced to different factors.⁵⁶ The root cause of the Congo's endless political upheavals can be attributed to the abundance of its mineral wealth and other natural resources and the pervasive interference of foreign powers bent on plundering its wealth.

This thesis statement can be substantiated by the involvement of foreign countries in the assassination of Lumumba and the toppling of his government by Colonel Joseph Mobutu through a military coup in 1965.⁵⁷ Joseph Mobutu, who later changed his name to Mobutu Sese Seko, imposed a dictatorial rule upon the Congolese people for many years. Mobutu retained his position as president for over 32 years through several phantom elections as well as through the use of brutal force. The political and social instability created by the Mobutu regime was intensified by armed ethnic upheavals in the Great Lakes region.

South Kivu became the region most affected by ethnic strife and civil wars triggered by a massive flood of refugees who fled from the fighting in Rwanda and Burundi in 1994. The large presence of displaced war-ravaged refugees in South Kivu created the violent and explosive situation that ignited the ethnic conflicts in this region in 1996.

The ethnic armed clashes that erupted in South Kivu in 1996 led to the toppling of the Mobutu regime in May 1997 by a rebellion led by Laurent Kabila and backed by Rwanda, Uganda, most Western governments and international institutions.⁵⁸ Initially the reason for the war was to fight for the recognition of the Banyamulenge population in South Kivu.⁵⁹ Kabila renamed the country the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), but in August 1998 his regime was also challenged by a second insurrection backed by Rwanda, Uganda and other countries. Troops from Angola, Chad, Namibia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe intervened to prop up Kabila's regime. Although a ceasefire agreement was signed in July 1999 by the DRC, the

⁵⁵ Meredith, 2006, p. 95.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 103.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 107.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 521.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 529.

Congolese armed rebel groups, Angola, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, intermittent fighting continued. The problems of struggles for peace were further constrained when Laurent Kabila was assassinated in January 2001 and his son, Joseph Kabila, became the head of state.

In October 2002, the new president, Joseph Kabila, successfully negotiated the withdrawal of Rwandan forces occupying eastern Congo. Two months later, the Pretoria Accord was signed by all remaining warring parties to end the fighting and establish a government of national unity. A transitional government was set up in July 2003 in which Joseph Kabila occupied the position of president with four vice-president positions held by the former government, former rebel groups, and the political opposition. The transitional government conducted a successful constitutional referendum in December 2005 and elections for the presidency, National Assembly, and provincial legislatures were conducted in 2006. Joseph Kabila was inaugurated president in December 2006 and the National Assembly was installed in September 2006. Vital Kamerhe was chosen as the president of the National Assembly in December. Provincial assemblies were constituted in early 2007, and elected governors and national senators in January 2007.⁶⁰ Rather like the impact of the geographical location of South Kivu on the eruption of violent conflicts and the course of events in the South Kivu region, the historical background of the DRC is an indispensable hermeneutic key for unravelling the historical and political origins and the causes of the armed conflicts in the South Kivu province and the rest of country. Thus, a clear knowledge of the historical context of the DRC and the Great Lakes region is important if one is to devise an appropriate structure for reconstruction community relations.

2.4 Environmental situation

The environment has suffered severe damage since 1994 and more particularly the period between 1996 and 2006 because of massive numbers of displaced persons as a result of the wars. The negative effects of the ethnic wars on the South Kivu region include massive reduction through poaching of wildlife populations in the Kahuzi Biega, water pollution, deforestation that caused extensive soil erosion, and complete disruption of mining enterprises (for diamonds, gold and coltan⁶¹ – the mineral used in manufacturing capacitors).

⁶⁰ CIA - The World Factbook – Congo, Democratic Republic of the.htm

⁶¹ Columbium Tantalus.

The destructive consequences of decades of wars, compounded by concentration of large numbers of displaced Congolese and floods of refugees, were the depletion of resources and environmental damage to South Kivu.⁶² It will take nature decades to restore the situation. The area of the Kahuzi Biega National Park is one of the many instances of nature conservation being under threat.

Although no comprehensive census data exists, conservationists active in the Kahuzi Biega National Park in [DR] Congo now suggest that the gorilla population, estimated to be approximately 8,000 individuals in 1996, may now number fewer than 1,000 individuals, an 85% reduction in numbers. A combination of deleterious forces related to the civil war has been responsible for this decimation of gorillas and other wildlife in the Kahuzi-Biega National Park (and in the Virunga National Park).⁶³

Additionally, the mining sector constitutes a huge threat to the nature conservation. The discovery of tantalum has caused a serious environmental damage in the region. The area of Kahuzi-Biega National Park reflects the negative impact of uncontrolled mining in the region.

An uncontrolled mining rush for coltan (Colombo Tantalum) has brought thousands of miners into the Kahuzi-Biega Park. Not only are their mining practices extremely destructive to the habitat, but they also contribute to huge increases in bush meat hunting. Kahuzi-Biega has also experienced an invasion by agricultural settlers, who by practicing shifting agriculture contribute to the destruction, degradation and loss of habitat, but also significantly increase the amount of bush meat trade.⁶⁴

Uncontrolled constructions of houses have created permanent environmental risk to the population in region. The rise of the urban population in towns has been a result of rural exodus because of insecurity in the rural areas. The high incidence of violence in the rural areas has made many people give up farming, a situation which has increased the level of poverty in the rural areas. The city of Bukavu illustrates this environmental crisis clearly. The city has a beautiful scenic landscape, surrounded by mountains trees and the plants, and was once called “Bukavu *la verte*”.⁶⁵ Already threatened by problems of a too fast-growing population, the city inherited thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees who fled from their county in 1994. To provide shelters for the millions of refugees that fled the ethnic wars in the Great Lakes region, refugee camps were established almost everywhere in the urban and rural areas. Trees that protected the city from erosion were cut down and used for the erection of tents, the construction of new houses and for cooking:

⁶² CIA - The World Factbook – Congo, Democratic Republic of the.htm

⁶³ Mehlman, 2002, http://www.gorillafund.org/conservation/reports/092002_actionprogram_18mos.php

⁶⁴ *Ibid*

⁶⁵ Translated by the researcher: “Bukavu the green city”

The situation is particularly dire in the eastern part of the country where the influx of 2 million refugees from Rwanda and Burundi in 1994, in the wake of the crisis in those two countries, led to deforestation and the destruction of fauna in the wildlife parks.⁶⁶

The chaotic construction of houses all over the province created by the massive influx of refugees led to the collapse of existing municipal building regulations that ensured safety – a situation that threatened the entire province. The mismanagement and corruption in the local public services has been a major catalyst in aggravating the situation. The problem was worsened by the fact that corrupt municipal officials continued to issue authorization to build in areas that were not marked for residential building purposes. The environmental problem created by non-regulated building practices defies solution because there is no good monitoring system to regulate the construction industry and to ensure that proper urbanization procedures are followed. As a result of this, the region is plagued by massive erosions that compound the environmental damage. Although the reviewed literature on this topic – the environment versus armed conflicts – does not show how this context acted as a catalyst in the ethnic conflicts in South Kivu (as did the geographical location of South Kivu), the section portrays the massive environmental damage caused by the armed violence and the breakdown of law and order. The extensive deterioration of the environment led to mismanagement of the environment, and physical and social crisis. A successful resolution of the constraints that prevent peace-building depends upon a deep understanding of how the environmental degradation affects the response of all stakeholders to the post-conflict situation in South Kivu.

2.5 Community relations

South Kivu has a large number of ethnic groups (Bashi, Barega, Babembe, Bavira, Bafuleru, Banyanga, etc) that regard themselves as indigenous ethnic groups of the region. However, historical evidence suggests that there has always been a migration of large number of other ethnic groups (Hutu and Tutsi) from Rwanda and Burundi into South Kivu during different periods. The Kinyarwanda-speaking population is called Banyarwanda. Throughout the history of the Great Lakes region, the Kinyarwanda-speaking population and the other local population on some occasion have treated each other with open hostility and have constantly clashed over various issues.⁶⁷ Approximately 150,000 Tutsi left Rwanda in 1959 and 1961 to

⁶⁶ DRC-IPRSP Kinshasa, March 2002 (World Bank archives)

⁶⁷ Meredith, 2006, p. 529.

Kivu in order to escape the violent political instability triggered by the Hutu revolution and the repressive Hutu regime.⁶⁸

The presence of so many Banyarwanda in the South Kivu region resulted in a sharp rift between the South Kivu local population – “autochthones” or “native”, as they call themselves, and those they labelled “foreigners” or “person with an untrustworthy citizenship.”⁶⁹ In 1991, the Banyarwanda representatives were excluded from the CNS (Conference National Souveraine), which was a national conference mandated to create transitional political policies. The situation was rendered more complex by the 1994 influx of thousands of Hutu refugees into South Kivu after the Rwandan genocide. For instance, Banyarwanda of the Tutsi ethnic group supported then Major Paul Kagame, the leader of the government backed by Tutsi ethnic group and the realignment of ethnic groups, intensified the problems of conflict between “autochthones” and “foreigners”. In 1996, the Banyamulenge started a war that was supported by Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and other allies. Yoweri Museveni, the president of Uganda, advised Laurent Kabila, “a native Zairian”, to lead armed intervention against the Mobutu regime.⁷⁰ The relationship between local communities and the Banyamulenge community deteriorated seriously with the war that destroyed many lives and created orphans. Although the war was initiated by the Banyamulenge, to some extent, all the ethnic groups have become victims of the current state of insecurity in South Kivu triggered by the 1996 war.

According to Rafti, the Hutu refugee community, welcomed in 1994 after Rwandan genocide, is perceived as a danger by the South Kivu population because of the continuous atrocities that are committed by the Hutu militias of FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda) in South Kivu;⁷¹ In Rafti’s view,

FDLR is a greater threat to the population of South Kivu than to Rwanda. The FDLR does not occupy land in Rwanda but controls territory in South Kivu. In many parts of the province, the rebellion is very violent and has deeply wounded its social and demographic character.⁷²

There are possibly other conflicts that are existent in South Kivu with other ethnic groups and communities but this research will focus only on the specific ten-year period that characterizes the study. The thematic focus of the study is the reconstruction of broken

⁶⁸ *Ibid*

⁶⁹ Person a nationalité douteuse in French

⁷⁰ Meredith, 2006, p. 531.

⁷¹ Rafti, M. 2006, p. 14.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 4.

community relations in the South Kivu region inhabited by many ethnic groups and tormented by sporadic inter-ethnic conflicts. An understanding of inter-ethnic or inter-community relationships amongst these groups is relevant to the study. This function is provided by this section. Also mentioned is the collaborative and holistic approach adopted by the Roman Catholic Church which, in pursuit of its goals in rebuilding fractured community relations and achieving peaceful resolutions of all the post-conflict problems, might be dictated to by the plurality of the Congolese society.

2.6 Religious background

The statistics survey taken in 2003 on the DRC as a whole reveals the percentage figures of the members of the different religious groups in the country. They are as follows: Roman Catholic 50%, Protestant 20%, Kimbanguist 10%, Muslim 10%, and other groups (including syncretic sects and indigenous beliefs) 10%.⁷³

The South Kivu population is deeply religious. Its culture of religious life is evident in the leadership role played by the religious bodies within the society. For instance, most institutions – hospitals, schools, and universities – are managed by religious leaders. Even development projects in South Kivu are supervised by project managers from religious organisations. The two major religious bodies, the Catholic and the Protestant churches, have emerged as the major institutional community service role players in South Kivu. This shows the degree of the churches' influence on the local population.

The protestant churches are divided into two groups: the DRC home-grown churches (called independent churches), and the recently established churches (called “Revival churches”)⁷⁴ which are offshoots of international religious organisations. The independent churches are composed of churches affiliated to the ECC⁷⁵ churches of Christ in Congo, and the Congo Council of Churches. Churches have mushroomed all over South Kivu. Almost every street has two to ten churches and sometimes more in longer streets. The new movement Churches have their own leadership style. A large part of the population in South Kivu has rejected completely the indigenous way of practicing their spirituality in favour of Christianity. The

⁷³ CIA - The World Factbook – Congo, Democratic Republic of the.htm

⁷⁴ Les églises de reveil

⁷⁵ Eglise du Christ au Congo

church has become the only source of hope and salvation for the voiceless and poverty-stricken majority overwhelmed by endless political and economic crises.

To address the plight of the people, the different churches have set up their own organizations for human rights and other social projects. While the majority of the population perceives churches as the only source of salvation from their misery, others perceive the recent increase in the prevalence of churches in region as a result of poverty. Other segments of the population look at churches as organizations created by certain individuals to fulfil their selfish interests or to realize their own hidden agendas. The two opposing views on whether or not the churches serve the selfish interest or the interest of the South Kivu society was not analysed because it is not relevant to this study. This study focused on gathering and analyzing evidence in order to determine whether churches, like other institutions, contributed towards rebuilding the South Kivu province. The religious background section provides the most important backdrop to a study whose research question signifies churches and their activities as the central concern aimed at addressing the ethnic upheavals that plagued South Kivu during the period 1996-2006. Without this essential pastoral crucible grounded upon practical theological research framework, the monumental role played by the Catholic Church in bringing peace to the DRC has been difficult to understand and evaluate.

2.7 State of insecurity

The insecurity in the province of South Kivu has been the concern of every Congolese since 1996. Different factors contributed to the insecurity situation amongst the population of South Kivu. One of the reasons is the existence of former combatants who have not been reintegrated into the army. These include the FDLR, the Mai-Mai⁷⁶, the disbanded members of Mobutu's former army, the AFDL, the RCD and those MLC force rebels who were not disarmed or reintegrated into the army. The presence of large number of disgruntled military groups operating outside the Congolese national army constitutes one of the main causes of insecurity in the South Kivu region. Many of these disbanded military groups are currently unemployed because there was and still is no proper mechanism put in place to ensure their integration back into civil life. To make matters worse, there is no current system to monitor their activities or take care of them. Consequently, they have become a threat to the current fragile peaceful climate and a danger to the local population: "These bands of violent youths

⁷⁶ Combatant against the Tutsi domination

appear to operate outside FDLR central command, possessing no ideological, ethnic or political objectives, fixed only on self-enrichment.”⁷⁷

The disbanded groups are responsible for many atrocities in surrounding areas of South Kivu. It may be instructive to highlight one of the serious atrocities that have been committed. On May 23, 2005, 19 Congolese civilians were hacked and beaten to death with machetes and hammers in the locality of Nindja in Kabare.⁷⁸ Rafti persistently argues that criminal activities are taking place because the government is not in the position to control the situation South Kivu. Rafti substantiates her view as follows: “The local defence forces in South Kivu are indigent, poorly armed and are no match for FDLR rebels. They are unable to protect their population and many people flee their homes and seek refuge in areas where security is perceived to be higher.”⁷⁹

Although serious intimidations are a daily occurrence, whoever tries to speak out against this faces severe repercussions from the various groups. In the last ten-years the local population has been victimised by all groups including the ill-disciplined army, the different rebel groups and the local combatants. The International Crisis Group, Congo, reports that the population of South Kivu is continually submitted to acts of violence by uncontrollable troops. “They carry out systematic reprisals against civilians whenever they are under military pressure from MONUC or the army.”⁸⁰

The insecurity is experienced not only in the rural areas but everywhere. A 1998 commission of inquiry into human rights and democratic violations listed the prevalence of the following human rights violations and violent criminal acts that ravage the South Kivu society: murders, assassination, massacre, burning of village and crops, destruction of property, torture and inhumane treatment, disappearances, obstruction of humanitarian aid, hostage-taking, kidnapping of children and medical patients, racial, ethnical and political persecution, armed robbery and house-breaking.⁸¹ The kinds of violence listed are part of the daily experiences the populations of South Kivu live with:

⁷⁷ Rafti, 2006, p. 15.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 16.

⁸⁰ International Crisis Group, Congo: Consolidating the Peace, *Africa Report*, No. 128 - 5 July 2007, p. 13.

⁸¹ Right & Democracy, International Centre for Human rights and democratic development *Commission of Inquiry in the DRC* June 1998, pp. 4 & 5.

The rebel forces were responsible for 70% of the massacre and execution of unarmed women, children and elderly person and other sidelined from combat due to illness or fatigue. The ex-FAZ is responsible for 10–15 % of the crimes, not against the refugees, but against anyone they found in their way.⁸²

The security and peace that the population of South Kivu experienced before 1996, as a result of poverty and other economical issues, has escalated into fear and mistrust owing to the continual acts of violence in the region. Because of insecurity, there is a perpetual movement of the population to areas that are perceived to be safe. This has led to abandonment of farms with a resultant high concentration of people in the urban areas, deforestation in certain areas, a high rate of unemployment in urban areas and an increase in criminal activities. At the present time the insecurity situation has become a complex problem. The major segment of the research deals with a catastrophic environment created by the post armed-conflict and political instability and is enshrouded in violent insecurity. Crucial to the study, therefore, is the attention that must be given to the chronic state of insecurity which the victims of conflicts and church leadership and other stakeholders had to overcome in order to usher the DRC into the fragile era of democratic governance.

2.8 Conflicts and HIV/AIDS

HIV prevalence in the DRC has increased tremendously since the war started in 1996. In 2003 the HIV/AIDS adult prevalence rate was at 4.2%, which means 1.1 million people contracted the lethal virus and were living with HIV. The AIDS pandemic was the cause of death of approximately 100,000 persons.⁸³ According to Doctor Kadima⁸⁴, who operates in the area, South Kivu is one of the most HIV/AIDS affected regions because of the high incidence of war and the continual acts of atrocity in the region.

The violent conflict has had a serious impact on the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in the rural areas and other regions where violence is severe. “Rape is often used as a weapon of war, either by rebel armies or uninformed service personnel, and thus contributes to the spread of HIV”.⁸⁵ It is hard to believe that a region that was one of the most peaceful provinces is, today, facing so many problems of instability. According to a UN report, “[a]n average of 40 women is raped everyday in South Kivu as a result of the on-going armed conflict in the

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 72.

⁸³ CIA - The World Factbook – Congo, Democratic Republic of the.htm

⁸⁴ Dr Kadima, interviewed by the author, Bukavu, 18 June 2006

⁸⁵ AIDS in Africa: Three scenarios to 2025, UNAIDS, 2005, p. 36.

Democratic Republic of Congo.”⁸⁶ This is unfortunate because children and married couples on different occasions are victims of these atrocities. Rafti comments that, “women withstand the worst of the violence, owing in part to the prevalent practice of sexual violence by the rebels” and that “HIV/AIDS is rampant.”⁸⁷

The foreign troops of the peace keeping mission and other rebel groups that came from the countries of high HIV/AIDS prevalence have played a major role in the spread of HIV/AIDS. The poverty in the region has further compounded the problems of the HIV pandemic in the midst of armed conflicts. “At the same time, conflict-induced economic disruption can force young girls and women into transactional sex.”⁸⁸ Transactional sex has become a common reality because of poverty and the fact that peacekeeping troops and other foreign troops operating in the region come without their sexual partners. It is significant to note this detail as an indication of the impact of armed-conflict on the spread of HIV/AIDS but also insofar as data on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS furnishes us with a research variable in assessing the degree to which health care services are affected in strife-torn and war-ravaged countries.

2.9 Wars and poverty

It is hard to believe that in spite of vast human and natural resources, the DRC is ranked as one of the poorest countries in the world. Some of the indicators place it amongst the most destitute countries in sub-Saharan Africa. According to the World Bank archives in 2002, “[a]bout 80 percent of its (Congo’s) 52 million inhabitants live on the brink of what human dignity can endure, on less than US\$0.20 a day.”⁸⁹

Before 1996, the economic situation of DR Congo was already in crisis after the years of Mobutu’s dictatorship, with its kleptomaniac leadership and mismanagement of the public treasury. It is on record that

For over 30 years the country was run by a corrupt, predatory dictatorship. The transition from dictatorship to democracy has been poorly handled since 1990. The resulting institutional instability,

⁸⁶ Rodriguez, Claudia, ‘Sexual Violence in South Kivu’ *Forced Migration Review* (2007) in http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/wps/StopRapeNow_Brochure.pdf

⁸⁷ Rafti, 2006, p. 15.

⁸⁸ AIDS in Africa: Three scenarios to 2025, UNAIDS, 2005 p. 36.

⁸⁹ Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Kinshasa, March 2002 (World Bank archives)

pillaging, and inter-ethnic fighting have plunged the DRC into an ongoing multi-faceted crisis, one of the effects of which is the increase of poverty.⁹⁰

The conflicts that began in 1996 have had devastating effects on the country's economy and its citizens' quality of life.⁹¹ For years during the Mobutu regime, public workers went unpaid; as result, corruption and bribery have become the common practice. Today, the majority of the population barely make a living from running informal businesses. Putting food on the table has become a daily struggle for most Congolese people. Although South Kivu was once one of the richest provinces in terms of food production for the whole country, this is no longer the case:

The number of undernourished people in the country has more than doubled from 15 million to 32 million (nearly two thirds of the population of 50 million) between 1990-92 and 1997-99, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in its annual report, State of Food Insecurity in the World 2001.⁹²

Although the DRC has an astonishing potential for providing electricity across the world, a large segment of the population does not have access to electricity. The DRC is well-endowed with resources suitable to generate hydroelectric power with the total hydroelectric potential estimated at over 100,000 megawatts, which is about 13 percent of the world's total.⁹³ Yet only about 6 percent of the country's population has access to electricity. In Kinshasa, the capital, only 31 percent of the population has access to electricity, one of the lowest rates of coverage in the world.⁹⁴

Two basic factors – lack of maintenance and armed conflict – have led to the collapse of the whole infrastructure of the electricity power supply system. Owing to the conflict and the collapse of the electricity power establishment, several areas of the country have been cut off from the network leaving important cities without electricity. The electricity distribution system has virtually collapsed because the state power utility, *Société Nationale d'Electricité* (SNEL), has not maintained the electricity infrastructure, nor replaced worn and outdated equipment with modern equipment.⁹⁵

The problems associated with continual armed conflicts have also adversely affected the education system. Inadequate state funding is reflected in the low level of staff salaries,

⁹⁰ *Ibid*

⁹¹ Report No. PID10904 Democratic Republic of the Congo-Emergency Multisector Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Project (EMRRP) May 30, 2002 World Bank.

⁹² *Ibid*

⁹³ *Ibid*

⁹⁴ *Ibid*

⁹⁵ *Ibid*

which discourages qualified teachers from practicing their profession. Other problems include decayed or decaying infrastructure and lack of teaching and learning materials. Because of inadequate government support, most schools in the DRC are operated by nongovernmental groups, usually the churches. These organizations finance their operations by collecting fees from students (or their parents).⁹⁶ This makes education very difficult for children of poor households or families. In 1995, about 59 percent of eligible children were enrolled in primary schools (62 percent of eligible boys and 55 percent of eligible girls). This shows a sharp decline compared with the period 1978-1979, when 72 percent of eligible children were enrolled in primary schools.⁹⁷ The perpetual conflicts have made the situation more difficult, and, because of insecurity and a high rate of unemployment, many parents cannot send their children to school.

In addition to the problems outlined above, the health care system in DRC has also been devastated by the ongoing ethnic conflicts. Health personnel have not been paid for a long period and, as a result, many have left the profession or sought greener pastures abroad. The major constraint that destroyed the health care establishment is that the hospitals do not have the necessary equipment to provide basic health care to the local population. The World Bank archive describes the state of affairs in the health care system as follows:

Most of the health districts are in a state of complete abandonment. Conservative estimates of health facilities coverage show that at least 37 percent of the population or approximately 18.5 million people have no access to any kind of health care.⁹⁸

It is hard to believe that in the 21st century, an age dominated by tremendous advances in health care, large numbers of Congolese people die daily because of the government's failure to provide basic health care. The mortality rate in DRC during the period 1996-2006 is alarming. The 2002 World Bank archives provide the shocking statistics:

Between 65 percent and 85 percent of births are not attended by skilled health personnel and result in a high maternal mortality rate. The infant mortality rate in 2001 was 129 deaths per 1,000 births (138 per 1,000 births in rural areas), while the mortality rate for children less than 5 years of age was 213 per 1,000 in 1998. The maternal mortality rate (870 per 100,000 births in 1995), which was already too high, rose steeply to 1,289 per 100,000 births in 2001.⁹⁹

These factors are alluded to here not in order to attempt kind of comprehensive analysis of Congolese impoverishment but rather to highlight the destitution and agonised suffering that affected every social fabric of the population of South Kivu. Poverty is an existential and

⁹⁶ *Ibid*

⁹⁷ *Ibid*

⁹⁸ IPRSP Kinshasa March 2002 (World Bank Archives)

⁹⁹ *Ibid*

never-ending problem that strangles the powerless and the voiceless in Africa. At this juncture we can do more than hint at the drastic relationship between armed conflict – war – and poverty, but this briefly sketched picture is intended to foreshadow the detailed investigation of the cause-effect relationship between wars and poverty in the rest of the research.

2.10 Natural resources

The DRC is extremely rich in natural resources, particularly coltan (columbium tantalite), gold, cassiterite, and other minerals in continuous demand. But the majority of its population gain no benefit from these natural resources. Instead, in South Kivu, the region's immense natural resources have become the major contributory factor to the misery of its people. Indeed, the rich natural resources have been the bane of the region and the country at large. "A group of researchers claim that states whose economies depend on natural resources run a 23 % risk of armed conflict, whereas the risk is only about 0.5% for those without natural resources."¹⁰⁰ Although it is said many times that the intention of the architects of these wars was to bring democracy to the people of the DRC, the rich mineral resources seem to have played a significant role in influencing the continuation of these wars. The complicity of big businesses in the resources-war interface is a major concern for some analysts. Hence, it is argued that "any analysis of the geopolitics in Congo requires an understanding of the organized crime perpetrated through multinational businesses" in order investigate "why the Congolese people have suffered unending war since 1996."¹⁰¹

What gives added credence to this observation is the fact that the regions most plagued by conflict are those that are richest in mineral resources. And according to Kwokwo,

the war in Congo is driven by the desire to extract raw materials, including diamonds, gold, columbium tantalite (coltan), niobium, cobalt, copper, uranium and petroleum." Like in other war region the "conflict natural resource" plays a key role in South Kivu crisis. A natural resource is described as being of 'conflict' when it provides revenue to an armed conflict.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Kwokwo, A. 2004. The Place of Physical Environment in the Reconstruction of Congo, *Journal of Human Right and Peace in the Great Lakes Region*, Volume 1, No. 1. 2004, p. 143.

¹⁰¹ Snow, H. & D. Barouski. 2006. Suffering in the DRC, Behind the numbers, *Business Africa Magazine* August, p. 36.

¹⁰² Kwokwo, 2004, p. 143.

During the period of the conflicts between 1996 and 2006, a large quantity of minerals was exported from the DRC. Snow and Barouski have noted that, paradoxically, the mining sector has witnessed an unprecedented boom during the conflicts:

Mining in Congo by Western companies proceed at an unprecedented rate and it is reported that some \$ 6mn in raw cobalt alone – an element of super alloys essential for nuclear, chemical, aerospace, and defense industries – exits the DRC daily.¹⁰³

It is sad to see through the veils of deception and to realise that, to a great extent, only a few self-serving individuals benefit from the DRC's natural resources, while the rest of the population suffers. According to Archbishop Emmanuel Kataliko:

Foreign powers with the collaboration some of our Congolese brothers organize wars with resources of our country. The resources that could be utilized for our development, for the education of our children, the treatment of our sick people, and in brief for us to live decently serve to kill us.¹⁰⁴

It is indeed a paradox that the citizens of a country endowed with vast human and natural resources should continue to endure an endless circle of abject poverty and misery. As soon as we contemplate the role the rich and vast natural resources of the DRC played in fuelling the armed conflicts in the DRC, the question that cries out to be investigated by future studies is: What role did the huge mineral resources of the DRC play in the endless eruptions of armed conflicts and what was the extent of foreign power involvement in the conflicts attributable to their vested interests in exploiting the natural resources of the DRC?

