

The Challenges of Conflict Transformation, Peacebuilding and Education Towards Intractable Conflicts: The Youth Involvement in North-Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of Congo

Philippe S. BANZI

ICON/Durban University of Technology
La Sapiencia Catholic University of Goma, DRC

Abstract:- Peacebuilding and transformation are essential in creating a peaceful environment, in responding to conflicts and in promoting good relationships for social harmony. This paper establishes the challenges to transformation and peacebuilding in dealing with conflicts and violence among young people as it explores the strategies for conflict transformation and peacebuilding in North Kivu province. It looks at how these tools can help the youths and the communities to break away from violence and work towards peace. The study is based on the systems theory in general and conflict transformation in particular how to train young generations to get out of conflicts and violence in order to prepare a bright future. Thus, the paper triangulates the systems theory, transformation, peacebuilding and the intergroup contact. From the participatory action research design, the paper provides resources in the struggle against intractable conflicts and subsequent violence for peacemaking. The paper establishes *ubuntu* as a starting point for conflict transformation, peacebuilding and in restoring peace and peaceful cohabitation among the youth in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Keywords:- Transformation, Peacebuilding, Ubuntu, Intractable Conflicts, Youth, Systems.

I. INTRODUCTION

In one of their publications, Nye and Welch raised a vital question that reflects what has been going on in some districts of North Kivu province and this question is: “why do people kill over minor differences?” (Nye and al., 2013: 208). The entire problem is around this question and in the case of North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo, herein DRC, the answer is to respond to issues of differences, ethnic misunderstandings, conflicts and violence among communities. To achieve this response, it is important to adopt a transformative approach and promote true peacebuilding in affected places. However, transformation as well as peacebuilding can be challenged in case there are missing components of these two approaches in facing conflicts.

Conflict transformation has always been a way of imparting values and good practices to people especially the youths, in order to train them through a value-based approach, and enable them to change their attitude or behaviors. It is undisputable that the youths are the dynamic forces of every nation. Therefore, they are expected to take part in the life of the nation. It is the responsibility of families, schools and churches among others to ensure that social values are not lost at any stage of life. In our ever-changing world, due to the effects of globalization, transformation and peacebuilding need to match the standard of the world's speed by promoting civic or public education. It is in this way that Villareal et al. (2023: 401) assert that “civic education teaches, more than just behavior, it also nurtures a culture of appreciation and respect for their homeland and the people with whom one lives in a society”, as it also helps in dealing with the youths' bulge. Indeed, there is a close link between someone's behaviours and the general environment where he lives. Talking about the relationship between the youth bulge and violent conflicts, Urdal (2004: 1) found that “youth bulges are believed to strain social institutions such as the labor market and the educational system, thereby causing grievances that may result in violent conflict.” In this way, one should say that the hundreds of militia groups prevailing in North-Kivu Province fall under the pattern of youth bulge and its consequences. In rural places like Masisi, the youth involved in mining activities have a say that *the best school is the spade* or the best lesson one can learn is how to use a spade not a pen (*uwize yize igitiyo*). On another side, in urban areas, people make fun of the poor and unemployed university graduates saying that they have become motorcycle riders because they cannot get a better job and they lack initiative or any other skill. So, they ride taxi motorbikes to earn their living. They are unable to create anything from what they have learnt. From these views, this paper raised the following questions: what are the motivational factors of conflicts and violence in North Kivu Province of DRC? What could be the answers to these endless conflicts and violence? How could transformation and peacebuilding bring an answer for harmony and peace among communities?

The causal factors of conflicts and violence in this part of the country are at two levels, internal and external. Internal causes are related to ethnic group relationships that have never been good, some groups considering others as foreigners or despising each other. On the other side, there is youth's manipulation by politicians, businessmen and other opinion leaders for their own interests. Internally, there have been crimes and mass killings without any justice or investigation; nor have there been memory healing for the people who lost their beloved ones. So, as earlier stated the major assumptions here are that, first; the causes of conflicts could be ethnic relationships and manipulations. Second, dialogue should be promoted among the conflicting parties, especially the youths. In this case, the transformation approach coupled with the contact hypothesis or intergroup contact theory that will be used aim at promoting change in historically divided and unequal communities. It has the potential to bring about peace among people known as foreigners and autochthonous; among educated and uneducated groups; among wealthy and poor people. Third, violence should be reduced and young people show willingness to re-socialize and to work together in unity. In this way, the contact hypothesis and peacebuilding confirm that positive interaction between members of different groups working towards the same goal tends to reduce intergroup prejudice and brings about social change. Fourth, non-violent behaviors and non-violent communication should be promoted in a transformed community. Hence, the outcomes of this paper are, among others, to bring to light the positive sides of transformation and peacebuilding in the youths lives; to clearly highlight the indicators of the problem, how people get involved in it and finally, to design and suggest some strategies to face intractable conflicts and violence in some parts of DRC. These strategies reflect the actions to be undertaken in terms of healing of memories and infrastructural reconstruction.

There is need for an intergroup reappraisal in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in eastern Provinces in particular. The paper looks at the youth bulge and its implications for human security and peacebuilding. The major problem in eastern DRC has also been a big young population that is not well taken care of by the sociopolitical stakeholders. Even though there are no available statistics of the youth population, an example of their big number could just be confirmed by the hundreds of armed groups in eastern villages and forests. Currently analysts talk of about 250 armed groups operating in this side of the country. Thus the paper identifies the factors that went wrong in social life, in transformation and peacebuilding and suggests some ways to address the issues. The findings will open the way to peace and peacebuilding from the conflict transformation perspectives. Before that, there is an essential need to understand key concepts, especially transformation and peacebuilding.

II. UNDERSTANDING TRANSFORMATION AND PEACEBUILDING

Galtung asserts that “in the life-cycles of conflicts there are no doubt phases that may be referred to as ‘solutions’”(1996: 90) and these solutions or phases in dealing with conflicts are different attempts to transform the conflict and give it a new trend. However, Galtung cautions that “conflict transformation is a never-ending process”(1996: 90). As such, it requires rules and regulations, commitment, good will and above all, it requires time to rebuild what was destroyed and to heal from the negative past experiences (Galtung, 1996: 90). What Omer (2015: 659) reinforces by saying that conflict transformation should be looked at “as a long-term process aimed at analyzing the root causes of deadly violence and its relation to cultural and structural forms of violence, histories, memories, global structures, and local and global power dynamics”. This means that conflict transformation has to be taken into various directions in order to make it effective and efficient. These directions are every types of violence, the results from past experiences and memories added to local and global contexts.

