

ENTRENCHING PEACE CULTURE IN THE AFRICAN CHILD: AN AFRICA PEACE STRATEGY

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Abstract

Peace in Africa has over the years been threatened by various armed conflicts including civil wars, militarism, ethno-religious crisis, terrorism and communal clashes. These threats do not only impact negatively on the development of the region, it similarly threatens the security and peace of the Continent. Although several efforts have been made in ensuring conflict prevention and for sustainable peace both internationally and regionally, African nations keep relapsing into violence. This study draws the attention on the active inclusion of children in the formulation and implementation of frameworks for conflict prevention and sustainable peace in Africa. Qualitative approach was adopted for study and analysis of the work. The paper concludes that although various peace strategies (frameworks and roadmaps) have been adopted by the African Union to silent the guns in Africa, it has however been unable to adequately prevent the relapses of violence and to ensure sustainable peace. This is because approaches formulated and adopted are not focused on children as a major stakeholder for sustainable peace. It was therefore recommended that children should be mainstreamed into the frameworks of the African Peace Strategies through entrenching of peace culture in the African child.

Keywords: Peace Culture, African Child, Peace Strategy

INTRODUCTION

The quest for peace by human society is as old as the history of human existence. Man seek inner peace as well as with his or her external environment to create a sense of freedom from any form of threats. In pursuing its desire for peace, human society has adapted various strategies that were unique to time-level of civilization, history, culture, as well as its internal and external interests.

In ancient cities, especially in the Greek, Roman, and Persian Kingdoms, Peace was arrived at through peace alliances/pacts, negotiations and oaths with one or more neighboring cities and powerful kingdoms. The purpose of these negotiations was among others to prevent invasions and to sometimes be under the protection of a more powerful kingdom. However, because this form of peace was achieved in this period, in some cases it was also achieved through coercion by a more powerful kingdom (Benham, 2009).

In the aftermath of world wars, I and II, and the effects of the wars which cuts beyond borders resulting from industrialization and massive technological advancement. The uniqueness of the time came with its resolve for peace that fits the uniqueness of the challenges. This resulted in the formation of the United Nations in 1945; an organization charged with the responsibility of the maintenance and management of world peace. In achieving this, the charter of the United Nations and through its various organs have put in place various strategies for peacekeeping, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding. (United Nations, 2020). Among the programs and frameworks of the United Nations to promote world peace is the Sustainable Development Goal number 16 (SDG16) which among others aims to reduce violence and the, protection of children. Also, the UN promotes peace through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which as the name suggests uses peace education and the culture of non-violence especially towards children as its main framework (UN, 2020).

Africa which has over the years been ravaged with various forms of armed conflicts including civil wars, ethnoreligious crisis, terrorism, has through the establishment of the African Union; similar to the structure of the United Nations has through treaties

between nation-states and in its development of several peace strategies to address the rising peace threats around the continent. Thus, the use of conflict resolution and peacekeeping strategies by the AU, is yet to successfully address the issues of armed conflicts that is inherent within the region. Like the UN, the AU has similarly developed various frameworks and programs to achieve its goal for peace within the region. This includes the AU agenda 2063 agenda 13 and 14 which is peace, security, and stability within the African continent. However, despite the various programs and frameworks both at the international level and regional levels, conflicting countries in Africa still relapse into violence. Armed conflicts are still prevalent within the region, and as such, peace has not been sustainable.

Consequently, this study is to understand why conflicting countries in Africa keep relapsing to violence despite peace efforts by the African Union and discussion on entrenching peace culture in the African child as an African peace strategy. Secondary research methodology is used and analysis for the study is non doctrinal; employing the review of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) roadmap. The paper will achieve this aim by defining the major keywords of the paper, give a theoretical background to create a foundation for the discussions, make an overview of some conflicts within the region, give a brief review of the African's Union peace strategy, discussion on entrenching peace culture in the African child as an African peace strategy and finally conclusion and recommendations.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The major concepts in this paper will be defined based on the aim and purpose of the paper.

Peace Culture: The United Nations (2020), defines Peace Culture as sets of values, attitudes, modes of behavior, and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes and to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals and groups. Rider (2008), further described Peace culture as the promotion of peaceable diversity such as patterns of belief, values, behavior, and accompanying institutional arrangements that promotes mutual caring and wellbeing

as well as equality that includes an appreciation of differences, stewardship and equitable sharing of a nation's resources amongst its members.