2.11 Conflicts and the displacement of people

Conflicts and scarcity of food are responsible for the displacement of people. Africans account for 40% of all displaced people in the world and it has been estimated that, in 2001, 13 million Africans had been uprooted by war or persecution and 1.7 million fled their homes in that year alone. In the last ten years the DRC lost a large part of its population because of conflicts:

More than three million human lives have been lost. Almost four million people are estimated to have been displaced in the sub-region and some 10,000 to 15,000 children are being used as soldiers.¹⁰⁵

The DRC is no exception in the continuing “brain drain”, which has seen thousands of professionals leave Africa for high-income countries each year since 1990. The cover story of

¹⁰³ Snow, H. & D. Barouski. 2006, p. 36.

¹⁰⁴ Nkunzi, B. J., 2005. *La Naissance de l'église au Bushi: l'ère des pionniers 1906 -1908*: Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, p. 243.

¹⁰⁵ IPRSP, Kinshasa, March 2002 World Bank archives

a recent issue of New African magazine¹⁰⁶, “Brain drain killing Africa softly”, highlights the situation:

Various estimates suggest that between 20% and 50% of the top African brains and skilled personnel now reside outside the continent, and most maintain minimal professional contact with the motherland.

The net effect of this is that it has diminished the pool of professionals and experts available for development within Africa.

This year’s World Migration Report, citing various European and American official sources, states that a new generation of “sub-Saharan African Diaspora has been mainly concentrated in the US (881,300), France (274,538), Britain (249,720) and, to a lesser degree in Germany (156,564) and Italy (137,780). Many thousands more are dispersed in lesser concentrations throughout Canada, Belgium, Holland, Ireland, Spain, and as far away as Australia, Russia, Eastern Europe and Asia.¹⁰⁷

The volume of displaced victims and floods of refugees fleeing from war-torn areas of the globe is the barometer that measures the intensity of the armed violence and the pervasive state of insecurity that afflict the victims. It is just one indicator of the amount of people displaced and how this displacement of people has affected the search for peace and reconciliation in the province.

2.12 Conclusion

The instances outlined above are some of the factors that have contributed to and impacted on the situation in South Kivu. The political history, the mismanagement of the nation’s treasury, the unresolved conflicts and the enormous quantity of natural resources that attract unscrupulous local and international business operators and politicians have all combined to prevent a culture of peace from being instilled within the different communities. This is attributable to the selfish interests or personal agendas of some of the parties. The fact that poverty has been increasing over the years has worsened the situation in the whole country, and particularly in South Kivu. The analysis of the existing data confirmed that only a small group of people has benefited from the exploitation of the vast natural and human wealth whilst the majority of the citizenry has been forced to struggle for mere survival, threatened by agonizing poverty and insecurity.

The issues presented in this chapter have shown that churches are faced with momentous challenges which include widespread poverty and socio-economic difficulties. In order to

¹⁰⁶ New African, “Brain drain killing Africa softly”, November 2005

¹⁰⁷ http://www.africasia.co.uk/newafrican/na.php?ID=714&back_month=51

achieve the thrust of the study, the causes of the relevant phenomena that underpin the role of churches and other religious groups in addressing the conflict problems of South Kivu the period under study have been repeatedly emphasised. The overall analysis is intended to clarify how, through practice; the churches have been able to engage in the community rebuilding process in the South Kivu region and what they have accomplished to date. The data analysis seems to suggest that the churches' message of hope and liberation may have produced a measure of desirable change, particularly in view of the fact that, initially, they worked alone. Similarly, the politicians, the army and the traditional leaders operated independently yet failed to resolve the problems of conflict. The next chapters show how the churches formed collaborations by joining other organizations that were involved in finding solutions to the problems confronting the South Kivu population – inter-organisational collaborations that prepared the way for successful resolution of the problems of peace and reconciliation.

To achieve the intended aim of the research and to enhance theoretical coherence, this study was structured around a theological framework designed to elucidate and illuminate the role of the churches in the context of social crisis. The inner operations of the churches were investigated by scrutinising church actions, sermons, letters and other church activities vis-à-vis the process of evolving solutions to the South Kivu problems. The study will tackle this aspect of the research problem in Chapter Three: A Theological Approach to the Rebuilding Context.

Chapter 3: A THEOLOGICAL APPROACH FOR THE REBUILDING OF COMMUNITIES

3.1 Introduction

In view of the issues raised in Chapter Two, this chapter focuses on the application of a theological framework in analysing the churches in the context of rebuilding intercommunity relations. An overview of the churches' practical theological approach to structural transformation as evidenced by church activities is discussed in order to link the church with the affairs of civil society. This part of the study is structured around the critical literature that deals with the theological approach aimed at social transformation in South Kivu.

To achieve this objective, certain aspects of the mission of the church were examined. The focal aspects of church participation are the rebuilding of intercommunity relations and nation-building activities. These community transformation efforts entailed reconstructing the political, economical, and social structures to ensure the stability of the society. In order to achieve the research goals, the research scrutinises various aspects of the churches' recreation of a peaceful society. These are (1) the churches' engagement with politics, (2) the church as a peace-maker, (3) the church as a development agent, (4) the church as the voice of the people plagued by a state of insecurity and (5) the church in the context of bridging cultural barriers.

A study regarding the conflict-resolutions undertaken by churches requires definitions of the church and what it stands for. The word "church" invokes a variety of images and conflicting meanings. The Bible is replete with images and connotations which denote the church in different contextual situations. Different disciplines and individuals have their own views of what the church represents. Owing to the conflicting debates on the conceptual definitions of the church, a section in this chapter is devoted to defining the church and locating it within the context of the study. In other words, the objective of this section (definition of the church) is to provide a conceptual definition framework, which shapes and informs the theoretical structure of the study. Another reason for the inclusion of the definition of the church is to

review the relevance and legitimacy of Church participation in conflict resolutions. David Bosch comments on this thematic concern as follows:

The relevance and legitimacy of religion is continuously tested (whether consciously or unconsciously) in respect of the contribution it can make to help its members attain the ideal of an increasingly human society. Its orientation is, therefore, to the future rather than the past. It supplies the basis for social change.¹⁰⁸

Bosch appears to endorse a negative perspective that does not see the church as a major contributor to the resolution of problems in the world, but it is not the intention of the present study to engage in this particular debate. More to the point, Bosch argues that the relevance and the legitimacy of religion are constantly tested in societies threatened by chronic problems in order to evaluate whether the churches have the capacity to make any meaningful contribution towards alleviating the suffering of the poorest of the poor afflicted by never-ending armed conflicts and social problems.. The unsolvable global problems include abject poverty, endless circles of armed violence and natural disasters. This study pays special attention to the involvement of South Kivu churches and their contribution towards helping church members create the ideal human society. Whereas Chapter Two provides the description of the state of crisis in South Kivu, our concern in this chapter is with the way the churches have approached the situation in order to achieve their aims.

3.2 Defining the church in the study

The missionary activities of the Church in colonial and postcolonial Africa project the Church as the agent of European colonisers, who have been interested always in exploiting the human and natural resources of African continent for themselves. Hence, the church is perceived differently by different cultures. In the postcolonial context some religious organisations founded by Africans have emerged as profit-seeking enterprises that exploit the poor so that the church leaders could enjoy an opulent lifestyle.

In addition, some churches are perceived negatively as authoritarian and conservative institutions and are accused of trampling the spirit of Christian freedom and joy and seen as instruments of colonialism that legitimize evil regimes.¹⁰⁹ This perception of the church has led to situations in which the church is viewed as an enterprise created by selfish individuals

¹⁰⁸ Bosch, D., 1985, The fragmentation of Afrikanerdom and the Afrikaner churches, in De Gruchy & Villa-Vicencio (eds.), *Resistance and Hope South African essays in Honour of Beyers Naude*. Cape Town: David Philip. p. 62.

¹⁰⁹ De Gruchy, 1994, p. 125.

with the sole purpose of making a profit at the expense of its members.¹¹⁰ Where, in certain situations, this kind of hostility towards the institutionalised church has developed, the result may well be that some people prefer to practise Christianity at the individual level whilst others reject Christianity entirely. The analysis of the primary data suggests that this perception is particularly prevalent amongst professional or more highly educated individuals from various backgrounds.¹¹¹

In direct contrast, there are also those who perceive the church as the universal divine womb responsible for conceiving, giving birth to and nurturing the Christian faith. This view projects the Church as an organisation that encourages individuals to become selfless human beings who protect the weak and voiceless majority. It is in this context that the church, despite its weaknesses, can, in fact, play a major role in conflict resolution in the world.¹¹² What is interesting is that the general view held by the majority of the South Kivu population is that the churches play the major role in resolving the ethnic conflicts in South Kivu.

It is not the central concern of the study to analyse in detail the perceptions of the people toward the churches, but rather to explore the conflict resolution strategies used by the churches, and we need at this point to establish an appropriate definition of “the Church” that will provide an effective methodological framework to proceed with our investigation the investigation. So what, we must ask, does the word “Church” mean?

Some sources define the church as “the clergy as distinguished from the laity”,¹¹³ but even adopting this perspective leaves room for a multiplicity of emphases: a building, a denomination, a congregation, the clergy and members of a particular congregation, an institution. This study focuses, however, only on one of these connotations: the Church as an organisation composed of the clergy and members of the congregation.

Barth¹¹⁴ emphasises the importance of the membership of the church as follows: “We may therefore begin with a definition of the church, which is true both with the regard to etymology and her essence: the church is at all events a *people*. It is [a] congregation, an assembly, a community.” The church is made up of the people that constitute it.

¹¹⁰ Worsnip, 1991, p. 42.

¹¹¹ Group discussion by the researcher, South Kivu, 17/08/2008

¹¹² De Gruchy, 1994, p. 125.

¹¹³ Holmes A. et al eds. 2004, *Collins Students Dictionary*, Glasgow: HarperCollins Publisher, p. 142.

¹¹⁴ Barth, K. 1939. *The church and the Political problems of our day*. London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd.

Additionally, the church is represented by different images in the biblical scriptures which include the body of Christ and the bride of Christ.

In order to give a detailed portraiture of the participation of the churches in the rebuilding and reconstruction of societies shattered by social tragedies, the study discusses the historical development of Christianity and describes the church models delineated by the Catholic theologian, Avery Dulles.¹¹⁵ Dulles highlights five models of the church: (1) the institutional, (2) the mystical-communal, (3) the sacramental, (4) the proclamatory/the kerygmatic and (5) the diaconal or servant model.

The first model, *the institutional church*, is very much reflected in Catholic theology. In this model the church focuses more on the continuity of the scriptures than on missionary work. As De Gruchy argues, “[t]he institutional church” constitutes the most important attribute of the church whilst “the spiritual and the social structure is undialectically related”.¹¹⁶ Although the church needs to take care of its internal spiritual needs, the church is located within a particular society with its own structures which are constantly changing. So whilst the scriptures and the spiritual dimensions of the church are extremely important, it is equally important that the church needs are understood solely within the context of the society. The preoccupation of this model, which focuses more on the needs of the congregation and the society than missionary zeal, appears to shape and inform the practical theological methodology employed by the churches in their attempts to effect social transformation in the South Kivu region.

Secondly, *the mystical-communal church* focuses on the transcendental union with God. This model is portrayed as a type of church that is totally preoccupied with the interiority of the church’s union with God and other. De Gruchy¹¹⁷ warns that insufficient recognition of the interiority of the church’s union with God and the society can easily lead to an unbiblical dualism. De Gruchy¹¹⁸ argues that the first and the second models are sometimes wrongly perceived and understood as embodiments of the kingdom of God on earth or the body of Christ and therefore beyond sociological inquiry and critique: a dangerous perception often found in Protestant theology. De Gruchy asserts that the “church is not the kingdom of God, but looks towards the kingdom of God, waits for it, or rather makes a pilgrimage towards it

¹¹⁵ De Gruchy, 1994, p. 128.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 130.

and its herald, proclaiming it to the world”. The relevance of this model to the study is that it highlights the sections of the research that criticise the selfish conduct of some church leaders. According to this model, the Church and its leadership are not above criticism from the citizenry.

The third model, *the Sacramental Church*, attempts to synthesize and re-emphasize the visibility of the first and the second models. In this model, much emphasis is given to the significance of the church, wherein the church is the sacrament of Christ in the world.¹¹⁹ De Gruchy¹²⁰ argues that the major problem with this model is that it can become an easy prey to almost any “narcissistic self-contemplation”, which is not easily reconcilable with a full Christian commitment to social and ethical values. Does the inner spiritual purity of the church leadership, that ignores the welfare of the society within which is located, invoke the essence of Christianity: the complete Christian commitment to social and ethical values of Christ? The Churches’ decision to support the victims of ethnic conflicts and to condemn the perpetrators of armed violence is an indication of the influence of this model on the churches.

Fourthly, *the Proclamatory or Kerygmatic model* portrays the church as above all the messenger of Jesus Christ. Some theologians have pointed out that the significant attribute of the fourth model is that it focuses on the role of the church as the herald of the gospel – the church’s pastoral function that appropriately plays down the importance of church’s sacramental role in the development of Christianity and crystallizes the divine role of Jesus Christ. De Gruchy argues, however, that this model tends to reduce the amount of congregational support for preaching and this reduction of witnesses may fail to allow for proclamation of the Christian faith in deed as well as in word.¹²¹ Although the church’s mission entails proclaiming the gospel, pastoral deeds in the particular society within which the church is located are equally important. Pieterse¹²² contends that the “church has to minister to the poor in deeds and [as well as in] words and in the order impelled by Christian love”. He concludes the church’s failure to accomplish this renders the proclamation incomplete.

Lastly, *the Diaconal or Servant model* represents the church in the service of the people. Whereas the first three models can be expressed more within Roman Catholic theology,

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 128.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*

¹²¹ *Ibid*

¹²² Pieterse, 2001, p. 111.

the final two fall within Protestant ecclesiology and practice.¹²³ “This diaconal or servanthood model sees the church as only authentically being the church when it is engaged in serving the needs of the world.”¹²⁴ De Gruchy warns about the danger of secularization in the fifth model in the event of the church losing its distinctive spiritual character in the world. Although the first four models play different but complementary roles in spreading the word of God, in this view, the fifth model is regarded as the most important in Christianity. De Gruchy’s study comments on the importance of the plurality of models in developing a contemporary ecclesiology:

Since each model affirms a side of the truth of the church, yet none grasps it entirely, Dulles argues that a plurality of models is needed in developing a contemporary ecclesiology. More precisely, the emphases of each of the other four models can be used to deepen the particular one opted for. No model can be taken in isolation from the other without reductionism.¹²⁵

It is argued the church’s adoption of “a plurality of models” ensures its survival within different societies with differing socio-economic and political conditions. The fundamental role of the church involves continual understanding of what it means to be truthful to Christ in different contexts in order to enable its members to live accordingly. Although it is suggested that the last two theological models are more Protestant than Catholic orientated, the practical methodology originally crafted by the Catholic Church, which was finally adopted by all stakeholders, embodies all five models. The study evaluates how the “plurality of models” employed by the churches impacted on the community rebuilding efforts in South Kivu. Rather than focus on a single model, the research identifies the similarities of the various church interventions and evaluates them as a group. The practical theological approach adopted by the study is determined by what happens in the real world situations.

Since the world is constantly changing, the practical theology approach helps to determine whether the activities of the local churches are in consonance with its mission. According to Pieterse¹²⁶, the objective of practical theology in this context is to study “the praxis of communicative acts in the service of the gospel in the church, in Christianity and in society”. The author defines the field of “communicative evangelical praxis” as the study of “people’s

¹²³ *Ibid*

¹²⁴ De Gruchy, 1994, p. 129.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*

¹²⁶ Pieterse, 2001, p. 9.

everyday practice in words, deeds [and] writings”. This approach focuses on the daily realities of church members. The enhancement of the church praxis involves the improvement of church members’ attitude and lifestyle. In re-affirming the above comments, Pieterse¹²⁷ observes that the practical theologian “studies these acts in order to improve them against the background or theological theory and the realities of the context and society in which we live and work”.

In his portrayal of the church, De Gruchy¹²⁸ observes that “[i]n contemporary ecclesiology much stress has been rightly placed on ‘the local church’ whether [it is] understood as a single congregation, a ‘base community’, or within the community of Christians in each particular context”. It is important to stress that any portrayal of the church that excludes the conceptual definition of the essence of the church may be regarded as an incomplete description of the church. Throughout the history of mankind, different historical contexts have shaped and informed the definitions of the notions of the true and false church. One of the perspectives that emerged in ecclesiology is that the church needs to be grounded in God’s mission. De Gruchy contends that “where the church fails to participate in God’s mission, it ceases to be the [true] church.” De Gruchy adds:

The mission of God, as proclaimed by Jesus (e.g. Luke 4:18 ff), is holistic. God’s redemptive concern for the world has to do with every aspect of life, whether personal, social, or environmental. The struggle for justice and liberation, the need for forgiveness and reconciliation, the healing of mind and body, the search for meaning and the awakening and sustaining of faith, hope, and love and the renewal of the earth, are all part of the *missio Dei* and therefore the mission of the church.¹²⁹

Practical theology is classified as a science that focuses mainly on the activities of the church. And, according to Pieterse,¹³⁰ the “praxis studied by practical theologians also entails the functioning of the church or congregation, of all believers in the church and in the society”. This definition and the function of practical theology suggests that its application provides a holistic approach to church problems and impacts on all stakeholders – the church, the congregation, and the society. Hence, this study contends that the use of this approach is

¹²⁷ *Ibid*

¹²⁸ De Gruchy, 1994, p. 129.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 134.

¹³⁰ Pieterse, 2001, p. 9.

relevant to the investigation of the research question. De Gruchy¹³¹ supports the church's adoption of a holistic approach in resolving problems of conflicts; he argues that "God's redemptive concern for the world has to do with every aspect of life, whether personal, social, or environmental."

Another researcher, Michael E. Worsnip, has described the church as an institution whose operations are concentrated on the most important areas of the society in which the church exercises its influence.¹³² Worsnip's portraiture of the church describes the church's dominant operational domains:

In looking at the church as an institution, we need to situate it in terms of the dominant terrain in which it operates. Normally, we tend to distinguish between three inter-related terrains:

- The economic terrain, in which production and reproduction takes place.
- The political terrain which organizes power and decision making in the society.
- The ideological terrain which holds together the various patterns of relationship in the society.

Although the church is said to have influenced the different terrains of human and social activities, its most important operational terrain is the ideological terrain.¹³³ The church has considerable influence on the development of new ideas and views and their emergence in society. This influence on the emergence of ideas and opinions impacts on a wide range of social structures; it is expressed in a variety of ways and gives rise to a variety of different experiences. There are many instances of the church's power to shape socio-economic and political ideas and views of its members. In fact, the whole society is often co-opted into the service of the dominant class in order to bolster and perpetuate its control of society.¹³⁴ The study by Worsnip also suggests that the church's participation in the society where it operates sometimes promotes (in symbolic form) a peaceful realignment of the dominant power relations which exist in society. This positive functional role of the church is responsible for social reform and peace-support initiatives that may achieve a desirable outcome in the struggle for peace and transformation, as exemplified by events in Latin American, Asia, and Africa (particularly in the South African struggle against apartheid).

The multiple theological views – the mission of Christ that focuses on spiritual partnership with God and the practical theology that is devoted not only to the spiritual needs of the

¹³¹ De Gruchy, 1994, p. 134.

¹³² Worsnip, E. M. 1991. Situating Spirituality within the Struggle, in Michael Worsnip and Desmond van der Water, (eds) *We Shall Overcome Spirituality of Liberation*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, p.36.

¹³³ *Ibid*

¹³⁴ *Ibid*

people but also to provide for the physical needs – discussed in this section, form the theological base on which methodological framework of this present research is grounded. Since the church is located within the society, it is expected to participate in the resolution of social problems that affect the society and rebuilding community relations without losing sight of its mission and essence in the world. Because the next section of this discussion – Rebuilding Community Relations – is too broad to be treated as a single concept, it will be subdivided into five headings: (1) Churches in the world of politics; (2) Churches amongst the oppressed; (3) A voice of peace in times of conflict; (4) Churches in the midst of insecurity and armed groups, and (5) Churches with the cultural heritage.

3.3 Rebuilding community relations

This section examines the relevant literature that deals with the churches' rebuilding process strategies applicable to the situation of South Kivu. The similarity between the situation of South Kivu and the destruction of Jerusalem, which is described in the Old Testament Book of Nehemiah, could serve to illustrate the plight of the citizens of South Kivu, the focus of the study.¹³⁵ In the scriptural account, the trauma associated with the destruction of societies trapped in armed conflict is conveyed by the tortured voice of a war-ravaged victim appealing to the people of war-torn Jerusalem to help rebuild the walls of the city. This passionate plea for the reconstruction of Jerusalem not only canonizes the thrust of the study but also underlines the role of teamwork or collaboration as the most important driver in rebuilding and reconstruction of shattered communities. In the Old Testament text, the appropriate response to armed violence as advocated by the churches is evoked in the words of a traumatised inhabitant of the war-torn city:

You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.¹³⁶

The response of the scriptural victim may be compared with others in similar war-ravaged situations – situations that have robbed the afflicted and maimed those who have dared to respond to the destruction of lives and societies. The social problems created by ethnic wars and violent armed conflicts include total destruction of intercommunity relations and their replacement by violent antagonism, degradation of the natural environment, total destruction

¹³⁵ Nehemiah 2 (NIV 1999)

¹³⁶ Nehemiah 2:17 (NIV 1999)

of infrastructures, destruction of self-esteem and dignity, unbearable levels of poverty and hopelessness that propels people toward self-destruction.

The reviewed literature suggests that the appropriate response to the armed-conflict-induced socio-political problems analysed above is to rebuild the various social and political structures through the collaborated efforts of politicians, economic operators, the church and the civil society. Theologians describe this part of the church's community reconstruction role as "contextual theology". The impact of the church's role in the context of reconstruction is commonly focussed upon through the methodology of contextual theology.

The other vital aspect in the study is to determine whether it is important for church leaders and theologians to work with the ordinary people from the communities they serve in addressing social problems. According to Frank Chikane,¹³⁷ "'doing theology' therefore means action and reflection on one's activity and involvement with the people, and participation in their struggles."

In South Kivu, the supreme reign of terror induced by the state of insecurity has created a chronic inter-ethnic animosity that has led to the collapse of social, economical, cultural and political structures. This debilitating and conflict-dominated state of affairs has led to abject, unremitting poverty and unrelieved misery for the people – the inevitable outcome of armed conflict that evokes the concerns of the present researcher. How and why the church responds to the destruction of lives and societies in armed-conflict situations is the focus of this section. Therefore, the aim of this section is to submit the practical theological framework, describing the rebuilding process, to an analytical searchlight in order to determine its relevance to the study.

The story of Nehemiah provides a good narrative framework for the rebuilding process. In the first place, it reflects Nehemiah's renewed awareness about the condition of his homeland, triggered by the meaning he attached to Jerusalem.¹³⁸ His predicament and his new state of awareness mirror the church's dilemma in South Kivu. The church is situated in a society composed of people with conflicting agendas and the church's mission is to spread the gospel. Can the church best do this by siding with one group against another or by taking a neutral position? It is argued that the church's success in addressing the problems of

¹³⁷ Chikane, F. 1985. Doing theology in a situation of conflict. In C. Villa-Vicencio & J. W. De Gruchy, *Resistance and Hope South Africa: essays in honour of Beyers Naude*. Cape Town: David Phillip, p. 100.

¹³⁸ Nehemiah 2:17 (NIV 1999)

rebuilding and the reconciliation process depends upon its ability to take cognizance of its location and the prevailing circumstances. The church as an armed-conflict resolution strategist cannot achieve its purpose without an understanding of the socio-economic and political factors of the location in which the church is situated. This view emphasises the importance of the church leadership's comprehensive knowledge and intimate understanding of the environment within which it is located: the cultural, economical, social and political history of the people it serves. The study is shaped and informed by the above armed-conflict resolution research strategy. De Gruchy highlights this major precondition of church participation in the rebuilding of intercommunity relations and the reconciliation process in the following passage:

One reason why theology today has found it very important and useful to engage in dialogue with social sciences, such as sociology, social psychology, political science and economics, is that they help provide necessary tools and resources for analyzing the context within which the church is called to proclaim and live the gospel.¹³⁹

The view expressed here by De Gruchy suggests that the mission of the church is to serve its people in a holistic way. The theologian contends that a sustainable post-conflict peace cannot be achieved without a clear understanding of the armed-ethnic problems. It is possible that it is for this reason that De Gruchy has highlighted the necessity of using other disciplines as tools. In this context, De Gruchy argues¹⁴⁰ that "God's redemptive concern for the world has to do with every aspect of life, whether personal, social or environmental". A holistic approach is recommended because the society served by the church is composed of individuals and groups with different problems and conflicting views on various existential issues, and a one-solution-fits-all approach is bound to lead to failure.

To reiterate, in the Nehemiah response to armed-conflict disaster, we are told that Nehemiah does not rely solely on hearsay but quietly goes to see things for himself in order to understand the seriousness of the situation: "I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Finally, I turned back and re-entered through the valley gate."¹⁴¹ This seems to suggest an approach requiring an intimate knowledge of the social and political dynamics of the people the church serves which the church must adopt in seeking to resolve conflict and rebuild devastated social and physical structures; this, the scriptural mode would seem to advise, is the way to influence events and make a meaningful attempt to resolve the problems

¹³⁹ De Gruchy, 1994. The Nature, Necessity, and Task of Theology, in De Gruchy & Villa-Vicencio (eds) 1994. *Doing Theology in Context: The South African Perspectives*: Cape Town: David Phillip: p. 11.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁴¹ Nehemiah 2:15

of the society within which the church is located. Theologians go so far as to call upon students studying theology to live in a conflict-ravaged community in order to experience the problems of people living in war-torn areas of the world.¹⁴² This re-affirms the point already made: that the rebuilding process starts by taking cognizance of the people's situation.

3.3.1 Churches in the world of politics

The preoccupation of this section is to investigate how the churches can successfully address the political and economic problems normally perceived to be reserved for politicians. In it we shall outline the different views of researchers on this topic, beginning with a study by Charles Villa-Vincicio which challenges the view that the churches must confine themselves to religious and spiritual matters and allow politicians to deal with all socio-economic and political problems. Villa-Vincicio rejects this compartmentalisation of politics and religion. Advocating proactive church involvement in all socio-economical and political problems, he contends that

It is equally important...for the church to accept that if theology is to be taken seriously within the political arena (and more especially during a period of political reconstruction) it has to contribute to the process of producing concrete proposals to deal with complex political and economical problems.¹⁴³

Villa-Vicencio argues that the only way churches can meaningfully engage themselves in the difficulties faced by the members of their congregations is to learn from the insight and mistakes of others. In so doing they are able to discover what it means to be theo-politically correct. Villa-Vicencio's view seems to suggest that the churches could only achieve their missionary objectives if they adopt a hands-on approach in addressing problems that affect the societies in which they operate. According to Hugh Montefiore,¹⁴⁴ it "is often alleged that Christians should be concerned only with salvation and spiritual matters, while politics are concerned with the things of this world." In rejecting the viewpoint that recommends pigeon-holing the religious and the political domains, Villa-Vicencio contends that "[i]t is important that a theological imperative of continuing social renewal be kept alive in a nation-building theology."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Pieterse, 2001, p. 119.

