

# Working Paper

## International and Local Actors in Peacebuilding: Why Don't They Cooperate?

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## Imprint

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## List of Acronyms

CAS	Civil Affairs Section
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ILP	Initiatives Locales de Paix
Monusco	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPM	Noyaux Pacifistes des Mamans
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RHA	Réseau Haki Na Amani
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

# Abstract

This working paper<sup>1</sup> assesses the interaction between local and international peacebuilding actors. Previous research has usually either focused on the international or local side of this interaction. The authors who focus on the international side often inherently define peacebuilding as being conducted by international actors. Thereby, they do not consider local peacebuilding actors as distinct units of analysis. If local peacebuilding actors are considered as subjects in their own right, the analysis of interaction between them and international peacebuilding actors is often reduced to an assessment of how the latter can support the former. Although the introduction of concepts such as local ownership or hybridity have led to a stronger focus on the interaction between the local and international level, they often oppose the international ‘liberal peace’ to local actors in general, subsuming under the category ‘local’ a whole array of different actors ranging from local communities to local peacebuilding actors, national elites and governmental actors. Virtually the only publications that have provided insights on how local and international peacebuilding actors interact are policy-related reports. They often explain the lack of cooperation as due to a power asymmetry based on the unequal resources of local and international peacebuilding actors. Based on the case study of the northeastern district of Ituri in the Democratic Republic of Congo, this working paper seeks to provide an alternative explanation, focusing on the perceptions that each set of actors has of resources, capacities and legitimacy. This allows insights for a more balanced and ultimately more relevant approach for both, international and local peacebuilding actors.

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<sup>1</sup> This working paper is based on research for a doctoral thesis on the interaction between local and international peacebuilding actors in Ituri, Democratic Republic of Congo from 1999 to 2012. It was supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation, the *Freie Akademische Gesellschaft Basel* and *swisspeace*. Related publications include Hellmüller, S. and Santschi, M. (eds.) (2013). *Is Local Beautiful? Peacebuilding between International Interventions and Locally Led Initiatives*. Heidelberg: Springer Verlag; Hellmüller, S. (2013). *The Power of Perceptions: Localizing International Peacebuilding Approaches*. *International Peacekeeping*, 20(2), 219-32; Hellmüller, S. (2012). *The Ambiguities of Local Ownership: Evidence from the Democratic Republic of Congo*. *African Security*, 5(3-4), 236-54.

# Introduction

It has become a truism that local and international forces need to be joined in order to build sustainable peace. As a Congolese respondent stated in an interview I conducted in Ituri,

*“each actor has a place, so we need to build together. There is not one person who can have the place by him- or herself, just like there is not one person who knows the reality alone, like there is not one person who has the solution alone. The solution always has to be found together, to be built together, to be engaged together, and to be developed together”.*<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, several authors have provided insights into the interaction between the local and the international level in peacebuilding. Thereby, they have, however, implicitly tended to focus either on the international or the local side.

The authors who have focused on international aspects of this interaction, often inherently define peacebuilding as being conducted by international actors (Barnett et al., 2007: 36; Donais, 2012: 31). As Call and Cook (2003: 238) state, peacebuilding literature often takes for granted their focus on international actors as the latter are assumed to have the lead in addressing conflict-affected contexts. Pearce (1997: 451) shows how external peacebuilding agencies tend to “focus the debate on their interventions (for instance, what they can do to articulate relief and development, what they can do to prevent conflict and build peace), and much less on the dynamic of local capacities and how they can shape the future prospects for peace-building”. Thereby, local peacebuilding actors are not taken as distinct units of analysis in research (Alger, 2007). Indeed, in current scholarly approaches to understanding peacebuilding, agency is often seen as lying nearly exclusively with international actors. This does not mean that these contributions do not talk about local aspects or even conduct their research in order to improve international – local interactions, but they often portray local actors as the ‘object’ of peacebuilding, but seldom as the ‘subject’ and actors in their own right (Mac Ginty, 2011c: 31; Donais, 2012).

The authors who have focused mainly on local aspects of the interaction between the international and the local side, usually concentrate on local civil society in general and its role in peacebuilding (e.g. Pouligny, 2005; Paffenholz, 2010; Kanol, 2010). Such authors have assessed different local peace initiatives and have shown that they can make a positive difference for peace (e.g. Tongeren, 1999; Prendergast and Plumb, 2002; Call and Cook, 2003: 243-4; Tongeren, 2005; Haider, 2009). However, they often do not provide an in-depth analysis of how these different local efforts interact with and link up to international peacebuilding programs. If they do, it is often limited to reflections on how international peacebuilding actors can better support such local initiatives and less how these local actors could contribute to improving international peacebuilding programs (Hoksbergen, 2005; van Leeuwen, 2009; Donais, 2012: 139-53). For instance, research often turns more around how international peacebuilding actors can strengthen the capacities of local

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<sup>2</sup> Interview #106 with national elite actor, Kinshasa, 2012.

peacebuilding actors rather than in what ways the latter can also improve international programs by making them locally more relevant.

While some authors provide insights into interactional elements, these are, however, either on the interaction exclusively amongst international actors or the interaction between international peacebuilding actors on the one hand and local actors in general on the other hand. With regard to the former, they inquire as to how different international actors, i.e. United Nations (UN) agencies, UN peacekeeping missions and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), coordinate their activities amongst each other and not how they interact with local peacebuilding actors (e.g. Ricigliano, 2003; Lipson, 2005; Herrhausen, 2007; Cooley and Ron, 2002; Campbell and Hartnett, 2005). Concerning the latter, some authors have addressed the interaction between the local and the international level, but none has focused specifically on peacebuilding actors on both sides. Barnett and Zürcher (2009), for instance, provide a framework in which they assess the interaction between international peacebuilding actors and local elites (at the national and subnational level). While highly useful as a framework of analysis, this implicitly defines peacebuilding again as mainly being conducted by international actors. Research based on the concepts of local ownership and hybridity has also focused on the interaction between the local and the international level (Reich, 2006; Mac Ginty, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d; Richmond, 2012; Richmond and Mitchell, 2012; Donais, 2012), but often oppose the 'liberal peace'<sup>3</sup> on the international side to 'local actors' more generally.

