

Researching livelihoods and
services affected by conflict

Pathways to women's empowerment:

Navigating the hybrid social order
in eastern DRC

Working paper 76

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Cover photo: Anne-mama *genre* Lwindi, Mwenga territory, South-Kivu Province in the DRC. Patrick Milabyo Kyamusugulwa, 2017.

About us



The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) is a global research programme exploring basic services, and social protection in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Funded by UK Aid from the UK Government (DFID), with complementary funding from Irish Aid and the European Commission (EC), SLRC was established in 2011 with the aim of strengthening the evidence base and informing policy and practice around livelihoods and services in conflict.

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the lead organisation. SLRC partners include: Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA), Feinstein International Center (FIC, Tufts University), Focus1000, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Wageningen University (WUR), Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research (NCCR), Busara Center for Behavioral Economics, Nepal Institute for Social and Environmental Research (NISER), Narrate, Social Scientists' Association of Sri Lanka (SSA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Women and Rural Development Network (WORUDET), Claremont Graduate University (CGU), Institute of Development Policy (IOB, University of Antwerp) and the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS, Erasmus University of Rotterdam).

SLRC's research can be separated into two phases. Our first phase of research (2011 - 2017) was based on three research questions, developed over the course of an intensive one-year inception phase:

- State legitimacy: experiences, perceptions and expectations of the state and local governance in conflict-affected situations
- State capacity: building effective states that deliver services and social protection in conflict-affected situations
- Livelihood trajectories and economic activity under conflict

Guided by our original research questions on state legitimacy, state capacity, and livelihoods, the second phase of SLRC research (2017-2019) delves into questions that still remain, organised into three themes of research. In addition to these themes, SLRC II also has a programme component exploring power and everyday politics in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). For more information on our work, visit: www.securelivelihoods.org/what-we-do

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Acronyms and glossary



AFD	<i>Agence Française de Développement</i>
APIDE	<i>Appui-conseils aux projets et initiatives de développement endogène</i> (a national NGO operating mainly in the Mwenga territory)
ARDAPE	The Association of Livestock, Agriculture and Development (operating in Masasu locality in the Mwenga territory)
BSD	Business and Sustainable Development Commission
CAID	<i>Cellule d'Analyse des Indicateurs de Développement</i>
COPA	<i>Comités des Parents</i> (parents' committees)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
D4	Degree obtained following four post-primary years of education
D6	Degree obtained following six post-primary years of education
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FGD	Focus group discussions
GNI	Gross National Income
HDI	Human Development Index
HFC	Health Facility Committees (also known under their French acronym, CODESA: <i>Comité de Santé et de Développement de l'Aire de Santé</i>)
IRC	International Rescue Committee
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OPJ	Officer of Judicial Police (in its French acronym, <i>Officier de la Police Judiciaire</i>)
PNSR-RDC	<i>Programme National de Santé de la Reproduction-République Démocratique du Congo</i> (National Program for Reproductive Health in DRC)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN SCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325
VDC	Village Development Committees
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Associations
WMG	Women's Major Group (official participant in the United Nations' process on Sustainable Development)
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature
Mama genre	Women who are also officers of the Judicial Police, in charge of gender in the state administration)

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Executive summary



The United Nations' Agenda 2030 aims to achieve gender equality as part of the 5th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). Yet, the way to reach this goal remains under-researched – particularly in rural, conflict-affected communities in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This paper uses the donor-funded, community-driven reconstruction programme 'Tuungane' as the foundation on which to analyse changes in gender norms in the context of a 'hybrid social order', defined as the interplay between 'modern' norms (state and non-governmental institutions); religious (church institutions) and traditional (institutions based on customary law).

Findings

Using a qualitative methodology collecting data from the Kalehe and Mwenga territories in the eastern DRC, this paper examines the possibilities for women's empowerment in decision-making. Our findings show that over the last decade, despite the low level of women's empowerment when it comes to decision-making and ability to speak out in public, women have become leaders via three pathways: (i) appointment as *mama genre* at the state gender service, (ii) through capacity development as president or member of a committee or association, and (iii) educational empowerment at secondary-school level.

These leaders also play diverse roles in mobilising others on women's and girls' rights, in leading women's associations or mixed groups, in counselling women and men, and sometimes in sanctioning women unable to follow the social order. These roles are growing because of the space(s) created by the Congolese Constitution and by the activities of NGOs (including church-led ones) with the support of international agencies. At the time of our data collection, we found that overall, the proportion of women in leadership positions was still very low because of several factors – including poor education associated with geographical remoteness, which affected the vast majority of women in the study area.

Although the Constitution and NGOs' rules make clear that women have the right to lead as men do, the religious and the traditional social orders do not place women at the forefront of decision-making, diluting what they have learnt or negating them. Importantly, this paper highlights the existence of a 'hybrid order', which means that women can lead in some 'modern' structures but not in the more religious or traditional ones, or only in a secondary, invisible, minority way. Different gender norms thus shape women's room for manoeuvre in different domains. An intersectionality 'lens' can help to unpack the differences among women leaders in terms of the endowment (or otherwise) of judicial power, and of social class – some are educated while others are not, and some are closely related to important kinship families or to a church-based community.

We conclude that where religious and traditional social orders dominate, attempts to empower women based on Western gender norms are bound to fail. A better understanding of the hybrid social order is required by the state, international actors including NGO programmes and grassroots projects, to help design better interventions.

Recommendations

This appreciation of the hybrid social order leads us to some key recommendations to better consolidate gender equality in such contexts:

- **Understanding the contours of the hybrid social order is key for grasping women's empowerment status.** Understanding the hybrid social order that emerges from the interaction, adaptation and (selective) merging of modern, religious, and traditional (customary) norms is crucial to begin capturing the realities of women's empowerment. Using the concept of 'hybridity', institutions, NGOs and grassroots programmes can begin to express how gender social norms intersect at the 'modern', to signify state and non governmental institutions;

religious to signify church institutions; and the traditional to mean institutions based on customary law.

- Within this context of hybridity, it is important for international donors **to develop balanced strategies to involve both men and women in questions of gender equality**. This also requires moving beyond awareness raising to engage deeply with men,

especially men who have no contact with gender equality concepts.

- **Nurturing women's leadership must go in tandem structural/societal changes to overturning the power of the status quo** i.e. poor access to education and legal and political representation. Education remains key to women's empowerment efforts in such contexts.

1 Introduction

Goal 5 of the United Nation's (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030. UN Women – the UN entity covering gender equality and women's empowerment – has shown that achieving this goal will have a 'multiplier effect' on all of the UN's Global Goals. Achieving Goal 5 will address other inequalities affecting many women in developing countries, which are especially severe (BSD Commission, 2018). This forms the rationale behind international agencies' and the UN's focus on women's empowerment (Kabeer, 2005; WMG, 2014).

