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## EDITORIAL

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## The Relevance and Urgency of our Task

Our mission is to contribute to non-violent conflict resolution and find solutions to the problems generated by corruption, social injustice, war and crime. We are not short of work.

Fraud and malpractice in banks and governments through immoral, yet legal, practices have left millions of families out of work and homeless. Acts of terrorism by fanatical groups claim innocent, civilian lives even in the world's safest countries. Security and defence are still rooted in barbaric and destructive methods. In some countries crime is legalized. Over 20% of world trade is linked to criminal activity. There is widespread money laundering, human trafficking and arms trade across borders. Dozens of wars are raging and there are hundreds of conflicts over sovereignty issues.

Furthermore, there is forced prostitution and child sex trafficking, genital mutilation, the slave trade, anti-democratic practices in certain political systems, the destruction of the environment and natural habitats, illegal expropriation of land and evictions that flout the law.

The *Journal of Conflictology* provides scientific solutions to transform security and defence policies, replacing the use of force with scientific knowledge to deal with conflict, hate and violence. We search for solutions and promote research for pragmatic and ethical responses to the problems of today. Thanks to the contributions of the people who collaborate with us, this knowledge can make our world a much better place, truly safer, freer and more just.

**Eduard Vinyamata**  
**Director**

**Journal of Conflictology / School for Cooperation**  
**CREC / Campus for Peace (UOC)**

## ARTICLE



# Rethinking Peace Education\*

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## Abstract

This article discusses peace education in terms of its content and communication form in relation to its context. Content and form involve major choices which are decisive in defining the substance of any education practice, including education for peace, and the implicit or explicit choices made are related to the differing conceptions of peace education.



## Keywords

peace education, participation, communication, transformative processes

## INTRODUCTION

This article discusses peace education in terms of its content and communication form in relation to its context. Content and form involve major choices which are decisive in defining the substance of any education practice, including education for peace, and the implicit or explicit choices made are related to the differing conceptions of peace education.

Historically, there are differing opinions on which principles should guide the selection of content and which should guide the selection of learning and teaching methods in peace education. The principles of content selection and form preferences are discussed separately then in relation to each other and in context. It is important to keep in mind that peace education is not limited to formal systems but can also be provided in the setting of voluntary organizations and more informally in the home. Some of these contexts exclude the possibility of selecting certain contents and forms. As a result, content and form are highly related and may be quite different in these three contexts.

It seems obvious that participatory peace education as discussed here assumes some fundamental rights and guarantees: democratic contextual conditions must prevail to ensure that peace education occurs and has a role in creating social change. Linking content, form and context will be discussed as an integral process to establish adequate learning conditions that can lead to social transformation.

## 1. SEARCHING FOR CONTENT IN PEACE EDUCATION

It is necessary to define peace in order to discuss the content of peace education. The following three approaches to defining the concept help understand the principles guiding its selection. First, peace is seen in terms of what it is and what it is not. It is seen as the opposite of violence and three forms of violence are discussed, direct, structural and cultural. Secondly, peace is discussed as realities ranging from the individual to the global – that

\* This is a revised, shortened version of a chapter published in the *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, edited by Charles Webel and Johan Galtung. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 2007.



is, in terms of close, intermediate and distant realities as seen from the perspective of the individual. Thirdly, it is considered as a relatively permanent state, with peace values enhanced and as a process of interaction within structures which might be more or less peaceful, or violent.

#### a) Content related to negative and positive peace

There is a long history of understanding peace as the absence of war or any other form of organized physical violence, which is the predominant definition and is incorporated into scientific definitions. Negative peace seems easy to exemplify and define. Negative peace certainly applies to cases where there is an absence of war between nations or civil war within a nation.

Positive peace is when social justice has replaced structural violence. In contrast to negative peace, positive peace is not limited to the idea of getting rid of something, but includes establishing something that is missing. Besides getting rid of structural violence or social injustice, positive peace implies the presence of social justice. Galtung has defined structural violence as the distance between 'the actual' and 'the potential'. This definition allows for many interpretations based on varying opinions about what is actual and potential. It is important to recognize the subjective understandings of present and future realities in peace education content.

Scientific research helps to transcend subjective opinion about what 'is' (in existence) and what 'could be' (potential). The scientific monitoring of human society produces systematic studies of the quality of life in any given society, and a large body of research constitutes our knowledge of 'the actual'. In contrast to the major emphasis in social science on problems of the actual, our knowledge of the potential is less extensive. Questions about what 'could be' have not been dealt with in social science to the same degree as those about what is actually in existence.

This first approach in searching for the content of peace education indicates the importance of understanding human suffering as a consequence of both direct and structural violence. It is apparent that both types often produce the same results in terms of death and human suffering. In a sense, one might argue that direct violence is worse than structural violence because in the latter it is not so clear which actors are involved - they do not have the same visibility and clear exposition. But there is no doubt - structural violence is the worst as it is, in most cases, the real cause of the direct one.

Questions can also be posed about the relationship between direct and structural violence and how they reinforce each other.

The study of violence is an important aspect of peace education content. If pedagogy fails to deal with the issue of violence, education will only serve to legitimize it and make it difficult to develop an understanding of its causes. This includes the possibility of the study of violence being excluded due to pedagogical preferences, an example of cultural violence. This is a third type of violence especially relevant to education which itself could be considered violent if it helped legitimize direct and structural violence. To varying degrees, all cultural agents in a society, including education, may choose to expose issues of peace and violence (religious institutions, mass media, universities, schools etc).

#### b) Micro and macro level content

In discussing the concept of peace in the search for the content of peace education, the following figure gives a view of close, intermediate and distant realities in terms of space and time.

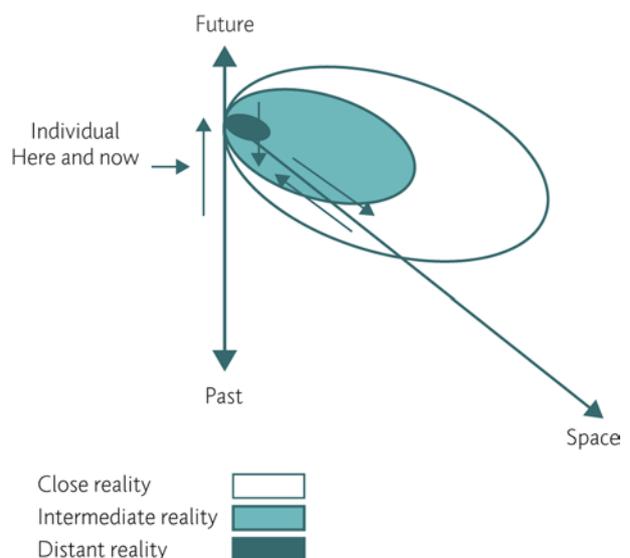


Figure 1. Relationships in time and space (Haavelsrud, 1996, p. 55)

The time axis is vertical and the space axis turns to its right. Their crossing point

(see dark spot in Figure 1) illustrates the "here and now context". This context is constantly changing as time progresses and as situations outside the "here and now" develop. The figure thus puts each individual in the center of time and space.

Time can be visualized in terms of past, present and future. The limits of the present may be drawn for individuals in reference to events such as change of location (e.g. going from home to school), change of activity (e.g. in the

1 Galtung (1999), *Peace by Peaceful Means*.



morning, from sleeping to eating breakfast) or change of social context (e.g. a guest arrives or leaves). The 'present' may also be a moment of *kairos*<sup>1</sup> in which a few moments may seem like an eternity (e.g. waiting to get out of a catastrophic situation or a moment of deep love).

Departing from such "now" contexts the time axis stretches towards the past as well as the future. In figure 1, three points in both directions are indicated to illustrate that time can be seen in terms of its distance to each individual, viz. close, intermediate and distant. The two arrows along the time axis illustrate causality over time. The arrow pointing upwards illustrates that the context at one time will influence the context at a later time. The arrow pointing downwards illustrates the idea behind the self-fulfilling prophecy: expectations, aspirations, hopes and visions of the future influence human behavior at earlier time points (e.g. visions of the future influence our present tactics or strategies for transforming the present towards our visions).

The extreme left is the position of the individual, and the arrow pointing to the right signifies indefinite space in physical terms. As human life is limited to our planet, the crossing point of the outer circle and the space axis points out the physical limits for global society.

The arrow pointing to the left along the space axis, illustrates the influence of society upon individuals living in it. The arrow pointing to the right along the space axis illustrates the fact that society is a human product. Thus, the figure points out that there is a dialectical relationship between world society and each individual.

Space can be measured in physical terms (e.g. meters and kilometers) but also in terms of societal dimensions, such as social, cultural, economic and political realities. As we know, there is a great variation in these realities from context to context. The specific realities of each individual are closely interwoven while being and distantly separated from others. Although dissimilarity between everyday contexts seems to increase as a function of physical distance, there is no simple relationship between physical distance and the social, cultural, economic and political characteristics of two or more everyday contexts.

In a single geographical location there may be greater dissimilarities between two contexts than between two contexts in different locations, for example between rich and poor families in large cities such as New York or London compared to rich or poor families in either city.

When time and space are seen together, it becomes apparent that there are possible causal chains reaching each individual from any time in the past and future and from any position along the space axis. In turn, there are possible causal chains departing from each individual to any point in the future. This influence is not restricted to the

individual's own future, but includes the future of society and the world. Thus, the individual can potentially influence the future world as well as any part of it.

As past interactions among individuals, social groups and institutions have created the present society, it seems clear that 'macro' produces 'micro'. This means that every time direct, structural or cultural violence occurs in a specific close reality, it is more than probable that causes of this violence are to be found outside that micro reality.

The roots of the attitudes, opinions and valuations of people at large, in the multitude of micro contexts in everyday life, are a necessary condition for maintaining the characteristics of the macro society.

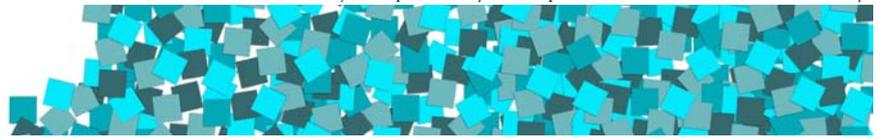
The content of peace education may be found in all contexts because violence as a phenomenon is not isolated to a few everyday realities. The specific manifestation of violence (direct, structural and cultural) in the everyday lives of people is therefore part of the content of peace education. But the content stretches to other close realities where the causes of this violence may originate. The links of violence between one close reality and another are to be traced in the search for that content. The concept of peace is relevant to all contexts. If peace was limited to a specific time and place, the relationships between micro and macro as suggested above would not be considered. This might lead to a distorted view of peace, because it is more and more difficult, if not impossible, to find a context which is completely isolated from the rest of the world.

### c) Peace content as structure and process

A third way to select the content of peace education is to see peace as a structure as well as a process. A peace structure is by definition one that has institutionalized values of peace, i.e. absence of violence and presence of social justice, participation and diversity. Just like any building, its basic features would enable certain interactions and make other interactions difficult or impossible.

A structure is taken to mean the presence of relatively permanent relations between specific units.<sup>2</sup> The units can be any social actors ranging from individuals and groups on the micro level to nations and transnational organizations, such as the UN, on the macro level. A structure for peace is a structure that enhances peace values, both those that enhance negative peace (absence of direct violence) as well as those that affirm peace (social justice, participation and cultural diversity). To test whether a specific structure secures peace, an investigation of the interactions among two or more units within the structure is necessary. Looking closer at interactions of this kind, it is possible to identify the extent to which the values of peace are realized over

2 Mathiesen (2001), *Law, Society and Political Action*.



time. If peace values are strengthened we are witnessing a peace process.

Structures established through interactions can be maintained or changed through new interactions. Therefore, a non-peaceful structure can be changed to a peaceful structure through peaceful interactions which can occur within it. If these peaceful interactions are allowed to develop into new patterns, they will eventually become structures of peace within the overall structure of non-peace. At that moment, the new structures may be so powerful that their confrontation with the violent structure may lead to an overall peaceful structure. The opposite, repression of the peaceful structure by the violent structure, might also occur.

History has many examples of such processes. It seems that most interactions based on the value of independence and autonomy during decolonization have led to new structures that were successful in dismantling the status quo. Today, we are witnessing movements for liberation on the part of women, ethnic minorities groups suffering from human rights violations, the working class and the poor, all over the world. Such interactions among various groups are often based on values of peace and begin as interactions among members of these groups beyond the control of those in power. If they are maintained, these interactions involve more and more people, and become structures of peace confronting existing violent structures.

When searching for the content of peace education, it is important to consider peace as both a structure and a process. A peace structure means the presence of relatively permanent relations between structural units that enhance peace values. The idea of 'relative permanence' implies that peace is a state, as opposed to a process. But peace is also the process of interaction between specific units, as long as the interaction is geared to the enhancement of peace values.

## 2. COMMUNICATION FORM IN PEACE EDUCATION

Everyday life may be characterized by habitual behaviors adapting to violent and non-violent conditions. The embodiment of oppressive elements in these behaviors is one factor that sustains the oppression. Cultural preferences in everyday life may support violence and inhibit peace. It is contended here that the cultural background of the learner is an important factor to take into account in any learning process and that the practical subjective preferences manifested in everyday life are where the learning process

should always begin, even if the subject is a violent actor in that context.

The voices of all learners in dialogue are therefore necessary in peace education. These voices blend into a chorus of communications. 'Dialogic learning'<sup>3</sup> is characterized by codification and de-codification processes in which everyday life is discussed in educational interactions. The description of a student's reality is codified by the teacher to give the learner the opportunity to mirror the teacher's model of discussion. If accepted by the learners, the description or theory given by them and codified by the teacher may shed critical light on the initial practice so that it is transformed, based on the insights of the initial discussions.

This transformation from practice to praxis implies that the practical world of everyday life is understood in a theoretical light, arising from the discussions of the participants and accepted as a guide for changes in everyday life. If the codification is not accepted, a new dialogue takes place to gain better insight into everyday life and its possible transformation. In the following figure, the integration of the world of practice and the world of reflection is highlighted.

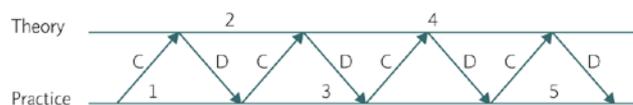


Figure 2. The dialectic between theory and practice

The figure has the form of a large arrow. It illustrates the continuous development of dialectics between theory and practice: it is never static. The numbers illustrate the different phases in this development. Number 1 is the first phase in the dialogic process: the initial meeting of the group and their teacher/facilitator/coordinator is to select the generative theme for continued content development. The teacher uses discussion as material for codification (C), which represents a bridge between the concrete and the abstract.

In the de-codification (D) the more abstract description of the practice or initial theoretical understanding of the practice is tested with reference to the empirical reality that is known to the participant. Further de-codification follows a new phase of codification. C and D are positioned between the lines representing theory and practice. The distance between the processes of codification and de-codification as well as between theory and practice depends on many things, not least of which is how far the participants have progressed in the development of theory starting from their own practice.

3 Freire (1972), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 45-49.



The process of theory development based on social practices – codification – and the return to practice with new knowledge fed by theory – de-codification – to apply to and enrich the new reality in the next turn of codification, led Paulo Freire to define education as a “practice of freedom”: freedom of practices, freedom of thinking and freedom to build interconnections to create new thoughts in a transformative path. And this is how peace education works.

Peace education can also be a process of liberation, in which people – not as recipients but as knowing subjects – achieve a deepening awareness of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality. Hence peace education is a practice of freedom and not domination – also a conscious act, one of choosing rather than of receiving. Education is an act of cognition rather than mere transfer of information.

Peace education is also a dialogical act – rigorous, intuitive, imaginative and emotional. The educational process has to create conditions for horizontal dialogue. Peace education needs dialogical, communicative rationality and the acts of knowing and thinking are directly tied to one another as knowledge requires communicative expression.<sup>4</sup> Dialogue does not exclude conflict. Confronting other visions is necessary to arrive at a common understanding of problems and attempt to build joint solutions. There is no democratic growth in society, no civic learning – therefore no peace learning – without different groups exercising the right to discuss and confront ideas. The right to struggle for dreams and hopes, to interact with others with differing dreams and hopes in a challenging process of ‘crossing borders’ in the individual and collective dimension.<sup>5</sup>

If dialogue is the main form peace education uses to build knowledge and understanding for the creation of content and approach ‘the others’, this dialogue is embedded in participation throughout the process.

Participation is a fundamental right of citizenship, the means by which a democracy is built and a standard against which democracies should be measured. Participation means that all the groups of a society are able and invited to gather, discuss and exchange ideas, not only in policy making but also in planning issues related to their daily lives, needs and hopes. They should be able to plan and decide their learning themes and issues according to their needs and realities, which is to say according to their contextual conditions.

In a way, contextual conditions dictate, and at the same time condition, the themes for analysis, discussion and research. In this process, progressing from ‘silent-voting ob-

jects’ to ‘participative subjects’ is a pre-condition for the development of a democratic society.<sup>6</sup>

So the participative component of the peace learning process is also a practice of freedom itself, and a praxis where reflection and action occur.

### 3. ON CONTENT AND FORM IN PEACE EDUCATION

Peace education is not just concerned about different concepts of *what* you teach but also about *how* you teach and the contextual conditions *within which* you teach. In fact there is a desirable relationship between the content, form and context of the learning process.

If peace education is the pedagogy that has to deal with the goal of change in order to set up an education that does not reproduce the system, it is evident that content and form are linked when considering where those changes have to be made. These changes would produce transformation in the existing contextual conditions. Hence it is highly likely that peace education as an alternative pedagogy will improve the reality.

Content is often selected and taught as an abstract structure with obscure concepts and little contact with daily life and problems. This results in a structure with its own codes for certain people, the only ones able to de-codify the meanings, so that others rely on ‘de-codification experts’ to understand the world, the society, the reality – no matter whether it is near or far.

Peace education content should not start from abstract categories but from people’s needs, captured in their own expressions. The traditional concept of content as the sum of different themes is replaced by the analysis of the micro reality, the selection of problems, their connection with the macro and the emerging dialogue between them. In this learning process, students focus on roots and causes of events and share ideas on possible solutions.

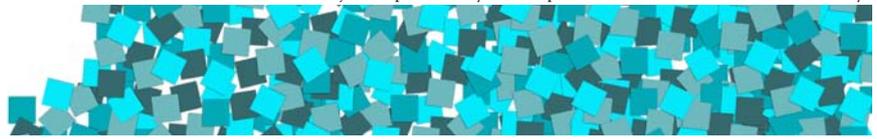
In this process, to know is not to accumulate knowledge, information or data regarding certain themes or problems. To know implies everyday knowledge, taking care of small things and thinking locally and globally in a linked understanding so that the outer world will be part of everyday life as well.<sup>7</sup> There is no division in instructive significance and everyday educative significance. And while people build knowledge through dialogue, other meanings are incorporated such as how we know, how we produce knowledge and how society uses knowledge. Knowing is

4 Morrow and Torres (2004), *Critical Theory and Education: Habermas and the Dialogical Subject*.

5 See the concept of border pedagogy in Giroux (1997), *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope. Theory, Culture and Schooling: a Critical Reader*.