Virtually the only publications focusing directly on the interaction between local and international peacebuilding actors are policy related research pieces (Anderson and Olson, 2003: 35-45; McGuinness, 2012). Thus, while a better cooperation between local and international actors in peacebuilding is often portrayed as necessary but to date still insufficient, empirical data to underline the necessity as well as reasons for this insufficiency are rarely given. In this working paper, I seek to address this gap by not taking either the international peacebuilding intervention or local civil society actors as the main object of inquiry, but by assessing the interaction between the different local and international actors engaged in peacebuilding. I assess this interaction from a multitude of local and international perspectives, rather than just the international one. For this purpose, I have chosen a localized case study of Ituri, a district in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). I analyzed the different perceptions of local and international peacebuilding actors in Ituri in 135 interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) in four field visits between 2011 and 2013.<sup>4</sup>

In this working paper, I attempt to explain why the interaction between local and international peacebuilding actors is often characterized by rivalry rather than cooperation which ultimately makes both their programs less effective. Most authors attribute the lack of cooperation to power asymmetries between the two, which are based on their unequal access to funding (Anderson and Olson, 2003: 62; Van Brabant, 2010: 8; Mac Ginty,

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3 The liberal peace theory is based on the belief that "in the long term the best chance for stable peace to take root in international society will be if all its members are liberal democracies" (Bellamy and Williams, 2004: 4-5).

4 I also interviewed national staff of international peacebuilding organizations. If they talked to me in their capacity as staff of the organization, I analyzed their responses as part of the international peacebuilding actors' perspectives. If they responded to me as person having lived through the conflict in Ituri, I counted them within the respondent category of the local population. This sometimes also changed from one question to the other within one interview.

2011c). I seek to provide an alternative explanation. I argue that local and international peacebuilding actors in Ituri have complementary resources, capacities and legitimacy structures. However, rather than making use of these distinct comparative advantages, they perceive them in different – at times competitive – terms, which hampers their cooperation. Although the identification of these comparative advantages involves necessarily a generalization and does not count for every single actor, the following tendencies can be observed.<sup>5</sup>

International peacebuilding actors' comparative advantages with regard to resources are that they often have the required funding to implement large-scale projects. They are familiar with fundraising procedures, have the necessary access to donors and can thus mobilize substantial amounts of money. International peacebuilding actors are said to attract the 'big funds' which is seen as a positive aspect by local peacebuilding actors who often also at least partially benefit from it. In that sense they can implement substantive programs with a visible impact, at least in the short term. Concerning capacities, international peacebuilding actors are seen as bringing the expertise on best practices and lessons learned of how to respond to conflicts. Even though they might have gathered these experiences in other contexts, lessons can still be drawn and capacities and skills transferred – after the necessary adaptations and with the required humility. The knowledge that international peacebuilding actors provide on different aspects related to statebuilding, for instance, is often perceived as being crucially important. Finally, concerning legitimacy, international actors are often seen as valuable outsiders when impartial forces are difficult to find within the conflict context. An external intervention is usually considered necessary in the beginning in order to stabilize a region and to create the space for longer term approaches.

Local peacebuilding actors' comparative advantages concerning resources are that they are more cost-effective. They can implement projects without large bureaucratic procedures and operate from modest offices with limited logistics. Moreover, their personnel costs are often substantially lower than the ones of expatriates. Their different activities are usually implemented with very low budgets when compared to international programs. Their work is also said to have a big symbolic impact, in addition to more tangible ones. If the population realizes that some of their compatriots have started working for peace, it usually sends a stronger message than if international peacebuilding actors implement similar peacebuilding activities. Concerning capacities, local peacebuilding actors have substantive context knowledge. Local actors who are from Ituri also speak the local languages and know the cultural specificities of the conflict context. This also gives them access to remote areas where international actors are often not present due to security restrictions. Lastly, their legitimacy is based on the fact that they have lived through the conflict. This legitimacy is further enhanced because beneficiaries know that they will stay in the area even if international

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5 These tendencies are mainly derived from interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and participant observations. They were also checked against the literature (see for instance Anderson and Olson, 2003; Hansen, 2008; Autesserre, 2014).



peacebuilding actors withdraw. This creates trust in their approach as they themselves have to live with the consequences of their own programs.

This short overview of comparative advantages shows that local and international peacebuilding actors have complementary resources, capacities and legitimacy structures. To be sure, these need to be assessed in every context anew, but the overview presented above points to the argument that each set of actors has its place. As one local interlocutor stated, “peace in Ituri has many fathers, everyone has contributed”.<sup>6</sup> Anderson and Olson (2003: 37) also observe that, “when they work together insiders and outsiders bring different and distinct qualities to peace partnerships”. This is, however, often not made use of. Richmond (2010: 685) notes that “both local and international offer a public transcript framed in mutually understandable language about how each may help each other, but there is a hidden transcript which betrays a lack of understanding, care or agreement, and antagonistic relations of domination and resistance”. This is also visible on the ground where “the relationship between outsiders and insiders in peacebuilding contexts is typically marked more by conflict than by collaboration” (Donais, 2012: 34, 74). Thus, the interaction between local and international peacebuilding actors is often characterized by rivalry, rather than cooperation and neither actor benefits from the above mentioned comparative advantages. While they are aware of these complementary assets, in practice they often act more according to competitive perceptions of their own and each other’s resources, capacities and legitimacy. In what follows, I assess these different perceptions as an explanation for their hampered cooperation.

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<sup>6</sup> Interview #5 with local peacebuilding actor, Bunia, 2011.

# The Assessment of Resources

## 1.1 Donor Dependency

One image held by international peacebuilding actors is that local peacebuilding actors have developed an attitude of expectations towards international funds. They are accused of ‘mushrooming’ after a violent conflict, and of only being created because donor money has become available (Veit, 2010: 211 (in Ituri); Schwarz, 2004: 10; Pouligny, 2005; Reich, 2006). This accusation of mushrooming is linked to the image that local peacebuilding organizations are highly donor dependent. Therefore, so the perception goes, they react to the availability of funds, rather than local needs and also stop their activities as soon as donor money finishes. Nagelhus Schia and Karlsrud (2012: 21) write that local peacebuilding actors are often perceived as having been set up merely to respond to funding. This was also echoed in interviews with international organizations in Ituri. As one respondent said “it is more of a solution to unemployment, a need for money. Money circulates, and one creates an organization”.<sup>7</sup> This also implies that many international peacebuilding actors, especially UN agencies, lament a perception of them as mere channels of funding. As one UN agency representative said “for [local peacebuilding actors], everything always turns around finances”.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, local organizations are accused of disappearing as soon as donor money finishes. As was observed by one interlocutor, “there are organizations that open today and close tomorrow according to the funds available”.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the view is that as Carl (2003: 3) states, “they may spring up overnight in response to donor agendas and outsiders’ institutional needs, and vanish just as quickly”.

