STOPPING AS SUCCESS:
TRANSITIONING TO LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT

PROGRAM TRANSITION AT THE
COMMUNITY LEVEL: INTERNATIONAL
RESCUE COMMITTEE’S TUUNGANE
PROGRAM IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
OF CONGO

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STOPPING AS SUCCESS

This case study was developed as part of Stopping As Success (SAS), implemented by a consortium consisting of Peace Direct, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, and Search for Common Ground, with support and funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). SAS is a collaborative learning project that aims to study the dynamics at play when ending a development program, and provide guidelines on how to ensure locally led development. In doing this, SAS looks beyond the technical aspects of an exit strategy to identify examples that demonstrate a transition toward locally led development. The case studies produced by the project highlight the past and present realities faced by international non-government organizations (INGOs), local civil society organizations (CSOs), and local NGOs, focusing in particular on how partnerships evolve during transitions or devolution to local entities.

1. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Do community-driven development (CDD) approaches facilitate successful transition when programs run by INGOs come to an end? This is the key question explored in this case study on the Tuungane program in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Tuungane is a large-scale community-driven reconstruction and development initiative funded by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID). The program was implemented in approximately 1,300 conflict-affected communities across eastern DRC by three large INGOs: lead organization International Rescue Committee (IRC) alongside CARE International and Search for Common Ground. The program began in April 2007 and ended in June 2016, operating with a total budget of £104.5 million (US$133.1 million).

During its implementation period, Tuungane was DFID’s largest and longest-running CDD program, and as such several large-scale evaluations have been conducted in order to ascertain its outcomes and impacts. The purpose of this case study is to map out the process of program transition: how it was communicated, managed and evaluated, and how IRC sought to ensure sustainability through working with local actors in...
eastern DRC. While it is too early to tell whether the program contributed to sustainable outcomes over the long term, especially given the ongoing humanitarian and conflict-driven crisis in eastern DRC, evaluations have shown that elements of Tuungane have been sustained since the program ended in 2016.

DEFINING “LOCAL”
In this case study, the term “local” is used to refer to a wide and diverse set of stakeholders operating at the local level in DRC, including community/village leaders and members, Tuungane’s Congolese staff, customary chiefs, religious leaders, government officials at the most local administrative level, and others. The term is not intended to minimise the role of such stakeholders in any way by placing local actors below international actors in a perceived hierarchy.

TYPE OF TRANSITION
Tuungane is an interesting case study of INGO exit as, in contrast to other SAS case studies, there was no handover of the program’s structures to a defined local entity (for instance, a Congolese NGO) when the program ended. Nevertheless, one of the grounding principles of CDD is that the transition of ownership and power to local stakeholders is built into the model from the outset. And the program did, in a general sense, hand over existing infrastructure – such as schools and health centers – to Congolese government entities. Tuungane is also interesting in that it is one in a series of large-scale CDD programs funded by both bilateral and multilateral donors over the past decade, and therefore any lessons learned may have broader applicability beyond the DRC context.

TUUNGANE’S APPROACH TO TRANSITION
Tuungane is an example of an INGO program transition driven by the end of a donor funding cycle. This report outlines how IRC shifted programming priorities in the final phase of Tuungane in preparation for closedown, including working more closely with governance structures already existant in eastern DRC.

This case study is based on interviews with 27 key stakeholders, including Tuungane’s international management staff in New York, Nairobi, Washington DC, and London; Congolese staff based in the communities where the program operated; community members; as well as with other external stakeholders with extensive knowledge of the program. Interviews were conducted across three locations in DRC – Kinshasa, Bukavu, and Walungu (a territory in South Kivu) – by Peace Direct’s Senior Researcher, Farzana Ahmed, and Congolese researcher Arlette Nyembo.

The case study also draws on the program’s extensive prior documentation, including in-depth evaluations carried out by Columbia University and the World Bank. We opted to focus primarily on IRC, as it led the implementation of Tuungane’s exit.

2. CONTEXT
International media coverage portrays DRC as a country suffering from high levels of violent conflict, political insecurity and, starting in 2018, an Ebola outbreak in the western and eastern parts of the country. This, though, is only part of a much more complex picture. DRC is the second largest country on the African continent and one of the most populous, with approximately 80 million inhabitants. It has vast natural resources, including 80 million hectares of arable land and over 1,100 types of minerals and precious metals. Despite being one of the most resource-rich countries in Africa, however, DRC is among the poorest countries in the world, ranking 176 out of 187 countries in the UN’s Human Development Index.

Following 32 years under the dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko, DRC experienced both civil and international war between 1997 and 2003. During this time, an estimated 5 million people died as a result of violence, disease, or starvation. The conflict was eventually brought to an official end through a peace process that began with a ceasefire agreement signed in Lusaka, Zambia, in 1999.

A transitional government was put in place in 2003, culminating in the country’s first democratic elections in 2006. Joseph Kabila, in power since 2001 after succeeding his assassinated father, was elected President. During Kabila’s presidency, DRC underwent a series of governance reform processes, the two most significant being découpage
and decentralization. As part of découpage, DRC’s 11 provinces were carved up and replaced by 26 new ones. Meanwhile, decentralization, a process intended to bring decision-making closer to the people and specifically designed to benefit entités territoriales décentralisées (ETDs) at the sub-provincial or local level, has largely stalled. As described by our interviewees, IRC deliberately chose to work with ETDs in support of the decentralization process from phase 2 of Tuungane onwards. As a senior IRC staff member put it: “It was an optimistic time in DRC in 2007… Government planned to really decentralize, with a lot more to be done at the territorial level. And this was basically our way of saying we will meet you from the bottom up.”