According to Lederach, conflict transformation operates on four major categories on which changes should be implemented. These categories are the individual or personal level, the relational, structural and the cultural levels. Lederach argues that relationships are essential to conflict transformation (2003: 17) like they are vital to intergroup contact. His views are complementary to Allport's opinion when he asserts that “conflict brings with it the potential for constructive change” (Lederach 2003: 15). He further highlights that “conflict can move from being destructive toward being constructive” and concludes that “conflict transformation focuses on the dynamic aspects of social conflict” or the social interrelation at interpersonal, inter-group, and social-structural levels (Lederach, 2003: 19-21). Finally, transformation aims at reducing the distance among actors, reducing bad communication and promoting reciprocal understanding among groups. That is why, in transforming relationships, stakeholders should be involved in the process (Lederach 2003: 26). This research is about stimulating communities, the youth included, to “create a change in their situation from their perspectives, ideas, opinions, wishes” (Lederach 2003: 29-31). Lederach adds that in dealing with conflicts and preparing the ground for reconciliation or building peace, there are essentials to look at and a training to undergo so that the transformative operation produces expected results. Hence, as Lederach considers it, transformation has to start at the grassroots and involve all the social sectors. This aspect has been quite often forgotten as people in North-Kivu, especially the youths are not involved in conflicts transformation processes or forums to deals with communal issues. Going further, Ramsbotham and al. (2005: 29) find that transformation is a strategy for dealing with conflicts and it has two major dimensions and these are the cultural and structural peacebuilding. Transformation goes further and works on parties' relationships. Expanding on transformation, Fisher and al. (2000: 7) underline that transformation includes

other strategies such as the community forum known as *Baraza in North Kivu* as it goes deeper to “the wider social and political sources of a conflict and seeks to transform the negative energy of war into positive social and political change.”

Given the tasks that conflict transformation has to fulfill, Lederach (2003: 21) confirms that if we want to reduce violence, we have to address the presenting issues and content of an episode of conflict, and also its deep causes. Besides, the causal factors of injustice should be addressed and changed at all levels of human relationships. At the core centre of transformation, Lederach finds that dialogue is the key way to bring about a positive change. Dialogue is vital to justice and peace and to other aspects of human life and social interrelationships. Lederach concludes that in conflict transformation, dialogue “is not the only mechanism, but it is an essential one” (Lederach, 2003: 21). Among other advantages, transformation tries to bring to the surface the relational fears, hopes, and goals of the people involved and it deals with them constructively (Lederach, 2003: 25). Similarly, Ryan (Sandole, 2009: 303 - 305) talking about conflict transformation and giving its objectives, argues that “the first feature of transformation is that it aims for deep and profound changes in conflict situations that go beyond the limitations of traditional approaches” (2009: 304). Relating the transformation aspects to the participatory action research or to the concept of security from below, Ryan (Sandole, 2009: 304 – 305) finds that “most, if not all, of the transformation supporters emphasize the importance of working at the grassroots level, sometimes referred to as building local capacity.” Conflict transformation is complementary to peacebuilding and both are needed tools to reduce violence in North-Kivu Province.

They both imply a deep change in institutions, in human relationships, in social structures as they address the wider causes of violence and conflicts. The paper hypothesized that the required steps of peacebuilding have not been followed in the North Kivu conflicts.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is based on a qualitative approach. It triangulates among other theoretical models, the intergroup contact, the conflict transformation theory and the theory of change. The common feature among conflict, intergroup contact and conflict transformation is that all of them are dynamic and changeable processes. The intergroup contact is changeable according to individuals or groups in contact, according to an organization system, the environment, the interest, the needs and/or strategies used in order to get rid of a conflict. Conflict transformation is a changeable process according to the stakeholders, their willingness to change, their interests, needs or strategies and the environment where they interact. As for a conflict situation, it is changeable according to time factors, locations, the stakeholders and their needs or strategies to fulfill these needs. To confirm the assumptions formulated above, the paper refers to the cooperative learning and the transformative education as part of the systems theory (Oduaran and al., 2020). Oduaran and al. (2020) summed up a couple of theories in what they called “the systems theory of youth violence”. Through their work, they analyse the interconnection of complex systems trying to understand human behavior and experience. From their analysis, I made the following diagram:

