Implementing the triple nexus in the DRC: progress, challenges and prospects

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1. Background

1.1. Overview of Conflicts in DRC

From the dawn of its independence in 1960, the DRC went into political instability based on secessionist claims. In 1965, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu's coup d'état followed by his 32-year dictatorship brought some kind of stability to the country, with the support he gained from the Western bloc in a Cold War context and the respect he enjoyed from his peers in the region.

In the early stage of his reign, in 1971, Mobutu promulgated a law that granted collective citizenship to all Rwandans and Burundians who had been in the Congo since 1960, « *as he sought to curry favour and cultivate loyalty among these relatively affluent communities* » (Stearns, 2021). However, ten years later, while seeking to mobilise nationalist sentiment, Mobutu reversed this law, enacting that citizenship could be obtained only on an individual basis and was available only for those who could trace their Congolese ancestry back to 1885 (Stearns, 2021). Although this latter decree was never really enforced, other Congolese (Zairian) government initiatives accentuated antagonisms against immigrants of Rwandan origins. Such initiatives included an identification of citizenship census in the aftermath of the *Conférence nationale souveraine* in the early 1990s, which sparked outrage and riots from these communities; as well as a parliamentary resolution in 1995 which called for all Rwandan refugees to leave the country, especially those so-called Banyamulenge, who had been in South Kivu for generations.

In fact, Congolese war broke out in 1996, in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the trend for democratisation in Africa. Beyond the internal demands for democracy from Congolese (Zairians), a few important events in the region played as immediate triggers to the crisis: first, hundreds of thousands of Burundian refugees arrived in the eastern DRC in 1993 following the assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye in Burundi. Among these refugees, some will be part of Burundian Hutus' rebellions who will maintain their rear bases in South Kivu, in the DRC for almost ten years. Secondly, in 1994, following the Rwandan genocide, nearly a million refugees, among whom more than forty thousand of armed soldiers will cross from Rwanda to eastern DRC (Stearns, 2021). At the same time, hundreds of Ugandan ADF-NALU rebels began setting up bases on the Congolese side of Mount Ruwenzori. By 1996, the

Congo had become a haven for rebel groups from at least four neighbouring countries (Stearns, 2021). This, coupled with Mobutu's physical and political deterioration, paved the way for the regional conflicts that were to follow (Stearns, 2021).

Three phases determine the 1996 war: a first phase which, with a coalition of neighbouring countries including Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, goes from 1996 to 1997 sees the fall of Mobutu who lost the support from Western powers. Mobutu's successor, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, falls out of favour with his allies, triggering the second war, which split the country into three major parts, from August 1998 to June 2003, with the government in control of the South-West region of the country, the *Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo* - MLC (a rebellion backed by Uganda and led by former ICC prisoner Jean-Pierre Bemba) leading in the North-East, and the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* - RCD (supported by Rwanda) positioned in the South-East of the country .

Under the mediation of the South African President, Mr Thabo Mbeki, and the leadership of the UN and the AU, a peace deal was brokered in 2002, in Sun City (South Africa). All major Congolese warlords and belligerents joined a transitional government and merged their troops into a new national army. As a result, a new Constitution was voted by referendum and promulgated, allowing the country's first democratic elections in 2006 and bringing an end to the transition. Here started the third phase of the DRC armed conflict, as it is experienced today.

Actually, the 2003 peace deal and the 2006 'power legitimacy' through elections were not able to put an end to the conflict; instead, the conflict « *spawned a more amorphous and fragmented phase of violence* » (Stearns, 2021), with a military and political bourgeoisie. This phase of the conflict is indicative of the situation to date, where the crisis is more confined to the eastern provinces of the country (Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu), with a proliferation of more than 120 armed groups in 2021, fighting over often local issues (Stearns, 2021).

Recent developments on the DRC peace and security sector include ongoing tensions between Rwanda and the DRC over the *Mouvement du 23 Mars*, known as M23, a Rwandan-backed rebellion in the eastern Congo.

During his apostolic visit to Kinshasa, the Holy Father, Pope Francis, did not lack strong words to stigmatize this deadly crisis which has bereaved families for nearly three decades, speaking in particular of *economic colonialism* and urging the actors involved in these terms: "*hands off the Democratic Republic of the Congo, hands off Africa. Stop choking Africa: it is not a mine*

to be stripped or a terrain to be plundered."[1] In a statement from the Congolese Bishops' Conference (CENCO) on the security situation in the DRC, the Congolese bishops did not hesitate to send an alarm: "*The situation is serious. Our country is in danger! Let's not let the DRC be balkanized. From North to South, from East to West, as well as in the diaspora, let us all stand up to safeguard the territorial integrity of our country.*"[2]

Indeed, in this declaration which stigmatizes the indifference, the hypocrisy, and even the complicity of the international community vis-à-vis the resurgence of insecurity in the eastern Congo since June 2022, the Congolese bishops did not hesitate to denounce the occupation of certain localities in North Kivu (including Bunagana, Rutsuru and Kiwanja) by the M23 rebels with the support of Rwanda. They also denounced the growing insecurity in the western part of the country, particularly in the territories of Kwamouth and Bagata, where an inter-community land conflict between the Tekes and the Yakas has already left hundreds dead. In the province of Kongo Central, more precisely in Kimpangu, Mbanza-Ngungu and Sona-Bata, Congolese populations have been evicted from their villages, their homes burned and their cemeteries desecrated because their lands are being sold, in contempt of their rights, to foreign persons not otherwise identified.[3]

In a confidential report from UN experts sent to member states of the Security Council, investigators revealed that the Rwandan army "*launched military interventions against Congolese armed groups and positions of the Congolese armed forces*", and has been doing so since November 2021.[4] According to UN experts, Kigali "*provided troop reinforcements to the M23 for specific operations*", in particular to "*capture strategic cities and areas.*"[5] The capture, on June 13, 2022, by the M23, of the locality of Bunagana, in North Kivu, is cited as an example.

This resurgence of violence in the eastern Congo, which has seen, however, two important military initiatives, including the *state of siege* and joint military operations between the Congolese army (FARDC) and the Ugandan army (UPDF), has prompted the deployment of

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[1] Pope Francis addressing Congolese authorities, representatives of Congolese civil society and members of diplomatic corps on his arrival in Kinshasa, during apostolic journey in the DRC, 31 January 2023.
[2] CENCO, L'heure est grave. Notre pays est en danger (cfr Néh 2, 17) : Déclaration de la Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo sur la situation sécuritaire du pays, Kinshasa, le 9 novembre 2022.
[3] Idem
[4] Morgane Le Cam, « RDC : un rapport confidentiel de l'ONU apporte des 'preuves solides' de l'implication du Rwanda dans l'Est », in *Le Monde*, 4 août 2022.
[5] Morgane Le Cam, art. cit.

the Eastern African Community (EAC) troops as the situation risks setting the region burning again.

1.2. What is the triple nexus?

The post-2000 era has seen a strikingly increasing number of internal conflicts, with a whole array of humanitarian needs, in various parts of the world. As Perret remarks,[6] these crises are generating a higher volume of humanitarian needs that are increasingly underfunded. In fact, the volume, cost and length of humanitarian assistance has increased dramatically. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), conflicts currently drive 80 percent of all humanitarian needs and the burden of protracted crises is of such a scale that there is an urgent need to reconsider approaches to humanitarian situations.[7]

Against this backdrop, the September 2016 World Humanitarian Summit acknowledged that humanitarian tools alone are insufficient to resolve protracted crises. In fact, resolving protracted conflicts requires not only meeting people's immediate humanitarian needs but also reducing risk and vulnerability.[8] Consequently, there was a call for improved collaboration across the humanitarian–development nexus and a "New Way of Working" (NWOW) to reduce needs, risk, and vulnerability. This included a commitment to work over multiple years, based on comparative advantages, towards collective outcomes and, wherever feasible, reinforcing the capacities and resilience at national and local levels.[9]

The UNSC and the General Assembly twin resolutions[10] have recognised that the eradication of these conflicts is only possible if one focuses on the three important ingredients, i.e. peace (justice), security and sustainable development. Together, if these three branches are simulated then internal conflicts can be eradicated from the present world. The connection (from the Latin 'nexus') of the three branches is collectively known as the *humanitarian-development-peace nexus* (H-D-P nexus), here referred as the *triple nexus approach*.

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[6] Liam Perret, *Operationalizing the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus: Lessons learned from Colombia, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and Turkey* (IOM: Geneva, 2019).

[7] Anne-Lise Klausen, *The State of the Art: Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus* (Copenhagen, 2021).

[8] G. Nguya & N. Siddiqui, « Triple Nexus Implementation and Implications for Durable Solutions for Internal Displacement: On Paper and in Practice », *Refugee Survey Quarterly*. 39, 2020.

[9] See Perret, *op. cit.*; ECDPM, *Think Local: Governance, humanitarian aid, development and peacebuilding in Somalia* (Discussion Paper 24, 2019); Klausen, *op. cit.*

[10] See Resolutions on Sustaining Peace: United Nations Security Council, UNSC), *Security Council Resolution 2282 (2016): UN Doc. S/RES/2282*, 26 Apr. 2016; United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture: UN Doc. A/RES/70/262*, 12 May 2016. These two resolutions define sustaining peace as "*encompassing activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict*."

The triple nexus is a sustainable model which is equipped to meet both immediate and long-term vulnerabilities addressing the systematic causes of the internal conflict, covered under poverty, inequality, non-inclusion, corruption and to add with this ongoing violence and a regularly weakening economy. The triple nexus policy fosters a strategic collaboration among three stakeholders namely the humanitarian actors, peace-builders and developmental strategists. The policy holds enough potential to transform the traditional humanitarian, development and peace interventions owing to its simplicity and effectiveness in coherently meeting the needs of every person affected and also in mitigating vulnerability with the idea of promoting world peace through jointly national, provincial or local initiatives of different actors.[11]

The OECD/DAC Recommendations on the triple nexus articulates the approach as "*the interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace actions and a nexus approach refers to the aim of strengthening collaboration, coherence, and complementarity. The approach seeks to capitalize on the comparative advantages of each pillar – to the extent of their relevance in the specific context – in order to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict*" (DAC, 2019).[12] This recommendation calls for a people-centric approach to implementing humanitarian action while following the basic tenets of humanitarian aid, i.e. being neutral, inclusive, conflict sensitive, as well as developmental and impartial.

The commitment to a new way of working (NWOW) must therefore respond to emergency humanitarian needs, while reducing risks and vulnerability, by collaborating more effectively across the humanitarian, development and peace sectors. Addressing immediate needs while securing longer-term investments by tackling the systemic causes of conflict and vulnerability - such as poverty, inequality and lack of effective accountability systems - is more likely to reduce the impact of cyclical or recurrent shocks and tensions and achieve peace, which is

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[11] Nexus pilotes identified in the DRC include : (i) in the Greater Kasaï region (Kasaï Central, Kasaï, Kasaï Oriental, Lomami and Sankuru), the focus was on issues of security, IDPs, agriculture, nutrition, education, health, reproductive health, human rights and GBV ; (ii) in Ituri, the focus was on IDPs, refugees, democratic dialogue, and local governance ; (iii) in North and South Kivu, global response was on stabilisation, recovery, rule of law, human rights, GBV, local governance and community recovery ; (iv) in Tanganyika, the response focused on Pygmees and Bantu conflicts ; (v) in Beni, a comprehensive and sustainable response to Ebola Virus Desease (EVD) was provided ; (vi) in Equateur, a global and sustainable response to EVD was ensured through an early warming and monitoring system, and by strengthening health structures, improving agriculture production, etc.

[12] OECD DAC Recommendations on the H–D–P nexus, "Nexus approach refers to the aim of strengthening collaboration, coherence and complementarity", https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-5019

essential for sustainable development (Oxfam, 2019). The new way of working is thus becoming a crucial step in eliminating the structural barriers to lasting peace.

To sum up, the triple nexus is a multi-lateral collaboration of various actors (see Fig.1) both at the local level and the global level. These actors create an institutional synergy and jointly coordinate in monitoring and evaluating the areas of focus within a given country or region.
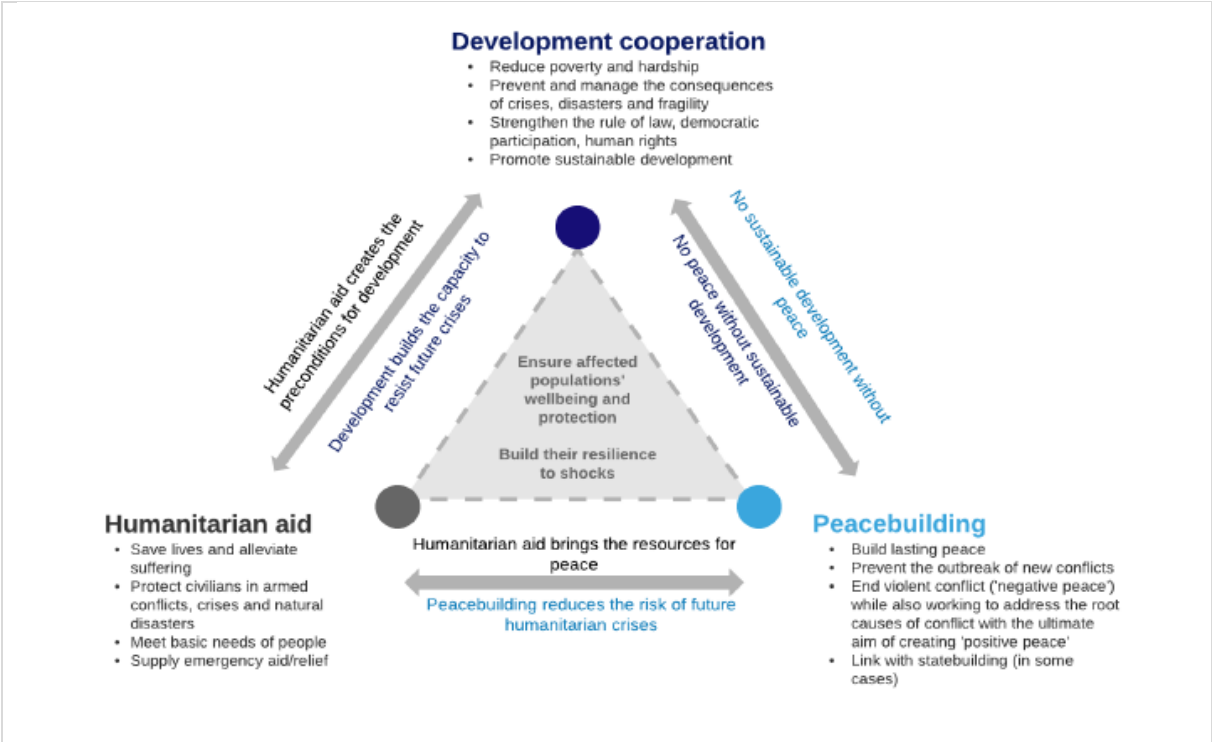
Figure 1: Triple nexus presented as a figure[13]

