

**The Canadian Supplementary
Stabilization Mission in the
Democratic Republic of
Congo**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On March 14, 2018, DRC Prime Minister Bruno Tshibala confirmed elections would occur in December 2018, and current President Kabila would not be running, in order to introduce a free and fair electoral process.¹ However, President Kabila is set to name a successor candidate in July 2018. Global Affairs Canada (GAC) has been chosen to lead a pilot project to assist in the prevention and mitigation of further destructive conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The pilot project has been titled the Canadian Supplementary Stabilization Mission in the DRC (CSSM) and is designed to help facilitate the next free and fair elections in the DRC. GAC is committed to work with various partner organizations (i.e., CANADEM) and local actors (i.e., the Catholic Church) to facilitate track-two mediation with relevant stakeholders through CSSM. CSSM will support a democratic transition of power while leveraging the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to reduce the likelihood and incidence of political violence in the country.² The pre-project risk assessment has identified favorable conditions in the DRC for CSSM, including existing security and humanitarian support. Indeed, according to the DRC diagnostic, the best-case scenario conditions are largely currently in place, with the Kabila government signaling interest in promoting a fair democratic process. However, there are certain obstacles potentially preventing aspects of CSSM's success, including the presence of armed insurgents and the polarization of political parties. This presents the need and opportunity for the democratic facilitation gap to be filled by CSSM. Foreseeable operational limitations include the retraction of funding for the elections' process from key international partners such as the European Union and the escalation of political violence during the elections. Perceived impacts of CSSM have been divided into immediate impacts such as increased voter participation and the completion of the DRC's electoral cycle. First and foremost, CSSM's long-term goal— and predicted impact— will be to increase the overall level of democratization in the DRC, which has been historically low and is considered a very high-risk conflict indicator. Other long-term results include future sustainable free and fair elections in the DRC and increased female political participation.

TIMELINE

APRIL 2018-DEC
2018

Prevent political violence, facilitate mediation between key parties (Kabila, opposition parties, Catholic Church), and ensure presidential elections run relatively smoothly in December 2018 with support from CANADEM.

JAN 2019-FEB
2020

Conduct post presidential elections monitoring and ensure a peaceful transition to power with the support of IDEA. Support and monitor the subsequent legislative, regional, and local elections.

FEB 2020-DEC
2020

Ensure peaceful and democratic transition to power in all elections (regional, legislative, and local). Continue to monitor the political landscape in the DRC to determine whether project had sustainable impact.

PRE-CSSM RISK ASSESSMENT

CSSM's goal is to provide electoral support alongside MONUSCO to ensure a free and fair election process within the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). To accomplish this, CSSM will engage with several stakeholders, both to help facilitate election monitoring and provide logistical support for the election process, ensuring that all parties involved view the upcoming election as credible. Some stakeholders will be addressed using two-track mediation, to ensure cooperation with CSSM's goals.

MONUSCO

The United Nations has historically provided security and humanitarian support to the DRC during electoral processes in the past through its peacekeeping operations. MONUSCO, or, the United Nations Mission for Stabilization in the DR Congo, has specifically committed to provide “technical and logistical support” to the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) to support voter registration.³ In recent years, MONUSCO has extended its mandate to focus on providing military support against militias, with changes in 2014 providing both military and police personnel.⁴

Part of CSSM’s niche operations is allowing MONUSCO to maintain support over elections processes, by sending specialists focused on election logistics and monitoring. A recently released report provided by the Country Indicators for Foreign Policy outlines that a credible, free, and fair election process predicates the international community providing further financial support to the DRC, provided a peaceful transition of power and reduction of violence.⁵ To fully accomplish the best-case scenario, facilitating a free and fair election process is critical for CSSM’s future goals to be realized. Due to the potential for armed groups to deter voters or incite violence, support from MONUSCO to provide security will be essential for CSSM to succeed.