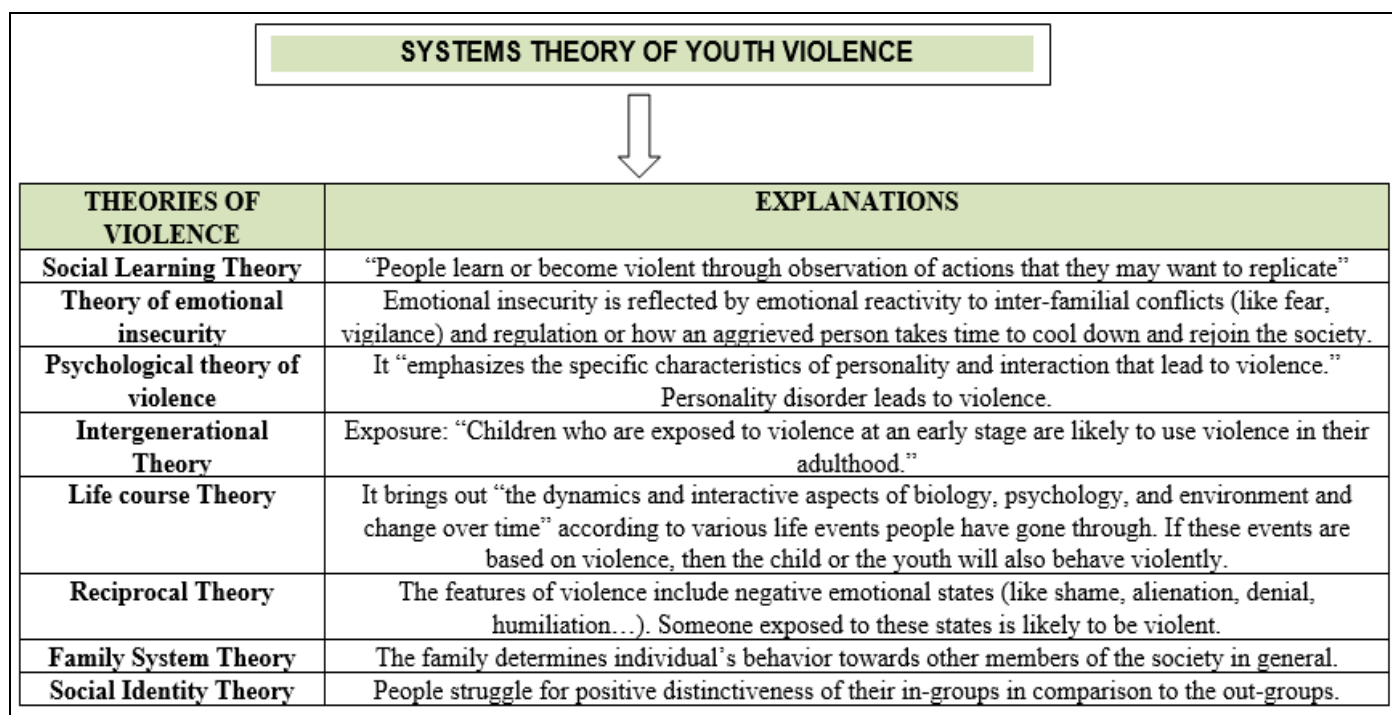


Diagram 1 The Systems Theory of Youth Violence

Source: Adapted from Oduaran, A. and al. 2020. Mitigating Youth Violence Through Participatory Action Learning and Action Research Paradigm in The Niger Delta.

This paper gives the interconnection among the theories to see how they generate the same results about the youths and their communities, their involvement into conflicts and the answers to their participation. From the outcomes, the study suggests the ways and means of change, transformation and peacebuilding. The goal of these approaches should be to work towards behavioral and structural changes for a peaceful society. All these aspects will be used to understand what is happening in Eastern DRC, how to promote a peaceful and harmonious community or how to promote peace in a given system. These theories will also be discussed under the peacebuilding dimensions. That is why they are relevant to this study as they bear major aspects of peacebuilding which are human security, socioeconomic development, human rights, justice and reconciliation; political transition, governance and democratization; coordination, management and resource mobilization (ACCORD, 2015: 44). In the case of the youths in North Kivu, unless they change their attitude, peace will be elusive and quite impossible to attain not only in this DRC province but also in Africa. That is why it is urgent to put up an appropriate intervention.

However, according to Kodmani and Chartouni-Dubarry (2009: 97), before an intervention is undertaken in a conflicting area for conflict transformation, there is need to understand the area and to get in touch with affected people. This view could also well apply to the situation in North-Kivu Province. But, in a much-divided society like in North-Kivu, especially in Masisi and Rutshuru where most of the youths are involved in militia groups, it is a very big challenge to implement a peace intervention. Any answer to people's grievances should have clear goals, targets and allies who will participate in actions to be undertaken. Other interrogations are crucial to enlighten the matter: will the intervention be achievable and mostly worthwhile? It has been more than four decades that conflicts have been going on in Masisi district and communities have been deeply divided. The question is relevant because if an intervention is not well planned or does not meet the group interest, it will never be achievable and could instead fuel more conflict than peace. Hence, a supplementary question is to know whether a given intervention for peace will not be more divisive and/or disruptive. The aspects to look at here are to know who the direct and indirect stakeholders will be, their role and commitment to the intervention and whether it will be supported by all the parties and by the law. Otherwise, what will be implemented will be immediately destroyed by uncommitted beneficiaries. Besides, there is need to question whether the intervention will result in any improvement in relationships and bring about peaceful cohabitation and have a positive impact or be in line with social values among which a sense of responsibility and leadership or provide any other skills. This study looks at how the Democratic Republic of Congo faces the issues of transformation and peacebuilding impacts on behaviors and what could be the ways to reshape the future for young generations (World Bank, 2005). For the informants' side, 40 people took part in the study. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation and

documentation. The following sections provide the findings from various sources.

IV. INTERGROUP CONTACT, CHANGE AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The findings revealed that in DRC conflicting parts there are issues of resource redistribution, recognition, people representation and reconciliation (Nussey, 2017: 95). Explaining these four pillars of the intergroup contact framework, Nussey argued that "redistribution implies an 'equitable distribution of resources'; recognition refers to 'status equality of all participants in an activity'; 'representation' indicates 'involvement in decision making at multiple frames'; and 'reconciliation' focuses on 'building positive relationships' (Novelli and others, 2015: 10; Nussey, 2017: 95). These ideas, Nussey concluded, are related to Galtung's idea of positive and negative peace and Lederach's idea of reconciliation (Nussey, 2012: 95). Thus, it means that lack of these pillars in a social setting implies misunderstanding, intractable conflicts and violence. This means that peacebuilding and its subsequent transformation at all levels should be focused on imparting values to the youth in general if one wants to build a harmonious and sustainable society. Referring to reconciliation as framed by Novelli and Sayed, Nussey asserts that, reconciliation implies facing "past events, injustice, and material and psychosocial effects of conflicts, as well as the development of trust." The major dimensions here are a look at history through past events, being fair to each other through justice and goods sharing while responding to psychosocial impacts of conflicts and building trust among the conflicting parties. In the case of North Kivu, especially in Masisi and Rutshuru, the situation is mostly characterised by a serious absence of these aspects of redistribution, recognition, representation and reconciliation as it has been confirmed by all the informants. This has also been confirmed through the report of the National Concertation forum held at Kinshasa in 2013 (2013: 165). In fact, according to this forum, resource redistribution is said to be one of the major causes of conflicts and violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (2013: 165).

V. FACTORS OF VIOLENCE OR CONFLICTS AMONG THE YOUTHS IN NORTH KIVU PROVINCE

The factors of violence are different situations that push to violence or could lead to violence. It is in this way that Colletta and Cullen (2000: 21) outline the major categories of factors according to observable impacts on people, the physical damage and the nature of conflict. Among the signs of violence in North-Kivu Province, one could mention the hostilities in social interactions among the youths and their communities.

In their publication about youth violence in Kumasi, Ghana, Barnie and al. (2017) established that unemployment, promiscuity, alcoholism, smoking, drug addiction and illiteracy are "predisposing factors of violence" and animosity among the youths (Barnie, 2017:

6). In some parts of Africa like Tanzania, Kenya or even DRC, the social or family education can predispose a young person to violence. The Swahili speakers, for example, say: *Mwanaume haliyake* (meaning “a man or a boy does not cry or shade tears”), what the Lingala speakers translate by *Mobali alelaka te*. This *mwanaume* or *mobali* (a male) is what the Baganda people call *Omussajja* or the true man. In DRC, there is even a local beer advertisement saying *Affaire d'homme* or “men’s business” meaning that only men or strong people can take this type of beverage. This type of language could intentionally or unintentionally instill violence just when someone wants to show how strong he is or his need to revenge.

