Chapter 10
Civil Society and Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Opportunities, Challenges and Recommendations

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Abstract This chapter investigates the extent to which civil society can be more productive in the context of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); it consists of a cross-sectional empirical case study that largely relies upon findings that originate from secondary data (reviewed literature) and primary data (focus group discussions and surveys) that were conducted at the Catholic University of Goma-La Sapientia in June 2019, in North Kivu Province (DRC). The sample was comprised of graduate and postgraduate students, academics, members of civil society organisations and security services. *Training of civil society's actors and leaders was* singled out as the most important factor that could enhance civil society's effectiveness: it represents the highest mean of 1.3429. Finally, a four-layer strategy emerged as the way to strengthen civil society's capacity to be more responsive and high-yielding: this starts with training civil society's leaders and actors, integrating peacebuilding programs at all levels of educational courses, developing and increasing partnership between local and international civil society actors, and prioritising a contextualised civil society's modus operandi in the DRC.

Keywords Civil society · Elections · Democratic Republic of Congo · Democratization · Peacebuilding · Political transition

10.1 Introduction

Since gaining independence from Belgium on 30 June 1960, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been a theatre of violence during which, under three successive authoritarian regimes, quelling rebellions and fighting civil wars consumed most of the energies and resources that could have served to combat poverty and misery and to build functional and modernised infrastructure and thus prompt the country's development and the pursuit of the common good. Efforts by governmental and non-governmental organisations have demonstrated sustained interest in preventing

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conflict and managing violent conflicts, but unfortunately their initiatives have been fruitless, other than being, in some instances, "… a mere pile of peacebuilding stones rather than a sustainable peace" (Reychler/Paffenholz 2001p. xiii). This assertion is justified by recurring and ongoing insecurity and violent conflict even in areas controlled by UN troops (Copeland 2012). Violence relating the inadequacy of electoral processes and the inability of the DRC's Government to respect the legal terms of transitional agreements (such as setting up a truth and reconciliation commission to deal with past and recurrent domestic human rights violations, and infringement of international human rights and humanitarian law) (Kiyala 2018). Electoral violence and unifnished transitional justice are similtaneously key contrintors to chronic violence and consequences of structural violence in the DRC (Kiyala 2018).

Against the backdrop of this introduction, in the volatile political environment of the DRC, what role can civil society play? How does civil society respond to the needs of peacebuilding in the context of problematic democratisation and political transition? To what extent do actions undertaken by civil society organisations (CSOs) signal progress and drive optimism towards attaining successful democratic processes and durable post-political transition peace? What is the salient impact of local citizens' movements and CSOs on deterring the drivers to conflict in the DRC? What are the contextual factors that hinder the effectiveness of such interventions, including cooperation among international non-governmental organisations and national non-governmental organisations, local dynamics, and the geopolitics of the region?

The overall objective of this study is to investigate the role that civil society plays in peacebuilding, specifically in the context of democratisation and political transition, with the purpose of gathering key components of the interventions that are needed to increase the effectiveness and usefulness of civil society in the DRC. An in-depth exploration of the multidimensional crisis of the DRC was essential to lay the foundation for a better understanding of CSOs' relevance in this context, prior to overran overview of the role civil society plays in peacebuilding, specifically in the context of democratisation and political transition. This study explores the opportunities and the challenges and proposes ways of redress to make civil society more engaged and effective in its vision to enact social, political, and economic transformation for the attainment of the common good and lasting peace. Peacebuilding and democracy theory are adopted as the paradigmatic framework to guide this work, which is designed as an exploratory case study and used a pluralistic methodological approach. It is structured as follows: the introduction is followed by a socio-political background to the DRC, an overview of civil society's evolution in this country, the theoretical framework that accompanies this work, research design and methods, results, discussion and finally, conclusions and recommendations.

10.2   Overviewing the Concept of Civil Society

Paffenholz (2015) defines civil society as "the arena of voluntary, collective actions of an institutional nature around shared interests, purposes, and values that are distinct from those of the state, family, and market" (p. 108). It consists of "a large and diverse set of voluntary organisations and comprises non-state actors and associations that are not purely driven by private or economic interests, are autonomously organised, typically show civic virtue, and interact in the public sphere" (Paffenholz 2015, p. 108).

