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Conflict Analysis Report

Guinée Forestière

Search for Common Ground, Guinea

September 2013

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Image 1 Damages in the center of the town of Koulé, September 2013.

Medam, B. et Abouya B. "Conflict Analysis Report : Guinée Forestière."
Search for Common Ground. September 2013. Conakry, Guinea.

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Executive Summary

"The Secretary General of the United Nations is deeply concerned about the violent communal clashes in southern Guinea, causing heavy material damages and losses of human lives."

Spokesman for Ban Ki Moon, Secretary General of the UN

This analytical report presents a study of the conflict situation in the area of Guinée Forestière – administrative area of N'Zérékoré - and aims to provide useful recommendations for the implementation of local programs of reconciliation and conflict prevention.

For more than 20 years clashes, especially between the Guerzé people and Konianké had serious humanitarian consequences, and hindered the development of the rich mining and agricultural potential of the region, resulting in a poverty rate of nearly 67 %. The violence reached a tragic peak in July 2013, following riots that killed 217 people.

Therefore, Search for Common Ground (SFCG) found it necessary to conduct an on-field search for nine days in September 2013, the main goal was to go to meet the people, the policy makers and the influential leaders of the region in order to develop a picture of the socio - economic, cultural and political conditions involved in the recurrence of conflict in Guinée Forestière. The methodological approach is based on the qualitative data collected from interviews, group discussions, informal meetings and exchange sessions and also on the statistical data that we have collected.

Following a structure revolving around five axes, the report addresses the following elements:

- 1) **Recurrent conflicts** in Guinée Forestière and their main causes: the identity and ethnic issues, land issues, political speeches fueling resentment, and poverty, unemployment and impunity.
- 2) **The actors** involved in these conflicts, particularly the youth, the old militia, the media, the motorcycle taxi drivers and the opinion leaders (traditional elders, intellectuals).
- 3) The immediate **effects** of these conflicts (particularly affecting the youth and the women) and the economic consequences.
- 4) Practical **recommendations** for effective action taken in the area.

The key findings of the analysis reveal that:

- the conflict involves all social strata of the region
- the conflict is economic consideration related to the distribution of commercial power and the fundamental question of land ownership.
- the identity conflict is bound to religion and to the ethnicity affiliation has a glaring lack of mechanism for dialogue between communities.

For recommendations, SFCG proposes the creation of activities to support dynamic mediation and dialogue in local communities, promoting local mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of

conflicts to provide justice. On the other hand, the adoption of a strategy of conflict prevention at the regional level seems appropriate, for among other things the pooling of interests of members of different communities to build a field of understanding.

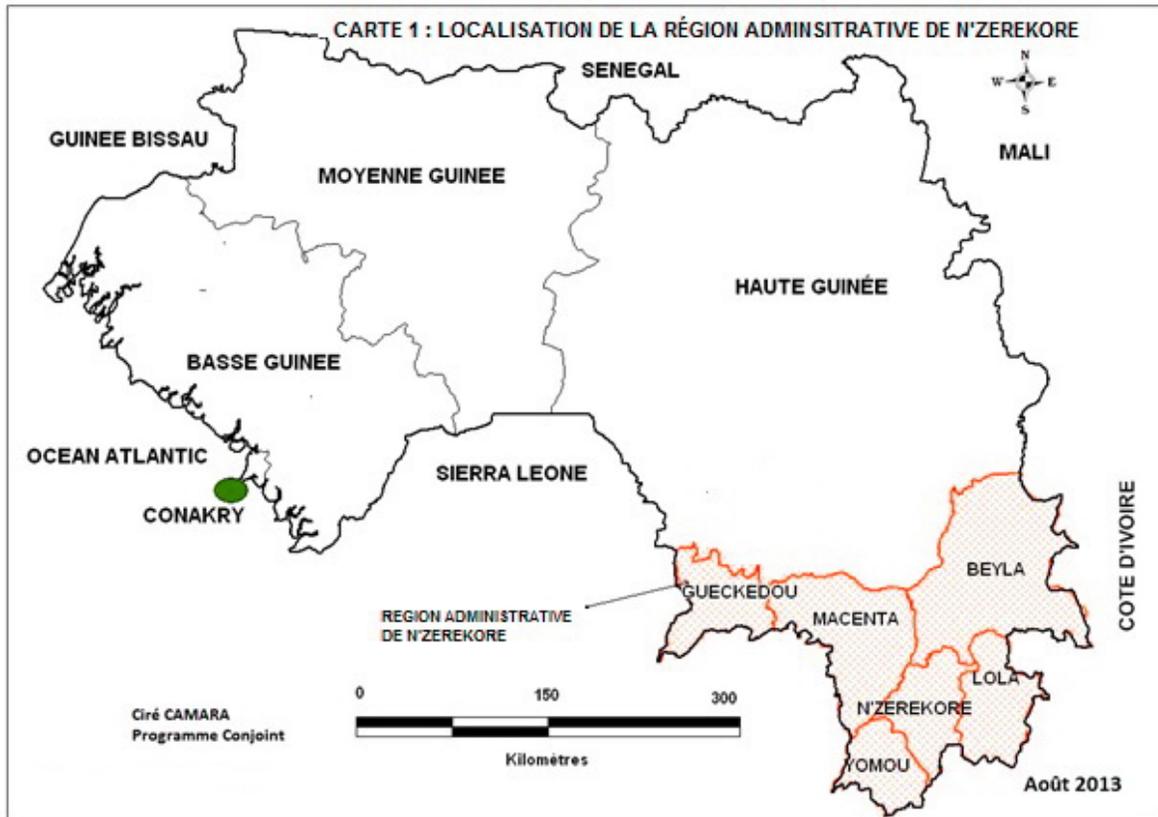


Image 2 Administrative Area of N'Zérékoré
 Source: UNDP – Joint Program Conjoint Guinée Forestière

1. Introduction

The administrative area of N'Zérékoré, commonly called Guinée Forestière is subject to violent ethnic clashes whose recurrence for the past twenty years disrupt socio-economic activities and contribute to the tearing of the social tissue.

These conflicts are particularly disturbing as they are devastating a region, whose population is estimated to be more than 2,600,000 people¹, approximately 25% of the population of the country, and who is considered to be the richest of the whole country in terms of their ethnic diversity and the potential of the development of their mining and the agriculture. However, it is considered as the most impoverished of the country, having the highest rate of impact of incidence of poverty, with a rate of 66% unlike the national level of 55.2%.²

Moreover the country of 44271 km² (18% of the country) borders the Ivory Coast, Liberia and Sierra Leone, finding itself in the middle of a particularly instable area and with its recent history characterized by many conflicts who have spread destruction.

Violence in Guinée Forestière mainly involves two ethnic groups, the Guerzés and the Koniankés.

The Guerzés, also called Kpeles, are for the most part animists and Christians. Self-identified as the real “natives” of Guinée Forestière– a claim that is at the center of the clashes Coeur – they have been to date living thanks to their agricultural activities.

The Koniankés for their part are mostly Muslims from the people of Mandingue, and relatives of the Malinkes mainly present in the Haute Guinée region (Upper Guinea). They have been present in Guinée Forestière for centuries, today they represent the main economic strength of the region and they also have a strong population growth, mostly in the urban areas, which fuels the conflicts. Thus, despite having been there for a long time, they are today the object of a stigma, labeling them as a group of immigrants occupying the region.

To the exception of the prefectures of Gueckédou, N'Zérékore and Yomou, whose population is made in majority of Christians, the other four prefectures are dominated by Muslims.³

For a long time these two communities have lived together in harmony, but the interethnic conflicts, as well as the violence used, have been troubling increasing since the early 1990s. Some conflicts with previous minor incidents have helped in the amplification of the violence

¹ Ministère du Plan de la République de Guinée, *Etude Socio-Economique Régionale de Guinée Forestière*, Mai 2012

² Ministère du Plan de la République de Guinée, *Etude Socio-Economique Régionale de Guinée Forestière*, Mai 2012

³ Ministère du Plan de la République de Guinée, *Etude Socio-Economique Régionale de Guinée Forestière*, Mai 2012

and have also marked the spirits until today, and even more so they have never been investigated or investigated⁴:

- 1991: Conflicts between the activist of the “*Parti de l’Unité et du Progrès (PUP)* in power and those of the opposition *Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinée (RPG)*.
- 2004: Violent fights resulted in two deaths after a young Guerzé cyclist hit Konianké imam who was coming out of a mosque in the neighborhood of Horoyade N’Zérékoré.
- 2008: Conflicts after a young Guerzé walked near the mosque of Sokourau at the time of prayer during Ramadan.
- 2010: Altercations between a merchant and a volunteer of maintenance of law and order during prayer time on a Friday causing six people to die.
- 2011: Major communal conflicts - 28 dead and dozens of wounded – following an animistic practice of identifying criminals by a witch of Galakpaye, in the prefecture of Yomou.

The escalation of violence reached his peak in a dramatic way during the bloody days of July 15 to the 18th of 2013.

On the night of July 14th to the 15th, at 4 am in the morning, a truck driver along with three novices on his way to Conakry stopped in his hometown in order to have breakfast with his family during the month of Ramadan. According to the report of the gendarmerie and the police security services, the novices stayed by the gas station where the truck was parked, went to meet the driver by the main road. A fight then breaks between the three young Koniankés and the guardian of the gas station, who accused them of theft and then right away called for reinforcement. In a matter of few minutes, the situation quickly escalates; one of the novices is killed then cut with a machete, another one is strongly tied. The local authorities quickly arrived on the scene but were unable to control the situation which deteriorated despite their request for calm/peace. The crowd increases and the conflict escalate as the Morning Prayer is ending and while the people of the city and the surrounding villages are alerted.

« On site, it became chaos, people were not listening and some have even tried to set fire to the station”

- Mayor of Koule
- Mayor of Koule

According to the local authorities met on the scene, the news spread really fast by the means of calls, SMS, and travelers going from one city to another. In the distance, smoke can be seen and gunshots can be heard. The rumors of the massacre reached the town of N’Zérékoré, where the first conflicts had already ravaged the neighborhood of Dorota.