Despite the relative political stability of Kabila’s regime, violence and humanitarian crises continue to affect the lives of Congolese people across the country. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated in July 2019 that 12.8 million people are in dire need of assistance as a result of local-level conflict and health threats, the most serious being Ebola.

Meanwhile, DRC has also been preoccupied with a growing political crisis. The country’s first democratic transfer of power was scheduled to take place through national elections held in December 2016. Kabila successfully delayed the elections by two years, employing a variety of tactics in a process that came to be known as “glissement,” or slippage. Although Kabila eventually agreed to step down as President, this delay and concerns about the legitimacy of the electoral process sparked anti-government protests across DRC’s largest cities, which were in turn often met with violent force by government security forces.

Presidential and legislative elections finally took place on 30 December 2018. In an outcome that surprised the international community, Kabila’s appointed successor, Emmanuel Shadary Ramazani, did not win. Even so, there is documented evidence that the electoral process was manipulated to ensure that the opposition candidate with the greatest amount of support (Martin Fayulu) was not pronounced the winner. Felix Tshisekedi of the DRC’s largest opposition party, the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social (UDPS), was sworn in as President on 24 January 2019. The political situation remains unstable due to the manipulated electoral process and the fact that Kabila’s coalition still holds a majority of seats in the DRC’s legislature.

AID TRENDS AND INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTIONS

In terms of official development assistance (ODA) statistics, DRC continues to be a highly aid-dependent country. Total ODA to DRC decreased slightly from US$2.6 billion in 2015 to US$2.3 billion in 2017. The US is by far the largest bilateral donor to DRC, followed by Germany and the UK. Figures 1 and 2 provide a breakdown of bilateral aid by sector.

FIGURE 1. TOP 10 DONORS TO THE DRC (GROSS ODA), 2016–2017 AVERAGE, US$ MILLION

FIGURE 2. BILATERAL AID BY SECTOR, 2016–2017 AVERAGE

HUMANITARIAN AID 33%
UNALLOCATED/ UNSPECIFIED 4%
OTHER SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES 15%
EDUCATION 5%
ACTION RELATING TO DEBT 0%
PROGRAMME ASSISTANCE 6%
MULTISECTOR 4%
PRODUCTION SECTORS 4%
ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES 5%
HEALTH AND POPULATION 24%
Civil society played an active and instrumental role in the South African-brokered peace process that took place between 2001 and 2003. Following this, prominent members of civil society assumed roles as Members of Parliament in the transitional government that operated between 2003 and 2006. This contributed to a politicization of civil society in the country, and to a large degree leadership in this sector is seen as a springboard into political life. Nonetheless, in a context in which state service delivery is virtually absent, civil society actors – most prominently the Catholic Church – play a crucial role in both the education and health sectors. Without their involvement, such services would all but collapse in many parts of the country. The Church has also played a prominent role in recent political protests against Kabila.

This history helps explain the prominent role civil society organizations continue to play in the country’s political development, as well as its social infrastructure. Due to donor concerns about corruption and the capacity of the DRC government, a relatively high proportion of aid to DRC is channeled through civil society and multilaterals. In 2014, aid via civil society increased and, as a result of continuing reductions in aid to Afghanistan, DRC became the largest recipient of aid via civil society in the world.

Tuungane, however, did not directly fund formal civil society organizations, opting instead to fund and engage with community members and leaders at the village level (some of whom were part of the civil society sector), and, later on, with local government officials. As IRC told us: “The whole concept [of Tuungane] was to pull together and get the voices of citizens in terms of what they were prioritizing as their needs and not go through traditional power structures.” In many ways, this includes broadening the definition of civil society to include all members of a community in a given village or area, not just those who are formally part of a civil society organization or NGO.

In terms of humanitarian assistance and international peacebuilding, there are many reasons why the 2003 peace process failed to end violence and bring about lasting political stability in DRC. Political scientist Séverine Autesserre argues, however, that international actors have constructed three dominant narratives, which have served to eclipse other important factors. According to Autesserre, these narratives focus on a primary cause (violence and the illegal exploitation of natural resources); a main consequence (sexual violence against women and girls; and a central solution (reconstructing state authority). This has meant international interventions have overlooked other important conflict drivers, including grassroots antagonisms over land, and traditional and administrative power struggles at the subnational level.

The political, economic, and humanitarian crises in DRC affect the security not only of Congolese people, but also aid workers in the country. Between January and June 2017, of the 97 cases of humanitarian workers reported kidnapped globally, 50 occurred in DRC. In December 2017, 14 peacekeepers were killed by Ugandan fighters from the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Partially connected to the increasingly difficult security environment, the UN peacekeeping mission, MONUSCO, reduced the size of its troop ceiling by around 3,600 personnel in the 2017 renewal of its mandate.