6 Cabezudo (2013), *Learnings from Democracy, Culture of Peace and Human Rights. A Challenge of Our Time*.

7 See relationships between the micro and the macro in this paper.



also changing attitudes, learning to think critically, establishing relationships and creating links.

The links between form and content are evident. Peace learning itself acquires a particular significance as a dimension of a transformative tool for change for all the actors, not only in their own but also for their potential 'outside' actions.

Content becomes form, in a way form is content. Acting as agents for change, both have great potential to transform contextual conditions.

## 4. CONTEXTUAL CONDITIONS

Life provides the learner with the possibility of 'reading the world'. They can (1) observe and diagnose violence (physical, structural, cultural) in their own context and its external relations to other contexts, (2) search for root causes of the violence, both internal (including the self) and external to their own context, (3) formulate visions of non-violent alternative futures, (4) reflect upon appropriate means of change and (5) act skillfully towards the creation of new peace processes and structures. These five components can serve as an informal guide on how a peace education process directs learners from an initial point of observation and diagnosis of violence towards practical actions to transform that reality into peace and non-violence.

Important contextual conditions for peace education include the types and levels of violence and how that violence is caused by micro and macro forces as explained in figure 1. Contextual conditions also relate to the possibilities for transcending violence by involving the development of desirable visions of the future and possibilities for action. The conditions are therefore both internal and external to the context.

This reflects the main idea in Bourdieu's theory that the habitus of the individual and objective and material structures in the larger society seek harmony. This means that, while the lifestyle and personality of each human being is influenced by the outside world, the individual is also challenged to transform the outside world to fit cultural preferences. This force towards harmony between cultural expressions or lifestyles and the outside world makes changes in both habitus and the outside world possible.

Contextual conditions relate to micro as well as macro realities. Such realities can be described in terms of social, political, cultural and economic perspectives and how they are related to each other. Understanding contextual conditions therefore involves understanding both micros and macros and their relationships. Peace education looks for the relationships between close and distant realities and at how different forms of violence at different levels interact in space and time. This is a practical necessity to find effective spaces for new interactions in the peace process.

A highly relevant aspect of contextual conditions is the educational policies selected by the authorities. The characteristics of formal education systems in most countries are: division of knowledge into specific subjects; teachers with specific competencies in these subjects; grouping of students into classes and the division of time into teaching periods and breaks. These basic characteristics - to which evaluation procedures and disciplinary codes could be added - are important structural components that allow certain types of initiatives for introducing peace education into the curriculum and exclude other types.

If the form of education and the division of knowledge into subjects is regarded as a problem, the peace educator runs into other problems of a structural nature, i.e. the peace education project might contradict the basic characteristics of the structure in which it is introduced. If, for instance, a peace education project is based on the principles of problem orientation and participatory decision-making it encounters difficulties if introduced into a school system which rigidly divides education into subjects, classes and teaching periods. Apart from the rigidity imposed by these three components, the greatest barrier for peace education projects might be the rules laid down in educational systems concerning evaluation of the students, through which students are sorted into categories according to their achievement in school subjects focusing on what is known and not on what is not known.

Through this discussion on contextual conditions, it should be clear that a peace education project might or might not be in harmony with the formal school system. It is possible that so much disharmony exists that the structure itself must be changed before peace education can be introduced.

The question then arises whether the structure can be changed through changes in form and content, or whether this is impossible until changes are brought about in the contextual conditions in the society which has produced the educational structure.

## 5. CONTENT, FORM AND CONTEXTUAL CONDITIONS

The analysis on how structure can be changed through form and content or whether form and content change due to structure transformation lead the discussion to which is the appropriate scenario for this process. That is to say a scenario to develop peace education in desirable conditions. Conditions that would privilege dialogical form, would allow discussion on contents by all the actors engaged in the learning process and would build critical thinking.

This scenario is without doubt that of a democracy - at the micro and macro level - where guarantees for freedom



of thought and action help start transformative processes at the individual and collective level. A question immediately arises as to the essence of democracy in relation to peace education.<sup>8</sup>

Focusing on a macro framework, a democratic scenario for transformation is a scenario where a 'civilizing process' can be developed in contrast to an 'uncivilized process', characterized by non-legitimization of the political authority combined with the impact of globalization and the emergence of powerful transnational economic forces.<sup>9</sup> This kind of scenario leads to an explosive combination provoking structural and cultural violence with consequences on direct violence. The contextual conditions do not help peace learning, and content and form reflect this non-peaceful environment, with the ensuing interactions probably creating a new spiral of violence.<sup>10</sup>

The key to building democratic peace - that is to say desirable contextual conditions for peace learning - is to break the vicious cycle of violence and to reconstruct relations based on dialogue, agreed rules and mutual understanding. Without democratization of structures, ending violence is very difficult and peace education faces the major challenge of building isolated changes in content and form in contextual conditions that do not help transformation.

Often, democratic contextual conditions are not present and change happens all the same. This has not happened in the formal teaching system that reproduces goals, subjectivities and policies of the macro political structure, but in the diverse non-formal and informal learning settings. With peace education goals in mind, non formal and informal agendas address almost every issue where there is tension between what is explicit and what is hidden, enriching the possibilities to develop concepts and practical skills in real-life situations. The search for harmonic interaction within formal, non-formal and informal education is one of the most difficult challenges and a very serious consideration in peace education.

Non-formal and informal learning challenge structures by offering opportunities to break the 'rules' of non-democratic formal systems and allow peace and non-violent learning as ways of resistance through creativity and imagination. These confront non-democratic realities by developing new strategies rooted in social and collective experiences and actions. Non-formal and informal education bring alternative spaces for peace learning when a specific context created by the structures does not allow

the development of free and critical thinking through constructive autonomous procedures.

The process of learning and exchanging knowledge as a social practice is one of the most important means non-formal and informal education offer to the development of peace education. Its potential has been challenged many times in non-democratic contexts, resulting in transformative social learning. Social practices and knowledge created in this process work as a tool for resistance in those contextual conditions where education is manipulated, denying critical thinking, emancipation and freedom.

Peace education considered as a strategy and a tool for resistance in non-formal contexts is based on the assumption that (a) education is a social production and not merely knowledge transmission; (b) education for freedom is a precondition for democratic life - meaning life with autonomy, sovereignty and real day-to-day decision making power; (c) education implies refusal of authoritarianism, manipulation, hierarchies and exacerbation of ideological control of specific individuals and groups over others.<sup>11</sup>

Resistance is the path and the way to achieve transformation in violent contexts where conditions do not allow change or actions. The Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, described the concept of resistance as a "state of consciousness"<sup>12</sup> that strengthens the work and actions in difficult contextual conditions where violence prevails. "Resistance is a state of consciousness that leads to active participation" within close or far realities, creating new social conditions through actions.<sup>13</sup>

When contextual conditions block positive changes in society, the motto of collective and individual resistance operates to feed actions and as a strategic tool for transformation. Based on complex, and often violent, present situations, dreams and visions of diverse futures help to lead specific transformative actions towards reality and pave the way to liberation. Resistance is also a collective strategy for making sure one is seen and heard when the context has no interest in, or does not allow, certain people, groups or problems to be discussed at a social or political level.

Latin-American contextual conditions during the wave of dictatorships between 1960 and 1985 are a model of how non-formal education takes on peace learning when the formal system turns its back on it. During this period there was no rule of law and civil, political and social freedoms did not exist. Peoples from almost all countries on the continent - Brazil, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador - lived with the fear of being kidnapped, murdered or tortured because of their beliefs,

8 Gadotti (2004), "Paulo Freire. Pedagogy and Democratization process in Brazil. Some views of his theory, method and praxis to introduce a debate".

9 Kaldor and Luckham (2001), "Global Transformation and New Conflicts".

10 See Kaldor and Luckham, ob. cit.

11 Cabezudo (2013), ob.cit.

12 Perez Esquivel (2004). *La gota de agua: relatos de experiencias de lucha y resistencia*.

13 See content on micro and macro levels in this chapter.



hopes or dreams for justice and social change. In Central America and Colombia, the period was characterized by a full-scale war within national parties. The whole region was the opposite of the desirable scenario where contextual conditions can produce transformation and change for peace and democracy. The formal system functioned according to the macro political structure. Schools, universities, colleges and teachers were turned into machines reproducing the dominant ideology.

But change happens. People understood those contextual conditions as a challenge and not as a defeat. People reacted against 'domestication' of their lives by 'others' in a certain space and time - the place and the time where they live. They reacted to contextual conditions where the future was being manipulated in a predetermined way. The future was something inexorable - something that would necessarily occur in a manner decided by these others. By refusing the domestication of time and space the importance of the role of subjectivity in history was recognized. Therefore, challenges for change broke fixed a-priori concepts of possible 'defeats' and visions of hope and non-violent contexts prevailed.

Inexorable futures handled by obscure forces were transformed into desirable futures where social struggles<sup>14</sup> happened. On this assumption, non-formal and informal education settings were where non-violent and peace actions at the micro level worked as alternatives. These alternatives were constructed in 'non-domesticated' places and times confronting difficult macro contextual conditions in the hope of autonomy, freedom and democracy in a true struggle for peace against structural and cultural violence.<sup>15</sup> Along with this process, social movements, civil organizations and individuals developed non-violent forms of resistance in communication and action.

Resistance happens through thought and action and is a peace learning process, also interesting to study and identify in contextual conditions other than the Latin American cases mentioned here.

After the dictatorships, the process of democratization worked along an educational path in which the transformation of the political context changed the way of thinking, acting and reconstructing the reality. This process is a good example of how context interacted with content and form in terms of transformation. Internal and external conditions arose from the democratization process eradicating existing structures and 'liberating' people at the individual and collective level. Therefore, these 'new' internal and external contextual conditions strengthen processes of political, economic and social change.

If we think of education as a continuum of reflection and action producing daily-life praxis and creation of knowledge, the achieved goals are as important as the process itself. The transformative condition in the substance of peace education has moved from a potential to a real-world setting, changing ways of thinking and acting and creating new ones.

## CONCLUSION

Peace education should help to build visions of peaceful futures in a world where diversity and plurality can be celebrated without fear and threat. These visions need to be sufficiently realistic for them to be found, and as the distance along the path is unknown, it needs certain milestones along the way to verify the right direction. But, as we have pointed out, no diagnosis, vision or road map is sufficient if this reflection is not combined with education founded on a conception of knowledge that we have summed up as the concept of praxis. Without this combination of reflection and action, peace education may well end up in verbalism or activism.

Here we have also tried to demonstrate that an alternative, peaceful future is defined not only as the absence of open hostilities or negative peace but as the presence of peacemaking processes and contextual conditions likely to ensure a durable, just and positive peace. It implies a state of wellbeing, a dynamic social process in which justice, equity and respect for basic human rights are maximized and violence, both physical and structural is minimized.

Peace education alone will not achieve the changes necessary for peace: it prepares learners to achieve change. It aims to develop awareness of social and political responsibilities, guiding and challenging people to build their own learning. It encourages them to explore possibilities for contributing to resolving problems and achieving better conditions of life for themselves and others.

This approach to peace education emphasizes a critical dimension, questioning existing structures, power, norms and educational values. While we are aware of the limitations of peace education we have seen that it provides hope by demonstrating that people are capable of acquiring the required skills and illuminating creative learning moments.

We support the principle that peace education can definitively help provide the requisite inspiration and direction to move beyond a culture of violence to envisioning and working toward a culture of peace. ■

<sup>14</sup> Cabezudo (2013), ob. cit. Based in conversations with Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, and Hebe de Bonafini, President of Madres de Plaza de Mayo.

<sup>15</sup> Galtung (1999), *Peace by Peaceful Means*, on structural and cultural violence.



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## ARTICLE

# Interrogating Stateness-Democratization Nexus in Nigeria: Issues and Contentions

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## Abstract

Surely, many answers would be given to the question of why Africa is not democratizing: neo-colonialism, non-civic political culture, pervasive authoritarianism, weak constitutional base etc. Specifically, these answers are not completely irrelevant to the crisis of democratization in Africa. Alone or in combination, they could be serious impediments but this article, drawing inspiration from notable statist theorists and using Nigeria as a research backdrop, contends that statelessness is at the root of the democratization crisis in Africa. Like its colonial predecessor, the post-colonial state in Africa does not have the wherewithal to support genuine democracy. The article recommends that changing the tide in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular, must entail the restructuring and the re-legitimization of the state.

## Keywords

democratization, stateness, political culture, neoliberalism, hegemony, legitimacy, restructurings

## A. INTRODUCTION

That political democracy is desirable in the post-cold war era is not in dispute (Huntington, 1991; Diamond, 1999): what is in dispute is the feasibility of the liberal variant of democratization in non-Western societies (Ake, 2000a; Nzogola-Ntalaja, 1997). In other words, whether people's struggle for democracy in these societies could be transformed into the 'good life' via liberal democracy (Nnoli, 1994:8). Democratization in non-Western societies (specifically Nigeria) since the 1990s has produced mixed results (Brown and Kaiser, 2007) or what Munetsi (2011) refers to as "the good, the bad and the ugly".

The neo-liberals, drawing inspiration from the success of Botswana, Mauritius, South Africa, Senegal and, more recently, Ghana, as reported by the Freedom House and other liberal monitors, contends that democratization is on course on the continent (Carothers, 1991). In contrast, the pessimists, basing their judgement on the experiences of failed democracies in Africa, reason that democratization is either blocked or incomplete in the region (see Bratton and de Walle, 1994).

Given the above theoretical dichotomies, it is instructive to note that recent African experiences have shown that the crisis of democratization reinforces that of development (Ake, 2000b; Are-Olaitan, 2006). This, in turn, has provoked many questions both within and outside scholarly circles. Indeed, Claude Ake (1996) working within a feasibility paradigm once asked: Is Africa democratizing?

Not surprisingly, Ake's question has elicited many answers from different theoretical positions but suffice to say that these could be pigeon-holed into two lines of discourse. The modernization discourse, as discerned in the works of neoliberal revisionists drawing from the classic works of Lipset (1960), argue that Africa, unlike other regions in the third wave, is not democratizing but witnessing a 'reverse wave' because of a combination of structural and cultural factors. For example, in their major works on Africa's democracy, Diamond et al (1988) eloquently argued that "constraints on democracy stretches from ethnicity through corruption, economic dependency and inefficient political institutions to unprecedented political leadership".

The other discourse, drawing heavily from the transitionology literature, berates the modernization revision-



ists for downplaying 'stateness' while laying emphasis on socio-cultural variables in explaining democratic failure in non-western polities (Skocpol, 1988; Fukuyama, 2004). As Linz and Stepan (1996:366) say, the "stateness problem must increasingly be the central concern of political activists and theorists alike".

Meanwhile, in this paper, we join the stateness camp by arguing that the quality of stateness is vital to the success of the democratization process in Africa, particularly Nigeria. Consequently, our thesis is as follows: understanding the crisis of democratization in Africa, particularly Nigeria goes beyond the socio-cultural focus but is hinged on the legitimacy of the superstructure, the state, whose foundations are rooted in history. This means that deciphering its historic mission is central to understanding the state's current defective, illegitimate and undemocratic nature.

Against this background, we seek to question the stateness-democratization nexus in Africa in the context of Nigeria. In the first section we set out the background and the main thesis of the paper, section two lays the conceptual blocks around which the study is based. The third section, in a discursive manner, traces the evolution of the global discourse on democratization and the entry point of Africa into it. Section four questions, in a qualitative manner, the stateness-democratization nexus in Nigeria. The final, fifth section concludes with a number of recommendations.

## B. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUE

In this section, aside from operationalizing and contextualizing the two key concepts, we attempt to link them analytically. To start with, these two conceptual variables are not only essentially contested concepts (Gallie, 1962) but are also ontologically and ideologically diverse. Here, without going into great lengths, we begin with the conceptualization of stateness and follow on with that of democratization.

### Stateness

An inquiry into the concept of stateness in its conventional sense requires an allusion to the basic constitutive components and features of the state. The reason for this is obvious: stateness ontologically depicts the quality of statehood, which in turn, is defined in terms of sovereignty, territoriality, legitimacy and hegemony (Jinadu, 2008).

What the foregoing suggests is that the concept of stateness cannot be separated from the characteristic of the state as a political entity. When any of these attributes is dispelled, the integrity of the entity is called into question (Roseberg, 2004). Suffice here to say that, in recent litera-

ture on political economy, it is fashionable for theorists to use the concept of stateness interchangeably with that of state capacity (Leftwich, 2005; Edigheji, 2006; Wesis, 1998).

Here, it should be noted that whether stateness is used synonymously with state capacity or not, it is like other emotive concepts in social sciences that have been enmeshed in ideological controversies. For example, while the neoliberal defines it in terms of market and growth (Wesis, *ibid*), the neo-Marxist sees it in terms of class hegemony. But despite these divergent viewpoints, most theorists agree that stateness cannot be viewed as an abstraction as it is relational. According to Jinadu (*op cit*: 4):

"State capacity is a function of the complementary, and reinforcing, and therefore, consolidating role of subsidiary associations, and group in mediating the relationship between the state and its institutions on the one hand, and the civil society, on the other hand, and in conferring legitimacy on the state. ...state capacity, therefore, is a function of the strength or deficit of these attributes, and of the extent to which a political culture of public spiritedness prevails among the ordinary citizens."

The above quote underscores the state-society nexus which underlies the notion of stateness (Chazan, 1998). In other words, stateness is defined in social contract terms. In this sense, legitimacy becomes the standard criterion for defining stateness in contemporary literature. In real terms, the stateness of the African state is defined by its ability to meet the democratic demands of the people (Mangu, 2007).

As will be made clearer, how the juridical entities in Africa approximate this ideal determines their democratic successes or failures. Given the foregoing, stateness for the purpose of this study is operationalized as a legitimizing credential ascribed to a juridical entity by its inhabitants.

### On Democratization

The concept of democratization, like stateness, is also enmeshed in ontological controversy. It is an elastic concept whose definitions and interpretations vary according to different interests (Basiru, 2010). Suffice to say here that difficulties surrounding its meaning stem from the unclearness of the root concept - democracy (Danjibo, 2010:52).