⁴ *Cartographie des Conflits en Guinée*, PNUD et SwissPeace, Janvier 2013, p. 87

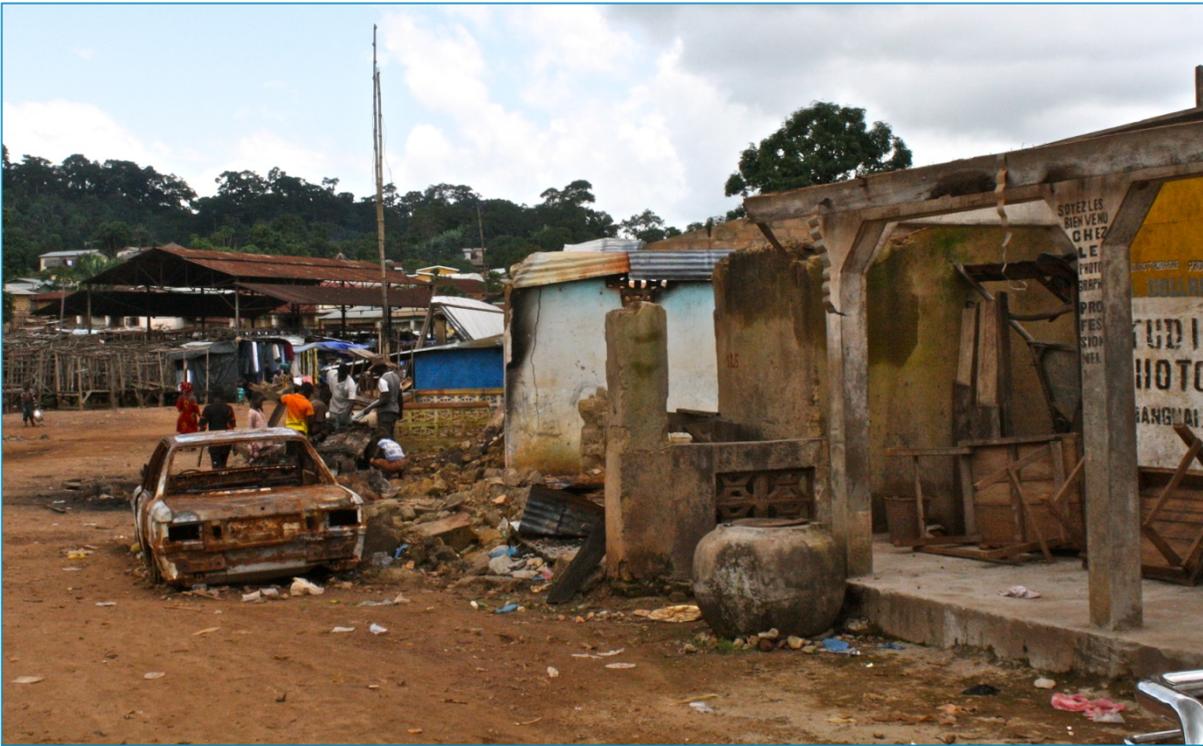


Image 2 Materials damages in the town of Koulé, the sub-prefecture located 40km of N'Zérékoré where the violence started on the night of July 14 to the 15th 2013.

In total, 16 towns that have been affected by the conflicts of last July notably: the urban towns of N'Zerekore, Koule, Samoe, Soulouta, Goueke and Womey, and the urban towns of Beyla, Boola, Diassodou, Gbakedou, Gbessoba, Moussadou, Nionsomoridou, Samana, Sinko, and Yomou.

The tension will be greatly reduced when, starting on Tuesday July 16th, the military reinforcement of Conakry reached the town in order to explore the different areas and the curfew was declared across the whole prefectural territory of N'Zérékoré. Violent isolated confrontation would follow until Thursday July 18th, date where the situation would finally be controlled by the security forces. In addition of alarming the international community, these dramatic events have shaken the political Guinean stage especially during this crucial period of democratic transition.

The damage was disastrous, a never-seen for the town, on both human and material point of view. According to figures of the *Joint Evaluation Report of the humanitarian situation following the communal violence's in the administrative area of N'Zérékoré* realized from August 4th to the 16th ⁵by the agencies of the United Nations in Guinée Forestière, the *Service National d'Action*

⁵ Rapport d'évaluation conjointe de la situation humanitaire suite aux violences intercommunautaires dans la région administrative de N'zérékoré

Humanitaire (SENAH), the Guinean Red Cross, the Danish Refugee Council and the NGO *Plan Guinée*, the conflicts have caused:

- 217 deaths;
- 267 missing;
- 473 wounded;
- 16711 internally displaced;
- 212 refugees.

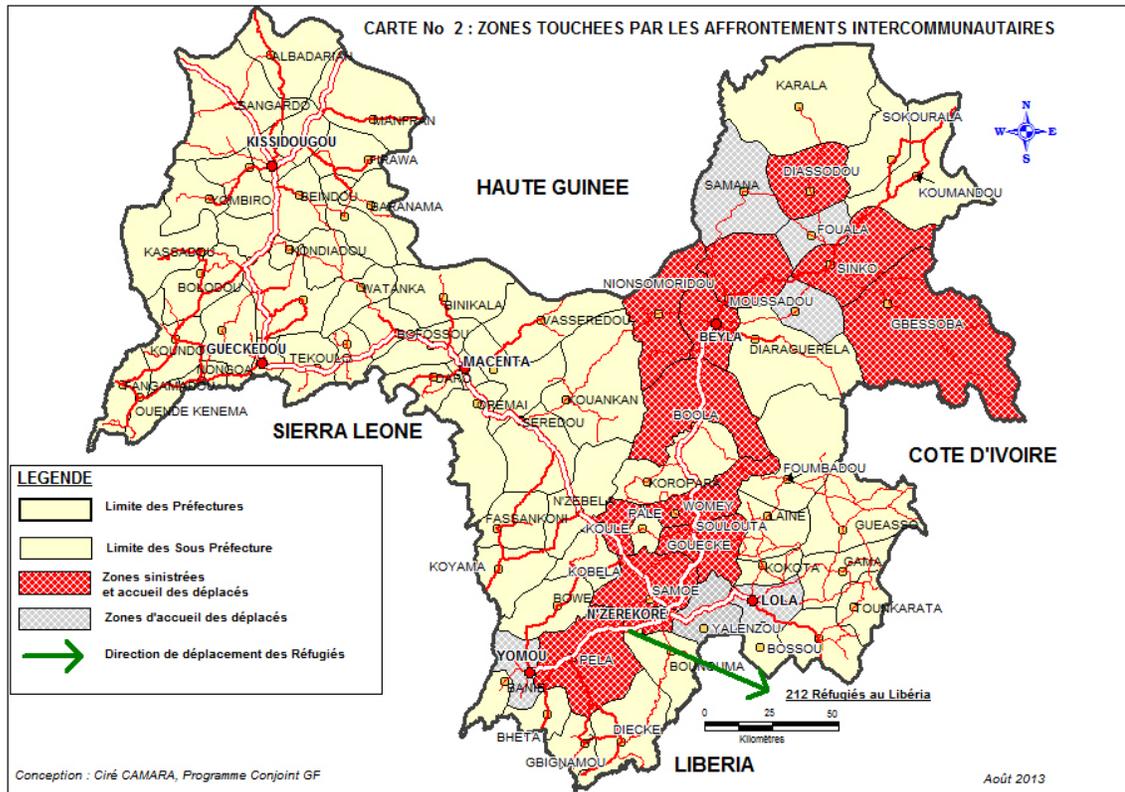


Image 3 Areas affected by the communal conflicts
 Source: UNDP. – Joint Program Conjoint Guinée Forestière

Furthermore, we note many important materials damages: 26 trucks and 89 cars destroyed, 1840 houses destroyed, raid or burned and 128 stores raid, in addition of the losses in terms of livestock, food inventory, water and cash.

In response to this alarming situation, and in order to have a better understanding of the true nature, the main actors involved and the issues at the heart of the rise of these conflicts in Guinée Forestière, as well as the deep causes of their recurrence, and finally in order to formulate a clear and suitable response to the needs of the people, this study was found necessary to the team of Search for Common Ground present in Guinea from September 4th to the 12th of 2013.

2. Methodological Approach

The situation analysis was primarily intended to go meet the people, the policy makers, and the influential leaders of the regions in order to create this image of the socio-economic, cultural, and political taking part in the recurring of the conflicts in Guinée Forestière. In order to identify the urgent needs and the types of activities necessary to social peace and to the communal dialogue and the preparation of recommendations essential to the setting of the suitable and instant actions in Guinée Forestière, a mission field study was made in the area for nine days.

The field analysis was done from Wednesday 4th to Thursday 12th of September 2013 in the neighborhood areas of N'Zérékoré, Lola, Macenta, Koule and in the surrounding villages. The base office of SFCG was located in N'Zérékoré and varied people formed the investigating team: Benjamin Medam; the main point of SFCG in the region, Ali Badara Camara; the Project Coordinator of SFCG, Youssouf Bamba; the President of the National Network of Traditional Communicators, Lansanna Conte; and a SFCG intern, Mohamed Cherif.

The quantitative data especially related to the human and materials damages and to the humanitarians needs, as presented in this report were drawn from the Joint Evaluation Report of the humanitarian situation following the communal violence in the administrative area of N'Zérékoré, that was provided by the representatives of the Joint Program of the United Nations Development Program in N'Zérékoré.

The opinions of the people and the local actors were judged vital to the development of this analysis, and since the quantitative data were provided by the local partners of *Search for Common Ground*, primarily The United Nations System in Guinée Forestière (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, PAM, UNHCR, ONUDI, HCDH, OMS), the *National Service of Humanitarian Action* (SENAH), the Guinean Red Cross in partnership with the NGOs Danish Refugee Council and *PLAN Guinée*, the methodological approach is based on the joint of tools of qualitative data collection.

- a. 31 individual interviews with the local and regional authorities, the opinion leaders of different communities, the sages and religious, the people involved in media, and any other authority considered competent. (groups of one);
- b. 14 informal and spontaneous meetings in public places with the residents of the towns and the villages visited in order to avoid the most bias possible that might result from the selection of the interviewers (groups of 1 to 6 people);
- c. 3 semi-structured focus groups with the young people, the women and the opinion leaders of different communities as well as members of associations and professional bodies (8 to 12 people) ;
- d. 7 communal exchange sessions organized with the associations representing the young people and/or the women of the different communities (30 to 70 people).

The qualitative data and testimonials were therefore principally obtained from the local and regional authority, prominent people, representatives of different communities, representatives of international organizations and NGOs working in the area, structures of young people, teachers, medical staff, soldiers and regular citizens who have been affected by the conflict. In order to have the most representative sample as possible, the selection of the people interviewed and met sought to respect the widest diversity possible in terms of age, sex, ethnicity, occupation and residence.

Refer to the annex for the complete list of people interviewed.