The contemporary meaning of civil society is traceable to the Age of Enlightenment, between the 18th and the 19th centuries, when civil society was identified with the state (Carothers/Barndt 1999). A further distinction is made by Keane (2009) who writes: "Contrasted with government, civil society meant a realm of social life – market exchanges, charitable groups, clubs and voluntary associations, independent churches and publishing houses – institutionally separated from territorial state institutions" (Keane 2009, p. 1). After World War II, the concept of civil society gained impetus in the face of a world plagued by totalitarian regimes, and it became associated with a domain that opposed tyranny. This movement was spearheaded by the Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci (Carothers/Barndt 1999). This conceptual evolution approximates the contemporary thinking behind civil society—as the world undergoes a revolution against authoritarianism, dictatorship, and excessive *dirigisme*, especially in Africa and Asia, "[i]t was in the midst of disenchantment with the overreach of the state – in Africa as well as Asia – that the concept of civil society took hold of the imaginations of both the left and the right. It promised an exit from bureaucratic inefficiency and political indifference" Chandhoke (2007, p. 612). From the same perspective, Keane (2009, p. 2) notes: "For the first time in their history, the political languages of democracy and civil society have become conjoined". Furthermore, arguing on the same note, Keane (2009) alludes to Thomas Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense* (1776), to tie together civil society discourse and democracy, and theorising on the assertion that despotic power can be contested by establishing the earthworks of civil society (Keane 2009, p. 3).

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10.3   Civil Society in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The emergence of CSOs in the Republic Democratic du Congo is traced back to the era of the Independent State of Congo (ISC) whose governance fell directly under Leopold II, King of the Belgians (1885–1908), and which was guided by the following normative and legal framework:

- The Decree of 28 December 1888 which allowed private associations to operate.
- The Ordinance of 18 March 1912 which acknowledged the existence, validity and legality of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Congo.
- The Decree-Law of 1 March 1914 which granted civil personality to Civil Society organisations.
- The Decree of 19 July 1926 which authorises the creation of non-profit public utility establishments (Congo Forum 2009).

These four legal documents paved the way for the future development and functioning of CSOs, which contrasts with a certain view that situates the origins of CSOs in the DRC at the time of the Sovereign National Conference (CNS) of 1990–1992 (Congo Forum 2009) (Fig. 10.1).

The real leap of Congolese civil society occurred when President Mobutu ended the mono-party regime and introduced multipartyism on 24 April 1990. In this context, civil society became more visible in the political arena and exerted a significant role when Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, a Catholic Prelate, took
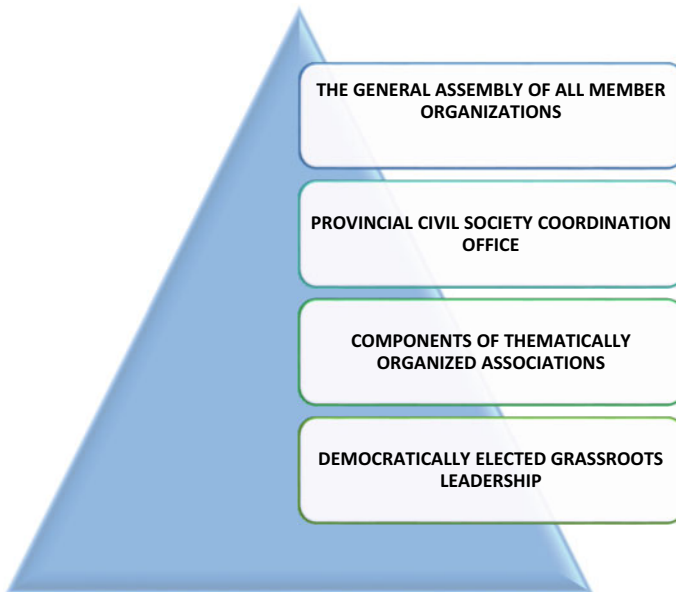
Fig. 10.1   Structure of Civil Society in the DRC *Source.* Designed from Congo Forum 2009's report

the reins of the Sovereign National Conference and became the Speaker of the High Council of the Republic / Transitional Parliament of the Republic of Zaïre, a function he held between 1991 and May 1997 after Laurent Kabila overthrew Mobutu and renamed the Country the Democratic Republic of Congo.

It is important to mention that civil society's actions have been met with brutal responses by former dictatorial rulers: many activists have been assassinated and there has been no accountability for their murder. The brutalities experienced by civic movements and other civil society platforms have aimed to muzzle outspoken militants, silence the voice of the people, perpetuate human rights violations, and continue with undemocratic voting systems. Activists have been victimised (Chic 2018), and brutalised by the police to contain their protests (Clowes 2016) but they continue to participate in political transformation through nonviolent resistance (Perera et al. 2018), and despite the killing of their fellows, such as Rossy Mukendi and others (Yahaya/Bello 2020), CSOs remain committed to advancing their agenda of advocacy, protection, and overall political and institutional transformation.