President Kabila & the PPRD Government

Although much controversy has taken place regarding President Joseph Kabila’s delay of the presidential election, Kabila has recently stated that he does not intend to run for president in the upcoming election.⁶ Due to corruption across the political landscape, the DRC has severely weak political institutions.⁷ In addition, local elections which are set to be completed between 2019-2020, have not taken place in the DRC. The lack of familiarity surrounding local elections processes will necessitate increased support from CSSM alongside presidential, regional, and legislative elections.⁸ Kabila plans to name his successor candidate in July of this year, who will presumably run representing the PPRD party.⁹ However, Congolese security forces have been implicated in violence against peaceful protests urging Kabila to step down.¹⁰ This has caused increasing tensions between the Kabila government and opposition groups.

As part of its goals, CSSM must ensure that government security forces will not interfere with the election process, since security forces have been used against civilians participating in anti-government protests. Bringing an end to political repression by the state would be a critical step to ensure credibility of the PPRD and facilitate voter participation. However, CSSM is aware of the often-supportive nature of the government-military relationship, and with MONUSCO, will monitor any remaining pro-Kabila security personnel, preventing the Congolese military from acting as a potential spoiler.

Opposition Parties/Le Rassemblement

The opposition parties have been fractured, although several key parties have aligned under a single banner, framing themselves as the best alternative to the Kabila regime. Although the numerous opposition parties have had difficulties uniting against Kabila historically, opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi was able to capture around a third of the vote in the 2011 election. The fact that Le Rassemblement was able to gain significant support makes the party a viable political participant in the upcoming election.¹¹

Because CSSM involves facilitating a free and fair political process, support from a significant segment of the opposition, namely Le Rassemblement, is critical for CSSM to succeed. Opposition parties that do not intend to participate may act as spoilers by calling on citizens to abandon the political process, which may rig the vote unfairly towards one party or another. CSSM can incentivize providing support to the political process by outlining how a free and fair electoral process can demonstrate state security and generate confidence in the DRC among potential international donors.

Catholic Church in the DRC

The Catholic Church in the DRC has served to fill many gaps left by state services among the Congolese people, and had led peaceful protests against President Kabila. Due to being targeted by Congolese security forces in response to their peaceful protests, the Catholic Church in the region has taken a severe anti-government stance.¹² The Catholic Church acted as a mediator for the DRC’s previous discussions on

election timelines through 2016-17 and have been putting significant pressure on the government to bring about free, fair and timely elections.¹³

Due to the role they play among the voting population, the Catholic Church may either act as a powerful supporter or a major spoiler for CSSM's goals. The DRC's population is 50 percent Catholic, and the church has mobilized protests taking place against the state, due to the fractured nature of the opposition.¹⁴¹⁵ CSSM should work to achieve support from the Catholic Church as their ability to mobilize the voting population would be an asset. However, if CSSM alienates the Catholic Church, they may compromise CSSM's goals significantly. Great care would need to be taken when including the Church as a potential stakeholder alongside the PPRD. Outside mediation may prove useful when approaching the Catholic Church and other groups within the voting public during track-two mediations, as previous unsuccessful mediations led by the Church in part caused their anti-government stance.¹⁶ Outlining how CSSM's focus on electoral fairness can bring about international humanitarian support may provide incentive for these groups to cooperate.

Armed Insurgents

Opposition-aligned insurgents and Mai-Mai militias based in the east may act as potential spoilers for CSSM. Formed initially to resist against Rwandan influence, local militias within the DRC have shifted their focus towards the Kabila regime. MONUSCO has worked to repel attacks taking place in the eastern part of the country, where many of these militias are located.¹⁷ Canada has historically provided military support to MONUSCO through Operation CROCODILE, with its goal being the protection of civilians and working with both local and international actors to bring about justice and security to the people.¹⁸

Militias and rogue opposition elements pose the largest threat to the electoral process. Violence against citizens will deter political participation in the already conflict-laden eastern part of the country, which can further lead to adverse effects such as a lack of representation and manipulated political outcomes. Providing a security guarantee to politically active civilians would be recommended to promote increased voter participation. This may be achieved through partnership with MONUSCO, potentially posting security forces at voting stations, or otherwise taking proactive security measures for citizens.