Development cooperation
- Reduce poverty and hardship
- Prevent and manage the consequences of crises, disasters and fragility
- Strengthen the rule of law, democratic participation, human rights
- Promote sustainable development

Humanitarian aid creates the preconditions for development

Development builds the capacity to resist future crises

No peace without sustainable development

No sustainable development without peace

Ensure affected populations' wellbeing and protection

Build their resilience to shocks

Humanitarian aid
- Save lives and alleviate suffering
- Protect civilians in armed conflicts, crises and natural disasters
- Meet basic needs of people
- Supply emergency aid/relief

Humanitarian aid brings the resources for peace

Peacebuilding reduces the risk of future humanitarian crises

Peacebuilding
- Build lasting peace
- Prevent the outbreak of new conflicts
- End violent conflict ('negative peace') while also working to address the root causes of conflict with the ultimate aim of creating 'positive peace'
- Link with statebuilding (in some cases)

Fig. 1. Overview of Triple Nexus. **Source**: The European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), 2019.
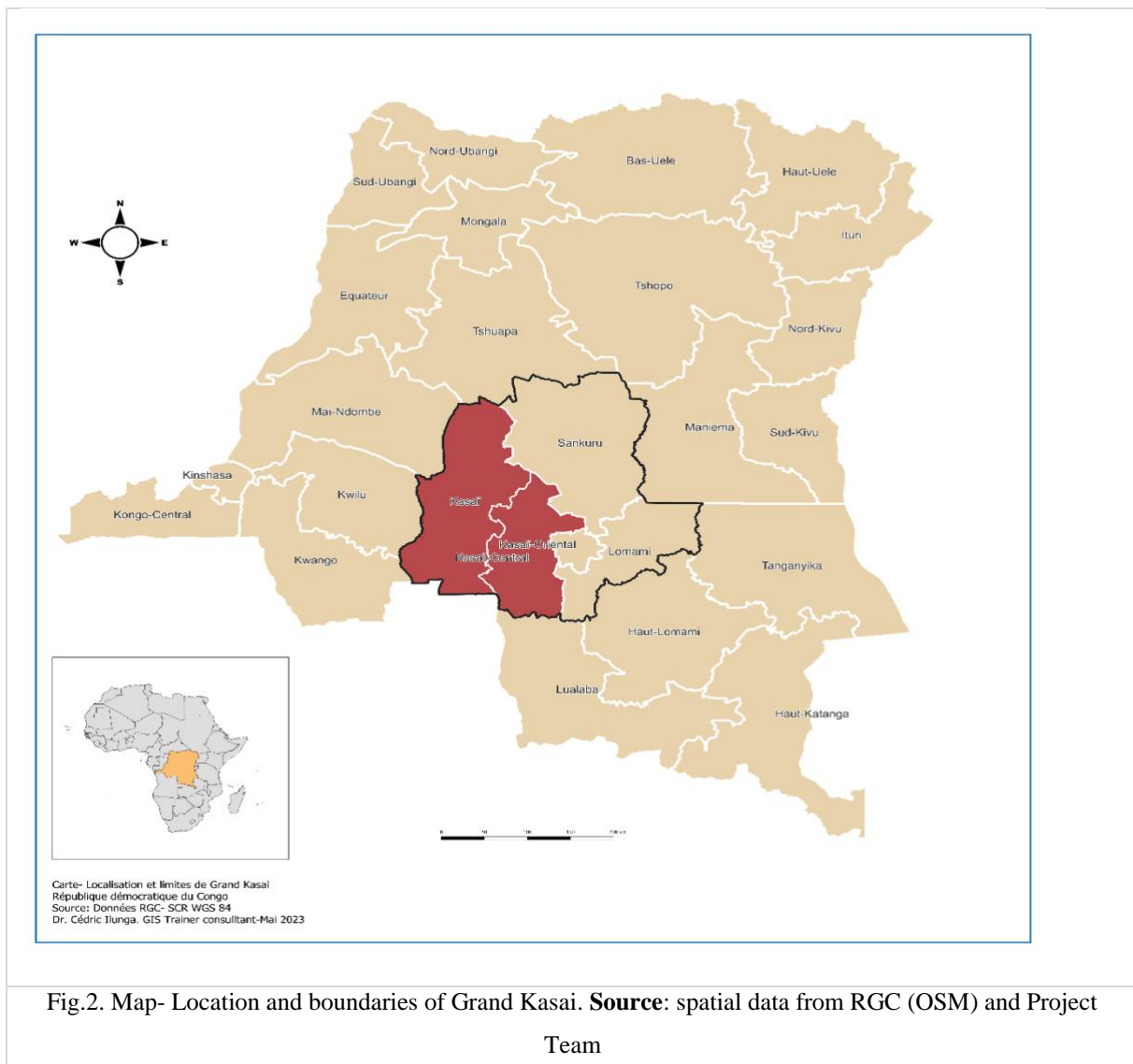
1.3. Why and how has the triple nexus been implemented in the DRC?

In view of the alarming situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which has been experiencing a number of multifaceted crises for nearly 3 decades, particularly in its eastern part and more recently in the Greater Kasai region [14] (see Map in Fig. 2), the country

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[13] This ECDPM figure illustrates the fundamental dependencies between peacebuilding, development and humanitarian assistance; it shows that, despite their specific focus, there are potential cooperation and partnering opportunities in all the three sectors, resulting in gains for the beneficiaries and the acting organisations.

[14] The area commonly referred to as "Greater Kasai" corresponds to the former colonial province of Kasai, an area of 325,044 km2 with a current estimated population of 15 million, and today includes the provinces of Kasai, Kasai Central, Kasai Oriental, Sankuru and the province of Lomami. Between 2016 and 2018, the provinces of Kasai and Kasai Central were rocked by an unprecedented and highly publicised conflict, known as the "Kamwina Nsapu rebellion", so named after a tribal chief demanding succession to power in his customary jurisdiction, resulting in thousands of deaths and internally displaced people. In the space of a few weeks, clashes between supporters of the tribal chief and the police escalated into widespread violence in which communities, traditional chiefs, State authorities and the police were pitted against each other (Interpeace, 2020).

was among the selected ones[15] by the United Nations as a nexus priority countries. In 2019, the provinces of Kasai, Kasai-Central, and Tanganyika in the south of the country, were selected by the DRC's nexus team to be locations for testing this approach. This choice was motivated, in particular, by the gradual phase-out of the MONUSCO [16] from these territories and, consequently, the need to strengthen the capacities of local and provincial institutions through the development of institutional collaboration mechanisms aimed at achieving sustainable peace and change.

Fig.2. Map- Location and boundaries of Grand Kasai. **Source**: spatial data from RGC (OSM) and Project Team

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[15] In March 2018, the Secretary General of the United Nations identified the DRC as one of the priority countries (along with the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin and Afghanistan) in which to implement the Nexus.
[16] Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), *Factsheet: Implementation of the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus in the DRC*, updated in April 2021.

It is also worth noting that the Kamwina Nsapu conflict in the provinces of Kasai and Kasai Central has been the scene of violent clashes resulting in the loss of thousands of lives, looting, destruction and the mass displacement of people from the region towards neighbouring Angola (Interpeace, 2020). In addition to its humanitarian consequences, the conflict has exacerbated a deep-seated crisis of confidence between the population and state institutions, on the one hand, and between different communities on the other, with the fighting in Kasai province characterised by a strong ethnic dimension (Interpeace, 2020). Throughout the region, villages have been destroyed, neighbours have clashed, children have been recruited into armed groups, and civilians have suffered at the hands of members of the security forces and militias. Although the conflict has subsided somewhat since 2018 with the voluntary demobilisation of many militiamen and the gradual return of refugees and internally displaced persons, the wounds are still fresh and now pose a threat to the ongoing reconciliation and reconstruction efforts in the region.

Against this backdrop, the nexus actors in the region have maintained an active presence with initiatives to curb the socio-economic tensions arising from these violations and other types of inter- or intra-community conflict in the short, medium and long term.

Based on the concept of the triple nexus, which aims to provide a framework for dialogue by adopting an approach of convergence, coherence and complementarity underpinned by the comparative advantage of the stakeholders (national and international NGOs, donors, government and civil society), this report focuses on the operationalization of this approach through the "*Support for ex-combatants and communities affected by spontaneous demobilisations by means of socio-economic reintegration and transitional justice initiatives in Kasai and Tanganyika in the DRC*" project in Kasai Central, here referred as SS-KAT project.
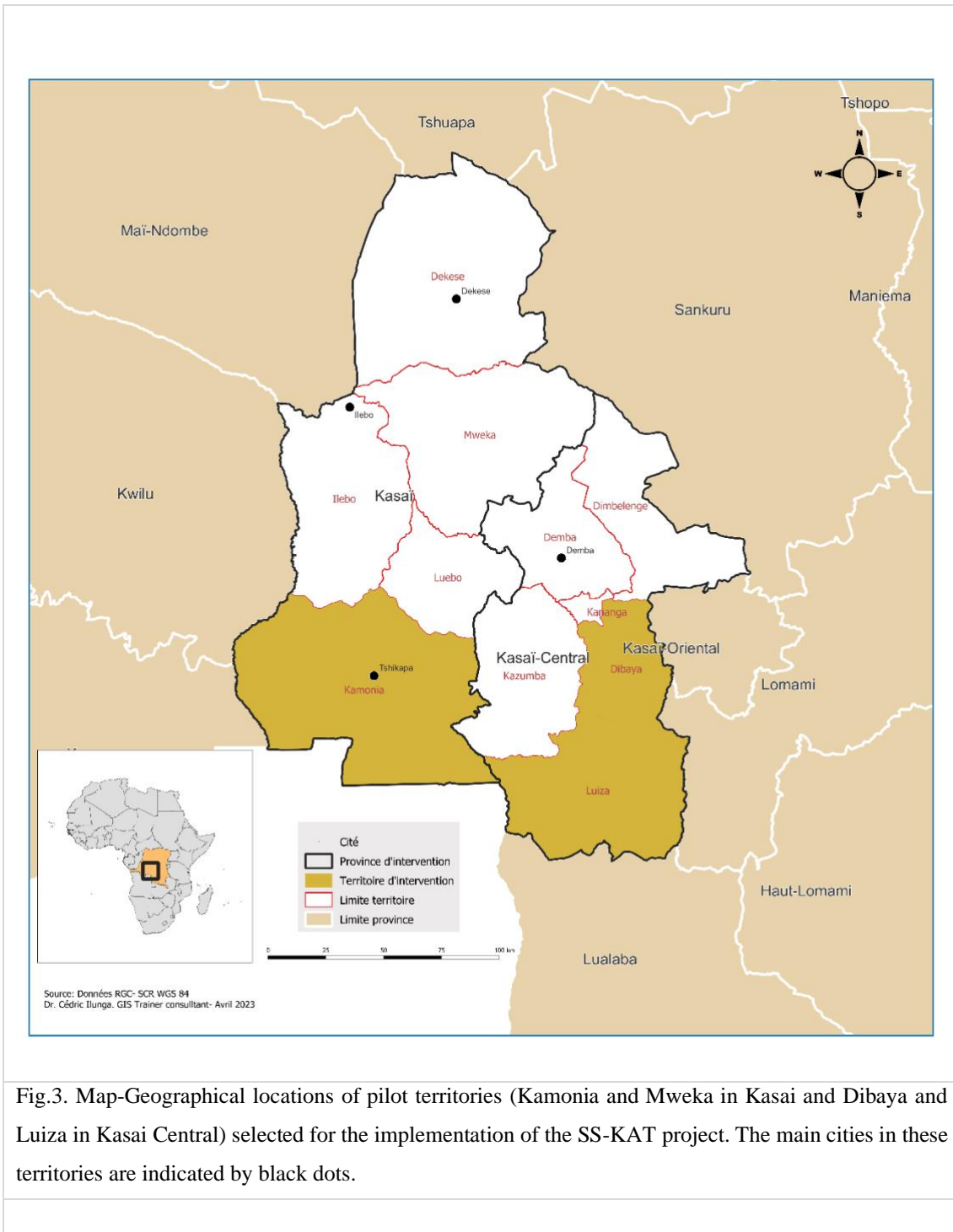
On the basis of a shared risk and vulnerability analysis facilitated by the OECD and its International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF), collective results were defined and agreed on by key various nexus stakeholders (including the DRC government, MONUSCO, bilateral and multilateral agencies, donors and civil society), at national level. In fact, during a workshop organised by the nexus country team and held in Kinshasa in October 2019, these key stakeholders were invited to discuss the humanitarian needs in the country as well as its level of vulnerability. The discussion led to the identification and approval of four collective results as the nexus priority areas for the DRC. These included (i) *reducing food insecurity and*

malnutrition; (ii) *increasing access to basic social services*; (iii) *reducing forced population displacement*; and (iv) *reducing gender-based violence*.

In a bid to gain a better understanding of the triple nexus approach in the DRC, a nexus project[17], the SS-KAT project, was selected to be part of the investigations. As a reminder, this project covers the province of Tanganyika and the provinces of Kasai and Kasai Central. The investigations focused primarily on interventions in the provinces of Kasai Central and Kasai, more specifically the territories of Luiza and Dibaya (in Kasai Central)[18] and the territories of Kamonia and Mweka in Kasai (Map on Fig.3). The project aims to extend its scope of operation by drawing on the experience and lessons learned at these pilot sites.