10.3.1 Civil Society and Peacebuilding

The investigation of civil society's role in peacebuilding is framed within two main theories, namely peacebuilding and democracy. In the discussion it will become clear that there are linkages between civil society, democracy theory and peacebuilding. Understanding this interrelation is key to developing a more realistic and efficient strategy that could prompt civil society's civic commitment to embracing peacebuilding principles and democratic ideals in its ongoing transformative action.

Paffenholz/Spurk (2006, p. 15) define peacebuilding as "an overarching term to describe a long-term process covering all activities with the overall objective to prevent violent outbreaks of conflict or to sustainably transform armed conflicts into constructive peaceful ways of managing conflict". This definition is not exhaustive of what peacebuilding's methodology, approaches, resources, actors/agents, beneficiaries, objectives, and outcomes are. However, it gives a conceptual understanding that can be completed by including its aims and expected outcomes. The aim of peacebuilding is to prevent and manage armed conflict and consolidate peace in the aftermath of large-scale systematic violence (Paffenholz/Spurk 2006). In a similar vein, Oberschall (2013) asserts that enhancing cooperation among adversaries is needed to build lasting peace, and can occur through power sharing; reconstruction of the economy; pursuing justice for victims and accountability for perpetrators; reaching settlement measures for refugees and populations forced into displacement; and establishing law, order and security, including reinsertion of belligerents into civil life and fighting criminal activities. For Last (2010), peacebuilding refers to the process of doing away with obstacles to durable peace by minimising the opportunities for violence, whether physical or structural. All these definitions are not exhaustive, but rather necessary to be considered in a study that aims at building peace.

Several scholars have worked on establishing how civil society is essentially linked to peacebuilding (Belloni 2001; Lederach 1997; Paffenholz 2015). Due to the proliferation of conflicts in the 1990s and the complex nature of the interventions required from the international community and donors, civil society's response is more and more sought (Paffenholz/Spurk 2006). The two authors define the role of civil society in peacebuilding in relation to civil society's action, namely its response to the areas of *protection*, *monitoring peace processes and accountability*, its commitment to *advocacy and public communication*, in the sphere of *socialisation and a culture of peace, conflict-sensitive social cohesion,* in its response to *intermediation and facilitation* of peace processes, and in the context of *service delivery* (Paffenholz/Spurk 2006).

Civil society's share of engagement in peacebuilding is embedded in the three types of peacebuilding actors illustrated in Lederach's pyramid and the three approaches adopted by these actors at each of the three levels (Fig. 10.2) (Lederach 1997, p. 39). At the top of the pyramid, civil society is represented by religious leaders; at the intermediate level, the leadership class, according to Lederach, is comprised significantly of civil society, namely ethnic and religious leaders, academics or intellectuals and humanitarian heads or those of NGOs; and finally, at the bottom layer civil society is involved through leaders of indigenous NGOs, leaders who champion community development, and those who lead refugee camps (Lederach 1997, p. 39) (Fig. 10.3).

In this model, drawing from the experience of Ethiopia, El Salvador, and Cambodia, Lederach argues that, in this top-down framework of peace-search and -building, or "trickle-down" approach, "[…] a process of 'national' transition is initiated involving the political leadership in creating a framework that will lead to democratic elections" (Lederach 1997, p. 45). Bottom layer leadership at grassroots level can exert an important influence towards peace and conflict resolution by

Level 1: Top Leadership
comprised of high profile military, political and religious leader

Level 2: Middle-Range Leadership
consisting of revered ethnic, religious leaders, academic, intellectual personalities, and leaders of humanitarian NGOs

Level 3: Grassroots Leadership
comprising local/community leaders, indigenous NGOs' leaders, community developers, local facilities' leaders/health officilas, refugee camp leaders

Fig. 10.2 Three types/levels of peacebuilding's actors. *Source* Author's adaption Lederach's (1997, p. 39) peacebuilding pyramid
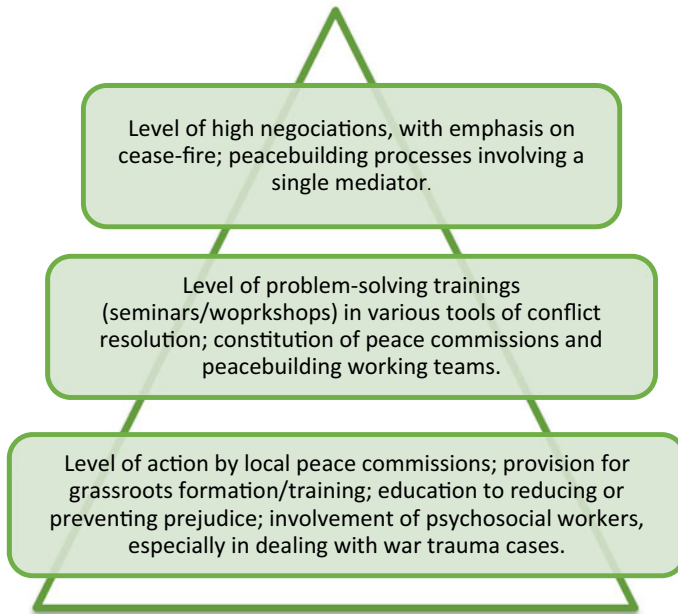
Fig. 10.3 Three levels of peacebuilding. *Source* Author's adaption of Lederach's (1997, p. 39) peacebuilding pyramid