Potential Contingencies

- **Election Rigging:** Efforts to combat potential election rigging have been undertaken since the previous elections in 2011. CENI registered 46 million voters as of January 2018 despite the fact there is no official census in the DRC.¹⁹²⁰ The United States and other international actors have also discouraged the use of electronic voting machines, on the basis that there is a risk of voter manipulation.²¹ However, CSSM through CANADEM can provide the CENI with logistical support in relation to the monitoring of the upcoming election and for voter registration.
- **Militarization/Political Repression:** Increased militarization of both government security forces and anti-government militias have posed a problem historically for the political process in the DRC. Discussion can be held with National Defense regarding security concerns in the DRC, as a reduction of violence is critical in allowing free and fair voting to take place. As a result, the provision of security forces to the DRC may be a possibility alongside CSSM's primary goals.

OPERATIONAL DECISIONS/ POTENTIAL PROBLEMS & MONITORING DURING CSSM

CENI and Resources

With the electoral calendar shortened to have CENI hold elections approximately 300 days after voter registration, CENI may abruptly run out of resources close to the December 2018 presidential elections.²² The international community including the United States and European Union, continues to place pressure on CENI to hold free and fair elections and have made resources contingent on this issue.²³ There is a risk that CENI may make further promises to international partners that it ultimately cannot fulfill. Although CSSM intends to offer logistical support to CENI, they may not be able to prevent CENI from making further promises to shorten the deadline. This could further reduce public faith in the credibility of the December 2018 elections, particularly if there is no independent oversight/audit over voter registration.

Ballots

According to reports, “there may be as many as 28,000 candidates” participating in the 2018 elections in the DRC.²⁴ While certain conditions to the candidacy process have been implemented by CENI through the Kabila regime in December 2017, there still may be a substantial number of candidates.²⁵ CENI may not have the capacity to print and disseminate close to 45 million ballots to the 126,000 polling stations in the DRC. If the United Nations does not provide the same aerial support to distribute these ballots as it had in the 2006 elections, the ballots may not make it to the polling stations. Similarly, combating negative perceptions of CENI among stakeholders may prove difficult. Opposition parties and activist groups in the DRC have expressed skepticism of CENI’s capacity to hold credible elections. In addition, these groups have already called for protests against CENI as a perceived tool of the Kabila regime.²⁶

Local Elections

Historically, there have been occasions where local elections did not take place, due to unwillingness to engage in the logistics and technical planning required following the presidential elections.²⁷ Additionally, there may be a shortage of candidates in the local elections due to skepticism surrounding local elections and Kabila supporters may gain local power by default. Outreach to stakeholders that have power in local communities, such as the Catholic Church, is critical to achieve greater voter participation.

Political Violence

Security forces, armed groups, and insurgencies have historically had detrimental impact on the safety and security of Congolese citizens.²⁸ The security forces which are loyal to and controlled by the Kabila regime are responsible for the mass arbitrary arrests and killings of protesters.²⁹ The security forces could continue to orchestrate violence in the lead up to the election and during the elections to prevent citizens from voting. Moreover, the Kabila regime could sanction security forces to harass opposition parties during the elections. This could lead to a reduction of international goodwill towards the DRC, such as on the part of the EU.³⁰

Post-elections, CSSM intends to engage the IDEA organisation to support constitutional reform and a peaceful transition of power. However, if IDEA’s guidance is rejected by Kabila and his supporters or other parties such as armed insurgencies, CSSM’s long-term objectives may be in jeopardy. Without the support of an organization which has valuable knowledge for transitioning governments, the next executive government may take a trial and error approach that may not be conducive for a stable political environment.

The Kasai region in the southwest is viewed as a hotspot for political violence, and by security forces as an “opposition stronghold” which could lead to increasing crackdowns by security forces in Kasai.³¹ Security forces could also set up arbitrary unofficial checkpoints near polling stations throughout Kasai and elsewhere in the DRC that may force citizens to pay bribes to pass, turn away citizens who come to the polling stations, and deter them from voting at these stations. Violence by armed militias can also contribute to further political instability during elections. These groups have frequently targeted MONUSCO personnel, which could lead to a further reduction of personnel responsible for preventing the escalation of violence during the elections.³² Following December 2017 attacks on MONUSCO peace keepers, there are reports of an inquiry on the incident, and a subsequent reformation of the mission to “ensure its ability to protect civilians.”³³ This reformation could lead to an increase or decrease of MONUSCO personnel and limit the mission’s activities in the DRC including peacekeeping. Without MONUSCO support through its police and military components, political violence in the DRC could go largely unabated.