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[17]It is important to clarify that there is no such thing as a nexus project per se, but the expression simply refers to the project's possible relationship with the nexus HDP dimension, in a similar way as if we were to analyse the gender dimension of a project. As Kasai Central was one of the provinces chosen to test this approach, it was necessary to implement a project from the perspective of the triple nexus. The SS-KAT project lends itself well to this, given that it has the support of 3 UN agencies, including the UNDP, the IOM and the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) as UN recipient agencies (donors). There are many other projects taking place in the region, but the SS-KAT project is unique in its nexus-sensitivity; therefore, this is the only one analysed in this report.

[18]The province of Kasai Central is administratively divided into five territories and two cities, namely the territories of Demba, Dibaya, Dimbelenge, Kazumba and Luiza, and the cities of Kananga and Tshimbulu.

Fig.3. Map-Geographical locations of pilot territories (Kamonia and Mweka in Kasai and Dibaya and Luiza in Kasai Central) selected for the implementation of the SS-KAT project. The main cities in these territories are indicated by black dots.

To tackle the root causes of the recurring conflicts in the DRC, the SS-KAT project in Kasai Central has been working to renovate community infrastructure (agricultural service roads, bridges, etc.) to support the socio-economic reintegration of individuals (particularly ex-militiamen, victims, displaced persons and vulnerable people) and boost the local economy by opening up the target areas and developing economic activities. These projects improve connectivity between villages and local markets, and also boost agricultural production, marketing and small-scale trade. To revive the local economy in a sustainable way, 80% of the beneficiaries (voluntarily demobilised persons, victims of violence,

returnees from Angola including internally displaced persons and other vulnerable people in the targeted communities) have, at their own initiative, already started their income-generating activities and have set up agricultural cooperatives, small livestock farms, associations and micro-enterprises, thanks to the 50% saving on the premium for participating in highly labour-intensive work (HLI), which provides long-term support by developing and strengthening technical and operational capacities.[19] The long-term goal is to reduce poverty levels in the communities and to build bridges between them to foster greater social interaction and cohesion, as well as inter-community harmony.

Thanks to the same project, a provincial Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission was established in Kasai Central in July 2021, marking a major step forward in transitional justice in the province, and indeed in the DRC as a whole. Through the project, hundreds of local actors in Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms have been able to access skills training to improve their collaboration with those in the judicial system, promote peace and protect people's rights.[20]

The SS-KAT project is being implemented entirely based on an interventional approach that relies on strong ownership and leadership from the central and provincial governments (of the 3 beneficiary provinces). At central level, interactions with the government occur in the framework of the governance dimension of the project, overseen by the Ministry of Planning, whereas the project's technical dimension is under the joint leadership of the Ministry of Justice. At provincial level, the project coordinates with the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of the Interior and Security, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, and the criminal courts, while at local level it coordinates with the heads of sectors, territorial administrations, public prosecutors' offices and other justice and security entities. At this level, the coordination and coherence of the project's strategy and activities are the responsibility of the Technical Monitoring Committee, led and chaired by the Provincial Planning Minister. Similarly, monitoring missions in the field are organised under the co-lead of the Provincial Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Justice.[21]

In line with the nexus logic, there are activities in the convergence zones involving all stakeholders. In addition, the progress of the project's activities is monitored using a results framework that groups together the indicators for achieving these collective results (CORE) as defined above.

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[19] Interview 6, Kananga (April 2023)
[20] Idem
[21] Id.

1.4. Main aim and specific objectives

The aim of this report is to assess and/or evaluate the implementation of the triple nexus in the DRC, with a focus on the SS-KAT project. Based on the views of the actors involved in the project, and taking into account the main beneficiaries' perceptions about the notion of humanitarian aid, sustainable development and peace in a post-conflict environment, the aim is to gain a better understanding of the scope of the triple nexus approach in the DRC, as well as its challenges, opportunities and prospects. In concrete terms, we intend to assess the effectiveness of the triple nexus in reducing community risk and vulnerability, as well as tackling the root causes of conflicts, rather than their consequences. It is therefore important to analyse the ability of the SS-KAT project to deliver collective results/objectives (CORE) as defined in 2019.

With regard to the triple nexus, this report is centred on 4 specific objectives, including:

- Mapping the triple nexus actors in the DRC in general and those working at provincial and local level, in Kasai Central where applicable;
- Gathering local perspectives on peace and its outcomes (security, justice, etc.);
- Identifying ideas and challenges emerging from the implementation of the nexus approach in conflict-affected areas, particularly in Kasai Central.

2. Methodological approach

The methodological approach used in this study can be summarised in 4 key stages: (I) literature review; (ii) workshop discussions; (iii) interviews with stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in the implementation of the SS-KAT project; and (iv) project analysis/evaluation.

2.1. Literature review

The aim of the literature review was to examine the existing literature in order to determine the importance of development aid and humanitarian aid in the context of development cooperation, as well as the impact of the triple nexus approach as a response to conflict cycles in the DRC. We also wanted to gain a better understanding of the context, relevance and coherence of the activities to be carried out to restore peace and development in the DRC. Various documents were reviewed, including journal articles, reports on the activities of UN agencies in the DRC, and documents on the national legislative and regulatory framework for humanitarian aid and development cooperation. The finding was that, although the need for

international aid in the context of protracted conflicts is being called into question, the debate surrounding the triple nexus has the advantage of encouraging actors in these three sectors to reflect together on the challenges facing aid and peace during protracted crises. The triple nexus approach therefore aims to ensure that humanitarian workers can concentrate their efforts on the most acute needs and that development actors can focus on long-term resilience by helping to build self-reliant, resilient, peaceful and effective communities.[22]

In this context, and in view of the dynamics of protracted conflicts in the DRC, the triple nexus appears to be an approach that makes it possible to question the usual working practices of the actors in the three sectors (humanitarian, development and peace) in order to tackle not just the consequences of these conflicts but also their underlying causes. The various actors in the triple nexus each have a role to play: humanitarian intervention to save lives and protect people; development aid to meet multi-dimensional structural challenges; and peace initiatives to facilitate the transformation of relations and to strengthen capacities for peace and social cohesion.[23]

2.2. Workshop discussions

To facilitate data collection, we organised two workshops, one at the end of August 2021 hosted by the *Institut Panafricain Cardinal Martino* (IPCM) at its site at the *Université Catholique du Congo* (UCC), Mont-Ngafula campus in Kinshasa, and the second in Bukavu (*Centre Caritas*) in January 2022. The workshop in Kinshasa was attended by political decision-makers, donors, bilateral and multilateral partners, humanitarian and development cooperation actors, members of civil society and the private sector, academics and the media etc. to discuss the interlinks between humanitarian aid and development cooperation in the DRC in a context of armed violence and post-conflict reconstruction. In Bukavu, the workshop focused on the impact of the nexus HDP approach to armed conflict in the eastern DRC, with attendees mainly coming from community associations and local NGOs.

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[22] Conclusions of the Council of the EU, 2017
[23] IASC, *Issue paper - Exploring peace within the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus* (French).

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Photo 1. The first workshop held in Kinshasa (UCC, Mont-Ngafula Campus): (A) Group photo of participants and (B) Attendance of the Minister for Human Rights, Mr Albert-Fabrice Puela.

The meeting in Kinshasa was attended by the Minister for Human Rights, the Rector of the *Université Catholique du Congo* and the representative of the Congolese Catholic Bishops' Conference, CENCO.

Photo 2. P of the second discussion workshop held in Bukavu.

2.3. Interviews with actors

Actors targeted included the SS-KAT project implementing actors, as well as direct beneficiaries. In total, a dozen of semi-structured interviews were therefore carried out in April 2023 in the city of Kananga, where the project coordination office is located. Due to time constraints and limited resources, all interviews were carried out at the provincial UNDP headquarter, in Kananga. This set up allowed us to mainly access actors present in the city, including representatives of implementing NGOs (i.e. *Caritas-Kananga*, *Action pour les Infrastructures et le Développement Social - AIDS, Association pour le Développement Social et Sauvegarde de l'Environnement – ADESSE*, etc.), provincial government officials, UN agencies representatives (UNDP, UNJHRO, etc.) and a very few direct beneficiaries that could be reached from Kananga. Accessibility to remote areas due to very precarious road infrastructures made it difficult in the given time to reach a significant sample of direct

beneficiaries. However, given the very qualitative nature of our perspective, number of interviewees should not be the core of our concern, but rather the quality of data collected. In this vein, the quality of information provided by these actors was significant enough to help build our analysis.

2.4. Analysis

The analysis focused mainly on qualitative data gathered from discussions at the workshops and interviews in the field. This information, combined with the literature review, has enabled us to draw a series of conclusions from which we may be able to make a number of recommendations.

3. The triple nexus in the DRC: Framework, Collective outcomes and Actors

3.1. Framework: an approach based on coordination, collaboration and coherence

Although the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDP) approach seems to be rooted in the initiative of the Secretary General of the United Nations, which brought together humanitarian, sustainable development and peacekeeping actors at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, in a bid to "*urge people to bridge the gap between humanitarian aid and development, and to include those involved in peace-building*", [24] the debate surrounding the triple nexus has the advantage of bringing together actors from these three sectors to reflect on the challenges of aid and peace in the context of protracted crises.

The triple nexus approach therefore aims to ensure that humanitarian workers can focus their efforts on the most acute needs and that development actors can concentrate on long-term resilience by helping to build self-reliant, resilient, peaceful and effective communities.[25] For the EU, the recurrent, protracted and complex nature of many crises reinforces the importance of putting in place longer-term interventions that address humanitarian needs as well as development and peace-building objectives. Resilience is the ability of a person, community or country to manage, adapt and recover quickly from disaster, violence or conflict. It applies to all stages of a disaster, from prevention (where possible) to adaptation (where necessary), and involves making positive transformations that strengthen the ability of current and future

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[24] UN General Assembly report, 2016

[25] European Commission, *Conclusions du Conseil européen : Donner un contenu opérationnel aux liens entre action humanitaire et développement*, 2017

generations to meet their needs and overcome crises.[26] The triple nexus approach aims to bring together three sectors in order to better respond to the immediate needs of people affected by conflict and to the underlying causes of protracted crises.[27]

This New Way of Working (NWW)[28] promotes a vision in which actors in the humanitarian, development and peace sectors work together to achieve collective results adapted to each specific context by drawing on their comparative advantages (UN General Assembly report, 2016). The NWW is therefore structured around three main aims: (i) strengthening (not replacing) national and local systems; (ii) bridging the gap between humanitarian aid and development by working towards collective results that are adapted to each specific context by drawing on their comparative advantages; and (iii) anticipating (not waiting for) crises.[29]

However, for many actors, particularly in civil society, the question is not whether humanitarian efforts should be linked with those of (sustainable) development, but rather how the third pillar of the nexus, namely peace, the definition and operationalization of which are still subject to debate, should be integrated. For governments (and the military), the peace pillar is seen through the lens of security, i.e. in terms of politico-military measures, but communities and civil society in general perceive it as an absence of violence and a form of social cohesion.[30] This ambiguity of the definition makes it difficult to achieve synergies between humanitarian, development and peace actors, and heightens fears that humanitarian principles will be sidelined by the triple nexus and replaced by a political agenda of security and stabilisation.

The humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality are not just a theoretical and ideological framework; they guide the policies and procedures of humanitarian action and reflect the commitments made by governments. It is therefore important not only to make a distinction between the mandates of different actors, by strengthening dialogue between humanitarian and military actors and increasing military actors' training in/awareness of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and humanitarian principles, but also to achieve a

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[26] European Commission, *Résilience et nexus humanitaire-développement-paix*.

[27] Interpeace, *Bâtir des ponts, quelle place pour la paix dans le "Nexus Humanitaire-Développement-Paix"?* (video resource created jointly by the FAO and the IOM). https://www.interpeace.org/fr/resource/quelle-humanitaire-developpement/

[28] Agenda for Humanity, *New Way of Working*. https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/5358

[29] UN General Assembly, *One Humanity, Shared Responsibility : Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit*, A/70/709 (Feb 2, 2016), para.113

[30] Sonia Rahal, *Le triple nexus à l'épreuve du terrain : humanitaire-développement-paix*, presentation at the national humanitarian conference, Paris, 17 December 2020 (as part of the round table on the "humanitarian-development-peace nexus").

common approach to peace that is capable of focussing the attention of different actors on the common goals of stability and sustainable development.

In this context, the nexus approach is being introduced to the DRC as an innovative concept which promotes a vision of unification or unity between humanitarian aid, development aid and sustainable peace. This was not the case before 2018 when instead, each player in a crisis worked within the strict limits of his or her role. The situation has since evolved, reflecting a concerted effort to synchronise the actions of the various actors.

Former Coordinator of the Aid and Investment Management Platform (PGAI) at the Congolese government's Ministry of Planning, late Théo Kanene, believed that "*the nexus approach is an innovation for the Congolese government, a mutual commitment to a new way of working with its partners*".[31]

As such, a team has been set up to coordinate the implementation of the HDP nexus approach with the aim of strengthening the interlinks between bilateral and multilateral partners in order to link humanitarian aid with development cooperation in the context of post-conflict reconstruction in the DRC. For the implementation of the nexus process, the Congolese government, through the Minister of Planning, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations, the Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in the DRC (DSRSG/RC/HC), together with the technical support of the nexus Core Team (which includes representatives of the Government, the United Nations, donors, international NGOs and national NGOs), will oversee the coordination and leadership of converging interventions. The nexus Core Team undertakes to act as a point of reference for the various stakeholders at country level, thereby ensuring a degree of consistency in the development of the approach across the country. The approach is also supported by the nexus Donor Group.