providing training to communities about "reducing prejudice and enhancing community decision making" (Lederach 1997, p. 54). Local leaders are instrumental in making reconciliation possible starting from the grassroots level and attending to the immediate needs of vulnerable populations in the aftermath of violent conflict and civil war, even in transitional periods.

To sum up, it will be helpful to use the results of a scientific study conducted by Nilsson (2012) on the durability of peace efforts that involve civil society. She found that, while the inclusion of civil society actors did not affect the durability of peace nor reveal negative effects, the involvement of civil society actors combined with the participation of political parties meaningfully leveraged the longevity of peace. It was further established that the prospects of lasting peace in nondemocratic societies demanded that civil society actors be implicated in peace agreements (Nilsson 2012). This last finding and the overall outcome of Nilsson's study sustain the necessity of getting civil society involved in peace processes to ensure that durable settlements are obtained, especially in the context of young democracies or in countries known for their legacy of non-democracy or generating and proclaiming illegitimate electoral results. In this regard, the DRC is no exception.

10.3.2   Civil Society and Democracy

Theorising on democracy here is limited to the context of an existing representative system of governance founded on a power separation between the legislative, executive and the judiciary powers. This discussion precludes ongoing debates about whether democracy is the best alternative to power which could sway our argument back to the time of Athenian direct democracy which was contested by Plato and his mentor Socrates—both arguing in favor of aristocracy as a better alternative to democracy (Aliu 2018). It is worth noting that *direct democracy* in Athens differed from *representative and liberal democracy* that was governed by wider nations. In Athens, all citizens with rights as free persons participated in voting and justice took place in the same way, whereby people were jurors because career judges and prosecutors did not exist, and this led to the condemnation and execution of Plato's friend, interlocutor, and mentor Socrates (Ninian 2012). Plato was against extreme democracy such as its populist form, for which, understandably, the killing of Socrates would not be tolerated; Plato rather the moderate dimension of democracy (Rowe 2001). Plato was appalled by Socrates' execution and depicted democracy as *hysterical*—because the whimsical essence of public backing goes against "sound reason" and generates "fatal inconsistency" as time goes by; and saw it as rule by *ignorance* because leaders tend to ignore the "inconvenient truths", in politics [in *The Republic* Book VI] (Ninian 2012). By disapproving of the vices mentioned earlier, Plato was apprehensive that the Athenian society would engender immense conflict: a political type that would yield hunger for an autocratic leader or a tyrant (Rowe 2001). Our society has suffered from the same dangerous realities that Plato feared most, and this has sustained the existence of and civic engagement by civil society.

Plato's views are relevant to this inquiry to examine why CSOs exist and stand outside the state. This is naturally a response to the attitudes adopted by politicians, from which Plato dissented, namely the lack of "unencumbered love of wisdom" which should oppose falsehoods, physical pleasures, material pleasures, meanness, and cowardice that corrupt leaders [in Book VII of *The Republic*] (Ninian 2012). All are desires and tendencies that threaten to corrupt leadership. What is pertinent about Plato's political philosophy is the contemporaneous relevance of his views on immigration as embraced by contemporary leaders, and the danger of leaving voting processes in the hands of inexperienced and untrained voters. This serves as a caution in terms of the ethical foundation of democratic ideals and political life: morality and political life are inseparable because "unencumbered love" of truth/wisdom is the light of a politician—who for Plato should be a philosopher (Rowe 2001).

Civil society is essentially connected to democracy because it represents a sphere where diverse groups freely engage with one another in the pursuit of projects that integrate their interests (Chandhoke 2007). The author argues that the absence of civil society corresponds to the non-existence of the democracy and freedom that are essential for democratic engagement. The linkage between her views and Plato's conception of democracy as an exercise of skillful and knowledgeable citizens and civil society is reflected in the following assertion by Chandhoke (2007, p. 613):

"By asserting civil society, people demand that regimes recognise the competence of the political public to chart out a discourse on the content and the limits of what is politically desirable and democratically permissible". In the context of political transition, Bratton (1994) notes that political actors grapple with putting in place regulations that allow redistribution of collective resources beyond the immediate power struggle. Civil society plays a significant role in the critical moment during the transition that intervenes between the fall of the incumbent regime and the takeover by the newly elected actors, following the period during which political space experiences independence and freedom that prompts the formation of political parties, as Bratton asserts (1994, p. 10): "Instead of providing a refuge of last resort for dissident politicians, actors in civil society are freed to take on truly 'civic' functions for which they have a more natural aptitude". In a similar vein, Carothers/Barndt (1999, p. 21) point out: "An active, diverse civil society often does play a valuable role in helping advance democracy. It can discipline the state, ensure that citizens' interests are taken seriously, and foster greater civic and political participation".