The insecurity of some of the areas where Tuungane operated between 2007 and 2016 meant that access to certain communities and villages was extremely challenging, both for staff (Congolese and international) and for participants in the program, limiting their movement between areas receiving funding. The original selection of communities chosen by IRC to participate in Tuungane was therefore constrained by security and accessibility considerations.
3. IRC IN DRC: AN OVERVIEW OF TUUNGANE

HISTORY OF IRC IN DRC

The IRC has worked in DRC since 1996, and, with offices in Kinshasa, Katanga, Kasai, North, and South Kivu, remains one of the largest INGOs operating in the country.

The IRC2020 Global Strategy highlights five key thematic areas of focus: health, safety, education, economic wellbeing, and decision-making power. IRC aims to “… reach 8.4 million people in DRC by the end of 2020, specifically targeting internally displaced persons, host communities, women and children, victims of gender-based violence, and the economically and socially disadvantaged.”

In order to implement its strategy, IRC has decided to focus its efforts in specific areas of DRC, based on an analysis of where need is greatest. IRC therefore has a geographical approach to exit and transition, illustrated in Figure 3 below. This decision was adopted by IRC DRC for its full portfolio of work, separate from the exits carried out under Tuungane.

IRC partnered with fellow INGOs CARE DRC and Search for Common Ground to deliver Tuungane. CARE has operated in DRC since 2002 and focuses on “… emergency relief, reconstruction and development projects, and programmes to prevent sexual and gender-based violence and support survivors.” Search, known locally as Centre Lokole, was established in DRC in 2001 to support the country’s peace process.

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE TUUNGANE PROGRAM

Tuungane was IRC’s single largest program in DRC, both in terms of budget and size of target population. It was implemented by IRC in North Kivu, South Kivu, and the former province of Katanga (now the new provinces of Haut-Katanga and Tanganyika). IRC continues to operate in North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika – areas highly affected by conflict and displacement. CARE was responsible for implementing the program in Maniema.

The program implemented the following activities, among others:

- Training of 170,201 community members in the use of community scorecards, used by community members to rate service delivery in their area.
- Training on leadership, responsible management of development projects, and good governance of 9,715 village development committee (VDC) members, 6,271 user committee members, and 1,029 local government officials in ETDs.
- Supporting the rehabilitation or construction of 1,448 classrooms, 1,514 WASH facilities (latrines, springs, reservoirs, wells and pumps), 33 market places, 118 health facilities, 495 meters of bridges and 275 kilometers of roads.

FIGURE 3. THE IRC’S GEOGRAPHIC TRANSITIONS IN DRC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Geographic Transition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Kivu</td>
<td>Expand operations in Beni and Walikale to respond to urgent needs, while maintaining the capacity to respond in Lubero, Masisi and Nyiragongo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Kivu</td>
<td>Respond to the emergency needs of Burundian refugees in Uvira and Shabunda and maintain IDP support in Kalehe and Fizi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Katanga Province</td>
<td>Expand emergency support of Nyunzu, Manono, Mitwaba, Pweto, Moba and Malemba-Nkulu through strategically located offices in Kalemie, Kabalo, and Lubumbashi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinshasa City</td>
<td>Maintain an office to continue relationships with the national government and other stakeholders, but wind down interventions in the capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasai</td>
<td>Respond to acute emergency through integrated programming targeting Kasain central.</td>
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</table>

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The main approach adopted was the provision of grants – ranging from US$2,000 to US$60,000 – to committees to spend on service delivery needs identified by the community. The community-driven development or reconstruction work under Tuungane comprised five broad phases, summarized in Figure 4 below.

In addition, Tuungane worked with 20 ETDs (the lowest-level administrative unit in the DRC) to improve their capacity to deliver services, manage public resources, and support local development in a transparent and accountable way. Grants were also given to select ETDs to support public works. Finally, Tuungane supported the development of village savings and loans associations (VSLAs) in select communities in Maniema and South Kivu, giving the poorest community members increased access to basic services through access to credit and a solidarity fund for household emergencies.

As described by a senior IRC staff member: “… the philosophy behind the program was learning by doing with communities but also the organizations themselves are learning by doing.”

Tuungane received political (rather than financial) support from the Congolese government, as it delivered on key service delivery priorities at the village level. As noted above, the original intention of the program was to complement the planned (and subsequently long-delayed) decentralization process promised as part of the 2005 constitution.

**WHAT IS COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT/RECONSTRUCTION?**

CDD, or CDR, is a widely-used development approach that “… emphasizes community control over planning decisions and investment resources.” It is informed by a range of principles, including local ownership, community empowerment, accountability, and transparency. Often used in the world’s most fragile contexts, where service delivery by government is virtually absent, CDD programs in conflict-affected areas are most commonly implemented to build social infrastructure (including schools, hospitals, and water and hygiene systems) based on community priorities.

Evidence on the effectiveness of CDD as a programming mechanism is mixed. In 2013, IRC and DFID jointly produced a critical review of CDD programs in conflict-affected states. A 2018 study by 3ie also critiques the assumption that CDD programs lead to greater social cohesion, although the evidence does show that they are highly successful in building public infrastructure.

This case study does not assess whether Tuungane was effective in achieving results, an area already explored in three separate evaluations. Rather, we seek to add to the evidence base on how exits from CDD programs and locally led development may be enhanced by the community-led approach, especially in programs implemented over a longer timescale than traditional development projects.

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**FIGURE 4. AREAS OF WORK UNDER TUUNGANE**

1. **Preparation phase:** Tuungane staff introduced the program to administrative and traditional authorities and organized a general assembly for the broader community in each village.