Furthermore, the findings of this report were reinforced by having 8 communal exchange sessions in Guinée Forestière from October 16 to the 26th of 2013. In addition to reaching N'Zérékoré (4 sessions) and Koule (1 session) it was also possible to reach other communities that were not subject to the initial survey, such as Beyla (2 sessions) and Galakpaye (1 session).

Although the analysis focuses on the socio-political situation as a whole, the urgency of the situation related to the recurrence and to the violence of the conflicts as well as the mission of Search for Common Ground as an international organization who aims to reinforce peace, have insured that the conflicts analysis tools were found in the middle of this methodological approach.

In accordance to the international norms as set out but the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, we understand this conflict analysis as a “systematic study of the political, economic, social, historical and cultural factors that directly influence the nature, the dynamics, and the evolution of existing or potential conflicts. It included an analysis of the causes, the dynamics of the conflicts, as well as a study of the profiles, motivations, objectives, and resources of the actors of the conflict (s) in question.”⁶

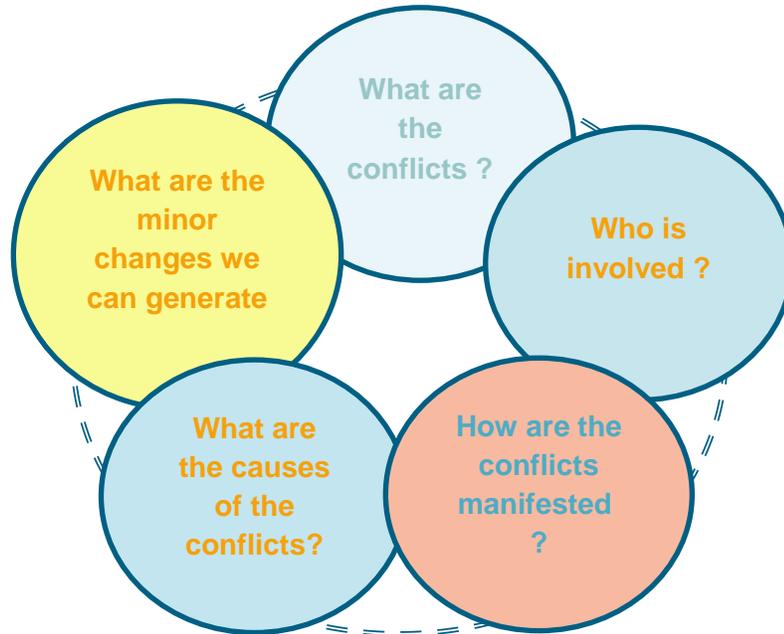
The document *Guidance Note on Conflict Analysis* produced in June 2013 by the Institutional Learning Team of SFCG⁷ was used as a foundation in the development of analytical questions. More specifically, the so-called “5W” matrix guided the five major lines of inquiry of this analysis, as follows:

1. What are the conflicts?
2. Who is involved?
3. How do these conflicts occur? How can we identify the conflicts?
4. Why do the conflicts occur? What are the causes of the conflicts?
5. What are the minor changes can we generate in order to have a major change? How can we develop a theory of change in this context?

Please refer to the annex for the details about the analytical questions

⁶ *Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities*. Paris: OECD-DAC, 2008: 11

⁷ *Guidance Note on Conflict Analysis*, Washington DC: Institutional Learning Team (ILT) – Search for Common Ground, June 2013



3. Results of the analysis

3.1. The Conflicts in Guinée Forestière and their Deep Causes

Conflict due to the problem of identity

As it is the case in Guinea as a whole, who's been living for the past years with a strong issue of isolation identity, all the interviews, focus groups and exchange sessions organized within the framework of this study have shown that ethnic affiliation is found as the root of all the preoccupations and identity issues of the people of Guinée Forestière. This is even more noted that Guinée Forestière is in fact the most diverse of the country in terms of ethnic affiliation, housing mainly the Guerze, Toma, Kissi, Manon, Konon, Konianke, Peuhl and Sousou.

All the interviews, focus groups conducted as part of this study with the people, the communal opinions leaders, the authorities and the local partners result with the conclusion that, a month after the violent conflicts of July 2013, the communal tensions lacking engagement and honest lasting dialogue on solving past crimes and the implementation of mechanisms of prevention and communal management of the conflicts are particularly evident in the region today. The conflict is first and foremost a matter of identity and perception, giving rise to the reciprocal distrust and to a tension that constantly threatens to escalate into violent conflict.

“We don’t love each other; we define ourselves first and foremost by our ethnic affiliation.”

Young Guerzé of the neighborhood of Bellevue

The hidden tensions with a high conflict potential involve mainly the communities of the Koniankés and the Guerzés as presented above. Despite the fact that these two communities have cohabitated relatively peacefully in the past centuries, the collection of data has shown that a deep gap exists due to the different customs and practices related to the culture, traditions and to the respective religions of these two groups.

«It is a question of perception and acceptance of the difference of the other in the cohabitation. There is a serious misunderstanding between the Konias and Guerzés, which generates hatred and spontaneous conflicts that are surprising and difficult to control.»

Mayor of N’Zérékoré

As an example, the young people who took part or who were victims of the fights of July 2013 interviewed for this study repeatedly stressed that the ethnic nature of the conflicts have given the right to the issue of identity isolation and to a “rediscovery” by them of the aggressive traditions of each ethnic group. For example, many young Guerzés who took part in the fights adorn their heads of palm leaves crowns, a direct reference to the traditional warriors of their ethnicity.

Religion plays an essential role in the misunderstanding and the interethnic tensions between the Koniankés predominantly Muslims, and the Guerzés mostly Christians. It is not surprising, as indicated above in the list of past incidents, that of the five major communal conflicts, four of them occurred near places of worship or during prayer time or religious ceremonies, and every year during Ramadan – as it was the case in July.

Furthermore, the places of worship have been particularly targeted during the conflicts of July 2013, N’Zérékoré, the mosque and the Islamic educational center of the *Agence des Musulmans d’Afrique* were burglarized and burned, and at Beyla, 3 administrative blocks of the main church were completely destroyed. Overall, 2 mosques were destroyed and 9 were burned, while 3 churches were destroyed and 10 burned.⁸

The non-Muslims Keples are perceived by the religious Muslims as being inferior and despicable. They resent having to see their children to marry the Keples that they consider to be not religious. This whole situation is frustrating and will bring the communities to clash. It doesn’t take much for these communities to fight.

⁸ Rapport d’évaluation conjointe de la situation humanitaire suite aux violences intercommunautaires dans la région administrative de N’zérékoré

Cartography of the conflicts in Guinea, UNDP and Swiss Peace⁹

In this sense, the testimonials of the people from the communal exchange sessions bring to the conclusion that the commonly accepted speech and the rhetoric conveyed within these communities revolve around the deep identity difference with the other, in fact by birth.

Here, when we talk about *Forestier*, we include everyone... except of course the Konianké.

Young Guerzé of the area of Bellevue

On a deeper level, this identity distinction has a historical dimension to it, even mystical, due to the attachment to the land and to the sensitive issue of the determination of the first inhabitants of the region. Indeed, the question of identity and the relationship to the land has been put at the center of all the communal focus groups and exchange sessions organized in the framework of this study. The sages and the prominent of the Guerzé community have repeatedly emphasized the need for the “alien” communities to recognize their “guide” / mentor”. Meanwhile, the Koniankés, especially the young people, have repeatedly expressed their frustration with being labeled as “aliens” despite the fact that they grew up in the area and they don’t have any other place..?

In other words, the core of the identity dispute openly expressed is based on the identification of the first inhabitants of the region, and therefore granting them the right to the land. This dynamic is explained in large part by the legal evolution of Guinean land law. In fact, while the land code of the first government (1958-1984) indicated that the land belonged to whoever was enhancing its worth; however, the land code of the second government (1984-2008) stated that the land belonged to the “natives”. It is in this idea that the majority of the Guerzé community identify themselves as being the real indigenous, the natives of Guinée Forestière, whose past generations have successfully cultivated the land. As a result, they identify the Koniankés as a group of aliens, even considering them as being only interested in the economic gains of the region, and despite the fact that they have been living there for generations. However, we shall see that this issue of right to the land is not only an issue of identity, but it is noted and reinforced by the significant economic and land issues.

”N’Zérékoré has always been a land of asylum welcoming different ethnicities. But who was allowing first? Who were the first people living there?”

Sages of the Guerzé community

Now the fact that this is registered in everyone’s memory as being part of history is particularly worrying because the hostility that exists between these groups appears as a hopeless fatality as it is linked to the identity of the people of the area.

“People refer to past events to satisfy their desires for vengeance.”

⁹ *Cartographie des Conflits en Guinée*, PNUD et SwissPeace, Janvier 2013, p. 87

President of the Union of the motorcycle taxis of Guinée Forestière

Now precisely, such communal separation has worsened the situation last July according to the interviewed authorities. In N'Zérékoré, although the majority of the neighborhoods are urban, the two central areas of the past conflicts were the neighborhoods of Dorota and Bellevue, respectively housing the Koniankés and the Guerzés. However the two focus groups organized with the young people of these areas have highlighted the strong sense of affiliation that each ethnic group attaches to his neighborhood.

These two areas were not only the source, they were also the most affected in terms of loss of lives and property damages during the crisis in July 2013. Such demographic separation of the different neighborhoods of the town according to the ethnic lines reinforces the contrast that exist between these communities and also creates “neighborhoods wars” as the conflicts extends to the entire city, as it is said by the young people of Dorota and Bellevue interviewed respectively interviewed for this study.

Moreover, this separation based on the ethnic lines can also be seen by the construction of associations and professionals bodies. We can note the example of violent conflicts (looted places, fights) that involve for the last two years the two unions of the region's road transport, l'UNTRG and the SYNATRAMGUI.

Such social division, both mental and physical, only increases the lack of communication and the misunderstanding that exists between these two groups, fueling the prejudice and the hatred across these generations.

Beyond the loss of lives and the material damages, the conflicts in Guinée Forestière have the largest impact of tearing the basic structure of the society. The analysis conducted in the region makes it possible to conclude that a climate of fear, distrust, even contempt between these populations. In this same logic, the speakers of the communities interviewed have pointed to the lack of dialogue between communities.

“We are scared; we understand that there is no one to defend us.”