Just as there are many interpretations of democracy (Osaghae, 1994), there are varying viewpoints on democratization. But can democratization be operationalized or conceptualized without grasping the meaning of democracy? Here, following Ake, (2000a, *op cit*), we contend that the controversies are unwarranted as they have been stirred up by liberal apologists who have succeeded in trivializing what democracy really means.



There is no doubt that Ake's position has generated debate about the meaning of democracy and democratization. While the neoliberals, under the cloak of Edward Burke's ideas and drawing inspirations from Schumpeter's classic *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1952) defines democracy in individualized, competitive and electoral terms (see Dahl, 1989; Carother, 2000, Fukuyana, 1989), the anti-liberals have attempted to conceptualize democracy, etymologically, as popular power (Ake, 2000a, op cit). In other words, it is more than electoralism.

Needless to say, the two perspectives have conditioned the meaning of democratization. For liberals, it is the institutionalization of liberal democracy in a given social milieu, Diamond et al (1995) identifying the liberal features as follows:

- 1) meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organized groups for all effective positions of governmental power through regular, free and fair elections that exclude the use of force;
- 2) a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies such that no major social group is prevented from exercising the right of citizenship;
- 3) a level of civil and political liberties secured through political equality under a rule of law, sufficient to ensure that citizens can develop and advocate their views and interest, and contest policies and offices vigorously and autonomously.

If Diamond and other transitologists see democratization as the consolidation of liberal values, Afrocentric democratic scholars contend that democratization entails the realization of democratic principles of governance and the balance of social forces in the community rather than consolidating electoralism (Nzogola-Ntalaja, op cit; Nwabueze, 2003a).

As laudable as the above perspectives are, what is their relevance for our present purposes? There is no doubt that they offer major insights into the practice of democracy in Nigeria. In real terms, whether democracy is defined in individualized or socialized terms, existing evidence suggests that, since the commencement of the third wave, democratization in Africa has not proceeded as it should have (see UNECA/AGR, 2010).

## Analytical Compass

By now, there is no disputing the fact that the two conceptual variables that are central to this study are eclectic and ideologically loaded, but how can they be linked for analytical purpose? To begin with, the relationships between stateness and democratization have been the subject of age-long theoretical discourse in political studies. In ancient Athens, the existence of a legitimate *polis* presupposes

the existence of a 'good life' which, in modern terms, translates into democracy dividends. For example, Aristotle in his *Politics* not only identified the end of politics but saw the enjoyment of good life taking place within the framework of the *polis* (Aristotle, 1962).

Unfortunately, the Athenian gift to mankind did not last beyond 200 AD. However, the ideal resurrected with the emergence of the nation-state in Europe, in the 17th century. Needless to say here that the Westphalian states that emerged had an authoritarian character as they were established through wars (Tilly, 1975) but with the rise of liberalism in the western hemisphere, the idea of the democratic state resurfaced. First in the United States and later in France, the liberal state paradigm was used to construct democratic infrastructures in the 18th and 19th centuries.

It should be noted that the idea of the utilitarian state in 19th century Europe re-echoed the Athenian notion of a 'good life'. Also during the same period, the idea of written constitutions as the bedrock of democratic society emerged. According to the 18th century philosopher, Thomas Paine (cf. Nwabueze, 2003a, op cit), "constitution is not the act of government but of a people constituting the government".

As a matter of fact, the written autochthonous constitution in the United States not only created the political interface between the state and the citizens but also determined the structure of legitimacy. Before adopting the constitution in 1787, there were thirteen political communities occupying contiguous areas of territory in North America but there was no common political arrangement uniting them into a polity or state.

So the first function required of the 1787 constitution was to constitute the several political communities into one body politic under the name of the United States of America. It is significant to note here that the new state was constituted by the constituent power of the people. As with the United States, so with Canada and Australia but the experiences of the non-Western societies were fundamentally different.

In Africa, for example, some of the sovereign states created by European colonialism shared a common origin, as with the United States, being constituted via written constitutions, but lack of an autochthonous process robbed the former of legitimacy (Basiru, 2010). As Nwabueze (2003 op cit) comments:

"Whereas the US was created by a constitution adopted and enacted into law by the people in exercise of their revolutionary sovereignty, the African states were the creation of colonial constitutions made by European imperial powers by virtue of sovereignty seized from colonized Africans. Lamentably, because of their origin in colonial constitutions made abroad by the European colonizers, the new states have no founding



fathers: they were illegitimate offspring of European colonialism.”

From the beginning, the state that was born in Africa and other colonized territories was completely illegitimate. It did not come as a surprise, in the Nigerian case, when some of the ‘founding fathers’ had reasons to denounce the grafted entity during decolonization. For Chief Obafemi Awolowo, “it was a mere geographical expression” while for Sir Ahmadu Bello, “it was the mistake of 1914” (see Ezera, 1960).

Because the newly-constituted colonial state lacked moral and social bases, it had to depend on physical power rather moral right: since it was driven by exploitative imperatives (Rodney, 1972; Ake, 1978; Onimode, 2000:74), it was majestic in form. Claude Ake (2000b:2) captures the *raison d’être* of the African colonial state thus:

“Since the colonial state was called upon by the peculiar circumstances of the colonial situation to carry out so many functions - indeed to do everything - it was all powerful. It needed to be all powerful not only to carry out its mission but also to survive along with the colonial order in the face of the resentment and hostility of the colonized.”

Given the absolute and arbitrary nature of the colonial state, no democratic link was forged with the natives (Young, 1994), such that, in essence, the colonial state deprived the natives of their democratic rights. As Rupert Emerson (1962) sadly remarks in the context of Asia, “colonialism was not a school of democracy but tyranny”.

However, as independence beckoned, expectations were high that the post-colonial environment would offer ‘bread and butter’ to the people but, disappointingly, the new order was not markedly different from its predecessors. The new political elites, rather than transforming the illegitimate state of affairs, sought to preserve it to serve their inclination to amass power (Onimode, op cit).

With its overwhelming power, the post-colonial state became the most prized political institution and was therefore sought by whatever means (Gana, 1985; Ekekwe, op cit). In this context, politics became a matter of life and death, paving the way for the military to gain power. As Ake (2000b:6) put it:

“Political competition now assumed the character of warfare and paved the way for the ascendancy of the specialists of violence, the military. The rash of military coups that came later essentially formalized a reality that was already firmly established. It was not the military that caused military rule in Africa by intervening in politics, rather it was the character of politics that engendered military rule by degenerating into warfare inevitably propelling the specialists of warfare to lead the role.”

With the appearance of the ‘specialists’ on the African political turf, the colonial legacy of brutality and crudeness was further entrenched in Africa, for decades, until the commencement of the third wave in 1990s. Since then, have there been fundamental changes in Africa? Has the African state been decolonized to serve as a haven of democracy? Before we answer these questions, let us put the ‘third wave of democratization’ into its historical context.

## C. THE THIRD WAVE OF DEMOCRATIZATION AND AFRICA

In most political change literature (Linz and Stepan, 1978; Dahl, 2001), the globalization of liberal democracy has passed through three phases, but the phase that has had the most impact on societies all over the world is the third, tagged the ‘third wave’ (Huntington, op cit). The third wave started on the Iberian Peninsula and marked the resurgence of the liberal multi-party democracy in different parts of the world. As Hague and Harrop (2007:57) remark “the third wave transformed the global landscape”. Consequent upon the emergence of the third wave, the issue of democratization became the core discourse in global policy and academic circles.

Indeed, from the perspectives of the western governments and donor communities, either a state democratizes or it is ostracized (Carothers, 1991). In Africa, as in other regions of the South, countless social movements sprang up to push for democratization (Bratton, 1994). As Nzogola-Ntalaja (op cit: 9) notes:

“From its violent outbreak in October 1988 in the streets of Algiers, this new social movement for democracy has manifested itself all over the continent, changing the rules of the political game and bringing about meaningful reforms in the institutions of the post-colonial state.”

As the transitions were under way in different parts of the continent, the concern of donor communities and scholars was how to consolidate liberal democracy in Africa. Drawing from the experiences of Latin American countries, new discourses on democratization emerged in scholarly circles on the best model of democratization for the continent (Gillespie, 1989).

For western scholars, the liberal model offers the best prospects for Africa (Carothers, op cit). According to this school of thought, if democracy could be institutionalized in Latin America in the 1980s, and given the similarities



with Africa in terms of history of authoritarianism, a liberal competitive model could also succeed in Africa (Diamond et al, op cit).

Publications by notable African scholars counter the views of neoliberal evangelists such as Fukuyama (1991). They contend vociferously that, given African historical specificity and cultural uniqueness, at variance with western societies, the individualized model of democratization might not suit Africa's purpose (see Ake, 1991, 1994; Onoge, 1997; Nzogola-Ntalaja, 2002; Mkadawie, 1999; Mafeje, 1995, 2002; Shivji, 2003). The premise of their arguments is: liberal democracy is associated with a particular culture and environment, which belies its claim to universality.

To this end, they argue that the purveyors of liberal democracy ignore the differences in the process of historical development and change in different regions of the world. Also, the preference for a state-centric legal-bureaucratic basis of authority that is tailored after the experiences of western societies does not hold actual or potential benefits for Africa (Parekh, 1993). As Claude Ake (1993:242-3) submits:

“Liberal democracy is a product of a socially atomised society where production and exchange are already commodified, a society which is essentially a market. It is the product of a society in which interests are so particularized that the notion of common interest becomes problematic, hence the imperatives of democracy.”

Given this liberal logic, electoralism, according to the radicals, became the standard for evaluating democratization. With this mindset, Onoge (1997:5) argues that the emphasis is not on actual participation of the people but on the party or candidate that wins in a competitive election. Afrocentric radicals further claim that the proponents of liberal democracy in Africa, by focusing on elections, have failed to factor in the issue of popular empowerment defined in a social democratic context. As Shivji (2003) put it “the struggle for democracy is ultimately rooted in the life conditions of the people”.

For the democratization process to succeed in Africa, contend the radicals, the superstructure of the African society, the state, which by its nature is anti-democratic, must be democratized. In this sense, democratizing the state in Africa becomes the sine qua non for genuine democratization. As Ake poignantly avers “democratization in Africa can only be meaningful if it addresses and changes the constricting context of the state”.

Given the above dichotomies on democratization discourses in post-cold war Africa, which of the two best approximates the Nigerian realities?

## D. NIGERIA'S EXPERIENCE WITH DEMOCRATIZATION

Nigeria is an example of a country in Africa where liberal democracy as championed by the donor communities has outlived its values (Momoh, 2006). In Nigeria, as for many other Africa countries, attempts have been made to study the feasibility of liberal democracy. Some contend that, given its heterogeneous nature, a liberal model may unleash centrifugal forces that ravage its body politic (Nnoli, op cit; Osaghae op cit). Others argue that cultural heterogeneity cannot be a stumbling block towards realizing the liberal dream in Nigeria, but its inability to consolidate democracy is due to the neopatrimonial and informalized nature of its politics (see Bayart, 1996; Bayart et al, 1999; Chabal and Daloz, 1999).

While some of the arguments by the second school might be plausible as they centre on Nigeria's stateness, we contend that they hardly touch on the history of the Nigerian state. They do not deal with the issue of how the anti-democratic status of the Nigerian state has been shaped by certain historical forces and how these forces have constrained its ability to act in peoples' interests, consequently unleashing issues that today constitute national questions (see Momoh and Adejumbi, 2002).

Since its emergence, first as a colony and later as a neocolony, Nigeria's political space has been littered with contentious issues which many analysts have termed democratic questions (Ake, 1996). In 1995, the National Constitutional Commission, under the General Abacha regime, identified thirty issues in Nigerian polity, ranging from the philosophical foundation of the Nigerian state to the fundamental rights of the citizens (Nigeria, 1995). To be more specific, some of these issues range from the most basic (e.g. labour issues) to the most volatile (Sharia, derivation etc.).

While some of the issues are nascent, some are as old as the Nigerian State itself. For example, in the first republic, issues of ethno-nationalism rocked the new nation and paved the way for military intervention in politics and eventually, the civil war (Dudley, 1973; Post and Vickers, 1973). Even under various military regimes, critical national issues continued to destabilize the nation. During this period, the military succeeded in suppressing some of the issues (see Elaigwu, 1979; Jega, 1995), but with the emergence of democratic rule on May 29th, 1999, various ethno-national issues that had been suppressed for decades resurfaced (Imobighe, 2006).

The indications point to three dominant issues which have underwritten the democratic process in Nigeria since 1999: ethno-nationalism, secularity and elections. There is no doubt that these issues have stretched the Nigerian State beyond limit and have even threatened its existence as an independent State. At this juncture, a



question is apt: Why has the Nigerian State, since its inception, not succeeded in aligning itself with its people in order to build legitimacy?

As argued at the beginning of this paper, an illegitimate state cannot promote democracy as it is detached from the people. According to various historical accounts, the Nigerian State was grafted on the people by the forces of British imperialism, so, from the beginning, was devoid of legitimacy. The grafted colonial State, by virtue of its creation, could not promote popular interests as it served the interests of the minorities in the metropolitan countries (Ekekwe, op cit). In the realm of politics, the authoritarian nature of the colonial state made democratic politics difficult. Even by the time independence beckoned, politics was still characterized by violence (Ake, op cit).

If the colonial state in Nigeria was not a school of democracy, liberal or otherwise, the post-colonial state was expected to be. In fact, prior to independence, expectations were high that the new state and elites would promote and protect democratic rights but unfortunately, peoples' expectations were dashed as the post-colonial state failed to respond to the demand for a good life. Being the successor to the bourgeois colonial state, it continued to serve the interests of the national bourgeoisie (Beckman, 1981, 1982). As a result, it became the arena of a class struggle between those in and out of office (Ake, op cit). For decades, the bourgeois state in Nigeria only served the interests of a tiny section of the populace rather than the people in general. Has the situation changed since the becoming part of the third wave? Or simply put, have the Nigerian state and its governing elites spurred democratization?

If we evaluate the Nigerian situation since 1999, based on either liberal or participatory criteria, it has not succeeded in institutionalizing democratic values. Firstly, in terms of electoralism, except the 2011 elections that were judged 'free and fair', those in 2003 and 2007 not only diminished the country's standing externally [Basiru, 2010(b)] but further marginalized the people (Emordi and Osiki, 2008, Omotola, 2009). Secondly, if democratization is evaluated in terms of governance and human security, Nigerians are probably worse off now than in 1999 (see UNECA/AGR, 2010).

Aside from these two critical failures, democracy deficit in Nigeria has also been manifested in the suppression of minorities, particularly in the oil rich Niger-Delta (Raji, 2000). In this region, the tactics adopted by the custodians of state power at the centre are not very different from those employed by the pre-1999 military regimes (Iyayi, 2007; CLO, 2001; Darah, 2001; Basiru, 2009). Save for the amnesty programme, the people of the region have been treated in an undemocratic manner. Following the experiences of Odi, Choba and other villages in River State demonstrate, a discerning mind wonders if repression and human rights violations of such magnitude could take place in a nascent democracy (CLO, op cit).

The foregoing evaluations have placed the process of democratization in Nigeria, since 1999, in context. It has shown that the institutionalization of democratic ethos has not really advanced as expected. Indeed, whether democratization is assessed in terms of liberal democracy (electoralism, pluralism etc.) or in terms of peoples' empowerment, the supposed beneficiaries, the people, have not been rewarded. In competitive terms, elections have produced outcomes that are unfavourable to the people. Save for the few 'riggers' and their cohorts (Omotola, op cit).

## E. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper set out to question the stateness-democratization nexus in Africa, Nigeria in particular, in a discursive, historical manner. Following a conceptual dissection of the key variables, we laid bare the nature of stateness in Nigeria: it is an illegitimate state which implies that it is undemocratic. Given this reality, the Nigerian state cannot be a harbinger of democratization.

Therefore, setting things straight must involve re-legitimization of the neo-colonial Nigerian state via re-constitutionalization. Although this recommendation might sound utopian, in a peripheral capitalist-social formation like Nigeria, a determined people can force this agenda on the nation through popular struggle. Re-constitutionalization through struggle by the people is imperative for re-engineering stateness and democratization in Nigeria. ■

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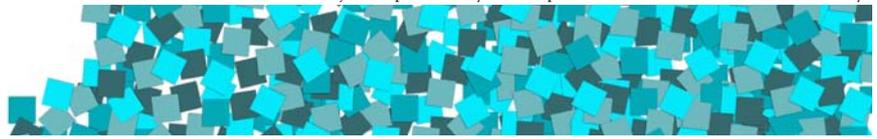
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**CAMPUS  
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## ARTICLE

# Peace Building Through Sport? An Introduction to Sport for Development and Peace\*

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## Abstract

The use of sport to address a variety of social issues, a strategy referred to as Sport for Development and Peace (SDP), is becoming widely accepted, especially in regions affected by poverty, violence and conflict. Identifying a set of unique characteristics, a wide range of actors in the peace and development field, including the UN, international development agencies and non-governmental organizations, have endorsed sport as a significant social catalyst. This paper aims to: 1) introduce Sport for Development and Peace; 2) highlight ways in which sport may support peace building and conflict resolution processes; and 3) present current Sport for Development and Peace initiatives in Colombia.

## Keywords

Colombia, physical activity, Millennium Development Goals, sport and conflict resolution, sport for development and peace

## INTRODUCTION

The role and impact of sports in society has been a subject of debate for centuries. For some observers, sport is a physical activity always associated with competition among nations or teams for the pride and glory of winning. The English writer and journalist George Orwell once defined sport as “war minus the shooting”. For Orwell (1994), the objective of competitive sports was defeating the opponent at any cost while humiliating them and their supporters. In his opinion: “serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence” (p. 322).

But just as sport has the capacity to awaken exaggerated nationalistic sentiments, intolerance and even vio-

lence, both in athletes and spectators, there is also a sector of society that supports the notion that sport can serve as a means to advance social development processes. The use of sport to bring about social change has been recently promoted by a variety of international actors, notably the UN, international development agencies, FIFA and the International Olympic Committee among others. Working together with non-governmental organizations, sport federations, and the private sector under a strategy referred to as Sport for Development and Peace (SDP), they have become supportive of the idea that sport is indeed valuable when addressing issues related to human justice and equality.