2. **Project sector selection:** Through community consultations, community members prioritized one sector from the areas of health, education, water and sanitation, and infrastructure (roads and markets) for improvement.

3. **Election of community representatives:** Tuungane staff assisted communities in electing representatives to the VDC.

4. **Joint problem-solving and planning:** VDC representatives, existing service user committees and service providers worked together to identify service delivery problems and developed action plans to address them.

5. **Project implementation and monitoring:** VDCs identified contractors and suppliers to implement any identified infrastructure projects and were entrusted with the management of the process in a transparent and accountable way.
TUUNGANE'S ADAPTIVE APPROACH

In recognition of the value of Tuungane within DFID DRC's wider portfolio, a decision was made to extend the program twice, resulting in two additional phases that extended the program by five years: Tuungane 2 (T2) and Tuungane 2+ (T2+). As a result of these extensions, Tuungane had a longer life cycle than the roughly five years experienced by many traditional development programs. To contextualize the changes made under T2+, it is important to understand the earlier programmatic shifts that occurred throughout T1 and between T1 and T2.

Tuungane began with micro-programs, providing unrestricted grants of up to US$3,000 to VDCs, which could then decide what to do with the entirety of the money. As T1 progressed, the size of the grants increased significantly to a maximum of $60,000 given to community development committees (CDCs) – formed of a collection of VDCs – to enable them to do bigger projects.

During T2, the program began to focus more explicitly on the governance aspects of social accountability and working with local power structures, as opposed to pure CDD approaches, which prioritize service delivery. As one international IRC staff member put it: “Community groups as the unbiased voice of their constituency [are prioritized] to ensure that voices of citizens are taken into account.”

This shift resulted in closer engagement with village chiefs and ETDs in Tuungane areas, as well as the introduction of community scorecards. ETDs also received grants under the second phase of the program, creating a means by which local authorities and civil society could come together to ensure community priorities were taken into account by political decision-makers. Another key change was a more sophisticated approach to the program’s gender component. On top of the requirement that 50 percent of VDC membership be female, IRC introduced the stipulation that either the president or vice president of the VDC be a woman. In addition, a gender-gap analysis of barriers to women’s inclusion was conducted, followed by a gender sensitivity training.

### TABLE 1. OVERVIEW OF TUUNGANE’S PHASES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tuungane 1 (T1)</th>
<th>Tuungane 2 (T2)</th>
<th>Tuungane 2+ (T2+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Budget</strong></td>
<td>£18 million (US$22.9 million)</td>
<td>£60 million (US$76.4 million)</td>
<td>£7.5 million (US$9.6 million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Locations</strong></td>
<td>Haut-Katanga, Tanganyika, South Kivu, Maniema</td>
<td>Haut-Katanga, Tanganyika, South Kivu, North Kivu, Maniema</td>
<td>Haut-Katanga, Tanganyika, South Kivu, North Kivu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target Populations</strong></td>
<td>1,250 VDCs, 280 CDCs</td>
<td>1,025 VDCs, 10 ETDs</td>
<td>413 structures (schools, health facilities, water points), 16 ETDs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grant Sizes</strong></td>
<td>US$3,000 per VDC, US$60,000 per CDC</td>
<td>US$24,000 per VDC</td>
<td>US$8,890 education and health, US$2,358 for water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Choices of Sectors</strong></td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
<td>5 sectors: health, education, water and sanitation (watsan), roads, and bridges</td>
<td>3 sectors: health, education, and watsan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>Quota for women on VDCs of 50 percent</td>
<td>Requirement for VDC president or vice president to be female</td>
<td>Encourage gender parity on committees and gender sensitivity overall, work with female leaders at ETD level (pilot), all-staff gender sensitivity training</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
by the introduction of a gender and inclusion checklist for all staff. Finally, IRC conducted targeted women’s empowerment activities, including exchange visits between women to share advocacy strategies and lessons learned.

4. MAPPING THE TRANSITION

Tuungane is a case of an INGO program transition determined by a donor decision (in this case by DFID) to end program funding, resulting in IRC having to wind down activities within an agreed timeframe. Despite having little say in the decision to end the program, however, IRC and local communities were able to manage the process in a way that prioritized local ownership. In 2015, IRC was notified by DFID that no further extensions would be granted, signaling the end of the program and spurring Tuungane staff to develop an exit strategy.

TUUNGANE’S APPROACH TO TRANSITION

Despite the uncertainty of the program’s exact end date, IRC had submitted a written exit strategy to DFID for phases T2 and T2+. It was clear in the minds of the management team and staff we interviewed that T2+ was the de facto exit phase, and programming changes were made accordingly. Senior international program staff explained in interviews that IRC undertook a deliberate shift between T2 and T2+, transitioning from “… a focus on created committees to actual structures that already exist within the DRC.”

This new direction resulted in several key changes under T2+, including:

• A shift in the overall focus of the program from democratic governance, socioeconomic recovery, and service delivery to the “… sustainability of good governance and service delivery improvements.”

While subtle, this shift represented an awareness that with no additional grants to provide directly to communities, the program needed to focus explicitly on longer-term sustainability.

• A change in modalities by moving beyond social accountability, gender, and inclusion tools toward capacity-building activities (including on how to create targeted advocacy strategies) and equipment purchases in preparation for the program’s end.