Based on that, international actors say that the cooperation with local peacebuilding actors sometimes poses problems because the latter always expect funding from international actors. This has also influenced how they assess the power balance between themselves and local actors. This power relationship is often evaluated according to who brings the finances. Indeed, the financial resources that international actors put into conflict contexts are substantial and allow for example for the provision of social services, the holding of elections, the reform of different state sectors, or the conduct of different trainings and reintegration programs for ex-combatants. The fact that international actors hold the ‘purse strings’ and local actors want to receive the money is said to give the former substantial power (Van Brabant, 2010: 8; Mac Ginty, 2011c: 84; Donais, 2012: 71).

However, from a local peacebuilding actor’s perspective, these arguments are not perceived in the same way. For most of them, the term ‘mushrooming’ refers more to the deployment of international organizations than to the creation of local peacebuilding organizations. The increase in numbers of local peacebuilding organizations is in their view negligible when compared to the arrival of the high numbers of international NGOs and UN agencies in Ituri. As stated by Pouligny (2006: 116), in Bunia, the district capital of Ituri, “the impressive deployment is made in zones that resemble no man’s land rather than towns, the shock produced by the encounter is surreal, even to a visitor used to such situations” (see also Zahar, 2012: 81). This impression

<sup>7</sup> Interview #18 with UN representative (national staff), Bunia, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Interview #46 with UN representative (international staff), Bunia, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Interview #44 with UN representative (international staff), Bunia, 2012.

of ‘mushrooming’ is not only linked to numbers, but also to the way in which space is occupied. The most central places in Bunia are dominated by international actors with the headquarters and recreation house of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission (Monusco) in the center of town and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UN Habitat right next to it on the main boulevard. Thus, from a local perspective, international actors have also physically ‘mushroomed’ in Bunia.

Local peacebuilding actors also have different views on the two related points about responding to availability of funds, rather than needs and the ending of programs as soon as the donor money finishes. With regard to the first, being aware of this commonly made accusation to only work for peace because it is a lucrative business, many local respondents underlined that they had already been active in peace promotion before international donors’ focus had turned towards Ituri. From a local actor’s perspective the creation of a peacebuilding organization is not caused by the availability of funds, but by needs. Thus, they say that it was a logical reallocation of resources: if you had an organization working on development, education, or undernourishment, you could not work anymore during the war, so you needed to address other issues – peacebuilding issues – first. Moreover, even if this accusation might hold for some local peacebuilding organizations, they noted that it was not so different for international actors. They allegedly also “lived from these conflicts” since they would also be unemployed without them.<sup>10</sup>

With regard to the second point, the sustainability of their presence, local peacebuilding actors stated that “internationals come with big money, but as soon as the budget finishes, the edifice crumbles which poses risks for sustainability”.<sup>11</sup> Thus, they are equally seen as heavily dependent on the availability of resources and have to leave Ituri once the funds are used. This is not only seen as a problem in itself because of the expectations created, but also leads to longer term complications as the presence of international peacebuilding organizations usually highly distorts the local economy.<sup>12</sup> As stated “the problem is that the UN is a big source of income for so many people in Bunia (wards, staff, housekeepers, etc.). So if they leave, what will happen?”<sup>13</sup> Local peacebuilding actors, in contrast, are considered to be more sustainable because they have often worked for years without substantial funding and are thus also likely to continue their activities even in times of a tighter budget. International organizations, however, according to most of the local peacebuilding actors interviewed, often quit very abruptly and are said to “leave the population waiting”.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, from a local perspective, donor dependency was equally an issue for international peacebuilding actors. Indeed, the latter also need to find a compromise to respect what donors see as a priority. Although international organization representatives interviewed underlined that they had some flexibility to adapt their programs to the situation analysis they conduct, they often saw donors as not flexible enough to align the budget to eventualities in the field.

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10 Interview #36 with local peacebuilding actor, Nyankunde, 2012; also FGD #3 with professor and local peacebuilding actor, Bunia, 2011.

11 FGD #1 with local peacebuilding actors, Bunia, 2011.

12 Interviews and FGDs with local peacebuilding actors, Ituri district, 2011-2013.

13 FGD #53 with UN representatives (international staff), Bunia, 2012.

14 Interview #37 with district authority, Bunia, 2012.

## 1.2 Access to Resources

Not only donor dependency, but also access to resources is perceived in different terms from local or international perspectives. Local peacebuilding organizations work with less financial resources than international ones. The most commonly known local peacebuilding actors in Ituri in 2010 had an annual budget of between US\$ 200'000 and US\$ 400'000 (USAID, 2011) while most international NGOs started with a minimum budget of US\$ 1 million. At the time of writing, international actors, namely UN agencies, manage the most important financial contributions to peacebuilding in the district of Ituri. UNDP, for instance, administers the Pooled Fund, a Common Humanitarian Fund for the DRC. Even though it was created in response to the Humanitarian Action Plan, its programs also encompass peacebuilding activities. It had a budget of US\$ 107.2 million for the DRC in 2011 which represented 24% of all humanitarian projects financed in Ituri (OCHA/UNDP, 2011).

Two factors make access to funding difficult from a local peacebuilding actor's perspective. First is the fact that donors and UN agencies usually request rather cumbersome procurement procedures and in-depth capacity assessments of local peacebuilding actors for which the latter often do not have the resources to invest in (Faubert, 2006: 4, 24; Samset and Madore, 2006: 17). For instance, in the UNDP 'Peacebuilding and Community Development Project' implemented between 2003 and 2006, local peacebuilding organizations could propose micro-projects. However, these projects needed to be approved at the level of Kinshasa and financial management and disbursement was equally centralized to Kinshasa (Samset and Madore, 2006: 13). This led to frequent delays and long procedures. As summarized by Faubert (2006: 31), "UNDP is perceived as a slow, well-entrenched bureaucracy where internal processes take precedence over operational effectiveness [with] a long lead-time for project approval, delays in transferring funds and unrealistic demands for detailed financial justifications". Most international organizations also have budgetary limits for the contracts they can conclude with local organizations. UNDP, for instance, has discretionary authority for projects of up to US\$ 30'000 (Faubert, 2006: 34). The same limits are imposed on the Quick Impact Projects that can potentially be given to local organizations by the Monusco civil affairs section (CAS) which are limited to US\$ 25'000. This constrains the types of projects that can be subcontracted to local peacebuilding actors.