This is reflected by altercations, the number of crimes and cases of unlawful executions, physically disabled people as a result of conflicts. There are many examples of people who have been beheaded or buried alive. Examples from Kishishe, Gisovu, Mohanga, Nyabyondo and Bukombo are still alive in people’s minds.

Another sign of violence is the number of people mentally affected by conflicts. Even though no study has been undertaken in this regard, one can confirm that in North-Kivu, people are traumatized and mentally disturbed by various scenes of violence they witnessed. The mass graves around their villages, the killings and daily torture have left deep wounds in their hearts and they need mental healing. Violence has become a way of life and is used to solve problems. This is reflected by the number of young people joining armed groups or those who left their villages to seek for security in IDP camps or in other places. Furthermore, the availability of weapons among the civilians allegedly for self-defense, in villages and in IDP camps is another stimulus to violence. Unemployed youths living in camps or in villages rely on guns to earn their living. So, the presence of displaced populations is not only a result of violence but a sign as well. There are Congolese who have been living in IDP camps for more than twenty years. Currently there are large camps around Goma town, at Kanyaruchinya, Rusayo, Bulengo, Lushagala and Mugunga. Besides, violence is reflected by the presence of too many armed groups. More than hundred armed groups in one Province cannot go unnoticed or without violence. The outbreak of violence results in the rates of crimes, murder and presence of illicit trading. The growing of hemp in places like Kibarizo, Gahanga, Kise, Mitumbala and in other different places in Masisi confirms these allegations. The multiplication of roadblock controlled by armed people at every corner of the muddy or bushy roads cannot go unnoticed. These roadblocks are just for exploiting and disturbing the peasants or travelers. In fact, lootings and/or pillaging, killings and kidnappings are very common by unemployed and idle youths.

However, it is alleged that the various armed groups are “organizations devoted to self-defense of the population”. They assume they are protecting people and their land while in fact they are impoverishing these people. There is also the ways infrastructures have been destroyed or the visible signs of war like schools, churches, houses

causing a “disruption of education and health services delivery”. The youth as the main manpower used to till land and to supply the local and even outside markets. Today that they can no longer move freely or they are not working, they have nothing to offer to the market yet they need to live. Other indicators are linked to “the nature of conflict” and its duration in the Province and the type of actors involved in violence as fighters or manipulators (Colletta, 2000: 21 and 55).

VI. IMPACTS OF CONFLICTS AND VIOLENCE ON YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTH-KIVU PROVINCE

The findings indicate that frustration and trauma are noticeable impacts of violence among the youths as a result of protracted conflicts and violence (Galtung, 1996: 95; Gates and al., 2012: 1715). “Widespread violence and physical destruction” had negative impacts on people’s transportation because they affected not only their means of transport but also impacted on the roads, bridges and other infrastructures. Wars and conflicts destroyed health and education facilities preventing people especially in rural areas to have access to proper health care or good education. Colletta and Cullen (2000: 3 - 4) asserted that “violent conflict within a state weakens its social fabric. It divides the population by undermining interpersonal and communal trust, destroying the norms and values that underlie cooperation and collective action for common good.” The protracted conflicts in Masisi and Rutshuru have destroyed the social fabric and kept people isolated and many people lost trust in each other. They do not cooperate in what they undertake nor do they work together for any common good. In the medical sector, conflicts have reduced the efficiency of the public health resource domain. Medical personnel have been killed and some who were lucky enough left the District leaving space for NGOs like *Medecin Sans Frontieres* to take over in places like Mweso, Nyakariba and Masisi Centre (Gates and al., 2012: 1715).

The education sector has not been spared by conflicts. Schools have been destroyed and, where they are operating, there is a high rate of drop outs, young people or children lost the will to go to school; teachers went into exile in safer places (Gates, 2012: 1716; The World Bank, 2005: 13-28). Those who are willing to work lack means, facilities and support. Young people who were born during conflicts or who grew up in IDP camps have been not only traumatized but they have forgotten school as some of them have never been to school. They live in uncertainty about their future. A good number of them witnessed the killings or have killed; some of them witnessed horrendous scenes of people eating human flesh or have themselves tasted it. They live with these pictures in their minds. In return, they become very violent, aggressive and wild. They developed anger, hostility, depression and grief. Moreover, security threat is another issue. The IDP camps have been in some areas since 1995. So, the youths who were born in these conditions and who have not been given the opportunities to live like other children are disturbed by their living conditions. They feel isolated from the normal social life

and became lazy. Life in the camps developed a strong sense of dependency whereby the youths only expect various NGOs to feed them and take care of them. As other consequences, there is an alarming rate of promiscuity and sexual activities in the camps, a high rate of rapes, violence and killing, early marriages and pregnancies at an alarming level.

VII. PEACEBUILDING AS AN ANSWER AFTER CONFLICTS AND VIOLENCE

Experts established three consecutive steps of peacebuilding. These are: the stabilisation phase, the transitional phase and the consolidation phase (ACCORD, 2015: 42). The stabilisation phase focuses on “disarmament, demobilisation and rehabilitation; humanitarian emergency, priority for the locals is survival; strong visibility and involvement of external”. The transitional phase of peacebuilding focuses on “recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction; building local capacities; creating legitimate state institutions; developing rule of law.” The consolidation phase of peacebuilding focuses on “reconciliation, security sector reform, handover of greater responsibility to locals, priority to local ownership, increasing human rights, trauma healing.” Adding to what Kwamena-Poh argued, other scholars found that the central issue to look at in reducing violence in affected communities is to improve the levels of education and provide vocational skills to young people. This is crucial because unskilled or uneducated young people are a socio-economic threat sucking the community without working.