¹⁴³ Villa-Vincicio, C. 1992. *A Theology of Reconstruction Nation Building and Human Rights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 38.

¹⁴⁴ Montefiore, H. 1990. *Christianity and Politics*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, p. 19.

¹⁴⁵ Villa-Vicencio, 1992, p. 38.

Analysis of the literature reviewed in this study on theology and pastoral engagements in strife-torn areas supports the thesis that the church has to devise proposals that address community problems and other issues that handicap peaceful political reconstruction. The assumptions upon which the church grounds its theological framework for resolving conflicts and working for harmony and peace are not realisable when the nation is in a state of devastation. Acknowledgement by the church that stable political institutions are achievable only in a conflict-free environment is a first step in tackling the problems of rebuilding intercommunity relations, bringing about reconciliation and propelling the processes of transformation. Ho-Won Jeon's comment that "stable relations between communities can be created through efforts to rebuild political, economical and social structures that have collapsed or are dysfunctional"¹⁴⁶ re-affirms the importance of political stability in nation building. Ongoing analysis continues to reinforce the argument that the wellbeing of the population depends on how the political institutions exercise their authority in response to the needs of their subjects. Jeon adds that "Nation rebuilding is necessary where the state authority and functions have collapsed."¹⁴⁷ The words of Nehemiah – "Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and we will no longer be in disgrace"¹⁴⁸ – continue to provide a leitmotif: many of the sources reviewed in this study concur that participation by the church in the initiation of requisite transformations to establish a responsible political structure is part of its essential mission on earth to restore peace and dignity to the people of God. De Gruchy¹⁴⁹ endorses the above statement as follows:

Participation in the *missio Dei* gives to the church its particular character in the world, for the testimony of the Scriptures is that since the dawn of the time God has been at work transforming chaos into creation and confusion into community.

There is general agreement among researchers, including De Gruchy, that political stability is a fundamental precondition for successful re-creation of collapsed or destroyed social and political structures. Jeong highlights the role of political stability in nation-building by citing the situations of failure of law and order in "failed states such as Liberia, Somalia, and Afghanistan where civil wars have destroyed the foundations of both governmental and civic institutions"¹⁵⁰. He goes on to say that "formation of a legitimate government is a necessary condition for order and stability."¹⁵¹ The general conclusion that could be drawn from the

¹⁴⁶ Jeong, 2005, p. 13.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁸ Nehemiah 2.17

¹⁴⁹ De Gruchy, 1994, p. 134.

¹⁵⁰ Jeong, 2005, p. 13.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 2005, p. 84.

literature reviewed so far is that the church cannot stay neutral when injustice, chaos reigns and an illegitimate regime oppresses the population.¹⁵² In this context, De Gruchy recalls that “the Christians of the early church were accused of ‘turning the world upside down’ because of the way that they transformed the society around them.”¹⁵³

The analysis of existing literature on the church’s participation in rebuilding and reconstruction of socio-economic and political structures, which might be described as “its entry into politics”, but without the agenda of wielding political power, gives rise to a number of debatable views that need to be mentioned. Firstly, the church’s mission is a religious or spiritual one and its efforts to resolve social, economic and political problems in war-torn areas are bound to clash with those of politicians and other institutions obsessed with controlling political and economic power of the society. While few studies have challenged the church’s role in addressing the problems of its members living in areas of war and conflict, the question that calls for investigation is: How can the church fulfil its fundamental mission, namely, resolving all the problems that face its congregation without triggering violent clashes with economic and political stakeholders?

The studies analysed suggest that, although the challenges that face the church in the aftermath of armed-conflict are extremely complex and defy solution, fulfilment of its mission requires the church to muster all its spiritual and human resources to meet and overcome these challenges. Nürnberger endorses this view when he asserts that “God’s intention cannot be frustrated by inner-worldly obstacles, be they superhuman powers, political systems, the hearts of evil men or the given structures of the natural world.” His perception of the indomitable zeal and unwavering determination to succeed that the church is called upon to display is captured in the dictum he offers that “[n]ot even death can thwart God’s justice.”¹⁵⁴ The history of the church is full of occurrences in which Christians, threatened by social upheavals, were able to draw on the strength of their faith in God to overcome insurmountable problems. To put it differently, theological or evangelical historical experience frequently records that when people in a society have taken on the responsibility of rebuilding destroyed or collapsed economic and political structures, they almost always (the evidence suggests) attribute their success to the will of God. In his re-affirmation of this

¹⁵² Acts 17.6

¹⁵³ De Gruchy, 1994, p. 134.

¹⁵⁴ Nürnberger, K. 1994. Towards a New Heaven and a New Earth, in De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio, *Doing Theology in Context: South African perspectives*. Cape Town: David Philip, p. 141.

perspective, Nürnberger argues that “in apocalypses human initiative was only dormant temporarily. Again and again it burst into political action when circumstances allowed and when the believers thought that God’s time had come.”¹⁵⁵

Against this backdrop, Nürnberger argues that “Existentialism has powerful antecedents in the ‘present eschatology’ of Paul, and especially in the gospel of John. For existentialism, the decisive events in life are located where they are actually experienced: not in a distant past and not in a distant future, but in the immediacy of the present moment.”¹⁵⁶ Nürnberger concludes that “[t]he present moment is the *kairos*, the crucial time which calls for a decision” – a situation that calls for opting for “alternative attitudes and actions” in order to define selfhood as righteous or sinful.¹⁵⁷

The studies analysed suggest that in societies where people have lost the joy of life and live in a state of hopelessness, rebuilding means restoring peace, love, dignity, and joy of life for these people and hope for a better future. The church, it is suggested, is called upon to initiate the transformation by standing with the oppressed. In the view of Pieterse, this is “the mystery of the Christian faith: God comes as a servant to free [the oppressed] from want, heal them, and open up new lives for them in every sphere.”¹⁵⁸ To reiterate the fundamental thrust of the study, it is posited that, in societies where the political institutions are in crisis, rebuilding means to help the society to put in place a political system that can meet the needs of the people. Standing against injustice for the sake of the people therefore constitutes the essence of the church – an important attribute of the definition of the institution of the church referred to earlier in the study. The repeated reference in the Bible to the need to stand against injustice confirms the importance of this attribute in Christian doctrine.

The participation of the church in the process of political reconstruction registers not only the importance of engagement of the church in solving problems of society but also the seriousness with which both the church and civil organizations regard this role. The best way for the church to fulfil its mission is to help the society articulate the most effective method for addressing the problems of the world. In relation to this Nürnberger outlines a dichotomy between the authentic and the unauthentic in the realisation of future goals. Nürnberger explains the criteria of authenticity:

¹⁵⁵ Nürnberger 1994, p. 141.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 145.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁵⁸ Pieterse, 2001, pp. 93-100

an authentic life is determined neither by what others say but – that is, by social conditioning, conventions, fads, collective interests, ideologies or traditions – nor by our own superficial whims and desires but by conscious, reflected and responsible self-determination. To gain authenticity I have to take control of my own life and assume my own responsibility.¹⁵⁹

Elaborating on this theme, Nürnberger¹⁶⁰ declares that “political theology appropriates the biblical vision of the eschatological kingdom of God and defines it as a situation of freedom from oppression and social justice.” In this context the existential perception is perceived as being more individualistic than a social corrective critique constructed by the political theologian. Nürnberger is of the view that the “existentialist concentration on personal authenticity obtained through momentary decision-making blurred the vision of believers as regards the importance of the wider social contexts which are subject to great movements in historical time.”¹⁶¹ The church in the service of the people cannot stay neutral when the political structure in place oppresses the people in our day and age; to rebuild a nation goes hand in hand with having in place a responsible political structure – a factor that evokes the importance the church attaches to nation-building and the reconstruction of collapsed political structures.

Nürnberger’s study thus re-affirms the view that the society will never be stable and at peace without good governance. In his attempt to re-focus on the role of eschatology for the future, Nürnberger asserts that “[t]he eschatological future is the present as potentially in every moment of life.”¹⁶²

On many occasions the Bible shows how religious leaders have been vocal in addressing problems of collapsed political structures which constrain the people’s ability to survive. Old Testament prophets such as Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah provide a model for the clergy who are engaged in addressing political structural damages that impact negatively on their prophetic ministry. In the New Testament, Jesus spoke of setting the captives free and, in contemporary times, various religious leaders have served as role models committed to resolving problems associated with political and socio-economic conflicts occasioned by wars and rebellions. These role-players include clergymen like Desmond Tutu in South Africa, Romero in Latin America and the Archbishop Muzihirwa of the DRC, who have engaged in political affairs in the name of the church.

¹⁵⁹ Nürnberger 1994, p. 145.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 146.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, pp. 146-147.

¹⁶² Nürnberger 1994, p. 145.

In a society where an oppressive political structure is imposed on the population, independent social organizations like religious bodies can play an important role in ensuring that the government serves the people. Itumeleng Mekoa takes up this point as follows:

This social structure can be the network of community organization, media, professional bodies, churches and other interest groups. Only such organizations independent of the state and its politics can be an effective watchdog against state abuse of power, corruption, human right violations, and tyranny.¹⁶³

Although Barth argues that there “are wars in which the church will have to be neutral, there are others which [the church] will have to oppose.”¹⁶⁴ The present researcher suggests that in war situations in which the churches have a responsibility to participate in peace efforts, they must do so through collaboration with the government and other institutions involved. Have churches collaborated with the government in any way in order to resolve the situation of South Kivu? This is another important aspect that the present study investigates, namely the convergence of the social mission of the church and the typical function of government. According to Montefiore, “the indispensable task of government is to assure people’s basic needs, so that they have security against starvation, violence and social collapse. Justice, although not indispensable, at least in the same sense that food and drink are indispensable, comes very high on the list of priorities.”¹⁶⁵ The participation of the churches in the armed conflicts in South Kivu and their verbal attacks on the self-serving warlords and the politicians have compelled the church leadership to veer away from passive spiritualism toward a more active and aggressive practical theology that puts the physical interests of the congregation above everything else.

3.3.2 Churches amongst the oppressed

This section reviews literature focusing on the involvement of churches in poverty-alleviation activities and, in particular, those aimed at rebuilding a peaceful nation. The central concern of this section is to explore the various views concerning the role of the church in addressing the issues of poverty and oppression imposed by armed groups and militiamen. As a starting point for discussion of the subtopic – “Churches amongst the oppressed” – we can usefully turn to Pieterse’s view on the churches’ response to oppressed victims of tyrannical rule, namely that “[i]f we want to communicate God’s love, grace and liberation to the poor in our

¹⁶³ Mekoa, I. 2005, Africa in the Twenty-first Century, In Johanes A. Smit & Pratap P. Kumar, edition. No.2, 2005. *Alternation*, Durban: CSSAL. p.419.

¹⁶⁴ Barth, K. 1939. *The church & the political problem of our day*. London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, p. 78.

¹⁶⁵ Montefiore, 1990, p. 24.

country, we will have to do so by way of physical acts of upliftment”¹⁶⁶. It is suggested that when the majority of the population lives in unbearable poverty because of economic devastation due to corruption, mismanagement of the public treasury or any other reason, “doing theology” means standing on the side of the people in order to address the economic problems.

The situation in South Kivu is graphically conveyed by Ho-Won Jeon. He asserts that there is no way to think of rebuilding peaceful intercommunity relations where a small group of the population is rich and a large group lives in agonizing poverty. It is this injustice which the church attempts to remedy. Jeong highlights the necessity of an equitable economic development in the rebuilding process in a region that is torn by conflict when he observes that “[p]eace would not be durable without equitable development that benefits the majority of people in the society coupled with income-creating opportunities for the poor”.¹⁶⁷ The situation in South Kivu is such that a few people have become extremely rich while the majority live in an unbearable state of poverty. The study assesses how the churches have addressed the poverty of the voiceless majority as opposed to the concentration of the wealth-generating natural resources which are controlled by a small minority.

The church cannot remain unconcerned, it is argued, when the majority of the population is overwhelmed by abject poverty. Internal community relations depend acutely on the wellbeing of the population and the extent to which their needs are satisfied. In the words of Burton, the “conditions of social stability and harmony require the satisfaction of certain human needs.”¹⁶⁸ According to some of the literature reviewed in this context, “doing theology” means siding with the poor who are victims of an oppressive system. In this kind of situation, the church is called upon to stand with the population in their suffering. Frank Chikane¹⁶⁹ speaks about doing theology in the context of poverty. He observes that applying “doing theology” in real-life situations “is demanding because it means theologians must relinquish their position of privilege and choose rather to suffer with the people of God: from this experience a people’s theology can be born.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Pieterse, 2001, p. 111.

¹⁶⁷ Jeong, 2005, p. 124.

¹⁶⁸ Burton, J. 1990. , Conflict: Resolution and Provention : New York: St. Martin’s Press, p. 21.

¹⁶⁹ Chikane, F. 1985. Doing theology in a situation of conflict, in De Gruchy & Villa-Vicencio C. *Resistance and Hope South African Essays in Honour of Beyers Naude*. Cape Town: David Philip, p. 100.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*

In the same context, Nolan suggests the preferential option for the poor should be the ethos of the church. According to Nolan, “the option for the poor is not a biblical phrase but it does sum up very neatly and succinctly the most central themes of the Bible.”¹⁷¹ Pieterse is of the opinion that prophetic preaching in the church should make the poor realize that God is on their side and that he will deliver them from the shackles of poverty and from dehumanising oppression.¹⁷² This message should not be for sermons and liturgical activities alone but should be embedded in the transformation process, assisting the poor, who live in a state of hopelessness, to attain a better life.

The surveyed literature repeatedly argues that community development is an option that brings improvement into the life of the poor through the process of ameliorating their desperate situation. According to Maluleke¹⁷³, this is a spiritual mission devoted to the development of poor communities. The present researcher perceives this role as a spiritual enterprise in which the theologians’ actions are conveyed to the poor in such a way so that they understand why these steps are being taken. To this end, community development should benefit the people by improving their lives. This sort of engagement provides an interface between the social, economic, psychological and spiritual spheres and brings their inter-relationship to the fore.

The church should be involved and should support development of policies if it is committed to benefitting the people. Development policies are vital to the rebuilding process in war-torn countries. Jeong contends that development policies should be considered as an integral part of broader peace process since poverty and inequality, sustained after internal conflict, remain to undermine the peace process by breeding discontent and anger. Hence, economic stability is essential for a stable society.¹⁷⁴ It is suggested that the church, therefore, cannot remain unconcerned while other institutions brainstorm and implement development policies. Studies conducted in the United States concerning poverty and social violence, which were analysed by Burton, have confirmed that there is an important link between the two factors: “conditions of poverty lead to local violence, theft and social conflict.”¹⁷⁵ Rather than remain aloof to the people’s problems, the church ought to take the lead in inspiring and initiating

¹⁷¹ Nolan, A. 1994. Kairos Theology. In De Gruchy, J and Villa-Vicencio C, *Doing theology in context: South African perspectives*. Cape Town: David Philip.

¹⁷² Pieterse, 2001, p. 115.

¹⁷³ Maluleke, S. D. 1999. *Christian Community development model*. Pretoria: SD Maluleke.

¹⁷⁴ Jeong, 2005, p. 123.

¹⁷⁵ Burton, 1990, p. 111.

projects that will benefit the people. The present study argues that the church, like Nehemiah, confronted by the destruction of his aboriginal home, should be able to say, let us rebuild... and we will no longer be in disgrace. The church should be instrumental in inspiring individuals and existing structures to change from their passive attitude and their state of mediocrity to a society that is committed to taking arms against the mountain of problems that confront the society. As Deryke Belshaw notes,

The role of the faith-based community within the large poor group may be to provide an entrée to external ideas and resources in an otherwise closed situation, to take the lead in innovating more harmonious relationships and productive activities and/or critique unjust systems.¹⁷⁶

The good news to the poor means a message that brings hope, which charts solutions to their problems. It is trite to say that war leaves many in the state of poverty. To rebuild a society that has been torn by civil war involves overcoming the legacy of war. It is simple to destroy but it requires enormous resources and much time to reconstruct the countless number of essential social and political institutions and structures destroyed by civil war. The church can play a role in this process by drawing attention to the wrong practice(s), and committing itself to meeting the priority needs of the people. But drawing attention to these priority areas is fraught with danger. Such perceptions find expression in Van der Ven's¹⁷⁷ argument that when the church, as a social organization, seeks to articulate the criticism of society and culture it is epitomized by Jesus on the Cross. The church, it is argued, cannot abandon its congregation in pursuit of its selfish interests but must actively engage in alleviation of suffering, even if that puts it at risk.

Because of the church's position within the society, it could be said that the church, as a trusted institution, could serve to facilitate the distribution of capital for projects within the society. However, it should be emphasised that churches are not the only organizations that are involved in the process of transformation of the people's shattered lives. They are, however, are ideally placed in this process because of their moral position and relationship of trust with members of communities in which they are located.

Pieterse¹⁷⁸ suggests that such engagements should be geared towards economic development that would enable poor people to find employment in the informal sector. In this process the church can make a real difference in the life of the communities. The role of the church in

¹⁷⁶ Belshaw, D. 2005. Enhancing the development capability of civil society organization, with particular reference to Christian faith-based organizations (CFBOS), Global Poverty Research Group Working Paper Series 035.

¹⁷⁷ Van de Ven, J. A. 1993. *Ecclesiology in context*. Kampen: Kok.

¹⁷⁸ Pieterse, 2001, p. 117.

economic development and job creation is re-affirmed by Belshaw's observation that "[t]he choice of "the engine of growth" is important for both solving poverty directly through increasing sustainable livelihood and to strengthen the capacity of churches, other FBOs (faith-based organizations) and NNGOs (national non-governmental organizations) to maintain and even expand their local participatory and empowering role in poor communities."¹⁷⁹

3.3.3 A voice of peace in times of conflict

The dominant religious message that informs the present study is peace and reconciliation – a theological principle evoked by the preaching of Jesus in "The Beatitudes". The thrust of these scriptures addresses Christians as follows: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God"¹⁸⁰. The key words in "The Beatitudes" – "a voice of peace in times of conflict" – prefigure the sentiments of the SIPA forum that succeeded in ending the civil wars by re-establishing multi-party democracy in the DRC. Differences amongst the various communities because of ethnic group, political affiliation, cultural heritage or any other aspect are what makes the society a better place to live despite the fact that these differences are sometimes also sources of conflict. In other words the various conflicts within the society can provide, paradoxically, opportunities to address and solve latent problems. Creating a fertile ground for a durable peace, which John Burton calls "conflict prevention", constitutes a part of the essence of the church. Burton defines this concept as follows:

Conflict Prevention means deducing from an adequate explanation of the phenomenon of conflict, including its human dimensions, not merely the conditions that create an environment of conflict, and the structure changes required to remove it, but more importantly, the promotion of conditions that create cooperative relationships.¹⁸¹

It is argued that if the conflicts are properly attended to they can strengthen the relationship among individuals and societies. But when they are neglected or are incorrectly attended to they can result in social crisis. John Burton, in his book *Conflict: Resolution and Prevention*, perceives the resolution of conflicts as a "[t]ransformation of relationships in a particular case by solution of the problems which led to the conflictual behavior in the first place".¹⁸² The church has the task of making peace where it is non-existent and strengthening beliefs that sustain attitudes to encourage peace and promote fellowship within the society.

¹⁷⁹ Belshaw, 2005

¹⁸⁰ Mathew 5:3

¹⁸¹ Burton, 1990, p. 3.

¹⁸² *Ibid*

The task of the church is to ensure that conflict situations between groups are resolved, leading to a balanced and peaceful solution. In order to ensure the church's success in its peacemaking mission process of rebuilding intercommunity relations, the prophetic message and action of the church should pre-empt problems that cause conflict in communities. Burton speaks of "provention, doing something about problems before they cause conflict". The society becomes a better place when each community learns to accept the other's differences and focuses on their common problems and the good. This should help create an environment that is conducive for peace. This, according to Burton, is necessary because "[t]he causes or sources of conflict between individuals and groups cannot be separated from the totality of relationships, and the environmental conditions that promote relationships."¹⁸³

In a society beset by discrimination and intolerance, rebuilding means bringing people together and promoting equality and reconciliation by any means. In the context of conflict, the church is expected to help establish peace. One of the most important processes is to address the causes and sources of the problems instead of the symptoms. In this, the church could play an important role. As Burton observes, "[p]roblems that relate to social stability and human survival are not solved in the absence of an explanatory and a preventive approach to them."¹⁸⁴ It is contended that most conflict-resolution agreements fail because they entail resolving conflicts only by signing peace agreements without addressing the sources of the problems and putting in place mechanisms that change the circumstances. Burton conveys this view in the following citation:

We spend more and more on jails, but very little on the sources of deviant behaviours. At great costs we try to make air travel secure, but give little attention to sources of sabotage [...] Greater powers seek to impose their institutions and values on peoples of other nations in the name of democracy and freedom, but there is little analysis and understanding of the oppressive circumstances that have led peoples and nations their present conditions, of their present felt needs for taking steps towards their independent development.¹⁸⁵

The view conveyed here by Burton shows clearly that the root causes of post-conflict problems are not usually addressed by post-conflict peace resolutions. The question to be asked is, have the root causes of the ethnic wars in South Kivu been addressed adequately by the churches and other stakeholders? The ways in which the churches implement peace-building strategies have tremendous impact on a country that has been ravaged by wars. This task cannot be fulfilled by the churches unless they pay attention to the problems that have

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 1990, p. 47.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*

destroyed the community relations. According to Burton, “[w]e conclude that there is now no option but to pay attention to the problems which give rise to conflict, even though this may require altered institutions and policies.”¹⁸⁶

The church could play an important role by, for the sake of the transformation, confessing their own culpability. Confession to humanitarian abuses is one way of doing theology in a reconstructive way, even though this role might be compromised by the church’s culpability in sustaining unjust systems. An excellent case-study is provided by the South African post-apartheid period in which churches that were involved in implementing apartheid racist laws also helped to end them. It is noteworthy that The Truth and Reconciliation Commission encouraged voluntary confession to violent crimes against the weak in order to create an enabling environment for democracy. It is common knowledge that some members of religious bodies in South Kivu were also deeply involved in the armed ethnic violence. The study evaluates whether the churches have also used a similar guilt-cleansing approach in South Kivu.

According to De Gruchy, “only in doing so [supporting the oppressed] could the church witness faithfully to the gospel in a post war context.”¹⁸⁷ This should be done, not with the intention to victimize or condemn someone, but for the sake of peace. For true reconciliation to take place, it is essential to address the real issues that are the cause of the problem. As long as the issues that constitute the problems are not dealt with, the peace they establish may not last. The church should be instrumental in preaching the message of reconciliation, a message that brings broken hearts together. Jesus spoke of forgiveness countless times. Villa-Vicencio posits that the success of the South African transition is due to ordinary people, remarking that “the people realized that either they live together or they kill one another.”¹⁸⁸

The review of extant literature suggests that true reconciliation cannot be achieved unless the justice system is balanced and social harmony is created. The church could ensure that the justice system delivers justice to the population by addressing any wrong practice. This social objective, the studies insist, is not achievable unless the church plays an important role on this level by facilitating events and occasions that bring communities together for reconciliation purposes. This has influenced the present researcher in examining how far

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁷ De Gruchy, J. 1994, *Confessing Theology*, in De Gruchy & Villa-Vicencio (eds.) 1994, *Doing Theology in Context: South African perspectives*, Cape Town: David Philip, p. 169.

¹⁸⁸ Villa-Vicencio, C 2004, <http://www.barcelona2004.org/eng/eventos/141%20preguntas/portada.cfm>

South Kivu churches have addressed the issue of reconciliation. Intercommunity dialogue in conventions and conferences where leaders of different communities are invited to consolidate their relationships within the communities is recommended by peace-resolution strategists as a viable approach for churches. It is pointed out that the effectiveness of this method stems from the fact that the attainment of the churches' peace-building mission in this manner is akin to the practice in the Old Testament where the prophets were deeply involved in the justice system. The point being made here is that there can be no proper rebuilding of community relations without a balanced justice system. Barth outlines the role of the church in its support of the process of dispensing justice, which has disappeared in post-conflict South Kivu:

For the Church cannot speak in a merely meditative and discursive manner in the actualization of her confession. But with all this it is not denied, but rather asserted, that in the actualization of her confession, the Church has to speak decisively with Yes or No, has to call white and black when the hour strike and the occasion is here to do this in the act of witnessing to Jesus. It will not always be here. It may pass. It may be still in the future. But woe to the church if, when the hour and occasion comes, she is silent, or merely meditates and discusses or just falls back into a bare recitation! Woe to her if she sleeps- not while a variety of things are going on in the world...¹⁸⁹

This comment by Barth affords a profound insight into the churches' approach to injustice. In the South Kivu context, how churches have addressed the issues on injustice and reconciliation is one of major focal areas of the present study.

After a long period of war, there is a need for behavioural change. The church could be the voice that calls for behavioural change by starting to work on its attitude through the belief systems within congregations. It could encourage attitudes that strengthen the relationship within the society. 'In settings of protracted violent conflict, peace-building requires a proactive change in relationship.'¹⁹⁰ In this context, the church's mission should be to promote peace-building. Lederach conveys this view below:

Rather than thinking about the capacity and relationship building in a generalized fashion as across the setting, we pose here the challenge of locating within the setting those people whose in peacebuilding will serve as a catalyst and then create a critical mass capable of affecting and sustaining change processes across the affected population.¹⁹¹

The church could ensure that it trains the people to be peacemakers for the sake of their wellbeing. "Strategic capacity and relationship building require a reframing of training from content to process and from transfer to transformation."¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Barth, 1939, pp. 3, 18-19.

¹⁹⁰ Lederach, 1997, p. 112.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 117.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, pp. 109-110.

3.3.4 Church responses to insecurity and armed groups

This section outlines the problems created by armed groups and the resultant insecurity – a political anarchy that has provided an ideal environment for a reign of terror. In their attempts to alleviate the suffering of the victims of the ethnic violence, the church leadership invoked the scriptural message, in Psalm 23, of peace and spiritual security transmitted to those who suffer under the ravages of conflict and insecurity: “Even though I walk through the Valley of shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me ...”¹⁹³

Insecurity is word that characterizes a society in a state of conflict. The victims trapped in armed conflict-torn communities are in constant fear about what will happen next because of lack of trust among people from different communities. The United Nations Development Programme’s Human Development Report of 1994 defines the main attributes of security as being “safety from chronic threats, such as political repression and protection from sudden and hurtful disruption in the patterns of daily life.”¹⁹⁴ In the midst of fear for all the atrocities that take place among the members of the society, the church calls for peaceful resolution of problems. But this will be futile if the issues that cause the insecurity are not addressed and removed. The salient question is: Do the churches of South Kivu have adequate structures to deal with the issues of insecurity?

The state of security and safety is an attribute of a stable society. In the prevailing atmosphere of armed violence, insecurity and armed terror, the churches need to provide hope and support for the victims. This re-assurance is essential in war-torn situations in which the victims are plagued by the terror of the armed violence and war. The insecurity and armed violence of post civil wars create an environment in which fear becomes the predominant factor controlling the minds of the people. This state of mind, if not assuaged, leads to more problems – problems that affect both the individual and the society.