Gender equality signifies the involvement of both men and women in terms of equal contribution, enablement and visibility in private and public life, including in decision-making. The concept also presupposes that this involvement is embedded in local norms and culture. At the same time, closing the gender gap requires improved education, training, employment, and labour market and wage structures (Grosser & Moon, 2005).

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional, dynamic and complex process, involving a change in power relations that ideally leads to the expansion of individual choices and self-reliance. It goes hand in hand with participation – indeed, the latter creates a 'space' for the former – and its success is based, in a developing world context, on the ability to translate Western norms locally (Kyamusugulwa, 2013b). Women's empowerment is the process by which women redefine gender roles in ways that extend their possibilities for being and doing (Mosedale, 2005; Acharya *et al.*, 2007). Here, the notion of agency is central as it embodies the processes by which people make choices and act on them (Kabeer, 2005).

Despite its importance to the success of the Global Goals, there is limited literature on how to go about achieving Goal 5, in particular with respect to conflict-affected areas (BSD Commission, 2018). In such contexts, the status of women's empowerment cannot be understood without first considering how women gain space in decision-making within grassroots organisations or groups, or in accessing services – particularly those led by women. In these contexts, institutions may also be less stable, and hence opportunities for change may co-exist with resistance to that same change. These themes are under-researched, especially with regard to the issue of how social norms operate in the real world in women's empowerment interventions that attempt to bring women into decision-making fora (Agarwal, 2010; Masanyiwa *et al.*, 2014).

1.1 The Tuungane programme

Since 2010, development and reconstruction programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have aimed to improve service provision, for example in education and health, while simultaneously boosting women's empowerment. One approach has involved lifting the gender parity in Village Development Committees (VDCs) in programmes such as Tuungane, which was implemented by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in eastern DRC from 2008 to 2016. Tuungane worked in 1,250 war-affected villages with a targeted beneficiary population of approximately 1.78 million people (i.e. in the provinces of Haut-Katanga, Maniema, North-Kivu, South-Kivu and Tanganyika), delivering community regeneration through increased engagement in community and local governance (Flynn, 2014: 4; Humphreys *et al.*, 2014). However, robust quantitative evaluation of the Tuungane programme has shown no positive evidence of changes in attitudes towards the roles and responsibilities of women either as a result of Tuungane itself or, of its gender-parity requirement (Humphreys *et al.*, 2014).

This paper does not consider the Tuungane programme as the single, causal factor in women's empowerment in the region, but it is interested in understanding how attempts at changing social norms – undertaken by a variety of actors over the last decade – have affected the possibilities for women's empowerment in decision-making. We argue that social norms of gender equality,

especially in decision-making, that are promoted by international agencies such as the IRC through Tuungane become embedded in the dominant traditional and religious existing social orders.

The remainder of the paper presents, first, examples of institutions, leadership and gender ideologies in the context of women's empowerment in rural communities and on gender equality and intersectionality in the DRC context. The second section describes the setting and methodology of this study before the third section highlights the results. We find that while women generally comprise the 'second gender' in the DRC and are in many ways disempowered, a few local women are considered powerful in their immediate context. These results stem from in-depth, qualitative fieldwork centred around six such women, which help us to understand:

- the sources of power – i.e. the 'pathways' to empowerment;
- how women can and do use power in practice – i.e. roles and responsibilities; and
- how women's empowerment based on modern social norms of gender equality has occurred despite religious and traditional gender social norms in rural areas, thus reinforcing hybrid gender social norms.

These results are further discussed in the paper's final section and conclusion.

2 Institutions and gender equality

2.1 Institutions, leadership and gender ideologies in the context of women's empowerment in rural communities

Rules, customs, norms and understandings can be defined as institutions, which can, in turn, be formal or informal (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004; Bratton, 2007; Justino *et al.*, 2018). Traditional norms, such as those cultures and traditions common to specific areas of the rural DRC, operate as informal institutions and are based on social obligations and binding expectations in the context of which domination can be seen as a legitimate order. For example, traditional authorities and church leaders use their power for control and legitimation, often through blessing or cursing (Heidenreich, 2012; Kyamusugulwa, 2014; Kyamusugulwa & Hilhorst, 2015). These norms may dictate different gender ideologies.

Gender ideology can be seen as people's perceptions about gender roles, marriage and decision-making that impinge on the construction of gender relations. It can be influenced by changes in law or gender regulations, because individuals' opinions may change after being exposed to new information. 'Gender ideology' refers, then, to how relationships between men and women 'should be', based on traditional, transitional or non-traditional beliefs (Greenstein, 1996; Brewster & Padavic, 2000; Davis & Greenstein, 2009).

What makes domination continuous and systematic is the belief by those who are led in the legitimacy of their leaders, resulting in a voluntary approval of those leaders' orders. Domination, then – following Max Weber – can be of three types: rational (belief in the legality of rules under which leaders issue commands), traditional (belief in the sanctity of traditions) or charismatic (belief in a newly revealed doctrine or exemplar). Furthermore, these three types can overlap (Wolin, 1981; Pakulski, 1986).

Since leadership is associated with the ways in which legitimacy is articulated locally, leaders are obliged to communicate ideas to those whom it intends to lead and to ensure that those ideas will be welcomed (Hastings & Phillips, 2018). At this point, the notion of power comes into play. First, its dimension of 'power over' is attributed to those who prevail in decision-making situations – women need to not only learn new skills before they can access leadership and decision-making positions, they also require legitimating in such positions by the community members whom they have to serve. Second, power's dimension of 'space' (in controlling an agenda)

refers to the idea that if a certain category of people – women, for example – is afforded a lesser level of entry to the spaces of decision-making (or barred from them altogether), it may be difficult to produce change (Lukes, 2005; Gaventa, 2006; Pantazidou, 2012; Crawford & Andreassen, 2013).

In the rural DRC, these three types of social norms – traditional, religious and modern/Western – may in some instances reinforce each other, while in others they may conflict and, in doing so, produce diverse gender ideologies. The challenge is to understand which social order people (especially women) are likely to defer to when it comes to empowerment in decision-making.

2.2 Gender equality and intersectionality in the DRC

In the African context (including the DRC), women are almost always left out of significant decision-making, mainly because of certain aspects of traditional culture and the influence of the patriarchy in state and religious institutions. In the precolonial era – and even in postcolonial times, in some remoter areas – most women were, and still are consigned to a secondary position in society. This is due to a deficit in women's education and its consequences, such as a lack of knowledge of their civic duty and ignorance of women's capacity and skills, placing them in an inferior position in comparison with men (Matundu & Faray-Kele, 2010).