3.2. Four collective results

Discussions to implement an HDP nexus approach in the DRC began in 2018 in light of the country's multifaceted challenges and the huge potential of the approach to improve the coherence and effectiveness of different actors and assistance flows. The HDP nexus in the

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[31] Opening remarks at the August 2021 workshop held at the *Université Catholique du Congo*, Kinshasa-Mont Ngafula

DRC is considered to be an inclusive and collective process that aims to reduce humanitarian needs, risks and vulnerabilities in the medium and long term while addressing the underlying causes of conflict and underdevelopment.[32]

To ensure the effectiveness of the nexus process, the DRC has adopted a different approach to most of the countries selected as pilot countries. In 2018, a full-time nexus advisor was hired to work at the OCHA Resident Coordinator's office. This outlook has made it possible to dedicate resources to raise the awareness of stakeholders and reinforce their commitment.[33] The government's commitment was demonstrated through the Ministry of Planning, in particular through its PGAI unit, and the Ministry of Solidarity and Humanitarian Affairs. With technical support from the OECD and guidance from Canada, the nexus Coordinator has played a key role in (i) conceptualising the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) country strategy, centred on the concept of fragility and vulnerability, and (ii) its operationalization. Later, it will also play a key role in aligning the HDP nexus (4 collective results) in relevant planning frameworks, such as the DRC's 2019-2023 National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP), the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), the International Security and Stabilisation Support Strategy (ISSSS), and in renewing the DRC's eligibility for the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The collective results have also been incorporated into provincial development plans (as in the case of Kasai Central). Moreover, MONUSCO and the UNCT have worked together to build a framework for joint interventions based on some of the medium- and long-term aims of the collective results.[34]

MONUSCO's involvement in the HDP nexus discussions, through the Stabilisation Support Unit (SSU), was decisive for the inclusion of peace in this approach. Finally, the involvement of United Nations agencies in the DRC (UN Country Team), the group of nexus donors and the leadership of Sweden (through its embassy in Kinshasa) have played a key role in the success of this approach in the DRC since it was introduced between 2018 and 2019.

The DRC's 2019-2023 National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) recognises that the triple nexus approach will make it possible to put in place (i) a complementary approach offering

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[32] IASC, *DRC country brief on HDP nexus*, 2021.
[33] Idem
[34] Id.

humanitarian actors the prospect of being part of a global vision focused on an "exit strategy" based on shared responsibility for a sustainable development trajectory;[35] (ii) an approach that helps to reduce risks (by targeting the sources of events that trigger crises) and vulnerability (by targeting chronic development deficits and social insecurity).

A common framework for collective results is being developed based on these priority themes (the 4 collective results) to ensure collaborative planning and programming by all development, humanitarian and peace actors.

3.3. Mapping the nexus actors in the DRC

At national level, the nexus approach ecosystem is made up of 5 main types of actors, namely (i) the national government, (ii) United Nations agencies, (iii) donors (based in Kinshasa), (iv) international Organisations and (v) national NGOs and civil society.

3.3.1. The government and its key financial partners

Since the implementation of the nexus in the DRC, the Ministry of Planning, through its Aid and Investment Management Platform (*Plateforme pour la Gestion de l'Aide et des Investissements*, PGAI), has acted as the interface between the government and the other actors in the nexus, including UN agencies (OCHA, UNDP, IOM, WFP, FAO, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, UNHCR, etc) and donors. The PGAI is an integrated Information System (IS) that uses Web technology. It was set up within the Ministry of Planning in 2008 and designated by the Congolese government to be the "single guide" and official source for the collection and management of external resources. It monitors individual projects/programmes funded by Technical and Financial Partners (TFPs), and facilitates coordination and decision-making in the management of these projects/programmes. This tool provides answers to the following questions: Who does what? Where? In which sector of activity? What is the type of intervention? What were the funds budgeted, allocated and spent/used? What is the impact of the intervention? It is from this platform that we obtained the databases on which our mapping in this report is based.

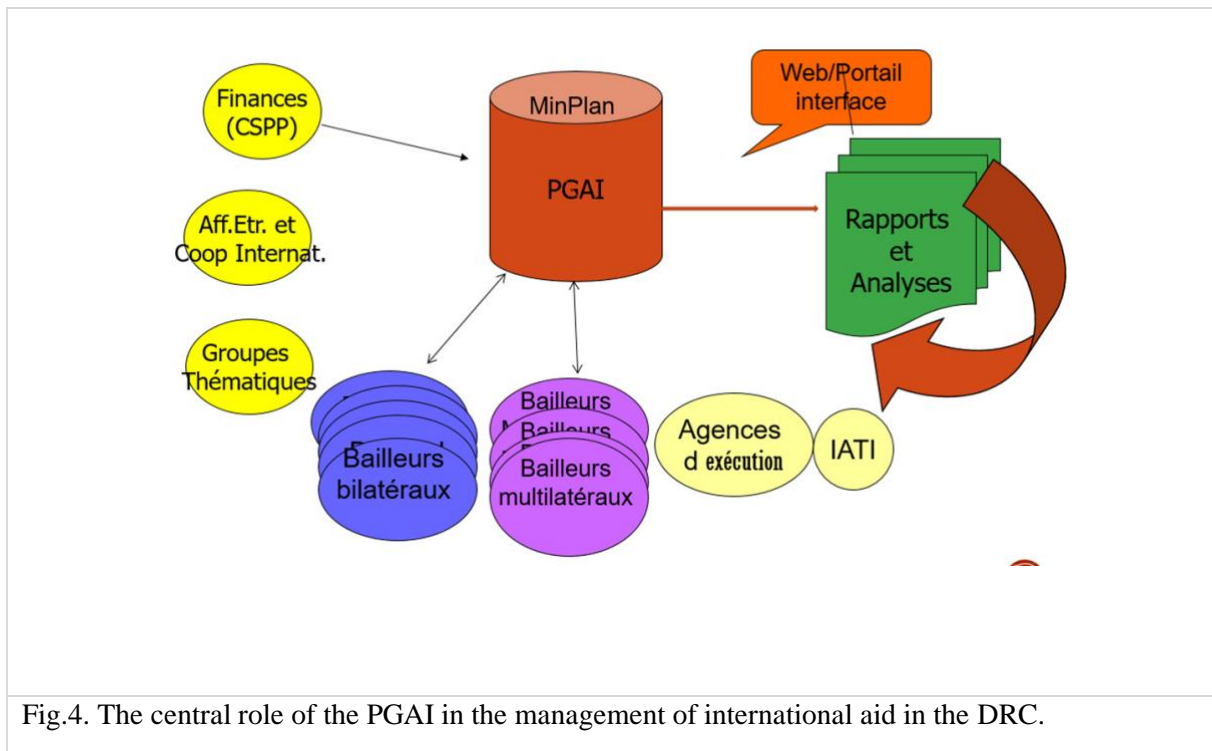[35] DRC, *2019-2023 National Strategic Development Plan*, § 53

Fig.4. The central role of the PGAI in the management of international aid in the DRC.

With regard to the mapping presented in this report, it is important to mention some challenges faced with the data collected, particularly in the use of the databases provided by the PGAI. Below we provide a summary of these challenges and how we have tried to resolve them.

(i) The data was not organised according to standard database formats (column & row), which meant that direct analysis was not possible. The first step in processing data was to organise them properly.

(ii) Though the PGAI pretends that its sectors' categorisation is based on the OECD one, ambiguity in the categorisation of the sectors used remains; it was difficult to indicate which sector refers to which category, therefore making it hard to regroup them into the 3 key sectors of the nexus (i.e. humanitarian, development and peace). The PGAI database provides 21 subsectors and demarcation between sectors is not provided. This is the case, for instance, with the sector of *"politique en matière de population/santé/Fertilité"* and the sector of *"Santé*". To resolve this ambiguity, we provide our own classification that is attached in annex.

(iii) The location of interventions: the database refers respectively to Kinshasa (the capital city and the headquater of the national government) to central administration. To avoid such a confusion, everything linked to the central administration has been integrated into national government.

3.3.2. Donors in the nexus (bilateral/multilateral agencies and UN agencies)

The group of donors includes bilateral agencies (such as USAID, DFID, GTZ and CIDA), multilateral agencies (World Bank, African Development Bank, etc.), and UN agencies, which play a major role in supporting development projects, given the government's limited capacity to meet the needs of a growing population in a vast country with multifaceted and multi-sectoral challenges.

The DRC's main donors include the World Bank, UN agencies, the USA, the EU, the UK, the ADB, the Global Fund, Germany, Sweden, Canada, Belgium, Japan, Switzerland, GAVI, France, the Netherlands, China, the Arab Development Bank, Italy, South Korea and the Republic of Malta. The figure below shows the contributions made by various donors. The biggest donor is the World Bank, which contributed over 500 million US dollars (see Figure 5).
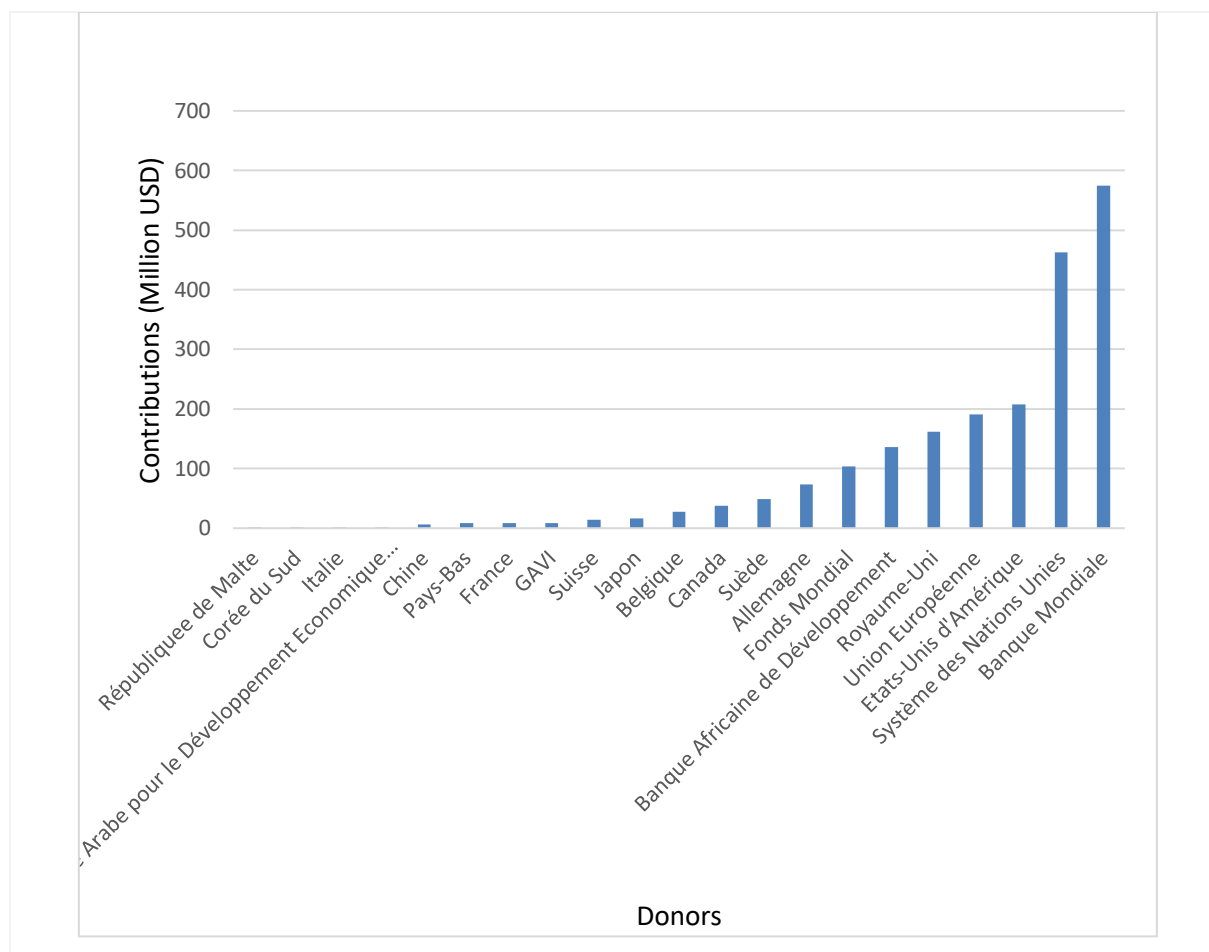
Fig. 5. Contributions from main donors (Amount in M USD)/Source: PGAI database in annex.

In terms of the amount of funding contributed, the World Bank is the leading donor, followed by the United Nations agencies and the United States as a country.