VIII. THE FAMILY AS A CRADLE OF EDUCATION BUT ALSO A PLACE OF LACK OF RECOGNITION AND A SOURCE OF DELINQUENCY

Nussey (2017: 95) argues that “recognition refers to status equality of all participants” within a given system. This is the basic for understanding, cooperation and peace in a community. In African society, as it should be with every society, the family is the first place where informal education takes place and where the child learns and acquires the basic moral values and rules: to love, to respect, to help, to socialize with others, etc. This is the source of fulfilment and happiness in one’s environment (Chingono, 2017: 124). The family has to be a transformative place that responds to social and human needs (Gadhoun, 2022: 1098) in all social life. That is the place where a child learns to respect life and not to kill. However, it should be noticed that in the case of DRC, not only the State has collapsed but also the society collapsed with it. Turner referring to Weiss gives the two sides of failure in this way:

Weiss, who argued that the state had not (yet) collapsed in Zaire/Congo in the early 1990s, also argued that the *society* had in fact collapsed: ‘The infrastructure, roads, means of communication have disappeared, the universities are closed, the hospitals have become mortuaries, the campaigns to fight the great epidemics are suspended and

one no longer measures the ravages of AIDS (Turner, 2007: 181).

On their side, Barnie and al. (2017: 2) argued unchallenged that “the youth are considered being nested within proximal and distal settings of the community or system for which reason the interactions within these community settings affect how youth develop and learn or unlearn violent behaviors.” They added that “the type of community one lives in could be a major risk factor for violence involvement”. The environment has an influence of violence on the youth when coupled with “lack of parental guidance and frustration” (Barnie 2017: 6). In North-Kivu, young people used to be trained to communal works like farming, harvesting and sharing the fruits of their work (*Umuganura* or the first fruits of their produce), cutting and carrying logs of trees, cutting grass to thatch their houses, taking part in social events like wedding parties, taking sick people to health centers on stretchers, mourning with other villagers. Good things as well as painful moments were shared. Young people were trained to respect adults when invited to share with them, a young person could not touch food or eat before an adult does so, a young person could not leave elder persons around food; when drinking on the calabash among adults, the young person had to kneel down, when sharing local brew, women and young girls had to sit in an isolated room and not sit with men. Young girls were taught not to speak when men and elders were around. Anything they needed to say had to go through the mother who would tell the elders. No shouting or making loud noise was allowed while the elderly people were talking. Respect for others and for life was instilled in them everywhere and all the time. This was part of education and was usually taught in the family. Currently that parents and family members are struggling to provide for their family, they have neglected or forgotten their duties, and the youths have missed out important lessons from their family.

As a consequence of this situation, the following types of violence are experienced by young people in their communities: stealing or robbery with force and murder, sexual abuse, physical fighting, lynching and other mob justice. This amounts to cultural violence sometimes approved or legitimized by societies. One clear example is the persecution of some ethnic groups. There is also the direct economic violence. This is violence that openly affects one’s goods and assets. In addition, the indirect economic violence relates to internal mechanisms of the economic systems that affects one’s interest. There has been political and institutional violence. Institutional violence is like sexual or gender violence. Men or even women “inflict violence to a woman because she does not do what they want or demand of her.” Men can sometimes be victims of rejection or prejudice, sexual or emotional violence. These violent acts are perpetuated against the community members over land or other properties, against people from other ethnic groups or villages, young boys and men against young girls and women, against unknown people or those called foreigners. The prevailing situation in eastern DRC, especially in Rutshuru and Masisi is that children and the youths in general have been denied their rights to education.

That is the situation people are living in whereby children in Rutshuru and Masisi have not been going to school for the last one year or so. Children from many places no longer know the way to school for many years now. If we take an average of just two schools in each area, bearing in mind that there were six schools in a place like Nyamitaba-Nyakariba, and if we assume that there were two hundred and fifty children per school, this makes thousands of children who have been deprived of their right to education pushing them to join militia groups and take part in endless conflicts and violence.

IX. THE SCHOOL AS A FAILED POOL OF TRANSFORMATION

What about the state school leaving examination for those young people in the war-torn areas like Masisi, Rutshuru, Ituri and elsewhere in the country? These are forgotten and left out generations; they do not care about this examination and the school in general. Given the youth bulge in these districts, there is no doubt that there are hundreds of militia groups made of school dropouts and other young people who have been denied the opportunity to go to school. Yet, everyone agrees that education is an inviolable right and that it plays a vital role within the community. According to Kwamena-Poh (1976: 269), “the formal system of education provides people with ability to work with written words and figures”. That is why the formal education should include aspects of “Education for tolerance and acceptance” besides other African moral values. “Prejudice may be challenged by teaching tolerance. Tolerance is the respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of cultures and various forms of human expression (UNESCO, 1995). Education for tolerance aims to counter influences that lead to fear, aversion towards and exclusion of others. Tolerance recognizes that others have the right to be who they are” (Navarro-Castro and al. 2010: 83) and to live the way they are pleased to as human beings.

Spiritually, a human being is made of that inner power making him who he/she is compared to others or like others. What the Kinyarwanda speakers say that *Akari U-muntu, kari undi (muntu)*. This means that what is true for a person is also true for another or what applies to a human being applies also to another. Here, they mean that human beings are equal in their humanity. By so saying, they mean that people endowed with the same humanity or *U-buntu* have also a meeting space from where they share what is related to their humanity. The Church or religion is that meeting. They gather in congregation to meet with Someone defined by his attracting *U-buntu* and that Someone is God. For the Kinyarwanda Speakers, God has *U-buntu* not to say that God has the same characteristics as a human being but only that “He is merciful, He is the Supreme Being”. Yet, in the traditional belief, people do not say that the gods they worship have *U-buntu*. So, by going to Church, people (*A-bantu*) go to meet with God (who has *U-buntu*) from where they fetch the strength for their own being. Hence, this *U-buntu* chain uniting people among themselves and uniting them to God is an important dimension that should prevent them from being violent to each other, to be mean and to kill

each other. This is an important human dimension the youths should be trained to nurture in North-Kivu and elsewhere. What is going on in this Province reflects a lack of *Ubuntu* on the side of the youths and the society (Asante et al., 2009: 142-147). Therefore, from these views, religious affiliation for people who share the same conviction should motivate people to advocate particular peace-related government policies. People, and in particular young people, should also directly oppose hatred, repression and promote peace and reconciliation. It is in this way that Religious leaders and institutions can work as bridges between opposing parties during conflict times and provide tools for peacemaking and peacebuilding. The first step of religious peacemaking should be through an interfaith dialogue. Rather than seeking to resolve a particular conflict, this step would be to defuse interfaith tensions that may cause conflict in different ways. Interfaith dialogue is what is missing in conflict transformation in DRC and in North-Kivu Province in particular.

X. CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO ARMED CONFLICTS

In the context of North-Kivu, transformation implies general change. This could be positive when shifting from a negative attitude to a positive one. Another aspect to look at in social change is the dimensions that sustain the change. These dimensions could be cultural, political, economic (structural violence), demographic (cultural violence) or technological (cultural or structural violence). Lederach sees transformation as a way of creating a positive change in a conflicting situation, providing justice and social cohesion. What Galtung reinforces when saying that conflict transformation aims at awakening the dynamism within any contradiction for creating harmony (1996: 89) because when there is a contradiction in conflict, there is also a dynamic transforming power behind this contradiction. This transforming power is capable to produce good result and change the conflicting situation in North-Kivu Province. Borrowing a leaf from the above analysts, McCandless and Bangura (2007: 44) suggest some strategies to address conflict and create a peaceful environment. The strategies they suggest are: the use of dialogue; the use of nonviolent direct action and grassroots movements for social change; problem-solving workshops; international law, reconciliation and justice commission; the role of gender, youth and business communities and the role of religion in peacebuilding; the prevention of violent and deadly conflict.

Conflict transformation should start at an individual level. For the case of the youths in North-Kivu, the process should start from establishing the motivational factors that push the youths to join armed groups. Besides, the transformational initiative should take into consideration the sociopolitical and economic conditions where the youths live in order to initiate the transformation process, bearing in mind that any positive change in these dimensions could bring a positive change of attitude. The task should be to look at the wider sources of conflict and how they push the youths to join armed groups as an effect of manipulation, greed and grievance among them and their communities. To

respond to these causal factors of conflicts, Allport (1954; Pettigrew 1998; Mckeown 2017) suggests what he calls the intergroup contact hypothesis. This latter is first predicated on *equal status* within a given context. This means that people should not have any unequal and hierarchical relationship. The group members in contact have to bear one label, share the general conditions and it is only in this way that bias or prejudice could melt away.

Another condition is *common goals*: the group members must pursue and work on shared goals. According to this study, peacebuilding, intergroup contacts and behavioural transformation should be the community common goals. The North-Kivu society should understand that violence affects everyone in a way or the other and that violence has never been an answer to violence. The third condition is *the intergroup or communal cooperation*: groups effort by the members in contact and striving to achieve the same goal must make them interdependent and foster cooperation and not competition among them (Pettigrew 1998). Finally, *authority support* (Chinn 2014; Mayer 2008) as another condition for intergroup contact implies that in whatever the members endeavor to achieve, they need a legal support from political, social and traditional leadership. It is further argued that group leaders must motivate and inspire their members to live in harmony in the best interest of the society. A critical leader's duty is to constantly create good living conditions by bringing members live and work together rather than as isolated individuals. The leader should always strengthen the group cohesion by building trust and respect between the members of the ingroup and the out group.

XI. PEACEBUILDING AS THE MAJOR COMPONENT IN COMMUNITY PEACE EDUCATION

Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2005: 30) look at peacebuilding as a higher step in making peace. For them, peacebuilding highlights and involves the work of peacemaking and peacekeeping by dealing with structural issues and long-term relationships between parties in conflict. They add that peacebuilding goes beyond the contradictions that sustain the conflicts (Galtung, 1996: 112; Ramsbotham and al. 2005: 30). According to Ryan Bennet et al. "the relational dimension of peacebuilding centers on reconciliation, forgiveness, trust building and future imagining. Peacebuilding seeks to minimize poorly functioning communication and maximize mutual understanding (Lederach 1997). The third dimension of peacebuilding focuses on the individual level. According to this dimension, if individuals are not able to undergo a process of healing, that will have broader social, political, and economic repercussions (Bennett and al. 2012: 7-8). Hence, peacebuilding aims at restoring broken relationships and changing negative energies into positive ones. It is a step after a violent conflict. Globally and according to Nigel Young et al., (2010: 363), a successful peacebuilding operation should aim at achieving the following five major elements: a safe and secure environment, the rule of law, a stable democracy, a sustainable economy and social well

being. Informants from Masisi confirmed that these elements are missing in North-Kivu.

Galtung's views of conflict transformation go with the idea that conflicts have life-affirming as well as life-destroying aspects and they stem from contradictions in social structure. From these views, conflicts are assumed to have a positive and a negative side related to misunderstanding and contradictions within the social settings. The two sides are reflected by human attitudes and behaviors. According to Galtung, "contradiction" that amounts to conflicts is reflected by people attitudes, interests or needs and their relationships towards a given goal. Thus, the incompatibility of goals or parties' interests could be transformed or resolved by transcending the contradiction that gave rise to conflicts; by improving the conflict structures or by bringing more internal and external parties in conflict transformation. The assumption is that conflicts are dynamic and based on ever changing behaviours and systems. In North-Kivu, conflicts started becoming violent when the youths become aware that among them, some are from the traditional ruling group whereas others are foreigners. It is true that the youths need consideration and recognition. Thus, their violence is a claim for some values; others need jobs, security and/or protection.

XII. APPROACHING THE NORTH-KIVU CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE THROUGH LEDERACH'S LENSES AND EDUCATION SYSTEM

Lederach and Maiese (2009: 7) distinguish three lenses in approaching a conflict. According to Lederach, a lens is a transformational instrument to approach a conflict. For him, "conflict transformation is more than a set of specific techniques. It is about a way of looking and seeing" that enables one to make sense of a conflict that erupts within the community. These transformational tools are complementary or linked as they enable to approach the conflict from different but complementary dimensions. The three lenses as established by Lederach are first the lens that shows the "immediate situation" or the conflict as it unfolds and develops. For the youth in Masisi, the matter is to look at how they get involve in conflict and subsequent violence. The second lens is the one that shows beyond the current situation and goes into "deeper relationship patterns that form the context of the conflict" (Lederach, 2009: 7). Here the issue is to involve other actors besides the youth and who take part in hostilities in North Kivu, their motivation and the impacts of their actions. The third lens "helps us envision a framework that holds these together and create a platform to address the content, the context, and the structure of relationship" (Lederach, 2009: 7-8). Practically, the North-Kivu context could be understood in this way if read through these lenses. There is too much of violence in this province and this calls for a mechanism to tackle the root causes of violence. The mechanism has to be a true "violence reduction forum" as it should promote closeness and exchange by rebuilding healthy relationships and communities. It should restore communication and reduce

inequality among groups, promote inclusiveness and tackle unemployment (Galtung, 2013: 13).