Poor education may not be the only cause.

Intersectionality theory is based on the idea that people's lives and choices should be understood through a lens that includes race, gender, class and other markers. It proposes that these identity characteristics, although described separately, are interlocked. Intersectionality can be 'horizontal', describing differences within groups, or 'vertical', highlighting divergences between groups. It invites researchers to go beyond considering these social

categories as simply demographic variables and, rather, to approach their research as being based on socio-historical contexts (Manuel, 2006; Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008; Viruell-Fuentes *et al.*, 2012; Bauer, 2014).

Much attention has been paid to the concept of 'gender' in the DRC over the last two decades. The DRC ranks 46th out of 52 African countries in terms of the share of seats held by women in national parliaments – with 8.9% of the total number (African Development Bank Group, 2016). The government department formerly known as the Ministry of Feminine Condition and Family has become that of Gender, Family and Child, focusing on equity in terms of the rights of men and women, in collaboration with other ministries. This Ministry's gender policy is based on implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325¹ but also on the aspirations of Congolese society to involve all social actors in promoting gender equality (Ministère du genre, de la famille et de l'enfant, 2010). At this ministerial level, there are further reports commissioned and published on gender based-violence; women's rights to political positions in state national, provincial and local institutions; male-female parity recognised by the current Constitution of the DRC (2006); and on other related issues, such as equal opportunities at work, the Family Code, etc. (Assemblée Nationale-RDC, 2006; Ministère de la condition féminine et famille-RDC, 2006; Nations Unies-RDC, 2009; Ministère du genre, de la famille et de l'enfant, 2010; Matundu & Faray-Kele, 2010; PNSR, 2012; AFD, 2016).

There is thus an elaborate government machinery promoting gender equality. Following strong advocacy of women in DRC, the latest development is a new family code promulgated in 2016, that has lifted some of the predicaments for women, for example that they would need their husband's signature before they could take a job. The new law rests on the idea of agreement between the spouses in large decisions. However, traditional gender norms persist in the local culture.

¹ The so-called SCR 1325 – on women, peace and security – was unanimously adopted in 2000. It called upon UN members to pay attention to violations directed at women in conflict settings; to protect internally displaced and refugee women; to support the capacity building of peacekeepers and the military, and policy on gender issues in conflict-affected areas; to finance actions aimed at protecting women in these settings; and to reconstruct institutions that deliver services to women, as well as funding agencies led by women that aim at preventing conflict and making peace (Willet 2010).

3 Setting and methodology

3.1 Setting

With a population of almost 77.3 million, the DRC is one of the largest nations in Africa that can be described as a conflict-affected country, following the war of 1996-2003. The eastern part of the country – South-Kivu, North-Kivu and the former Oriental Province – has been heavily affected since the beginning of the conflict as many rebel movements started in these areas. According to a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, the DRC ranks 178th out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI): life expectancy is about 59.1 years, Gross National Income (GNI) is the equivalent of roughly \$680 and the mean number of schooling years is 6.1 (UNDP, 2016).

We collected data in the Kalehe and Mwenga territories, which lie approximately 200 kilometres apart in the eastern DRC, in South-Kivu Province. Although residents of these two territories are all Swahili speakers, they differ in local dialects and cultures as the vast majority of inhabitants of Kalehe also speak Kihavu (of the Havu ethnic group) and those from Mwenga speak Kilega (of the Lega ethnic group) or a closely related dialect, Kinyindu (of the Nyindu subgroup). Livelihoods and activities have been heavily affected by repeated waves of war and violence in both territories, reducing the economic capacity of residents (Kyamusugulwa, 2013a; Geenen, 2016; Vogel & Musamba, 2017; Kyamusugulwa *et al.*, 2018). Agriculture, especially cassava cultivation, together with livestock, fishing and, to a lesser extent, artisanal mining remain the main livelihoods in the region.

In the last 10 years, a number of both national and international agencies have been operating in Kalehe and Mwenga – including Oxfam-Novib,² which has targeted food security; the non-governmental organisation (NGO) APIDE,³ also concentrating on food security and micro-credit; CARE International with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and International Alert, targeting the areas of agriculture and governance; the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), supporting nature conservation in the Itombwe Forest; and Maltezer International, supporting the health sector. The IRC has been active with various programmes too, including ‘Women’s Protection and Autonomy’ and ‘Health’ in addition to our case study, the community-

² The Dutch affiliate of Oxfam.

³ Appui-conseils aux projets et initiatives de développement endogène, APIDE, is a national NGO operating mainly in the Mwenga territory.

driven reconstruction programme known as Tuungane.⁴ As mentioned in Section 1.1, this intervention focused on promoting good local governance through the provision of schools and other infrastructure (re)construction (CAID, 2016).

3.2 Methodology

In order to understand the pathways to women's empowerment, these women's roles and responsibilities, and the context in which such empowerment took place, we opted for qualitative, ethnographic fieldwork. The first author undertook this fieldwork from August to November 2017 in South-Kivu Province, in the eastern DRC. We chose Kalehe and Mwenga territories as they are both Tuungane target communities and because they are representative of the main features of South-Kivu Province in terms of the landscape: Kalehe is located at high altitude in the North-East of the province, and Mwenga is at low altitude in the south-western area. We present findings from six villages that are quite remote from each other: from the provincial capital, Bukavu, to Kalehe, the furthestmost north-eastern village, is a distance of 106 km; in the southwestern region, the farthest village, Mwenga, is 141 km from the capital. Altogether, we were in four *groupements* – Basilubanda in the Basile chiefdom and Kigogo in the Lwindi chiefdom of

the Mwenga territory, and Mpinga-Nord and Mpinga-Sud of the Buhavu chiefdom in the Kalehe territory.

During repeated field visits, we interviewed six women leaders, including two *mama genre* (women who are also officers of the Judicial Police, in charge of gender in the state administration), both in the Kalehe territory and the Kasika Lwindi chiefdom. The sampling of female leaders was systematic: we first asked the village chief for the names of the top five women leaders of a target community; then, we randomly selected and interviewed one of them in each village (see Annex 1 for a list of interviews, and Annex 2 for their profiles). In addition to individual interviews with women leaders, we conducted two focus-group discussions (FGDs) with 'ordinary' women in Masasu and Ngingu, and group interviews with two 'ordinary' women each in Kakulu and Manga-Ndindi localities.

Interviews and FGDs took place in offices and homes, lasting a minimum of 45 minutes and a maximum of 3.5 hours. They were conducted in Swahili/French, recorded and translated into English. For data analysis, we categorised variables into three main codes: becoming a woman leader, woman leader's responsibilities, and social orders. We have anonymised the respondents.