An elder from the Guerzé community

However, it is important to note that for the reactions encountered during the interviews, focus groups and exchange sessions conducted, the identity tensions based on the ethnic affiliation seem to be deeper in the city than in rural areas. Although the Galakpaye and the Koulye villages were at the heart of these communal clashes, respectively in 2011 and 2013, the people of both communities agreed to sit around a table and discuss. Moreover, from the discussions it is shown that the people are first and foremost mostly preoccupied by the socio-economic conditions- mainly the lack of jobs and infrastructures – rather than the issues of identity. However, the most violent testimonials in terms of the identity issue were recorded in urban areas, mainly in Beyla and N'Zérékoré.

This can be explained by the fact that the cities are the heavier places of “multiethnic mix”, where people of different customs are more in daily contact. Moreover, the people met in urban areas have placed emphasis on the politicians, opinion leaders – intellectuals, sages, and religious – who, like we will see, can take part in the continuation of speeches and rumors that divide and inflame the population, and whose presence can be seen in areas where communication tools and the spreading of information is more accessible.

The “right to land”: State conflicts and economic power struggles

Although the ethno-religious affiliation issue appears to be in heart of the conflict in Guinée Forestière, it would be wrong – and risky from a programmatic perspective – to make it the only center of attention, to the detriment just as important of the economic and political power struggles.

Thus, the issue of “right to land” which is always brought up during the collection of qualitative data as part of this study, has more of a pragmatic dimension to it, that of a real struggle for the lands. Let us recall that despite having the highest rate of poverty of the country, the forest region proves to be the richest in terms of development both in agriculture and mining. While cohabitation has always been done peacefully, the growth of the population in the region – estimated at 4.3% today¹⁰, as opposed to 2.2% for the whole country – has revived the tension while lands are becoming extremely difficult to find for this growing population. Let’s also note that welcoming since 1990 large groups of refugees following the different conflicts in the neighboring countries has also played a role: it is estimated that Guinée Forestière has so far received a total of more than 700 000 refugees on its territory.

Added to this, the Konianké community has now emerged as the true holder of the economic power in the region, being specialized in business and moving forward agricultural production, which has been reserved for a number of years to the Guerzés. In this sense, past conflicts in the region, such as ones between herders and farmers are well fed by considerations related to a community affiliation.

As it is highlighted in the Map of the Conflicts in Guinea produced by UNDP in partnership with the NGO SwissPeace, “the discovery of important natural resources in the region, the arrival of mining companies and the massive migration of job seekers to N’Zérékoré have increased the worth of the lands occupied by the Konias. Based on customary law, the Kpeles are claiming exclusive ownership of the land that they, themselves, gave to the Konias. On their part, the Konias are refuting the idea of returning the parts occupied by the Natives because they have all the forensic evidence to prove that they are the owners.”¹¹

Several lands, especially in the urban areas of the region belonged to Guerzés families and were bought by the Koniankés. These lands today are the subject of important disputes and often results in communal conflicts. Even more so, that some of these lands have been sold

¹⁰ Ministère du Plan de la République de Guinée, *Etude Socio-Economique Régionale de Guinée Forestière*, Mai 2012

¹¹ *Cartographie des Conflits en Guinée*, PNUD et SwissPeace, Janvier 2013, p. 87

several times and the official property permits are rare in the region. Also note that the issue of land ownership also has a family dimension to it as well, as many young people interviewed expressed their frustration to the fact that family lands are sold instead of being available to them.¹²

In addition, there are the conflicts that involve the farmers to the herders. The herds are not always strictly monitored and sometimes find themselves in agricultural plantations. It was the case in Beyla in June 2012, 163 animals were killed by farmers, which cause considerable tension in the community.¹³

In the district of Guamakony, each year the herders occupy land that have not been used by the farmers in years. With the demographic pressure, the farmers need more cultivable lands, so they decide to occupy the land used by the herders while reminding them they are foreigners.¹⁴

Map of the conflicts in Guinea, UNDP and SwissPeace

Following the same logic, the conflict analysis report performed in Guinée Forestière by Search for Common Ground in January 2012 prior to the project *Strengthening cross-border civil society networks in Guinea, Liberia, and Cote d'Ivoire* already put the emphasis on the fact that “the most urgent conflicts were those related to the issue of land. Although conflicts between nomad pastoral farmers and farmers or interfamilial conflicts or conflicts between the Liberian refugees or Ivoirians, or a mix of all these problems existed, land issues dominated.”¹⁵

In that matter it must be admitted, as concluded in the report, that conflicts related to the land issues persist over time largely to the lack of knowledge and of popular ownership of institutional mechanisms to solve these issues: in general, people don't know how to treat a land claim using the traditional or formal institutions that exist within the communities. Consequently, the land disputes were often not solved.¹⁶

Therefore, the state related conflicts were often found in the middle of the claims that divide the different communities of the region as well as deepening the identity gap between the people “aliens” and “natives”. The so-called ethnic conflicts often act as an excuse to justify the fight actually based on land and economic considerations.

“The State related and economic conflicts are the main conflicts in Guinée Forestière. They often appear ethnic.”

Director of the Rural Radio of N'Zérékoré

¹² *Baseline Study of SFCG Opportunities for Action in Mining Communities of Guinea*, Search for Common Ground Guinée, Juillet 2012, p. 35

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 28

¹⁴ *Cartographie des Conflits en Guinée*, PNUD et SwissPeace, Janvier 2013, p. 87

¹⁵ *Baseline Study of SFCG Opportunities for Action in Mining Communities of Guinea*, Search for Common Ground Guinée, Juillet 2012, p. 35

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5

“According to our studies, the State-owned problems account for about 80% of the conflicts in the region.”

Mayor of N'Zérékoré

It is important to note that a significant gap exists between rural and urban centers of the region in terms of economic distribution. The rural population is the largest of the population, representing 68.1 of the Forestière of the population¹⁷. However, the rural population has experienced a dramatic decline in the recent years while she still accounted for three quarters of the population in 1996.¹⁸ On the other side, the urban population has increased from 138,741 people in 1983 to 397,201 people in 2009.¹⁹ Although the villages have always been sustaining the economic production, the region is undergoing an important change: rural migration and the growth of the cities. We can certainly note a big difference between the rural and urban areas: while the average population density of the region is 57 inhabitants per km², for Gueckédou and N'Zérékoré respectively it is 145 and 101 inhabitants per km².²⁰ But this phenomenon of expansion in the urban areas is increasing from years to years: as an example, the population density in N'Zérékoré was in 1996 of 78 inhabitants per km², and has increased to 101 in 2009.²¹

Many young unemployed people we encountered as part of this study and who admitted taking part in the last clashes in N'Zérékoré have explained living the countryside to move into town because the future seemed better there. Once settled in the urban centers, these young people are often unemployed or living in very small unstable houses. They explained that they prefer to abandon the old traditional farming techniques in order to find better opportunities in the city. Moreover many of them who relied on the cultivating the family land found themselves without any prospects when their parents decided to sell the land instead of passing it to them, which definitely added to their frustrations already related to the land issues.

Surely, the cities in the region are experiencing a major development in the recent years, while the agricultural potential of the region is struggling to develop its fair value due to the lack of resources and the absence of an implemented long term agricultural policy due to the instability in recent decades, causing the income gap between urban and rural areas to widened. Although the major fights has occurred in the city during the crisis of July 2013, the testimony of the authorities agree to state that many external elements from the surrounding villages of N'Zérékoré and Beyla contributed to the escalation of things, looking to take advantage of the

¹⁷ Ministère du Plan de la République de Guinée, *Etude Socio-Economique Régionale de Guinée Forestière*, Mai 2012

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Ministère du Plan de la République de Guinée, *Etude Socio-Economique Régionale de Guinée Forestière*, Mai 2012

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

chaos to come to the urban centers looting homes and stores, without any consideration for the ethnicity affiliation of the victims.

"People from other villages came to break into our homes and rob us. They did not come to fight but to steal. We were overwhelmed by the surrounding villages. Us at Koule, we never set our problems with violence. "

Mayor of Koule

When politics gets involved

Beyond the identity and economic considerations, it appears that politics plays an important role in the communal divisions that have the potential to escalate into violent conflict.

The democratic opening and the development of multiparty known in the country since the 1990s have without a doubt reinforced - even leading in some cases - strong ethnic divisions. Indeed, respecting its own logic to the whole sub-region, newly formed political parties in the 1990s are mostly based on the ethnic affiliation as a means of popular mobilization.

"Before 1991, we had no problems with our Guerzé brothers. The multiparty of the 1990s has given the opportunities to some politicians to take advantage to divide and conquer."

Regional Director of the Konianké N'Zérékoré Youth

In the case of Guinée Forestière, it is mainly the first local and municipal elections in June 1991 that represent in the eyes of many observers the first communal divide having set fire to the powder and started the spiral of violence affecting the region until today.

"Ethnocentrism has emerged from this period, with the principle that everyone should rule at home."

Director of the Rural Radio of N'Zérékoré

At the time, the President of the Republic, Lansana Conté stated to the Guerzé communities that his party supported: "Since when a Konianké can be master in your homes? We need a Guerzé leader here! "But these elections, which eventually saw the victory of the Guerzé candidate, not only contributed to the stigmatization of the Konianké people but also degenerated into violent communal conflicts that killed more than 200 people.

Opinions agree that the process of democratization still ongoing today, and the said transition having been consecrated for the 2010 presidential elections, have not only reinforced this process of ethnic identification to the political candidates, to the expense of the projects for the society as a whole.

"The votes are not made based on political beliefs but of ethnicity or religion affiliation. The basis of Guinean politics is to vote for our parents. "

A young person of the neighborhood of Bellevue

It should be noted that the juvenile group of the population, which remains the most affected by unemployment and lack of occupation is particularly vulnerable to the exploitations based on ethnicity by politicians seeking legitimacy.

The campaign for the elections - originally scheduled for June 30th and then postponed to September 24th has, in the opinion of the Governor of the same region, participated in the upsurge of communal tension during the summer of 2013. It is interesting to note many individuals interviewed for this study conducted by SFCG in Guinée Forestière in July 2012 have expressed their fear to see the comeback of the ethnic tensions ahead of the parliamentary elections initially scheduled for the end of 2012, the division are mainly due to the manipulation of political parties according to them and a lack of information on the issues of democracy.²²

²² *Baseline Study of SFCG Opportunities for Action in Mining Communities of Guinea*, Search for Common Ground Guinée, Juillet 2012, p. 35



Image 4 Young Forestier returning from the fields at the end of the day.