The adopted mechanism should create constructive changes by reducing violence. This could be only possible when attitudes, perceptions and orientations change. The mechanism should also increase justice and address the real-life questions in human relationships (Lederach: 2014: 9). Such mechanism, according to Nganje (2020: 123) should “promote sustainable peace, against the backdrop of changing conflict dynamics and a new peace building discourse that valorized the local context, local initiatives, and local agency in peacebuilding processes.” It has to promote peacebuilding or security from below, from the grassroots. That is why North-Kivu needs a conceptual framework that connects the immediate context to a deeper relationship patterns. Since there are local or grassroots initiatives or committees for peace, the mechanism for local peacebuilding should really facilitate dialogues and mutual understanding among the youths and giving the way to a constructive problem-solving through joint actions for preventing violence among people. Adopted tools should bring about social cohesion and help to build a resilient society. It is agreed that local people or communities, especially the youths living in violent context have the needed strength or possibilities to deal with violence than any other external party (Nganje, 2020: 124). Hence, the youths from North Kivu in general should be the first associates in the business of solving conflicts and reducing violence in the Province. As a solution, Lederach (2003: 21) opines that “to reduce violence requires that we address the presenting issues and content of an episode of conflict, and also its underlying patterns and causes.” Lederach adds that the tasks for the transformation process are to reduce the negative impacts of social conflicts. In addition, transformation is about how “people perceive, what they desire, what they pursue, and how they structure their relationships interpersonally, as well as inter-group and intra-group”(2003: 24-25). From such literature, conflict transformation and the likelihood of reverse impact from the outside world or from human problems within the society have not been devoted much attention or deep analyses of conflicts in Eastern DRC especially in North-Kivu. For achieving peace in this Province, this presupposes creating conditions bearing “friendship potentials”, coming together and opening to collaboration and harmony coupled with the attainment of the common goal. This is not only focused on the technical aspects of positional change but also on the whole human aspect in conflict transformation. It is also presupposed that contexts of conflict transformation must lead to people transformation, to their minds and behavioral change and build on existing knowledge from the grassroots.

XIII. CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND CHANGE IN NORTH KIVU

The theory of change has its origins in the works of theorists like Kirkpatrick, Michael Quinn Patton and Carol Weiss among others. Basically, their works provided a methodological framework to relate and articulate various components of a social change program. These experts gave

the possible connecting steps among different activities making a change program. The major dimensions to look at in this program are a series of the expected outcomes to achieve through an intervention; this is followed by the evaluation processes and strategies to confirm the outcomes. Generally speaking, the theory of change is a tool for a desired change. As such, there are various types of change like “strategic organizational change”, people-centric change, structural change, remedial change, static change, dynamic change. The theory of change can be understood as a framework mapping out the way a series of activities to transform or to improve a situation is brought to reality. This series of actions requires some inputs that could be human resources, funds or any other equipment.

The Theory of Change needs to identify the issue to be addressed and the kind of interventions that are likely to produce the desired outcomes at the long term. Among the preconditions to build up a Theory of Change, there are the target group or the beneficiaries, the development process and the expected change. The theory globally aims at involving the beneficiaries in a given intervention, to empower them so that they own up the intervention and improve their situation. For this study research, the expected changes could occur in the youth situation; the youth behavior (or involvement in violence and conflicts); the change of attitudes and feelings or how they feel about others and the change of their relationships.

There are conditions to fulfill in order to achieve the desired goal or change in North-Kivu. The major elements of change are articulated around first of all, an identification of the true issue to address: here, to educate community members in conflict education and violence reduction in order to achieve a positive peace. Second, there is need to explain the process to undergo, to identify the people who are involved and define their stake. At this point, the change diagram should show what to achieve as long term goal. In order to develop this theory, the stakeholders should be the community members, politicians and the civil society and among them, development true experts and community leaders. An innovative conflict transformation is the needed strategy to bring violence to an end (Galtung, 1996: 34). There is also need to establish the intended impacts. The end outcome of the process towards change should be reducing tensions, cleavage and discriminations, mistrust and stereotypes, prejudice and violence. Nevertheless, the conditions for desired outcome are security, the willingness to dialogue, understanding and cooperation among various stakeholders without leaving out the youths. There is need to involve resources from local peace committees, those taking part in the indigenous legal forums and the youth leaders. These are the major outputs that will create the desired impact. This should be done within clear and precised timelines, in short, medium and long term according to established critical or important assumptions.

There is need to reach out to the people at the grassroots and educate all the stakeholders about the issues of conflicts and violence in North-Kivu. This will enable any intervenor to gain their support and support to

peacebuilding interventions. There will be need to mobilize people support and create awareness about the tough situation they have been living in by providing them convincing experiences and facts bearing in mind that people will support what they only clearly understand. Kā Mana and Kenmogne (2014: 27-28) argued that “the school as a source of knowledge is the space for a radical critique of the current world order; a critique of his economic visions and effects; a critique of its political logics and harmful impacts. Other aspects of the Congolese current education are the orientations of the current world culture and useless thing children are learning from schools. If the Congolese school wants to be a true educational space, it has the duty to train critical personalities who will become themselves critical members of the society. So far, the fundamental tendency through the school has been to create useless people imitating the developed world. Today, time has come to train true social change agents needed in places like North-Kivu Province. In this business of change, the school is called to be a place of constructive innovations and real transformation, creating people with rich knowledge through large-scale research in all the fundamental fields on which depend their future. Today, it is surprising to see that the dynamics of the quest for concrete solutions to social problems have no place or are quite forgotten in Congolese educational institutions starting from the family where children initiation starts.

That is why, Kā Mana and Kenmogne’s advice is worth mentioning when they caution that African people, and here the Congolese society, must break with that bad habit to nurture a local school which brings nothing meaningful to the world, to African people, to Congolese people and their youths; an education system that offers nothing to change the prevailing situation. In addition, people must promote a positive interdependence by promoting positive and promotive social interaction among the community members, starting by those from the province level up to external stakeholders. This would yield a positive living environment. Kā Mana (2017: 384 -394) argued that for our educational system to be efficient and produce expected results, our young generation as well as ourselves should understand the current challenges in order to win the future battles (2017: 384). The current society in North Kivu is torn apart with conflicts violence, crimes and rape. This is happening when globalization as a process is underway with what it entails as challenges and social disturbances. That is why, Kā Mana opines, we need to deeply think and reconsider the way we raise the young generation and reassess our educational system. This does not mean building new infrastructures or elaborating new syllabi or adopting new methods. It is instead about reviving our lost values, beliefs, norms and mentalities and promoting them in our cultures and civilizations while introducing them in our way of education and the way we train new generations in the current Congolese societies and schools.