Moreover, in order to be eligible for Pooled Fund money for instance, local peacebuilding organizations have to "complete an in-depth capacity assessment" (OCHA/UNDP, 2011: 13). This assessment includes a review of their institutional, financial, administrative and technical capacities. Once an organization has been judged eligible, it also undergoes a risk assessment in order to reveal its institutional, administrative and financial weaknesses. The generated risk factor (low, moderate, significant, high) determines the frequency of reports required from the organization and monitoring visits by evaluators. Local NGOs are considered a higher risk than international ones:

in the eligibility assessment of 2011, 44 out of 94 local NGOs were considered to be high risk (46%) while only 5 out of 63 international ones were judged to be high risk (7%) (OCHA/UNDP, 2011: 13). Local peacebuilding actors often see these procurement and capacity assessment processes as burdensome and the amount received rather small for a more substantial engagement. They cannot always allow themselves to invest time (and money) in these processes as they most often work on a shoestring and sometimes do not even have enough funding to take care of their core activities.

The second factor which makes access to funding difficult from a local peacebuilding actor's perspective is the fact that international funds disbursed by UN agencies are often channeled through international NGOs who then sub-contract local peacebuilding actors instead of arriving directly with the latter (Hoksbergen, 2005; Pouligny, 2006: 72). With UN agencies in Ituri, for instance, the formula was most often that an international NGO would act as an "umbrella agency for smaller national and local NGOs and groups" (Faubert, 2006: 27).<sup>15</sup> This was criticized by local peacebuilding actors as the amount of funding with which they eventually had to work was often very small. They said that at every step, money got lost in transaction costs and thus not a lot of funds actually reached the communities in the end.

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs implemented in Ituri provide a valuable example of this. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for instance worked with two American profit organizations who subcontracted international NGOs. The latter then also subcontracted local organizations. It is clear that this not only made the process more complex, but also that a lot of money was wasted. As stated by one observer, "the worst period was the period of DDR when a shit load of money came in and overheads were shocking. In the end, what the small ex-combatant received was peanuts compared with what the whole chain above him received".<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Monusco CAS was also criticized for having a lot of funds, "but instead of giving it to local organizations that are credible, they prefer to work with the money themselves".<sup>17</sup> Thus, local peacebuilding actors are often at the end of the 'aid supply chain' which leads to frustrations and a request for the money to be channeled through them in more direct donor relations.

International actors often justify the unequal access to donor money by accusing local peacebuilding organizations of evading funds. As one interviewee stated, "corruption is an accepted evil in society"<sup>18</sup> or even "corruption is in the physiology of people here".<sup>19</sup> However, local peacebuilding actors – while acknowledging the 'evil' of corruption in many organizations – state that this is not only the case for local organizations, but also international ones. In this regard, they most often refer to so-called 'return operations'. These denote operations in which the subcontracted local peacebuilding organization signs a confirmation that they have received the full amount as foreseen in the budget while they in fact had to give part of the amount back to the international organization funding them. The money they return is then

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15 Interview #51 with UN representative (international staff), Bunia, 2012.

16 Interview #112 with external expert, phone, 2013.

17 Interview #113 with local peacebuilding actor, Bunia, 2013.

18 Interview #112 with external expert, phone, 2013.

19 Informal discussion #131 with international organization representative (international staff), Bunia, 2013.

misappropriated. As an example: “we execute a project in partnership with [an international actor] with US\$ 10’000. I have to tell them that I executed it with US\$ 10’000 even if in reality I had to return US\$ 4’000 and had to execute the project with US\$ 6’000”.<sup>20</sup> While only a handful of local peacebuilding actors referred to this phenomenon in interviews, when asking around most local organization representatives said that they were familiar with it.

More generally, international actors are said to have much higher costs for the same activities. From a local viewpoint, international actors spend for instance too much money on things other than the projects themselves. Visibility signs provide an example. Such placards are widespread over the district and for almost every project there is a sign indicating which international organization has implemented it. This is seen as necessary from an international point of view to show their donors what they have achieved. However, from a local point of view, this is often seen as a waste of money. As was stated with regard to a humanitarian project for instance, “for one water source there are maybe ten signposts each costing 300 dollars [...]. You can see how much this visibility costs, so in the end what is important is not the service done to the beneficiary, but to see who did it”.<sup>21</sup> This was also observed by Pouligny (2006: 147) who stated that “local [...] actors criticize the [UN] missions for being more concerned with their own publicity and the showcase that is presented than in communicating with the country’s population” (see also Autesserre, 2014: 230-34). As one international peacebuilding actor acknowledged, “there are organizations that work not necessarily on cooperation, but on visibility. They have to show that they are doing things”.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, international peacebuilding actors are seen as taking a long time to implement projects due to the heavy procedures.<sup>23</sup> The privileging of international actors by donors and UN agencies therefore stands against the background that both local and international actors agree on the fact that local peacebuilding actors are much more cost-effective, as they can “survive with little”.<sup>24</sup> This also confers them with a certain power which is beyond financial resources. Therefore, even though international actors usually have more funds, local actors can reach a higher number of people through local mechanisms of message propagation.<sup>25</sup> As such, while international actors measure resources mainly in financial terms, locally resources are also understood to include the ability to achieve a longer term impact.

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20 Interview #20 with local peacebuilding actor, Mahagi, 2011.

21 Interview #38 with local peacebuilding actor, Bunia, 2012.

22 Interview #11 with UN representative (international staff), Bunia, 2011.

23 Interviews and FGDs with local peacebuilding actors and UN representatives (national staff), Ituri district and Kinshasa, 2011-2013.

24 Interviews and FGDs with local peacebuilding actors and UN representatives, Ituri district, 2011-2013.

25 Interview #19 with local peacebuilding actor, Bunia, 2011.

# The Assessment of Capacities

A second reason for why the cooperation between international and local peacebuilding actors is often hampered is their assessment of capacities. The capacities of international peacebuilding actors are often valued more than the ones of local peacebuilding actors. Thus, local peacebuilding actors often complained in interviews and FGDs about the fact that they are usually portrayed as lacking capacities although they have specific context knowledge and methodologies adapted to the realities on the ground.