The state of insecurity in the South Kivu context is created by various factors: the regime in power, the presence of uncontrolled former soldiers and the abundance of weapons amongst the population after civil wars, the absence of a functioning judicial system – to name just some of these. The task of the church is to initiate or support the efforts that are directed towards building a safe state.

¹⁹³ Psalm 23.4

¹⁹⁴ Cockell, J. 2003, Conceptualising peacebuilding: Human security and sustainable peace, in M. Pugh (ed.), *Regeneration of war-torn societies*, London: Macmillan, pp. 15-34.

“Doing theology” in the society where atrocities of all sorts are a common occurrence means being engaged in the process that will assure the safety of the people. “The easy availability of modern weapons tends not only to increase the risk of war, but the civilian suffering caused also tends to prolong conflict.”¹⁹⁵ The availability of weapons and uncontrolled ex-combatants constitute the major contributory factors to the state of insecurity in nations that are recovering from violent conflicts. The state of insecurity results in more problems within communities.

To establish security in this situation, demobilization and disarmament are vital. The role of the church in this context is to contribute, in one way or another, toward the establishment of conditions of safety for the people it serves. In societies in which insecurity dominates, investment is considered to be a high risk, resulting in less foreign investment, economic stagnation and high rate of unemployment. This situation, according to Lewis and Dos Santos, creates the following scenario:

Generally, employment opportunities in the private sector are also limited. An environment of insecurity and uncertainty discourages the growth of the private sector, with entrepreneurs generally taking a “wait-and-see” attitude with regard to new initiatives and investment. Any future development of the private sector crucially depends on the maintenance of a peaceful and secure environment.¹⁹⁶

The church could address the issue of ex-combatants by giving spiritual support, actively participating in the process of their integration and addressing issues at stake so that a long-term solution can be found. Apart from the economic problems outlined above, the problems of “ex-combatants [...] seeking employment are further exacerbated”¹⁹⁷ by the employers’ negative attitude towards them. The churches could also play a role in redressing such perceptions.

The process of rebuilding in the post-conflict epoch also entails building confidence in people. In a state of insecurity it is hard for schools, business activities and reconstruction projects to operate properly, or even for dialogues to take place. “Doing theology”, in this context, should inspire the people to have confidence in their homeland. The efforts of the church in such circumstances are to articulate its contributions in the process transformation. The following maxim proves to be instructive: “There is a time to speak, but there is also a

¹⁹⁵ Cairns, E. 1997. *A Safe Future Reducing the Human Cost of War*. Oxford: Oxfam Print Unit, p. 32.

¹⁹⁶ Lewis, N., Harris, G. and Dos Santos, E. 1999 The demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants, in G. Harris (ed.), 1999, *Recovery from armed conflict in developing countries: an economic and political analysis*. London: Routledge, pp. 126-165.

¹⁹⁷ Lewis et al. 1999. p. 126.

time to remain silent and simply do what is right. Yet again the model is Jesus himself, in whom word and deed became one.”¹⁹⁸

There is no way in which safety can be ensured when peace is not enforced. The church is well located to address the issues of personal and social insecurity. This potential of the church is demonstrated in the South African success story, which showcased the tremendous role the church played in the reconstruction process. De Gruchy captures¹⁹⁹ this succinctly: “One way of describing the relationship between the church and those in power in this transitional era and in the future South Africa is in terms of critical solidarity.” De Gruchy continues:

The critical or the prophetic dimension implies continued resistance to what is unjust and false, and continued protest on behalf of what is just and true. The prophetic struggle against injustice must continue; standing for the truth never comes to an end. But being in critical solidarity also means giving support to those initiatives which may lead to the establishment of a new, just social order. It means that the church remains prophetic in its stance towards the emergent nation, but now on the basis of shared commitment to the realization of that new nation. In other words, while confessing theology accepts the need for the church to be of helping the reconstruction of the nation, it insists that one of the most important elements in that task is to bear witness to values that are transcendent and that are critical of any misuse of power or patriotism.²⁰⁰

The literature reviewed argues that the commitment to a fresh start and transformation is fundamental and must be vigorously pursued in the post-conflict epoch. Lewis *et al*²⁰¹ aptly note that the “end of the war does not automatically lead to the end of insecurity. War-torn countries demobilizing their military run the risk of instability as former soldiers and others who relied on military budgets for their livelihood are integrated into the economy and society.”

3.3.5 Churches and cultural heritage

The purpose of this section is to investigate how churches, in their attempts to resolve the ethnic conflicts, successfully exploited cultural dynamics. We shall pursue this investigation by exploring and examining the extent of the church commitment to, and involvement in, the South Kivu conflicts that have led the church leaders to realise that practical application of cultural dynamics can lead to the establishment of long-term peace and transformation of the war-torn region.

¹⁹⁸ De Gruchy, 1994, pp. 170-171.

¹⁹⁹ De Gruchy, 1994, p. 170.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 170-171.

²⁰¹ Lewis et al, 1999.

It can be deduced from Burton's analysis that cultural transformation is a prerequisite in resolving armed conflicts. The literature already reviewed suggests that cultural factors impinge on the long-term peace process and that stakeholders engaged in peace and reconciliation process in South Kivu stand a better chance of attaining the reconstruction and transformation efforts if they employ this approach. Burton conveys his view on this theme, arguing that:

Culture is obviously a value to be protected: empirical evidence is that the protection of culture is something for which people will make personal sacrifices. The active preservation of cultures is a driving force in all ethnic conflicts in multi-ethnic societies.²⁰²

What Burton underpins in his research is the view that cultural dynamics constitute a vital tool in establishing long-term peace in South Kivu where different communities from different tribes with different cultural heritages live. The various sections in chapter two describe the culture of violence, impunity, mismanagement and other factors affected by the culture of the victims.. It is apparent that many of the armed ethnic crimes, in South Kivu today have become routine occurrences in the daily lives of the people. Because cultural transformation is crucial for rebuilding community relations, this section focuses on the relevant literature that deals with the cultural transformation that targets the churches' participation in the resolution of armed conflicts.

In contemporary times when the values that ensure harmonious lifestyle within indigenous societies are eroded by different factors, to rebuild means to revive the values and to promote a sense of self-esteem which is reflected in the individual identity that creates the ideal environment for harmonious community relations. As Burton puts it, "different cultures typically have different means of dealing with conflicts."²⁰³ The importance of culture in fostering broken community relations, advanced by Burton and re-affirmed by other scholars, informs and shapes the research methodology used in this study. Thus, the research investigates whether the churches have included cultural strategy in their efforts to rebuild war-ravaged South Kivu. The reviewed literature suggests that it will be difficult for the churches to participate effectively in rebuilding intercommunity relations process if they ignore the relevance of cultural dynamics.

Lungile Pato links the issues of African theology and culture in addressing Africa's social problems in the following observation: "Indeed, an African theology needs to realize that

²⁰² Burton, 1990, p. 211.

²⁰³ *Ibid*

culture is a valuable weapon against foreign domination, and a basis for liberating theological reflection and activity.”²⁰⁴ It is important to mention that the cultural values of South Kivu have been under severe attack since the beginning of the colonial era.

Though there are important cultural resources within the African heritage that could be utilized in solving problems with African intercommunity relations, the continent is choked by chronic intercommunity rebuilding problems because the relevant cultural resource vehicles for addressing these problems have been abandoned.²⁰⁵ Alienation has posed a huge problem for Africa. “If indigenous theologies do not address the hard reality of sources of alienation, they do not address the hard reality of actual deprivation and oppression.”²⁰⁶ Colonialism has played a major role in this aspect. The values that encouraged people to love who they are and where they belong have been replaced by other beliefs that do not directly encourage the development of self-esteem. Pato notes that the “destruction of the African cultural systems and social structures made Africans considerably vulnerable not only to conversion but also to starvation.”²⁰⁷ There is no way to separate the socio-economical problems in communities without considering their cultural dynamics, particularly where there has been considerable damage to the cultural heritage. The issue raised by Pato has influenced the present researcher’s intention to examine whether the South Kivu churches have used this model in order to revitalise abandoned cultural values that promote socio-economic development.

David Chidester’s work on the impact of Christianity and colonialism on the colonized population analyses how Christianity, to some extent, has been utilized to establish colonization.²⁰⁸ In regions where this impact is still fresh, there is a need for reconstruction. Unfortunately, to some extent, the church has unconsciously continued to encourage or support the colonial system.

The indigenous belief systems that shaped lifestyle in indigenous societies have been destroyed or rejected. According to Chidester, “by appropriating foreign religious resources and recasting local religious resources, indigenous people all over the world struggled to

²⁰⁴ Pato, L. L. 1994. African Theologies, in De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio, *Doing theology in Context South African perspectives*. Cape Town: David Philip, p. 157.

²⁰⁵ Burton, 1990, p. 211.

²⁰⁶ Villa-Vicencio, 1992, p. 44.

²⁰⁷ Pato, 1994, p. 157.

²⁰⁸ Chidester, D. 1996. *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*. Studies in Religion and Culture. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.

make sense out of colonial situations.”²⁰⁹ There is a need for a new theology that could deal with the problems that affect the African cultural values, which require rebuilding in the light of realities of the people in the contexts such as unemployment, poverty, cultural alienation, sexism, ethnicity, discrimination, hatred, injustice.²¹⁰

The present researcher has targeted this aspect of the study in order to evaluate the role culture has played in the rebuilding efforts of the Church in South Kivu. There is no proper mechanism in place that ensures the protection of Africa’s cultural treasures. In this respect, the “foreign” religions that were utilized for the agenda of colonization have caused a huge imbalance in the society in such way that even nowadays, consciously or unconsciously, the colonial mentality permeates people’s psyche. It should also be acknowledged that the impact of colonialism has been felt, not only at the economic level but, more profoundly, in the cultural sphere. The present study tries to understand why the concept of Ubuntu, Ujama and “African Solidarity”, which exist, in various forms, almost everywhere on the African continent are not evident in South Kivu’s ethnic conflict crisis. Pato illustrated this well with regard to the South African context:

Since the beginning of missionary activity, Christian faith in South Africa has been in bondage to the cultural, ideological, political and economic interests of the white colonial settlers. Thus even when the Christian faith in South Africa has been accepted by Africans, it continued to play an ambivalent role. This ambivalent role of missionary Christianity is illustrated by the fact that the clash between African and European in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was never simply a clash between Christianity and ‘Heathenism’. The clash was in essence a clash between cultures: an indigenous one and imperialist one.²¹¹

This reality is relevant not only to South Africa but also to other parts of Africa. Other African theologians, such Kofi Appiah-Kubi from Ghana, and T. Tshibangu from the DRC, also adopted this approach in their theological reflection and activity.²¹² Cardinal Malula of Congo takes it even further in his exploration of the topic of Africanisation. In the postcolonial period, some African theologians have been engaged in the process of redefining the way Africans have been taught religion by missionaries who employed terms like indigenization or African renaissance. Doing theology, in this context, is to ensure that the valuable cultural ideals which are perceived today as unchristian and selfish – practices which reinforce essential cultural identities of societies – are reincorporated into the societies that have lost or forgotten them. This reconstruction in the belief system should also give

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*

²¹⁰ Pato, 1994, p. 158.

²¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 157.

²¹² *Ibid*

impetus to the process of development in the context of transformation. The New Testament story told by Jesus of the rich young man is a good example of the need for transformation. “I tell you the truth; it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God”.²¹³ This process of transformation entails changing the mindset of Africans in their social, cultural and religious clusters. Pato observes: “Indeed, Christianity in Africa is at present burdened by European structures and European mind-sets.”²¹⁴ It will be important for the church in Africa to consider African realities in their African locale in order to address African problems effectively. One of the key factors in the crisis of South Kivu is the selfishness of the individual. The study investigates whether the churches have attempted to revive any of the cultural values that inform Ubuntu as tools for the transformation of the shattered cultural norms in South Kivu.

In certain circumstances the international media has played a destructive role in the countries that are economically weak – countries negatively labelled “developing countries”. In these societies, the absence of local media productions that could promote the local cultural heritage results, instead, in a somewhat negative portrayal of African cultural identity and values. The countries that are economically strong control the media and it is through the media that foreign lifestyles are imposed upon indigenous societies. Almost every day programmes with excessive violence and sexual content are transmitted through media without considering the harmful effects on the population. One could say that the media has, therefore, contributed to the problems, when, instead, it could have been used to address the reconstruction and reconciliation process.

Pato emphasises the holistic approach to addressing problems of nation building and the creation of a harmonious environment for all, advocated by churches. The present study examines whether churches have ever been able to use other means besides Christian material with which to address the situation in South Kivu. Pato argues that the “African theologian must go beyond the Bible and the Christian documents, not with the view to undermining Christian faith, but so as to rediscover the integral connections which can hold African tradition and its world-view together with Christianity.”²¹⁵ The people within society learn to perceive the media portrayal of it as normal. This because it is hard to think of a violence-free society when violence is perceived to be part of everyday life. A positive step towards

²¹³ Mt 19.23-24

²¹⁴ Pato, 1994, p. 153.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 159.

the ideal society would be to respond proactively against violence, conflicts and other social ills. It is necessary to restore good values in order to promote a culture that supports reconstruction of social relations. Pato advocates that “rather than dismissing African folktales and myths as pagan and evil, seeking to purify them, African theologians must place them alongside biblical stories”,²¹⁶ suggesting that such an approach enhances “the respect and pride of African Christians of their religious and cultural inheritance.”²¹⁷ He goes on to observe that

Africans are torn apart and seek wholeness. They have an identity crisis. They are torn apart by loyalty to the Christian faith on the one hand, and loyalty on the other to African culture and history on the other. A change of perception about the Bible and African cultural expressions could make a significant contribution of African Christian Identity.²¹⁸

To rebuild intercommunity relations in the context of a society torn apart by violent conflict could be a futile process if a culture of peace, reconciliation, self-employment, and solidarity is not recreated and integrated into the belief system. Pato argues that if the churches take advantage of the knowledge made available by anthropologists and other scholars and use an African-centred approach enshrined in African cultural value systems, the realisation of its rebuilding efforts might be more successful.

3.4 Conclusion

The reviewed literature suggests that the problems that affect the members of a society also affect the church. Though the church plays an important role in shaping people’s attitudes, the church’s objectives remain unachievable if it does not collaborate with other stakeholders within the society where it operates. The transformation of an entire society depends on the transformation of each individual within that particular society. The church and other religious groups shape the belief systems of the society which, in turn, affect the attitude of conflicting groups toward different social situations and eventually, toward the way people behave. The changed behaviour patterns can be directed, for example, toward a positive transformation from a violent society to a peaceful society. But this can only be achieved when theology is done in context of doing theology. “Doing theology in this context” is understood as ministering in the context of that particular society and time. The church’s

²¹⁶ *Ibid*

²¹⁷ *Ibid*

²¹⁸ *Ibid*

successful resolution of the various conflicts depends upon its awareness of the reality of the poor and its commitment to the poor.

Chapter 4: THE RESPONSE OF CHURCHES IN SOUTH KIVU

4.1 Introduction

The central concern of this chapter is to explore the response of the churches to problems created by the armed conflict during the period 1996-2006. This chapter is concerned with investigating the following five subtopics: (1) The church and the political situation of South Kivu; (2) Churches and the oppressed in South Kivu; (3) Voices of peace in the South Kivu conflicts; (4) Churches' response to insecurity and armed groups in South Kivu and (5) Churches and culture in South Kivu. Certain sections of Baciunjuze Justin Nkunzi's book *La Naissance de l'église au Bush: l'ère des pionniers 1906-1908* published in 2005, which deals with the genesis of churches in Bushi,²¹⁹ were translated into English by this researcher. The work highlights the problems generated by the ethnic wars in the Great Lakes region, and, in particular, the underlying causes of the political instability and violence, outlined in detail in Chapters One to Three. The thrust of this study is invoked by Monsignor Mitima's words cited in Nkunzi's book. During a church ceremony in Bukavu (1997), Monsignor Mitima welcomed Monsignor Kataliko, the Archbishop of Bukavu (the capital of South Kivu province) with the following words of acknowledgement of his contribution to the rebuilding of broken community relations in South Kivu:

The countries of the Great Lakes region live in the torments of ethnic and tribal wars. Africa is the continent with the largest number of refugees in the whole world. Your evangelization will target and touch the hearts of people in order to end tribalism, ethnocentrism, egocentrism and the discriminations and usher in the reign and the spirit of reconciliation, of mutual respect, solidarity and fraternity.²²⁰

Nkunzi's report of the conflict situation in the South Kivu region articulates the critical state of community relations in the Great Lake countries in 1997. The period 1996-2001 can be described as the era of ethnic anarchy, war and serious intercommunity conflicts in South Kivu. During this period of political unrest, the majority of the inhabitants of this region cried continually for peace, transformation of community relations and rebuilding of destroyed structures. This study argues that the crisis in South Kivu has been the concern of everyone in the DRC.

²¹⁹ Bushi is the Bashi (one of the main tribes in South Kivu) territory in the South Kivu

²²⁰ Nkunzi, 2005, p. 235.

The churches are like many other social institutions who have claimed to have played a role in rebuilding the intercommunity relations in the province of South Kivu as part of their pastoral mission to participate in the reconstruction and reconciliation process.²²¹ This study explores the activities of churches and the various perceptions of people of South Kivu who were interviewed concerning various aspects of the churches' role in rebuilding the intercommunity relations. This chapter, therefore, articulates the practical theology framework, discussed in Chapter Three, for rebuilding intercommunity relations in South Kivu.

The data collection technique was customised to investigate and interrogate the diverse opinions of church members and the members of the population of South Kivu about the response of the churches to the situation in South Kivu. Consequently, this chapter's discussion focuses on analysing many different types of data. These include the views that were collected during the interviews with members of the South Kivu population, the pastoral letters and other documents that constitute dialogues between the church leadership, stakeholders, conferences and other gatherings concerning the community relation crisis.

4.2 The church and the political situation of South Kivu

The breakdown of law and order intensified by ruthless economically-motivated operations of foreigners, armed soldiers, selfish politicians and criminal acts of individuals led to political upheaval in the South Kivu region. The comment by Christophe Munzihirwa, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bukavu who is both a major role player and one of the causalities of the armed conflicts situates the study in its context:

The enemies of the nation are not only the foreign soldiers heavily armed, but also the children of the country who are not doing their duties: the soldiers, the selfish, and the members of political parties which sacrifice all their values for the sake of the party.²²²

Because Munzihirwa is a Roman Catholic Archbishop the above statement is evidence that the Catholic Church has had an ongoing interest in the political affairs of the DRC. He spoke these words early in 1963 warning the citizens of the DRC and, in particular, admonishing the politicians regarding their selfish role in politics. It thus appears that the Catholic Church has been deeply involved in political affairs, on a national level, since the early years of the

²²¹ Father Jean-Bosco Bahala testimony to the Committee of International Relations, House of Representatives, Washington D. C., May 17, 2001 <http://www.heritiers.org/uscongbahala.html>.

²²² Nkunzi, 2005, p. 230. (PT)

DRC's independence.²²³ It is evident that Mekoa's suggested approach the church should become a watchdog, guarding against the state's abuse of power, corruption, and human right violations, has been utilised by some of the church leaders.²²⁴ The case of Cardinal Malula²²⁵ is a good example of the church's involvement in the political arena during the early days of independence. Cardinal Malula's criticisms of the Mobutu regime did not go down well with the regime and he was forced to go into exile to Belgium in the 1970s. The following extract from the analysis of the situation of the religious groups in DRC shows that the Catholic Church provided the only source of forceful opposition to the Mobutu regime:

Until the inauguration of multipartyism in 1990, the most persistent and most effective opposition to the Mobutu regime came from the Roman Catholic Church. Mobutu's ambitions for state expansion necessarily implied conflict with organized religion, and the main adversary of the expansionist regime was the Roman Catholic Church, which claims 46 to 48 percent of the population as active members. The Catholic network of schools, clinics, and other social services was as large as that of the state, and more efficiently run. The role of the church thus was pervasive, and its moral authority made it an uncomfortable competitor for the comprehensive allegiance that Mobutu sought.²²⁶

However, the situation appears different for the Protestant churches. The ECZ²²⁷ (Church of Christ in Zaire) a religious association that unites all Protestant denominations, has been perceived merely as Mobutu's tool. In fact, many Congolese people felt that Mobutu created the ECZ as a strategy to control the Protestant churches. It is widely held in the DRC that the Protestant denominations had a generally good relationship with the Mobutu regime and it appears that the Protestant churches did not criticise the Mobutu regime publicly until the inauguration of the democratic era. The approach the Protestant churches seem to have taken here appears to be similar to what Karl Barth has referred to as working with the government²²⁸. However, the veracity of the above critical appraisal suggests that, prior to the pre-1990 period, the Protestant churches operated as a political tool for legitimising the Mobutu regime. This is confirmed by the following quotation:

The Protestants remained committed to the regime until after Mobutu's announcement of a process of popular consultation. Then, in February 1990, the ECZ's Executive committee for Kasai-Oriental Region submitted a memorandum in which it criticized the constitutional structure of the Second Republic, denounced the failures or abuses of the functioning of the various institutions, and proposed a series of changes. The memorandum was particularly direct in criticizing the "excessiveness of the powers held in the hands of only one man," i.e., the president. What is interesting in the light of

²²³ Kabamba, Dr., interview with author, Durban, 18 November 2006.

²²⁴ Mekoa, 2005, p. 419.

²²⁵ Cardinal Malula was the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in the early days of the DRC independence who stood up against the Mobutu regime.

²²⁶ <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-15123.html>

²²⁷ Eglise du Christ au Zaire

²²⁸ Barth, 1939, p.78.

subsequent events, however, is that this memorandum did not demand the replacement of the regime and made no mention of multipartyism.²²⁹

The analysis of church activities and interviews suggests the churches' deep involvement in the politics of South Kivu and that these political activities increased significantly in the 1990s. According to Monsignor Maroy, the churches in South Kivu intensified their involvement in the political scene in the 1990s. Maroy recalls that "[u]ntil 1994, this local church has worked in the catechetical field, liturgical and pastoral, and has been involved a bit deeply in what we call politics."²³⁰ In South Kivu, Christophe Munzihirwa was officially appointed the Archbishop of Bukavu on the 27th of March 1994, succeeding Aloys Mulindwa. It has been noted that from beginning of his pastoral ministry Munzihirwa fearlessly addressed the problems that affected the population. In his open pastoral letters and articles he continually criticizes corruption and bad governance in the province of South Kivu. According to Nkunzi, the Archbishop was perceived as a threat by those who worked in the public service.²³¹ Bruno Chenu attributes the reason for his death to his persistence in speaking the truth. Bruno's graphic and symbolic description of the total dedication of the Roman Catholic prelates to the task of addressing the problems of ethnic violence in the South Kivu region and their willingness to sacrifice their lives for the democratic transformation of the DRC is powerfully conveyed by the following:

They had serious fault, these three archbishops: they spoke loud and strong. And their assassins have perfectly understood that only death could silence them. They spoke the truth. They were executed. They signed their pastoral ministry with their own blood.²³²

Archbishop Munzihirwa and his colleagues conveyed their messages in sermons and in pastoral letters. Archbishop Munzihirwa's last Christmas letter to the congregation reveals the intensity of his passion and his commitment to his mission to speak for the population of South Kivu. He strongly stressed the malpractices of the public servants and their total disregard for the people they were supposed to serve:

Thinking of ourselves, daughters and sons of this country, what kind of oppressions are we not submitted to? To go to a market with a bit of merchandise, which one of the taxes are we not paying for before, during and after the market! At each street-corner, men in military uniform arrest you and demand dollars. Where will the poor population find the dollars?²³³

It is clear from his message that the churches were concerned about the problems that confronted the DRC during this period. In one of his articles, Hussein Solomon, Senior

²²⁹ <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-15123.html>

²³⁰ Archbishop Maroy intervention in Burundi 26 July 2006

²³¹ Nkunzi, 2005, p. 231.

²³² Chenu, B. "Editorial", *La Croix*, 2 November 1996 (PT) p. 233.

²³³ C.Munzihirwa, last letter of Christmas, 1995 PT

Researcher in Regional Security at the Institute for Security Studies, described the situation of the DRC (then Zaire) in this way:

Zaire is, arguably, the quintessential reflection of the current malaise affecting Africa. In Mobutu's vast empire, many of the symptoms are reflected – from corruption, nepotism and kleptocracy, to ethnic conflict and an absence of democracy; from economic stagnation and environmental degradation, to foreign intervention.²³⁴

Solomon's key words characterising the Mobutu era – “current malaise”, “corruption”, “nepotism”, “kleptocracy”, “ethnic conflict”, “absence of democracy”, “economic stagnation”, “environmental degradation”, “foreign intervention” – evoke not merely a state of hopelessness but an impending doom. According to Mirindi,²³⁵ Archbishop Munzihirwa constantly called the population to order as the regime of Mobutu was characterized by corruption, bribery, tribalism and other sorts of misconduct in the public services²³⁶. During this period the country witnessed increasing poverty among the population because of mismanagement and only Mobutu and his cohorts, including many from the favoured ethnic groups, benefited from his regime. The members of the communities that suffered from the daily acts of discrimination committed by the corrupt Mobutu regime were reduced to a state of worthlessness. “People from certain tribes were given preference not on the basis of their competence but because they belonged to a certain tribal group and only the churches [were] addressing those issues”²³⁷. According to Mirindi, in the 1990s, the churches played an important role by inspiring the population to stand for what is right despite the fact that situation had already created animosity amongst the different communities.

An analysis of Archbishop Munzihirwa's letters, written in 1994, suggests that the churches were involved not only in local politics but also in international politics through internationalising the Congolese problem. Archbishop Munzihirwa²³⁸ wrote letters to the Secretary General of the United Nations and to the French president suggesting peaceful means to solve the problems of thousands refugees and regional politics. But, according to Nkunzi ²³⁹, there was little response from the international community to any of the Archbishop's suggestions. As the situation continued to deteriorate, it became almost impossible to control the explosive political instability in the South Kivu region. The involvement of Archbishop Munzihirwa, as vehement critic of those responsible for war and

²³⁴ Hussein, Solomo 1997. *SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE CRISIS IN ZAIRE*

²³⁵ Mirindi, public servant, interview with the author, South Kivu, 15 June 2006.

²³⁶ *Ibid*

²³⁷ *Ibid*

²³⁸ Nkunzi, 2005, p. 231.