The aim of this paper, divided into five parts, is to bring to light the recent use of sport as peace building agent. The first part introduces the field of SDP. The second identifies some of the attributes of sport which SDP supporters claim

\* An earlier version of this paper appeared as a working paper of the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies



facilitate peace and development work. The third tackles the issue of sport for conflict resolution. Drawing from existing conflict resolution models, this section aims to provide a preliminary analysis on the interplay between sport and peace building. The fourth part highlights current SDP initiatives in Colombia. Two projects in particular are briefly addressed: the multi-sectorial sport-for-peace project, Football and Peace Network (*Red Fútbol y Paz*) and the south-south cooperative, academic, grassroots project Goals for Peace (*Goles por la Paz*). The paper concludes with some remarks on SDP as a social strategy and area of research and elaborates on the opportunities and limitations of sport as a social catalyst

## 1. SPORT AS A CATALYST FOR PEACE: EARLY INITIATIVES

The idea of using sport to advance peace endeavors is not new. The first documented use of sport to mediate in times of conflict dates back to the 9th century BC in ancient Greece with the establishment of an Olympian Truce (*Ekecheiria*), intended to temporarily stop the war between the Peloponnesian city-states during the celebration of the Olympic Games. Spectators, athletes, artists and their families were able to travel to the Olympic Games and return to their places of origin in total safety (International Olympic Committee, 2009).

Another example of the conciliatory character of sport is the famous Christmas Truce of 1914 during World War I when German and English troops stopped hostilities to exchange gifts and play football (Woodhouse, 2009, p. 27). In doing so, the rival troops validated the potential of sport as an agent of transformation and change as a match of football provided temporary relief to combatants and a provisional cease-fire.

In more recent years, the use of football to tackle issues related to equality and social justice emerged as a response from different social sectors, notably grassroots, to instances of violence and intolerance induced by spectators – and in some cases by professional players themselves – both in and around football stadiums. This particular type of sport-associated hostility commonly referred to as “hooliganism”, dominated football venues in England in the 1970s and 80s, leading football to the worst crisis it has ever experienced. The Heysel disaster of 1985, in Belgium, resulted in the deaths of 96 football fans (Hughson and Spaaij, 2011, p. 283), due to a deadly combination of football violence and poor stadium maintenance. Following this, the Football Supporters

Association was established in the United Kingdom to educate ‘wild fans’ and encourage supporters to express their concerns with regards to football violence. Denmark replicated this campaign when a group of football enthusiasts founded a movement called the Rooligans or peaceful fans. Moreover, joining several European awareness-through-sport initiatives from grassroots organizations, in 1992 professional football clubs in Germany and Italy dedicated a game to protest against violence and racism in sport (Murray, 1996, p. 170).

Building on the success of early sport-for-peace campaigns to tackle a wide range of social issues at the local and regional level, several initiatives to promote sport as an agent of transformation were subsequently launched internationally. This in turn set in motion a sort of ‘cooperative global ethos’, gravitating around the new application of sport as a social catalyst and laying the foundations for a social intervention strategy and social movement known today as Sport for Development and Peace.

### 1.1. What is Sport for Development and Peace?

As a social intervention strategy, Sport for Development and Peace proposes the use of games, physical activity and sport to address explicit peace and development objectives including, most notably, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). While this approach aims at realizing the rights of all members of society to take part in sport and leisure activities (Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, 2008) it has an important component of non-sport-based activities. These are to tackle a wide range of social issues including: gender equality; peace building and conflict resolution; social inclusion; crime and violence; racism; social inequality; health education. SDP projects are being carried out both in developed and developing nations, with a significant number of interventions taking place in regions with particularly high levels of violence, poverty and conflict.

As a policy sector (see Giulianotti, 2011) and a social movement (see Kidd, 2008), SDP has been operating since the 1990s, with activity intensifying in the last decade<sup>1</sup> (International Platform on Sport and Development, n.d.). To streamline efforts directed at promoting sport as a social catalyst, multi-sectorial alliances and partnerships involving key stakeholders in the worlds of peace, development and sport continue to grow worldwide.

As an emerging academic field, the study of sport as a development and peace instrument has been addressed by a variety of disciplines, most prominently international

1 P. Donelli (quoted in Giulianotti and Armstrong, 2011) estimates that by 2007 approximately 400 NGO's in the field of sport, development and peace were in operation and an average of 10 more NGO's were being created per month (379).



development, conflict and peace studies, sport studies and kinesiology, sociology and area studies. There is a growing body of academic literature in this incipient field and SDP has been enhanced by research, mainly in the form of case studies aimed at assessing the role of sport and its capacity to strengthen social development processes.

## 2. WHY SPORT?

As a cultural manifestation common to virtually every society, the international community has acknowledged the potential of sport and physical activity to support peace building efforts. The UNESCO, for example, has indicated that, to achieve the goals of peace and development, it is important to recognize the cultural dimensions of sport, which it considers needs more academic analysis (UNESCO, 2009, p. 8). Additionally, several agencies within the UN system (e.g. UNOSDP, UNDP, WHO, ILO, IOM) use sport as a component in their development and peace work (United Nations, n.d.). Beyond the global popularity of sport and its alleged capacity to break through cultural barriers, SDP advocates contend that sport possesses unique features that allow it to strengthen development and peace processes (Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group, 2008):

### a) Universality of sport

Sport, games and physical activity in general are present in virtually every society. The popularity of sport transcends political, national and ideological borders and it is enjoyed by spectators and participants alike (SDP International Working Group, 2008). Football for instance, the most popular game in the world, is estimated by FIFA to be played by 265 million people (FIFA, 2007), while other games such as cricket, basketball and baseball, attract the interest of millions of spectators and participants worldwide. The use of sport as an intervention strategy is supported by the belief that the popularity of sport provides a hook to bring multiple stakeholders and at-risk populations into community welfare programs.

### b) Ability of sport to connect people

One important attribute of sport is its capacity to connect peoples and communities in an extremely effective manner. When they are inclusive, these communities turn into important areas of social networking fostering a capacity to work in a cooperative manner (SDP International Working Group, 2008). The Open Fun Schools project is an example of the capacity of sport to encourage the development of social networks between former antagonistic communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since its inception in 1998, this

grassroots youth football program has brought together tens of thousands of children from once opposing communities to play football together (Gasser and Levinsen, 2004).

### c) Potential of sport to inspire and motivate

By shedding light on what people can do, sport inspires and motivates individuals. In addition, sport encourages self-esteem, physical and mental health and nurtures positive connections with others (SDP International Working Group, 2008). Sport can also serve as a 'classroom' where participants learn about social skills such as teamwork, leadership and cooperation, thus providing an ideal environment to foster healthy individual and collective development.

A four-year study was conducted to test the hypothesis that "sport contributes to personal development and well-being in disadvantaged children and young people", analyzing the impact of eight organizations in Africa and India employing sports in a variety of ways. The study concluded that: 1) sport programs had an impact on the self-esteem and perceived self-efficacy of participants, with the self-evaluation of the majority undergoing a transformation; 2) positive attitudes towards women's involvement in sport and education were improved across participating programs; 3) sport was an effective medium for giving young people information about HIV and other health-related issues; 4) physical training boosted participants' confidence both through meeting and addressing issues with peers and coaches as well as by developing leadership skills (Coalter, 2010).

### d) Capacity of sport to divert violent behavior

A study conducted in 2008 by the consulting firm Schwery asserts that the relation between sport and violence revolves around the idea that physical activity may be instrumental in preventing deviant and antisocial behavior and that sport can assist in the rehabilitation of offenders. The study also found that the delinquent behavior of young members of sports clubs was lower (Schwery Consulting, 2008). Furthermore, according to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, SDP programs implemented in the slums of Medellin, Colombia have resulted in a drop in criminal behavior while in Brazil, programs such as Segundo Tempo are expected to show children a way out of misery and violence (2005, p. 8).

### e) Capacity of sport to foster peace building

Although the relationship between sport and peace is not always evident, there have been several instances where sport has been instrumental in supporting formal processes of peace building and conflict resolution. According to Woodhouse (2010) "...there are many examples where different sports and sportspeople have explicitly worked in a



conflict-resolving manner and where sport has been seen as a bridge-building activity and an alternative to violence and destructive conflict” (p. 494). A particular example is the case of Sierra Leone during the civil war. A football festival in the Bo region was one of the few activities that could provide a sense of normality during the conflict. As reported by Van der Niet (2010) football had the power to literally stop the war, albeit only momentarily. The festival provided a “safe space” for conflicting sides to interact, with the occasional football matches held between the military, civilians and the fighting groups (p. 49). Further elaboration on the role of sport in peace building is offered by Giullianotti and Armstrong (2011), indicating that sport-based peacemaking facilitates reconciliation efforts in affected communities. Moreover, peace building through sport presents the military with a new way to create positive connections with civilian populations in conflict zones (p. 379).

### 3. SPORT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Sport for Development and Peace is a relatively new social intervention strategy and an emerging interdisciplinary research field. However, in spite of the growing body of SDP literature, the academic community has stressed the lack of research analyzing the interplay between sport and peace from a perspective of peace and conflict resolution studies. Although an important number of studies examining the role of SDP programs have been produced, Sugden and Haasner (2009), affirm that only a few interventions and studies are grounded in conflict resolution theories (p. 1).

The limited research addressing the use of sport for conflict resolution (Borsani 2009; Lea-Howarth, 2006), has made use of peace theories including Galtung’s 3 Rs (1998), Lederach’s web-approach to peace building (2005) and Schirch’s use of rituals (2005). Here I have mentioned only a few peace building and conflict resolution approaches from which future research can develop a more systematic interpretation of the use of sport as a social catalyst. With this in mind, I focus on Galtung’s 3Rs approach to peace building to illustrate some of the ways in which sport may support conflict resolution initiatives.

#### 3.1. Galtung’s 3Rs: reconstruction, reconciliation, resolution

For Galtung (1998), the holistic process of peace building includes 3 Rs or key factors: reconstruction of peoples and

places after violence, reconciliation of the parties in conflict and resolution of animosities (p. 8).

##### 3.1.1. Reconstruction

Galtung further divides reconstruction into four subcategories: rehabilitation, rebuilding, restructuration and reculturation (1998, p. 53-61). SDP programs can provide rehabilitation and healing through psycho-social programs. One example of this comes from Sri Lanka, where cricket, the country’s most popular game, is used to rehabilitate hundreds of child victims of the internal conflict through the Cricket for Change program (Cricket for Change, n.d.). Furthermore, FIFA has played a central role in rebuilding sports facilities in regions affected by conflict and violence. For instance, they promised funds to rebuild a football pitch in Gaza which had been bombed. In Afghanistan, the national stadium, the site of executions, was also repaired and reopened with the support of this organization (Lea-Howarth 2006, p. 16). In restructuration, sport-for-peace programs can facilitate the building of relationships and thereby social inclusion (Kuvalund, 2005). In reculturation, SDP programs can serve as hooks, getting people involved in sport and establishing sports clubs and leagues based on accepted cultural rules, so strengthening civil society and democratic processes. In several African countries, such as Sierra Leone, football tournaments have been established with different ethnic groups playing together as teams, to reduce inter-tribal conflict by fostering a sense of national identity as opposed to tribal rivalry (Lea-Howarth, 2006, p. 17).

##### 3.1.2. Reconciliation

This stage aims at (re)building positive relations between former enemies who were both victims and perpetrators. Sport can contribute to building a more positive environment by helping people to regain a sense of security and normality (Borsani, 2009, p. 11), thus, facilitating reconciliation between opposing parties. Høglund and Sundberg (2008) identify instances in which sport has contributed to reconciliation in South Africa<sup>2</sup> at three different levels:

###### a) Reconciliation at the national level through symbols

Sport provided a space to represent the idea of the country being a multicultural nation or ‘rainbow nation’. South Africa’s first Olympic appearance since the 1960’s, when international anti-apartheid protests led to its exclusion from the event, was at the 1992 Olympics. The Olympic team, with both black and white athletes, flew in an airplane with the country’s flag painted on it. This provided an opportu-

2 Refer to the work of Cora Burnett (2010) for further analysis of the SDP sector in South Africa.



nity to use sport as a way to portray the political and social shift of the nation.

b) Reconciliation through communal activities

A direct use of sport can be found in military demobilization and integration processes, rehabilitation of child soldiers and games of football in refugee camps. In addition, through football tournaments and competitions, people have a chance to interact with members of other communities. Sport constitutes an easy, low-cost opportunity for people to socialize and strengthen community ties.

c) Reconciliation through individual development

The use of sport for individual development rests on the idea that, in order to be at peace with society, one has to first be at peace with oneself. To achieve this, a number of SDP programs in the country use life skills training, gender empowerment and HIV awareness (p.807-814) seeking to create a positive impact on the personal development of participants.

### 3.1.3. Resolution

A potential contribution of sport to conflict resolution processes is that it provides a sub-systemic nucleus around which social networks can be formed and where members can be taught about resolving conflict. The organization Football for Peace (F4P)<sup>3</sup> with ongoing projects in Israel, Jordan and Northern Ireland, for example, has been using sport to encourage social contact across community boundaries while teaching participants about peaceful coexistence and resolution of conflicts (see Sugden, 2008). By using 'disagreements' that may arise among participants during sport activities, Football for Peace coaches have introduced the concept of 'teachable moments', a space to encourage children to learn how to solve disputes in a constructive way (Lea-Howarth, 2006, p. 13). Another example of the use of sport to foster peaceful resolution of conflicts comes from Colombia where the Football for Peace Methodology (*Metodología Fútbol por la Paz*) has been instrumental in creating opportunities for dialogue via sport, among at-risk youth in disadvantaged communities.

Other approaches to examine the validity of sport as a tool for social transformation and change include Lederach's (2005) web-approach to peace building which emphasizes the creation of strategic networks. These networks (web-making processes) are particularly relevant for NGOs. As they are middle level actors, they are strategically placed to get people together and promote dialogue (Sugden and Haasner, 2009, p. 2) and to bring community

needs as well as grassroots efforts to promote social change to the attention of regional and national authorities. Additionally, Schirch's use of rituals (2005) may provide a framework to assess the validity of sport as a peace building tool. This approach emphasizes the use of rituals to 'humanize' victims and aggressors who, through violence, have dehumanized others or been dehumanized. In this context, a ritual can take the form of physical activity or a sporting event.

## 4. SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE IN COLOMBIA

Despite the fact that sport has been used as a peace building strategy in Colombia for nearly two decades, academic research addressing SDP in the country is virtually non-existent. Studies based on peace building approaches tackling the potential of sport as a social catalyst are needed, especially in this crucial moment when the nation and the international community have turned their attention to two recent developments in the country involving, precisely, the worlds of sport and peace: Colombia's outstanding performance in the 2012 Olympics and, as a consequence, the growing national interest to strengthen public policy around sport, and the ongoing peace process in the nation.

In the following section I briefly introduce the SDP sector in Colombia and present two sport-for-peace initiatives, the multi-sectorial project Football and Peace Network (*Red Fútbol y Paz*) and the grassroots initiative Goals for Peace (*Goles por la Paz*). Although an assessment of these programs or a comprehensive account of the SDP field in Colombia is beyond the scope of this paper, the aim is to bring current sport-for-peace initiatives in the nation to the attention of the academic community, SDP decision-makers and anyone interested in SDP in the region.

The formalized use of football to tackle a variety of social issues in Colombia began in the mid-1990s in the streets of Medellín, then one of the world's most dangerous cities. Following the tragic assassination of Colombian defender Andres Escobar after scoring an own goal in the 1994 World Cup, football was beginning to be perceived by a large sector of football fans as a means to create more violence. A group of concerned football enthusiasts and social researchers, notably Jürgen Griesbeck and Alejandro Arenas, came to the conclusion that this should be prevented and that the game should be a vehicle to unite people and promote peace. Determined to create social transformation via sport at various levels, and capitalizing on the popularity of the game, they developed a methodology with a series of innovative rules to foster peaceful co-existence and dialogue among

3 Not to be mistaken with the Football for Peace Methodology from Colombia.



football spectators and players alike. It came to be known as the Football for Peace Methodology and, as highlighted by Arenas, it introduced a set of features that complemented the traditional game: 1) mixed-teams; 2) first goal to be scored by a female participant; 3) mediators instead of referees; 4) the players agree on a series of rules which have to be respected throughout the match; 5) an end-of-game evaluation of whether the rules were respected as well as appraising fair play, with both factors taken into consideration to determine the winner of the match (personal interview Alejandro Arenas, March 13, 2012). The success of this and subsequent initiatives employing football as a peace strategy inspired Jürgen Griesbeck to establish Streetfootballworld a few years later, a global platform for football-for-peace projects and a repository of information on SDP. Moreover, this methodology quickly spread throughout the country and was adopted by a number of NGOs implementing peace-through-sport programs.

The Colombian Government has also adapted the Football for Peace Methodology through the program Golombiao, El Juego de la Paz - the Peace Game. It is currently being implemented through the Presidential Program on Youth Affairs - *Colombia Joven* - in association with UNICEF and the German Agency for International Cooperation in 18 states throughout the country. *El Golombiao* has been acknowledged as a strategy to advance development plans at the municipal and state level (Colombia Joven, 2011). Furthermore, the administrative body for sport, recreation, physical activity and leisure, Coldeportes, has also recently begun to explore the capacity of sport as a social inclusion tool, notably through the program *Gestores del Deporte* - roughly translated as Sports Promoters. In 2012, it was carried out in marginalized and conflict-torn zones in Colombia where opportunities for recreation and education are extremely limited (Coldeportes, 2012).

A number of sport-for-peace initiatives are also being promoted across the country by international actors in the peace and development world. For instance, the Monaco-based organization Peace and Sport, in collaboration with local NGOs, utilizes sports such as badminton, baseball, gymnastics, chess, table tennis and ju-jitsu to advance peace work (Peace and sport, n.d.). Additionally, the Inter-American Development Bank has supported projects in the country to integrate young people, via sports, into programs aimed at strengthening citizen security and preventing violence (Inter-American Development Bank, n.d.).

#### 4.1. Football and Peace Network (Red Fútbol y Paz)

The Football and Peace Network, formed by 16 public and private organizations, initiated operations in 2010 to address, via sport, issues concerning the social reality in

Colombia, including forced recruitment, social exclusion, violence, poverty and inequality. The Network has the technical and logistical support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) the World Bank and the German Agency for International Cooperation. This multi-sectorial initiative currently benefits around 25,000 children and youths participating in programs implemented by members of the Network, all of which have adopted the Football for Peace Methodology. The Football and Peace Network was conceived within the framework of Expopaz, a peace fair held in October 2010 in Bogotá. It was a meeting point for public institutions, the private sector, civil society organizations, international agencies and public figures in the field of peace to share knowledge and generate proposals on building peace in Colombia (Red Fútbol y Paz, n.d.). Among the participating organizations were Colombianitos (Little Colombians), Fútbol con Corazón (Football with a Heart), Tiempo de Juego (Play Time), World Coach Colombia, and Con-texto Urbano, which had been implementing SDP programs in the country for years.