## 2.1 Information and Knowledge

Information is defined by the Oxford dictionary as “facts provided or learned about something or someone”. Knowledge is defined as “awareness or familiarity gained by experience of a fact or situation”.<sup>26</sup> While information is factual and thus verifiable or falsifiable, knowledge is an already verified belief. It connects different fragments of information and is thus a capacity, which is the ability to do or understand something. Local peacebuilding actors consider what they know about the social, economic and political context as knowledge and hence a capacity which international peacebuilding actors often lack. This knowledge is especially important in the realm of creating peaceful social cohabitation on which their programs are based.

In contrast, international peacebuilding actors see the thematic knowledge they have and which is to some extent transferable from one context to the other as an important capacity. Such external knowledge is often linked to principles of the ‘liberal peace’, especially with regard to how the state and civil society should be rebuilt. This knowledge is usually portrayed as being based on “non-negotiable principles that, in a sense, stand outside history and above politics” (Sending, 2009: 5). This non-negotiability is linked to the fact that many authors and practitioners see the ‘liberal peace’ as stemming from a global consensus, rather than seeing it as a consensus shared by some, but not all. External actors are hence often unwilling to renegotiate their concepts of peace and peacebuilding (see also Goetschel and Hagman, 2009: 64).

Thus, international actors present themselves as the technicians bringing expertise on specific topics. Thereby, the context knowledge of local peacebuilding actors is usually considered as information, rather than knowledge. It is seen as useful mainly to fine-tune and implement international programs, but less to define peacebuilding priorities in the first place. Therefore, international actors value their own capacities mostly for strategy-making while local knowledge is downgraded to information which is used mainly in the implementation phase. The question asked is not what peace looks like from a local perspective, but how the peace that is designed outside the country can best be implemented locally. As such, while both international and local actors agree that local peacebuilding actors are more familiar with the context, this contextual knowledge is often valued as less important than thematic knowledge. This explains why peacebuilding processes are more

<sup>26</sup> Available at <[www.oxforddictionaries.com](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com)>, last consulted 8.2.2014.

strongly influenced by outside expertise than knowledge of what works in a given setting, what already exists in this context and what people having lived through the conflict might prioritize.

This also leads to the fact that when local peacebuilding actors are invited to share their context knowledge, international actors often talk about consultations conducted under the rationale of gathering information for the implementation of the latter's programs. As a UN staff member noted, "local NGOs have the information, also for security".<sup>27</sup> Thus, local peacebuilding actors are mainly consulted when international actors are in need of information, but are not really seen as equal partners with complementary capacities. As one observer put it, "when they lack information, they come see us. Whenever there is a problem of security, they ask us".<sup>28</sup> Other interlocutors also explained that international actors only involved local organizations when they needed specific information critical to the implementation of their programs or faced security risks, but rarely to make their programs more locally relevant.<sup>29</sup> The information gathered in consultations with local peacebuilding actors is, moreover, usually not fed back. The reports that are written based on local information are rarely shared with the informants. They are sent to Kinshasa and the respective headquarters. Therefore, for most Iturians, Monusco has become a "black box, into which resources were fed (such as information), [but] exactly what happened to this information usually remained unclear" (Veit, 2010: 194). This is even more salient in the case of the many policy reports that are written and that influence future strategy-making of international peacebuilding actors.

As a consequence of the valuation of thematic, rather than context knowledge by international peacebuilding actors, local actors are seen as in need of capacity-building for acquiring the knowledge held by international actors. Thus the relationship is often portrayed as one of giver and taker, or teacher and learner. This is also demonstrated by the fact that UN agencies often request international NGOs which they sub-contract to work with local actors in order to reinforce the latter's capacities. As stated by one respondent, "international NGOs have a lot of capacities as they have worked in a lot of different countries and they can achieve 'big things', while local NGOs need a lot of capacity-building".<sup>30</sup> This view is also present in the literature. Hoksbergen (2005: 18), for instance, states "blessed with highly educated personnel with specialized degrees in important areas of development, [...] [Northern] NGOs strengthen Southern partners by imparting knowledge through workshops, classes and mentoring".

A concrete example in Ituri is provided in the realm of mediation. Different international organizations have started to train mediators on the ground. As one UN staff member stated "we need to build capacities, give them the tools to conduct mediation. We do a lot of training on the concept and mechanisms of mediation".<sup>31</sup> Thereby, local capacities in mediation which are adapted to the context are often overlooked and it is often forgotten that these actors conduct mediations on a daily basis without their capacities

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27 Interview #11 with UN representative (international staff), Bunia, 2011.

28 Interview #4 with local peacebuilding actor, Bunia, 2011.

29 Interview #5 with local peacebuilding actor, Bunia, 2011; FGD #22 with international organization representatives (national staff), Kinshasa, 2011; Interview #39 with UN representative (national staff), Bunia, 2012.

30 Interview #58 with UN representative (national staff), Bunia, 2012.

31 Interview #16 with UN representative (international staff), Bunia, 2011.



being recognized. As one local peacebuilding actor stated, “before, we did not have training in mediation, but we reconciled a lot of people, [...] but it was apparently not the right technique of mediation. This was made clear to us in a training we received in 2010 and we had to laugh as before we did not follow the right technique of mediation”.<sup>32</sup> This shows that international capacity-building often stipulates that their approach is the right one while what local peacebuilding actors did before is valued as the wrong or insufficient approach, even though it was successful.

This stronger valuation of thematic expertise is sometimes also almost seen as an insult. This is also linked to the fact that international peacebuilding organizations increasingly tend to employ very young interns and volunteers. While it might be an excellent opportunity for young people to gain experience abroad, for many local actors it is sometimes difficult to receive training by less experienced and younger persons. As stated by Pouligny (2006: 95), “local employees recall their unease at collaborating with outsiders in positions where they considered themselves underemployed, ill-treated or even humiliated because they had to receive instructions from arrogant young volunteers with neither their qualifications nor their experience”. In the end, it is not always clear what a recent graduate who might have studied conflict resolution or a similar topic knows in comparison to a 40 year old woman or man who has fought for peace throughout the conflict, but it shows again the preference for thematic over contextual knowledge. Thereby, it is obvious that this “can also be disempowering for local civil society peace activists, whose energy and initiative can be undermined by the cult of the outside expert” (Donais, 2012: 69).