Dissemination of Information

The Telecom Ministry has recently ordered a national shutdown of internet and SMS services to deter anti-government rallies. The Telecom Ministry could be used during the elections to prevent citizens from voting by cutting off information to polling stations or candidates’ platforms online. Furthermore, it could prevent the operation of peaceful rallies in support of presidential candidates which are often used to garner further support for the candidates.³⁴ Conversely, citizens could be the target of misinformation campaigns run by state or non-state actors such as Kabila supporters or armed groups. Social media platforms could be inundated with false stories surrounding corrupt candidates and directions to phony polling stations which

could undermine the DRC's free and fair elections. Organizations like the UN Volunteers which specialize in civic education, may find it difficult to reach target voting groups who do have access to social media and who may believe the "fake news". Additionally, if information is correct in that certain candidates or the entire electoral process has been corrupted, citizens may engage in a mass protest during the elections that could turn violent.

POST PROJECT IMPACT

Immediate Impact: This project's immediate impact will be centered on the upcoming elections and their success. Firstly, because this project will target the ongoing violence in the DRC, an immediate effect would be the stabilization of, and eventual decrease in, the levels of violence leading up to the elections. This will enable elections on the presidential, legislative, regional and local level to occur without increased risk to citizens exercising their right to vote. Another immediate impact will be on voter participation. Due to the program promoting civic duty and political participation, an immediate impact would be high rates of voter participation in all levels of the upcoming election through the mobilization of relevant stakeholders, such as political parties and the Catholic Church. Further, in promoting civic duty and electoral participation, a sub-impact would be increased levels of awareness and widespread knowledge of the candidates, as well as increased knowledge in voting practicalities. Finally, due to the program's partnership and work with the NGO "Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security,"³⁵ the program will have an impact on female political participation, mainly in the form of voting in all available levels of elections.

Long-term Impact: The long-term impacts of our program will be centered on greater institutional and structural reforms. Our continued work—beyond the elections itself—with existing NGOs, local organisations, and UN organisers, will be to create lasting changes in civic education, women's voting and political participation, as well as a decrease in politically-based violence over time. Four years after the conclusion of the project, the goal is to observe regular free and fair, and genuine elections, mitigated electoral violence, and increased rates of women running for and occupying political office and exercising their right to vote; with the goal to develop a firm electoral infrastructure to grant international credibility to the DRC. Based on the best-case scenario, the goal of CSSM's election oversight is that international donors will respond to a credible election and be willing to provide greater humanitarian support to the people of the DRC.

Areas of Impact: Overall, this project hopes to target the conflict risk indicator of democratisation in the DRC, which is currently categorised to be at a level of very high risk.³⁶ In both the long-term and short-term, our project will impact election-related activities in different capacities, including: election-related violence, women's voting and election participation, civic education, and practical matters concerning the machinery of elections themselves. The indicators used to measure the impacts of our project will come from two sources; we will rely primarily on results, observations, and reports by partner organisations, such as CANADEM,³⁷ MONUSCO,³⁸ AU,³⁹ Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security NGO,⁴⁰ and UN Volunteers.⁴¹ Our secondary source of information will come from external reports, such as the Freedom House freedom rating (with emphasis on the ranking for political freedom),⁴² Center for Systemic Peace,⁴³ and World Bank governance indicators.⁴⁴ While not directly reporting on results pertaining to our program impact, combined with the localised reports from existing partner organisations, this will provide a larger context on the direction and amount of progress that the DRC is making in relation to our specific project. On a statistical level, data pertaining to number of voters and voter participation sorted by gender will also be used to measure the impact of the project.

In distinguishing our project's impact from other concurrent missions and processes, it is important to note that the project will have limited overlap with other existing organisations. As the current significant external actors are concentrating on military-led violence prevention, the impacts of our project—which will be centered on coordinating with internal and external NGO's—will be distinguishable from those of existing organisations.

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