A UNDP representative elaborated on the nature of the Network Football and Peace: "One of the conclusions we drew from Expopaz, was the need to bring these and other organizations together under a common framework to work collectively through sports, issues concerning co-existence, peace and reconciliation in the nation" (personal interview, February 23, 2012). Since its inception in 2010, one of the most significant achievements of the Network has been the launching of the Solidarity World Cup - *El Mundialito Solidario* - held in July 2011. In this tournament, 120 children played during the under-20 Football World Cup celebrated in Colombia (Cercapaz, 2011). The Network Football and Peace is currently setting up a database of previous and ongoing projects, to provide a deeper understanding of the impact participating organizations have on communities across the country where interventions are being carried out.

#### 4.2. The Goals for Peace Project (Goles por la Paz)

The Goals for Peace Project is a mixed grassroots and academic initiative in the field of conflict transformation, community development and south-south cooperation via sport and is probably the first collaboration at the grassroots level between Colombia and the Philippines. Goals for Peace was first implemented by a group of sports enthusiasts and peace activists from both nations in 2009 in Bogotá, Colombia, followed by a project in the Negros Oriental region of the Philippines the same year. In Bogotá, the project was carried out in Ciudad Bolívar, the capital's largest locality and home to a considerable population of internally displaced people. Using the popularity of football, cooperative games and



artistic activities, Goals for Peace is aimed at empowering young people to initiate change, promote pro-active reform and develop a culture of peace in their communities. The basic components of the program are sports training and seminars on capability building along with activity-based modules in areas such as leadership, teamwork, conflict transformation and peace building (Cárdenas, 2012). Goals for Peace has become an international initiative through a series of partnerships in Europe and the Philippines, where a number of projects have been developed in collaboration with academic institutions and community organizations.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

### a) Sport for Development and Peace interventions

Sport's main contribution to peace building processes is its universality. Because of its cross-cultural nature, sport is a unique way of breaking through geographic and social barriers and therefore can be a major component of social interventions, especially those targeting children and youths. Moreover, can attract at-risk populations onto programs where they can be offered other social services. Team sports force participants to interact with each other, which can contribute to building relationships on and off the field. Furthermore, participants may use situations of conflict that naturally arise from these interactions, to find innovative ways to solve disagreements (e.g. football matches without referees as a way to encourage participants to negotiate the rules of the game as presented by the Football for Peace Methodology).

Sport can be fun, and positive values learned during games such as team cooperation, fair play and leadership can be replicated in daily life. To be successful, SDP interventions should take into consideration the specific cultural dynamics where programs take place and concentrate on the most suitable sport (e.g. cricket as a more popular sport than football in India or Pakistan; gender awareness and sensitivity in regions where this is a major issue, with mixed-teams not always being possible in some countries). Finally, monitoring and evaluation of activities should be mentioned in this section, as this is certainly one aspect of SDP programs that poses considerable challenges to the people implementing the program and to financiers. Reports should not be limited to narrating simple outputs but they should be means to rationally analyze and assess the impact of SDP interventions and the possible ways in which programs could be improved. Academic institutions may support this process by developing rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems in conjunction with NGOs and grassroots organizations.

### b) Cautions and limitations of the use of sport for peace building

Sport is commonly associated with competition and aggression and has, in many instances, led to violence on and off the field. Certain sports demand high levels of physical contact between players and that, added to the competitive nature of sport, can lead to physical aggression and even serious violence. Emphasis on values such as fair play and respect should be a major component of any sport activity whether professional or recreational. It is essential when sport is used as a strategy supporting peace building such as SDP interventions.

Although sport can address many of the factors included in conflict transformation processes, it is by no means a comprehensive and holistic peace building strategy (Lea-Howarth, 2006, p. 44) and should not be propagated as a panacea to cure the world's most pressing issues; sport alone will not create any significant social change. SDP interventions should be regarded as a component of a complex multidimensional process to attempt to bring about peace in affected communities. Lastly, an additional limitation of using sport for peace building is the fact that sports coaches may know little or nothing about peace building; conversely, peace builders (and researchers) are usually not trained in sport coaching, or may not be familiar with the particularities of a sport, impeding a greater analysis and understanding of the connection between sport and peace.

### c) Sport for Development and Peace as an emerging academic field

Academic research in the area of SDP is still in its infancy and much remains to be done. Therefore, as suggested by Giulianotti (2010), research has to go far beyond case studies, and produce more analytical work (p. 208). On a similar line of thought, Sugden and Haasner (2009) have stressed the need for more research in this field to construct and share a more robust body of knowledge, thereby providing a wider understanding of the role of sport as a social catalyst (p. 10). In relation to sport as a facilitator of peace and conflict transformation undertakings, it is appropriate to point out that most studies are not grounded in existing conflict resolution approaches, impeding a more in-depth evaluation of the claims attributed to sport, in particular, as an element of change and transformation.

In Colombia, there is a need for research grounded in peace building approaches that address the potential of sport as a transformative tool. A more concrete understanding of the role of sport and its opportunities and limitations as an agent of peace within Colombia's particularly complex environment will consequently enrich the emerging field of Sport for Development and Peace.



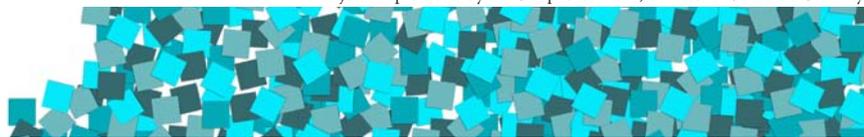
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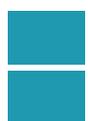
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## ARTICLE



# Initiatives of Oil Producing Communities and the Dynamics of Conflict and Peace Building in the Niger Delta

Adediran Daniel Ikuomola

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## Abstract

Local initiatives in the dynamics of conflict and peace building are germane to understanding the actions and inactions of a people reacting towards their plights. This study adopts a qualitative methodology to investigate initiatives in local communities, in the unending conflicts and peace building processes in Nigeria, using Gokanaya, Onelga, and Eche communities in Rivers State as case studies. The major findings showed that the roles and networks of key indigenous institutions such as the elders' council, ruling houses and 'mothers of the land', as well as traditional healers and witch doctors are vital in directing the affairs of the communities: their socio-political, economic, spiritual and religious activities. However, government and multinational corporations often sidelined them. With only technocrats and the educated elites involved in negotiating peace, key stakeholders were missing and conflicts in the region intensified. The study recommends that peace building initiatives should take a bottom-top approach and be devoid of politics.



## Keywords

indigenes, multinational corporations, technocrats, peace building, conflicts

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Oil producing communities in Nigeria are faced with a myriad of problems. Characteristically they are underdeveloped, and relatively far from government presence and modern ways of life (Ikporukpo, 2004). Irrespective of this, these communities are the proverbial hens that lay the golden eggs which support the Nigerian economy. Events since 1999 depict oil producing communities as places where tensions and conflicts have continually heightened, with all the attendant negative consequences on the socio-economic and political development of the

country (Imobighe, 2002; Jega, 2007; Albert, 2010). There has been violence in different parts of the country, especially in oil producing communities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Democratic governance commenced in Nigeria in 1999, and the estimated number of deaths from violent conflict since then is over 10,000 and over 300,000 internally displaced persons (Ikelegbe, 2005). Most of the conflicts in Nigeria are a result of several factors: poverty, terrorism, human rights abuses, religious fundamentalism, disease, unemployment, ethno-nationalism, resources agitation and marginalization of one ethnic group by another (Jacques, 2005, Albert, 2010).

The history of conflict in oil-producing communities in Nigeria is a long struggle of the people over the failure of the central government and the oil companies to make



meaningful improvement in their lives, despite the abundant resources generated in their communities. Following the unhealthy negative practices by multinational oil companies, the social and environmental cost of crude oil production in the region have been catastrophic. They include the destruction of wildlife and biodiversity, loss of fertile soil, pollution of air and drinking water, degradation of farmlands and damage to aquatic ecosystems. So, during the five decades since the discovery of the black gold, ecological devastation of farmland and neglect arising from crude oil production have left much of the populace in the Niger Delta region desolate and poor, and even more profound is the low level of development amongst the inhabitants (Akinwumi, 2004). Mostly farmers and fishermen, their means of livelihood are continuously being threatened by the activities of the oil companies.

The 1970s, 80s and, 90s saw the Nigerian governments make empty promises to the indigenous peoples and other inhabitants of the oil producing communities. In the long run the relationship and trust of the people towards government became strained due to the deep sense of frustration and perception of neglect and marginalisation, and the failure to win concessions through peaceful means. In the 1990s, the oil producing communities rose in protest against oil companies and the federal government. In the last decade, the challenges have meant a deadly struggle between the ethnic and community leadership, the elites, business men and politicians, youths, women and various other groups in the region (Ikporukpo, 2005; Enweremadu, 2009). In addition, individuals and groups struggle to control and dominate access to, and actual opportunities and benefits from, the oil proceeds. The result was the emergence of greed, corruption and conflict surrounding distribution of the benefits, which underpin numerous incidents of community conflicts in the region (Akinwumi, 2004; Odinaku, 2010). A number of scholars have noted the complexities, the diversity of communities, agitators and human interests, but not how conflict developed through local institutions and spiritual medium in the Niger Delta.

Specifically, this study seeks to examine the role of indigenous institutions and their networks in the dynamics of conflict in oil producing communities. There is a need to understand the cultural and spiritual dynamics of conflicts adopted by local institutions when seeking redress and resolving the myriad of problems facing oil producing communities through conflicts.

## METHODOLOGY

The scope of this study is Rivers State, a focal point in Nigeria's oil producing Niger Delta region. The study population consisted of traditional heads of clans (custodians of culture), mainly chiefs, and their subjects, women and

youth leaders in the three communities of Gokanaya, Onelga and Eche. The study employed in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions with a cross section of 25 heads of household, 12 chief priests and 13 youth group leaders, a total sample size of 50. For a robust qualitative study, the opinions of a sample of one hundred residents across the communities were also included. The data was subjected to content analysis, limited to interviews and discussions with the indigenes of the various settlements: elders, (males and females). Interpretation of data was situated within the framework of the Niger Delta socio-political and economic environment.

## SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY POPULATION

In the sample population, 58 % (29) were males and 42 % (21) females, 36 % were Christians, 48 % Animists and 16% Muslims. For the age group categories, 30 % were within the 18-37 age bracket and categorized as youths, 44 % in the 38-57 age bracket, and 26 % between 58-77 years old. The majority, about 70 % had both primary and secondary education. The figures for occupational activities clearly show that a high percentage is involved in agriculture (42%, fishing and farming) with a further 18% working as civil servants, 26% in trade and 14% speculating in land.

## INDIGENOUS INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR NETWORKS IN THE DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT IN OIL PRODUCING COMMUNITIES

The study revealed that the indigenous and traditional institutions in Rivers State were associations made up of men, women and youths who, over the years, have distinguished themselves by birth, age and occupational achievement. Notable among these institutions were the elder's council (only men); ruling houses and the king makers (blue blood); mothers of the land (mainly women traders and craft workers); traditional healers (native doctors); witch doctors, and the age grade unions (youth associations). These institutions have come to be regarded by the community and the respondents as vital in any event that may occur. There was no doubt of their importance in directing the affairs of the communities: social, political, economical, spiritual and religious activities. In Gokanaya, Onelga and Eche, the traditional rulers emphasised that the relevance of traditional institutions should not be



underestimated as it goes beyond what western education and educated elites can explain. Specifically, the traditional head in Eche, stated that:

“Traditional institutions are powerful in the control of the people’s lives developmentally, economically, politically and religiously. There are a lot of things that go beyond what the eye can see. Many a time, politicians and government officials have come to pay homage and later turn their back on us, play on our intelligence by sidelining the traditions of the people with lots of promises and white elephant projects, but the results are evident in the unrest everywhere in Rivers and other parts of the Niger Delta.” (Traditional Head Eche)

In the opinion of one of the heads in Gokanaya, the role of indigenous institutions and their networks in the dynamics of conflict in Rivers state has a common sense explanation, “spiritually the mind of the people can be controlled through them”. This is an important function of traditional institutions and their leaders; to unite the people for peaceful coexistence. In recent times, out of insecurity, selfish interest and bad governance, political manoeuvring and meandering have continuously separated the people from their livelihood and resources. Hitherto united ethnic groups are increasingly becoming disenchanted with each other and, in the same way, the traditional institution is affected. It is in these regards that the spiritual means have been developed, resuscitated and directed against government officials, programmes, decisions and ‘sycophants’ benefiting from their largesse; amidst these widening divisions, poverty becomes paramount in these communities.

Similarly the focus group discussions with the women revealed the existence of spiritual powers in manipulating the people, especially the youths. A female head noted that it is unfortunate to resort to such means:

“The implication of using cultural and spiritual means in creating disputes among one another and in settling scores have caused a lot of people to lose their loved ones, many are no more, deaths everywhere; secret societies and cult groups, here and there uncontrollable.”

The issue of secret cults and societies, according to Maquet (1971), is evident and commonly used in Africa in times of conflict resolution and peace building. They are defined as close associations, guilds, and cult groups with closed membership. These societies are ‘fraternities’ established by a conjunction of purposeful intentions with a view to achieving specific ends. They are branded ‘secret’ partly because only a few people with special knowledge or interest can understand them. Offiong (1989) revealed some of the modus-operandi of secret cults as involving the use of particular rituals, signs, symbols and forms of knowledge which are withheld from non-initiates. Re-

spondents generally agreed with the existence of special sources of powers utilised by the elders, usually secretive and kept private. Although there was reluctance to mention names of secret cults and rituals in the communities, it was however noted that there are many secret cults in the communities, which are highly respected. In Onelga, the traditional head indicated three categories of cult/secret societies: traditional secret societies, religious secret societies and anti-social secret societies, he further noted their activities as vital in explaining conflicts in Rivers state and environs. Among the three listed cults, the antisocial secret societies are usually made up of youths who physically express their anger via violent means such as rioting, burning of houses, kidnapping and other vices; while the traditional secret societies comprised mostly of the elderly whose responsibilities are intertwined with culture of the people. Traditionally they participate actively in ensuring peace and monitoring the roles and powers of the village heads. However it was spelt out clearly in the focus group discussions with the elders that “he who has the power to make peace also has the power to create conflict” this is often used as a slogan in the meetings of the elders or as a general adage.

Responses on the involvement of the elderly and traditional cults in conflict generation was noted as recent and associated with the degradation of arable land and governmental neglect of oil producing communities in the late 1980s. This period marked the third decade of oil exploration in Nigeria. About 25 % of the respondents highlighted the impact of colonialism and the empowerment of traditional elites where they had not previously existed (especially among the Igbo speaking elites in River State known for their cephalous arrangement). Endemic corruption and poor leadership since independence and the discovery of oil in 1958 had created a culture of conflict and therefore driven the imperativeness and invocation of a silent aspect of the peoples’ culture into action, often using the spirit medium in the generation of conflict as a sign of protest among local inhabitants in the region. This is one of many ways: the communities (through their custodians) react and seek redress for the anomalies in their environment and against those regarded as oppressors or collaborators of local and sometimes state government. An interviewee noted that “in recent times, we (referring to the members of the elders’ council) have been forced, like the youths, to make society uninteresting for the new sets of leaders.” This prompted the adage that *he who said his mother will not sleep, will also find no sleep*, meaning the elders also have their mechanisms to frustrate and repay corrupt officials in their own coin. The creation of unrest, disagreement and conflict were some of the mentioned demonstrations of the spiritual means invoked to stalk the villages at night, often not visible or scientifically proven but evident during the day. The women leader in Eche, commented on the collaboration of members of the Omu’echelonu secret



society (limited to a few elders) with the council of elders in the spiritual activities guiding the communities as well as in the analysis of conflict.

“Secret societies and cults can be categorised into three groups. In terms of conflict creation, combat and opposition to evil, physically, the anti-social arms of the secret institutions are mandated to face any person or institution whose interests are not genuine, as in the case of exploitative and corrupt government. These institutions have been part of our culture; we barely resort to violence, the anti-social cult, traditionally, is always the last resort.”

The above statement corroborates previous studies on how cult groups are embedded in African culture. Ogunade (2002) noted that secret societies exist in the Nigerian setting and that the influence of these societies varies depending on the local situation, and specific time of year among the various ethnic clusters. In this regard, to say that secret societies, as other traditional institutions, have and do metamorphose is stating the obvious. They have been in existence since the pre-colonial period in Nigeria. Some of them have now been reformed and transformed politically into militia groups, such as the Oodua Peoples’ Congress (OPC) among the Yoruba, the Arewa Youth Movement (AYM) among the Hausa, and the Bakassi and Egbesu boys in the riverine areas in the South-south political zone.

Table1. Respondents views on indigenous institutions and their networks in the dynamics of conflict in oil producing communities

Categorisation of Networks	Frequency	%	Roles and levels of involvement in conflict
Masquerade troupes	42	28.0	High
Traditional priests and festivals of curses	37	24.7	High
Market women/traders association	13	8.6	Moderate
Occult and Cult groups	58	38.7	High
Total	150	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2011/2012

The survey highlighted that the role of masquerade troupes, priests, occult, and cult groups was high in the dynamics of conflict in the oil producing communities. The highest ranked were the occult and cult groups (38.7 %), followed by the Masquerade troupes (28.0 %) and traditional priest groups (24.7 %). These groups, mainly dominated by men (although market women and heads of trade

associations were also highlighted), are key players in conflict generation but their involvement in the crisis in the region was found to be a moderate 8.6%.

Stakeholder debates and analyses of the interviews and discussions among various traditional heads, youths and workers in the oil companies showed that these groups are not completely distinct or isolated from each other. A former Nigerian National Petroleum company (NNPC) employee noted that these indigenous groups are made up of people from within the community; they belong to different but interrelated institutions. For instance, during festivals, a young man in the masquerade group will perform his duty as a member, while also belonging to another group such as the cult group. This shows that membership of traditional institutions is in a state of flux, making it difficult to hold any person or group responsible for a particular crisis, especially when they are not seen perpetuating violence or physically indulging in the mobilisation of youths against state authorities. As noted in Eche, the upheaval during election and festival periods are often difficult to trace, because many of the perpetrators belong to different associations, traditional unions or communities. This often causes confusion among the security operatives when making arrests. For others, women groups are not excluded from crisis generation, as they have been found instigating their children, youths and husbands to, violently and otherwise, fight for their rights. Traditionally, among the Gokanaya people, a conflict could arise in the morning if a woman goes out naked at night to rain curses on the people or particular group of families, or government officials and politicians who have done wrong towards the community or an individual. This view is also widely held among the Binis, where some of the Gokanaya kinsmen trace their origin.