²³⁹ *Ibid*

atrocities in the political situation of South Kivu, led many to consider him as the voice of the silent majority. Kabegos relates that the appeal made by the Archbishop to the local populace of South Kivu was for them to remain indoors. Kabegos recalls that “[T]he archbishop spoke to people on the radio and in churches” and drew the congregation members’ attention to the fact that “the government failed the population” and “the church was the only voice the population listened to.”²⁴⁰

By 1996 it was apparent that the political situation in the region changed drastically after the eruption of the first incidence of the war. It was alleged that the main motive for the war was to obtain citizenship for the Banyamulenge community.²⁴¹ It is further hypothesised that this war intensified the latent conflict among the Banyamulenge and other communities that perceived the Banyamulenge and AFDL war as a plan by the Banyamulenge community to form a military alliance with Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and neighbouring countries to dominate the local community. As a result of this perception of the situation, the churches advised the South Kivu population not to join the AFDL movement. The Banyamulenge community did not, however, perceive the situation that way. Jonas Sebatunzi, who represented the Banyamulenge community at SIPA, stated that “it was not necessary to take arms to make themselves accepted.”²⁴² The statement of Father Jean-Bosco Bahala, the Diocesan Media Director for the Archdiocese of Bukavu, addressed to the International Relations Committee of the United States House of Representatives, revealed the churches’ involvement in regional politics. Father Bahala explains this involvement:

In the Kivu provinces, we have realized that under the tutelage of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, the Banyamulenge had been manipulated for other objectives. In 1996, Laurent Kabila was made the leader of this “rebellion.” Thus, this largely externally engineered rebellion was made to appear as a (Congolese) civil war with a slogan of campaigning for “national liberation”. In exchange, Kabila would get the military support from his allies to overthrow the ailing Mobutu dictatorship and seize power in Kinshasa. To settle once and for all his power in Congo, Kabila was made to clarify his stand vis-à-vis what several Congolese had begun considering as a political and military take over of Congo by Kabila’s own allies. Under pressure from national public opinion, he decided to break ranks with those he had identified as Rwandan, Burundian and Ugandan mercenaries. The second so-called war of “liberation” started right after that decision.²⁴³

Political tensions amongst the communities in North and South Kivu regions on the national level can be traced back to 1992 during the CNS when the citizenship of the Kinyarwanda-speaking population was challenged.²⁴⁴ The period associated with citizenship problem

²⁴⁰ Kabegos Interview with the author, Durban, 15 November 2007

²⁴¹ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

²⁴² ASIPA, 2001, p. 68.

²⁴³ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

²⁴⁴ Meredith, 2006, p. 529.

witnessed major changes in DRC politics. According to Fomeka from Uvira, not only did the political conflicts of 1996 deeply affect the ethnic conflicts but they also disrupted community relations even in the churches where the local churches leaders sided with their communities to resist the Banyamulenge war.

During the period of the conflict, a press release by the Congolese Human Rights Association (AZADHO) on the report of the *Commission of Inquiry in the DRC*²⁴⁵ commissioned in June 1998 by the International Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Development reveals that Monsignor Gapangwa of the Catholic Church, the Archbishop of Uvira, collaborated with other Kinyarwanda-speaking politicians in forming a block to deal with the political issues. The AZADHO press statement reports as follows: “[T]he animosity intensified in the wake of the National Sovereign Conference in late 1992, where the country’s general policy was to exclude all the Kinyarwanda speakers from power. The schism was so wide that the Banyamulenge formed a block around their bishop, mgr. Jerome Gapangwa.”²⁴⁶ Ngugwa and his friends, who come from Uvira in South Kivu, asserted that “Gapangwa and other Banyamulenge church leaders were very politically active although they did not do it publicly.” According to Ngugwa some of the Banyamulenge church leaders in Uvira had been stirring the Banyamulenge youth to join the political resistance. However, a Banyamulenge community letter²⁴⁷ addressed to SIPA²⁴⁸ by Enock S. Ruberangabo, the president of the Banyamulenge community accused the Protestant and Catholic churches of inciting the population of Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu, to conduct a hate campaign against the Tutsi ethnic group through sermons and letters to support the exclusion of Tutsi during the CNS. Ruberanganbo notes “the sermons of incitation to hatred during the period of hostilities towards the Tutsi members (these cases are frequent in the church of Bukavu).”²⁴⁹ In view of these allegations from different church leaders, it can be argued that church activities have had implications for the political development in the region.

It is apparent from Father Bahala’s statement that the AFDL and the RCD movement have been perceived as a Banyamulenge ethnic group movement with foreign allies that came to occupy the South Kivu and to oppress other local communities in the province. In response to

²⁴⁵ Commission of Inquiry in the DRC June 1998 by International Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Development Page 18 (AZADHO, Press Release n°11/97, Kinshasa, July 26 1997, 5pp)

²⁴⁶ AZADHO, Press Release n°11/97, Kinshasa, July 26 1997, 5 pp.

²⁴⁷ ASIPA, 2001, pp. 73-74.

²⁴⁸ Symposium International pour la Paix en Afrique

²⁴⁹ ASIPA, 2001, p. 74.

this perception, the churches engaged in resistance activities against the RCD. The intensity of the animosity of the indigenous population of South Kivu towards the RCD compelled the Catholic churches to decide to halt their ecclesiastic daily activities and other services that they previously provided. This temporary termination of Roman Catholic churches' pastoral services was intended to manifest their discontent over the decisions of the RCD. The political regionalism that characterised the crisis in the South Kivu region is substantiated by the fact that while the Protestant churches form ECC/South Kivu²⁵⁰ expressed their endorsement of the Catholic Church's decision, those outside the region criticised the decision. Father Bahala explains the underlying factors in this turn of events:

The people consider the present war as an invasion initiated from outside and carried out under the disguise of a mutiny of the 10th and the 222nd brigades, based respectively in Goma and Bukavu. However, what are these two brigades to resist the Congolese National Army with the support of Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia? This "rebellion" is not an expression of the aspirations of the people, as some want public opinion to believe. It is instead the result of political intrigue built around the vengeance that Kabila's own old Rwandan and Ugandan allies had prepared against him. That is why the people reject it, considering it as another unjust war against them. In spite of months of falsehood, the people have shown their disapproval by boycotting different activities imposed by the RCD ..., which is the political branch of the "armed rebellion."²⁵¹

The examination of the church leaders' statements clearly demonstrates the churches' continuous support for the people of South Kivu on the different political issues. One piece of evidence that confirms this perception is revealed by Father Bahala's comment:

The Congolese people see this war as a conquest aimed at fully controlling and managing the resources of Congo and their exploitation through Rwanda and Uganda as intermediaries. Due to this critical understanding, the people manifest a true attitude of resentment against the actual U.S. policy in Central Africa. The armies of Rwanda and Uganda, main allies of the U.S. in the region, are in fact occupying Congolese territory.²⁵²

The examination of the archives of Monsignor Kataliko's pastoral letters and messages, in his capacity as the Archbishop of Bukavu, showed that he called on the population to resist the RCD's decisions which he perceived to be unjust. Kataliko argues that "we have to speak, for the people [who] suffer. We have to speak to chiefs of states; we have to speak to rulers."²⁵³ During the period when the rebel movement refused to allow students' examination papers to be sent to Kinshasa for marking, Kataliko commented on this incident on the occasion of the African Child's day:

To Christians of our church

²⁵⁰ Letter from the committee of protestant Church leaders, « *Position De L'église Du Christ Au Congo/Sud-Kivu Face A La Situation Qui Prévaut Dans La Ville De Bukavu Et Ses Environs* » 15/02/200

²⁵¹ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

²⁵² *Ibid*

²⁵³ ASIPA, 2001, p. 16.

We have the duty to defend the rights of children, to inform them of their rights, and to help them to reclaim them without violence and to accept to commit themselves body and soul for the protection of the human person. To be silent facing this flagrant violation of the right of our children will be a contradiction if not a complicity. A Christian cannot subtract himself from his duties because they have as principal mission to be witnesses of Jesus Christ who made himself a child and love children. They are the future of the country and of the church.²⁵⁴

A further comment on the International Day of the African Child in 1999, the extract from Archbishop Kataliko's speech to the youth, illustrates the kind of message he wished to convey to the congregation in his pastoral ministry:

Don't ever accept the mentality of a society that destroys or annihilates your rights. Discern with your educators the values that build your personality, adopt them and execute them humbly but firmly. Never cease to learn.²⁵⁵

The history of the ministry of Archbishop Kataliko and his predecessor shows that they have been consistently involved in the political issues that affected their local community on a national level in their attempts to engage the international community on these issues. According to one interviewee, the fact that Kataliko was prevented from returning to his archdiocese for seven month shows that his pastoral ministry had serious implications for the politicians. The exile of Kataliko to Butembo resulted in a series of resistance acts among the population who perceived him to be the voice of their communities.²⁵⁶ This is evident in this extract from the open letter written by the leaders of the Catholic Church of Bukavu: "while waiting for the return of our Archbishop, we declare the cessation of liturgical activities in the churches. It will be the same in all the professional and social diocese of Bukavu."²⁵⁷ As a result of the ongoing events during this period, the relations between the churches in South Kivu and the politicians were severely strained. According to Father Bahala, the churches have suffered as the result of the complicities of the politicians:

with the complicity of the RCD, the invaders are terrorizing local traditional rulers and chiefs, forcing them to go underground in the countryside. In certain cases, Catholic priests and Protestant pastors have suffered from the same treatment. This behaviour displays the political intention to decapitate a people by suppressing its traditional leadership.²⁵⁸

It also appears that the churches in South Kivu were interested in seeing whether politicians of different communities (other than members of the RCD) would participate in the political discussions. Father Bahala explains the need for a concerted effort and networking:

²⁵⁴ Message of Archbishop Kataliko on the occasion of the International day of the African child 16 June 1999
PT

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*

²⁵⁶ Letter of the Committee of ECC pastors <http://www.heritiers.org/eccsk.html>

²⁵⁷ College of the leaders of the catholic church of Bukavu "REMETTEZ-NOUS NOTRE PASTEUR" samedi 12 fevrier 2000.

²⁵⁸ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

The population does not lack interlocutors and spokespersons. The civil society of the South-Kivu can be proposed as a courageous example. In their "Plan for Peace" (which has brought on them persistent repressive measures from the RCD), they have designed some peaceful ways to get out of this absurd war. As interlocutors, they need to be recognized by the great powers of this world, as a way by which the latter can show their political will and determination to find peaceful solutions to a conflict that has already left too many victims. *Paths to Solutions*.²⁵⁹

The political scenario changed after the death of Laurent Kabila when the negotiations for peace and the establishment of the transitional government were initiated.²⁶⁰ The messages and efforts of churches took a slightly different direction. During this period the churches encouraged politicians to form a government that would unite the whole country. They called for a unified country as opposed to the existing multiplicity of ethnic groups perceived as a nation. The DRC had been divided along ethnic and factional lines – ethnic groups whose loyalties were held by different rebel movements prior to the signing of the peace agreement. Tyrone Savage, in her article entitled “In Quest of a Sustainable Justice, Transitional Justice and Human Security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo”, describes the political situation of the DRC during this period as follows:

Widely denounced as dynastic and undemocratic, the appointment marks the turning point in the conflict. In the days that followed his appointment, Joseph Kabila re-established negotiations with neighbouring states and announced his intention to revive the national dialogue on democratic transition. In early 2002, the Inter-Congolese Dialogue was re-established at Sun City, bringing together all Congolese political groupings of any significance: government, 19 opposition parties, civil society, the Mayi-Mayi militia, the Ugandan-backed *Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo* (MLC), and the various factions of the Rwandan-backed *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD). After intense negotiations, consensus was reached and the Sun City Accord was signed on 19 April 2002.²⁶¹

An examination of church booklets, brochures, materials and interviews shows that churches participated in the publicising of the constitutional project. According to Faustin²⁶² the churches have played a significant role in publicising the constitutional project in order to prepare the population for the referendum and eventual democratic elections. A religious sister, Marie Bernard Alima of the Catholic Church, stated in the introduction of the brochure published by CENCO and entitled *Vulgariser le projet de constitution de la République Démocratique du Congo* that “the first exercise of a responsible choice is the [fundamental aim] of the constitutional referendum.”²⁶³ The churches have been facilitating the publicising of the constitutional project among the population, utilising different methods to inform the Congolese population of the duties and rights that could be used in the elections. Alima

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*

²⁶⁰ ASIPA, 2001, p. 36.

²⁶¹ Savage, T., *Occasional Paper 130, November 2006*, Introduction: Transitional justice vis-à-vis the Democratic Republic of the Congo

²⁶² Faustin, Interviewed Michel, Mpanzi, 2006

²⁶³ Alima, Marie Bernard 2005, *Vulgariser le projet de constitution de la République Démocratique du Congo*, CENCO

further notes that “it is with the concern to see the Congolese people providing themselves with a fundamental law of the country that this brochure was elaborated with the style of box of images.”²⁶⁴ According to Alima, a speedy process to conclude the constitutional project was very important for the Congolese population in order to go to the elections. One of the reasons raised was that the population was tired of the system used during the transition of “1+4” – one president and four vice presidents – which was accepted as a compromise during the transition in order to persuade the population for the elections. Alima stated that the churches’ role in publicising of the constitution is not intended to tell the population whom they should elect but rather to enlighten them on the democratic rights of their choice. It is important to consider Alima’s explanations of the important role played by the churches:

To contribute effectively to the success (of the government) of transition, the Church-Family of God which is in DRC has raised the pastoral option of mobilizing the population for the elections. This option is the concretization of the engagement of archbishops who express themselves through their pastoral letters which, as we can convince ourselves, testify a remarkable prophetic ministry.²⁶⁵

In spite of the different allegations of illegalities that marred the elections, Archbishop Maroy perceived the election as a way out of their misery and a sign of maturity: “We will go to the elections on the 30th of July with the guarantee of the blessings of the Pope Benedict XVI”.²⁶⁶ He made this public statement, encouraging the population of Bukavu to vote at the elections, despite the allegations of illegalities in the preparation of the elections that were raised in the other parts of the country. The ECC in South Kivu also called upon the population to participate in the elections as the solution for their problems. According to Kabegos, the Catholic Church in Bukavu and most churches in South Kivu supported the elections because they believed it would be the only way that could bring peace to the region. “The elections will put the right person[s] in power although the other provinces did not see it that way.”²⁶⁷ Additionally, Kabegos’s mentioning of the fact that the Archbishop of Bukavu encouraged the population to vote shows that the Catholic churches supported the democratic process. In the preparation for the elections, the ECC²⁶⁸ took the initiative of conducting seminars/workshops as well as peace education and creating awareness about the mechanism for resolving electoral conflicts and the management of the post-conflict transition programme.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*

²⁶⁵ Message of Abbot Fulgence Muteba 2004, *Guide de formation de l’électeur Congolais*, 29 July 2004 Kinshasa (CENCO).

²⁶⁶ Words of the Archbishop Maroy in Bukavu DRC 24 July 2006

²⁶⁷ Kabegos, Durban, 15 November 2007

²⁶⁸ Eglise du Christ. (Church of Christ in Congo) <http://riobukavu.org/pages/realisation.htm>

The majority of the people perceived the elections to be, in the long term, the best solution to the problems of South Kivu and the country as a whole. Looking at the activities of the churches and listening to the comments of interviewees, it can be argued that the churches did put in a lot of effort to ensure a successful electoral process with a view to building sustainable peace. Alima points out that:

For more than a year, the Catholic Church and the religious confessions have been engaged in the vast campaign of civic and electoral education which the objective is to enlighten the conscience of the Congolese population in the historical choices to which they are called during the transition.²⁶⁹

It was evident that before the elections, the churches, in particular the Catholic Churches, were committed to mobilising the population to participate in the elections. The local parishes used many mechanisms to facilitate the preparations for the elections. According to Ade, originally from Kadutu in South Kivu, churches became centres of practical democratic education from whence the South Kivu population learned most concerning the upcoming elections. As Ade said: “I was inspired to participate in the elections because of the sermons I was listening to in our parish of Kadutu.”²⁷⁰

It is also useful to note that the measures implemented by the churches were to ensure successful participation of all the groups in the elections in order to re-introduce democracy into the political terrain, marred by decades of armed conflicts. One of these measures entailed mobilising thousands of leaders with different opinions from many dioceses to prepare the electorate for elections. Thus, the organisation of elections became the preoccupation all the provinces of the DRC.²⁷¹

Examination of the plans and activities of the churches proves that the churches were involved in the reconstruction of the new political structures. According to RIO²⁷² (Réseau d’Innovation Organisationnelle), a branch of the ECC, churches had been engaged in the facilitation of seminars and workshops for leaders and the provision of training regarding the cohabitation of all the different tribes. They were also involved with reconstruction after the presidential and municipal elections. A case in point is the workshop hosted in Uvira from the 21 to 23rd October 2006. The objective of these training sessions was to teach people in leadership positions how to influence the population to accept the outcome of the elections.

²⁶⁹ Alima, Marie Bernard 2005, *Vulgariser le projet de constitution de la République Démocratique du Congo*, CENCO

²⁷⁰ Ade, interviewed by the author, Durban, 15 May 2007

²⁷¹ Muteba, 2004, CENCO

²⁷² RIO <http://riobukavu.org/pages/identite.htm>

The population of South Kivu was exhorted not to resort to violence if the candidate of their choice did not win the elections. The point was made during the interview with Ade²⁷³ that the churches in Bukavu played a significant role in preparing the population to make reasonable electoral choices. However, the intention of this section is not to analyse in detail the history of all the churches in South Kivu, but to randomly select events and situations relevant to the investigation of the churches whose contribution enhanced the resolution of the crisis. Basically, the intention of this section is to discuss the response of churches to the political situation of South Kivu.

4.3 Churches and the oppressed in South Kivu

The victims of oppression in the history of the Congo stretched from the evil and rapacious colonial exploitation of the human and natural resources of the DRC²⁷⁴ and from the brutal Belgian colonial era vividly captured by Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness*, through Mobutu's tyrannical reign of corruption, eroticism and kleptocracy to the current instability created by warring ethnic groups. However, as Emanuel Kataliko says,

Although oppressed, humbled today we are called to remain faithful to the plan of God which is love, in respect and sharing, in the justice and the truth without being contaminated by the mentality of the oppression.²⁷⁵

It is evident from the messages embedded in the pastoral letters and sermons that the thrust of the church response to transformation of the shattered socio-economic and political structures in the different communities revolved around the issue of oppression. Information gathered during field research suggests that the approach of the churches in South Kivu during this period is similar to the preferential treatment option for the poor that Pieterse and Albert Nolan²⁷⁶ discussed. Pieterse states that "prophetic preaching in the church of the poor should tell them that God is on their side and that he will deliver them from the causes of poverty and from the situation of poverty."²⁷⁷ This is evident in one of Archbishop Kataliko pastoral letters in 2000 to the church, in which he promised the population that the church would stand with the population in their sufferings:

We are engaged with courage, with a firm spirit, with an immovable faith, to be to on the side of all the oppressed and, if necessary, to share our blood, as the archbishop Munzihirwa, the Abbot Claude

²⁷³ Ade, interviewed by the author, Durban, 15 May 2007

²⁷⁴ Conrad, J. (1988). *Heart of Darkness*. Norton Critical Edition. New York: Norton & Company.

²⁷⁵ Emanuel Kataliko, pastoral letter Passover 1999 to the church

²⁷⁶ Nolan, 1985, pp. 189-198.

²⁷⁷ Pieterse, 2001, p 115.

Buhendwa, the abbot and sisters of Kasika, the abbot Georges Kakuja... and many other have already share theirs.²⁷⁸

Research evidence from the literature analysed suggests that in the post-Mobutu period, within a year of the overthrow of Mobutu's dictatorship, most public institutions collapsed as a result of mismanagement, corruption and other malpractices. This situation, combined with the ravages of two other wars that took place in 1996 and in 1998, exacerbated the problems confronting the state.²⁷⁹ The small structures that were still operational were seriously damaged. Different faith-based organisations initiated various projects in order to ameliorate the situation. It should be said that the state of insecurity caused by the wars compounded the country's social crisis, including the high rate of unemployment, disease, death, and high-school dropouts. At the level of social responsibility, the churches in South Kivu have begun to put into practise the diaconal church described by Pieterse: "[I]f we want to communicate God's love, grace and liberation to the poor in our country, we will have to do so by physical acts of upliftment."²⁸⁰ It is can be deduced from Father Bahala's statement that the Catholic and the Protestant church denominations became physically involved in the plight of their communities. Father Bahala notes:

Our church is the backbone of several community development efforts - we run hospitals, dispensaries and health care centers, institutions of primary, secondary and higher education, and is very engaged in the protection for the population through social and development programs.²⁸¹

Information gathered during interviews with students from South Kivu also indicates that the churches were involved in solving the social problems of their communities. For some, the churches helped the population to survive in the midst of the challenges that they faced in terms of education, health and unemployment, particularly during the war years. Papy recalls that "the schools and universities that were still well- managed and operational during this period are the ones managed by faith-based organizations."²⁸² In fact, many interviewees pointed to various projects that were initiated by churches in order to create employment opportunities for the local population. Cases in point include the "Olame" bakery and other centres of training like "Cheche" that provided the people with skills in carpentry, construction and couture.²⁸³ In addition, the Catholic Church and the ECC provided a number of the people with employment during a period of high unemployment. In an interview,

²⁷⁸ Letter of Archbishop Kataliko to the population of Bukavu on the occasion of Christmas 2000

²⁷⁹ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

²⁸⁰ Pieterse, 2001, p. 111.

²⁸¹ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

²⁸² Papy Maheshe, interviewed by the author, Bukavu, 14 June 2006

²⁸³ Nkunzi, 2005, p. 216.

Jean-Pierre stated that the Catholic Church had been helping the members of the congregation to develop themselves in different fields ranging from manual labour to intellectual jobs.

However, it was obvious that other respondents did not share the same sentiment toward the churches. According to one interviewee, Mwafrika, some of the churches were partial in the distribution of resources. Mwafrika observed: “They were partial in the distribution of resources to members of certain community and in many cases the church leaders have enriched themselves at the cost of their congregation.”²⁸⁴ On the hand, others perceived certain churches as being driven by poverty to embark on missionary work. There are ten to fifteen churches in certain streets. “In most of these churches the pastors are on full-time basis and get their income from their congregations that are already living in a heartbreaking poverty. It is exploitation of the population” one of the interviewees said.²⁸⁵ According to another interviewee, in other cases the church leaders raise funds from sponsors in foreign countries using the poor circumstances of the population to get funds that are not properly utilised in many cases. This interviewee added: “when they [the church leaders] get funding they forget their congregations’ needs but focus on themselves.”²⁸⁶ There has been a widespread perception that as soon as the funding reaches the organization, the church leaders spend the money on themselves: building their private houses and acquiring luxurious cars. In an interview, Fomeka²⁸⁷ from Uvira, argued that some of the churches were heavily involved in tribalist practices which contributed to the rise in the number of churches in the region. According to Fomeka, “Pastors or priests were giving favours to people of their ethnic groups first instead of looking at the equitable share in the society where the church is located.”²⁸⁸

Nevertheless, others perceived churches as the only trustworthy institutions that could speak on their behalf. Alain, one of the interviewees, observed: “The church has worked tremendously for the South Kivu population in almost all aspects of life.”²⁸⁹ Another respondent said: “The Churches spoke for our problems to the international community. If the

²⁸⁴ Group discussion, Durban, 15 September 2007

²⁸⁵ *Ibid*

²⁸⁶ Anonymous, church clerk, interviewed by the author, South Kivu, 20 June 2006

²⁸⁷ Fomeka, interviewed by Kilosho, Uvira, 12 September 2007

²⁸⁸ *Ibid*

²⁸⁹ Alain, a business man from DR Congo in South Kivu, Interviewed by the author, Durban, 15 May 2007

churches were not there it could have been worse for the people of the Eastern Congo²⁹⁰
Father Bahala's statement quoted below indicates how some churches were committed to alerting the international community to the humanitarian crisis in South Kivu:

In Catastrophic Humanitarian Situation, we live a daily humanitarian tragedy that is indescribable and unprecedented. The humanitarian structures of the Church such as hospitals, medical centres, nutritional and charity centres are unable to keep pace with the massive flow of the ever-growing numbers of the needy. Malnutrition, once a phenomenon afflicting mostly children, is now increasingly afflicting adults. Epidemics such as cholera, once confined to the some rural areas, are reappearing in the city, following the enormous exodus and concentration of populations fleeing the insecurity in rural areas.²⁹¹

Some of Father Bahala's statements indicated that the churches situated in South Kivu criticised the international community, particularly the US government, regarding its policies of poverty alleviation, and particularly the way the United States handled the South Kivu situation and the crisis in the DRC. It is instructive to refer to Father Bahala's testimony before the International Relations Committee of the US House of Representatives.:

U.S. government officials are on record as saying that a country as big, rich and powerful as the U.S. is morally obliged to take steps in reducing the poverty of the Third World. That is what should be the case but for the moment; our people are hardly receiving any assistance from your country. The US should send strong signals that it is conscious of the war economy and economic interests that are suspected of fuelling conflicts in the region, and that serious consideration will be given to measures similar to the proposed Sierra Leone (conflict diamonds) Carat Act, UN diamond export bans on Sierra Leone and Angola, or the embargo on Liberia's diamonds, to create strong disincentives to economic adventures.²⁹²

It is evident that during the period covered by this study, the churches in South Kivu paid attention to the main challenges that confronted the region. These challenges included the local conflicts and poverty. In his description of the preferential option for the poor in South Africa, Albert Nolan suggested that "the oppressed must take a clear option for their own cause, for the cause of all the poor and oppressed."²⁹³ The churches in South Kivu province were concerned with the issue of poverty in the whole country. Father Bahala's statement illustrates the situation:

In the Western part of the country controlled by the Government of Kinshasa, the situation is hardly better: famine, misery, and disease are compounded by unpaid salaries due to the war – in other words the generalized extreme poverty is the daily reality for Congo's citizens.²⁹⁴

According to John De Gruchy's description of *the missio Dei*: "The mission of God as proclaimed by Jesus (e.g. Luke 4.18ff), is Holistic. God's redemptive concern for the world

²⁹⁰ Thierry, interviewed by the author, Durban, 15 June 2007

²⁹¹ Father Bahala, Washington D. C., May 17, 2001.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ Nolan, 1985, p. 196.

²⁹⁴ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

has to do with every aspect of life, whether personal, social, or environmental.”²⁹⁵ Another aspect of life that the churches focused on, which is illustrative of faith-based organisations’ holistic involvement, is the health sector. In fact, the health sector has been one of the major concerns of churches over the years, including those prior to the onset of war.²⁹⁶ Church hospitals, rehabilitated by foreign financial donors, played a significant part in helping the population during the war. A number of interviewees confirmed that during the periods when the country was divided, church hospitals survived because of external funding and support that they received from their partners outside the country. However, there was no contact between South Kivu and other parts of the country controlled by the government. This made it difficult for most public hospitals to get medical supplies and the necessary support. Byabuze Ildefonse, one of the lecturers at ISP (Institut Supérieur Pédagogique) in Bukavu, asked of the authorities, “Is not because of the begging of churches and NGOs from international organisations that there are still some good schools, rare credible hospital, jobs with salaries, and centers of activities and our villages?”²⁹⁷ It is also made clear in Father Bahala’s statement that the churches were concerned about the collapse of the public health care system and its consequent effect on the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS and rape cases²⁹⁸ that were occurring due to the violent conflicts. In this regard, the churches warned the world of the possible health dangers that could strike the region as a result of the sexual violence prevalent in the South Kivu. Regarding this problem, Father Bahala made the following commented:

As a result of this widespread use of sexual violence, the spread of AIDS is a real concern, especially since it is said that 70% of soldiers fighting in Congo are HIV positive and have been accused of raping women indiscriminately. Congolese human rights groups have documented hundreds of cases of rape perpetrated by soldiers.²⁹⁹

The intervention of churches is exemplified by the case of the Panzi referral hospital of CELPA (Communauté des Eglise Libre Pentecôte en Afrique) one of the Protestant churches, predominantly funded by the Scandinavian countries. This hospital has helped the victims of war, especially children and raped women. During an interview, Doctor Mukwege³⁰⁰, the director of Panzi hospital, stated that a significant number of raped women are treated at Panzi hospital daily as a result of sexual violence used as a weapon by the belligerents. On a

²⁹⁵ De Gruchy, 1994, p. 134

²⁹⁶ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

²⁹⁷ Nkunzi, 2005, p. 240.