Since the strength of liberal and constitutional democracy lies in power separation between the three branches of state, namely the executive, the legislative and the judiciary powers (Krause 2000). It is important to note that the differentiation of various functions is merged with "a system of checks and balances" (Krause 2000, p. 235). Civil society ensures that there is no abuse of power in this system of governance, and its engagement is not limited to one of these institutions but is seen all the three.

10.4   Design and Methods

This inquiry was designed as an exploratory case study using various sources and consequences of conflict in the DRC, while focusing substantially on the DRC's protracted conflict to show why stability created by a successful democratisation and political transition can enhance durable peace. The role of civil society in the pursuit of peace is clearly the focal point of this investigation. Designing this inquiry both as case study and exploratory study allows us to carry out in-depth research which is susceptible to generate valid and reliable knowledge of the impact of civil society on peacebuilding in the context of democratisation and political transition in the DRC.

While the reliability and generalisability of a single case study is contested, a triangulation of data sources and methods employed in this inquiry ensures its outcomes are valid and generalisable. Triangulation in this study refers to the use of "two or three different methods to explore the same subject" (Davies 2007, pp. 35–35). This will be done by combining methods (qualitative and quantitative) of data collection, analyses and interpretation which are based on constructivist realism as an ontology through which a positivist approach is merged with a constructivist worldview to produce solid, valid and reliable knowledge (Cupchik 2001). Quantitive analysis was

employed to draw statistics about the characteristics of the sample, whereas qualitative data comprise literature-reviewed secondary data and primary data originating from focus group discussions provided in-depth information for this study.

Seventy respondents out of eighty-three participants were involved in answering survey questionnaires, which were converted to variables measured at ordinal scales between *I strongly agree,* and *I strongly disagree*, and these variables were coded, thematised and analysed via the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27. Firstly, Cronbach's Alpha Test [α] (or coefficient alpha) was performed to evaluate the reliability of the set of scale. Secondly, descriptive analyses were executed to determine frequency distribution of the sample's features and various institutions involved in this inquiry.

This study uses non-probability sampling techniques, namely convenience and purposive sampling. Convenience sampling is based on taking what is available where you can get it, while purposive sampling refers to a strategy where the researchers target a population which is believed to be representative of that being studied (Davies 2007). The available data was provided during a workshop conducted at the Catholic University of Goma-La Sapientia (CUG-LaS) from 11th to 14th June 2019. Participants largely were taken from academic and research institutions (graduate and postgraduate students, lecturers, professors, and researchers) as components of civil society, as well as local CSOs. Two main sources of data taken here are group discussions and survey questionnaires. Several responses from 70 participants were coded and converted to variables measured as nominal and ordinal scales via the SPSS tool. These 70 participants were key informants because of their experience on the way civil society operates in the DRC. Permission was obtained from the gatekeeper to conduct this study at the CUG-LaS and respondents participated freely. Of 83 attendees, 70 responded favorably to the survey after consenting to the ethical considerations explained, based on the principles guiding research in social sciences according to Bless et al. (2013), particularly non-maleficence, beneficence, autonomy, fidelity, respect for participants' rights and dignity, informed consent and voluntary participation, anonymity and discontinuance. Confidentiality and appropriate referral were not significant because the nature of the open forum and group discussions which generated responses to survey questionnaires did not require this. Ethics in analysis and reporting research outcomes, and reporting back to participants (Bless et al. 2013) were also observed.

Figure 10.4 represents the main features of the sample as far as occupations of participants is concerned .