• A decrease in the size of available grants and a narrowing down of targeted sectors from five to three (education, health, and water and sanitation) in an effort to focus attention in the program’s final phase.

• A transfer of mandate, roles, and responsibilities from the VDCs, which were responsible for managing Tuungane grants, to existing education, health or water committees. This transition had been planned from the outset of the program.

It is important to note that while T2+ was the official exit phase of Tuungane, the program had already exited from many communities at that point. T2+, therefore, did not include all of the original communities that participated in T1 or T2.

As described by a Congolese Tuungane staff member, the approach to T2+ was about making the exit as sustainable as possible: “… sustainability was ensured by working closely with authorities and beneficiaries on how to lobby and advocate for themselves and to know what the authorities are supposed to provide for them. We worked a lot with service delivery agents as well. Before we did not really have those platforms where people could interact with authorities and to make sure that that was understood by everybody that was a strategy in itself.” We will return to sustainability in section 5 of this report.

In addition to the exit strategy implemented as part of T2+, IRC organized a series of lessons learned events with program stakeholders and participants. These included conferences and workshops at the local, provincial, and national level in DRC. The aim was to communicate lessons from the program’s lifespan to a wide group of stakeholders, including the DRC government, international donors, NGOs, civil society, and the media. A national Tuungane conference was held in June 2016 on lessons learned on social accountability, attended by other DFID implementing partners, the DRC government, Congolese civil society, and international organizations based in Ethiopia and Kenya doing social accountability work. Lessons from the Tuungane experience also informed several high-profile international workshop processes, including the Global Partnership for Social Accountability, consultations on the 2016 World Development Report, the 2016 Ethiopian Social Accountability Program National conference, and a workshop by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) on CDR in fragile states. This commitment
to sharing lessons has raised Tuungane’s profile as an influential CDD program.

**ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS**

Successfully managing an eventual transition process, particularly for programs as large as Tuungane, requires strong engagement with local stakeholders from the moment activities start. As described by a senior stakeholder within IRC: “… the program was about more than infrastructure. It was about relationships.”

Throughout Tuungane, the program emphasized local engagement, consultation, and joint decision-making, all core concepts of the CDD approach. As DFID noted in the program’s Project Completion Review: “… the nature of CDR means that the program has been implemented both within and with communities. Accordingly, it had to navigate local realities including high levels of mistrust amongst people and between people and those who provide services, including international actors, a high potential for community-level conflict, and high levels of corruption and fraud. This required strong awareness, systems and structures for managing the risks of operating in eastern DRC.”

Tuungane’s core decision-making process was driven from the outset by local communities via general assemblies and meetings in selected villages. During these meetings, communities decided which sectors to focus on from a list offered by IRC (choosing between, for example, health, education, or roads), with community leaders counting the number of votes for each sector to create a ranking of priorities.

A former staff member emphasized the importance of Tuungane being a different type of program from its inception: “It was an innovation in terms of implementing a project because we were always used to INGOs arriving and implementing a project that they already designed outside. But with Tuungane they had a project, yes, but the communities were choosing themselves what they wanted to implement in the area and they knew exactly how much money was available to them. That was something different for them because no one had ever done that in the past.” One of the key outcomes was, therefore, that Tuungane introduced a new way of operating, creating in some cases a standard against which other INGOs seeking to operate in these communities might be measured.

In the spirit of maintaining strong relationships with local stakeholders, the program sought to work closely with chiefs in target villages, who in the absence of elected local officials are crucial to decision-making on issues of governance and resourcing. The main role of chiefs was to encourage citizens in communities to participate in general assembly meetings, as well as serving as an adviser to the VDC in the capacity of an honorary member. IRC initially required a minimum participation rate of 70 percent for meetings in order to ensure any vote was representative of the majority view, but this was later adjusted downward when lack of participation led to delays in implementation. In cases where Tuungane was unable to engage with village chiefs, who in some instances opposed the program, IRC staff targeted religious and civil society leaders instead. This helped bridge the gap between national/provincial-level approval for Tuungane – which had already been secured – and local-level endorsement.

A community chief interviewed for this study was complimentary of the relationship that developed, saying that “… when IRC first arrived in the province, they first met with the authorities at the provincial level and then met with all our territorial representatives, even the tribe chief of villages. And when they started implementation of the projects, they were working closely with the population. It was a collaborative relationship.” Another community leader also praised the relationship with IRC, highlighting the training received as part of the program and noting that IRC encouraged communities to contact other villages working in the same sectors. Laying the groundwork for this engagement early on was crucial to the success of future communications regarding the end of the program.

**COMMUNICATION ON THE TRANSITION**

IRC created communications plans for the first “community-level exits” of the program, that is, for communities that participated in T1 but were not included in T2. IRC recognized the importance of communicating the decision clearly and well, as former T1 communities might be in close proximity to communities selected for T2. There was a further reduction in the number of participating communities from T2 to T2+, due to the number of sectors being
narrowed down. In a sense, a natural end point was reached once the grant money for a particular project had been spent, with infrastructure having been built and maintenance handed over to the authorities, in collaboration with communities. IRC held an end-of-program event with each community, also attended by territorial authorities, marking the official handover of responsibility from the Tuungane VDCs.

Once DFID notified IRC that it would no longer be extending the program, IRC began communicating the program’s definitive end to its staff and participating communities. Three to four months prior to the program’s closure in June 2016, workshops were held at the national, provincial, and local level, with the aim of communicating the end of Tuungane to a wide audience, from community leaders to government authorities.