⁴ Tuungane is a Swahili term meaning 'let's unite'. It is the local name of the community-driven reconstruction programme that the IRC implemented from 2008 to 2016. It consisted of three phases: Tuungane I, from 2008 to 2010; Tuungane II, from 2011 to 2014; and Tuungane II plus, from 2015 to 2016.

4 Key findings: pathways to women's empowerment and the social order

4.1 Becoming women leaders

Our results have shown that over the last decade, women became leaders via three main pathways:

- 1 Employment at the chiefdom or territory level;
- 2 Training by international or national agency staff, and accepting positions on Village Development Committees (VDCs), Parents' Committees (known under their French acronym, COPA⁵), Health Facility Committees (HFCs – also known under their French acronym, CODESA⁶) and savings and micro-credit associations; or/and
- 3 Education to a higher-than-primary level.

While it is clear that education constitutes a precondition for the first two pathways, we have kept it as a separate, third pathway: education in itself can have empowering effects for women, such as enabling them to compete with men for positions on various committees, independent of external support.

In the first pathway, Justine and Anne (respondents 3 and 6 in Annex 2) had been employees at the chiefdom or territory level, and were already empowered by their education level – they both had the secondary-school diploma (known as D6) or an equivalent (D4). They were hired as agents in charge of youth or taxes. When the opportunity arose to appoint a woman in charge of gender, family and children (a *mama genre*), those women already well positioned in the administration took the chance for promotion. This situation arose because Article 14 of the Congolese Constitution of 2006 defines gender equality as 'gender parity' (Ministère de la condition féminine et famille-RDC, 2006; Ministère du genre, de la famille et de l'enfant-RDC, 2010). Explaining her career path, *Justine* stated:

I worked in the social domain and JMPR,⁷ and was associated to youth; we were labelled 'secretariat de la Jeunesse'. I was appointed its leader in 1987. I worked also in the territory office as agent in charge of indicators; I was the only woman. The 8 March Day [International Women's Day], I am the one to organise it. In 2004, all provincial authorities came,

⁵ *Comité de parents* (COPA) is an elected body in charge of co-managing a school along with the school's director.

⁶ *Comité de Santé et de Développement* (CODESA) is an elected body in charge of co-managing a health centre in collaboration with its head nurse.

⁷ *Jeunesse du Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (Youth of the Popular Revolution Movement) was the political party established by the former Congolese president, Mobutu Sese Seko kuku Ngbendu Wa Zabanga.

including the vice-governor and all division heads. I organised the day; then, I demanded a transfer to be here [Kalehe territory]; I got the appointment letter as head of gender service at the [Kalehe] territorial level. I became therefore the only woman among all chefs de bureau here.

In the same vein, Anne – another interviewee, this time at the Lwindi chiefdom in Kasika – stated:

I was a cashier; there were people who came here to install 'gender'. Criteria were to be able to read and to write. I am an experienced teacher D4 [i.e. with four, post-primary years of education]. My rival earned a state diploma D6. They said one could be in charge of other activities. This was in the year 2008-2009 that I was elected as mama genre at the chiefdom.

We can see that the current *mamas genre* were already well educated and served as agents in the administration before they moved to leading the gender office or sub-office at the territorial level. This move was specifically aided by the change in the country's constitution in 2006, which provided job openings for women but also gave them a space among other state officials – albeit for many of them at the middle- to low levels of the state administration.

With regard to the second pathway, above, women were empowered that benefited from training held by international and national agency staff. These agencies each had as their focus the teaching of gender equality, and they sought women who were already in leadership positions in women's associations or in VDC, COPA or HFC facilities. Discussing what had been needed for them to become 'women leaders', Justine asserted:

Education and further training through an association; here in Kalehe, there are more women leaders. For instance, a feminine association to be led by a woman; if it is a mixed group, men do not allow [women to lead] as it is the case in political parties.

Women's associations have, then, become a space in which more women than men found a place to exercise their rights to lead. These associations took several forms, ranging from Village Savings and Loan

Associations (VSLAs) to livestock or animal micro-credit associations. Interviewed on what she does outside her teaching activities, Divine, one of the women leaders mentioned,

I have been leader of a micro-credit group called 'umoja-Kambululu' for three years ['umoja' means 'together' in Kiswahili, Kambululu is the name of a village]. We did not receive any training; we got the information about these groups from others who were trained by World Vision [an international agency that has operated there] because our village was seen as behind others. We noticed that in Lushebere, it was helping women to move forward.

The widespread appeal of these associations is, in large part, due to their enabling independence, which allows women to improve their economic power and reduce their almost complete dependency on husbands or men in general. These associations were not always created by NGOs; some of them grew out of attempts to emulate what seemed to be working more informally in a neighbouring village – as shows in Divine's account in Kambululu. Becoming a female leader also requires fulfilling some general criteria, which was widely agreed upon by the women we interviewed. These range from integrity (no history of quarrel or conflict) to self-esteem, literacy, a capacity to mobilise others, trustworthiness and availability to be at the service of the group.

These female leaders occupied the positions of president or member of a VDC, COPA or an HFC. They received support and training from agencies such as the IRC; Tuungane, for VDC and COPA/HFC; World Vision and Ushindi⁸ for VSLA; and from APIDE for the livestock women's associations. After being exposed to capacity building by such agencies, some of these women applied what they learnt to their daily lives or within other women's groups, while keeping the leadership name of *mama* in their communities. One of these such *mamas*, Adele, in the Masasu locality in the Mwenga territory, asserted:

I am 52 years old, other people see me as leader. I am leading a group of women in an association. In the past, I was COPA president and president of an association called ARDAPE.⁹

As for the third pathway, women in our research sites have, unsurprisingly, become leaders through school

⁸ Ushindi is the Swahili name given to the project led by the Panzi Hospital in South-Kivu (DRC) to mitigate the suffering of women – especially rape victims.

⁹ The Association of Livestock, Agriculture and Development (ARDAPE) is a local association that operates in Masasu locality in the Mwenga territory.

education. Education is closely associated with the first and second pathways, as a means through which women arrive at community level leadership positions. Our results show that women appointed as *mama genre* had already been enabled through their educational opportunities. Women who were selected for leadership positions in VDCs, COPA, HFCs or other associations also, for the most part, possessed a certain level of education. Indeed, in rural, eastern DRC, education is seen as a necessary foundation to lead a COPA or any other committee – women in Ngingu skilfully explained:

We are illiterate and because [of this] we lack intelligence which goes with education; so, you can't [lead a COPA] if you are not educated. To have a female president of COPA or another committee, we need evening courses to know a bit of French. Here, once a girl reaches the 2nd secondary-school year, she goes to the kitchen. She cannot return to school as she will get pregnant.