Participants in the study came from three countries: two from Burundi (2.9%), two from South Africa (2.9%), and 66 from the DRC (94.3%). The highest representation came from graduate and postgraduate students pursuing various academic studies at the CUG-LaS, among whom there were thirty-two from the Faculty of Philosophy, nine from the Faculty of Theology, six from the Faculty of Social Sciences and three from the Faculty of Psychology. In addition, there were eighteen academics, including the participating universities' rectors, professors and lecturers, one police officer and one member of a local NGO. Table 10.1 captures the frequency distributions

Fig. 10.4 Features of the sample. *Source* Author
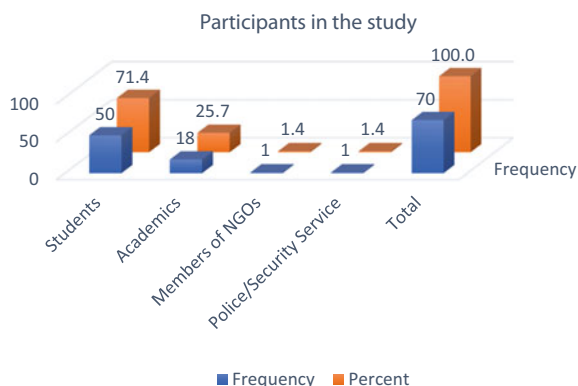
Table 10.1 Organisations to which participants belonged

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Evangelical University of Africa	3	4.3
	Catholic University of Goma _ La Sapientia	56	80.0
	Catholic University of Bukavu	2	2.9
	Sub-Saharan University of Africa	2	2.9
	Great Lakes School of Theology and Leadership	1	1.4
	Durban University of Technology/International Centre of Nonviolence (ICON)	2	2.9
	Rema Burundi	1	1.4
	Other	3	4.3
	Total	70	100.0

and percentages of individual categories of participants in the inquiry based on six groupings.

10.5   Challenges, Opportunities and Recommendations

Civil society is confronted by a myriad of challenges, mainly those related promoting civil liberties, ensuring the respect of the rule of law, improving governance system, depoliticising civil society participation in democratisation and service delivery, protecting citizens' movements and human rights activists (see Appendix 10.1).

Participants identified several opportunities through which civil society can be more relevant, especially in monitoring peace processes, implementing peace agreements to end armed conflicts, redressing social inequalities, promoting gender equality and equal access to education opportunities, and helping demilitarised areas to achieve durable peace (see Appendix 10.2).

From the list included as Appendix 10.3, 10 recommendations were made by all the groups involved in group discussions:

- Train CSOs' actors and executives
- Call on international experts and NGOs for exchange programs
- Review the education system by including the concept of conflict resolution in the national curriculum at all levels
- Draw on African social realities to create and submit our own conflict resolution theories
- Create a group (an autonomous and independent think tank) to investigate further all drivers to conflicts and assist local organisations to tackle identified root causes of conflicts
- Integrate conflict management courses into the curriculum of primary and secondary schools
- Introduce peacebuilding into the higher learning syllabus and encourage scientific research in conflict resolution and peacebuilding
- Organise conferences on conflict resolution at various levels of communities (rural, urban and in higher learning environment)
- Organise listening sessions where people can share their frustrations and worries relating to conflicts
- Create radio broadcasts on conflict resolution

10.6   Discussion

The density of materials supplied by participants in this inquiry translates the passion which animates all respondents for whom peace is a vital need. The discussion of findings will focus on empirical data resulting from the recommendations made by participants, and this is subdivided into three components: (1) Training and education of civil society actors and leaders (2) Introducing peacebuilding programs at all levels of educational courses (3) Sharing of expertise with international civil society organisations/NGOs (4) Glocalization and contextualisation of training models and interventions strategies (Fig. 10.5).

Firstly, training of civil society members, actors and leaders emerged as the most valuable of all the factors that could enhance the effectiveness of civil society. Several recommendations share the same trends, which encompass integration of peace-building programs at all levels of educational programs. Scholars such as Lederach (1997) encourage training of leaders at the grassroots level because of the responsibility they carry in enhancing reconciliation and delivering immediate and urgent services to the people most affected by conflict. Similarly, Plato observed that political actors need expertise and ethical standards so that they can exercise meaningfully their democratic rights and lead an ethical political life (Ninian 2012).

Secondly, the lifespan of the DRC's tumultuous political life has caused an erosion of the traditional values of conviviality and socialisation and impacted social capital, as many communities confronted each other, military or violently, thus destroying the

Fig. 10.5 Layers of Civil Society's effectiveness enterprise. *Source* The Author
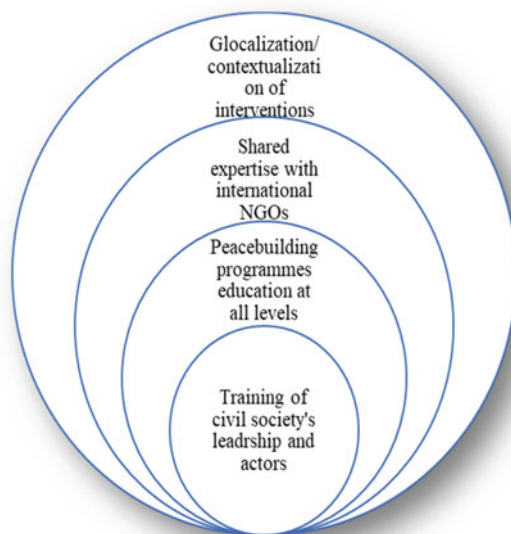
social fabric, which needs to be repaired. Education for peace requires both infrastructure and the resolve from Congolese of all generations to embark on educational programs that inform on democratic ideas and peacebuilding—to break the vicious circle of dragged-out conflict and prolonged violence.