Former Congolese Tuungane staff members from IRC noted that the end of the program was not a surprise to them – it was clear from the outset that the program would be timebound. One former IRC staff member noted that all staff were “psychologically prepared” for the exit, having been given clear communications from the start. This enabled them to prepare communities for the end of T2+.

Similarly, communities were informed at the beginning of Tuungane that it would be a timebound project, as outlined in the partnership contracts held with each participating community. Despite this, the granting of two extensions over time created an expectation that Tuungane would continue to operate. Even when informed that T2+ would be the final phase of the program, several community members initially believed that it would nevertheless be extended for a third time.

We interviewed leaders of several communities that participated in Tuungane, who, while not necessarily a representative sample, confirmed that they were always aware of the program’s time-limited nature and were not surprised when it came to an end. They also referenced the close-out workshops, noting the message of Tuungane staff that they hoped communities would continue with the work. Nevertheless, there was an inevitable sense of disappointment from communities that they would no longer receive direct grants to support infrastructure projects, particularly in a context of growing political
crisis and further delays to the electoral timetable, especially at the local level. Given that the decision to end of the program was donor-driven, this was not something that IRC could directly address.

5. OUTCOMES, IMPACTS, AND CHALLENGES

In order to assess the outcomes of of a transition, we need a sense of what post-transition success looks like in terms of locally led development. This section outlines some of the shorter-term outcomes of the program exit, assesses the emerging story on impacts, and highlights challenges faced by IRC.

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

It is difficult to fully capture all the outcomes associated with the exit process in a program as complex as Tuungane. Instead, captured below are some of the reactions to and perceptions of the end of the program from a selection of key stakeholders.

The overarching outcome in the logical framework (or logframe, a monitoring and evaluation tool) for T2 and T2+, the exit phase, was outlined as follows: “Communities and local levels of government are active agents of development within a governance system that effectively addresses their priorities.” Community leaders interviewed for this case study emphasized the accountability elements introduced as part of Tuungane, including those that had come about since the program come to an end. As a president of one of the Tuungane-era committees in South Kivu noted: “… besides bringing us the projects and helping us with peace, [Tuungane] also taught us a lot of things. We benefited from a lot of training from the project, for example improving accountability and transparency. They were at first saying Tuungane was a governance project – we asked what governance was. So they organized a lot of training. It was beneficial for us because it helped us know what our rights are and what were the obligations of our authorities and it reduced the fear in us because we were very fearful of authorities – we hardly questioned them even when we knew they were stealing money.”

In a similar vein, a village chief in South Kivu explained that his community feared holding the paramount chief to account over his handling of the village’s taxes. Since Tuungane ended, community members have been invited to participate in the preparation of the budget, something which had never happened before. Participating in Tuungane allowed the paramount chief to “… make his leadership better and bring him closer to the people.” The president of another community in South Kivu provided another example in relation to Church leaders. Prior to Tuungane, Church leaders had not been fully transparent about their finances, including how money that had been collected was going to be used. Now, the Church has introduced accountability and transparency as key principles of its work in this particular community.

The accounts we heard of improved social accountability in the final phases of the program were confirmed by the World Bank’s evaluation of T2, which “… performed well on outcomes related to the relationship between villagers and service providers. We find evidence that service users and service providers are better informed about line ministries; there is more interaction between villagers and user committees and service providers and user committees; and villagers in Tuungane 2 areas are more positive about service provision and the actions of their local user committees.”

Meanwhile, an external government stakeholder told us that “… in terms of strengths, the Tuungane model encouraged a culture of accountability and transparency which somewhat lasted upon project completion. For example, in Lubumbashi one of the chiefs of the ETD would be accompanied by a citizen delegate to withdraw money from the IRC account, even for purchasing any furniture. This was just to show that no money was being stolen. Everything was known by the communities.”

Finally, community members reported gender as another area where significant outcomes were observed as the program wound down. A former IRC staff member noted that Tuungane had contributed to a “shift in mentality” when it came to the role of women in social accountability, enabling women to attend committee meetings by putting in place gender parity quotas.

Although this evidence is largely anecdotal (albeit backed up by external evaluations), such reflections provide valuable insights that might be applied to ongoing and future CDD programs, especially in conflict-affected areas and countries.
SUSTAINABILITY OF TUUNGANE: THE STORY SO FAR

Although the program ended in 2016, in many ways it is still too soon to assess the long-term sustainability of Tuungane’s end. With this caveat in mind, below we outline two of the program’s most sustainable aspects, as highlighted by Tuungane stakeholders, participating communities, and evaluation reports.

• Lasting service delivery infrastructure
  As noted above, Tuungane’s exit phase was used to hand over maintenance of any program-financed infrastructure to communities. There is evidence to show that this approach has led to sustainability via the creation of maintenance committees post-Tuungane. In one community in South Kivu, we were told that this committee uses the equipment it has received to conduct ongoing maintenance of the roads. Once a week, the committee organizes a community service day where community members work together to help fix the roads. While funding sources have been scarce since Tuungane ended, community members and village chiefs contribute small amounts of money to invest in wood, nails, and other material to help with the maintenance of local bridges. More important than the equipment itself were the wider benefits of communities coming together for the good of the entire village.