## INDIGENOUS INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR NETWORKS IN PEACE BUILDING

Particularly of note and mentioned by those interviewed, was the masquerade institution popular referred to as *Egungun*. Traditionally, the *Egungun* are believed to be spirits which enter a man and make him perform acrobatically, dancing and gesticulating, and chanting words which can only be understood by the people surrounding the *Egungun*. It is also believed that they bring blessings and revelations from the spirit world. The *Egungun* institution is of importance to the people, and it is believed that the spirit appears three times a year. The first appearance is at the beginning of the planting season (early March-April), then at the time of harvesting of yam and maize, often symbolised as the god of fertility, and then between August



and December as a symbol of peace and thanksgiving (welcoming indigenes who have been abroad). This institution has greatly been affected by education, religion, politics, deforestation and the oil economy.

The people have profound belief in the network and impact of the Egungun as a traditional institution and festival. This is evident in the way young and old, indigenes and non indigenes anxiously prepare and idolise the coming of the Egungun. An elder and member of the Aonda Masquerade, however noted that there were specific Egungun, only known to members of the masquerade houses whose duties were strictly to pour libation and praise, for peace and peaceful coexistence of the people.

A traditionalist in Eche stated that the last fifteen years symbolised a dark period in Rivers State and among its people, and that there was a new Egungun that appears at night. It does not symbolise peace, and is only accompanied by birds making strange sounds. A youth leader in Onalga noted that, recently, ceremonial masquerades were common, during burial rites, rites of passage and age grade ceremonies, especially the *Babouwa* (Comic masquerade).

A female head of Eche opined that, as more and more people receive formal education, they abandon their culture to adopt western religions, especially Christianity. In doing so, the people gradually leave behind the rituals, tradition and customs associated with the institutions. Regarding the Egungun festival, she highlighted the fact that, today, very few people can perform the rites to bring out the Egungun and interpret their messages. The few custodians of this institution are very old and their children are no longer interested in continuing the tradition of masquerading.

## INDIGENOUS COMMUNAL PROPOSALS AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES' RESPONSES TO THE PEACE BUILDING PROCESSES IN THE NIGER DELTA

The aftermath of the 2008 amnesty programme by late President Umaru Yar'Adua, brought new hope and temporary relief to the people of Rivers State. The regular call for proposals on how to ensure peace building since then is said to have gained prominence and is becoming more and more relevant in the current political situation. Similarly, the state and local media are gradually coming to terms with the idea that traditional institutions and elders are vital to peace building initiatives and practice in any community with regards to their 'spiritual powers'. Community

based organisations and non-governmental organisations have also recognised the need to incorporate the chiefs and elders and their traditional structures to restore order to the system. It was described as, "widely welcomed", however, a lot of politicking was noted in practice, evident in the demands and proposals that arose from the communities and the governmental responses, as listed in the table below:

Table 2. Community proposals and government responses to their demands

Community proposals/demands	Frequency	% ages	Comments on Government responses to community proposals
Building and expansion of markets (open and lockup shops).	24	16.0	Average
Cottage industries.	26	17.3	Average
Fertilizers, fishing boats and other related materials	35	23.3	High
Health facilities	17	11.3	Low
Road network linking rural community to urban centres	34	22.8	High
Low-cost housing	14	9.3	Low
Total	150	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2011/2012

Table 2 shows that 23.3 % of the communities' demands between 2008 and 2012 were related to the need for fertilizers and fishing materials; 22.8 % for roads construction; 17.3 % for cottage industries; 16.0 % for market construction and expansion; and health facilities accounted for 11.3 %. In all the proposals, the construction of road networks linking the rural areas to major cities was given more importance while the provision of fertilizers and fishing materials was rated as high in terms of governmental response. The proposal aimed to alleviate poverty in the local settings by laying emphasis on basic human needs such as food, health and shelter. However, it was discovered that, although government received various proposals from the communal heads, the implementation of the proposals was described by many as politicised issue which highlighted the selfish agenda of the government. For instance, while the communities demanded new and modern markets, government agencies were more interested in renovating the existing markets. In Eche, the case was different, as government built a new market but not on the land specified in the proposal. The decision had a negative effect



and was heavily criticized. Upon completion, the market was only used as a shelter for the destitute, hoodlums and miscreants at night. One of the women leaders in the study noted that market locations and operations have spiritual connotations, which only the elders can explain:

“[...] the new market in Eche has been abandoned because it was not sited in the place where the elders and the community wanted. The government and agencies involved failed to realise that the market site has a spiritual implication for it to function properly by attracting people, and be used without suffering misfortune. This is a major factor why the market is still unused to date.”

In Gokanaya and Onelga, cottage industries built by the government were among the demands of the communities in the proposal submitted shortly after the amnesty programme. Over 78 % of those in the study commented that the speed with which government embarked on the project was overwhelming:

“[...] it would have not been imagined that the cottage industry in Onelga was completed within six months. It was in record time, the acquisition of production materials and equipments followed subsequently.” (Women leader/youth)

In Eche, the cottage industry was not granted because of political reasons. Of note, was that the community did not support the local government chairman's second term bid:

“The local government chairman and the councillors are not on good terms with the community heads, just because a vote of no confidence was once passed on them prior to the 2011 election. For this reason, they rejected key demands in the community's proposal such as the demand for a cottage industry to serve the community, especially the youths, in skill acquisition and empowerment.” (Religious leader, Eche).

Based on the riverine nature of the communities, the demands for fishing boats, fishing nets, hooks and other materials and equipment were common in the three communities' proposals in the peace building initiatives. The provisions of these materials and equipment have also been described as being politicised and distributed based on community support for the government in power. Loyalist camps were identified as key to governmental responses. Health facilities were also a major part of the proposals, but the request for hospitals was specifically reduced to health centres and clinics. The need for the local authority to finance and improve traditional medicine was completely neglected. In Onelga, the traditional head was asked to remove these demands from the proposal. The worst response was

to the request for low-cost housing: a community head quoted the state housing authority chairperson as saying “housing proposals are for those in bigger cities and not for rural dwellers”.

Of all the proposals listed in Table 2, road construction, reconstruction and maintenance was given the nod. The network of roads was described as having improved since the amnesty programme had begun. This was attributed to the Presidential proclamation that the interior of the Niger Delta should be opened to avoid militants groups hiding in the creeks. This gesture has meant more villages and rural areas in the Niger Delta are connected to major towns and cities, aiding development and communication in general. However two-thirds of the interviewees noted that construction of roads gives government agents the opportunity to embezzle public funds, hence the concentration and speedy approval of construction proposals.

## CONFLICT INITIATIVES

Conflict, though eminent in all society, is a product involving human actions and inactions (Weber, 1978). Human initiatives towards the generation of conflicts can only be understood by knowing what triggers conflict and the various societal signs and symbols that are often displayed prior to the manifestation of conflicts. Without exception, the conflict in the Niger Delta was considered a result of grievances, ill feelings, resentments and government insensitivity to the plight of the people and their environment. Of note is the degradation of the environment as a result of the exploitation and exploration of oil, as well as the long-term effect on the health and livelihood of the people. Agricultural activities on lands, rivers and the sea have been affected to the extent that life has become not only expensive but in some cases hostile, for communities and the people who hitherto lived in peace. Given these narratives of life in the Niger Delta, the initiative towards creating conflict was studied. This study revealed seven different strategies and initiatives adopted by the people of Gokanaya, Onelga and Eche in reaction to their plight:

- 1) Red banners on poles along market roads
- 2) Barricades along farmlands
- 3) Sacrifices on disputed lands, structures and private houses of notable individuals in the community and their government allies
- 4) Night-time gatherings
- 5) Early morning gatherings of youths (mostly males) in public places
- 6) Early closure and late opening of markets
- 7) Resonating sound of gongs and town criers late at night instead of around midday or early morning.



These signs were described as ways for the people to ingeniously communicate conflict, to act out their feelings, to show that there was an issue yet to be addressed or had not been properly addressed and the likelihood of an impending conflict, which if not decoded by state authority, and given a speedy response, might spell doom for the nation. While these signs and symbols are often obvious to outsiders, the precise meanings can only be properly interpreted by locals or sometimes only a specific group of people. In this case the interpretive understanding of signs and symbols becomes necessary in conflict analysis. Insiders usually know when violence and conflicts will be unleashed. It was also noted that government and local authorities often do not take these initiatives seriously, except after major strikes by militant or aggrieved parties through the vandalization of public property, gruesome killings and other avoidable disasters.

## THE CONFLICT IN PEACE BUILDING INITIATIVES

While conflicts are caused by grievances, so are the initiatives towards resolving conflicts and peace building, a process which brings back equilibrium to the society. However the problem encountered by the communities in conflict resolution and peace building is that there is often a top-bottom approach. Government and public office holders also take advantage of making money out of every peace building process in the Niger Delta, thereby reducing it to a purely ceremonial activity. In Onelga and Eche it was noted that the key representatives of the various wards in the communities were sidelined in the peace building process and in the amnesty programmes, except for those who have close ties with governmental agencies and are card-carrying members of the ruling political parties. According to the participants in Gokanaya, consultants were hired from universities and government ministries to deliberate and dictate the pace and shape of the peace building process. Often, the peace building process is prolonged because the acclaimed negotiators or experts are not grounded or well informed about the plight of the people, hence the difficulty in negotiating peace in the wider Niger Delta region. The result is more grievances, distrust and acrimony in the community wards. Quite a number of respondents (about 46 %) considered that the peace building initiatives were usually from outside rather than from the communities, as summed up by a youth leader in Eche:

“[...] community clashes, as well as the peace building processes, in the Niger Delta region as a whole have often been politicised in favour of communities in support of the ruling political parties with notable

individuals/personalities in society and government. Small communities are not considered because it is believed that their votes do not count compared to those of larger communities. Similarly, opinions of individuals from the communities are usually not taken into consideration, compared to that of the representatives of government.”

A member of the Isopkemrou Youth Association had this to say:

“In the past, Shell-BP’s involvement in community services and development programmes as one of the initiatives to peace was very impressive and hailed by members of the communities. This was so because they were consulting with the community heads, market women, elders, youths and various religious and traditional bodies before embarking on programmes and projects that would benefit everyone irrespective of whose interests were harmed.. Presently, the situation has changed. Government interference and corruption in the traditional institutions among others are issues creating conflict of interest and discord in various communities where oil is being explored.”

Narrating a particular scenario in Eche where a primary school was said to have been renovated with the sum of N50million:

“[...] for instance one of the community development programmes in Eche which has created a lot of noise and disputes against the multinational companies, was the renovation of Eche primary school with the sum of fifty million naira. First of all, the primary school was not among the priorities of the people of Eche, the school was built by the community with the sum of N7million. Instead of renovating the primary school for such a huge amount, the community would have preferred the joint venture to build a secondary school for the community, as the closest government owned secondary school is about six kilometres from the inland population.” (Financial secretary, Otuoma Women Association (OWA) in Eche).

In Kerboumo Union (KU)-Onelga, and the Isopkemrou Youth Organisation (IYO)-Gokanaya a major conflict of interest was with the farming population. This was basically on three issues: (1) removal of subsidy earlier enjoyed from Shell and BP community development programmes, (2) the emergence of the SPDC (Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria) and NNPC (Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation) joint venture and (3) the introduction of agencies in the fertilizer and pesticide distribution channels.



“[...] in the past, fertilizer was being re-subsidised after the normal subsidy by the federal government. This was a good gesture by Shell-BP, however, since the introduction of multinational corporation joint venture initiatives, fertilizer procurement and distribution is now being handled by different agents set up by the government in the various communities. This has not only widened the bureaucratic bottleneck and the cost of fertilizers, but also the cost of getting it from the agencies (point of distribution) to the point of usage (the farm).

Another interviewee (a farmer) noted that the support enjoyed from multinational companies in the communities was gradually fading with the introduction of various ventures which do not put the community's interests at heart. Shell and Agip used to help farmers buy fertilizers and pesticides and distribute them to farm settlements where the youth arms of farm cooperatives collect on behalf of their parents and kinsmen. This has all changed. “What a pity”, exclaimed the female farmer, a member of the Kerboumo Union, who highlighted the distribution channels of fertilizers and pesticides among farmers.

In Onelga, the women's group noted that “the case of peace building in the Niger Delta is often determined at the federal capital territory Abuja rather than through the initiatives of those affected. It was deduced from the qualitative data that there was more politics in peace building initiatives than in conflict initiatives, because they are frequent and involve government expenditure, so peace building processes in the Niger Delta were described as political and full of deceit:

“[...] Imagine someone who has lived all his life in Lagos city was made the chairman of the amnesty programme in Onelga - just because he is a member of the ruling party! What does he know about the origin of conflicts in this community? Does he know the number of cult groups causing trouble in this community? Does he know those sponsoring violence in this area? These are questions we should ask ourselves.” (Pa. Obiyan, a retired teacher and headmaster in Onelga)

From his comments, it is clear that the people are angry because of the continuous sidelining of the people at the community level in proffering solutions to the unending crisis in the region. They are missing links in the chain,

and if this situation does not change, it will create myriads of problems in the future.

The effect of the above is manifested in the consistent vandalization of multinational companies' installations and facilities located around Rivers State and neighbouring communities. There is regular protest by youths and adults within these communities firstly against this development and secondly because of the price hikes of agricultural produce. It is on record that the Niger Delta is one of the regions in Nigeria with the highest expenditure on agriculture, yet with the lowest yield and contribution to agriculture due to the exploration of oil. Agriculture accounts for over 60 % of the nation's employment opportunities, but in the Niger Delta the meagre income from agriculture means it employs unskilled youth, the largest section of the labour force. The result is the restive and violent nature of most youth, already unemployed.

## CONCLUSION

This study sees the discrepancies facing the manner in which community proposals are being handled as one of the causes of conflict, poverty and violence in the Niger Delta region, evident in Onelga, Gokanaya and Eche communities. Specifically, government and multinational corporations exploring and exploiting the resources (oil) in the communities are becoming increasingly insensitive to the plights of the inhabitants in conflict situations and their initiatives as pivotal steps in the peace building processes and the restoration of harmonious coexistence in their communities. If not checked and given the necessary attention within and alongside the amnesty programmes, the politicisation of community needs and corrupt practices among government officials, party affiliates cum loyalists, will continue to put the oil producing communities in a perpetual state of conflict. Lastly, the study recommends that the initiatives of local communities in generating conflicts amidst the insensitivity of government and its agencies should not be taken for granted in the broader discourse of peace building, which should take a bottom-top approach and be devoid of politics. ■



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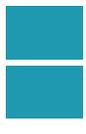
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## ARTICLE



# Family Mediation: Competencies for Social Work Training

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## Abstract

This article discusses the fundamental principles of family mediation training and social competencies, focussing on the needs and requirements of mediation training. The results of the research, which was conducted with the assistance of professional mediators and students, are presented with a view to analysing the incorporation of mediation training within the competencies and requirements of the European Higher Education Area. The competencies defined by the statistical analysis can serve as a useful tool for the development of new syllabuses and for professionals who work in the area of conflict management.



## Keywords

conflict, mediation, competencies, social work, family

## INTRODUCTION

In our research, we focussed on the training requirements for mediation with a view to it being included in university training of social workers, using as a base the main agreements reached in discursive practices from a European and international perspective. We will first give some background on the role of social work in conflict management, particularly in the area of social mediation.

European higher education is currently undergoing a period of transformation as a result of the launch of the European Higher Education Area. This reform emphasises the need for all citizens to develop a range of competencies and skills that will enable them to undergo effective training in preparation for the world of work.

Moreover, significant social changes are taking place in social and family structures. One of the social institutions that has been most affected is the family, which has changed and evolved with the deinstitutionalisation of the traditional unit and the emergence of various types of

family structure. Other factors, such as immigration, have led to an increasingly plural and multi-ethnic social reality. These developments have resulted in the rapid growth of family mediation as a method of intervention for social professions in general and social work in particular. Moore (1995: 9) defines mediation as “the intervention into a dispute or negotiation by an acceptable, impartial and neutral third party, who has no authoritative decision-making power” According to J. F. Six (1997: 13), “its purpose is to foster new relationships between the parties or prevent or heal troubled relationships.”

We opted for a quantitative methodology, using a survey, to provide an insight into family mediation as close as possible to the reality. The aim was to identify the best quality learning of the competencies necessary for professional mediation, to be included in social work syllabuses. Experts were also interviewed to validate the effectiveness of the questionnaire and the relevance of the competencies and skills, to ensure the results were statistically significant and consistent with the changes in social work training



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in the latest reforms of the training syllabuses. By coordinating the paradigmatic and methodological levels, we can empirically validate the proposed competence, to serve as a theoretical and methodological tool for both teachers and professionals working in the field.

The current effort to adapt syllabuses to the European Higher Education Area, requires scientific foundations to justify research on mediation and the competencies required by the social situation and the job market. The introduction of mediation training programmes in syllabuses is fundamental for equipping social work graduates with the necessary tools to use in all situations (Rondón, 2010).

This has given rise to calls for current teaching practices in social work studies to be modified and updated to reflect the social changes affecting families and the emergence of conflict.

The aim, therefore, was to analyse the competencies required for social workers to become involved in family mediation. The data from this analysis of the competencies required for social workers to become involved in family mediation could be a useful tool for developing new syllabuses and an interesting source of information for those involved in research activities.

## METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

In view of the objectives of the research, data collection involved a questionnaire with closed questions. In order to validate competencies and skills, experts and practitioners were previously consulted about their suitability for the role of mediator and a pre-test was conducted to ensure the appropriateness of the questions and to ascertain the initial impressions of the practitioners. The questionnaire was individual and self-administered, and the majority of the questions were closed in line with the purpose of the study. The comparative analysis of the two groups (students and professionals) enabled an analysis of the training received and its comparison with the realities of the job market.

To perform the statistical analysis, the latest version of SPSS, version 19.0, was used, which enabled us to establish descriptive statistics, averages, weighted sums, contingency tables, charts and levels of significance.

## PARTICIPANTS

The population samples for this research were:

- Final year social work students at the Complutense University of Madrid.

- Qualified professional mediators with a social work training background.
- Experts in social work training and mediation.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE VARIABLES

The analysis variables were structured in two main areas. One was related to the participants' backgrounds, including socio-demographic considerations, the subject's current status and the university they attended. The second dealt with the competencies necessary for the practice of mediation in social work studies, in accordance with the requirements of the European Higher Education Area, i.e. general and specific competencies, social skills and specific mediation subjects.

## ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DATA

### Part 1: The background of the respondents

The university students participating were mainly young, female and full-time social work students. Considering the average age in general and those studying at the Complutense University in particular, a high percentage was very young: 90% were aged between 18 and 25 and only 10% were over 25. In relation to sex, 83.2% were women and 16.9% were men. In terms of employment, 57.7% were full-time social work students, 27.7% were employed, and 14.5% defined themselves as being in other situations, such as undertaking work experience, casual work and looking after children.