Thirdly, the need for international cooperation between external actors and local CSOs is much favored. Such a partnership and the assistance of international experts are pivotal in helping local CSOs to deal with the challenges involved in conducting fair and transparent elections, preventing electoral violence, and building post-electoral sustainable peace, before, during and after transitional phases. External CSOs could train locals in democracy, reconciliation, and peacebuilding, while learning and possibly taking advantage of locally-oriented peacebuilding mechanisms, such as the Baraza—a traditional restorative justice model of conflict resolution and indigenous jurisprudence in the eastern DRC (Kiyala 2016).

Lastly, glocalisation and contextualisation of interventions was evoked as an underpinning of an efficient response of civil society. The need for ongoing education and the expertise of international civil actors is justified by the desire to expand the understanding and knowledge of civil society's engagement worldwide. The expression *glocalisation* incorporates two concepts, namely *globalisation* and *localisation.* It refers to bringing the concept of civil society, democracy and peacebuilding from the global context and adapting its functionality, aims, agenda and modus operandi in the complex realities of the DRC. This reasoning for taking a glocalisation approach could be justified by the saying "there is no one-size-fits-all", in approaching violence related to democratisation and transitional processes. The diversity of contexts and responses to conflict transformation and peacebuilding, as elucidated by Lederach (1997), supports the importance of adaptability of strategies and interventions to fit

the context. Political transition and the search for peace are distinct engagements that take into consideration local/domestic realities and which are not uniform, by requiring the adoption of local-based wisdom, and getting indigenous people embarked on this project. The fact is that most conflicts in the DRC are entrenched up-country, in rural and remote areas, and not in big cities. In this context the bottom-layer leaders are key players in any peacebuilding, providing training on democratic ideals and transitional processes. This view is supported Dah: "An essential element of democracy, it is argued, is that people have access to information and differing opinions so that they can make informed decisions" (Dah 1989, cited in McLaverty 2002, p. 308).

10.7   Conclusion

This inquiry aimed to investigate the extent to which civil society could effectively contribute to durable peace via its engagement in democratisation and transitional processes in the context of the DRC emerging from the legacy of authoritarian rules and a history of rebellions, civil wars and protracted armed conflicts. It was found that civil society emerged at the time when the DRC was the Independent State of Congo, then a Belgian colony. However, its real development and visibility were discernible in the 1990s following President Mobutu's speech which ended the mono-party system and opened the DRC's political space to multipartyism. Several civil society platforms, including civic movements, adopted a non-violent approach to pursuing the fight for the advent of a DRC which is truly democratic and where the rule of law frames and defines the system of governance and ensures that peace and security prevail. Unfortunately, many civil society activists lost their lives to defend democratic ideals under brutal and despotic rulers. The resilience of civic movements has been rewarded by a new era marked by the hope that CSOs could operate in a free and secure environment and continue to play their advocacy role, remain committed to the protection and human rights and civil liberties, and foster the democratisation agenda and respect of legal provisions that sustain peace and justice mechanisms in transitional societies—a legal framework that protect the rights of victims and upholds the rule of law.

It emerges from both literary data reviewed and empirical data that the DRC's civil society is confronted with a myriad of challenges that have to be overcome, but there are many opportunities too where CSOs can operate to consolidate peace and democratic institutions. Amidst an extensive record of strategies suggested to make civil society more effective, there came up, simultaneously, 10 factors identified by the findings which carry substantive potential to affect the leading role of CSOs in taking the democratisation agenda further and ensuring the DRC's citizens participate in electoral processes that are fair, peaceful, and transparent, in which they participate freely, and the voting results of which reflect the truth of the electorate's will. This, so far, has been a serious problem in the country following the last three nationwide elections (2006, 2011, and 2018). The new political dawn characterised by freedom

of the media and the independence of CSOs could be a turning point towards the vision of a DRC as a mature democracy which is unequivocally democratic and where everybody abides by the rule of law. Reaching such heights demands a synergistic implementation of the four layers of an efficient civil society, and this should be supported by a determined collaboration between CSOs and the DRC Government.