²⁹⁸ Rafti, 2006, pp 15-17.

²⁹⁹ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

³⁰⁰ Doctor Mukwege, Director of the referral of Hospital of Panzi, 15 June 2006

daily basis, women – victims of rape by rebels, soldiers and uncontrolled armed groups – walk kilometres from their villages to reach the Panzi referral hospital in Bukavu in order to receive medical attention.

Another area of church intervention is in the vital sector of education. When one considers the sheer number of schools managed by churches the incontrovertible conclusion is that they have played an important role in the education sector. The views expressed by different church leaders indicate that they have been committed to ensure that all children have access to education.³⁰¹ This affirms Pieterse's conceptualisation of the church's prophetic engagement within the context of poverty and oppression. According to Pieterse, such engagement "must inspire and motivate [the people] to find the vision and hope to ameliorate their own situation and thus to collaborate in God's work of liberation."³⁰² The churches of South Kivu have demonstrated that they realise the import of Pieterse's observation. For instance, Archbishop Kataliko's pastoral letter in 1999, addressed to the population on the occasion of the African Child Day, implored parents to encourage their children to pursue their education and teachers to continue to provide a teaching service to children in the face of the adverse situation. The pastoral letter urges the youth to commit themselves to their education since it is the only way to ensure their own future survival.³⁰³

Churches in South Kivu have also demonstrated their commitment to capacity building in order to enhance national development through their involvement in higher education sub-sector. The two universities in Bukavu, the capital of the South Kivu province, were founded by the Catholic and Protestant churches. Remarkably, the South Kivu province did not have universities or any other tertiary institutions that trained medical doctors, lawyers and economists prior to the creation of these two universities. According to Patrick, an interviewee, the churches played a significant role in creating these universities, which have provided a large number of people from South Kivu with the opportunity to follow their own career choices and supply the province with a pool of professionals from different communities.³⁰⁴ Respondents stated that education provided in institutions managed by faith-based organizations is of high standard. A case in point is the Collège Alfigiri, a high school, managed by the Catholic Church. It is renowned as one the best high schools, providing a

³⁰¹ Archbishop Kataliko the African child's day

³⁰² Pieterse, 2001, p. 115.

³⁰³ Archbishop Kataliko the African child's day

³⁰⁴ Patrick, originally from Nguba, interviewed by the author, Durban, September 2007

quality education to all students despite the turbulent political situation in the DRC. According to Patrick, this high school as well as others high schools managed by the churches provide quality high school education because of the sizeable resources invested in these institutions by the churches.³⁰⁵

Information gathered during field work indicates that refugees and the internally displaced population affected by communal conflicts from different areas have constituted another major area of intervention by churches. More often than not, the churches were the first places of refuge for the population. Father Bahala draws attention to

Internal displacement of the civilian population: for instance, entire villages are displaced and continually in motion between Bukavu and Kindu, fleeing from the terror of war. By our estimates, at least 1.5 million Congolese are internally displaced as a result of the war.³⁰⁶

A number of respondents commented on the social involvement of churches. In some cases the church services worked as financial institutions helping the population transfer money when the regular financial institutions were no longer functioning for various reasons. Many banks had their branches plundered and others had collapsed and were therefore not operational during the pre-1996 period. Mirindi, an interviewee, stated that during this period it was only from the Catholic priests based at the Collège Alfigiri that one could receive money from relatives who lived outside the region.³⁰⁷

It is impossible to undertake an exhaustive discussion of all the activities that the South Kivu churches were involved in during the period covered by this study. It is equally impossible to discuss the role of all the local churches, given the number of these churches. As indicated earlier, there are between ten to fifteen churches per street in some areas in South Kivu. Hence, this chapter has covered only the major interventions by the main faith-based organisations. In this context, this chapter has explored the different views of people and examined church archives concerning the diverse reactions to church intervention vis-à-vis social problems that affected South Kivu during this particular period.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid*

³⁰⁶ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

³⁰⁷ Mirindi, South Kivu, Interview with the author, 15 June 2006

4.4 Voices of peace in the South Kivu conflicts

Monsignor Maroy Francois-Xavier, the Archbishop of Bukavu who succeeded Munzihirwa, Kataliko and Charles Mbogha, focused explicitly on the mission of re-establishing peace in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, as can be seen in a statement made by him in which he invokes the message of peace in Matthew's Gospel:

We are natural neighbors with the Rwandans, the Burundians, and the Ugandans. We are condemned to live together rather in peace and harmony in this sub-region that God generously gave us and not in perpetual wars. What will the new wars serve us which are only accentuating the poverty of our people and creating unnecessary antagonism? "Blessed are the peace makers, they will be called sons of God". (Mitt 5, 9) "Never again, never the war, the world is thirsty of peace."³⁰⁸

The Archbishop urges the necessity for peaceful resolution of the armed conflict situation in the Great Lakes region by reiterating that the establishment of peace in the region is essential for good neighbouring relations with Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda and for a harmonious development within the region. However, "the efforts" of churches to rebuild intercommunity relations amongst different communities in South Kivu and in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa did not insulate the churches from the effects of the crises that affected the region. Monsignor Kataliko describes the assaults endured by Catholic churches in 2000:

Our institutional church herself is not safe. Parishes, presbyters, convents have been ravaged. Priests, religious brethren and sisters are affected, tortured and even killed because, by their lifestyle, they denounce flagrant injustice in which the population is plunged, condemn the war and recommend the reconciliation, pardon and non-violence.³⁰⁹

According to one of the interviewees, the churches were the only voice that was to be heard for the population of the South Kivu during the time of conflict. Kabegos adds: "The churches, particularly the Catholic Church, had a huge influence on the majority of population. Most people listened to the Archbishop Munzihirwa's advice on the radio and in the church."³¹⁰ It is apparent that this trust has developed as a result of the population's observation of how church leaders have repeatedly demonstrated their commitment to addressing the unrest in the province. According to Amnesty International (1997), during Archbishop Munzihirwa's leadership, at the beginning of the first war in 1996, he publicly criticized the rebels for using armed violence as means to resolve their problems. According to Father Bahala, the church leaders faced serious setbacks because of their commitment to building peace in the region:

³⁰⁸ Message of François-Xavier MAROY, the Archbishop of Bukavu, to his Excellence Bernard Prévost, ambassador of France in Kinshasa, in during a visit in Bukavu, the 28th May 2007

³⁰⁹ Letter of the Archbishop Kataliko (Christmas 2000) <http://peres-blancs.cef.fr/kataliko.htm>

³¹⁰ Interview with Kabegos, from South Kivu, former Student at the ISDR, 15/11/2007

In the last couple of years and because of our commitment to peace and human dignity, the Catholic Church of Bukavu has lost through violent or precipitated deaths, her pastors, Monsignor MUNZHIRWA Christophe, assassinated on October 29, 1996 and Monsignor Emmanuel KATALIKO, who recently died in Rome on October 4, 2000, after seven months in exile imposed by the RCD rebels. This, because he dared to speak of peace, express outrage against attacks on a defenceless civilian population, and articulate the concerns of the population entrusted to his care.³¹¹

The analysis of debates on the crisis suggests that, from the beginning of the conflicts in 1996 to the end of the period of wars, the church leaders from different communities called on the population to desist from violent conflict and resist violence through peaceful means. Archbishop Kataliko's 2000 Christmas message illustrates this viewpoint:

The gospel calls us to refuse the means of weapons and of violence to come out of conflicts. It's at the cost of our sufferings and of our prayers that we will conduct our fight of freedom and that we will eventually lead our oppressors to the reason and to their own internal liberty.³¹²

According to the Missionary Service News Agency (MISNA), Bishop Jerome Gapangwa from the Banyamulenge community urged the population not to participate in the ethnic violence. Bishop Gapangwa stated in the strongest terms that 'everyone had the right to live wherever they wanted and that war was certainly not a solution' to the country's problems.³¹³

A the focal area of concern for this study is the reconciliation process. It is instructive to note that in the search for peace the churches organized a series of meetings to facilitate the reconciliation of different communities. Despite the conflicts in their respective countries the bishops met in assemblies in Kigali to talk about the peace process. For instance, Catholic bishops from neighbouring countries often held consultations on how to resolve the crisis in not just the DRC but the whole Great Lakes region. Cyril Musila refers to one such meeting:

United in an assembly in May 2002 in Kigali of peace and unity in a region where their countries are fighting, Catholic bishops of Burundi, of Rwanda and of the Republic Democratic of Congo brought their contribution to the peace process.³¹⁴

The fact that church leaders, just as politicians and other players, held such consultations aimed at bringing about reconciliation and redressing the conflicts in the region shows that the churches played an important role in the peace process. Another case in point is the SIPA (Symposium International of Peace in Africa), held in Butembo in March 2001. SIPA, initiated by Catholic and Protestant churches, also involved traditional leaders, politicians,

³¹¹ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

³¹² Letter of Archbishop Kataliko to the population of South Kivu Christmas 2000 (PT)

³¹³ Misna Monsignor Gapangwa

³¹⁴ <http://www.irenees.net/fr/fiches/experience/fiche-experience-97.html>

and civilians from different communities as participants. This gathering was crucial because it afforded the different communities the opportunity to express their feelings in the church context. This context entailed employing the practical theological approach enshrined in Christian teaching already discussed in this study: the use of peacemaking efforts of the church, the collaborative all-inclusive or holistic approach or the practical, doing theological method of resolving conflicts and creating a harmonious society for all groups. According to Father Jean-Bosco Bahala, SIPA was initiated with the intention of addressing the issues of peace through non-violence or what Ghandi calls passive resistance to acts of violence:

Despite the attacks, destruction of property, and assassinations of religious personalities, the Church has embarked on the path towards peace. Recently the Church organized despite its having been banned by the RCD in Bukavu an International Symposium on Peace in Africa, in Butembo (North-Kivu), that brought together over 500 guests from across Europe, North America, and other African countries. The symposium was a concrete manifestation of our commitment to non-violence and peaceful cohabitation.³¹⁵

The letters, speeches, and poems presented during the symposium reflected opinions and feelings of different communities concerning the intercommunity conflicts. For example Jonas Sebatunzi, speaking on behalf of the Banyamulenge community, explains how the Banyamulenge perceived the war that affected the region. In Jonas's view, "the Rwandese soldiers did not come for the Banyamulenge, they came for their interests; the proof is that in Bukavu we cannot walk anywhere and anytime even though they are there."³¹⁶

However, this symposium, like Father Jean-Bosco Bahala's testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives, repeated the extract from Archbishop Kataliko's the letter addressed to the US House of Representatives and the interview with people from other communities. Other non-Banyamulenge communities had a different perception of the Banyamulenge community regarding the conflicts. Some people were of the view that the Banyamulenge community was manipulated into committing acts of violence against other Congolese communities in order to exploit the natural resources. Archbishop Kataliko reported that

Two years later, in 1996, a minor rebellion of the Banyamulenge, (Tutsi of Rwandan origin who for long had been living on Congolese soil), scorched the Eastern part of the Congo and expanded to the entire country. The reasons advanced for this rebellion was that they were fighting for their right to Congolese citizenship.³¹⁷

³¹⁵ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., 17 May 2001

³¹⁶ Jonas Sebatunzi, Procureur de la République in Bukavu, Message de la communauté Banyamulenge in ASIPA, 2001, p. 70.

³¹⁷ Archevêque Kataliko, Decembre 12, 1998, Un cri de détresse du peuple Congolais au peuple des USA.

Father Bahala's statement indicates that the churches and other communities perceived the wars as military actions whose aims are to take over the region by means of military conquest in order to exploit the vast natural resources of the DRC. According to Father Bahala:

The Congolese people see this war as a conquest aimed at fully controlling and managing the resources of Congo and their exploitation through Rwanda and Uganda as intermediaries. Due to this critical understanding, the people manifest a true attitude of resentment against the actual U.S. policy in Central Africa.³¹⁸

Deliberations during the SIPA showed that there were different reasons put forward by both camps to justify their involvement in the conflicts.³¹⁹ In addition, different reasons were advanced regarding the wars that had exacerbated the latent conflicts that existed between the two opposing communities: the Banyamulenge community made up of the Bafuleru, Bashi, Barega, and Babembe ethnic groups, which migrated from areas located around the Great Lakes into South Kivu, and the indigenous ethnic communities who are the aboriginal inhabitants of the South Kivu region. Initially, the main reason adduced for the 1996 war had to do with seeking national recognition of for the Banyamulenge community.³²⁰ Later on, this issue became a subject of intense debate among the different communities. Various additional reasons for the South Kivu intercommunity conflicts came to the fore during discussions at SIPA. Some participants believed that the Tutsi ethnic group wanted to create a Tutsiland where all non-Tutsi communities would be suppressed, and that they wanted to annex South Kivu for this purpose. This perception was expressed in Doctor Geronce Balegamire's presentation during SIPA. According to Doctor Balegamire the Banyamulenge community allegedly committed a scientific crime by distorting the historical truth about the true origin of the Banyamulenge and removing a portion of the DRC from the country's map.³²¹ According to one interviewee, this historical distortion severely impaired intercommunity relations between the Banyamulenge community and all the other non-Tutsi communities in the South Kivu province because there was mistrust amongst the different communities.³²²

During the symposium there were a number of different communities who described how they were affected by the various conflicts. According to their testimony during the symposium, the Banyamulenge community members have been subjected to intense hatred

³¹⁸ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

³¹⁹ ASIPA, 2001, pp. 71-81

³²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 73.

³²¹ *Ibid*, p. 81.

³²² *Ibid*, p. 81.

by other communities for being members of the larger Tutsi ethnic groups. They claimed that they became the object of hatred for either looking like Tutsis or being in contact with the other Tutsis, despite the fact that they were not the cause of the war. Jonas Sebantuzi states this view as follows:

Since the beginning of the second war, the one before 1998, we are the only tribe that have paid the price on the first hour, at a high cost. Some of our brothers in army as well as civilians who were in Kinshasa, Lubumbashi... were murdered for the only reason of being Tutsi.³²³

Other communities also expressed their feeling towards the number of atrocities that they had experienced because of the war. The traditional leader of the Bafulero, the Mwami Ndare Simba, expressed his concerns this way:

Since the beginning of hostilities in 1996, the North Kivu has experienced the assassinations of four traditional leaders and South Kivu three. All this because the traditional leaders dared resist that a daughter is not raped in front of her father and her mother and that the mother is not raped in front of her son...³²⁴

A notable point, at the time these accusations were being made, is that it was the churches which provided the different communities the opportunity to express their views and to articulate their problems, and it bears repeating that in midst of all the accusations, the church leaders called the attention of the participants to the need to reconcile communal differences as a necessary step towards building peace and forging new community relations for a better continent. The leaders of all the churches working together as one body, concluded at the end of the symposium that

From this symposium we call all Africans: "Let's no longer fight against each other but work together to build a continent where everywoman, everyman has the right and the joy to live"³²⁵

At the close of SIPA the churches that attended the symposium passed a number of resolutions concerning the situation in the Great Lakes region. Father Jean-Bosco Bahala³²⁶ summarised the resolutions as follows:

- "To disarm our minds and recognize that all Congolese and all men and women concerned about peace are our brothers and sisters;
- To take human rights as our starting point in building peace;
- To break away from apathy, the corruption of lies and the search for personal interest in political life;
- To refuse to resort to violence, revenge and hatred in order to advance resolutely along the path of non-violence. Non-violence is the power of truth"

³²³ *Ibid*, p. 68.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, p.65

³²⁵ ASIPA, March 2001, final message of the participants

³²⁶ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

It is also apparent from Father Bahala's testimony that the churches went to the extent of calling for the international community to put pressure on the belligerents in order to stop the conflicts. In May 2001 Father Bahala specifically called for the intervention of the U.S.:

We strongly believe that, as the only superpower in the world, the U.S.'s decisions have a huge influence on political actors in Central Africa region. This country can play a significant role in putting an end to the carnage that is going on there if the right pressure is applied on those forces fuelling the conflict. Our aim is to seek solutions to the conflict in Congo that respect the expectations of the population and internationally recognized rights and obligations of peoples.³²⁷

It can be argued that the churches were aware of the peace framework that could be effectively applied in order to resolve the problems. The resolutions and recommendations which they framed were structured around practical procedures and applications that could effectively achieve sustainable peace and promote reconciliation in the region. The peace initiative approach recommended by the SIPA seems to draw from Villa-Vicencio's recommendation:

It is equally important, however, for the church to accept that if theology is to be taken seriously within the political arena (and more especially during a period of political reconstruction) it has to contribute to the process of producing concrete proposals to deal with complex political and economical problems.³²⁸

It is possible to infer that in consonance with Villa-Vincencio's remark, the churches in South Kivu wanted to be taken seriously in their dealing with the South Kivu situation. This is echoed by Father Bahala's address to the International Relations Committee of the US House of Representatives, in which he enumerated the church's proposals on how to deal with the situation in the Great Lakes region. Father Bahala suggests the following:

1. The reality of the conflict in all its complexity must be made public. We salute to that effect the idea of deploying UN observers (MONUC), to ensure that the belligerents live up to their commitments, and ensuring a neutral observer presence.
2. Real peace will never be achieved as long as the integrity of the DRC is threatened. The deployment of UN troops should be envisioned at its borders with the invading countries rather than along the combat front line, as stipulated in the flawed Lusaka Accords.
3. An inter-Congolese dialogue would not be effective without a more serene atmosphere and as long as occupation armies control the country. It is also a must to work simultaneously at resolving the internal problems of Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda through an internal dialogue in their countries, as required from the DRC.
4. Good governance is a must in the DRC and in the entire Great Lakes Region of Africa – this must be assured through governments that result from popular participation and are democratically chosen.
5. The Banyamulenge question is a question that can only be resolved by an administration of a peaceful Congo, in conformity with the Constitution of the country. Moreover, the wiser among the Banyamulenge have long come to the realization that those in power in Kigali are simply manipulating the Banyamulenge's legitimate concerns for their own objectives in DR Congo; these Banyamulenge groups have thus began searching for ways to peace.
6. An international structure to investigate, try, and punish all those guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity – no matter their origin or perpetrators – is necessary to halt the culture of impunity that has settled in the region.

³²⁷ *Ibid*

³²⁸ Villa-Vicencio, 1992. p. 38.

7. Support should be given to those forces in the population actively working on ways to peacefully resolve the conflict. It is imperative to associate all those active at the grassroots level in the peace process. Since they share in the devastation of war, it would be beneficial that they participate in peace building.³²⁹

Apart from proposals such as these, visits and other interventions undertaken by churches leaders in region re-affirm the role of churches in the peace-building process; churches are involved in a variety of activities to restore peace and harmony in the Great Lakes region, particularly in South Kivu. In July 2006 Monsignor Maroy, the Archbishop of Bukavu, described the effects of the church's involvement in the peace-building process:

Far from developing negative feeling in the hearts of our people, the death of...two valued pastors...I would say [has] enforced the testimony of faith, of hope, and of charity. We have opened the doors to dialogue, to workshops, to sessions, to exchanges of experiences...to the extent that practically Bukavu has become the second pole of political conscience of the country after Kinshasa the capital.³³⁰

At this stage, it is important to point out that, like the ECC, the Catholic Church has designed a plan to promote harmony in South-Kivu and the Great Lakes region. It seems that the churches are a step ahead of the politicians in this regard as the churches have already been engaged in the initiation of activities that are aimed at bringing the people of the region together. Archbishop Maroy made this clear in a statement in 2006 while highlighting the church's three-pronged approach to building harmonious community relations in the region. According to Archbishop Maroy, the church would continue to play its peace-building role at the regional level. This role would also be replicated by the church at the local and national levels. In this context, the church has committed itself to implementing the following resolutions:³³¹

To intensify the meetings of groups in our three countries with an extension on Uganda and Tanzania (also belonging to this region of Great Lakes)

To open cultural activities and multidisciplinary sport competitions between our young girls and boys the future of the church and the society

To create tertiary institution of peace education preferably in Bukavu, not only because of development in that town in the tertiary sector, but for to meet the people whose patrimony has been the most destroyed on the human level.

This section has explored at different levels how the churches have been engaged in the peace process. It has also discussed the perceptions of the communities about the crisis in South Kivu and the Great Lakes region as well as the church's interventions in fostering harmonious community relations. The section investigates only a small portion of the

³²⁹ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

³³⁰ Mgr François-Xavier MAROY RUSENGO Archevêque de Bukavu, Intervention du 26 juillet 2006 ACEAC/Burundi

³³¹ *Ibid*

churches' peace-building initiatives in South Kivu. Although the churches were able to promote reconciliation in South Kivu and the DRC, enhanced by the signing of a peace accord, the state of insecurity in most parts of the country and the number of soldiers and combatants in different parts of the country posed serious challenges to stability. This is the focus of the next section.

4.5 Churches' response to insecurity and armed groups in South Kivu

The 2001 report by *Héritiers de la Justice*, a local Christian Human Rights (CHR) organisation, showed that the state of insecurity in South Kivu and the DRC became a matter of major concern for the entire population. It is on record that there has been an upsurge in criminal activities since the end of the war.³³² Severe crimes like murder, armed robbery, and rape have become common in most places because people have become accustomed to the culture of violence as a way of expressing their anger or resolving their problems. The CHR report outlines the insecurity concerns as follows:

Again Héritiers de la Justice call for an end to the state of insecurity that continues to prevail on the main roads of the Kivu region and reiterate its call for justice in the name of the civilian victims of this insecurity.³³³

The state of insecurity has been worsened by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the high number of child soldiers. Churches in South Kivu have also given attention to this problem. Church leaders have tried to address the problem of insecurity through their messages of hope and denunciation of evil. It can be said that the churches became the source of hope for the people traumatised by insecurity. Archbishop Kataliko articulates the basis of the church's "hope-amidst-insecurity" message:

Today, us, his church, we cannot betray the hope that Jesus brought to us. We, his followers, we are called to continue the mission of Jesus: to announce the life and the life in abundance, to resist to all sorts of evil, to denounce everything that diminish the dignity of the person.³³⁴

In relation to the church's response to the state of insecurity in South Kivu (and by extension, the country), it is important to note that security issues varied from one place to another. For instance, in Bukavu, the church leaders were perceived by some as trustworthy sources of information because Archbishop Munzihirwa, for example, was a member of the security council of the province. Olivier, an interviewee, stated that Archbishop Munzihirwa was

³³² Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

³³³ <http://www.heritiers.org/insecurityjuly.html>

³³⁴ Letter of Archbishop Kataliko to the population of South Kivu (Christmas 2000)

good because he was informed about the situation of insecurity and warned the population of imminent dangers. In other places, the church leaders were perceived as sources of insecurity because of their involvement in the communities in conflict. It could be deduced from the views of interviewees that the sharp divisions among the different communities affected the level of trust of members of opposing political camps towards the church. This development of mixed reactions toward the role of the church in the society was occasioned by the churches' deep involvement all matters affecting the society: particularly politics of insecurity.

The point was made during interviews with people from Uvira that some of the church leaders were perceived as sources of insecurity by members of different communities because of their strong affiliation to different political movements. Included in this category was the allegation that Monsignor Gapangwa assisted the rebels in smuggling weapons into South Kivu.³³⁵ Also noteworthy were allegations by the Banyamulenge community that the churches in Bukavu distributed incriminating tracts to incite the population against the Banyamulenge population.³³⁶

Despite all these allegations, some interviewees still regard the churches as important institutions that provided trustworthy security advice to the population during the period 1996-2006. Some interviewees mentioned that in 1996 Archbishop Munzihirwa worked with the South Kivu Security Council to provide directions to the people in Bukavu, that he reported matters of urgency to the local population on the radio and in sermons during church services, and that his messages helped a lot of people when the city of Bukavu was under the state of emergency. One interviewee, Kabegos, reported that to prevent more people from being killed, the Archbishop called upon "the population to stay in their houses because the city was already taken by rebel soldiers";³³⁷ hearing the Archbishop on the radio and in the church sermons had brought hope to the population.

In criticising the prevailing state of insecurity churches have made themselves heard locally and have also called the attention of the international community to the problem. Father Bahala's statement shows that the churches were engaged in campaigns against insecurity in the region:

³³⁵ <http://www.congonline.com/Forum1/Forum05/Glc01.htm>

³³⁶ ASIPA, 2001, p. 69.

³³⁷ Kabegos, Durban, 15 November 2007

With such incidents of increasing insecurity, the local population has tended to seek refuge in Church Parishes. The attackers have therefore turned to systematically attacking and destroying property belonging to the Churches. Churches and rectories have been burnt and priests and other clergy killed. Even hospitals and medical centers belonging to the church have been burnt. These attacks, often carried out in city centers, are routinely and without investigation, blamed on militias whereas by all accounts they are carried out by the occupying armies. This was for instance the case with the deliberate looting of the studio of my institution, SEDICOS that was broken into in November 2000.³³⁸

Information gathered from interviewees indicates that the churches continually recorded and publicised the problems created by the security situation. The church made insecurity the focus of its attention on a variety of occasions; issues of insecurity were frequently addressed during events organised by the churches. One important dimension that attracted the attention of the church was the situation of women, and especially how the state of insecurity affected them. During his visit to the region in January 2001, US Congressman Frank Wolf described the “situation of women as particularly precarious”. Father Bahala corroborated this, noting that

Women live in fear. Soldiers – regardless of whom they owe their allegiance to – often treat them as prey. I heard horrific stories of rape, abuse and torture. Women are being raped in front of their husbands and children. One woman had her hands cut off after being raped; she now has a child she cannot care for. We were told that just two days before I arrived in Bukavu, a woman was raped in the marketplace at 10 a.m. and no one intervened.³³⁹

In response to this state of insecurity, the churches gave psychological support to the members of their congregations. According to some of the interviewees, during the period of serious insecurity, many people nevertheless had hope for the future because of their faith in the prayers. For others, there was no hope during this period and the only factor that enabled them go on living was their faith in God. According to one interviewee from South Kivu, at the height of the crisis, particularly from 1996-2001 before the cease-fire, the population of South Kivu had experienced untold suffering, aggravated by the feeling of abandonment and hopelessness, as a result of the failure of their government and the international community to rescue them. The churches became the only place where they received the spiritual strength to face their problems. According to one of the interviewees, in most churches the leaders encouraged the congregation and the population at large not lose hope for God would rescue them. In the interviews most people produced sentences like: “It was only by trusting in God’s hope that I was able to reach the next day during the wars”; “the sermons in churches gave me hope every time I came out of church”. It is obvious that the church messages of hope held the population together.

³³⁸ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

³³⁹ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

The church's message of love for one another had a significant influence. According to some of the interviewees, the church people's voices on the radio and in churches were the only weapons that were used to call the perpetrators of criminal acts to order because the justice system was non-existent. For some, because of the church's messages, many perpetrators of violent acts responsible for the insecurity changed their attitudes towards demilitarization:

As none of the security problems listed above will be solved before the elections, the new democratic government will have to deal with a legacy of security threats stemming from unsuccessful attempts at demobilising the militiamen, uncontrolled armed groups, disgruntled politicians and hostile neighbours.³⁴⁰

It is beyond contention that the presence of numerous uncontrolled armed groups constitutes the major insecurity problem for the South Kivu province. The situation in South Kivu is complex because of the presence of many former soldiers from different groups: the *Interahamwe* that came from Rwanda in 1994, the ex-FAZ, the Mayi-Mayi, and the former AFDL fighters.³⁴¹ Many of these former soldiers have no other skills and no concerted efforts have been put in place to ensure that those who left the army are reintegrated into civilian life or provided with job opportunities to continue their life as civilians.