Similarly, in explaining why they had no means to speak for themselves, women in Manga-Ndindi acknowledged:

We have our [female] representatives who can speak on our behalf. But in case of relief aid in the form of food or clothes distribution, they take it for themselves. We, who don't have education, who are useless, we work for others [but there are] difficulties, there is time we see [aid donations], only see but don't receive anything from what white people send. A pen [is used] to write down names of other people; I am not going to get anything. Men and women, when they write names for others, they might replace these names [with] their own.

Women's education fosters empowerment and creates opportunities for women to benefit from assistance and to occupy leadership positions. Women who are less or not educated, were seen to perceive of themselves as 'less clever' or even 'useless'.

There are several factors leading to women receiving more power to lead others, or committees/associations. These include the Congolese Constitution having 'opened the door' for male-female parity, the presence of international and national agencies on the ground and pre-existing education of women. However, it is important to note that these female leaders are in the minority. The majority of women in the DRC are not able to benefit from such power associated to leadership roles.

4.2 Responsibilities of women leaders

A leader receives a 'space' of leadership – the state provides space for a few women to become agents in charge of gender while agencies, national or international, create spaces for women to lead committees or associations. We found that a woman who is heading a service, a committee or an association has not only accrued a certain level of legitimacy from this position, she has also developed the power to take decisions about the group that she leads. Discussing her role as the woman in charge of gender at the Lwindi chiefdom in Kasika, Anne said:

On 8 March, we invite women [caucus of women] and women of organisations, we talk about a particular theme. We invite chiefs while asking [for their] support. Then we teach women – particularly on 'discrimination', that they make an effort to send our children to school. Even when a girl gives birth [while still a student], please bring her to school. What we ask is that women who were not educated that they have opportunity to study in an 'evening course' and do craftsmanship activities.

Therefore, a *mama genre* within the state administration holds the capacity to promote, defend and protect the rights of women and children. One way in which she may do so is by organising regular events around the 8 March International Women's Day, to engage a wider population in reducing discrimination against women and girls.

Secondly, the most common responsibility of women who are socially accomplished, is to lead a committee or women's association. In the process, they will have the opportunity to learn not just about gender equality but also about other issues relevant to the improvement of women's lives – namely, how to demand accountability from service providers and leaders. Discussing her understanding of what a woman leader means, and how she became one, Alice, a leader from Kakulu village in Mwenga, shrewdly acknowledged:

A leader is somebody who is willing to work for others without any payment. I was president of a savings and loan association; we ourselves [decided] to give loans and to reimburse, women first ... Those who lead these groups are women; presidents of the groups are women to prevent misappropriation; even at the secretary position, no men ... We were trained by the Ushindi project in 2012; who did not provide [money]; it was only training. Ushindi gave us a coffer

with three locks and three basins [containers]; the idea is to promote savings and solidarity. We have hidden the coffer at one member's place who is a cashier, and we keep three keys [with] three women members.

Adele, another woman leader who worked on the Tuungane project in her locality, mentioned:

In [Tuungane] training, we learn ... in everything, please be transparent. ... In Tuungane 1, I was female president of the Masasu VDC. In the second phase, I was elected treasurer ... In Tuungane 1, we bought all materials; we constructed five classrooms and an additional classroom ... [In Tuungane 2], we bought sand and wood, we did all together; it was good governance. We involved the village chief ... In Tuungane, we worked in unity, you could see that you were working all together.

Through their interaction with agency staff, women who led either an association or a committee were able to learn more about how to lead – even to the extent of using the language of good governance – and about how their actions would affect those in these groups and their respective communities.

However, not many women had been elevated to this level and the vast majority of them, especially the most poorly educated, were still in need of basic power. Commenting on the number of women who held a platform for speaking out now, compared with before the Tuungane programme came into play, one of the women in Ngingu locality said, 'I can estimate 1 out of 10 can speak now; in the past, it was 0 out of 10'.

Thirdly, female leaders have a responsibility to counsel other women to make sure that they behave according to locally prevailing gender norms. Social control is strongly invested in women's leadership and leaders are expected to sanction women who do not follow their council, by imposing a fine. Of course, not all women leaders are endowed with sanctioning power; only those acting as state officials in charge of gender are invested with the necessary judicial power as *Officier de la Police Judiciaire* (OPJ) – an Officer of Judicial Police. When giving advice to two women who then failed to end their dispute, Anne, the *mama genre* in Kasika, emphasised:

Later, when I received information about these two, I invited both of them, I took their statements down on a PV [proces verbal]. I judged them, asking them

to pay a fine; they paid and spent three days in [local] prison. As an OPJ, I yelled at them; another OPJ said that three days is enough. They paid each \$5 for papers [administrative fees] and the guilty one [in this case, the accuser] paid \$20 in fines. The guilty woman promised not do it again and the other one decided to forgive her.

As a representative of state authority, *mama genre* is a position of power, conferring legitimacy and prestige to those in such a position. We found that before sanctioning other women, female leaders would first offer advice. This role is undertaken not just by those in state office but by all women leaders. The only difference being that non-office holders exercise no coercive power. Adele, a leader in the Masasu locality, recognised that:

[If two women are in dispute], I will go there to tell [them] that as women, we should not quarrel. You, an adult woman should not do this. But if they don't want to listen [then I cannot do more].

Female leaders, therefore, also have at their disposal a form of bargaining power to negotiate agreements between women who are in dispute, and to compel them to comply with existing social norms. A woman leader can sometimes end such disputes at this stage, without having to follow through with a more serious formal sanction.

Similarly, we found that office-holding female leaders counsel not just women but also sometimes families involved in land-based grievances and, in the process, uphold women's land rights. However, the outcomes from these experiences can still be mixed – using her experience at the Kalehe office, *mama genre*, Justine related:

I assist women in this matter. For example, a boy refuses to give any plot of land to his two sisters, or three boys distribute among themselves a plot of land. [I received] the complaint of women claiming the right to have a space to farm. Then, I invited these men and read the [current] Family Code. Thereafter, they give an acknowledgement note that states that on behalf of a specific family, they agree to provide to their sister a plot of land where she will be cultivating. Among 10 cases, I estimate four who [would] accept [such acknowledgement]; it is still low.

Office-holding women can make a difference if more women would be aware of their rights according to the

new family law and could appeal to women leaders to assist them in promoting their rights in such matters, and if more men defer to women leaders. In particular, there could be more awareness raising about the current family code, which grants increased space to women in terms of employment and inheritance. Office-holding women and those who have led committees or associations have developed the same instinct to have their children share responsibilities regardless of gender. Within the household, we found that women leaders tend to be an example – here Justine, *mama genre* in Kalehe, explained:

The task of a girl is to take care of a child, cook or prepare ugali [cassava-flour dish], a boy can also do that. Here in Kalehe, we had a 'gender club' [where they discuss gender roles], how to consider a girl and a boy regarding house tasks. The idea is like today for Benjamin (a boy) to clean up the house while Zawadi (a girl) cooks and next day vice-versa; a girl to keep a goat and a boy to work in the house. While keeping a goat, (s)he should be reading/taking a look into her/his books. This brings about social cohesion and the fight against poverty ... In my house, as a woman and mama genre, all boys are able to cook.