A poor region, unstable, where impunity reigns

Behind the identity, economic and political considerations, it is important to emphasize three major causes that contribute to the recurrence of conflicts in this region of Guinea. Poverty, unemployment - the working population employed in the Guinée Forestière represents 15.6% while the national level is of 9.1%²³ - and the lack of opportunities for socio-economic integration, particularly for the young people, appear as fundamental factors essential to the constant recurrence of the violent conflicts.

As we mentioned above, the Guinée Forestière is the poorest region of the country, with a poverty rate of 66.9% as opposed to the national level of 55.2%.²⁴ Poverty in the region affects the quality of life of its inhabitants. Formal education and civic training is seriously lacking in most of the young people in the region, particularly in the rural world. Despite the increase in new school enrollments in the recent years, more than 260,000 children are still not in school

²³ Ministère du Plan de la République de Guinée, *Etude Socio-Economique Régionale de Guinée Forestière*, Mai 2012

²⁴ Rapport d'évaluation conjointe de la situation humanitaire suite aux violences intercommunautaires dans la région administrative de N'zérékoré

today, most of the children not enrolled can be found in the rural area (81.8%).²⁵ But the recurring conflicts affect the educational system in the region: for example, the mayor of Koule explains that back in 2013, of 400 enrolled students only 18 of them made it to school. Moreover, the administrative area of N'Zérékoré is also the most affected in terms of food insecurity, with a rate of 52.7% as opposed to 6.4% in Conakry²⁶, and access to electricity is only 1.5%, in contrast to 94.7 % in Conakry.²⁷

The underdevelopment of the region is at the heart of the concerns of the residents and often underlies the conflict dynamics according to the people interviewed. In this sense l'*Etude de base sur les opportunités d'action dans les communautés minières de Guinée* conducted by SFCG in July 2012 shows that beyond the dynamics related to mining, the report has emphasized on the causes of conflict related to the backwardness of the region in terms of development:

« Many conflicts are non-mining related and are predominantly developmental, caused by a lack of infrastructure and social services and especially lack of water, electricity, hospitals, schools, roads and social services such as employment programs, affordable healthcare and professional development programs.»²⁸

With no future, most of the young people decide to leave countryside to go to the cities in search of employment. Many of them say they are often frustrated, getting small jobs or staying in the streets out of shame to go home empty-handed. This distress is added to the unemployed already present in the area in large numbers in the main urban centers of the region. So these young people usually end up meeting over tea in the evening to discuss and they attest that it is at such times of trouble that the ethnocentric speeches are more likely to develop and enter their mind.

We can also note also that the lack of opportunities related in part to the recurrence of these conflicts is negatively impacting the lives of many households, "Women felt unfairly burdened with supplier providing for Their families and felt a high degree of resentment: towards Their husbands frequently unemployed. Women noted that men frequently spent their days sitting, while women were expected to work and then come home to buy and prepare food for their families."²⁹

Any source of income becomes essential to the survival of the young unemployed and the chaos resulting from the conflicts may seem like a relatively easy opportunity to make money. This is one reason many homes and shops were looted without necessarily being burned during

²⁵ Ministère du Plan de la République de Guinée, *Etude Socio-Economique Régionale de Guinée Forestière*, Mai 2012

²⁶ *Documents de Stratégie de Réduction de la Pauvreté*, Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances de Guinée, Décembre 2010, p. 23

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 27

²⁸ *Baseline Study of SFCG Opportunities for Action in Mining Communities of Guinea*, Search for Common Ground Guinée, Juillet 2012, p. 3

²⁹ *Baseline Study of SFCG Opportunities for Action in Mining Communities of Guinea*, Search for Common Ground Guinée, Juillet 2012, p. 31

the conflict in July 2013, the idea was not necessarily to punish, but simply to provide the means of subsistence.

"Here poverty is the root of hatred."

Mayor of Koulé

In another side of ideas, it is important to note that for the past twenty Guinée Forestière is in contact with three particularly unstable areas: Sierra Leone and Liberia in the west, Ivory Coast in the east. Borders are porous, making sure that light and automatic guns as well as Guinean and foreigners ex-combatants and militia - who took part in conflicts in neighboring countries, are able to circulate easily.

"Here we are surrounded by countries that experienced war. Some fought among refugees, some have returned with guns. They know how to fight and are constantly looking for money. They find a benefit in the conflict. "

President of the Union of motorcycle taxis in Guinée Forestière

The recurrence of conflicts in the sub-region, especially in the area of Guinée Forestière appears to be a major obstacle to the economic development in this part of the country. This creates a vicious cycle, the level of poverty and the lack of occupation, particularly in the juvenile layer, acting as a strong vector in the dynamics of the conflicts.

Although the conflicts of Guinée Forestière seem to be confined to the region, we are not immune to an international overflow in the sub-region with unstable porous borders. The ethnic conflicts in Guinée Forestière are also present in neighboring countries. But the governments of the countries of the sub region have become accustomed in recent years to interfere in the wars of their neighbors through militias.

"The real danger is that the conflict in Guinée Forestière may take an international dimension."

Prefect of N'Zérékoré

Finally, a third factor emerges as the important element to the collection of qualitative data conducted as part of this investigation: the common frustration and the loss of confidence in the authorities, they do not have the means to carry out their regulatory functions in this part of the territory. Local authorities have themselves acknowledge that because of the lack of adequate resources, local authorities, particularly the police are unable to guarantee the protection of all the citizens.

"The police lack of means to control the crowds quickly. Warning shots and tear gas could have really changed the situation. "

Chief of Staff of the Civil Administration in the Governorate of Guinée Forestière

Therefore, it is clear today that, part of the population has simply lost confidence in the authorities and was frustrated with the "false promises" that have never been fulfilled.

"We were promised to rebuild our houses after Galapakye, and we are still waiting, it is difficult to contain the young in such circumstances."

Sage of the Konianké Community

On a more dangerous level, the local authorities are concerned that the limited resources of the authorities allow the possibility for a parallel system of conflict resolution to exist. So traditionally, the wise men of various communities have always acted as respectful individuals and able to judge the dispute. However, ethnocentrism has come to break the traditional channels of communication between communities, and many locals now prefer to do get justice themselves.

"The problem of Guinea is that the population does not trust the authorities to investigate when a problem occurs. They take matter into their own hands. "

Mayor of Koulé

But beyond the weakness of the state in regard to providing basic services and security, from the interviews and focus groups conducted, it is shown that this is the issue of justice that is found in the heart of frustrations of the people toward authority, and that is in all the communities. As stated by the Mayor of N'Zérékoré "impunity is the source of misunderstandings leading to violent outbursts." Investigations initiated following past communal clashes have rarely been solved and many criminals were not charged due to lack of means. This obviously has the effect of stirring up feelings of revenge among the populations.

"This time we have to send a clear and strong message. This year, for the first time, we have risen and avenged what's ours. "

Sage of the Konianké community

"We do not understand what this democracy is where you kill and you're not punished!"

Sage of the Konianké community

"Impunity is the center of the problem: the criminals of past crimes were not judged."

Mayor of N'Zérékoré

In the absence of systematic institutional management disputes, violence appears as a "normal" tool of conflict management - a phrase used by three youths who took part in the fights and were met separately. Several testimonies abound in the same direction: many people simply have no fear of suffering the consequences of their criminal acts.

These findings confirm those of the study of conflicts conducted by SFCG in Guinée Forestière in January 2012 before the project *Strengthening cross-border civil society networks in Guinea, Liberia and Ivory Coast*. This study had in fact identified "land disputes, ethnic or tribal conflicts, socio-economic, religious, and conflicts between generations that threaten peaceful coexistence."³⁰



Image 5 Tanker burned in the heart of Bellevue district in N'Zérékoré, September 2013.

³⁰ Rapport d'évaluation finale du projet '*Strengthening cross-border civil society network's in Guinea, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire*', Search for Common Ground Guinée, Décembre 2012, p. 9

3.2. The Main Actors of the Conflicts in Guinée Forestière

Conflicts in Guinée Forestière affect the entire population of the region and it is essential to admit that everyone was more or less involved in more recent conflicts. However, some groups appear as the central actors supplying the dynamics for the recurring conflicts.

The Youth

The youth, which represents 50.7% of the population³¹, is both the victim and the first principal actor of the conflicts in Guinée Forestière.

The young men of theatre, particularly those living in urban areas are particularly affected by the lack of occupation and unemployment. The possibilities are limited and the constant search for income, as well as poor living conditions, only increases the vulnerability of these young people from political manipulations.

Lots of young people met in the framework of this study highlighted the gap that separates the state institutions that are supposed to help them improve their future. This finding was made in the context of conflict analysis conducted in January 2012 by SFCG: "young people were frustrated with what they described as a difficult relationship with local authorities, rather than a cooperative relationship. They felt abandoned in their quest to find work in the mines, and during the last year there were quite often in the community general strikes on poverty, unemployment and lack of information, support and transparency."³²

A big part of these young people of the urban centers are often grouped informally in clans or staff. The final report of the "Youth and Non- Violence in Guinea" was particularly focused on this phenomenon in the country describes the creation of a culture of clans as "a very young phenomenon that has its roots in the industry image of modern global communications. For example, most of the young rebels in the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone took the alias names like "Rambo" or "Tupac ", a phenomenon which is apparently also taken by the young gang leaders in Guinea."³³ The two focus groups conducted with them in the respective neighborhoods of Bellevue and Dorota reveal that the formation of these clans follows a hierarchical structure: young influential leaders thus have a power of conviction and significant mobilization. However the young people interviewed for the project "The youth and Non-Violence in Guinea" explained that "the leaders of political parties and opinion leaders in the communities often seek to co-opt these young leaders ," providing them with financial compensation in order to mobilize during the political demonstrations or communal clashes .

³¹ Ministère du Plan de la République de Guinée, *Etude Socio-Economique Régionale de Guinée Forestière*, Mai 2012

³² *Baseline Study of SFCG Opportunities for Action in Mining Communities of Guinea*, Search for Common Ground Guinée, Juillet 2012, p. 31

³³ Final Evaluation Report, '*Youth and Non-Violence in Guinea*', Search for Common Ground Guinée, Avril 2010, p.

In addition, the exchange sessions showed a clear disparity of opinions between the youth and the elders, further evidence that the intergenerational gap is widening now in Guinée Forestière. The young people insist that the prestige of the wise is increasingly challenged by the younger generations: however note that such a phenomenon is more seen in urban than in the rural areas covered by the survey and where the traditional customs seem to have remained more rooted in morality. It seems that many young people do not meet, or simply do not have a good knowledge of the traditional methods of peaceful conflict resolution used by their ancestors.