The churches have been concerned with the highly militarized province. Father Bahala addresses these issues in his statement:

As you are surely aware, in this war waged on the Congolese civilian population, and against our will for four years now, which involves 7 regular armies and several other armed groups, it is estimated that 2.5 million Congolese have died. While this number in itself is shocking, it does not reveal the gravity of the suffering, hardship and torment that innocent Congolese civilians have endured: under the guise of waging war women have been buried alive; nuns have been raped, young girls and women sexually assaulted, and men killed.³⁴²

One of the interviewees³⁴³ felt that in the attempt to demilitarise the region, the churches have been leading their war against the militarization and illegal traffic of weapons through their sermons, homilies, letters and messages on the radio, calling the population not join armed groups and to refrain from using violence as a method of solving problems. He said that, according to one of the former soldiers, the visits of church people to the military camp led some soldiers to resolve to leave the army. Another interviewee said, "because of Christianity I decided to leave the armed violence, as I realised that as child of God I'm not

³⁴⁰ Thierry Vircoulon, *Anticipating a new and fragile democracy in Central Africa* (http://www.iss.co.za/index.php?link_id=21&mlink_id=3535&link_type=12&mlink_type=12&tmpl_id=3)

³⁴¹ www.iss.co.za

³⁴² Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

³⁴³ Anonymous, interview with the author, Durban, September 2007

supposed to be killing others.”³⁴⁴ On the other hand, some respondents said it was unfortunate that there are not many activities that target the ex-combatants.

It is clear that insecurity, militarization and the high prevalence of weapons amongst the population of the South Kivu province has been a major concern for all spheres of the society because it has affected almost everyone. It is also evident that the churches have addressed this issue in sermons from the pulpit and on the radio. And while we have recorded, in this section, some of the range of activities carried out by churches in their efforts to bring peace by promoting non-violence, it must also be noted that divergent opinions did exist among the local population concerning the church’s efforts in peace building in South Kivu.

4.6 Churches and culture in South Kivu

This section investigates how churches, in their attempts to resolve ethnic conflicts, successfully exploited cultural dynamics. It can be deduced from analysis of Burton’s study that cultural transformation is a necessity in the conflict resolution process. The literature already reviewed suggests that cultural factors impinge on the long-term peace process, and the reconstruction and transformation efforts of stakeholders engaged in the peace and reconciliation process in South Kivu stand a better chance of success if they follow this approach. Burton conveys his view on this theme in the following quotation:

We cannot complete an analysis of decision making and conflict resolution without making special reference to culture... The active preservation of cultures is a driving [force] in all ethnic conflicts in multi-ethnic society.³⁴⁵

According to Burton, “The active preservation of cultures is a driving [force] in all ethnic conflicts in multi-ethnic society.”³⁴⁶ What is underpinned in Burton’s research is the perception of cultural dynamics as a vital tool to be applied in establishing long-term peace in South Kivu where different communities from different tribes with different cultural heritages live. This section explores and examines the extent of church commitment to, and involvement in, South Kivu conflicts that have led the church leaders to realise that practical application of cultural dynamics can lead to the establishment of long-term peace and transformation in the war-torn region.

³⁴⁴ Group discussion, Durban, 15 September 2007

³⁴⁵ Burton, J.1990 *Conflict: Resolution and Prevention*, London: St. Martin’s Press

³⁴⁶ *Ibid*

Interviewees from various different communities acknowledged that cultural activities and sports could bring communities closer, solidifying the reconciliation process. According to one of the interviewees, the cultures of communities are important elements that could contribute to the transformation of the situation in South Kivu. That is, the inclusion of those cultural dynamics that promote love, reconciliation and tolerance amongst different cultural identities could make a marked difference.³⁴⁷ However, other interviewees stated that, for years, some of the churches have been resisting different indigenous cultural activities because they are perceived to be against Christianity. For example, one of the interviewees said that “most churches are against the use of the indigenous cultural activities, although everyone has his or her cultural heritage”.³⁴⁸ This reflected resentment towards missionary opposition to Christians embracing what was considered, during the colonial period, to be anti-Christianity activities such as local traditional rituals. Nevertheless, others said the churches do respect cultures because they sing liturgical songs in the languages of different communities although they do not encourage Christians to practice their traditional rituals that are perceived as being against Christianity.

Having said this, it is useful to note that churches during this period of violence did promote the cultural transformation of the society as whole. This was done partly by suppressing cultures that promote discrimination, violence, ethnicity and tribalism whilst favouring cultures thought to promote reconciliation and peace in the region. According to RIO, a branch of ECC, the churches have been engaged in the promotion of the culture of peace and reconciliation amongst the population by facilitating seminars and workshops for people irrespective of their ethnic group or community of origin.³⁴⁹ According to RIO, a process of transformation has started in many faith-based organizations as result of workshops and seminars that are being conducted.³⁵⁰ People from different communities interviewed have acknowledged that sustainable peace could be achieved by complementing the emerging culture of peace within the population of South Kivu with a culture of peace through music and other cultural activities.

However, according to Bufole from Nguba in Bukavu (now based in South Africa), the church is to blame for many things that have happened in DR Congo. Bufole argues that

³⁴⁷ Group discussion, with the author, Durban 15 September 2007

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*

³⁴⁹ [Http://riobukavu.org/pages/realisation.htm](http://riobukavu.org/pages/realisation.htm)

³⁵⁰ *Ibid*

“churches broke the relationship that link the people to their identity by making them abandon their cultural heritage.” Hence, the population no longer finds pride in their heritage because they believe that it is heathen and worldly. Bufole concludes that “as long as the people of Congo will not respect their own and others indigenous cultural heritage which makes them Mushi, Murega, Munyanga, Mubembe and others the problem will not be solved.”³⁵¹ In similar vein, another interviewee felt that the teaching in churches has invariably made the population reject their own culture which formerly connected them to the land of their ancestors, to their lifestyle and other important indigenous values.

In the light of these reactions, it is not surprising that the cultural resources in terms of local proverbs and myths are not usually utilized in sermons as a source of inspiration although there are important messages in the regional stories and myths that address the issues of violence, reconciliation and peace. During an interview, a pastor from the region argued that the Bible is the only sacred document that should be utilized for the church services as anything else is not inspiring. However, there were others who believed that the indigenization of religions was necessary in order to address their problems.

According to a student group from South Kivu, churches are very committed to promoting a culture of peace among the population through the radio, marches and other activities. To some extent every church has talked about peace. For some, the promotion of the culture of peace and reconciliation begins just by speaking about them, which is what the churches have been doing. Therefore, it can be argued that there is a faith-based strategy for promoting and keeping the culture of peace. During the conflict period some churches specifically brought people together from communities that were in conflict with one another. According to one of the interviewees, the church’s gospel of loving ones neighbour has been an effective tool in promoting the culture of peace and tolerance within the different communities. In this context, Archbishop Maroy asserts that

We are natural neighbors with the Rwandans, the Burundians, and the Ugandans. We are condemned to live together rather in peace and harmony in this sub-region that God generously gave us and not in perpetual wars. What will the new wars serve us which are only accentuating the poverty of our people and creating unnecessary antagonism? “Blessed are the peace makers, they will be called sons of God”. (Mt 5, 9) Never again, never the war, the world is thirsty of peace.³⁵²

Information gathered from interviewees indicated that the churches actively advocated cultural transformation that would advance peace and reconciliation. In addition, churches

³⁵¹ Bufole, originally from South Kivu, group discussion, Durban, 15 September 2007

³⁵² Archbishop Maroy intervention in Burundi 26 July 2006 (PT)

have also called for an end to the culture of impunity, bad governance and other bad practices in the region. Some churches perceive the change in culture of impunity as another important way of solving intercommunity conflicts. This view finds expression in Father Bahala's position:

An international structure to investigate, try, and punish all those guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity – no matter their origin or perpetrators – is necessary to halt the culture of impunity that has settled in the region.³⁵³

In other cases, the churches have engaged in practical implementation of culture as a transformational tool for nation-building in the South Kivu region. For example, Archbishop Maroy describes improvement in relations between the DRC and Rwanda where Rwanda had been regarded as the main enemy by many communities in the DR Congo:

The actions are on both sides, especially with the dioceses of bordering countries, the visits are organised and we encourage everything that is done for the edification and the consolidation of peace in the hearts and in the region of African Great Lakes.³⁵⁴

It is contended that in their efforts to improve community relations in South Kivu and other neighbouring countries, not many organizations have been able to initiate activities that could change the culture of hatred and distrust amongst the different communities. The churches, however, managed to come up with certain initiatives that have contributed to changing the situation.

4.7 Conclusion

The findings of the wide range of studies reviewed demonstrates that the holistic and collaborative peace-building and community-relations approach which the churches have adopted for addressing the problems of armed conflict in South Kivu can be seen as an innovative theological template for conflict-resolution. Equally, the data that has emerged offers an insight into the practical and social-oriented theology that underpins the way Roman Catholic Church leaders, in their quest for peace and democratic governance, sought to transcend the political intrigues and hidden political agendas of other stakeholders in the resource-rich but strife-ravaged DRC. Some of the critical findings and implications of this research are as follows:

³⁵³ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

³⁵⁴ Archbishop Maroy intervention in Burundi 26 July 2006

1. The identification of the emergence of a Congolese home-grown theological model for resolving post-armed-conflict problems.
2. The suggestion that the collaborative South Kivu structural transformation implementation strategy developed by the churches might prove to be a best approach for church participation in conflict resolutions.
3. The innovativeness of the religious-cum-political practical approach that evolved during the Roman Catholic Church's involvement with the peace-rebuilding process in South Kivu might be considered as a best conflict resolution template for churches.
4. The suggestion that a clear understanding of the origins of the conflict and the intricate relationships between perpetrators and victims is essential for defining goals and constructing an appropriate implementation design for successful resolution of problems of peace-rebuilding.
5. The fact that the destruction caused by wars and armed conflicts tended to affect everything: human lives, the environment, social and political structures and the very soul of the society and its members.
6. The conclusion that the solution to the state of insecurity in war-ravaged societies is only achievable if members of the various groups work together.
7. The suggestion that an imposed peace-agreement by military presence was not only expensive, requiring the backing of the Western powers, but also difficult to sustain for a long period.
8. The fact that the frequent eruptions of armed violence in South Kivu and the DRC, might be linked to the following variables: the DRC's vast natural resources, the proximity of South Kivu to strife-torn countries like Rwanda and Burundi, the interference of foreign powers with a vested interest in the rich mineral resources of the DRC and the inordinate greed and selfishness of politicians and warlords.
9. The collapse of social, political and economic structures, coupled with the serious deterioration of all health care services, led to mass exodus of intellectuals, professionals and

specialists required for running services and developing the shattered country: a factor that compounded the problems.

10. One of the determinants responsible for the success achieved by the churches and other stakeholders could well be attributed to the fact that the method used incorporated many diverse factors that impinged upon the South Kivu post-armed-conflict resolution process.

11. The dramatic growth in the spread of the HIV/AIDS, the prevalence of which can be linked to the state of violence and insecurity and the collapse of health care services.

Chapter 5: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

Various organizations, locally and internationally, have participated in the efforts to rebuild intercommunity relations amongst the population of South Kivu and the Great Lakes region from 1996 to 2006. This period has been one of the most unstable periods in the history of the Great Lake countries (DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi). South Kivu is one of the DRC provinces most affected by the social crisis that plagued the region. During this period the churches in South Kivu as well as in other parts of the country developed their own methods to address the problems that affected the region. It has been acknowledged that the churches had considerable determination to serve both their own congregations and the whole country in those turbulent times. However it seems that there were other areas in which the churches could have improved upon their attempts to contribute to (community) conflict- resolution.

To understand the role that churches have played, this study has focused on five important aspects that could illuminate the involvement of churches in the resolution of community conflicts in this region. The findings of this study will be grouped into five sections that should reflect the involvement of churches along the lines of the five aspects discussed in Chapter Four.

The purpose of this chapter is to present this study's findings. This section of the study is aimed at drawing conclusions as to how the churches played certain roles in the following areas: regional politics, social responsibility, peace and reconciliation, insecurity, and cultural transformation.

5.2 The church and politics

The political predicament besetting the countries of the Great Lakes region began in the 1990s when the war which erupted in Rwanda ended with the genocide of 1994. The most disastrous outcome of the war was the influx of thousands of Hutu refugees who crossed the border into South Kivu. The large number of traumatised conflict-ravaged Hutu refugees into

South Kivu proved to be a catalytic event that changed the peaceful coexistence of all the ethnic groups in the Great Lakes region, the fundamental focus of the interventionist efforts of the churches.

However, it should be borne in mind that, even prior to the Rwandan genocide, churches had been engaged in vital role-playing in regional politics. These roles assumed greater significance, however, during the period 1996-2006.³⁵⁵ During the period of the Hutu-Tutsi conflicts in Rwanda, certain churches in South Kivu were engaged in the criticism of politicians for their failure to find peaceful solutions to the various conflicts. Throughout and after the epoch of the war that resulted in genocide, the churches in South Kivu suggested peaceful means to the local politicians and the international community to resolve the crisis without violence. The pastoral letters the churches addressed to the local authorities and to the international community (the former French President, Francois Mitterrand, to the Secretary General of the UN and other institutions) contained recommendations for the peaceful settlement of the conflicts.³⁵⁶ During this period, the South Kivu church leaders networked with other Catholic Church leaders on how to address the refugee crises.

The main focus of the majority of churches was speaking out against bad governance and addressing the issues of corruption mismanagement of public services, national resources and human rights abuses. Section 2 of Chapter Four of the study shows that, in 1996, when the war erupted in South Kivu, the churches publicly denounced violence as means of resolving conflicts. Most churches called upon the population to resist the foreign forces of occupation in a non-violent way.³⁵⁷ In addition, the churches criticised politicians for manipulating community relations for their own selfish political ends.

The study also reveals that church leaders have suffered severe repression because of their political involvement, this because criticisms levelled by the church leadership infuriated both the government and rebel groups to the extent that some church leaders were forced out of their homes or, in some cases, even maimed. In 2001, the orientation of churches' involvement in the political scenario changed from the politics of opposition to the politics of peace and democracy. At the political level, in 2001, there was much pressure exerted on

³⁵⁵ Meredith, 2006, p. 509.

³⁵⁶ Letter of Mgr Munzihirwa Christophe to President Francois Mitterrand on the 17th August 1994. The same letter was addressed to the secretary General of the UN Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

³⁵⁷ Position De L'église Du Christ Au Congo/Sud-Kivu Face A La Situation Qui Prévaut Dans La Ville De Bukavu Et Ses Environs 15/02/200.

political groups by the international community to sign the peace accords in Lusaka and South Africa. Simultaneously, at the local level, churches put pressure on the different political movements to sign the peace accord by means of sermons, dialogues, and peaceful rallies.³⁵⁸ During this period, the Catholic and the Protestant churches jointly initiated meetings to engage the rebel groups in the occupied territories in talks about the possibility of peace.³⁵⁹ The churches persistently called upon the international community to intervene in the situation of the DR Congo to put pressure on the politicians to change the situation.³⁶⁰ Eventually the negotiations between the political groups culminated in an agreement which led to the formation of a transitional government.

During the period 2003-2004, the churches participated in publicising the proposed constitution and educating the population about their rights and duties as Congolese citizens;³⁶¹ their contribution in this regard helped to ensure the success of the constitutional referendum elections.

The present study also shows that, between the years 2004 and 2006, the churches shifted their focus toward the elections. The local ECC and Catholic parishes were actively involved in the preparation for the elections.³⁶² During this period many church leaders, having enlightened the people about their rights, encouraged them to participate in the elections. It can thus be argued that the involvement of the churches in South Kivu inspired members of their congregations to participate in the elections.³⁶³ The participation of church leaders included not only facilitating the electoral process but also collaborating with the electoral commission before and during the elections.

Another notable initiative was that taken by the ECC branch known as RIO in arranging a series of seminars and workshops for the leaders of different organizations in order to mobilise their members to participate in the elections and to accept the outcome of the elections.³⁶⁴ It has been noted that, after the elections, some churches in South Kivu began to

³⁵⁸ ASIPA, 2001, p. 36.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid*

³⁶⁰ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

³⁶¹ Alima, Marie Bernard 2005, *Vulgariser le projet de constitution de la République Démocratique du Congo*, CENCO

³⁶² Muteba, 2004, CENCO

³⁶³ Ade, interviewed by the author, Durban, 15 may, 2007

³⁶⁴ [Http://riobukavu.org/pages/realisation.htm](http://riobukavu.org/pages/realisation.htm).

support the government initiatives; on the other hand there are other churches that criticised the government for not fulfilling its promises.

5.3 The church amongst the oppressed

The study has shown that before 1996, when many of the public institutions were not functional, the churches began providing basic support to the local population.³⁶⁵ The war that began in 1996 destroyed much of the country's already deficient infrastructure. During this period the churches played a leading role in the provision of various social services.³⁶⁶ The evidence provided by primary data demonstrates that the churches provided health services, education and humanitarian support to the victims of wars. Father Bahala confirms this:

[The Catholic Church] is the backbone of several community development efforts - we run hospitals, dispensaries and health care centres, institutions of primary, secondary and higher education, and is very engaged in the protection for the population through social and development programs.³⁶⁷

During the period of the armed conflicts and civil wars, the community projects and social services provided by the church had significant impact on the people. Both the Catholic and the Protestant churches were able to provide these services because they received support from their foreign partners and international donors.³⁶⁸

The church also demonstrated its commitment to non-violence during this period. Since church leaders were committed to solving the past ills and perceived the RCD as forces of oppression, they called upon the population to stand against human rights abuses and to refrain from taking up arms.

It has been shown in this study that the church has been perceived as the most significant voice to speak for the population in this period of crisis. Nkunzi puts this most succinctly: "To be the true voice of those without a voice is the role of the church in all countries which are in a state of conflict, or victim to dictatorship and oppression."³⁶⁹ Not only did the churches provide social services to the local population but they also continued to call on the international community to put pressure on the political leaders to solve the crisis in the

³⁶⁵ Nkunzi, 2005, p. 216.

³⁶⁶ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid*

³⁶⁸ Kabegos 2007

³⁶⁹ Nkunzi, 2005, p. 237.

South Kivu province. In this context, the church leaders have gone beyond the boundaries of the country itself in order to alert the world about the crisis in the DRC and the Great Lakes region.

It can be deduced from this study that there are similarities in the role that churches played in South Africa and in South Kivu. This similarity is borne out in Frank Chikane's comment regarding a similar situation in the South African reconciliation and reconstruction process. In this situation, he recommends "Doing Theology" and argues that the practical application of this approach which entails "action and reflection on one's activity and involvement with the people, and participation in their struggles"³⁷⁰ as vital tools for solving conflicts without resorting to war. In a similar context in South Kivu, Archbishop Kataliko echoes the South African context by asserting that there is a need for the people of the DRC to engage with "courage, with a firm spirit, with an immovable faith, to be to on the side of all the oppressed and, if necessary, to share [their] blood, as the archbishop Munzihirwa."³⁷¹

The study also points out that, during the period of strife, the church leaders stood with their communities while addressing their problems. In addition, the study has shown that, on the practical level, the churches offered solutions for dealing with the problems with which the people had to grapple during the war and after. In the health sector for example, churches created special units in their hospitals to attend to the victims of sexual violence and to address health problems that affected people in different areas and especially those in the rural areas.³⁷²

5.4 The church, reconciliation and social rehabilitation

This study contends that the churches have participated in the peace process through the dissemination of their moral messages. Detailed evidence of church intervention is provided in section 4.4 of Chapter Four which delineates the religious approach to resolving the situation of South Kivu. The reviewed literature suggests that there are similarities between the way the churches in the South Kivu approached the peace-building process and the

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³⁷⁰ Chikane, F. 1985. Doing theology in a situation of Conflict, in (eds) C. Villa-Vicencio and J. W. De Gruchy. *Resistance and Hope, South African essays in honour of Beyers Naude*. Cape Town: David Philip.

³⁷¹ Pastoral Letter of Archbishop Kataliko for Christmas 2000

³⁷² Doctor Mukwege, Interview with the author, Panzi, 15 June 2006

conditions that promote peace. The churches' messages in pastoral letters and sermons constantly call for peace and reconciliation in meetings, functions and various ceremonies in which members of the congregations were gathered.³⁷³ Moreover, based on interviews and group discussions, the study asserts that messages conveyed by church radio, sermons and pastoral letters played an important role in shaping the attitudes of communities towards other communities that were previously perceived as enemies. Section 4.4 of Chapter Four provides further detail on the way this strategy affected the population.

It is interesting that the attitude of communities in South Kivu changed rapidly toward other communities they were in conflict with because of the messages disseminated in their congregations.³⁷⁴ Some of the data provided in Chapter Four suggest that due to the interventions of the churches aimed at making the environment conducive for peace the attitudes of many of the South Kivu population changed positively towards communities they had previously viewed as enemies. This study's findings suggest that people believed that the prayers, the conferences initiated by various church leaders and the fact that churches invited political leaders to participate in church activities all played an important role in bringing the population and the political authorities together while the negotiations were in process – as witness the words used by the prelate Kataliko in calling his listeners to look upon the Lord:

May he touch the hearts, of all the political and military responsible who are the cause of this war and perpetuating it, so that they take conscience of the enormous responsibility they in front of God, and the people.³⁷⁵

SIPA is one of the events regarded as having been particularly significant in the reconstruction of relations amongst different communities on the political level. The Catholic and Protestant churches organized this event that brought people from different ethnic groups together to address issues that affected them in an effort to promote reconciliation and foster harmonious community relations. One of the key strategic successes of the church inter-community relation strategies bears mentioning. While it was the religious leaders who organised this peace-rebuilding initiative, what is important is that they compelled prominent politicians to listen to the wishes of the people, as is reflected in the statement made by Jean-Pierre Bemba, the leader of one of the major rebel groups:

³⁷³ Letter of Archbishop Kataliko on the on the African child day 1999

³⁷⁴ Kabegos, Durban, 15 November 2007

³⁷⁵ Nkunzi, 2005, p. 237.

I have heard your requests. I have heard them as they were transmitted by the Monsignor amongst us. I would like first ask for forgiveness for the mistakes, the atrocities, the crimes, the plundering committed by our militaries. I come to ensure you that now, as the responsible of this movement; I will attach myself to restore the security and peace for all ... I ask for priests to come back to their churches, in peace and security.³⁷⁶

The churches realised that communities could not live in peace without forgiveness and true reconciliation. Hence, the churches' emphasis on these two factors in the peace building process. This study points out that the fact that churches, generally recognised as one of the most trusted institutions in the region, played an important role in breaking down the walls of separation between the communities and rebuilding intercommunity relations among the different ethnic groups and communities that had, hitherto, offended each other. The importance of inter-ethnic harmony is highlighted by Villa-Vicencio: "the people [have] realised that either they live together or they kill one another"³⁷⁷. The approach of South Kivu churches has been such that it has focused on making individuals conscious of their situation.

5.5 Security and demilitarization

The finding in this section is that the Catholic Church has played a significant role by assuring the population (while the state of insecurity was high in the province) of their safety. Section 4.5 of Chapter Four provides substantial evidence concerning the role of churches in ensuring hope within the population during the period of fear and anxiety induced by armed violence. As presented in section 4.5 of Chapter Four, it can be seen that the church leaders, and especially Catholic Church leaders, worked with the provincial Security Council to improve the security situation in South Kivu province. Archbishop Munzihirwa was a member of the provincial Security Council in Bukavu where he made it his policy to inform his congregation and the local population about state of insecurity in the province. The people were encouraged by the Archbishop's initiatives and emulated his approach to resolving conflicts.³⁷⁸ The case cited above was not applicable in all the regions, since other areas were affected by different factors and had different perceptions about church leaders. A glaring example was the feeling that the church leaders who served on the provincial Security Council were responsible for the deterioration security in the region because of their links to certain political movements or rebel groups in their communities.

³⁷⁶ ASIPA, 2001, p. 102.

³⁷⁷ <http://www.barcelona2004.org/eng/eventos/141%20preguntas/portada.cfm>

³⁷⁸ Kabegos, Durban, 15 November 2007

Despite these mixed feelings about church leadership, the finding of the study suggests that the churches became the main source of hope and encouragement for the local communities. All through this period when insecurity, fear and hopelessness prevailed in the province, the only source of hope became the ecclesiastic activities that encouraged the population to summon their courage and not to run away from their homes.³⁷⁹ The churches in this period also became a place of refuge for internally displaced persons with the traumatized receiving both spiritual and practical support from the churches.

This study's findings show that the churches have played an important role in improving security by alerting the world about the state of insecurity in the province.³⁸⁰ The churches' local human rights organizations and local Christian radios became the central force in voicing and reporting human rights abuses that were taking place throughout the province. These politically-motivated activities are complemented by the church's constant and informative news reporting that brought hope to all afflicted war victims. The impact of these socially oriented actions on the society cannot be overestimated.

It is reported that the activities of the Churches have had a significant influence on soldiers, ex-soldiers and other groups. These peace messages prepared the way for the development of the culture of peace and non-violence in South Kivu.³⁸¹ Thus, some soldiers have been encouraged to renounce armed violence and to become re-integrated into civilian life. The churches' messages have helped soldiers and combatants, who have been converted to Christianity, to integrate with greater ease into the society. Most importantly, the church messages changed many ex-combatants' attitudes, resulting in their participation in the transitional democratic process of the DRC. Although this initiative has not yet been implemented in areas that are occupied by the different militia groups, it is contended that the general message on the radio and in communities played a role in improving the security situation in the province.³⁸²

³⁷⁹ Father Bahala, Washington D.C., May 17, 2001.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid*

³⁸¹ Anonymous, interview with author, Durban 15 May 2007

³⁸² Anonymous, ex soldier, interview with the author, 15 May 2007

5.6 Culture and churches

It can be said that the messages of churches have been vital in shaping the cultural direction of the population because of their impact on the attitude of the population. This section explores and examines the extent of the church commitment to and involvement in the South Kivu conflicts which have led the church leaders to realise that practical application of cultural dynamics can lead to the establishment of long-term peace and transformation of the war-torn region. The situation of South Kivu is such that there is big need for a cultural transformation. From the beginning of the AFDL-led rebellion and the insurgency led by the RCD movement, the churches called on the population to practise the politics of non-violent resistance. The churches' message proved effective as the people tirelessly resisted the rebel movements. A lecturer at ISP, Bukavu, Byabuze Ildefonse, wrote a letter to DR Congo's political leaders, which reflects the perception of some members of the South Kivu churches:

Mr President, you engage a war with men of God who are sacred and consecrated pastors by the Lord. They do their work extremely well that they annoy us sometimes with their sermons like: "Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you". Is it not because of the churches International mendacity and NGOs that there are still some good schools, rare credible hospitals, jobs with salaries, and centres of activities and our villages?³⁸³

As the study has indicated, throughout the period of SIPA, the churches created an atmosphere that was conducive for people from different communities to assemble together for a common cause – for peace and reconciliation. It would seem that the churches experienced less resistance to bringing people from the different communities together than did other organisations. This may be because the symposiums and other activities³⁸⁴ helped to create a culture of peace. Other activities organized by the church in South Kivu that have enhanced the peace process since the ceasefire include sporting events and cultural activities³⁸⁵ – this in the hope of creating a new culture of peace within the region. Despite the political tensions amongst the politicians, these events have attracted many people from different countries to the Great Lakes region.³⁸⁶

In spite of these advances towards peace and community rebuilding, there are perceptions that the majority of churches in the South Kivu province have contributed to the problems of the region because of their messages against the African cultural indigenous heritage of the various tribes and ethnic groups. It has been suggested in some discussions that it could have

³⁸³ Nkunzi, 2005, p. 240.