At the time of our data collection, we found that overall, the proportion of women in leadership positions was still very low because of several factors, including poor education associated with geographical remoteness, which affected the vast majority of women in the study area. Within the minority of female leaders we interviewed, we found that they play diverse roles in mobilising others on women's and girls' rights, in leading women's associations or mixed groups, in counselling women and men, and sometimes in sanctioning women. Importantly, women leaders are not always acting according to the family law, but also represent traditional and religious values and hence they tend to reproduce the hybridity of norms.

These roles are growing because of the spaces created by the Congolese Constitution and by the activities of NGOs, with the support of international agencies. At the same time, it needs stressing that these female-led efforts must happen in tandem with other structural/societal changes to drive progress.

4.3 Women's empowerment and negotiating the social order

Annex 3 shows that while international and national agencies have made efforts to drive women's empowerment, women are facing conflicting structural

and social norms that both encourage, but mostly stifle, empowerment. This dynamic is particularly acute in decision-making.

The dominant social order seems to be that based on traditional norms. Out of the 220 statements that we analysed, more than half referred to traditional norms. The many responsibilities socially attributed to women – specifically those of farming, motherhood and cooking – go some way to explaining the limited number of women leaders. Our results show that women in the Ngingu locality mentioned 10 daily tasks that included cleaning, fetching water, cooking, caring for children and breastfeeding, and tending to their husbands' needs.. When asked about whether there are tasks a husband can help with, the women mentioned,

There isn't. You are the one to look for vegetables; if your husband asks you [for] drink[ing] water, you have to give it to him and after cooking, you have to present the meal you prepared to him.

In farming activities, women were again more occupied than men, with more field-based tasks. Discussing their agricultural activities, women interviewed in Kakulu locality said:

Farming activities occupy us more; women are not free; men are free (farm or not farm, he will eat). Us women; we are more prisoners of tasks. For example, of tasks on a farm: man cuts the grazing, the rest of activities are [for] women: to plant, to take bad leaves out, to harvest (at this time, man does not arrive in the field until you harvest), he will want [meals] on his plate. The majority of them [men] stay [in the village]; some play the dame game [game of checkers], others (for those who can) do teaching activities.

This also reveals that women who are less educated have less chance to diversify their livelihood activities – the only option for a vast majority of women is to marry and take on agriculture tasks.

In addition, low levels of education were a result of parents' prioritisation of paying boys' over girls' fees. Their reasons being that girls marry earlier and tend to follow the examples set by society, and because of parents wanting the dowry (cattle) from their daughters' marriages. These motives apply particularly in the more isolated areas. One of the interviewees mentioned, 'A girl was considered as an economic asset.' Similarly, women

in Ngingu explained, 'A girl feels that she is late because others of her age are already married.' Economic and social considerations interact with traditional norms that hinder women's education from an early stage.

More than a quarter of all statements referred to modern norms such as gender equality (see Annex 3), but because of the dominance of traditional and religious norms, they are not yet reflected in social reality. For instance, Tuungane wanted to achieve gender parity in VDCs, but more men are educated than women in these rural communities of the DRC, and women remain disproportionately occupied with farming activities. Accordingly, men continue to dominate these committees as they are regarded as more able to lead and more flexible – the social perception of women in leadership roles is that they do so simultaneously with their farming and household tasks.

Further still, while gender equality is being promoted by government agencies and international organisations that promote gender equality as foreseen in the Congolese constitution and legislation, in some churches, women are still seen as inferior to men, with limited responsibilities and occupying a secondary position in society. The difference in gender roles is seen as 'how God planned things to be done'. At the same time, traditional norms assign kitchen-based roles to a woman since, once married, a man cannot return to the kitchen because this would be regarded by both sexes as shameful. Where women are allowed in decision-making spaces, they are in a minority. For example, the protestant church committee in Kalehe includes only one woman among its 16 elders. Religious norms were mentioned in 12.7% of the statements we analysed (see

Annex 3) for more examples), and often interact with and reinforce traditional norms.

These different sets of social norms conflict with or reinforce each other, thereby contributing to a 'hybrid' social order or governance system characterised by a blend of written and unwritten norms influencing behaviour in these communities. Female leaders and other women find ways to utilise these norms as best as they can, but are often forced to accept a limited form of empowerment. For instance, women are not allowed to take part in decision-making within village or *groupement* councils, which are exclusive to men according to customary law. However, they can participate in and even lead associations and committees administered under the modern rules, including the Congolese Constitution.

Similarly, women can lose out vis-à-vis the right to housing as this depends on having contracted a civil marriage, which is *de facto* a modern law. At the same time however, in settings in which men still refer to the customary law (not requiring a marriage document), women can see themselves denied the right to houses that belong to their husbands or partners. Women leaders are forced to negotiate with which social order to comply even when they have been empowered, which may have been achieved through the modern set of norms – they may still fear to enter spheres of decision-making that follow more customary norms and traditions. Additionally, modern norms might authorise a woman's legitimacy as a leader but may not necessarily be accepted by men in other, potentially more senior, leadership roles in institutions.

5 Conclusion

Achieving gender equality has been encouraged by the DRC's ministries, NGOs and various agencies involved with reconstruction on the ground, including the Tuungane programme. Gender equality is considered essential to achieving Goal 5 of the Global Goals, and its achievement will have positive impacts across all other goals. However, this paper finds that attempts to empower women without considering the religious and traditional social orders that dominate the DRC, are bound to fail.

A case in point is Tuungane, implemented by the IRC in eastern DRC from 2008 to 2016. Humphreys *et al.* (2014: 60) found that the Tuungane programme design requirement for gender parity in development committees generally did not increase women's representation in situations where women would otherwise not be represented. Through quantitative analysis, Humphreys *et al.* (2014: 61) also found that participation in Tuungane had no impact on the overall attitudes towards the roles and responsibilities of women. The findings from our qualitative study complement this result and help to explain why this is so: quantitative data does not easily capture empowerment as a social change, and such measurements need to be embedded in local organisations that are sensitive to the types of changes in gender relations that bring about the renegotiation of power relations (Hunt *et al.*, 2009). Our study has shown the prevalence of traditional and religious norms that conflict with 'modern' norms, especially in rural areas. We believe this helps to explain the limited impact of Tuungane on women's empowerment.