As such, knowledge exchange is not portrayed as a two way road of mutual learning, but as a process with actors who benefit on one side and actors who provide on the other side. Thereby, international peacebuilding actors “assume a position of authority in knowing what needs to be done in countries they often know little about” (Sending, 2009: 8). There has, for instance, never been a seminar held *by* local peacebuilding actors *for* international actors doing capacity-building on the Iturian context. This shows again how information is taken from local actors, but capacities and knowledge are seen as the realm of international actors. This is highly significant as it not only gives the international actors authority, but it also contributes to justifying their presence in a conflict context.

## 2.2 Logistics and Management

Local peacebuilding actors see their own needs more in the realm of logistical and managerial capacity-building. With regard to logistical capacities, they often work with very basic infrastructure as they do not have substantial core funding. In most local peacebuilding organizations’ offices, even basic lighting is lacking, the rooms are very small and internet access is usually not constant. Most of the organizations do not own their office buildings and thus

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<sup>32</sup> Interview #54 with local peacebuilding actor, Bunia, 2012.

have to spend part of the project money on running costs. International actors sometimes provide logistical support. This support is, however, most often limited to what is needed to implement the specific projects they are funding (e.g. megaphones, bicycles, office material). In other cases only the activity as such is funded which makes it difficult for local peacebuilding actors to even access the zone in which the project takes place.

Moreover, logistical support for projects implemented conjointly with international actors is not always equally distributed. For instance there was one case where in a proposal to a UN agency, cars were requested for the international NGO, but motorbikes for the local peacebuilding organizations.<sup>33</sup> Such actions further widen the logistical divide between international and local actors which is already striking to begin with as on the other side, international actors are heavily dependent on high-tech logistics in order to carry out their activities “to a speed and level of efficiency required by their donor governments and funding agencies” (Smirl, 2008: 241). The differences are obvious when spending time in Bunia. Most of the 4x4 cars in the streets are those of international actors (not only peacebuilding actors, but also many humanitarian organizations). In turn, only a very limited number of local peacebuilding actors own cars and most of them usually travel by foot or motorbike.

With regard to managerial capacity-building, local peacebuilding actors acknowledge that they sometimes do not live up to the capacities of international peacebuilding organizations. The latter also provide support in this realm. UNDP for instance, in their ‘Community Empowerment and Peacebuilding Project’ in Ituri implemented from 2009 to 2012 had as a specific objective to “enhance the organizational and technical capacities of 50 selected community-based organizations and planning bodies in the target areas” (UNDP, 2008: 22). As stated, “international NGOs are expected to supply their management experience and know-how, and national NGOs will receive capacity-building through trainings and other learning opportunities” (UNDP, 2008: 30).

While appreciating such strengthening of managerial capacities, local peacebuilding actors often regret that what they are trained in is usually not where they lack most capacities. For instance, UNDP organized a capacity-training seminar of five days in 2005 with 75 local peacebuilding actors. The content was the management of micro-projects, especially the planning, implementation and general management of such projects; monitoring, evaluation and auditing; and participation of local communities in the management of the projects (Samset and Madore, 2006: 46). However, local peacebuilding actors reportedly would have wished to be trained in more ambitious topics, such as financial and human resources management or the logical framework approach (Samset and Madore, 2006: 46), rather than in what they already had knowledge in, such as community participation. In the latter, they felt they had already better capacities than international peacebuilding actors. One of the main areas in which they recognize their lack of

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<sup>33</sup> FGD #1 with local peacebuilding actors, Bunia, 2011.

capacities is fundraising and how to become more eligible for funds granted by international donors. This is, however, rarely part of such trainings as international and local actors compete for funding.

In addition to competing for funding, local and international peacebuilding organizations also compete for staff. Local peacebuilding actors state that one reason for their lack of capacities is also the fact that international organizations pay higher salaries. As Herrhausen (2007: 16) says, sometimes the “UN builds parallel structures in the countries where it operates; because of the higher profile it has and the better salaries it pays, it often depletes those structures that do exist locally”. Thus, as soon as people are trained by local peacebuilding organizations, they are reportedly enticed away by international bodies. This allegedly creates a brain drain from local to international organizations which makes it difficult for the former to build up and keep capacities.

The above shows that perceptions of what constitutes capacity, of who is in need of capacity-building and in which areas capacity building is needed, differ between local and international peacebuilding actors. While local peacebuilding actors mainly underline their knowledge of the context, international peacebuilding actors put a strong focus on thematic knowledge of peacebuilding. This means that the context knowledge of local actors is not seen as a capacity, but rather as simple information to be used to fine-tune internationally funded programs in the implementation phase. In the realm of logistics and management, where local peacebuilding organizations acknowledge being in need of capacity-building, it is often provided in an insufficient manner.

# The Assessment of Legitimacy

A third reason for the hampered cooperation between local and international actors revolves around differences in orientation for legitimacy. The legitimacy of an organization can be defined as “the generalized perception that an organization’s actions are ‘desirable, proper, or appropriate within a social system’” (Suchman cited in Walton, 2012: 19). From an international and a local standpoint, the social system within which legitimacy is evaluated differs. The social system of the local peacebuilding actors refers mainly to local communities while the social system of the international peacebuilding actors mostly refers to donors. As such, local peacebuilding actors are habitually more concerned with their inside legitimacy within communities as they themselves are part of the latter. International peacebuilding actors, in contrast, often assess legitimacy in relation to donors and with respect to outside factors, such as the ‘liberal peace’ framework and their thematic expertise.