Overall, more than 48.6% of donors are active in the Development sector; the Peace and Humanitarian Aid sectors account for 28.6% and 22.9% of donors respectively. The concentration of donors in the development sector can be explained by the fact that since 2003, following the Sun City peace agreements reached between the fighting parties in South Africa, the DRC has been regarded as a post-conflict country, prompting donors to fund more reconstruction and community resilience projects. The significant amount of funds allocated to peace can be explained by the major role that MONUSCO, the United Nations peace and stabilisation mission in the DRC, continues to play. Finally, emergency interventions, although substantial, remain concentrated in provinces affected by armed conflict (particularly in the east of the country and more recently in the greater Kasai region).
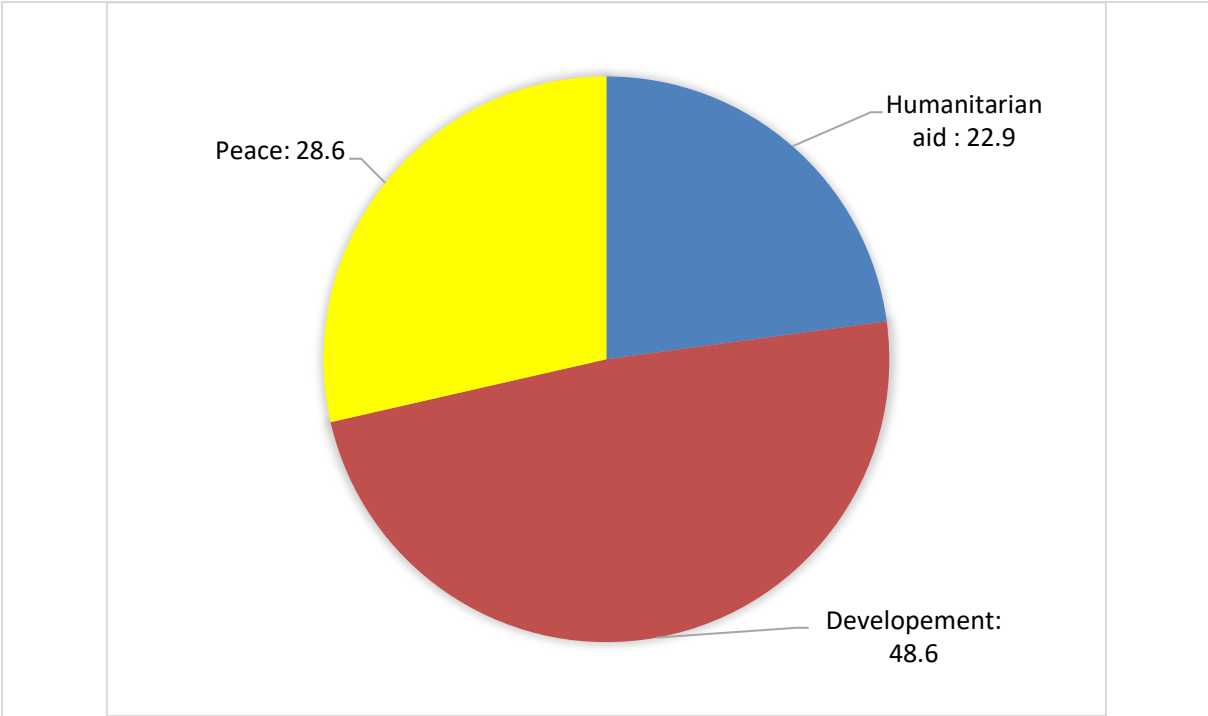
Fig.6. Summary: main donors by area of activity. **Source**: Nexus stakeholders report in annex[36]

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[36] A more comprehensive mapping exercise of the nexus actors in the DRC was undertaken by 'Affaires mondiales-Canada', in partnership with the OECD and the UNJHRO in 2020 (see Affaires mondiales-Canada, *Évaluation de la programmation de l'aide internationale canadienne en République Démocratique du Congo 2012-13 à 2018-19*, Rapport d'évaluation, Direction de l'évaluation de l'aide internationale (PRA), Juillet 2020). The mapping

3.3.3. Other international organisations in the nexus

Data analysis shows that international organisations (other than UN agencies and those with a mandate to provide financial aid) and international organisations tend to specialise in one of the three specific areas of the nexus (Humanitarian, Development and Peace). This is because, unlike donors, NGOs are often only involved in one area of the nexus (see previous figure). The international organisations category includes Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), Oxfam, Care International, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), World Vision, Handicap International, etc. It is important to note that the activities of these various international actors are concentrated in the humanitarian sector (80%), as shown in Figure 7 below.

Fig.7. Summary: International Organisations by area of activity. **Source**: Nexus stakeholders[37]

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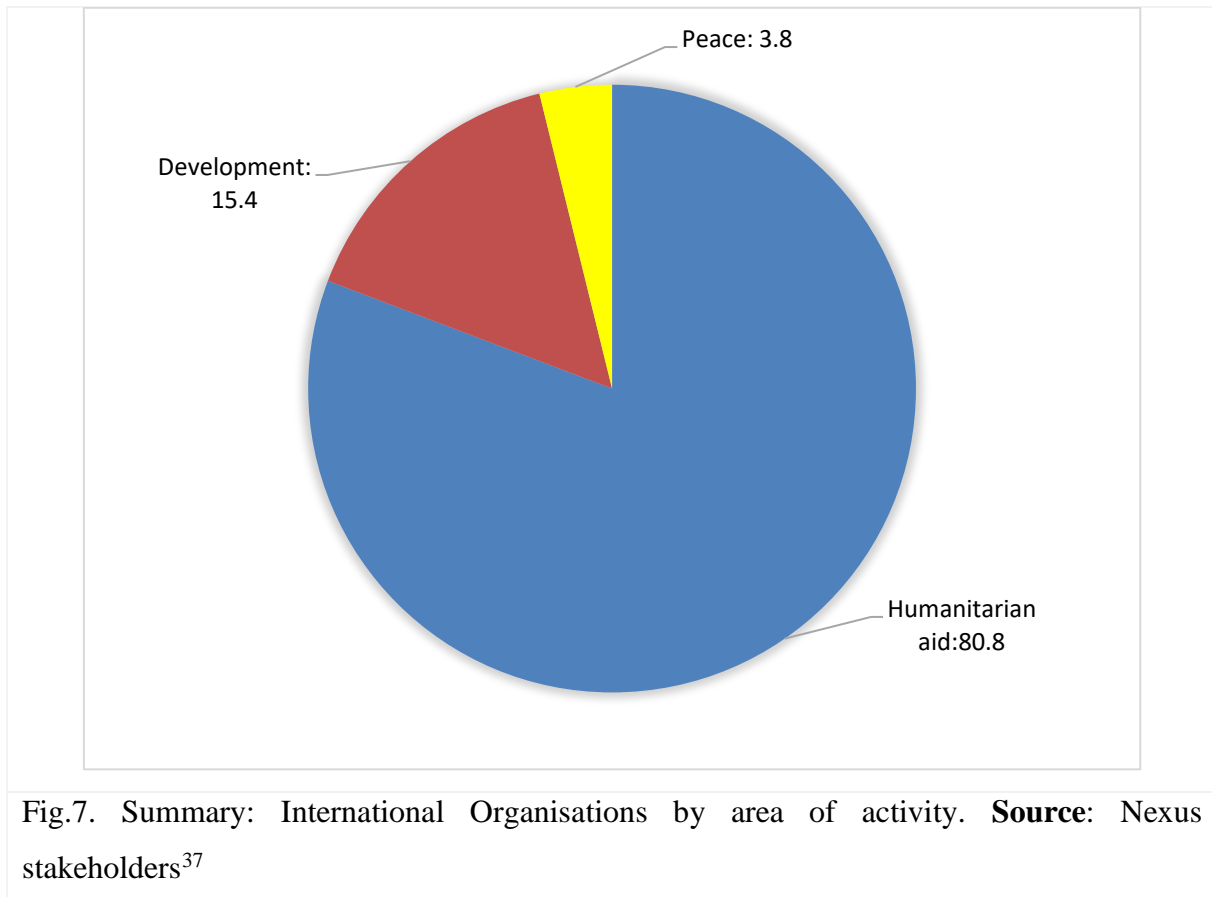
includes five types of organisations (DRC government, UN agencies, donors, national and international NGOs) and four types of relationships (funding, information sharing, collaboration and coordination). In this report, we find hundreds of organisations involved in the triple nexus in the DRC, with a complex net of relationships. Here, we refer to a list of local and international actors provided by the PGAI. Although very limited, we have used this list to help give a relative picture of the situation on the field. The list is attached as annex.

[37] See note 33

3.3.4. National non-governmental organisations and civil society in the nexus

There are over 60 national and local NGOs in the nexus approach.[38] Unlike international organisations, many of the NGOs at local level (in the provinces of Kasai and Kasai Central) are not specialised in a single area of the nexus but rather are active in at least two of the three areas of the nexus (Humanitarian, Development and Peace), as shown in Figure 8.

Fig.8. Summary: Breakdown of national NGOs by area of intervention. **Source**: Nexus stakeholders[39]
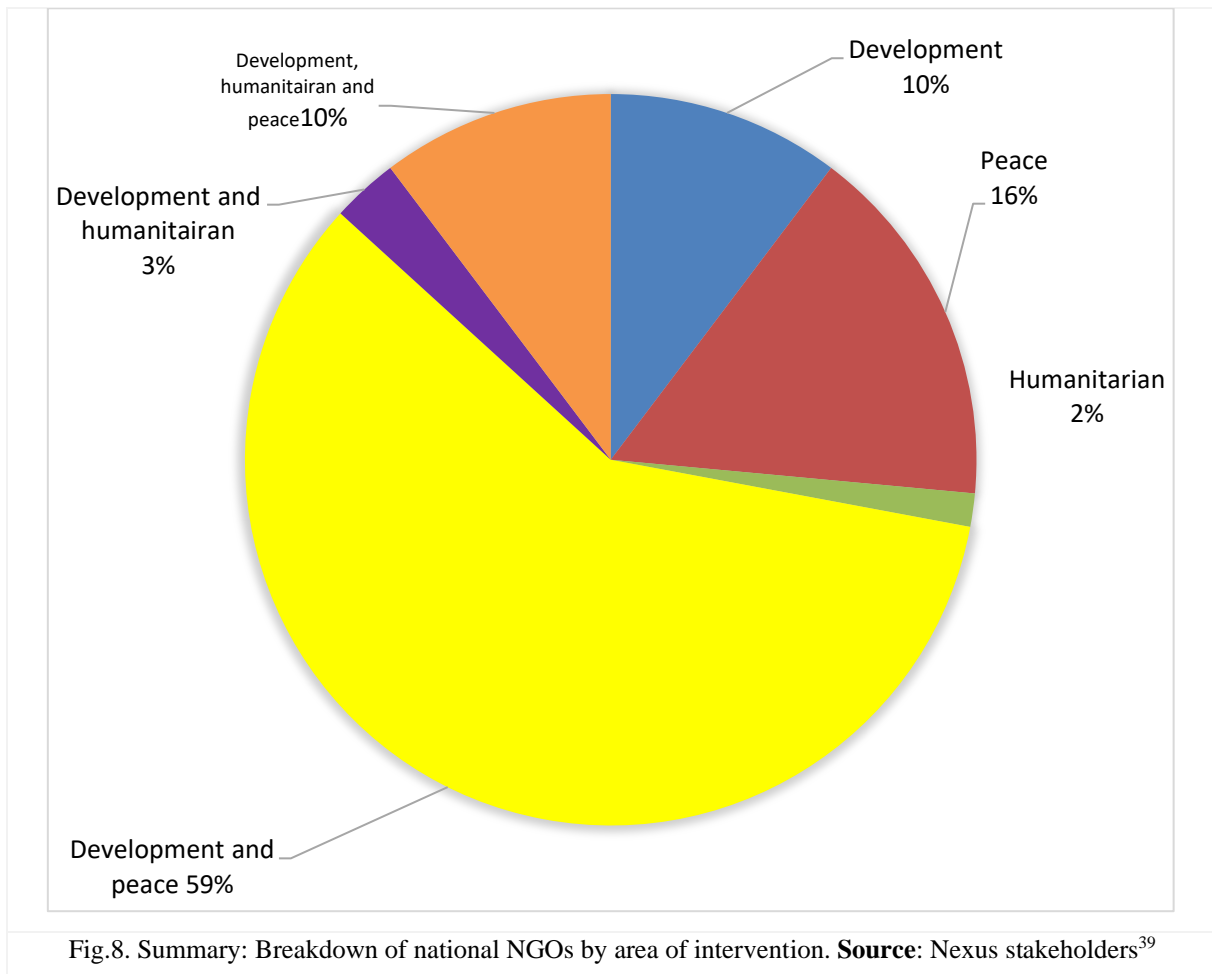
3.4. Projects and Funding

Based on data obtained from the PGAI database, the trend in funding from 2015 to 2021 has been analysed and shows a gradual increase in the budget. One of the reasons for this increase is the interest shown by international players (including donors and international Organisations)

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[38] See note 44

[39] "Humanitarian" is understood in the sens of emergency interventions and response to immediate needs for poor communities, while Development is used for interventions focusing on building resilience and those with long term perspective; and Peace is meant for activities that ensure social cohesion, stability and absence of war.