³⁸⁴ Syfia ICM, Les rencontres sportives font tomber les préjuges 16/02/2005

³⁸⁵ ASIPA, 2001, p. 106.

³⁸⁶ Archbishop Maroy intervention in Burundi 26 July 2006

been better if the churches had accommodated the cultural messages of each ethnic group regarding the different issues that affect contemporary African societies.

5.7 Conclusion

The historical ten-year period in the Great Lakes countries has been one of the most critical eras for community relations in the region. Between 1996 and 2006 churches in South Kivu played a remarkable role in shaping community relations in the region. This is the reason for the selection of this particular period for the study. However, this is not to say that the churches were not involved in the problems of the region prior to 1996. The period (1996-2006) is significant because of its especial sensitivity. The aim here has been to investigate the role the churches played during the era that ushered in civil warfare and ended in the elections of 2006. This study focuses on the investigation of the roles churches played during this period, and with special emphasis on the different conflict areas that received the church interventionist response. .

The study has demonstrated that during this period the churches in South Kivu had a significant influence on the politics of the region with the churches using their influence, in ecclesiastic activities, to resist the political pressure by criticizing poor governance and calling upon the population to employ the type of passive resistance popularised by Ghandi in colonial India. Church participation was most noticeable during the period of transition, including the preparation for the general elections and during the actual elections in the DRC.

The churches also played a significant role in the provision of social services during this period. They offered assistance in the education and the health sectors and provided economic support for the victims of community conflicts, particularly necessary in the absence of effective service provision by the public authority. During this period churches continually alerted the world to the humanitarian crises that affected the villages and towns by speaking to the local authorities and the international community.

The study has highlighted the activities of churches in helping different communities to come together with a view to promoting reconciliation and peace. One of the most important achievements of churches in the region concerning peace and reconciliation has been the initiation of SIPA. This provided the opportunity to members from different communities to meet and talk about peace and reconciliation. Another important element that emerged during

the study was an acknowledgement from members of different communities that the unrelenting messages concerning peace and reconciliation, delivered by the churches, had a significant effect on the population.

The insecurity in the province of South Kivu was an issue that churches took seriously. The churches, through their human rights units, have played an important role in reporting different cases of criminal activities as well as cases of human rights abuses in the province. The local churches have played a key role in the population through their messages of non-violence in which they asked the people to refrain from causing harm to members of the other local communities. Also, this study shows that the message of churches, vis-à-vis the demilitarization process, played an important role in facilitating the voluntary disarmament and demilitarization of ex-combatants. This all contributed to facilitating the peace process in the province.

Additionally, this research has indicated that through their ecclesiastical activities the churches have influenced the cultural patterns of members of their congregations. This is illustrated by the fact that the attitudes of the church members began to change. The change became noticeable because of the direction provided by the church leadership which resulted, in some cases, in the creation of new cultural patterns amongst members of these communities. However, anti-church attitudes began to emerge that suggested that not all members of the church leadership were as respected as they had been formerly. In many instances the churches' messages are no longer respected but are perceived as a primary cause of the disruption of communities for their part in destroying indigenous cultural values and practices. These practices are seen to have an important function in linking individuals to their cultural origins which, in turn, manifests in patriotic national feeling, pride and love for one's cultural identity. Apart from the above, however, the study serves to demonstrate that the cultural activities, sports events, and series of seminar workshops organised by the churches helped to promote a culture of peace, reconciliation and justice between members of different communities

This study could not cover all the activities that the churches have initiated or participated in. For this reason the study has been limited to investigating only the general pattern of the churches' involvement in the public sphere in order to ascertain the areas of interest and the impact of church activities on peace and reconciliation problems during the period 1996-2006. Much of the information provided in this study has been based on views of ordinary

people from South Kivu. It is beyond the scope of this study to include the stories of all the local churches although examples from different areas and churches were randomly selected in discussing the subject-matter of the study. There is no doubt that conducting more research in each of the fields of faith-based intervention amongst churches of the whole African Great Lakes region would contribute to the scholarship on religiously motivated initiatives aimed at addressing social problems confronting contemporary societies.

Churches and other faith-based institutions might find this study useful since the results point to a particularised approach that could be replicated and tested in future studies which, in turn, would add to the existing scholarship in this field. The findings of the study suggest that a holistic and all-embracing approach that adopts a collaborative methodology is more likely to create a more enduring long-term peaceful reconciliation than one imposed by the victor upon the vanquished. The practical application tool is considered to be relevant for different stakeholders working in regions affected by conflicts.

As the South African success story has proved, the “doing theology approach” has emerged as a tool for resolving conflict problems that have their roots in the kind of historical ethnic problems which could so easily lead to the genocidal violence such as took place in Rwanda and Kosovo. It is hoped that this study on the participation of churches in South Kivu will provide a practical model for re-evaluating their impact on the Great Lakes region and the success rate of the role-players who contributed to resolution of insecurity problems. The lessons learned from the experience of churches in South Kivu enhance this study’s potential to motivate other faith-based actors to participate in the process of building peace on the African continent and sustaining harmonious intercommunity relations.

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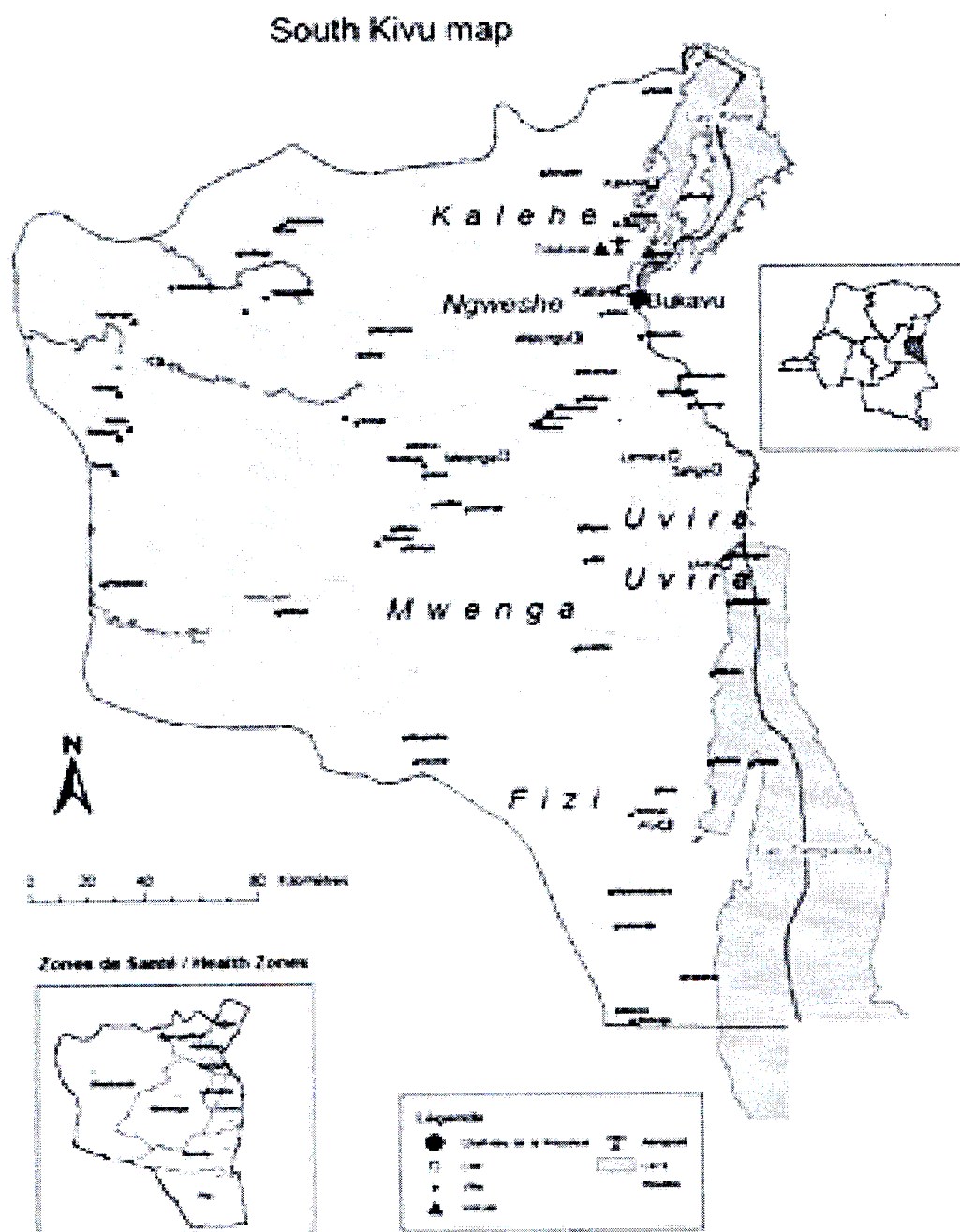
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Map of South Kivu



Source: http://fondamu.org/images/south_kivu.jpg
 Accessed the 14th January 2008

Appendix 2: Location of South Kivu



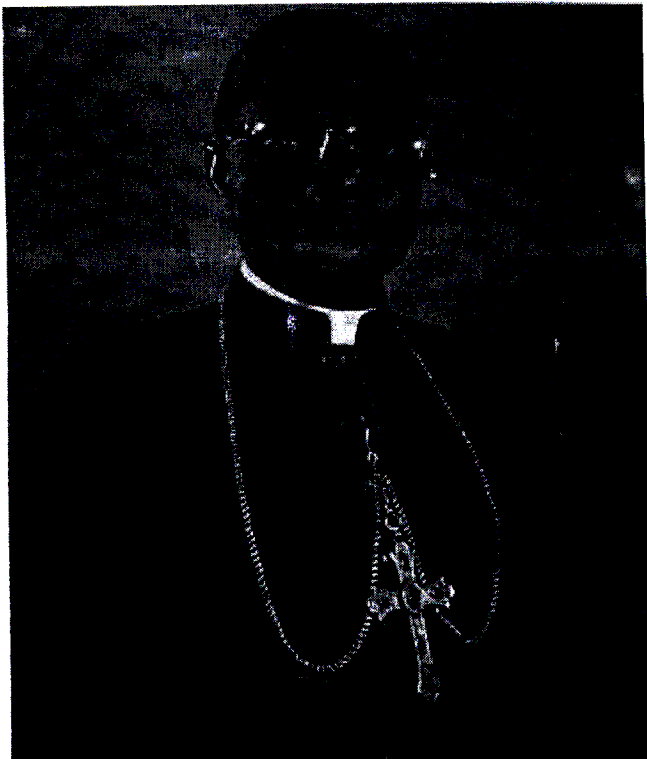
http://www.geocities.com/afonseca/CongoWar_files/image004.jpg
 Accessed the 14th January 2008

Appendix 3: Photograph of Archbishop Munzihirwa



[web.neomedia.it/congosol/appr/mem Munz fra.html](http://web.neomedia.it/congosol/appr/mem_Munz_fra.html)
Accessed 14 January 2008

Appendix 4: Photograph of Archbishop Emanuel Kataliko



<http://peres-blancs.cef.fr/images/kataliko2.jpg>
Accessed 14 January 2008

Appendix 5: Sample Interviews

1. Dr Kadima, interviewed by the author, Bukavu, 18 June 2006

Q: How would you describe the situation of South Kivu between 1996 and 2006?

A.: South Kivu is one of the provinces that have been severely affected by the violent conflicts since the beginning of the first war in 1996. Today many public institutions are not operational because of insecurity in the region and political instabilities.

Q: What are the particular areas of concern in South Kivu?

A.: The public health system is in a very serious state of crisis. There is a serious increase of HIV prevalence particularly amongst the young people. Rape cases are common in areas where wars are taking place which contribute tremendously to the spread of HIV/AIDS. South Kivu is one of the regions most affected by HIV/AIDS because the highest incidence of war and continual acts of atrocities occur in the region.

Q: How are churches dealing with this situation?

A.: I am the coordinator of CELPA (Communauté des Eglises Libre Pentecôtes en Afrique) Health Development project. Our church is deeply involved in the providing basic health care to the local population. Religious organizations are key-players that have played a major role to keep the people of this region alive. Our organization is involved in many projects and providing basic health service is one of our projects. Almost all the religious organizations are playing their part to some extent.

2. Kabamba, Dr., interview with author, Durban, 18 November 2007

Q: How would you describe the situation of South Kivu After 1996?

A: South Kivu has been one of the most unstable provinces due to the fact that it became a centre for violent conflicts. Even before the war of 1996 the region was already in state of instability because of the influx of Rwandan Hutu refugees in the region after the genocide. Almost all structures were no longer operating in an ideal way.

Q: How would describe the position of churches facing the political situation of South Kivu?

A: It is evident the churches have been involved, more particularly the Catholic Church. The Archbishops of the Catholic church of Bukavu have been vocal concerning the political developments in the region. Archbishop Munzihirwa openly criticized AFDL for trying to take power by means of violence. Even the assassination of the of Archbishop Munzihirwa in the midst of his own people is further evidence that shows that the Catholic Churches in South Kivu pay attention to the political situation of the region.

The Roman Catholic and other churches have played a key role in the preparation of election and in assisting the local population deal with their situation. The reaction of the Congolese shows that they were interested in the state of the political affairs.

Looking at the history of the DRC, it is apparent that the Catholic Church has been deeply involved in political affairs on a national level since the early years of the DRC's independence.

Q.: What do you think about the role of the church in lives of the poor?

A.: The churches have played a considerable role in the life of the poor in the sense that they helped the refugees, the displaced and also the churches have been working hard toward finding a way of improving the situation of people living in poverty. It is also important to say that the churches were advocating human rights more than most institutions.

Q.: What do you think about the situation of insecurity?

A.: Well, it's hard to say. The insecurity in this province is linked to so many issues. However regarding the churches and insecurity I could say that the churches were playing a very constructive role in the sense that they helped reassure people. They called on people in the country and outside the country to intervene in the situation of South Kivu. The churches helped a lot by speaking to the internal person of most soldiers with the intention of getting them to stop causing harm to each other.

3. Mirindi, public servant, interview with the author, South Kivu, 15 June 2006

Q.: What do you think of the role of the churches in South Kivu?

A.: The churches played a crucial role in South Kivu. Archbishop Munzihirwa called the population to order all the time. The Mobutu regime was characterized by corruption, bribery, tribalism and other sorts of misconduct in the public services. People from certain tribes were given preference not on the basis of their competence but because they belonged to a certain tribal group and only the churches [were] addressing those issues. It is important to mention that among the clergy there might be some who were not really good for the people because they were involved in the conflict. The churches are giving people hope. The churches contributed tremendously in many ways to assist the population of South Kivu.

Q.: What do you think of the contribution of churches toward peacebuilding?

A.: The churches played significant role in relation to peace in South Kivu. I would say that they helped a lot. Firstly, with the Christian message of forgiveness; this put in the necessary frame of mind to live together peacefully. Secondly, with their initiatives such as conferences and seminars organized around the problems that are affecting the province had a considerable impact. Thirdly, their involvement in the run-up to the elections, in the elections themselves, and in the post-election period was crucial for the stability of the region.

Q: What do you think about the political situation and the insecurity in relation with the church?

A.: I think churches have tried well enough and the political situation will improve in time. That's how I see it.

4. Kabegos Interview with the author, Durban, 15 November 2007

Q: What do you think of the role of churches in South Kivu?

A.: I recall that the archbishop spoke to people on the radio and in churches and they drew the attention of members of the congregation to the fact that the government failed the population, and the church was the only voice the population listened to.

The churches made the local population see that the elections will put the right person[s] in power although the other provinces did not see it that way. Additionally, the fact that the Archbishop of Bukavu encouraged the population to vote shows that the Catholic churches supported the democratic process. In the preparation for the elections, the ECC took the

initiative of conducting seminars and ran other initiatives with intention of contributing positively to the situation. I see this as an effort from the church to contribute positively.

Q.: What do you think of the culture of people in South Kivu and the kind of message that the churches promotes?

A.: The churches influenced a good portion of the population toward being tolerant and understanding. Firstly, due to the fact that good number of the population is religious in South Kivu. Whatever teaching the people get from their churches, in some way has an influence on the way they live their life. In my view, many of the South Kivu population are tolerant because of the churches. Sometime it seems as if the people have even become indifferent about fighting for their human right and dignity because of Christianity. It is noteworthy that the attitude of communities in South Kivu changed rapidly toward other communities they were in conflict with because of the messages in their congregations in many instances.

The people were encouraged by the archbishop's initiatives and emulated his approach to resolve conflicts. The case cited above was not applicable in all the regions, since other areas were affected by different factors and had perceptions about church leaders.

Q.: What about churches and the economical situation of the population of South Kivu?

A.: Well, without the churches the situation could have been worse. Many of institutions that are still functioning well are the ones that are managed by religious institutions. They play an essential role in our communities by the fact that they raise funds from foreign partners to invest in the community projects. However in some instances you could experience some politics or tribalism in the way they distribute their resources. But either way it helps the population. Another thing one could mention is that the churches comfort and give strength to the population.

5. Faustin, Interviewed by Michel, Mpanzi, 2006

Q: What do you think of the role of churches and the situation of South Kivu?

A.: I am from the protestant church; according to me, the churches have played a significant role in publicising the constitutional project to prepare the population for the referendum and

the eventual democratic elections. This is one of the crucial elements the churches have contributed towards making the country peaceful and democratic.

Q: What do you think about the churches and insecurity in the South Kivu?

A.: The churches play a considerable role in a sense that they build people's faith in time of fear and war. The churches' message also plays a considerable role amongst the fighters, calling on them to lay down their weapons and go about solving the problem peacefully. In the time of Archbishop Munzihirwa for example, he appealed to people on the radio not to go out because of the shooting, and a lot of people took heed. So certainly the churches had an influence. On the other hand there have been allegations that some of the priests were involved in the AFDL war which was mainly supported by foreign countries.

Q.: Do you think churches have done as well as they should to improve the situation?

A.: In my view in most cases the churches did what they could. However it is apparent that the Catholic Church particularly has been very influential in this process because of the number of highly trained clergy as compared to their protestant counterparts. Generally all the churches have played a considerable role by denouncing all sorts of abuses of power by various political groups, to human rights organisations such as Héritiers de la Justice and Commission Justice et Paix. We definitely need churches and trained leaders who can contribute to the development of the region. South Kivu does not need religious leaders who are only looking out for offerings from the congregation because in some instances this is what is happening.

Q: Where do you see the situation of South Kivu going?

A.: It is very hard to say because it is evident things are not improving as fast they should for us to live a better life. However, I hope that sometime things will get better. There are so many countries that are interested in this country – and more particularly this region – because of its natural resources. It is unfortunate because many people in the province are corruptible and cannot stand firm to improve the situation of their population. Despite the contribution of various institutions progress is coming slowing and this is mainly linked to the fact that the people are not prepared to stand strong and make a difference.

6. Ade, interviewed by the author, Durban, 15 May 2007

Q: How would you describe the intervention of churches in situation of South Kivu?

A.: According to me [originally from Kadutu in South Kivu], churches became centres of practical democratic education from where the South Kivu population learned most of the things concerning the elections. I was inspired to participate in the elections because of the sermons I was listening to in our parish of Kadutu.

The churches in Bukavu played a significant role preparing the population about making reasonable electoral choices. Looking at the situation of South Kivu, there is a possibility that some churches' political activities reflected their own partisanship in some of the political conflicts.

Q.: What would you recommend to churches leaders in South Kivu?

A.: I would recommend to churches in South Kivu to continue with their mission of serving the people. We will always admire them for their determination when they did put their lives at risk for the sake of their people. We will always remember all the true servants of the people who served the population of South Kivu.

Q: What do you think of the churches position in relation with the political situation of South Kivu?

A.: The churches were deeply involved in politics. Even before the elections it very often appeared that sometimes the churches leaders support the political party that is close to their own ethnic groups or their interests. Looking at the situation of South Kivu in past years it is obvious that the churches tried by all means to make a positive impact in reconstructing the general wellbeing of South Kivu after the destruction wrought by heartless politicians. Unfortunately it seems that, despite the fact that the churches often urge their members to change their behaviour, some of the individuals driven by selfish interest use all means to continue causing misery to the people. I would not like to say more.

7. Papy Maheshe, interviewed by the author, Bukavu, 14 June 2006

Q: What do you think of the role of churches in South Kivu?

A.: I recall that the schools and universities that were still well managed and operational during this period are the ones managed by faith-based organizations. I can say that in this province the churches play a crucial role. Universities, schools and hospitals are some of the

most important institutions, that our people cannot live without. Today in many instances the religious organisations are the institutions that create a possible future for youth. The rest, I really don't know how I could describe the role of the churches.

Q: What do you think of churches and peace in South Kivu?

A.: The churches are amazing institutions that are making a difference in this troubled province. In 2001, there was a conference that was organised by church leaders with the intention of stabilising the province. The conference united people from various ranks of the society. This conference and many others brought representatives from various communities together for dialogues. It is also important to mention that in most communities it did not matter where one came from; the important thing was that they were participating.

8. Anonymous, church clerk, interviewed by the author, South Kivu, 20 June 2006

Q.: What do you think of the role of churches?

A.: In most of these churches the pastors are on a full-time basis and get their income from their congregations that are already living in severe poverty. It is exploitation of the population. I work for this church but I am not happy about the way certain things happen. It is true our priests are doing a good job of inspiring people, calling on people to be honest, but sometime they themselves do wrong. Our churches have programmes of assisting people in jails and encouraging the underprivileged, but I still think there is more that could be done.

Q: What else can you say about churches and communities?

A.: It is true the churches help to some extent, but I think they should do more. That's all I can say; maybe my friend could comment more. In some cases the church leaders raise funds from sponsors in foreign countries using the poor circumstances of the population to get funds that are not properly utilised in many cases. When they [the church leaders] get funding they forget their congregation's needs but focus on themselves.

Q: What do you think about the churches relation with political situation?

A: Our church is good when it comes to dealing with the political situation of this province. We have good church leaders, who have been writing letters and speaking on radio stations calling people not to participate in violence. They also openly criticised the wrongdoings of

regimes in place, be it the government or rebel movements. In case you don't know, Archbishop Kataliko was chased away from this town, Bukavu. His sermons were really inspiring to the local population and also denounced acts of abuse by the rebels. I cannot say any more.

9. Fomeka , interviewed by Kilosho, Uvira, 12 September 2007

Q: What do you think of the situation of South Kivu and churches?

A.: I have a lot respect of the church leaders for their contribution in this province. The churches have been dynamic in condemning injustice, abuse of power and all sort of wrongdoing. However despite the fact I am not a Christian, I am aware of the way some of the churches are practicing tribalism, which contributed to the rise in the number of churches in the region. Pastors or priests were giving favours to people of their ethnic groups first, instead equitably sharing in the society where the church is located when they get funding or have the opportunities, but they choose to be selective. This is one of the major problems affecting the churches.

Q: What do you think of the churches and peace?

A.: About the churches and peace, one thing I have observed is that all the religious leaders love their country in general. The religious leaders from various organisations criticized bad governance in the days of the RCD and even before then, before they were trying to get power by violence. The religious groups in this province do not promote the culture of violence. Actually if there were no religious groups to keep people moral, in order to maintain peace, there could have been a serious humanitarian crisis. A good example is when the Catholic Archbishop was driven out of Bukavu, almost all the religious groups expressed their disapproval, irrespective of the religious group they belonged to. Archbishops Kataliko and Munzihirwa will always be remembered by the people of Bukavu for their resistance. That's what I have seen.

10. Alain, a business man from DR Congo in South Kivu, Interviewed by the author, Durban, 15 May 2007

Q: How do you see that situation of South Kivu and the contribution of churches?

A.: The church has worked tremendously for the South Kivu population in almost all aspects of life. Even my friend says, “The Churches spoke for our problems to the international community. Without the churches it could have been even worse for the people of the Eastern Congo”. I cannot comment much but I know that the churches are extremely important for our society.

11. Thierry, interviewed by the author, Durban, 15 June 2007

Q: what do you think the of the churches contribution to situation of DRC?

A.: The Churches spoke for our problems to the international community. If the churches had not been there it could have been much worse for the people of the Eastern Congo. Because of the churches, people are still living in this province. I hope that in the future things will be better. The churches invest in educational institutions, hospitals and many other institutions of that nature.

Q: How do you think the churches could contribute toward rebuilding the community relations after the war in South Kivu?

A.: They play crucial role criticizing injustice and fighting all the wrongdoing on the side of the Government and the regional rebel movement, but things should not stop there. The churches are in a position to gain the trust of almost all the communities – the Bashi, Barega, Bazibaziba, Banyanga, Bafuleru, even the Banyamulenge and other ethnic groups in the region. This is why churches could do even more to influence the people of South Kivu to live peacefully. The politicians, soldiers, fighters, and people from various professions, all of them are from a particular religion; this is the reason why it is extremely important for leaders of all the religious groups to be united and work towards building a better and safe society through their teachings.

Q.: What do you think of the political situation of South Kivu and what could churches do to improve the situation?

A.: They have done well so far by calling for conferences, symposiums and dialogues. I think that already created a platform for a peaceful political transition. Churches and all the other religious organizations should not just focus on spiritual matters but must also look at issues that are affecting their community life, be it poverty, crime, insecurity, health problems, and more particularly the political situation, because that is fundamental. The problems of South

Kivu are linked to so many other issues but what is more important is for the population to be educated. If they are well educated, they will be less vulnerable to outside influences.

Q.: Can you see the situation changing soon? Tell me more about your answer

A.: It is difficult to say because so many things have happened in this country, but hopefully this time it is going to be different. The only thing the churches can do is to make sure that they make people conscious of the situation they are going through and understand that their future is in their own hands. Then the people will be able to make the right decisions. However, either way, people from Rwanda, Congo, Burundi have to understand that peace is essential for long-term development of the Great Lakes region. Thank you.

12. Doctor Mukwege, Director of Panzi Hospital, 15 June 2006

Q: How would describe the situation of South Kivu?

A.: I am a medical doctor, director of the Panzi referral hospital. We have received a significant number of rape victims who are being treated at Panzi hospital on a daily basis as a result of the use of sexual violence as a weapon by the perpetrators of acts of violence. On a daily basis, women – victims of rape by rebels, soldiers and uncontrolled armed groups – walk kilometers from villages to reach the Panzi referral hospital in Bukavu in order to receive medical attention. The situation is very critical in this province. There are so many issues that are affecting South Kivu region.

Q.: What do you think of the contribution of churches toward rebuilding communities' relations?

A.: Well the churches are playing a key role in this country, especially in the health sector. For example, churches created special units in their hospitals to attend to the victims of sexual violence and to address health problems that affected people in different areas, especially in the rural areas.

Q.: In your view how can religious groups participate in reconstructing the situation of South Kivu?

A.: Church leaders must continue playing their role in calling for reconciliation, nonviolent conflict resolution, and assisting with community projects. The churches are also playing a good role by encouraging their members to have faith and trust in their country despite the misery.

Comments on the methodology

These are sample of some of the interviews conducted during the research. There were several other interviews which it was not appropriate to reproduce due to the fact that some of the interviewees were not comfortable about their statements being published. For ethical reasons, I avoided using the respondents' real names in some cases. These interviews in most cases were conducted in an informal way to allow the participants to respond freely. In many instances the participants were not prepared to have their interviews recorded electronically. Most of the interviews were conducted in French, and then translated by the researcher.