"There is a moral depravity and resignation of the parents in terms of authority: the children no longer listen to their parents and the pacts of the elders are violated.

Director of the Rural Radio of N'Zérékoré

Such generational gap had already been raised by the stakeholders interviewed as part of the study of the conflicts that SFCG had led in Guinée Forestière in January 2012. The report found that "young people were particularly frustrated by their marginalization by the former members of the community, especially in the management of the affairs of the community and in the mechanisms of conflict resolution. They were also discouraged by the lack of activities to develop, and the lack of inspiration or advice from elders. "In contrast, this study found that the" old generation, tended to see young people as a source of problems rather than a resource for peace. "³⁴

Former militia

Although all testimonials agree that the vast majority of individuals who participated in the most recent conflict in July 2013 were ordinary citizens, the strong presence of former veterans and militia in Guinée Forestière is an additional factor of destabilization feeding the potential for conflict in the region.

First note the presence of several militia Guineans back home: this is particularly the case for young Foresters having been recruited to take part in the final assault against the regime of Charles Taylor in Liberia. Besides, the presence of young people was formed to establish regional militias supporting the regime of the military troop of Dadis Camara, himself a native of the region. These young people, trained in combat, are now back: many of them have not been subject to the procedures of disarmament and reintegration into society and for whom future opportunities are scarce.

It is necessary to know that the former militiamen now live among the people and that no census has been done to date. It is therefore difficult to separate, in the everyday life and at the time of the fighting, the former fighters of the ordinary citizens.

³⁴ Rapport d'évaluation finale du projet 'Strengthening cross-border civil society network's in Guinea, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire', Search for Common Ground Guinée, Décembre 2012, p. 9

Members of the media

As we mentioned earlier, the speed with which information - and incendiary rumors - have spread across the region following the events in Koule has greatly contributed to the escalation of violence and the spread of conflict during the crisis of July 2013. This was particularly the case in N'Zérékoré where false rumors were circulating that the patriarch of the Guerzé community had been murdered, fueled hatred and bitterness according to the testimonials. Generally, it is to be admitted that the press has a crucial role and an important civic responsibility in times of conflict, which can not only contribute in the overall healing through messages of peace and thoughtful coverage of the facts, but can also have an important influence that can turn negative.

The "rumor mill" that worries many interviewers is at the center of the recurrence of conflict in Guinée Forestière. Thus, during the crisis of July 2013, the Minister of Information deemed it necessary - as a measure called "extraordinary" - to suspend the activities of private FM radio *Liberté* for six days with the excuse that the information broadcasted could incite hatred and desire for revenge among the population.

In general, it seems that some private radio stations as well as online media have increased in recent years and whose sources are often from Conakry without local presence , plays a negative role in making the race to "scoop " wanting to announce the first deaths , without verifying the sources of the information disclosed.

"Today, the online press is a huge problem: everyone puts anything on the internet and this information is then relayed by SMS to the scene of conflict. Around a certain time it was said that the Konianké had poisoned the water in N'Zérékoré."

Director of the Rural Radio of N'Zérékoré

Motorcycle taxi drivers

Following the same logic of false spread rumors about fires, it is important to note the role played by the drivers of the motorcycle taxis.

Motorcycle taxis have increased in the region, and particularly in N'Zérékoré since 2005. There are now more or less 7000 in the prefecture of N'Zérékoré, which helped to reduce the unemployment rate among some young people in the region.

However, some drivers receiving no supervision are identified by the local authorities and some of them are identified as offenders prone to alcohol and drug abuse as well as violent behavior. Importantly, motorcycle taxi drivers act as "messengers" privileged as they are the ones that move faster and more frequently between towns and villages in the region.

"The motorcycle taxis have participated in the escalation of conflicts. The motorcycle taxis communicate quickly between villages and districts. They play a crucial role in terms of communication as they can peddle rumors, which become dangerous in times of conflict. "

President of the Union of motorcycle taxis in Guinée Forestière

The union of motorcycle taxis drivers of N'Zérékoré demonstrates the willingness to mentor young people, in particular by strengthening their capacity for peaceful conflict management, but the lack of resources and difficulties of mobilization have made the task almost impossible until now.

"During the crisis in July 2013, motorcycle taxis have spread a rumor that 30 young people were detained in Beyla Lola, ready to be slaughtered."

Mayor of Lola

Opinion leaders, intellectuals and the sages

As previously demonstrated, the very heart of the communal conflict that affects Guinée Forestière is based on a question of perception and the perpetuation of an ethnocentric rhetoric designed to divide the populations.

However, in addition to the leaders of political parties as mentioned above, all opinion leaders and intellectuals who are the respected elite of the respective communities have a double-edged role: the legitimacy conferred on them the fact makes them both potential peacemakers in whom people can count, but also individuals whose influence on the population can become dangerous.

"The indigenous intellectuals play an important role in manipulating the people by saying things such as" we are at home here. "

Director of the Rural Radio of N'Zérékoré

First note the important role also played by the diaspora of the respective communities. Indeed, beyond the major source of funding they represent, the testimonials agree that the majority of the fire rumors and calls for revenge circulating via SMS were coming from Conakry, not the region itself.



Image 6 The Sages of the Guerzé community interviewed at N'Zérékoré, September 2013

Let's also note also in this same logic the influence of the intellectuals of N'Zérékoré on all the people of the region. It is interesting to note that ethnic tensions are more mentioned as the main conflict by the people interviewed in the urban centers than those in the rural communities.

"The speech on ethnic conflicts come from N'Zérékoré, we do not know it in Koule"

President of the Commission for Peace and Reconciliation of Koule

The intellectuals and the wise men of the different communities, although traditionally playing a role of pacifier, may also participate in the spiral of violence by supplying the speech and myths based on ethnicity.

"Religious leaders are perceived as sacred individuals; they have a huge impact on their communities but sometimes avoid their responsibilities and help in escalating the conflict."

Young person from the district of Dorota

3.3. Effects and manifestations of the conflicts

Although the conflicts have been recurring over the past twenty years, the clashes are periodic and usually last a few days. However, what worries to the changing dynamics of conflict in recent years is that the outbreaks of violence now tend to recur periodically, having now held almost every year.

In general, note that the conflict having escalated into major communal clashes in recent years were all caused by small minor disagreements between individuals.

"Mistrust is latent and small conflicts put fire to the powder."

President of the Union of motorcycle taxis of Guinée Forestière

The testimonials mentioned the situations of shoving, car accidents or conflicts between herders and farmers about a herd going into a field. Because of the latent tension palpable at all levels of the social fabric, and because of the lack of occupation, small incidents such as these, which are not subject to police intervention often attract crowds and can quickly escalate. The young people we met and indicate that when minor conflict of this type occurs, the first instinct of people is to know which ethnic groups are involved in the conflict, even before finding out what the real issue is. In this sense, the conflict will therefore no longer be held between a farmer and herder, but between a Konianké and a Guerzé. Once the clashes starts, the information flows generally very fast with the new means of telecommunication, including SMS. In short, any event in a trivial origin has the potential to be used as a pretext for ethnic clashes.

"The slightest spark incites resentment"

Director General of the Regional Hospital of N'Zérékoré

The steady escalation of the bloody conflicts as the region is located in the heart of a particularly destabilized region in the recent years, welcoming many refugees, made sure that the violence is in the morals of the country. The resolution of violent conflict is no longer seen as something extraordinary, as should be the case in the rule of law, but as a normal tool.

"Here, death has become ordinary"

Regional Director of the Konianké Youth of N'Zérékoré

However, we must recognize that to date, 2013 has marked a new level of violence. It is not only the number of casualties, injuries, and physical destruction that is impressive, but also the methods used during the conflicts that mark everyone (people cut with machetes, burned alive, stoned, impaled) and trigger the desire for revenge.

"They cut my friend right in front of me, how do you want me not to react? We didn't have the choice to defend ourselves, they had no weapons, and they wanted to destroy us!"

Young person from neighborhood of Bellevue

This outburst of violence is so far relatively chaotic. In organizational terms, the various testimonies of the young people who took part in armed fights explain the mobilization and the creation of small militias were made spontaneously and locally in order to defend the neighborhoods.

"The violence was not organized, everyone was doing his own thing, and there was no mastermind, only small groups being formed here and there."

Young person from the neighborhood of Bellevue

However, the speed with which the violence was spread , the influence of opinion leaders, the presence of former militia leaders in the area and the relatively free flow of automatic weapons , lets fear the worst : Guinée Forestière possesses certainly many ingredients that could allow the transformation of minor disputes in an organized confrontation , even a civil war.

Although the entire population is obviously heavily affected by the recurrence of the conflicts, the youth is the one particularly affected by it. In addition to the economic downturn that generates stagnation in employment, these conflicts often generate the dislocation of the organized youth structures, the disruption of school or university as well as sports and cultural activities. Conflicts threaten access to basic needs such as education and health, which particularly affects the children and young people: in Beyla, the majority of teachers and medical staff fled the city and are still not back to start the school year and while the medical needs are greatest around that time.

As we were told by several young people from different communities, these conflicts reinforce the mistrust and misunderstanding between the young people from the different communities by reducing the opportunities for dialogue and the possibility of working together.

Women are also heavily affected. In addition to being vulnerable during the violent clashes - several sexual assault cases have been reported, the women interviewed indicated their concerns that their daily activities are not possible during the conflict, putting the life of the family as a whole at risk.

"We are the most exposed group. We cannot stay at home watching our husbands and children starve. We are forced to go out despite the gunshots, risking our lives to feed our family. "

A Konianké woman of the neighborhood of Dorota

Although this study focuses specifically on the ethnic groups the Koniankés and the Guerzé, it is important to note that the adverse effects of these clashes spread to all communities and their locals. Many refugees are branded as veterans supporting one side or the other; this is the case of some Liberians Guerzé. This is also the case of the Fulani that many point to as taking advantage of the chaos caused by the escalation of conflicts to do business.

"I've never been direct victims of these conflicts but many rumors say the Fulani are those that distribute weapons to the Guerzés. Our own life is also endangered. "

A Fulani man from the district of Ossude

Economic consequences

The resurgence of conflict in Guinea Forest is obviously full with economic consequences and seriously slowing down the economic development of this unstable however rich and favored in agricultural and mining region.

Conflicts cause systematic damages that strongly slow down economic activities primarily commercial and agricultural of the region. Note for example the destruction of 26 trucks and 128 shops were looted during the conflict of 2013, in addition to significant losses in terms of livestock, food stock, water and cash. Moreover, in addition to the significant amount of refugees present in Guinée Forestière following the conflicts in the neighboring countries, the conflicts in the region cause significant internal displacement of the populations.