since 2019 in the nexus approach, which they perceive to be a tool for coordination, convergence and coherence in the management of international aid. Although the triple nexus should not be seen as a tool for fundraising, it is important to notice that the approach has received greater consensus and support from major donors. As a result, a gradual increase in projects funding can be observed each year.
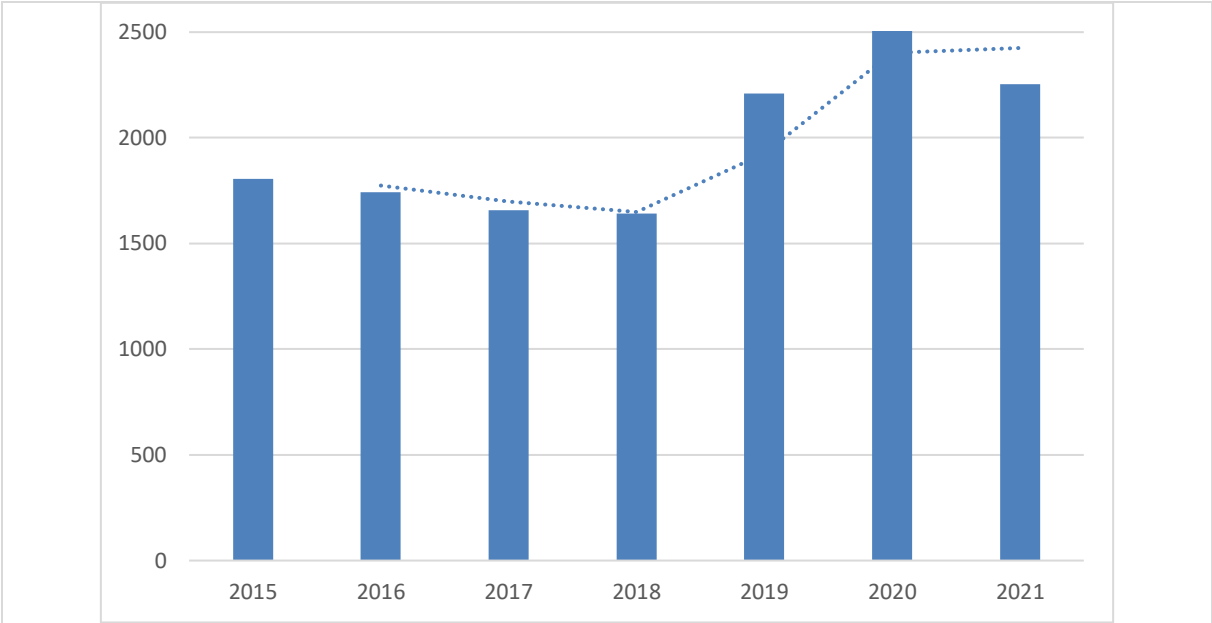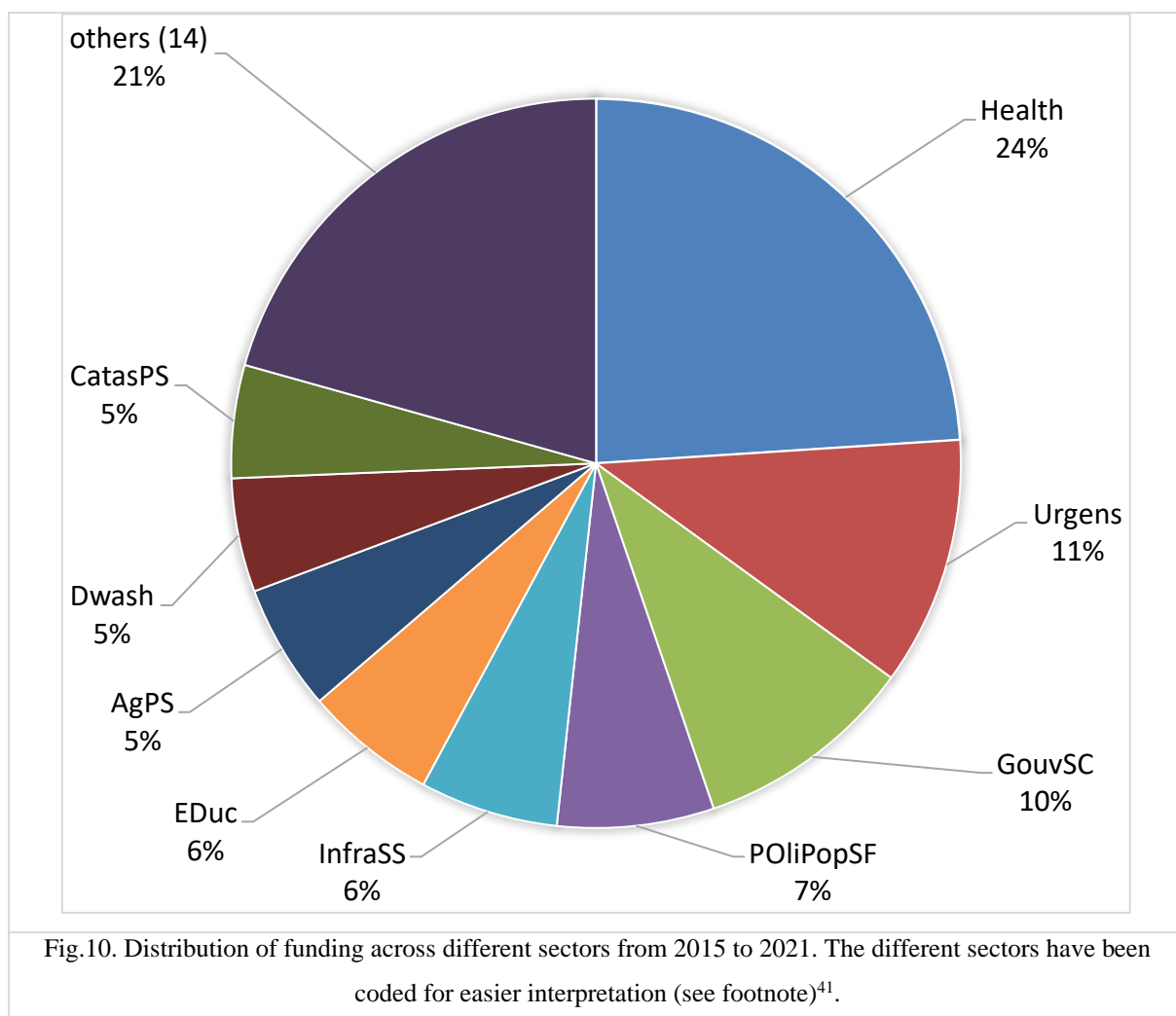

Fig.9. Annual change in funding between 2015 and 2021

The drop in funding, starting in 2016 and reaching its lowest level in 2018 (the year of the presidential and parliamentary elections), can be explained by the tense and volatile relations between the international community and President Kabila's regime, which was late in organising the elections[40].

A total of 21 sectors were identified according to the categorization provided by the PGAI database. This categorization is based on the sectoral classification of the OECD. The analyses for the period from 2015 to 2022 (see Fig. 10) show that the health sector benefits from approximately 24%, followed by the Emergency sector (11%) and Governance & civil society sectors (10%). Support for the rest of the sectors fluctuates around 6% (CatasPS, Dwash, AgPS, EDuc, InfraSS, POliPopSF, etc.).

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[40]These elections were finally held in December 2018, far from the gaze of the international community.

Fig.10. Distribution of funding across different sectors from 2015 to 2021. The different sectors have been coded for easier interpretation (see footnote)[41].

To assess the contributions in the Nexus-related sectors, a correspondence was made between the OECD sectors' category and the Nexus sectors (Humanitarian, Development and Peace). This comparison has made it possible to group the OECD sectors identified in Figure 7 into the following categories: Peace (PS), Humanitarian (Hum), Dev-PS (Development-Peace), Hum-Dev (Humanitarian-Development) or Hum-Dev-PS (Humanitarian-Development-Peace) and other sectors not linked to the Nexus. This analysis subsequently made it possible to identify the funds allocated to the nexus sectors, i.e. 27% (see Fig. 11) on the basis of data used from 2015 to 2021.

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[41] CatasPs: Disaster prevention and preparedness; Dwash: Water supply and sanitation; AgPS: Agriculture, fishing and forestry; InfraSS: Infrastructure and other social services; Population/health and fertility policy; GouvSc: Governance and civil society; Urgens: Emergency response; Health: Health.
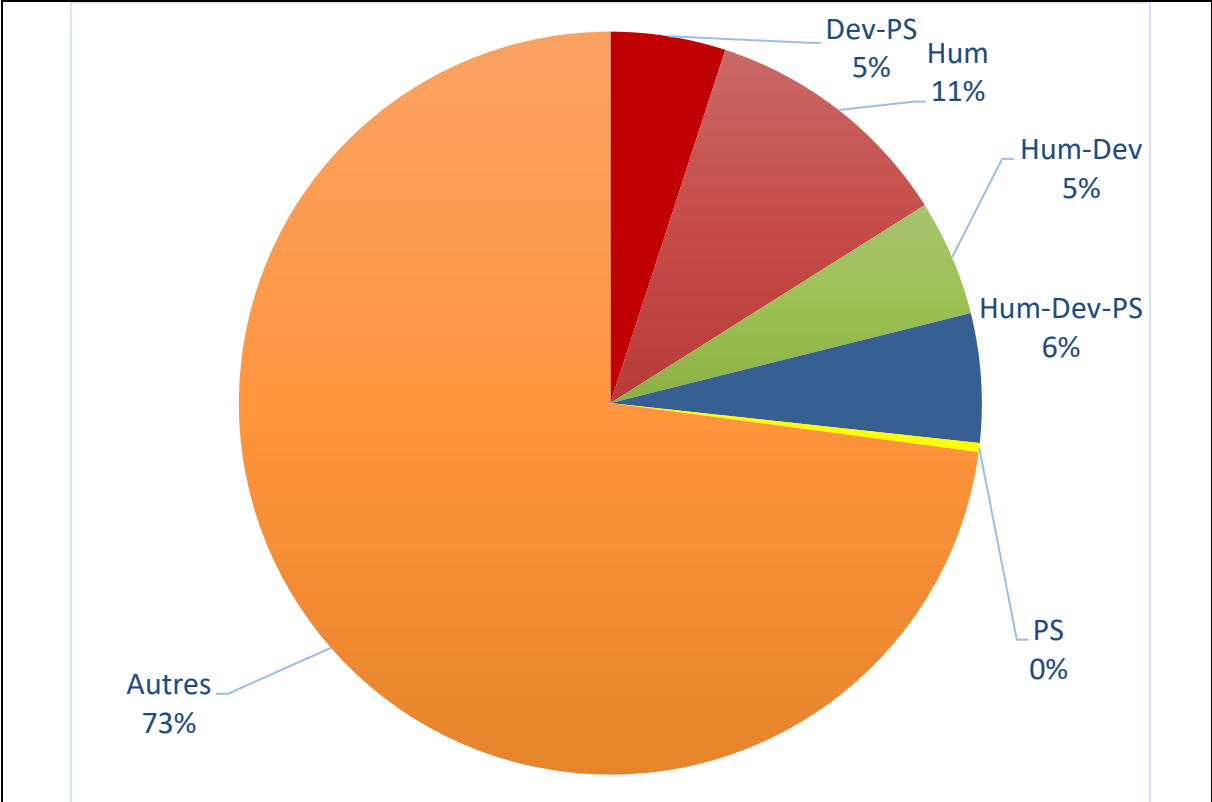
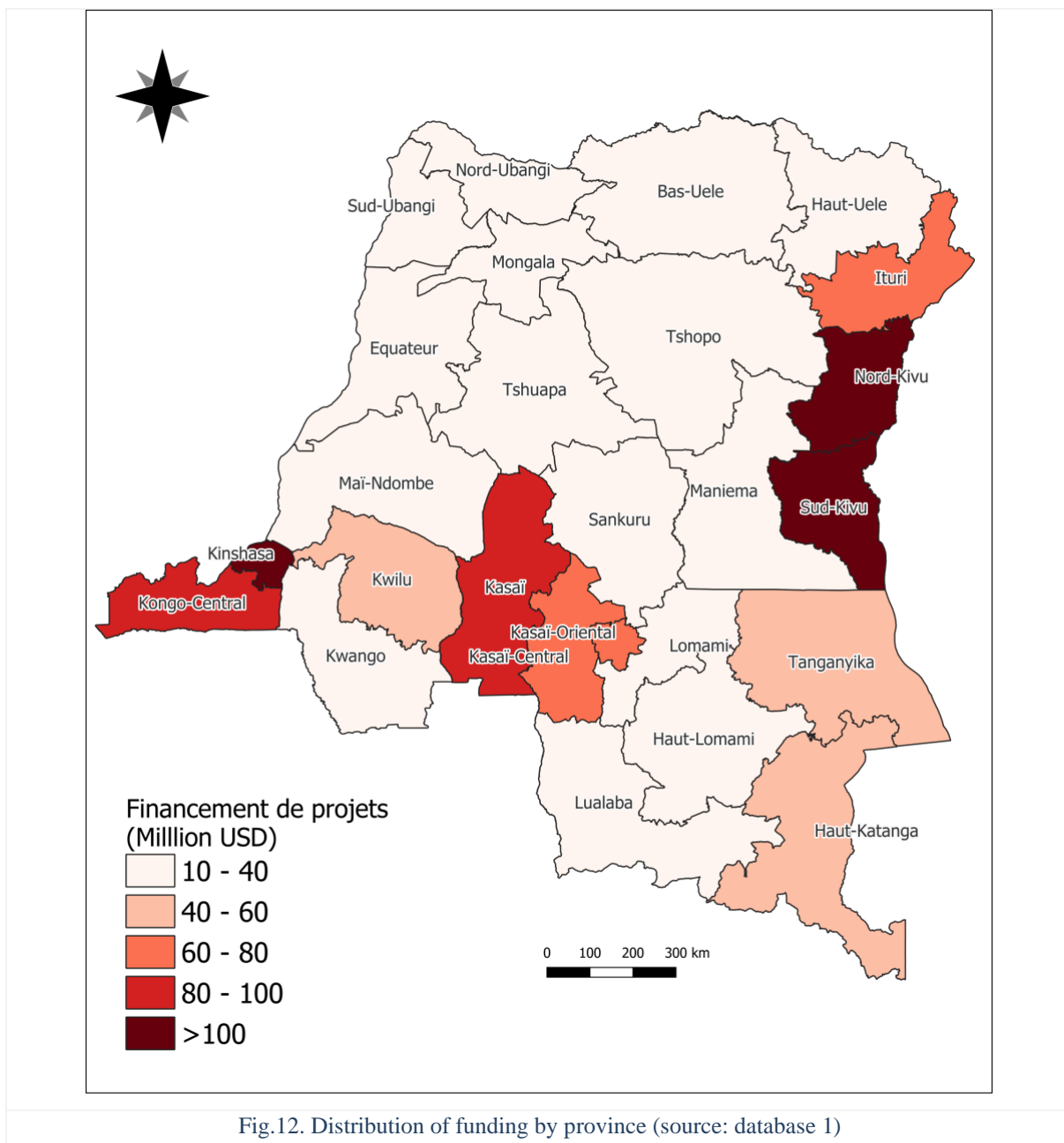Fig.11. Distribution of projects across the 3 areas of the nexus (Source: PGAI database)

Fig.12. Distribution of funding by province (source: database 1)

The map clearly shows that more funding is provided to conflict zones (apart from the case of Kinshasa, where the high amount of funding can be explained by the fact that this is where central institutions are based and so all national-level projects would be accounted for in that province). Moreover, the amount of funding varies depending on the intensity of the conflicts (e.g. armed conflicts in the East versus inter-community conflicts in the greater Kasai region).

4. A case study of Kasai Central: explaining project, roles/actors, coordination and tools

4.1. The triple nexus in Kasai Central

"*We arrived in an area to provide drinking water. There were more than a dozen other operators in the area, each working on a different, cross-cutting or even identical aspect of the project. It soon became obvious that, for the sake of efficiency and rationalisation, we needed to work together to focus our efforts more effectively.*" [42]

This comment from a programme officer in Kasai Central clearly illustrates the importance of the nexus as a strategy of **convergence** and **coherence** whereby different actors work together to define common aims for their interventions. For this reason, the operationalization of the nexus in Kasai Central can be characterised by the production of a mapping of the humanitarian, development and peace actors on the ground; the identification of priority geographical areas for the nexus; the contextualisation of collective results and the identification of activities to be put in place to achieve them; and, finally, the establishment of a local nexus coordination mechanism.[43]

In Kasai Central, the nexus approach is primarily guided by the provincial development plan, the provincial government's operational action plans, the humanitarian response plans for localised crises and MONUSCO transition plans.