## 3.1 Local Peacebuilding Actors’ Inside Orientation

Local peacebuilding actors mostly define legitimacy with regard to how they are perceived in the communities in which they work. As one respondent said, “local NGOs are closer to the communities and reflect their realities”.<sup>34</sup> Their context knowledge is said to help them plan and implement programs on the ground. Their legitimacy is seen as mostly deriving from their being an insider in the communities. Because they master the local languages and are usually familiar with the persons they work with, they are accepted more easily. As one local peacebuilding actor stated, “for a real peace, the person needs to know you, otherwise she or he will have reservations and will not open up”.<sup>35</sup> Because they live in the communities and hence are permanently on the ground, their activities are also seen as more sustainable. As one local peacebuilding actor stated,

*“international actors work according to what they have heard, but we work according to what we have seen and lived through. This is completely different. We have more interest in that the conflict does not break out again, in order to not return to the past. Therefore, we know better how to identify activities that can prevent such things”.*<sup>36</sup>

In sum, they are largely perceived as more sustainable actors on the local level and enjoy high social legitimacy (USAID, 2011: 243). However, this local legitimacy that local peacebuilding actors focus on is not automatic. Two factors need to be taken into account. First, the fact that their insider nature also submits them to local social cleavages and second, that there are several levels of localization. With regard to the first, the war in Ituri has fundamentally polarized society according to ethnicity. Therefore, local organizations either enjoy legitimacy in one or the other ethnic community depending on the background of their staff. This reminds us that such local peacebuilding actors “can also reflect social dynamics and reinforce pre-existing cultural or social divisions, e.g. the dominance of one particular ethnic group” (Haider, 2009: 8). Thus, the legitimacy of local actors was, especially in the immediate

<sup>34</sup> Interview #93 with UN representative (national staff), Bunia, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> FGD #1 with local peacebuilding actors, Bunia, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> FGD #1 with local peacebuilding actors, Bunia, 2011.

aftermath of the war, often impaired depending on the composition of their staff. Pertaining to the second factor, legitimacy is conferred at an even more nuanced level of locality than ordinary schemes of ‘international versus local’ allow for. This means that local peacebuilding actors with their offices in Bunia, for instance, are also sometimes seen as outsiders in villages in Ituri even though it is the same district. The conferral of legitimacy is thus highly localized. While local peacebuilding actors are not to the same degree outsiders as international actors, they are still to some extent outsiders and also have to establish their legitimacy (see Anderson and Olson, 2003: 36). The difference with international actors is that local peacebuilding actors usually know better how to establish their legitimacy and work with the communities in order to build it.

Three aspects illustrate how local peacebuilding actors purposefully work to overcome these challenges in order to (re-)establish their local legitimacy. First, working in networks helped them to overcome the problem of legitimacy in an ethnically divided society. Even the city of Bunia was divided according to ethnicity, with one ethnic group on the one side and the other ethnic group on the other side. Thus, while local peacebuilding organizations sometimes still had mixed staff, it was very difficult as anyone ‘working with the enemy’ was seen as a traitor. As such, every local organization also became associated with the one or the other side depending on which ethnic group dominated within their staff. For this reason, local peacebuilding organizations could not work by themselves anymore because they would only have had access to one side. Therefore, they established a network of different actors joining forces for peace. This network, called the *Réseau Haki Na Amani* (RHA)<sup>37</sup> is mostly composed of local NGOs and church groups. This allowed them to be the first example for inter-ethnic reconciliation and gave them access to zones where they could not have gone alone.

Second, they underline that they always start with the communities. As they say “if you don’t involve the communities you will always have gaps in the results”.<sup>38</sup> Their activities are based on needs assessments and they have specific structures for gathering information from local communities and tailoring their programs in response. They, for instance, always associate the local chiefs and identify beneficiaries together with them. Their context knowledge also helps them to identify other – less official – community leaders to work with. For outsiders, it is often difficult to recognize such community leaders and they hence usually work with the first person presenting him- or herself as such. Local peacebuilding actors also sensitize communities before implementing programs. This, as they explain, is based on the fact that local communities have to understand the programs and see the benefits in order to engage. How important this is illustrates the fact that in the beginning of the international presence in Ituri, communities sometimes had difficulties to understand that something was purely ‘for them’ with no strings attached.<sup>39</sup> They were therefore quite suspicious and often did not continue the activities once international peacebuilding actors had left. For the latter, however, it seemed almost unthinkable that people would not

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37 The name is in Swahili and means Network Justice and Peace.

38 FGD #1 with local peacebuilding actors, Bunia, 2011.

39 FGD #1 with local peacebuilding actors, Bunia, 2011; Interview #21 with local peacebuilding actor, Mahagi, 2011; Interview #36 with local peacebuilding actor, Nyankunde, 2012.

‘appreciate’ their assistance and thus they did not invest a lot in explaining the rationale of the programs and follow-up procedures. However, this would have been necessary in order to ensure sustainability.

Finally, local peacebuilding actors, aware of the highly localized conferral of legitimacy, also often created local infrastructures for peacebuilding. As one member of a local peacebuilding organization stated “there can be a global strategy for peace, but every region has felt the crisis in a different manner so the strategy needs to be adapted case by case”.<sup>40</sup> The clearest indications of this localization are the local structures that the RHA has created. They have assembled 127 *Initiatives Locales de Paix* (ILP) and 93 *Noyaux Pacifistes des Mamans* (NPM) in different villages to involve communities. These structures are trained and engage in local conflict resolution. For instance, if two people are in conflict, the local chief invites the two parties and often asks a member of the ILP to support him. The ILPs and NPMs also facilitate the diffusion of messages which is highly important in a context where travelling is not always feasible.

In sum, these approaches speak directly to the communities and thus enjoy legitimacy as they are based on the intimate local understandings of peacebuilding. The RHA is the most telling example. The RHA and its ILP and NPM are widely known in society and with local chiefs. When the conflict was still ongoing, the RHA members “were the first in Bunia to go out which was remarkable and they were very much appreciated”.<sup>41</sup> Many of the communities expressed “this is the first time that people come; it is the first time that we get these kinds of meetings”.<sup>42</sup> Thus, as stated above, the RHA has clearly established itself in the district as one of the main actors working for peaceful social cohabitation. Other organizations are equally well received, but work on smaller scales and are thus not known throughout the district.

Thus, local peacebuilding actors mainly focus on establishing their local legitimacy. Even though this local legitimacy is not automatic, they have managed to widely build it. At the same time, local peacebuilding actors also increasingly try to have more direct access to donor money as stated above. Therefore, they often conduct a balancing act between keeping their legitimacy in local communities while at the same time satisfying the demands of their international partners or donors.

### 3.2 International Peacebuilding Actors’ Outside Orientation

International actors, in turn, usually refer to outside sources when legitimizing their presence. These sources are threefold: reference is often made to UN Security Council resolutions which give an intervention its legality under international law, to an agreement between the host government and the intervening organization which respects the principle of consent or to the

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40 FGD #1 with local peacebuilding actors, Bunia, 2011.