Despite the low level of women's empowerment when it comes to decision-making and their ability to speak out in public, the individual stories of the women leaders we interviewed illustrate the potential for women leaders to emerge in certain conditions. Navigating the realities of the social order and traditional and religious norms in the DRC, our findings have shown three main pathways for women to gain leadership positions – through education, appointment to official government positions in charge of gender issues, and heading local committees or associations. When women have achieved their leadership positions, we find three broad areas of responsibilities:

- 1 mobilising the public for events relating to the 8 March International Women's Day, to raise awareness of women's and girls' rights;
- 2 contributing to group decision-making and providing advice to women who seek it, particularly within

- associations and/or committees;
- 3 sanctioning women who cannot conform to the existing social order, typically after providing a counselling role to these women who seek assistance.

Although NGOs' rules make clear that they have the right to lead as men do, the religious and the traditional social orders do not place women at the forefront of decision-making. Our findings point to difficulties that women leaders face in operating in decision-making spaces, around the following themes:

- **The existence of a 'hybrid order'** can explain why some people have different beliefs on gender norms around decision-making, which is based on a more diverse set of social norms that shape gender ideologies (more traditional or more egalitarian). An intersectionality 'lens' can help to unpack the differences among women leaders in terms of the endowment (or otherwise) of judicial power, and of social class – some are educated while others are not, and some are closely related to important kinship families or to a church-based community.
- **Education and social capital:** poorly educated women have little chance of leading women's associations and/or VDCs unless they have another source of empowerment – this might derive from belonging to a women's choir or church group, often associated with affinity to the church leader, or to the chief's kinship. In this regard our findings confirm previous research, which has found that women's access to education may increase their chances of a good marriage or their ability to write, but 'unless it also provides them with the analytical capacity and courage to question unjust practices, its potential for change will be limited' (Kabeer 2005: 23).
- **Grassroots support:** women's presence in the governance structures of society can lead to potential changes in unjust practices only when they are elected (rather than invited) and have a grassroots constituency to represent and answer to (rather than being drawn from a narrow elite) (ibid. p. 24).
- **Empowerment and disempowerment can happen simultaneously.** While NGOs and international agencies try to empower women to become leaders, there is a countervailing push from traditional and religious social orders that reacts against – and, in some instances, invalidates – a gain. This might

explain why after a couple of months, once a project ends, there is likely to be a return to the original situation, in which women know what they can do but cannot change the balance of power associated with the prevailing social orders.

Following the implementation of the Tuungane programme, this paper shows that, overall, only a few women (almost all of them already educated) have had the opportunity to become *mamas genre* or group leaders, gaining leadership and, to a certain degree, decision-making capabilities concerning people's lives. In this regard, this is where Tuungane, together with other agencies, deserve recognition. We argue that certain aspects of the prevailing social orders – namely, the traditional and religious ones – hinder the effectiveness of women's empowerment projects that attempt to promote 'modern' notions of gender equality, and which would allow them a 'seat at the table' in decision-making fora. We also know that the political and economic performances of societies are affected by social institutions and cultural norms (Bates, 2010). In this paper, we have tried to avoid the trap of 'Africanist traditionalist culturalism', with its emphasis on personal relations, community, ethnicity and witchcraft to understand African societies (Olivier de Sardan, 2017), by (at least implicitly) applying the following definition of culture (ibid., p. 84): '[A] set of practices and representations that investigation has shown to be shared to a significant degree by a given group (or sub-group), in given fields and in given contexts'. This explains our focus on studying actual practices, rather than (only) 'shared meanings and values' (ibid., p. 82).

With this in mind, we put forward the following recommendations to consolidate gender equality:

- **Understanding the contours of the hybrid social order is key for grasping women's empowerment status.** Understanding the hybrid social order that emerges from the interaction, adaptation and (selective) merging of modern, religious, and traditional (customary) norms is crucial to begin capturing the realities of women's empowerment. Using the concept of 'hybridity', institutions, NGOs and grassroots programmes can begin to express how gender social norms intersect at the 'modern', to signify state and non governmental institutions; religious to signify church institutions; and the traditional to mean institutions based on customary law.

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- Within this context of hybridity, it is important for international donors to **develop balanced strategies to involve both men and women in questions of gender equality**. This also requires moving beyond awareness raising to engage deeply with men, especially men who have no contact with gender equality concepts.
 - **Nurturing women's leadership must go in tandem with structural/societal changes to overturning the power of the status quo** i.e. poor access to education and legal and political representation. Education remains key to women's empowerment efforts in such contexts.

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Annex 1: List of interviews and focus group discussions

Adele, individual interview, woman leader, Masasu village, Mwenga, 30.8.2017.

Alice, individual interview, woman leader, Kakulu village, Mwenga, 02.9.2017.

Justine, individual interview, *mama genre*, Kalele, 12.9.2017.

Marie, individual interview, woman leader, Mweha village, Kalehe, 14.9.2017.

Divine, individual interview, woman leader, Kambululu village, Kalehe, 15.9.2017.

Anne, individual interview, *mama genre*, Kasika, Mwenga, 15.10.2017.

Focus-group discussion, ordinary women, Masasu village, Mwenga, 31.8.2017.

Group interview, ordinary women, Kakulu village, Mwenga, 01.9.217.

Focus-group discussion, ordinary women, Ngingu village, Mwenga 12.10.2017.

Group interview, ordinary women, Manga-Ndindi village, Kalehe, 15.11.2017.