4.2. Mapping the actors at provincial level

Our interest in mapping the provincial nexus actors stems from the fact that the SS-KAT project is a provincial one that requires coordination and leadership at provincial and local levels. In the province of Kasai Central where the investigations were carried out, we find almost the same groups of actors as at the national level; the only difference being that the donors are not present or represented (Figure 13 - structure of actors). There are 3 UN agencies involved in coordinating the nexus project in the province (OCHA, UNDP and the Office of the Resident Coordinator), whereas the international organisations include Catholic Relief Services (CRS), World Vision and Handicap International. The international and national/local NGOs[44] are

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[42] Interview 1, Kananga (April 2023)
[43] Interview 9, Kananga (April 2023)
[44] 14 national NGOs participated in the SS-KAT project as implementing partners. These were the *Association des Jeunes Islamiques pour le Développement* (AJID), *Action pour les Infrastructures et le Développement Social*

active in the thematic groups (CORE1/2/3/4). A **technical secretariat** comprising the Governorate (Executive Secretary) and the UNDP (*Nexus Analyst*)[45] supports the coordination work. The Provincial Nexus Group (PNG) in Kasai Central can be summarised as follows:
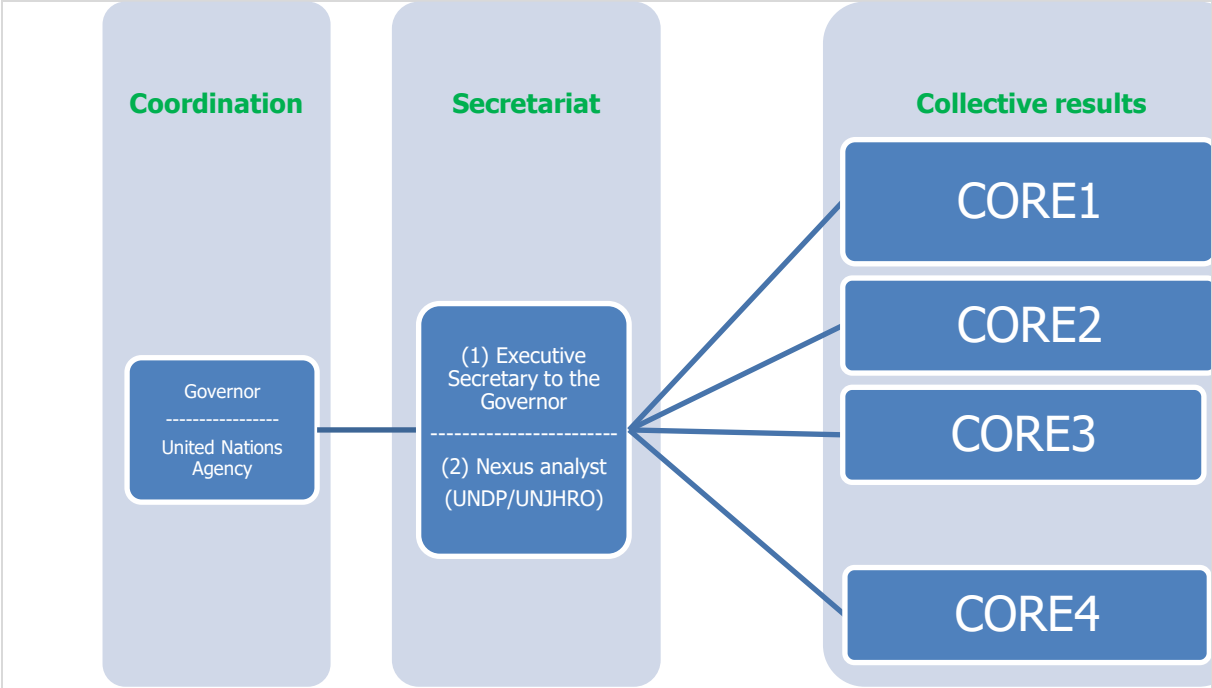

Fig.13. Organisation of Nexus actors at provincial level, in Kasai Central

THEMATIC GROUPS (defined in terms of collective results): the "nexus work" happens at this level, where different stakeholders concretely meet in action. Implementation of a project or an intervention happens at this level, with coordination and leadership ensured by a specific State (provincial) Ministry. The level of leadership (involvement/participation) of the Ministry plays a key role in achieving results.

(AIDS), *Association pour le Développement Social et Sauvegarde de l'Environnement* (ADSSE), *Bureau d'Elaboration et de Mise en Œuvre des Projets de Développement Communautaire* (BEMPRODEC), *Caritas-Développement/Kananga, Centre d'Encadrement Intégré Lukibu* (CEILU), International Save the People (SAPI), *Centre d'Appui au Développement de la Femme en Action* (CADEFA), *Regroupement des acteurs pour le Développement de Base* (RADEBA), *Bureau National Catholique de l'Enfance* (BNCE), *Réseau des associations de promotion des droits de l'homme au Kasaï* (RAPRODHOK), *Bureau d'élaboration et de mise en œuvre des projets de développement communautaire* (BEMPRODEC), *Centre pilote pour la Promotion et le Développement de l'Elevage et de l'Agriculture* (CEPRODEA), *Office des voies de desserte agricole* (OVDA) and *Action des volontaires unis pour le développement* (AVUDS).

[45] It should be noted that at provincial level, there is a Nexus Analyst whose role is to act as the secretariat for coordinating the provincial Nexus.

TG/CORE1 Food insecurity & Malnutrition	TG/CORE2 Basic social services	TG/CORE3 Forced displacement of populations	TG/CORE4 Gender-based sexual violence (GBSV)
•Lead: Ministry of Agriculture •UN: WFP & FAO •Partners: Technical experts, National NGOs	•Lead: Ministry of Planning •UN: UNICEF •Partners: Technical experts; National NGOs	•Lead: Ministry of Planning •UN: UNHCR & Interpeace •Partners: Technical experts; National NGOs	•Lead: Ministry of Planning •UN: UNFPA & UN WOMEN •Partners: Technical experts; National NGOs

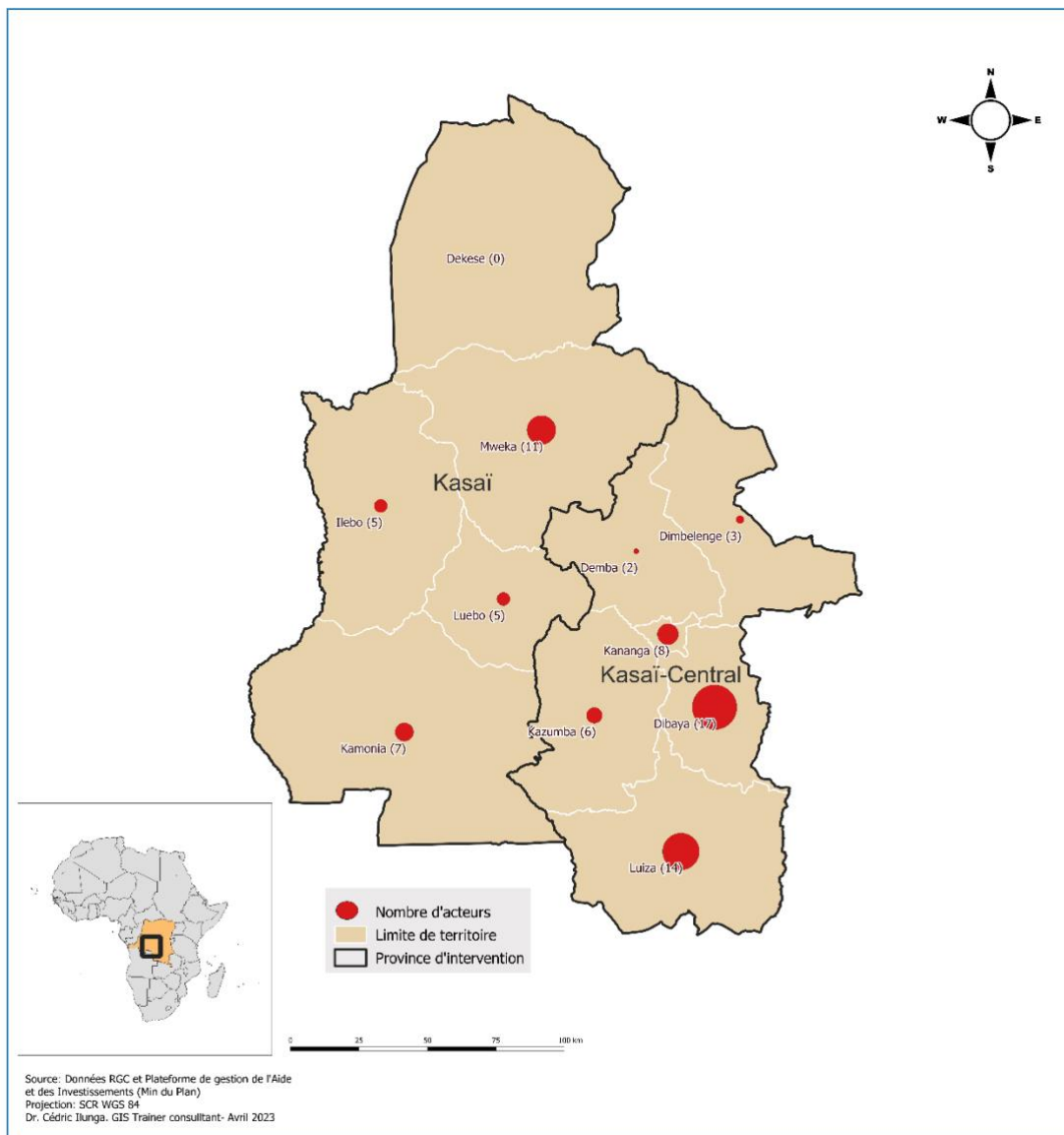**Operational presence of actors in the provinces of Kasai Central and Kasai**

Fig.14. Overview of operations in the provinces of Kasai-Central and Kasai

4.3. Coordination and Leadership

As shown and stated in Figure 13, the Governor of the province is the key player in the coordination of the triple nexus in the province. Assisted by a technical secretariat (made of the members of the cabinet and the nexus Analyst), the Governor is supposed to impulse the leadership in mobilising resources, getting active participation of all stakeholders. It has been noted that where there is a clear recognition of the nexus approach and its vision, especially by State actors, there are more chance to achieve more tangible results.

4.4. Tools to support the nexus approach

To improve coordination and increase greater effectiveness in the implementation process of the triple nexus, the DRC nexus team has elaborated a number of tools, which are explained below.

4.4.1. Monitoring and Evaluation tool

This tool uses the 3Ws (Who? What? Where?) which help to list a) all stakeholders who are active in the convergence zones, b) the pilot territories (i.e. Luiza and Dibaya in Kasai Central; and Tshikapa in Kasai) c) with the aim of extending the nexus to the entire province (i.e. Kasai, Kasai Central).

The tool also provides a results framework, which determines indicators for monitoring progress and delays, as well as programming and financial issues preventing the achievement of the collective results (CORE).

4.4.2. Communication and Advocacy tool

Based on data available, the tool helps to ensure that services are widely distributed. "*It is thanks to the nexus approach that we are able to obtain all this information and ensure that the various actors operating in humanitarian aid, sustainable development and peace-building are working together coherently and effectively.*" [46] The aim is not necessarily to carry out a joint activity but to share information and to plan the phasing out of activities according to the results framework, as defined by the stakeholders.

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[46] Interview, Kananga, April 2023

In Kasai Central, the provincial Ministry of Justice and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) oversee this function.

The 3Ws tool helps to identify, at this level, the proportion of the budget allocated to one particular area compared to another. For example, more than 95% of the gender-based violence (GBV) budget is allocated to Dibaya and less than 5% goes to Luiza. We can therefore conclude that there are not enough GBV initiatives in Luiza compared to Dibaya. As the 3Ws mapping is used to identify the nature of the actors in the different regions of intervention, it helps to highlight duplications and deficiencies in services provided to vulnerable communities and individuals.

4.4.3. The results framework for indicators and planning

This tool help to visualise how the activities implemented are progressing or regressing compared to the expected results. Based on the conclusions, it becomes possible to get informed data for results achieved, which are key for donors.

At present, these various tools are already operational in Tshikapa and Kananga; a map of actors is available, and the results framework and five-year plan are fairly advanced. In general, this is how structures evolve, since the aim of the nexus approach in terms of the synchronisation of activities is to reduce vulnerability and vulnerable people in the long term. To this end, the continuous self-assessment and evaluation of different activities by stakeholders means that the tools can be adapted and progress measured. Although each actor evolves in its own way, the idea is to incorporate the nexus approach in the implementation of different projects in the field.

5. Evaluation and Outlook

Since the late 1990s, the eastern part of the DRC has been plagued by prolonged armed conflict, resulting in thousands of deaths, internally displaced people and even refugees in neighbouring countries. Despite efforts to restore State authority, this situation has increased the fragmentation of local government authorities to such an extent that the provinces affected by the conflict are witnessing a "seizure of power by the local, or even ultra-local".[47] This is as much the result of the war as it is of the geography of this continental country. This *de facto* balkanisation obviously prompts us to wonder what caused it. Is the collapse of central government to blame for the rise of violent alternative political structures, or did the latter violently undermine the authority of central government? What is the effect and what is the cause?