To a certain extent, the professional mediators had similar characteristics: they were predominantly female (81.25% women) and young (56.25% were aged between 26 and 33, with only 9.38% between the ages of 42 and 49).

With regard to their fields of work, the majority specialised in family mediation (71.88%) and the remaining in intercultural (12.5%) and judicial (9.38%) mediation. Other areas such as community mediation were not particularly well represented (6.38%).

### Part 2. Assessment of general and specific competencies and social skills

The following analysis evaluates the score for professional competencies and social skills, classifying the most impor-



tant according to the hierarchical order and importance they were given by the participants on the survey. For each group of competencies and skills, the respondent not only had to indicate the order of priority, but also the five most important competencies. The results are shown in three tables. Table 1 covers the classification of general competencies (gc), Table 2, specific competencies (sc) and Table 3, social skills (ss). The scores are ordered according to the percentage of the five most important general competencies to compare the evaluation with the importance given to them.

Due to the large amount of data, the students' results are shown on the left of the table and the professional mediators' on the right to display the information clearly. The shaded columns indicate the weighted sum of the group, which takes into account the fact that the student group is the largest and represents the point of comparison of the analysis.

The results obtained from the statistical analysis are shown below:

Table 1. Classification according to the weighted sum of the percentages in general competencies

Weighted sum: the sum of the % of students/professionals who ranked the skill category in the top five positions, with the position of the general competencies (gc) weighted as follows:  $gc1 \times 5 + gc2 \times 4 + gc3 \times 3 + gc4 \times 2 + gc5 \times 1$ .

General competencies	Students: positions in general competencies (gc) 1-5 (%)						Professionals: positions in general competencies (gc) 1-5 (%)					
	gc1	gc2	gc3	gc4	gc5	Weighted sum	gc1	gc2	gc3	gc4	gc5	Weighted sum
17 Conflict management	18.8	14.1	16.5	18.4	13.4	251.13	53.1	12.5	18.8		3.1	375.00
3 Interpersonal skills	18.8	10.8	11.8	5.2	10.1	193.80	25.0	9.4	28.1	3.1	9.4	262.50
2 Teamwork	14.5	12.4	6.1	7.5	10.5	165.92					3.1	3.13
15 Commitment	5.1	6.6	10.4	11.8	8.1	115.51						0.00
18 Analytical ability	4.2	8.4	6.6	11.3	12.9	110.82	3.1	21.9	9.4	21.9	18.8	193.75
10 Critical reasoning	6.6	7.5	4.2	6.6	3.8	93.12	3.1		9.4	6.3	3.1	59.38
4 Ethical commitment	7.0	7.0	4.7	4.7	4.3	91.70		3.1		6.3	6.3	31.25
16 Assertiveness	3.7	8.0	7.5	4.7	2.4	85.57	6.3	21.9	3.1	12.5	15.6	168.75
1 Decision making	7.0	4.7	3.7	5.6	6.7	83.72	3.1	3.1	6.3	9.4	15.6	81.25
11 Adaptation to new circumstances	1.8	3.3	12.3	6.6	8.6	81.53	3.1		6.3	12.5	6.3	65.63
9 Recognition of diversity and multiculturalism	4.7	5.6	4.7	3.7	4.3	72.35		6.3	3.1	3.1	6.3	46.88
5 Creativity	3.3	3.3	2.8	3.7	2.8	48.72		12.5	9.4	6.3	9.4	100.00
8 Information management skills	0.4	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	30.78	3.1	9.4	6.3	12.5	3.1	100.00
12 Concern for quality	0.0	0.9	1.4	3.7	2.4	18.03				6.3		12.50
14 Public service vocation	0.4	0.9	2.8	0.4	1.9	17.53						0.00
6 Leadership	1.4	0.9	0.4	1.4	0.9	16.08						0.00
7 Knowledge of a foreign language	1.4	0.9	0.4	0.4	2.4	15.62						0.00
13 Probity	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.9	2.85						0.00

Source: Compiled by author

Both participant groups indicated that essential general skills were conflict management, interpersonal and analytical skills. Teamwork and commitment however were more highly valued by the students than the professionals, who, interestingly, carry out much of their work in a team, as shown by their answers to part 1. Probity scored very low for both groups. Many of the respondents needed to ask about the meaning of this word as they completed the questionnaire, which perhaps explains why it received a low score or was simply not answered.

Both groups agreed on the two most important competencies (conflict management and interpersonal skills).

There were also similarities in the category of analytical ability, although the students generally gave it a lower score. As mentioned above, the students largely opted for commitment and teamwork, and the professionals for assertiveness and creativity. The main difference was found in the students' group, where the correspondence between the competencies rated as most important and how highly they were ranked was not proportional, i.e. between 3 and 4. The exception was the recognition of diversity and multiculturalism competency, which featured among the five highest rated and also among the most valued.



In contrast, quality, public service, leadership and knowledge of a foreign language were considered general

competencies with little value, especially among the students.

Table 2. Classification according to the weighted sum of percentages in specific competencies  
Weighted sum: the sum of the % of students/professionals who ranked the specific competence (sc) category in the top five positions, with the different positions weighted as follows:  $sc1 \times 5 + sc2 \times 4 + sc3 \times 3 + sc4 \times 2 + sc5 \times 1$

Specific competencies	Students: positions in specific competencies (sc) 1-5						Professionals: positions in specific competencies (sc) 1-5					
	sc1	sc2	sc3	sc4	sc5	Weighted sum	sc1	sc2	sc3	sc4	sc5	Weighted sum
18 Identifying the cause of conflict	5.5	6.6	9.7	7.7	1.5	100.81		15.6	9.4	3.1	3.1	100.00
26 Managing a communication process for agreement	8.5	3.5	2.5	6.2	13.1	90.54	3.1				6.3	21.88
24 Skilful mediation through communication	5.5	6.1	2.5	8.2	4.7	81.32	9.4	6.3	3.1	18.8		118.75
23 Social skills to express ideas	6.5	2.5	4.1	8.8	4.7	77.76	3.1	9.4	9.4	12.5		106.25
5 Understanding conflict as a basis of mediation	8.0	3.5	4.1	0.5	4.2	72.31	3.1	3.1				28.13
1 Understanding conflict as a human dimension	10.6	1.0	1.5	4.1	1.5	71.62	18.8	6.3		6.3	3.1	134.38
25 Professional confidentiality and ethical principles	3.5	5.1	4.1	4.1	6.8	65.59		3.1	6.3	3.1	3.1	40.63
9 Respect for cultural diversity	2.5	8.1	2.5	3.1	3.1	62.39	3.1	3.1	3.1			37.50
11 Interaction in conflicts to achieve balance	2.0	5.1	6.1	4.6	3.6	62.08	15.6	15.6	9.4	3.1	6.3	181.25
8 Identifying the interests of the parties involved	3.5	5.1	3.6	4.1	3.1	60.36		12.5	6.3			68.75
19 Recognising mediation as a viable alternative	3.5	4.5	4.6	3.6	2.6	59.85		6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3	62.50
10 Supporting the parties in a self-management capacity	2.5	5.1	5.6	4.1	1.0	59.39		3.1		9.4	3.1	34.38
3 Developing work hypotheses about the conflict	6.5	3.0	1.5	2.0	3.6	57.54		3.1	3.1			21.88
7 Valuing the participation of the parties in conflict	5.0	3.5	5.1	0.5	1.0	57.09	3.1		9.4	3.1		50.00
12 Understanding the profile of the mediator	2.0	3.0	4.6	5.1	0.5	47.15			3.1			9.38
6 Assuming mediation voluntarily	4.0	4.0	1.0	2.5	1.5	46.38	3.1	3.1		9.4	9.4	56.25
21 Investigating mediation experiences	0.5	6.1	3.0	3.1	3.6	46.20	3.1		3.1		3.1	28.13
20 Using optimum intervention methods	4.0	2.0	2.5	2.5	4.2	45.49				6.3		12.50
4 Distinguishing between different types of conflict	2.5	1.5	4.6	3.6	2.6	42.55	9.4	3.1		3.1		65.63
17 Intervening to find real solutions	2.0	0.5	7.2	1.0	1.5	37.44	9.4	3.1	6.3		12.5	90.63
27 Designing communication strategies	0.5	3.0	2.5	4.1	4.7	35.53				6.3	6.3	18.75
14 Explaining possible legal consequences	1.0	1.5	4.1	3.6	1.5	32.38						0.00
28 Assessing interventions	0.5	3.5	3.0	2.0	2.1	32.34	3.1		3.1	3.1	12.5	43.75
30 Availability of mediation training	2.5	1.0	0.5	2.0	2.1	24.50		3.1			3.1	15.63
13 Investigating, analysing and using existing knowledge	0.0	3.0	2.0	1.0	0.5	21.03			3.1			9.38
15 Evaluating interventions from a psychosocial perspective	1.5	1.5	1.0	1.0	1.5	20.44						0.00
16 Extensive professional knowledge	0.5	1.5	1.0	1.0	1.5	15.39	3.1		9.4			43.75
29 Interdisciplinary profile (social and legal)	0.0	0.0	1.5	1.0	5.7	12.50			3.1			9.38
22 Assertiveness and adaptation of discourse	0.5	0.5	0.0	1.5	4.2	11.89	3.1			6.3		28.13
2 Analysis of conflict from an interdisciplinary perspective	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.0	4.62	6.3					31.25

Source: Compiled by author



If viewed as groups, it can be concluded that the four groups of competencies generally have a positive rating for the reasons stated. However, the situation changes with respect to the differences in rating of the four groups of specific skills by the students and the professional mediators.

Most of the students valued the first group of competencies highly, i.e. they understood that conflict is the basis of mediation, then the third, fostering communication and negotiation between the parties in dispute, and to a lesser extent, the second, the ability to identify the conflictive parties and its relationship with environment. The third group, the ability to manage mediation, its nature and techniques was however rated as not very important. This trend supports the argument

that conceptual and procedural issues are valued more highly than practical or instrumental matters, as far as mediation is concerned.

In contrast, the professional mediators valued the four general groups almost equally, and gave more importance to instrumental skills than the students.

The overall appraisal of specific skills is high and more positive for the mediation professionals than the students. Despite the large group of specific competencies, there was general agreement in the choice, indicating that the thirty specific competencies in Table 2 were considered relevant by those surveyed, and are valid for analysing the results of training as far as mediation and conflict resolution are concerned.

Table 3. Classification according to the weighted sum of percentages in the social skills

Weighted sum: the sum of the % of students/professionals who ranked the social skills (ss) category in the top five positions, with the different positions weighted as follows:  $ss1 \times 5 + ss2 \times 4 + ss3 \times 3 + ss4 \times 2 + ss5 \times 1$

Social skills	Students: positions in social skills (ss) 1-5						Professionals: positions in social skills (ss) 1-5					
	ss1	ss2	ss3	ss4	ss5	Weighted sum	ss1	ss2	ss3	ss4	ss5	Weighted sum
1 Active listening skills	56.9	8.6	9.1	2.4	7.0	358.68	37.5	9.4	3.1	12.5	15.6	275.00
5 Verbal communication skills	7.1	11.0	12.0	9.6	6.5	142.11	3.1	12.5		9.4	3.1	87.50
10 Conflict identification and analysis skills	6.2	5.2	9.1	19.7	21.1	140.32	15.6	18.8	6.3	6.3	15.6	200.00
8 Ability to remain impartial and neutral	5.2	7.6	11.5	19.2	9.0	139.37	6.3	6.3	9.4	18.8	9.4	131.25
7 Negotiation skills	2.8	11.5	15.4	10.5	10.0	138.09	9.4	9.4	9.4	9.4	6.3	137.50
2 Ability to assess needs and interests	7.6	16.8	4.3	7.2	4.5	137.57	6.3	21.9	15.6	28.1	9.4	231.25
3 Ability to build trust and rapport	5.7	15.8	7.7	5.7	6.5	133.43	21.9	6.3	9.4			162.50
6 Nonverbal communication skills	2.8	11.5	12.0	9.6	10.5	126.52		3.1	18.8		6.3	75.00
4 Rethinking and reformulation skills	3.3	6.2	6.2	4.3	4.0	73.26		9.4	12.5	6.3	21.9	109.38
9 Strategy planning skills	1.4	2.4	5.8	7.6	9.0	58.61		3.1	12.5	6.3	9.4	71.88
11 Ability to convey credibility	0.0	1.9	3.3	2.4	5.0	27.67			3.1			9.38
12 Ability to design temporary plans	0.0	0.4	2.4	1.4	6.5	18.59				3.1	3.1	9.38

Source: Compiled by author

The skills from the first group (1, 2, 10, 3 and 7) with the highest weighted sum are the same for students and mediation professionals. These are the social skills for active listening, evaluation of interests and needs, identifying and analysing disputes, building trust and the ability to negotiate. For both groups of participants, more importance was given to social skills related to processes and communication management and those related to knowledge and disciplinary matters. Paradoxically, explicit communication in the skills (verbal and nonverbal), in spite of having the highest weighted sum in both cases, was not among the most important. This indicates that the students valued verbal (5) and nonverbal communication (6) skills more than the professionals.

The professionals, in contrast, opted for rethinking and reformulation skills (4). Both students and professionals generally considered active listening as the most valuable social skill. The two participating groups generally coincided in the precedence they give and they are clear and precise in terms of reinforcing the conclusions.

From the tables, it is evident that no differences exist in terms of the skills rated as most important, and their average ranking varies only slightly, i.e. the social skills that the students and practitioners considered the most important are also rated higher.

We conclude that the twelve skills are relevant with a high statistical score for both groups.



## CONCLUSIONS

A detailed analysis was carried out on the role of social work in training programmes for family mediation, based on a survey. Here, we reflect on the results and offer the following conclusions, listed according to the initial objectives and assumptions.

- 1) Recent national and international debate agrees on the need to ensure that students acquire the knowledge, attitudes and social skills needed to pursue the careers for which they are being trained. According to the recommendations of the Tuning report, the competencies that social work students and graduates need to acquire are as follows:
  - Systemic competencies: related to teamwork. Skills that enhance interpersonal relationships and analytical, information management and decision making abilities.
  - Instrumental competencies: the ability to identify conflict is important as a basis for mediation. Also the ability to manage mediation and have the communication skills and techniques for negotiation between the parties in conflict.
  - Interpersonal skills: the relationship between conflict and environment, encouraging communication and social interaction.

Due to their vital importance and their nature as an area of intervention in social work, specific competencies have to be mastered by students in the field of social mediation.

- 2) A degree in social work should prepare students to work with individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities, and enable them to evaluate performance. Social workers often encounter situations of conflict, daily, if we consider conflict as a factor that is present in the individuals and groups that make up society. As a result of the progress made in conflict resolution strategies, mediation can play a central role in dealing with the social changes taking place in post-modern societies and the new family units that now exist. Of all social institutions, the family has experienced the greatest change from its traditional model in terms of structure and multitude of forms.

The proliferation of mediation and its many different areas of intervention are an inescapable fact that justifies the need to train postgraduate studies in conflict resolution and mediation. In addition, future social work graduates must be provided with applied and specific training that complements basic undergraduate studies and enables them to acquire highly

specialised skills in accordance with the needs of the job market. This postgraduate study should be available to all graduates whose studies can be considered suitable for mediation, but with training pathways that are tailored to the needs of each specific discipline, in this case, social work.

A commitment by universities to recognise society's new social demands is required, in line with the requirements of the European Higher Education Area. A social work degree should enable future graduates to meet the new demands of society and the new reality of the job market.

From this study, it was evident that social work students had an extensive knowledge of mediation and its importance, although there was some bias, originating from their social work studies, which was mainly manifested in difficulties in identifying concepts, applying social work and mediation principles and, in particular, identifying the differences between the disciplines in terms of social intervention. In addition, more emphasis is given to issues of knowledge than to practical and methodological matters precisely because they conceive them as being identical to those related to social work and because of the ineffectiveness of old syllabuses in terms of the practical training which is essential for developing mediation skills.

- 3) Mediation as an alternative conflict resolution strategy is one of the core competencies for social workers. For this reason, they have to be properly trained for mediation to be part of their day-to-day work in a number of specific areas of conflict: schools, families, victims, minors, and communities and families (social mediation). To this, we can also add the multiethnic dimension and the resulting challenges for social workers in terms of multicultural or transnational families, in which the cultural variable becomes an important consideration in future social conflict, requiring special training. As stated by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 2008), social workers are faced with the issue of conflict resolution as a regular part of their professional work and it champions mediation as an effective method for social workers dealing with family conflicts.

In short, mediation should be incorporated into undergraduate courses from a bi-directional perspective. On the one hand, conflict resolution should be included in the cross-curricular competencies of compulsory subjects with the teaching of conflict resolution techniques for families, groups and communities to resolve conflicts that arise in the day-to-day work of social workers. On the other, specific subjects should be offered to enable students to apply their knowledge. The importance of mediation in social work education was emphatically recognised by the survey participants, and is supported by work developed in other European



countries. One such example is a document on social work competencies published in the United Kingdom (2002), which recognises the importance of mediation competencies and training in conflict resolution techniques. Also worth noting for implicitly legitimising these arguments is European Directive 2008/52/EC of 21 May 2008 (18) on certain aspects of mediation in civil and commercial matters. "Member states shall encourage, by any means which they consider appropriate, the training of mediators and the introduction of effective quality control mechanisms concerning the provision of mediation services."

These new challenges provide opportunities and interesting prospects for social work in the 21st century, opening the door for professionals to areas beyond the limited management of social resources.

With regard to the content of mediation training, according to our analysis, emphasis should be placed on knowledge and the disciplinary framework of mediation, psychosocial issues and techniques, skills and procedures for conflict resolution. In other words, it should have a twofold, theoretical and practical, dimension.

- 4) Social work is a major part of mediation training. In addition to an extensive history of working with families, it can also play a role in the first experiences of mediation programmes. Its characteristics are suitable for these programmes, due to its generalist and multidisciplinary nature, psychosocial and legal content and the social skills required by syllabuses, which are all considered fundamental in mediation training.

Mediation is part of social work not only as a tool but also as a goal to enrich this work, involving comprehensive intervention and providing new strategies and perspectives to enable the social reality and problems to be analysed. Social reality is becoming more complex and multidimensional and requires new and effective strategies to comprehensively deal with social situations from every perspective. Social work and mediation are forms of social intervention of an evident complementary nature. They operate in common areas such as the family, social services and the justice system, and share a common disciplinary framework, although the purpose of intervention is different, with a focus on conflict in the case of mediation and social problems in the case of social work. In this regard, the role of the social worker can be viewed as an agent who mediates between different institutional conflicts and more specifically between two parties in conflict.