Annex 2: Description of the women interviewed

Name	Position	Educational level	Relation to churches	Relation to local chiefs	Other responsibilities
Adele	Leader, Masasu village. In her 50s	not completed secondary school (5th class)	Catholic. Has been a church leader (shirika) for seven years and the local Catholic Charismatic community-based for 15 years.	Wife of a local village chief counsellor	Has led other local associations (livestock, agriculture and development). Tuungane I female VDC president. COPA president for one year. Leader in a local women's association called 'Mitamba'.
Alice	Leader, Kakulu village, in her 40s.	Has not completed secondary school (3rd class)	Nzambe Malamo believer (Protestant). Leads group of women in her local church	Belongs to the <i>groupement</i> chief family.	President of savings and loan association (VSLA Kakulu). The group created three others in the same village, mainly dominated by women. Trained by Ushindi/Panzi hospital project; was VDC treasurer in Tuungane II project; she keeps the key to the village water tap (water system constructed under Tuungane); representative of a political party in Kakulu.
Justine	<i>Mama genre</i> Kalehe territory/ Chef de bureau territorial charge de genre, Falille et enfants, in her 50s.	State diploma, secondary school. Left school at 19 years old.	One female member among 16 elders of the 8th CEPAC (protestant church) district committee in Kalehe	of extended family (not directly from royal family)	In charge of youth at the Uvira sous-region since 1987; she is used to organising the 8 March day; first woman to become chef de bureau within the Kalehe territory administration; trainer of associations on gender; president of the Federation of Protestant Women, Church of Christ/Eglise du Christ au Congo (ECC) in Kalehe; president of women in the 8e CEPAC district (including 15 churches); president of the Cadre de Dialogue et Mediation (CDM). She is endowed by the judicial power (OPJ of the limited competence).
Divine	Leader, Kambululu, in her 30s	State diploma (secondary school)	Catholic.	of extended family (not directly from royal family)	Teacher at the Butondo Catholic primary school (one of three female teachers of the six teachers at the school); leader of a micro-credit group called 'umoja-kambululu', made up of 40 women (no men); holds a certificate of 'mama leader' from a World Vision project.
Anne	<i>Mama genre</i> , Lwindi chiefdom, in her 40s.	Secondary school diploma (D4)	Catholic.	Spouse of the former Administrative Secretary of the Lwindi chiefdom	Leader of Kasika; experienced teacher at primary school; in charge of taxation at Lwindi Chiefdom; former cashier of the Lwindi Chiefdom; was VDC Kole under Tuungane II; endowed by the judicial power (OPJ of limited competence); organises the 8 March day.

Annex 3: Selected women’s statements and types of social orders in Kalehe and Mwenga in South-Kivu Province, DRC

I. Social order			
Traditional (<i>informal and oral</i>)	Modern (<i>Formal and written</i>)	Religious (<i>Belief and written</i>)	Hybrid (<i>combined formal/ informal/religious and partly written</i>)
number (%) of statements	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
120 (54.5)	57 (25.9)	28 (12.7)	15 (6.8)
II. Some women's statements			
(i) Here, parents prioritised schooling of their boys. Also, girls want to be married while parents want to receive a dowry (i.e. cattle) from the marriage of their daughters. A girl was considered an economic asset.	(i) [In Tuungane programme, I was president (female), there was a male vice-president, a treasurer (male), a female secretary, <i>Requa</i> (1 male and 1 female), a mobiliser (male); we were 3 women and 4 men. We were elected.	(i) Churches discriminate. In the Catholic Church, sisters can only read but cannot lead. In the Protestant Church, none of the women is a reverend. Among 15 elders, only 1 woman in decision-making; they don’t follow [you].	(i) In the Church, if you ask for forgiveness, that is all; customary law does not have forgiveness: one has to pay; for instance, a chicken for customs keepers to eat. Customary law is still operating here (<i>religious and traditional social orders</i>).
(ii) [The COPA president is not a woman], it is about a vote on how he was elected; it is difficult. A man can easily lead; he is flexible. We are very busy; a woman is in charge of her household – for instance, farm activities, meals; yesterday and today: it is your duty, you woman.	(ii) [What needs to be done] is to educate husband and wife together on the advantages of spacing births, rather than limitation of births; show the consequences [of lack of family planning and uncontrolled births]. A woman can also participate in such decisions; educate men and women to decide together.	(ii) [Men are ahead of women]; it is because God said men to be more mature than women. Are you going to put yourself above a husband! This is how God planned it. Are you going to be above the one you followed!	(ii) [Dispute between a male and a female resident]: they bring it to the council; they pay a fine; there are those who pay. They can choose either to go to the police or to the local council (<i>traditional and modern social orders</i>).
(iii) Because of their [men’s] stereotypes, for instance, [they say] a woman [will] not be able to do this; a woman is not intelligent. Even within a household, you see that a woman has many responsibilities – e.g. a woman is in charge of all: schooling children; farming; responding to household needs (food, clothes, healthcare, etc.), while a man requesting things to be done by his wife; a father seeking information such as about elections to be held in the country.	(iii) Yes [the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) brings about change in women’s lives]. Here in our area, you may be not able to save CDF 10,000 [Congolese francs – approx. value: \$10] in your house but where you save it, it is secured. If you want to do small-scale trade, the group will give you this; then, your kid won’t be chased at school or won’t lack healthcare. In our area, it is hard to have somebody who gives you CDF 1,000 [value \$1]. The VSLA brings love and solidarity, translated into cash.	(iii) I have been leading a Catholic, community-based organisation (<i>shirika</i>) [for] 7 years [and have reached the highest level a woman can reach] – not the chapel leader (<i>Muongozi</i>) nor being a priest – and I have been leading our charismatic Catholic group for 15 years. I asked why a woman cannot be neither a chapel leader nor a Catholic priest; the answers that I got are: (a) your child can annoy you there; (b) none of Jesus’ disciples were women; (c) [the Virgin] Mary and [Mary] Magdalene were not disciples of Jesus; they were representatives.	(iii) A woman has the right to a house; it is like a husband went for trade, I stay with children. When you buy a house, there is a little bit of my participation. If there is a marriage document, I can claim [this right]. The civil service raises awareness of [this document]. Men refuse because they say, ‘it is putting a cord [around] one’s neck’. Those who do it are mainly members of churches (Jehovah’s Witnesses and protestant 5e CELPA (the 5 th Free Church-Community of Pentecost in Africa in its French acronym: <i>5eme Communauté des Eglises Libres Pentecôte en Afrique</i>); the Catholic Church does not push this (<i>modern, traditional and religious social orders</i>).
(iv) Kitchen tasks: a man needs to be married; since that day he cannot do it any more. It will reflect badly if a man is cooking. Even other men will mock on him as, ‘go away, you are like a servant of a woman’. Even us women, we will say what is that! Because each task is allocated – for example, a man to build a house, a woman to the kitchen. There is exception, if they are only two, man can assist.	(iv) Here, we had a ‘gender club’. The idea is like today Benjamin (a boy) [is] to clean up the house while Zawadi (a girl) [is] to cook, and next day vice-versa; a girl to keep a goat and a boy to work in the house. While keeping a goat, (s)he should be reading her/his books. This brings about social cohesion and the fight against poverty.	(iv) [A woman and another woman dispute (farm or other reason)]; we leave it into the hands of God.	(iv) There is a men’s council (<i>groupement</i> council) known as <i>baraza</i> ; no woman gets in. I told them this, I never receive any response. They said, ‘to involve women!’ This model is a barrier to women. Only committees set up by NGOs have involved women. Village/ <i>groupement</i> committee, I never see women in. NGOs approached chiefs [village and <i>groupement</i>]; there is no change (<i>traditional and modern social orders</i>).

Note: The numbers and percentages described here represent the number of excerpts that highlighted a given social order in the statements of interviewees after coding using the *Dedoose* qualitative-analysis software.



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