A former IRC Tuungane staff member provided a similar example from another set of villages, which had previously received a grant of US$24,000. The communities decided to come together after the program ended to establish a maintenance committee that would mobilize community members to contribute 200 Congolese francs per month to cover repairs over time. Another community reported using the same method to maintain water and sanitation infrastructure. However, this approach has worked less well for communities in more remote areas, especially those with high poverty levels.

• Working within existing structures and systems
  IRC recognized that – as opposed to the VDCs and CDCs, which were created under Tuungane – T2+ needed to work with local committees and structures already existent under the official Congolese legal and governmental structure. Some of the CDCs, which had already been phased out in T2, had attained a level of legitimacy that would allow them to continue to direct village-level affairs. However, without a grant to manage, their mandate was diminished. The approach in T2+ was therefore to work with existing committees in Tuungane’s chosen sectors. For instance, in the education sector the program worked with parent committees, offering training in accountability and evaluation methods.

A positive side effect of Tuungane was that the committee structures put in place served as a model for the government, which has adopted a similar model. According to a member of the World Bank evaluation team, Tuungane’s work with local government authorities impressed on them the importance of using committees to manage local community funds, and several subsequent projects have adopted this approach. Indeed, one community that operated development committees under Tuungane was able to secure funding from the Fonds Social – a government-managed program funded by the World Bank – to build new classrooms and toilets.

EMERGING IMPACTS

Given Tuungane’s large budget and significance within DFID DRC’s portfolio, several reviews and evaluations were commissioned during the lifetime of the program.

The first evaluation, led by Columbia University and published in 2012, focused on the VDC component of T1. Data collection took place between 2010 and 2011 using a randomized impact evaluation approach, with the outcome being that no evidence was found of Tuungane having had an effect on the program’s stated goals of improving economic and social outcomes. The evaluators did, however, find that “Tuungane was successful in implementing a large number of projects in the target areas, that the projects were in line with the preferences of the populations, and that the populations reported very high levels both of exposure to project activities and satisfaction with the outcomes of the project.”

As this evaluation took place before the program had come to an end, and given it only looked at a single
component of Tuungane, DFID commissioned the World Bank’s Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) group to conduct impact evaluations of all three phases of Tuungane. Taking on board the first evaluation’s findings and changes to implementation over time, the World Bank evaluations shifted focus from measuring local governance and social cohesion improvements (social outcomes more broadly) towards evaluating infrastructure and service provision, as well as long-run impacts.

The evaluation of T1 found that Tuungane successfully implemented a large number of projects across target communities, and the program was known by name to around 80 percent of the population area. Participation levels in the program were also high, with a large share of the population reporting having attended and voted at meetings. The evaluation also concluded: “The Tuungane I program performed well on outcomes related to activities that were directly under its control – namely improvements in the quality of infrastructure and to some extent on the presence of material and supplies – but appears to have had few downstream socio-economic effects. This suggests that improvements in socio-economic infrastructure, in and of themselves, may not be sufficient to produce the desired impact.”

The shift in emphasis between T1 and T2 from service delivery infrastructure to broader accountability dynamics appears to have made a difference to the types of outcomes observed. The accounts we heard from communities of improved social accountability in the final phases of the program were confirmed by the World Bank’s evaluation of T2, which “… performed well on outcomes related to the relationship between villagers and service providers. We find evidence that service users and service providers are better informed about line ministries; there is more interaction between villagers and user committees and service providers and user committees; and villagers in Tuungane 2 areas are more positive about service provision and the actions of their local user committees.”

The evaluations were conducted shortly after the closure of the program, and therefore it is too early to tell whether these initial impacts will endure or change over time. Tuungane’s sheer scale of ambition, as shown in this evaluation overview, means that it is challenging to capture.

CHALLENGES

As with any INGO program transition, IRC faced challenges in the winding down and eventual end of the program.

- **Communities felt the timeframe for the exit (and no longer receiving grants) was too short**
  One unanticipated outcome of the program’s end was that the handover to communities was not
always straightforward. A community leader in South Kivu noted that despite his view that “… it’s not for a project that is short term to fix things in our community,” community members were disappointed when they were informed three months before the end of the program that funding would come to an end. Although Tuungane activities were always tied to grant cycles, the T2 extension raised community expectations about future funding. The reasons for wanting the program to continue went beyond the desire for additional financing; improving governance is an issue that requires sustained, long-term attention, especially in fragile contexts such as DRC. At the same time, it was appreciated that the remaining time in the program was used to conduct training and capacity building in areas related to governance.

Another issue that arose was disagreement between IRC staff and committees on the best service providers to work with after Tuungane’s end. While IRC was keen that villages consider service providers from outside of the community, in communities where this path was taken post-Tuungane, some projects remained unfinished due to external service providers proving too costly.

- Randomized evaluations with data collection after the end of the program can potentially raise expectations

As mentioned above, Tuungane has been a heavily evaluated program. One of the benefits of this is that such evaluations can help to inform program exit, as well as adding to the evidence base of what works in similar CDD or CDR programs. However, large-scale evaluations, particularly those relying on randomized methods, can also pose challenges when it comes to program exits. Given external evaluators are asking questions about which areas of the program were most and least effective, there is the potential for raising false expectations that communities or villages may receive new funding. Striking the appropriate balance between collecting robust, high-quality data and managing expectations in a respectful way can be challenging, but it is important to consider this question when designing evaluation approaches.