Another worrying consequence of these conflicts is the reluctance of foreign investors who are afraid to establish themselves in an unstable region. The case of violent clashes that took place in August 2012 between the authorities and the people of Zogota, following the revolt of the town against the activities of the big Brazilian mining company Vale, remains in the memory of many of investors. This is why an international company like Iron Mining Company of Guinea (IMCG) places great emphasis on the sustainability of long-term project that relies heavily on harmony with the host communities and a commitment from them as well.

"We know that the Guinée Forestière is a risk, particularly because of community conflicts. This is obviously part of our calculation when evaluating investment opportunities in the region. "

Head of Department of the IMCG Community

4. Recommendations of Search for Common Ground

According to the on-field survey analysis, two fundamental strategic appear to be necessary for the development of an emergency response, sustainable and adapted to the particularly worrying situation in Guinée Forestière: repair and dialogue, and the prevention of future conflicts.

All interviews and focus groups conducted as part of this study, as well as community exchange sessions implemented by SFCG help in knowing that despite the underlying tension, people are willing to move on and thus engage in a process of dialogue.

Theoretically, the idea is to rebuild bridges that were destroyed. If individuals from the communities in conflict are given the opportunity to interact and listen, they will have no other choice but to have better understanding and become well aware of their respective interests that can come into contradiction and lead to conflicts.

The idea here would be that the opening of a place for intercommunity dialogue framed by SFCG and its partners that would enable the communities in conflict to resume conversations and exchanges, even collaboration that characterized the lives of past generations. Thus, a minor intervention may give rise to a major change of attitude within the communities. Indeed we share the principle that if we manage to engage individual members of communities in conflict in a process of reconciliation, a healthy relationship will occur as a result and will give the right to the emergence of a shared future. This will decrease the wishes of communities to use violence to manage their differences.

4.1. Reparations and dialogue

The opened wounds from the various communal conflicts experienced by the region remain painful for the population. While past crimes have not been prosecuted and that the houses are still destroyed, mistrust, misunderstanding and lack of communication reinforce the ethnocentric speeches dividing the population.

Opening a space for honest, inclusive and sustainable dialogue appears as the first step needed to restore social peace and a peaceful climate in Guinée Forestière. It is in this sense that a process called "trauma healing" should be established. Especially aiming the young people, the main victims of the conflicts and the major players of the conflicts, this process will have the goal to provide an opportunity for traumatized individuals by the recurrence of the violent conflicts in the region to express their resentment and claims. This will reduce their desire for revenge while opening a space for dialogue and exchange suitable to future collaboration. Holding eight communal exchange sessions in Guinée Forestière in N'Zérékoré (4 sessions), Beyla (2 sessions), and Galakpaye Koule has confirmed the need for these people to express themselves first and foremost, people of all ages , genders and communities have massively participated in the exchanges , the number of participants in some cases were over 250 people , as was the case in Galakpaye . Having a space for inclusive and sustainable dialogue appears to be a crucial first step in the reconciliation process in the desired region. In order for this dialogue to be an initiative owned by local actors , it would be important to strengthen the capacity of pre identified leaders (elders , traditional communicators , youth, women) in terms of techniques for moderators, management dialogue and peaceful resolution of conflict , so that they are in charge of facilitating the exchanges. This will not only put the people at ease in addition to sustain spaces for dialogue in the long term, once the intervention of Search for Common Ground is completed.

"There were workshops, people participated, but there was no real effect. When calling people to participate in a workshop, we give them all the lessons prepared. But for these people to be invited to participate in these workshops, we must give them the opportunity to their express themselves. "

Mayor of N'Zérékoré



Image 7 Exchange session with the populations organized in Galakpaye, October 2013

The expression of resentment by these traumatized individuals could have the undesirable effect of stirring up hatred and resentment between communities if the "trauma healing" is not accompanied by the development of a strategy for reconciliation between the communities. Thus, in addition to support the initiative of signing a new pact between the wise of the communities in conflict, it will be crucial to ensure that the grassroots populations and all communities are integrated in this process. The purpose of this reconciliation process will not only be to change the perception of how these individuals approach conflict, a confrontational approach towards a collaborative approach, but also to give them their tools to build a common future.

"Help us to reach out to people to change their attitudes." - Prefect of N'Zérékoré

In order to ensure that the communities are the real players in the heart of the establishment of these two parallel processes, it is important to:

- Train the leaders (elders, youth, community structures) to the Common Ground approach, the techniques of "trauma healing" and the peaceful resolution of conflicts;

- Educate people, particularly the young people, on peaceful coexistence and dialogue between communities;
- Open spaces for inclusive, interactive and sustainable dialogue as well as having communal solidarity events organized by the trained leaders.

"The covenants are not a solution; we've had them since before the beginning of the last century ... we need a sustainable dialogue between communities, not just meetings from time to time."

A young person from the neighborhood of Bellevue

Finally, the possibility for a dialogue and the establishment of a reconciliation strategy could not be complete processes without the problems of impunity, present in the heart of the resentments of the people, being set and that light is shed on the past crimes. In this sense, it is important to:

- Participate in capacity building and support for formal and informal structures designed to shed light on past crimes and render justice.
- Inform people about justice mechanisms in place for the peaceful management of disputes.

"The conflict continues over time because of the impunity: we must tell the truth and do justice because impunity breeds frustration, which in turn causes the violence."

General Director of the Regional Hospital of N'Zérékoré

"Men can only shake hands when they know the truth and that justice is served."

Elders of the Guerzé community

4.2. Prevention for future conflicts

The process of inter-communal reconciliation could not only with a simple phase of repair and dialogue. Indeed, once the "repair" part has started, it will be necessary to adopt a preventive strategy to prevent such conflicts of breed violence in the region.

Prevention will be mainly based on the interaction and sharing of interests of members of the communities in conflict so that they no longer see themselves as enemies, but seek to understand the interests of their co-citizens and thereby seek to resolve their disputes peacefully.

This interaction will be based on the creation of organizations (ex.: unions of motorcycle taxis, clubs of discussion, consultation framework on the reduction and the prevention of conflicts) and joint projects (reconstruction of infrastructures destroyed by the conflict , development radios programs based on the common history of communities , development of micro-awareness outreach programs in the neighborhoods , organizing cultural and sports events promoting peace) whose composition is mixed in terms of ethnicity. We're talking about unions, student or consultation framework at the level of civil society. Regarding joint projects, reconstruction projects habitats in common would be an interesting opportunity. Income-generating activities.

This will build peace around common interests. The idea is to not only to raise awareness but to address the two major problems in the region being the source of recurring violence: the problem of the young people and the mistrust between communities.

The simple awareness has its limits, when it is not associated with the opening of future opportunities for these young people. This corroborates the findings of the evaluation of past SFCG projects in the region. As part of the final evaluation of the *Guinean Young People and Leaders of Nonviolence* project, it was apparent that "a very large proportion of young people affected by the messages of awareness on non -violence and peace-building effect still remain idle in most of the cities targeted by the project."³⁵

Thus, having to develop and carry out a joint project, young people from different ethnic communities will be brought together to find common ground. It will be important to support these structures by strengthening the capacity of the young people to become their real engines and ensuring sustainability. Moreover, the success of such projects serves as the future model for other young people in these communities.

However, the tearing of the social tissue associated with the conflict affects all populations of Guinée Forestière, and the all communities. Thus, in parallel with efforts to strengthen the interaction and mutual assistance between warring communities, it is important to create a culture of peace within the society. The idea is to change the negative perception that individuals have of each other through the development of cultural, educational and media content to promote peaceful coexistence.

In order for prevention to be sustainable in the long term it will be necessary to:

- Build peace around common interests and projects to all communities in the region;
- Introduce the idea that it is better to fight together than fighting each other, and therefore the future of the region depends on the efforts of all;

³⁵ Rapport d'évaluation finale du projet 'Jeunes de Guinée, Acteurs de la non-violence', Search for Common Ground Guinée, Décembre 2011, p. 9

- Establish a common narrative to all communities in the region so that people can stop seeing themselves as "others ", enemies, but rather see themselves as neighbors with whom they can collaborate;
- Ensure that the common narrative sought is not jeopardized by the incendiary rumors by educating members of the media on the social responsibility of the journalist, the importance of impartial information processing and management rumors in conflict;
- Focus on the common history and past successes of the warring communities, especially involving the wise and opinion leaders.

"We must avoid splits in terms of organizations: if you choose to work together with someone, go forward with a common goal without regard to ethnicity. Everyone should be involved and speak the same language. "

General Director of the Regional Hospital of N'Zérékoré

"There is no need to invent another pact: we need to remember and respect the foundation of the old covenants. "

Chief of Staff of the Civil Administration in the Governorate of Guinée Forestière

4.3 Priority Intervention Zones

In most urban centers, it will be essential to decentralize activities to the sub-prefectures, rural development communities and villages if it happened that their inhabitants are the central actors in the recurring conflicts and are often neglected during training and awareness.

As priority intervention areas, it will be important to target:

- Rural communes of Samoé, Gouécké, Bounouma et Koulé
- Districts Kéréma, Zao and Comou
- Neighborhoods of the urban commune of N'Zérékoré: Gbanghana, Nakoyapala, Dorota, Angola, Jamaica Horaya, Bellevue, NyenSokoura, Boma, Horoya, Mohomou and Kpama II.

These areas of intervention are subject to change according to the recommendations of our local partners.



Image 7 Members of the Guerzés and Konianké communities during an exchange session in Koulé.

5. Annexes

5.1. Detailed analysis of the 5W matrix

1. What are the conflicts?

- a. What are the primary and secondary conflicts based on?
- b. What is the nature of the conflict? Is it primarily a political, social, economic, cultural or ideological conflict? (Remember to include the ethnic dimension here)
- c. What are the political, social, cultural, economic and ideological dimensions of the conflict?
- d. What is the history of the conflict and how has it evolved until today?
- e. e .What are the main lines of social divide? Which ones are more likely to become violent conflict?

2. Who is involved?

- a. Who are the main parties involved in the conflict? (Groups? institutions? individuals?)
What are their positions and their fundamental interests?
- b. Who are those who put peace at risk? Who are those who contribute to peacekeeping?
What influence do they each have on the system?
- c. What are the power relations between these groups?
- d. What are the strategies and tactics of each of these groups?
- e. Who, within each of the groups in conflict is a natural "common grounder" with whom we could work together?