41 Interview #112 with external expert, phone, 2013.

42 Interview #112 with external expert, phone, 2013.

values of the 'liberal peace' (Wiharta, 2009: 96, 98; see also Campbell, 2011: 99). If reference to local aspects is made, it is with regard to the behavior of international personnel on the ground but in general, the expatriate officials are more concerned with their international image than with the one in local public opinion (Pouligny, 2006: 154). They assume that international legitimacy "automatically translates into domestic legitimacy of peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict countries" (Sending, 2009: 2).

One of the reasons for this outside orientation is, again, the fact that the liberal content of programs is seen as non-negotiable (Richmond, 2004: 88). This also refers back to capacities: international peacebuilding actors portray themselves as capable and knowledgeable about how to build peace, while local actors allegedly do not possess this capacity. Thus, the programs promoting liberal values are *ipso facto* considered legitimate, moving the question of how local communities and peacebuilding actors perceive the programs to a secondary level of importance (Sending, 2009: 15; Roberts, 2012b: 5). This is reinforced by the fact that the UN's status as an institution "approximating universality gives it a position as the organization which exercises the political function of collective legitimization" (Wilén, 2009: 347).

Therefore, in the view of international peacebuilding actors, international sources confer an objective legitimacy to international peacebuilding operations and are thus preferable to local sources of legitimacy which are often not even taken into consideration (Sending, 2009: 5). However, international legitimacy does not automatically translate into local legitimacy. Rather, local legitimacy still "remains to be established in the country of intervention – an aspect too often ignored" (Pouligny, 2006: 180). This is why contemporary international peacebuilding often lacks legitimacy on the ground because it is based on assumptions about what peace means to people on the ground influenced by their belief in the 'liberal peace' theory, rather than what the people themselves perceive to be the priorities for peacebuilding (Roberts, 2012a: 367).

This outside orientation has also increased pressure to show results based on the recent turn towards results-orientation in peacebuilding (see Bächtold et al., 2013). The visibility signs mentioned before are an example for this. When asking a head of an international organization if they could stop using such signs and use the money in other ways he said "no, unless you want to lose all the donors as well".<sup>43</sup> This results-orientation also involves regular monitoring and evaluation visits which are often perceived by local peacebuilding actors to be a farce. As one respondent stated, when they "send their representatives to discuss their work, they are big institutions, you cannot criticize them. And even if you do, they often do not write it in the report".<sup>44</sup> The fact that most evaluations are done by international, rather than local actors is also often lamented and said to demonstrate by whose standards achievements are measured. Moreover, international actors often "do not want to go to the field as they do not want their shoes to get dirty".<sup>45</sup> Some upward accountability might be necessary to provide the donors with

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43 Informal discussion #131 with international organization representative (international staff), Bunia, 2013.

44 FGD #40 with local peacebuilding actors, Bunia, 2012.

45 Informal discussion #132 with international organization representative (national staff), Bunia, 2013.

information of what has happened to the funds (Bächtold et al., 2013: 11). However, at the same time international peacebuilding actors often take their local legitimacy for granted “without seriously considering the degree to which, for local actors, legitimacy must be rooted in their own history and political culture” (Donais 2012, 18). Thus, the incentive structures as well as the criteria by which international peacebuilding actors measure their performance are both oriented towards the outside, rather than the inside (de Coning 2012, 82). Due to this outside orientation, it is often not seen as necessary to include local peacebuilding actors in strategic decisions because the main partners in this are considered to be the host governments and donors.

In sum, the different perceptions of legitimacy which exist amongst international and local peacebuilding actors mean that local actors are faced with a balancing act between ensuring their legitimacy on the ground and increasingly trying to also have more direct access to donor money. For international actors, their orientation remains largely towards the outside – despite lofty claims of ensuring local ownership – which often hampers their local legitimacy.



# Conclusion

This working paper has assessed the interaction between local and international peacebuilding actors in Ituri. It has illustrated why the interaction is often characterized by rivalry and how the lack of cooperation makes both international and local programs less effective. It has argued that the reason for the lack of cooperation, rather than the power asymmetry between them, is that local and international peacebuilding actors have different assessments of their resources, capacities and legitimacy structures. Thereby, this paper has on the one hand provided an alternative explanation for the lack of cooperation between international and local peacebuilding actors, and on the other hand it has suggested an additional element in explaining peacebuilding success and failures.

International peacebuilding actors often see local actors as highly donor dependent and justify indirect funding to them on the grounds of due diligence. At the same time, they value their own thematic knowledge as an important capacity while they treat the context knowledge local peacebuilding actors hold often as simple information, used mainly to adapt their programs in the implementation phase. Finally, they are largely focused on outside legitimacy and assume that it automatically translates into local legitimacy. From local peacebuilding actors' perspectives, international actors are at least equally donor dependent as they often leave quickly as soon as the budget finishes. They perceive their context knowledge as capacity equal to the thematic knowledge of international actors and they are mostly concerned with their inside legitimacy, i.e. their acceptance in the communities where they work.

Due to the fact that international peacebuilding actors do not sufficiently recognize local resources, capacities and legitimacy, they often design their strategies with host governments and donors, rather than with local peacebuilding actors. To be sure, they consult with the latter, but only at the implementation stage to fine-tune their programs. At the same time, local peacebuilding actors adapt their programs to international priorities as they depend on their financial resources. Thereby, they can help to make international programs more locally legitimate. However, as they are not consulted in the strategy-making phase, they can only conduct marginal adaptations during implementation. This shows that while peacebuilding in Ituri has clearly become hybrid and neither local nor international peacebuilding actors can implement their programs without adaptations, the space in which this hybridity is negotiated remains dominated by international peacebuilding actors.

If local and international peacebuilding actors had more balanced views on resources, capacities and legitimacy, they could work according to each other's comparative advantages, rather than in rivalry. Local peacebuilding actors have distinct comparative advantages as they work in a highly cost-efficient way, know how to navigate the local context and how to establish local legitimacy. International actors, in turn, have access to donor resources, valuable technical capacities and know how to establish international

legitimacy. Thus, while local actors can facilitate access to communities and improve the local relevance of international programs, international actors can help local actors in increasing their scale of activities and getting access to donor money. This eventually promises to make both their programs more effective.

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