The fundamental contribution of social work to mediation consists of introducing the social variable to the analysis of conflict, i.e. the social circumstances, in terms of family, community and intercultural relationships, which cause the social problems that result in conflict. It can also contribute to 'bridge building',

when there is the need for an individual social intervention with one of the parties who may be subject to a social imbalance that prevents a symmetrical relationship or who needs to fulfil responsibilities involving childcare or other family functions, when these social circumstances can influence negotiation and agreement.

In this process of introducing conflict resolution techniques, social workers can play a central role as mediators between the parties in dispute. They can intervene and investigate and develop scientific approaches to the comprehensive and holistic application of their knowledge. In so doing, mediation can provide social work with an overall perspective of the social problems that affect the increasingly diverse range of family types in the 21st century.

To sum up, mediation and social work are complementary and interdependent. They share common professional ground and training content, but their social functions and intervention goals are different. Given the current educational situation and the challenges for this century, joint action is required from all sectors involved in training, such as universities and government. At all universities, it is necessary to standardise the criteria and harmonise syllabuses, at the local and European level, in order to fulfil the requirements of the job market and professional organisations, and the demands of the profession.

Since the practice of mediation seems destined to flourish in the future, the following lines of action could play an important role:

- National and international meetings or seminars to define the competencies of mediation and incorporate its teaching into current undergraduate degrees.
- Improvements in mediation training and retraining to ensure that professionals are able to respond to market needs, including instrumental, system and interpersonal competencies.
- Publication of scientific articles on social mediation.
- Incorporating social mediation courses and the cross-curricular content in core subjects into syllabuses to provide students with the necessary training for work in mediation and a competitive edge when entering the job market.
- Creation of lines of research and work on undergraduate and postgraduate social work courses.
- Development of joint action with mediators for ongoing learning and sharing of knowledge and experiences.
- Special attention to social changes and problems affecting families in order for them to be incorporated into the field of mediation.



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Finally, with regard to our quantitative study, the data can serve as a means of evaluating courses related to mediation and conflict with the aim of improving training through the modification of programmes, student guidance, stud-

ies and research conducted at universities and, most importantly, establishing guidelines to optimise the quality of teaching. ■

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## ARTICLE



# Conduct of the Police in Kenya's 2013 General Elections

Jack Shaka

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## Abstract

The conduct of the police during the 2007 elections and post-election crisis in Kenya cannot be forgotten. The tragic stories and repugnant images that shook the world are still vivid even today. At the centre of it all was the conduct of the police. Human rights reports accused the police of acting with impunity during the period. They were responsible for several murders, and even those who were taken to court walked away without punishment. The former head of the police force, Retired Major General Hussein Ali, was among those who faced charges at the International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague. The ICC pre-trial chamber failed to confirm his charges of crimes against humanity. Since the historic events of 2007/8, the conduct of the police in Kenya has been a key issue in human rights debates and the media. This article is my journalistic foray into the recently concluded 2013 General Election that took place in Kenya on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013, focusing on the conduct of the police before, during and after the elections.



## Keywords

police, prosecutions, human rights, ethnic violence, peace, elections

## BACKGROUND

The Kenya General Elections were held on 4th March 2013 to elect the president, governors, senators, members of parliament and county representatives. The elected president will be Kenya's 4<sup>th</sup>. As I write this, the President Elect is Uhuru Kenyatta. He is the son of Kenya's first President Jomo Kenyatta. Uncertainties dog his election as President, as one of the losers, Prime Minister Raila Odinga, has gone to the Supreme Court to challenge the election outcome citing massive irregularities.

In the 2007 election, the conduct of the police was questioned. Their role in the ethnic violence that rocked Kenya in 2007/8 was criticized in various human rights reports. As the violence escalated during Kenya's trying moment, the police were ordered to shoot to kill. The number of dead soared as Kenya quickly disintegrated into a failed state. This is evident in the rankings in the Failed States

Index published by the Fund for Peace in the United States. Kenya has been among the 20 countries topping the list since 2009. In 2012 it was in position 16 out of 177 countries ranked. Position 177 is the most sustainable and position one the worst state.

As the violence came to a halt in April 2008 after the signing of the Peace Accord, as a result of the talks mediated by Kofi Annan, the administration police and the regular police had shot at least half of the total number of people who had lost their lives during the ethnic violence. They were not arrested. The victims and relatives of those who had died as a result of the police brutality were denied justice. The most prominent case was that of a policeman who was filmed shooting an unarmed 15-year-old boy. The policeman walked away without punishment. This was impunity at its highest.

The 2013 General Election in Kenya put the police in the spotlight as a result of their actions in the 2007/8 ethnic



violence. Human rights organizations, the media, election observation missions and others kept a keen watch on the role of the police in the 2013 elections.

## DEPLOYMENT OF POLICE OFFICERS

The Kenya police deployed 99,000 officers to staff polling centres and handle security issues during the March 4<sup>th</sup> 2013 General Elections in Kenya. This deployment was historic: it had never happened before. The State deployed, several days before the elections, the General Service Unit (elite paramilitary police squad) officers in hotspots like Naivasha, where a family was burnt to death in the ethnic violence related to the post-election events of 2007. The security personnel for the Kenya Elections 2013 were drawn from the Kenya police, administration police, Kenya Prisons Service, Kenya Wildlife Service, Kenya Forestry Service and National Youth Service.

A statement from the Inspector General of Police, David Kimaiyo, said that they had a Contingency Action Plan (CAP) to cover the election period. The CAP document outlined areas where police would be deployed in the polling centres and hotspots which were prone to election-related violence.

## SECURITY AT THE NATIONAL TALLYING CENTRE IN BOMAS OF KENYA, NAIROBI CITY

Nothing was left to chance when it came to protecting the National Tallying Centre, where the data from all polling units around the country were being tallied. A police helicopter circled above the venue - the Bomas of Kenya - from 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013. The entire area was guarded by regular and administration police officers and their counterparts from the General Service Unit. The areas surrounding Bomas - i.e. Langata and Karen - were also under surveillance from these units.

In order to gain access, one needed to have accreditation from the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) or prove through official documents that they were guests of the state, observers, diplomats or political party agents among others. This was followed by a physical search and screening for guns or explosives. Everyone was screened. Kenya has been and is still on the look out for Al-Shabaab warriors who have been responsible for multiple bombings and killings around the country since Kenya's invasion of Somalia.

During the election period, the police gave a warning that some people were masquerading as police officers in order to disrupt the elections in parts of the country. The police spokesperson Charles Owino told a media briefing at the IEBC National Election Centre at the Bomas of Kenya that the fake police officers were targeting three areas: the Kibera, Mathare and Kisumu regions. It is worth noting that these were some of the areas that were adversely affected during the ethnic violence as a result of the election results in 2007.

He went on to say that certain people had planned to put on police uniform to disrupt the elections in Kibera, Mathare and Kisumu. The police asked the public to report any suspected cases of impersonation or any person harassing peaceful members of the community. Security was tight in all tallying centers in the 47 counties to deter any attempts by dissidents or any other groups that would want to disrupt the process.

## HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES DURING THE ELECTION PERIOD

The night before the 4<sup>th</sup> March General Elections in Kenya, at least 10 police officers, were killed before the voting began. The brazen attacks on the police officers marred the start of elections in Mombasa City. The police laid blame on the outlawed Mombasa Republican Council (MRC). Though it was a dark day for the security forces, they went on with their work to make sure that the elections could be held without interference. The suspected MRC, militia who were estimated to be between one and two hundred strong, went on to terrorize and kill residents on the eve of the elections.

The police in the Changamwe region, on the coast heard that over 200 armed, suspected MRC members were going to attack a police station in Miritini. Before they could take any action, the MRC attacked and the police were killed. Seven members of the MRC also fell in the process. The Inspector General of police and other human rights bodies in the country condemned the attacks. Election observation missions suddenly took an interest in the area. International media ran sensational headlines depicting resurgence to violence as had happened in 2007.

There was a rapid response from Police Inspector General Mr. David Kimaiyo, who quickly airlifted 300 paramilitary personnel to Mombasa. To show solidarity, he flew to Mombasa City and visited Miritini, one of the places where attacks had taken place. In other attacks on the police in Kisauni and Mishomoroni, a sergeant from the Prisons Department was killed and his AK47 rifle stolen, while in Kilifi, one administration police sergeant was killed and his G3 rifle taken by the attackers.



The Inspector General of Police directed his officers to use their firearms as provided for in law in such circumstances, and ensure no further loss of lives of police officers or civilians. At least eight civilians were also killed during the targeted attacks. Among the dead were the Changamwe Officer Commanding Police Division (OCPD) and the Officer Commanding the Station (OCS). The attackers stole some guns and two G3 rifles.

Some isolated events indicate the police were not well trained to handle their own weapons. One was in Murang'a region where a policeman accidentally shot dead an election official as they were transporting ballot boxes to Kangema tallying centre in the same region. It is not clear how the gun suddenly went off killing the IEBC official. In another incident that shocked Kenyans, in Masimba Social Hall in Kisii, an administration policeman manning the tallying centre shot himself dead while votes were being tallied on the day of the election. Gunshots were heard and panic ensued. The circumstances are still not clear as to why he killed himself. Another accident? We have yet to find out.

In analyzing the events of the 2013 election period compared to the 2007 election, it is prudent to say that the police in 2013 were the target of pre-planned attacks meant to disrupt the electoral process and throw the country into a state of emergency. After the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission Chairman, Isaac Hassan, announced the results; Kisumu City was in a state of panic. Their preferred Presidential candidate Raila Odinga had lost the election. They had voted overwhelmingly for Raila Odinga. With a heavy presence of police already there, they neutralized the situation before it got out of control. The Kondele area of Kisumu was the only area affected by the unrest in Kisumu.

## PROSECUTION OF ELECTORAL OFFENCES

The Kenya Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Mr. Keriako Tobiko, set up a special unit of 35 officers to deal with issues related to electoral offences just before the elections. The readiness is a result of the unpreparedness the office had found itself in after the 2007 post-election violence. The main purpose of the special unit was to deal expeditiously with those who engaged in electoral misconduct. The officers were given specialized training on electoral related issues so that they were well prepared. These included guidelines in drafting charge sheets used to register proof of committed offences.

To ensure effectiveness in operations, the Public Prosecutions Office (PPO) worked in collaboration with the police and the IEBC to ensure smooth identification and prosecution of cases.

The Judiciary also went further to create Special Courts all over the country to deal with electoral offences committed during the election period. The prosecutors were based at the Special Courts created by the Chief Justice of Kenya. The whole process was meant to decongest the courts and ensure speedy trials.

Kenya's Judiciary has gone through massive restructuring since 2008. There is a new Chief Justice (CJ) and a vetting process of all judges to ensure they are fit for office. Many judges who were anti-reform or corrupt were dismissed or opted to retire. There is a lot of confidence in the Judiciary at the moment. A few days before the elections, a notorious sect threatened the CJ and other judges but the police moved swiftly to reinforce their security.

## CONCLUSION

The conduct of the police during the 2013 election period as compared to that in 2007 was above intrinsic. It is worth noting that the police officers who died at the police station in Miritini were carrying out their duty to protect the citizenry. The cowards who tried to disrupt the process and send Kenya back to the precipice were thwarted in their attempts and the elections took place peacefully. Peace messages that ran on TV played a vital role in calming the youth in the areas where people were not happy that their preferred candidate had not won the Presidential Election.

Kisumu City was one of the hotspots in the country that the police had already noted and they deployed officers to avoid possible outbreaks of violence. When the unrest began in the afternoon of 9th March 2013, after the results were announced, the police force moved in swiftly before the crowd of youths could burn the city to cinders as they had done during the 2007/8 elections. The police have conducted themselves in a manner worthy of recognition. The process was not perfect but the police did their best, in spite of the numerous challenges. They fared better than the IEBC who are facing law suits at present. ■



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## PROFILE

# Initiatives of Change

Rainer Gude and Chris Breitenberg

### ■ Abstract

Initiatives of Change (IofC) is a worldwide movement of people of diverse cultures and backgrounds who are committed to the transformation of society through change in human motives and behaviour, starting with their own. With many years of experience in peacebuilding, IofC inspires, equips and connects people to address world needs, starting with themselves.

### ■ Keywords

peacebuilding, reconciliation, human security, trustbuilding, ethical leadership, sustainable living

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Initiatives of Change (IofC) is an NGO with over 80 years of field experience in peacebuilding, reconciliation and the promotion of human security. It has three focus areas for its work: trustbuilding, ethical leadership and sustainable living.

The Founder of IofC, Frank Buchman, once said, “Peace is not just an idea, it is people becoming different.” We believe, and have seen, that people can change. People can be socialized and sensitized to move beyond the pain of war and break the cycles of violence and corruption. Structures remain important and obviously impact on human behavior, however our entry point and medium to change is the human being.

With 31 national associations, and an overarching international association called Initiatives of Change International, IofC utilizes a model that accentuates grassroots work and personal initiative at the local level. It also has special consultative status with ECOSOC at the UN, and promotes its aims through international conferences and projects. Whether at the local or international level, people are at the centre of IofC’s approach as we try to make the link between personal and global change. In that way we reach a wide spectrum of beneficiaries. At our conferences there are both students and ambassadors. Our local projects include programs that range from farmers and women in remote areas to CEOs of large companies.

Our work is founded on a basic approach that focuses on the human dynamic of any lasting change. We uphold a self-reflective approach and values-based living as primary tools in this effort and encourage people to take steps of change in their own lives, dialogue about it with people of diverse backgrounds and circumstances, and finally take action with those people to push forward results in a community or country. With our bottom-up structure, which encourages local ownership, we see our role as one of accompanying, strengthening, and empowering individuals to be the change they want to see in the world.



## MAIN OBJECTIVES

IofC wants to see a just, peaceful and sustainable world to which everyone, responding to the call of conscience, makes their own unique contribution. Our approach is one that encourages people, and our own teams to start with, to listen to others and then to take focused action.

Starting with a self-reflective model, people are invited to take an honest look at their own motives and behaviours and learn to listen to their own conscience. With that as an ongoing practice, they are prepared for a true dialogue with diverse perspectives – a process which is capable of building trust and community. Lastly, our teams accompany others through concrete actions in our three focus areas. Our methods for doing this primarily include training, dialogue facilitation and conferences, as well as various development initiatives. Our local teams are our strength, while our international association provides guidance, cohesion and representation by sharing lessons learned and expertise throughout the network and with partner bodies.

## PARTNERS AND FUNDERS OF THE ORGANIZATION

Locally, IofC has partnered with hundreds of civic society groups and government agencies, and has received funding from individual donors and large grant-making bodies such as the Kellogg Foundation. IofC projects have also been funded by bodies such as the Departments of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, and the United States Institute for Peace. Currently, one of our largest partnerships is with the the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.

The domains of peacebuilding, human rights advocacy, development and mediation tend to be widely separated, with highly specialised organisations. Our person-centred approach leads us beyond peacebuilding and indeed has led us to bridge these gaps and also partner with organisations working in other fields. Both our conferences and our grassroots work promote the building of these links. For example, our projects with aboriginal Australians and in inter-racial healing in the United States have led us to form links with human rights advocacy groups, while our work in Burundi together with the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs touched upon more of a mediation role.

## CASE EXEMPLAR

Besides the work of our two conference centres in Caux, Switzerland and Panchgani, India, one of our most well-known grassroots examples is our work in the Great Lakes region of Africa, accompanying individuals, political parties, and armed groups towards dialogue, healing and reconciliation. It largely falls under our trustbuilding work. It was a unique combination of a fruitful partnership with the Swiss government, a great local team with local understanding, ownership and motivation, and the expertise and collaboration of others within the international network of IofC. The work has had some successes along the way, but is far from finished.

Since 2000, IofC, with a local office in Bujumbura, has been working towards peace in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. The goal is not to set up negotiations but to prepare minds and to bring people together so that peace agreements can be signed and political dialogue take place.

Since 2003, the work has focused on Burundi, at the request of Burundians who feared that their country would slip back into chaos. A process of offering support for the main players in the Burundi conflict was set up. Long and ongoing, it largely involves bringing different members of society to talk about their wounds and their fears and to establish bonds of trust between them, based on listening to one another and reflecting about their own responsibilities.

From 2001 to 2007 there were numerous missions on the ground in Bujumbura and Tanzania to meet the leaders from all sides, including the Palipehutu-FNL armed group.



In March 2003, IofC worked for a round-table meeting to bring together representatives from the government, the army, the FRODEBU opposition party, the Catholic Church, the CNDD-FDD, which at that time was a rebel group, and the Palipehutu-FNL. Two CNDD-FDD leaders confided to the organisers that without this round table they would not have managed to assimilate the political process.

In June there was another round table with the goal of changing mind-sets and preparing the way for dialogue. In 2004, this led to a dialogue training given to the Palipehutu-FNL officers. Two years later the government and the Palipehutu-FNL asked IofC to accompany those involved in the Dar es Salaam negotiations, which brought about the ceasefire agreements in June and September 2006.

All this important groundwork, based on building relationships of trust on all sides, led to an 'honest conversation' event in our conference centre in Caux, which brought together 33 political, military, religious and media leaders. This was made possible with the support of the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

What followed was a permanent presence of our local team on the ground to support the peacebuilding process. Now the network of people committed to working together with IofC to normalize political life has grown and activities such as personal meetings, Café Politique events, and seminars continue. This has led to other round tables and meetings both in Burundi and in Switzerland as our patient process of trustbuilding and preparation for, and promotion of, dialogue continues.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

IofC's strengths are very much in its people, which include many volunteers, who are committed to living out IofC's core approach in their own lives and in all IofC operations. Furthermore, IofC's model of locally-owned grassroots-driven initiatives supported by a larger organization keeps us close to significant needs on the ground and flexible to respond to them without major organizational interference. Lastly, we have an 80-year history of success stories in trustbuilding.

The weakness is the counter-balance of the positives that come with this kind of grassroots entrepreneurship model and a long history. Working from the bottom-up can be slow as it is not easy to coordinate and consult with so many local bodies. We are just redeveloping our central organization after years of dispersed work. The longer the history, the harder it is to make adaptations at times.

Nonetheless, the added value of having such local ownership and motivation, as well as such a rich history, is worth the challenge of finding the right structures and balance to best accompany our work. ■

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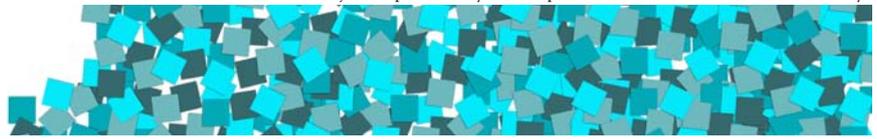
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