At the time of Tuungane’s closure, there was discussion about a potential follow-on program that would focus on collective action (working with civil society and communities across the country) and systems strengthening (working directly with government institutions). As of mid 2019, a follow-on program has yet to be released, widening the gap between the official end of Tuungane and any further DFID-funded work in the area of CDD. In many ways this is understandable, given the shift toward addressing the growing humanitarian crisis in eastern DRC. The most sustainable option for CDD programs in the long-term is therefore for communities to use their own assets and resources to self-fund development. This, however, is easier said than done in a context such as the DRC, where poverty and instability are prevalent.

6. KEY LESSONS

Planning for transition is challenging in a context of a time-limited development program that may or may not be extended.

While not knowing the program’s exact end date prevented the writing of a detailed exit strategy, IRC was nevertheless able to use the final phase of the program as de facto exit planning, building on earlier programmatic shifts. Ideally, and regardless of the duration of a program, INGOs should put in place some form of exit strategy that can be finalized when program closure is decided.

In highly participatory, community-driven programs, not having a say in the decision to end the program can cause tension.

One of the challenges INGOs face when a CDD program winds down is precisely the fact that it has hitherto been led by community priorities. The decision by an international donor to end a program (for whatever reason) is not community-driven, nor is the way in which the exit is communicated (that is, from the donor to the INGO, and from the INGO to the communities). This speaks to a wider issue about potential tension between locally led development and donor-driven decision-making processes, something it is important to acknowledge as early as possible in the program.
Disappointment over decisions to end CDD programs, especially those that disburse sizable grants, is largely inevitable, as they provide communities with resources they often lack from government sources. What donors and INGOs can do is work together to prepare considered and careful messaging about any extensions, as well as the eventual program exit, creating space for community members to voice any concerns about this process. By extension, it is crucial to establish robust local engagement processes at the outset of a program, not just when it is coming to an end. Thus, CDD programs similar to Tuungane should focus on creating social capital within groups (for instance at the village level) and between groups (as occurred through the CDCs), to ensure the coming to terms of a program’s exit is more of a shared process.

DFID itself has recognized that a greater emphasis on local ownership is important when designing CDD-type programs, with its Tuungane Project Completion Review noting: “Tuungane delivery was heavily resourced and staffed: in effect, Tuungane represented a non-state structure which reached right down to the village level, almost dwarfing existing local government structures. This provided significant benefits in terms of the programme’s responsiveness and delivery capacity, but also created some perverse incentives and costs by not working through existing structures. At the same time, working through Congolese systems proved difficult because of the high risks in using these. This raises questions about the balance between risk and value for end beneficiaries. To improve the sustainability of future ‘Tuungane-type’ programmes, DFID should consider doing more to build local capacities, finding innovative ways to manage higher risks resulting from this (for example through innovative third party monitoring).”

Processes and practices, such as accountability mechanisms, often last longer than infrastructure.

Tuungane’s central aspect was the provision of grants – based on agreed priorities – to community-led committees to build infrastructure such as classrooms, latrines, health facilities, and roads. The “softer” side of Tuungane, however, was about rebuilding social fabric eroded as a result of conflict and political instability. Communities expressed that through and as a result of Tuungane they were more informed about the responsibilities of local service providers, and thus better able to hold them to account. This has, in many instances, improved relationships between community members and their leaders. Since Tuungane ended, many of these processes and practices have endured at the community level. The lesson here is that while building service delivery infrastructure is a core part of locally led development, less tangible elements – such as reinforcing existing social accountability mechanisms – can be equally important, especially in the medium- to long-term.

Where feasible, transition funding for communities to continue activities beyond a program’s exit could help mitigate the cliff-edge.

Former Tuungane staff and participating community members spoke of the challenge of funding coming to an end within a few months of program closure being formally announced. According to a former IRC staff member, the Tuungane projects would have been more sustainable if a small amount of funding was allocated to communities in preparation for the: “One of the shortfalls of Tuungane is that these projects were short term and all the structures created were short term. I think what IRC should have done was to introduce income-generating activities to prepare the communities to be autonomous once the projects stopped.”

While hope was expressed that program activities would continue using other funding sources, communities noted that transitional funding for use after the program ended would have been very helpful. Equipment was left in villages for future use, but communities often struggled to raise money for maintenance costs, especially in poorer areas. This may have been compounded by the fact that although the number of sectors was narrowed down throughout the program, communities continued to outline a large number of priority activities, making program closure more noticeable.

We do, though, acknowledge the difficulty of transition funding within the context of traditional donor programming, with bilateral donors such as DFID facing constraints regarding their ability to disburse funds outside of a contracted program. In lieu of additional grant finance, our interviewees suggested focusing on income-generating activities in future programs, thereby enabling communities to fund their own service delivery priorities in the absence of external sources.
ENDNOTES

1. Tuungane means “Let’s unite” in the local Kiswahili language.
2. UK Development Tracker, “TUUNGANE (Let’s Unite) – Community Driven Reconstruction Programme in DRC.” https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-105862
3. CDD programs are well funded in general; according to the World Bank, as of 2018 there were 199 active CDD projects in 78 countries, with a total budget of US$19.7 billion. An additional US$12.4 billion was being provided by other borrowers and donors. See: www.worldbank.org/en/topic/communitydrivendevelopment#2