3. How does the conflict manifest itself? Under what forms can we identify the conflict?

- a. What are the effects of the conflict?
- b. What are the excuses used by the parties?
- c. What is the level of violence and how is the violence used strategically?
- d. What are the triggers of violence? What elements are the peacemakers?
- e. How are the conflicting groups pursuing their goals?
- f. What information is circulating on the conflict? How is this information circulating?
- g. What is the perception of conflicting groups on the matter? How is this perception formed?
- h. What are the main reasons / stories that exist about the conflict? These explanations / stories are they compatible or contradictory? How are these explanations / stories formed? Can we change them?

4. Why is this conflict happening? What are the causes of the conflict?

- a. What are the root causes of conflict?
- b. What are the key factors that contribute to conflict?

- c. How these key factors are related to one another? Which are the most influential? Which can you change? What are the dynamics between the various causes of the conflict? What are the strong links or not between these causes?
- d. What are the contextual dynamics that create an environment conducive to the emergence of violent conflict environment?
- e. What are the prevailing attitudes within the population that create conditions conducive to the conflicts?

5. What minor changes can we generate in order to obtain a major change? How can we develop a theory of change in this context?

- a. What are the opportunities to build / strengthen peace?
- b. What change in the system of the conflict we want to cause?
- c. What short-term changes may be the most important long-term effect on the system of the conflict?
- d. Who are the parties involved in the conflict with which we should work with to achieve this change?
- e. What tools would be most effective?
- f. What process should be adopted?
- g. How this process would complement the work done by others in the field? And in what would there be any overlaps?

5.2. Discussion Guides for individual interviews and focus groups

DISCUSSION GUIDE 1			
Local Authorities			
Name of the investigator :			
Date :			
SIGNALETIQUE			
Status of the survey		Name of the survey	
Conflicts			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the main conflicts in Guinée Forestière today? 2. Who are the main actors of these conflicts? 3. How is the conflict manifested? How can it be identified? 4. What are the consequences of the conflict on the social tissue? 5. Why is the conflict happening? What are the main causes? 6. What are the emergencies today? In what field should we intervene first? 			
Resolution of Conflicts			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. What are the tools used by the local authorities to date? 8. What are the possible solutions that you can identify? 9. How can our organization help in the restoration of a peaceful environment? 10. What are the main actors involved in the resolution of conflicts in Guinée Forestière? 11. What are the priorities of the local authorities in the field of the conflicts resolution? 			

DISCUSSION GUIDE 2			
Stakeholders des OI, OSC, OING			
Name of the investigator :			
Date :			
SIGNALETIQUE			
Status of the person interviewed :		Name of the person interviewed:	
Conflicts			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who are the main actors of these conflicts? 2. How is the conflict manifested? How can it be identified? 3. What are the consequences of the conflict on the social tissue? 4. Why the conflict is occurring? What are the main causes of the conflict? 5. What are the emergencies today? In what field should we intervene first?? 			
Conflicts Resolution			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. What are the possible solutions you can identify? 7. Who are the main actors involved in the conflict resolution in Guinée Forestière? 8. What are the programs of your organization in the resolution of conflicts? 9. What of conflict resolution mechanism local/foreign your program strengthen? 10. What role have you given to the youth and to the women in your programs? 11. What are the lessons from your experiences? What good practices were you able to identify? 			

DISCUSSION GUIDE 3			
Members of the ethnic communities			
Name of the investigator			
Date :			
SIGNALETIQUE			
Status of the person interviewed:		Name of the person interviewed :	
Conflicts			
<p>12. What are the main conflicts in Guinée Forestière today?</p> <p>13. How is the conflict manifested? Under what forms can it be identified?</p> <p>14. Who are the main actors in these conflicts?</p> <p>15. Is your group involved in conflicts? If yes, why?</p> <p>16. What are the effects of the conflicts on your ethnic group?</p> <p>17. What are the consequences of the conflict on the social tissue?</p> <p>18. Why is the conflict happening? What are the main causes?</p> <p>19. What are emergencies today? In what field should we intervene first ?</p>			
Conflict Resolution			
<p>21.What possible solutions can you identify?</p> <p>22.Who are the principal actors involved in conflict resolution in Guinée Forestière?</p> <p>23.What conflicts resolution mechanisms are used?</p> <p>24.What did you learn from the conflicts in the past 10 years?</p> <p>25.What did you learn from your experience? What good practices were you able to identify?</p>			

DISCUSSION GUIDE 4			
Internal displaced and refugees / Other communities			
Name of the investigator :			
Date :			
SIGNALETIQUE			
Status of the person interviewed:		Name of the person interviewed :	
Conflicts			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How is the conflict manifested? On what form can it be identified? 2. What are the consequences of the conflicts on the social tissue? 3. Why the conflict is happening? What are the main causes of the conflict? 4. Who are the main actors if the conflicts? 5. Do refugees play a role in these conflicts? 6. What are the effects of the conflicts on you as a refugee/internally displaced? 7. What are the emergencies today? In what field should we intervene first? 			
Conflicts resolution			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Who are the main actors involved in conflict resolution in Forest Guinea? 9. What mechanisms of conflict resolution are used? 10. What possible solutions can you identify? 11. What have you learned about conflicts over the last decade? 			

DISCUSSION GUIDE 5			
Traditional Leaders and Religious / Elders			
Name of the investigator :			
Date :			
SIGNALETIQUE			
Status of the person interviewed :		Name of the person interviewed :	
Conflicts			
<p>27. What are the principal conflicts in Guinée Forestière today?</p> <p>28. Who are the main actors of the conflicts?</p> <p>29. How is the conflict manifested? Under what form can it be identified?</p> <p>30. What are the consequences of the conflict on the social tissue?</p> <p>31. Why does the conflict happen? What are the main causes of the conflict?</p> <p>32. What are the emergencies today? In What field should we intervene first?</p>			
Conflicts Resolution			
<p>33.What are the possible solutions can you identify?</p> <p>34.What are the main actors involved in conflict resolution in Guinée Forestière?</p> <p>35.What is your role in the resolution of conflicts?</p> <p>36.What conflicts of conflict resolution are you using?</p> <p>37.How can an organization like us help in the restoration of a peaceful environment?</p>			

DISCUSSION GUIDE 6			
Women			
Name of the investigator			
Date :			
SIGNALETIQUE			
Status of the person interviewed :		Name of the person interviewed :	
Conflicts			
39. What are the main conflicts in Guinée Forestière today? 40. Who are the main actors of these conflicts? 41. How is the conflict manifested? How can it be identified? 42. What are the consequences of the conflict on the social tissue? 43. Why is the conflict happening? What are the main causes? 44. What are the emergencies today? In what field should we intervene first?			
Conflict Resolution			
45.What are the possible solutions can you identify? 46.What are the main actors involved in conflict resolution in Guinée Forestière? 47.What is your role in the resolution of conflicts? 48.What conflicts of conflict resolution are you using? 49.How can an organization like us help in the restoration of a peaceful environment?			

GUIDE DE DISCUSSION 7			
The Youth			
Name of the investigator			
Date :			
SIGNALETIQUE			
Status of the person interviewed:		Name of the person interviewed :	
Conflicts			
50. What are the principal conflicts in Guinée Forestière today? 51. Who are the main actors of the conflicts? 52. How is the conflict manifested? Under what form can it be identified? 53. What are the consequences of the conflict on the social tissue? 54. Why does the conflict happen? What are the main causes of the conflict? What are the emergencies today? In What field should we intervene first?			
Conflict Resolution			
55.What are the possible solutions can you identify? 56.What are the main actors involved in conflict resolution in Guinée Forestière? 57.What is your role in the resolution of conflicts? 58.What conflicts of conflict resolution are you using? 59.How can an organization like us help in the restoration of a peaceful environment?			

5.3. List of the Interviews conducted for the analysis

Date	Location	Person interviewed
04 / 09	Macenta	Akoï Sovogui, Local Representative of RENACOT
05 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Guemou Ernesto, Young, Responsible of the group <i>Messageur des Enfants</i> in the neighborhood of Bellevue
05 / 09	Lola	Mayor of Lola
05 / 09	Mont Nimba	Direction of the mining company Iron Mining Company of Guinea
06 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Personnel of the rural radio of Guinée Forestière, Along with the Head of Programming in the framework of the training prov the social responsibility of a journalist in the time of conflict
06 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Abdoulaye Djomandé, Vice-President du Office of the Youth of Konia
06 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Grégoire Bamy, General Secretary of Coordination of the Manon Community
06 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Head of programming of the rural radio rurale of Guinée Forestière
06 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Adjudant Pappus Mamy
06 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Django Chérif, Director of the Prefecture of the youth of N'Zérékoré
06 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Gedeon Behiguim, UNDP
07 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Regional Coordination of Motorcycle Taxi Simon Pierre Camah, Regional President of the Union of Motorcycle taxi (11 attendees)
07 / 09	N'Zérékoré	M. Kouloumou, Chief of the district of Horoyah 2 and Woo Alfred, Opinion leader
07 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Focus Groups with 11 people, including 2 girls, in the neighborhood of Belle Guerzés, 4 Konias, 2 Peuls, 1 Soussou
08 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Excahnge Session d'échange with the women of the Konia community 81 femmes present
08 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Regional Directo of the Konianke youth of N'Zerekore
09 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Dr. Youla, General Director of the Regional Hospital of de N'zérékoré
09 / 09	N'Zérékoré	2 young Konias who fought in the neighborhood of Bellevue
10 / 09	N'Zérékoré	M. Barry, unemployed
10 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Chief of Staff of the Civil Administration of GOvernate of Guinee Forestière
10 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Sages of the Guerze community
10 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Mayor of N'zérékoré
10 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Prefect of N'zérékoré
10 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Director of radio Liberté FM
11 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Focus Group with the young partners of the project SFCG <i>Jeunes de Guinée Acteurs de la Non-Violence</i>
11 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Sages of Community of Konianké
11 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Imam of the Grand Mosque of N'Zérékoré
11 / 09	N'Zérékoré	Abbot Simon Patrice, Secretary to the Bishop of N'Zérékoré, and Project M at the Catholic Organization for Human Promotion (COHP)

11/ 09	Koulé	Sub-Prefect of Koulé
11/ 09	Koulé	Alain, Koulemo, President of the Commission for Peace and Reconciliation Koule
11/ 09	Koulé	Exchange Session with the population of Koulé, about 60 people, mostly men between 20 et 60 years old / 10 girls and women Authorities and elders were present 2 group ethnic present,/ 2 languages used
11/ 09	Koulé	Mayor of Koulé