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[47] Sébastien MELMOTH, "RDC : décentralisation et sortie de conflit", in **Afrique contemporaine**, no.221, vol.1, 2007, p.80

Frank van Acker and Koen Vlassenroot believe that the two phenomena are probably self-perpetuating. In their view, *"the context of state disintegration and growing insecurity has paved the way for new strategies of economic control. Disorder, insecurity and a general situation of impunity have prompted the formation of new militarised [informal] networks for the extraction of economic profits."*[48] Local warlords saw the militias as a base for their racketeering activities, which in turn strengthened the drive to create these militias.[49]

In the context of the recent Kamwina Nsapu conflict in Kasai Central, which was rooted in the difficult coexistence of traditional power and modern State power, it would not be misguided to view the economy of all these local conflicts and territorial disputes through the lens of the fragmentation of State authority, especially at local level. Thus, this issue of power and territorial appropriation is at the heart of an ongoing conflict that is hindering local development: *"It is State fragility, political clientelism and the use of ethnicity by the elites in times of crisis that are to blame for the many conflicts..."* [50] This is particularly true in Greater Kasai, where more than a thousand conflicts were recorded between 2002 and 2015, including around 600 in rural areas which mostly related to land disputes and almost all to the discovery or exploitation of diamond deposits.[51] The consequences of all these conflicts have been horrific: the death of civilians, the abandonment of villages following the burning and destruction of houses and fields, disproportionate reprisals by the police forces and the loss of crops.[52] The question, thus, does the implementation of the triple nexus bring about some change in affected conflict areas? What are the gains so far?

5.1. Improved local perceptions of peace and stability

As we mentioned above, the SS-KAT project has been very critical in tackling the root causes of conflicts and in creating social cohesion within the affected communities. As a result of SS-KAT project's implementation, the actors were with the view that the project has provided a pace for peace, social dialogue and interactions between and within communities that were previously in conflict. The project's achievements arising from the repair of agricultural service roads included the provision of work to local people in labour and other income-generating activities, such as pig and poultry rearing. Thanks to the financial resources generated from these activities, many children have been able to return to school. A space for discussion and reflection has been created to hold meetings between the direct beneficiaries of the project.[53] Various problems that arise in the community are addressed (for example, the maintenance of agricultural service roads), and guidelines and strategies are adopted to ensure that

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[48] Franck van Acker and Koen Vlassenroot, "Les Maï-Maï et les fonctions de la violence milicienne dans l'Est du Congo", *Politique africaine*, No. 84, December 2001, p. 105.
[49] S. Melmoth, id.
[50] Kabata Kabamba, "Pouvoir, territorialité et conflictualité au Grand Kasai, en RDC."
[51] Id., p.22
[52] Id.
[53] Interview 2, Kananga, April 2023

the positive impacts of the project are sustained over the long term. For 5 villages with at least 6,000 people, a minimum of 155 people directly benefited from the project. The project primarily targeted victims of war and people fleeing atrocities.[54]

As a result, real progress has been made not only in terms of social cohesion but also in terms of physical safety[55] in communities previously affected by conflict. This change has also led to a shift in local people's social perceptions of peace, security and justice.[56] Consequently, peace is seen as the result of the community's efforts to settle disputes and live together in harmony for mutual benefit.[57]

It will therefore be important to drive forward the nexus with a localised approach by supporting more local leadership through grassroots capacity-building initiatives. Aligning the nexus with the local development dynamic increases the chances of achieving lasting results.

5.2. Working with national and local actors in a volatile political environment

Working towards peace and stability in a very fragile political context (lack of state authority, poor political governance, i.e. lack of accountability, corruption, impunity and lack of political legitimacy, etc.) remains a key challenge. Coupled with the widespread poverty, deep-seated inequalities and lack of opportunities in communities, it becomes more challenging to come up with innovative solutions to these social rooted illnesses.

The nexus approach aims to respond to conflicts that are tearing our communities apart by acting at the root causes. Although change is slow and barely perceptible in the context of armed conflict, we suggest below some areas that will need more attention to make the approach more impactful for communities in the long run.

(i) Strengthening national coordination and institutions

To ensure that the operationalization of the triple nexus approach in the DRC is effectively coordinated and oriented, a national nexus coordinator has been recruited. The latter is represented and assisted at provincial level by a *nexus analyst*.[58] The role of the nexus coordinator is to coordinate the interactions and actions of the various actors at national level.

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[54] Interview 9, Kananga, April 2023

[55] Although the society is still very patriarchal, the level of gender-based violence has fallen in relative terms as a result of this project, as has the incidence of crime and interpersonal conflict.

[56] During an interview with a community leader, the latter acknowledged that the people of Kasai Central are more willing to settle their disputes before the courts, unlike in Kinshasa, the capital, where there still seems to be a serious lack of confidence in the justice system (Interview 4, Kananga, April 2023).

[57] Id.

[58] This is the case in provinces where nexus projects are being implemented.

The role of the nexus analyst, on the other hand, is to support the provincial government in coordinating the nexus actors within its province with a view to instilling a sense of responsibility in the provincial government, local NGOs and civil society to ensure the sustainability of nexus-related activities. Given that some actors, including international organisations, have a fixed-term mandate and will inevitably leave one day, it is important to consolidate and strengthen the capacities of national players (government, civil society, businesses, etc.) to ensure that the approach is sustainable and effective by continuing activities and interventions.

(ii) Investing in civil society (local and national NGOs)

Our findings show a very low capacity for local institutions (local government and NGOs) to fund activities and projects from their own resources, resulting in dependence on foreign funding. This is also perceptible in the low level of local expertise in managing major projects and lack of mechanisms and procedures to safeguard resources.

Indeed, when we examine the current capacity of most national NGOs to fund projects with their own financial resources, we can immediately acknowledge the structural difficulties they face when it comes to sustaining projects without the support of international partners. The table[59] below gives some idea of the extent to which local NGOs in Kasai participate in the implementation of projects.

Table 1. Illustrating the participation of national NGOs

Province	Territory	Thematic group	Number of projects implemented	Number of National NGOs	Budget allocated from own funds in % terms
Kasai	Tshikapa	food security	13	2	0.04
		Access to basic social services	27	11	11
		Forced displacement of populations	19	6	0.31
		Gender-based violence	13	5	1.13

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[59] Annual implementation report, 2022

If we are to rise to the challenge, it is vital that we push the government to take the lead in coordinating the nexus so that it can fulfil its mission, which is to plan the development of the country or province in a way that meets the diverse challenges of its people. Technical and financial partners can then act as support structures. It should be noted that when we discuss the government's leadership, we are referring to two different levels, namely political and technical.

At the political level, the actors to be targeted and empowered by the triple nexus policy in the provinces are the governor and his/her ministers. But, unfortunately, the biggest challenge is ensuring continuity and effectiveness, given that political positions in a fragile country like the DRC remain extremely precarious and transient.

In order to ensure the sustainability of actions, it is important to focus on the technical aspect of leadership, which must be the responsibility of the Heads of Division (of the various departments/services within the Ministries) and the driving force behind the continuity of public action (in the event of a political change). When it comes to steering the nexus structure at provincial level, it is therefore important to interact with these two structures when referring to the government

With regard to Kasai and Kasai Central, when we talk about the nexus approach, we are referring to the technical teams from the various provincial ministries (see role of the thematic groups in Fig 13 above). Although it is not always immediately apparent, the teams collaborate well and also play an important role in implementing the nexus at the provincial level. Most of the work takes place within the thematic groups, which are instrumental in achieving the objectives of the nexus in the 2 pilot provinces.

Working and evaluation tools have been put in place to support the evaluation of the work carried out by the various actors, with the aim of extending the triple nexus approach to the other territories of Kasai Central and Kasai provinces, and eventually to other provinces of the DRC.

(iii) Recruiting local staff

"Here in Kasai, we didn't start testing the nexus until 2021. We explained to the beneficiaries that the intervention of the humanitarian workers is only temporary and that, once they leave, it is up to the beneficiaries to take ownership of the positive impacts of the various projects. With the nexus, there is a kind of follow-up that takes place during the implementation of the

different projects. For this reason, we insist on recruiting local staff to ensure that the positive impacts of the project are sustained over the long term. In my opinion, this approach contradicts the idea that humanitarian workers do not develop a country but simply abandon the population, leaving them to deal with their fate on their own, only to return again with donations... The nexus approach, as I see it, is a recovery approach." [60]

Experience has shown that working with local staff and increasing local ownership for the approach have a more positive impact for communities in the long run, as it helps raise awareness on how to build more resilience from what they have. Strengthening local technical capacities (expertise) as well as financial ones (for example, giving local authority the means of their action) might guaranty social change.

5.3. Transitional justice as a bridge between peace and development

It must also be acknowledged that the operationalization of the nexus has made it possible to highlight the issue of transitional justice as a mechanism for sustainable conflict resolution. Part of the SS-KAT project has seen a successful implementation process of transitional justice, with the establishment of a provincial Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission in Kasai Central, in July 2021. Again, through the same project, hundreds of local actors in Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms have been able to access skills training to improve their collaboration with those in the judicial system in order to promote peace and to protect people's rights.

For this local leader, "there is no development without peace; and peace is only possible if people in conflict agree to reconcile with each other. Healing the wounds of a painful past is an essential step for peace. This is what transitional justice process has to deal with in our province."[61]

It goes without saying that the effective success of this process will rely on community involvement, including traditional chiefs and local authorities taking ownership and participating/getting involved, and capacity to show the willingness and commitment to forget the past for a common better future.

5.4. Looking at aid perspective

With a view on the operationalization of the nexus in the Great Kasai, one of the relevant questions to be raised is the extent to which aid, whether humanitarian or in the context of

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[60] Interview 2, Kananga (April 2023)
[61] Interview 7, Kananga (April 2023)

sustainable development or peace-building, can really bring definitive peace and sustainable development to the affected communities. If support from international partners can help deal with internal challenges, how do we deal with external causes of conflicts, more often out of control of those affected? This questions, in fact, helps to question the consistency of the triple nexus itself as a sustainable approach.

Stories from interviewees in Kasai Central, and even during workshop in Bukavu, have shown cases of resistance to foreign aid/assistance, be it in terms of emergency aid or development aid. In fact, if aid can help to alleviate misery and help build resilient communities, for some community members it continue to entertain dependency and frustrations,[62] which are expressed sometimes in direct contestation or even confrontation with aid workers or more specifically with peacekeepers. The recent call from grassroots organisations in the eastern Congo for the UN mission (MONUSCO) and the EAC regional troops to immediately quite the country participates of these frustrations. [63] Looking this from the triple nexus perspective, it should not be wrong to assert that the approach does not yet respond adequately to the challenge of achieving permanent stability and sustainable development. It is therefore important to continue thinking on ways to make it more significant and impactful in the long run.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

From 2019 to date, what lessons can we learn from the operationalization of aid in the DRC? Is it really possible to move away from the paradigm of delivering aid and towards the concept of ending need? The implementation of the SS-KAT project demonstrates that the nexus approach has a promising future and can play an important part in building communities that are more peaceful, resilient and committed to their own development. Indeed, "*this approach contradicts the widespread idea that humanitarian workers do not develop the country but simply repress populations by abandoning them to their sad fate, only to return time and time again with donations... When local players take ownership of the achievements of different*

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[62] In a number of accounts, the interviewees described the opposition encountered by their "aid distributors", either because the people are tired of simply receiving aid without seeing their security situation improve, or because they feel degraded by being kept in a position of dependence (interviews in Kananga, April 2023).

[63] As we finalise this report, media reports have mentioned the recent killings of civilians, in Goma, protesting for the departure of MONUSCO and the EAC troops (see Human Rights Watch Press release, *RD Congo: Répression meurtrière à Goma*, 31 August 2023 https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2023/08/31/rd-congo-repression-meurtriere-goma).

projects, the government's role becomes easier in deciding the future of its people."[64] However, conflicts, especially protracted armed conflicts, are not solely attributable to internal factors. Sometimes external factors are more difficult to identify and more complex to manage. With this in mind, the promises of the operationalization of the nexus also have their limits. This is why it is so important to start thinking in terms of a paradigm shift: from development aid to the right to development.

Nonetheless, based on our study, we make the following recommendations for the future of the nexus in the DRC:

In terms of development cooperation,

A public department or public institution responsible for managing international aid should be created to ensure efficiency (the national nexus coordination could be transformed into such a department);

The international community, including donors and international NGOs, should make a greater commitment to support and accompany the Congolese government in overcoming its many humanitarian, security and sustainable development challenges.

In terms of institutions,

Political leadership at all levels of Government (local, provincial and national) should be developed in order to strengthen the Government's capacity to implement an official development assistance policy and manage partnerships and agreements, with a win-win vision, through programmes aimed at facilitating the implementation of the triple nexus.

A Ministry for Reconstruction or a Reconstruction Commission should be created within the Ministry of Planning to plan post-conflict development in the DRC. This ministry will be required to collaborate effectively with ministries involved in development, defence and planning, justice and human rights. It will also catalyse and facilitate reconstruction initiatives.

A peace observatory working at all levels of national life should also be created with the aim of regulating and preventing peace, facilitating conflict resolution, consolidating peace and supporting post-conflict rehabilitation. At present, two structures have been established by the Congolese government, one of which is under the responsibility of the Prime Minister and the

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[64] Interview, Kananga (April 2023).

other, called the National Monitoring Mechanism of the Addis Ababa Agreement, reports directly to the President of the Republic. There is talk of requalifying these two structures and uniting them to improve efficiency.

In terms of education, civic engagement and social mobilisation, it will be important to emphasise empowerment as the process of enabling individuals and communities to take action to ensure their well-being and their right to have a say in the decisions that affect them, which will also be the focus of research and social intervention. Another important element is the introduction of the nexus approach into the curricula to enable the present and future intellectual elite to understand what is at stake in this approach, to contextualise it and to perfect it so that it can be applied effectively in the DRC. Through education and training, efforts will be made to localise the nexus approach. The localisation or the *indigenisation* of education and training for peace, conflict resolution and development will prioritise education on tolerance, truth and justice as community values, and on learning to cooperate.

In terms of legal structures, there is a demand for an **international criminal tribunal for the Congo**. Initiatives by NGOs and prominent figures at both local and international level are pushing for the establishment of such a court. The aim is to address the issue of inadequate protection for civilians and others not taking part in hostilities, whose rights have been violated on a massive scale, with war crimes and crimes against humanity being committed against them. The atrocities committed during the armed conflicts in the DRC are immense and extremely violent. The legal dimension will focus on transitional justice.

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Appendix

See Excel file (attached).