Appendix 10.1: Challenges

• Promoting freedom of expression	• Disdain towards civil society
• To facilitate the search for consensus in the process of national decision-making	• The politicization of civil society • Violence carried out by unknown attackers on activists
• Police brutalities	• Killing of activists without justice
• Facilitating conditions for free, democratic, and transparent elections • Vulnerability of civil rights activists • Complicity of the population in securing civil society • Autonomy of civil society to facilitate peace dialogues	• Difficulties in fighting the hypocrisy of the political elites • Lack of protective measures to secure CSOs' actors and leaders • lack of resources in the delivery of services • Lack of cooperation by rival political parties • Nepotism and sentimentalism
• Improving the functioning of the judiciary	• The State's rejection of certain civil society demands
• Improving governance system • Lack of power to protect citizens	• Socialization and building social capital
• Creating conditions for freedom of expression	• Tackling the clash over customary and land laws
• Creating the conditions for the peaceful resolution of electoral disputes	• Lack of a spirit of consultation among civil society organizations for actions of common interest
• Facilitating civic engagement without confrontation and disruption of public order • Presence of insecurity • Incapacity to deal with increasing ongoing insecurity • Poor job management	• Lack of healthy relations among mutual associations • Neglect by the authorities in the face of brutal treatment of CSO actors • Lack of an appropriate framework for arbitration of political disputes • Distrust in the ethnic, cultural, and religious groups of the CSO groups
• To be the voice of the people in making decisions that have a national reach	• Easing of intergroup, intercommunity, inter-ethnic social cohesion
• Civil society's dependence on politicians who may exert their influence, which impedes the neutrality of civil society	• Tribalism and gender discrimination • Non-existent legal protective framework to ensure safety of human rights and civil rights activists

(continued)

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• Promoting freedom of expression	• Disdain towards civil society
• Absence of the principle of meritocracy among civil society actors • Impotence to enforce the principles of political alternation • Camouflaged agenda of some members of civil society	• Lack of an adequate framework for exchange between communities • Lack of an appropriate framework for mediation • Facilitation and mediation between rival political groups • Land disputes
• Repealing laws that favor only small groups	• Acceptance of others as viable players in civil society
• Ethical failure of civil society representatives	• Lack of conviviality among communities
• Politicization of civil society • Lack of training equipment on individual freedoms	• Non-applicability of pre-established laws • Lack of intergroup social cohesion

Appendix 10.2: Civil Society's Opportunities

• Monitoring peace and easing disputes in the context of increasing political conflicts and military confrontations, and promoting interaction among citizens' movements
• Mobilizing the resources available for development and ending recurring armed conflicts
• Opportunity for research on conflicts related to ethnicity and land control
• Fighting the mercantile spirit of economic operators that exploit children and fuel mineral resources conflicts
• Monitoring and implementation of peace agreements in inter-community and identity conflicts
• Redress of social inequalities and tackling failures of service delivery and ongoing protests
• Fighting unequal access to education, promotion of human rights and gender equality
• Safeguarding democracy and peace in the DRC
• Fighting against mismanagement or misuse of natural resources in organizations
• Militating for the independence of civil society, its neutrality, and cooperation among NGOs and citizens' movements

Appendix 10.3: Suggested Ways to Overcome Identified Challenges

Collective action	Individual/personal commitment to conflict resolution and peace management
• Change of mentality and political will • Respect for the principles of democracy • Dependence on legal institutions • Training and informing citizens in important areas • Restriction of civil society for consideration in the face of citizens • Train the population on the missions and functions of civil society • Raising awareness and motivating people to participate in an integral way for a new image of civil society • Highlight the importance of each group in the process of building worthy values • Instill a spirit of cooperation and exchange between communities, • The reinvention of civil society acceptance • The appropriation of this structure (civil society) by all segments and categories of population • There has to be awareness; thus, the awareness by each group of civil society in the context of peacebuilding. • It is necessary to proceed by the unification of civil society (collaboration, coordination, and order in the actions of civil society) • Good organization and specific goals • Respect for legal texts	• Multiply training and seminars on conflict resolution • Awareness and consultation of all social strata for inclusive participation; reinvention of the image of civil society • Everyone's commitment to peacebuilding and conflict resolution • There is a need to intensify awareness and awareness campaigns on the promotion of peace • Introduce courses on peace education in the national education curriculum giving them a special importance (i.e., giving a high weight) • Strong awareness and awareness of all • Providing fair justice • Raising awareness among the members here • Awareness of the members here ?? • Creating a sense of listening • Everyone's commitment to peacebuilding and conflict resolution • Good governance and respect for human rights • Financial independence of civil society • Setting up a communication cell within civil society • Security, understanding between political groups • Educating members of civil society through seminars, training, and the like

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