Kā Mana noticed that people in North-Kivu have reached a level in their history whereby they should take action for deep-rooted social transformation, particularly the

action of an educational will that provides to African generations strategies, skills and references that root them in the current world, open them to a creative way to the future and push them to reinvent their culture based on a real knowledge of their context and the willingness to teach a new Congo to Congolese, a new North-Kivu to people from this province. In this way, local education should enable future generations to adopt a critical mentality for actions of social transformation. This has to be done in all areas of life: spiritual, moral, political, scientific, economic and socio-cultural life. It is therefore necessary to change from top to the grassroots. Besides, it is advisable to train a new generation of people who are capable of creating new knowledge based on what they learn from their communities, from schools and churches. This requires that young people be reminded at all time that they can only build and succeed their future by mastering and going beyond the ways provided to them by the current world of interest and selfishness. To achieve this, it requires cooperative learning or the willingness to learn, cooperation and collaboration as it is in complementarity that the youths will acquire the type of behavior that DRC, and here the North Kivu Province, needs for its development. It is necessary to forge personalities of great dynamism, who have as the first goal the creation of a new Province, a new country and a new Africa. And according to Villareal et al. (2023: 400), for the formation of a citizen to be effective, early education is required, which manages to infuse the qualities and rules of behavior determined by the society of the country in which one lives, as well as the consequences of not abiding by said rules. That is why the importance of imparting a civic education during the growth of children and young people.

For Kā Mana, (2012c: 47 – 48), the society should help the youths to fulfill their dream by showing them the way from their mother land to another place, a new world of light where their dreams come true and from where they get new opportunities. This could be a positive way to change their minds, their behaviours and their normal place of living. This dream should not just be an unproductive mind activity but it should be oriented towards peace, harmony, efficiency and success that define a real development. To achieve this, social or general education must be rooted in a firm will to change the reality with efficient and clear programs, real projects and initiatives that can be carried out by the youths themselves with the help of their community. Another conditional aspect of development and success is that the youths and their society need to take informed decisions in order to implement appropriate interventions.

XIV. CONCLUSION

This paper looked at peacebuilding, conflict transformation and how they can contribute to attitudinal change. Both can also help to prevent or to stop youth violence in all communal settings, the society, the school or the church. For Kā Mana and Kenmogne (2014c: 39), it is appropriate that as Africans and Congolese, we forge such an awareness and raise such a will, through an African school whose principles would not be just the object of a sad

history but a source of a positive history; not to be organized from the outside according to others interests, but an internal school organized by all local stakeholders according to the true problems that should be urgently solved. In the North-Kivu case, the problem is education and its style for peace and security. Finally, all the stakeholders in educational business should unite in a common search for solutions to their problems in educating a new generation that will keep away from conflicts. If the society or the family, the formal school and the church are seen according to these principles, then they will become a vital space for learning, for change and search for real actions and social transformation. They will be a place of invention for *Umntu(person)* to act and to react with others: a new *Umntu* building a new destiny of *Abantu(people)* united in one Africa. The good news is that violence is preventable and that there are always alternatives to violence. The paper pointed at the grassroots and basic educational systems and how they failed to strengthen the social harmony and peaceful cohabitation among people. In addition, it underlined the ways the educational system fails to open the door to job opportunities and to prepare the youth future. Besides, family education with its patriarchy ideas misleads the youth. So, preventing social violence requires a comprehensive and cooperative approach that addresses the social determinants of violence, such as income inequality, rapid demographic and social change, and low levels of social protection. To recover the lost *Ubuntu(humanity)* and to face to intractable youth conflicts, the community and all the stakeholders should promote accountability, inclusivity, advocacy for the marginalized and forgotten people (ACCORD, 2015: 96).

If every sector properly plays its role, then dialogue will take place among the conflicting parties. In this case, the intergroup contact model will play the big part of promoting social change in historically divided and unequal societies. Dialogue will bring about peace among foreigners and autochthonous, educated and uneducated groups; wealthy and poor people. Consequently, violence will reduce and people will show their willingness to re-socialize and to work together towards peace. In this way, positive interaction between members of various groups will surely reduce intergroup prejudice and bring about the desired social change. Besides, non-violent behaviours and non-violent communication will be promoted through a transformed context. Promising prevention strategies should include dimensions like:

- Life skills and social development programmes designed to help the youths to manage anger, to resolve conflict peacefully, and develop the needed social skills to respond to social issues.
- The implementation of school approaches to violence prevention in educational programmes that support parents and promote positive parenting skills; in education sector, teaching and learning strategies should include dimensions like support to school-based violence prevention programmes, drawing attention to the magnitude of youth violence and the need for prevention.
- Preschool programmes that provide children with social skills at an early age in their families;
- Approaches for youths at high risk of being involved in militia groups and in violence should be promoted;
- Interventions or activities to reduce access to alcohol and other harmful use of drugs;
- Interventions to reduce concentrated poverty and to improve rural environments.

The World Health Organization also provides more responses to violence. According to this organization, conflicts and violence can be decreased through educational initiatives that help to identify, quantify and respond to issues that created them. Strategic solutions to intractable conflicts should also include other aspects like to develop guidelines for all relevant sectors, here the society, the church and the school, to prevent youth violence and strengthen responses to it; supporting national efforts to prevent youth violence; and to promote social collaboration.

According to Kä Mana and Kenmogne (2014c: 39) the time for change or transformation has already come to promote a clear vision and educational practices that open up new paths of thinking and new horizons for global integration and unity from the grassroots. This requires a permanent battle against the local school in North-Kivu as a system of mediocrity, servility, incapacity and lack of initiative. In order to reduce violence among communities in North-Kivu and achieve true transformation, young people need to be motivated for working for peace. They should be sensitized about the beauty and the benefit of togetherness and the beauty of peace. The youths need a supportive community at the family level and the general leadership. To achieve this, there is need for a series of communal talks with the youths, to listen to them and to each other; to set up means together and to train a new generation of young people who will reassess and redefine another DRC, another North-Kivu Province.

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