Peace Culture therefore can be said to involve the introduction of the goals and values of a nation in respect to its peace and security needs. Like other learnt behaviors, children can be socialized into a culture of peace in their homes and communities with the core values for the respect of human rights, equality and tolerance.

African Child: This is a person under 18 years that is birthed or is resident in Africa with or without the supervision of a legal adult.

Peace Strategy: Strategic Peace is a long-term run at all levels of a society that establishes and sustains relationships among people both locally and globally and addresses structural conditions that can generate to deadly conflicts. It further noted that strategic peace stretches across generations and addresses issues including violence, human rights and economic prosperity (KIIPS, 2020). Galtung (1996) in his quest for the promotion of systems that would create sustainable peace, identified three major peace strategies to include Peacekeeping, Peacemaking and Peacebuilding. He further explained that none of the three approaches to peace can function separately, they're all interconnected, interdependent and mutually reinforcing (Zondi, 2007) and therefore, each strategy alone cannot really be effective in creating peace without the application of other strategies. For this paper, however, peace strategy is the development of structural and constructional conditions that includes the participation of children for sustainable peace efforts through the inculcation of Peace Culture and values.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

System Theory

System theory studies society from various complex elements and societal arrangements that influences human interactions and relationships. This approach originated in the 19th century arising from the works of the English Sociologists Herbert Spencer and French philosopher Emile Durkheim (Gibson, 2007). The system theory is a deductive approach that seeks social problems and solutions by studying the various elements and sub-elements in society that gives rise to a

particular social behavior. According to them, society is influenced by its various interrelated components, a change in one affect change in others.

The theory further noted that, the elements of social behaviors in society are formed through adaptation, integration and maintenance of long-term patterns (Stichweh. 2020). That is the behavioral characteristics of a people in a society is dependent on the elements of its external environment. According to Vallancher et al (2008), all peace and conflict situations operate as dynamic systems; i.e. sets of interconnected elements that creates an emergence for a global state such as war and peace. They further explained that, to achieve a state of peace, focus should be on how a system can be transformed from the elements that perpetuates conflicts such as oppression, Injustice, Human Rights Violation etc. to elements that promotes peace. Consequently, since social behaviors are also formed through adaptation and integration in society, violent behaviors that give rise to conflicts and wars can also be adaptive and vice versa.

OVERVIEW OF ARMED CONFLICTS AND PEACE EFFORTS IN AFRICA

This background is to understand some African nations that have experienced a protracted crisis that has spanned for many years despite various peace efforts and interventions but has however been unable to successfully maintain sustainable peace within the countries. For this paper, a brief overview of the conflicts in Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Central Africa will be made.

Somalia Civil War

Somalia which gained her independence in 1960 has been in an ongoing civil war for over 30 decades. The violence which started as a clan-civil war in 1988 transcended into an insurgency in the early 2000s till date. According to Bradbury and Healy (2010), an important feature of the past decades in Somalia has been the emergence of a variety of Islamist movements seeking to establish an Islamic state not only in Somalia but also a regional and global agenda. The rise of this insurgency which developed from what started as a civil war and ethnic succession for the control of states resources has been difficult to quell thereby leaving the peace of the country fragile despite the various peace efforts.

The over 30years of civil war in Somalia has not only impacted on infrastructures and institutions but has resulted in the countless loss of lives and properties. However, children have also been the most hit in the crisis. Somalia has the highest record of child mortality coming from direct and indirect impacts of the conflicts with a record of 180 deaths per 1000 live birth (UNICEF, 2011). Children are noted to have not only lost their lives in these wars but have similarly suffered from various forms of abuse and violence. Children as young as 9 years are enlisted into armed groups as child soldiers (Humanium, 2020). According to Save the Children International (2009), it recorded that the recruitment of children into armed groups in Somalia has increased since 2017. It also revealed that Somalia has the highest cases of abduction of children worldwide with thousands of children displaced and unaccompanied.

As noted earlier, despite the ongoing war in Somalia, there has been various peace efforts and interventions regionally and internationally. Some of these peace efforts include the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM); a Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Mission. It was involved in reconciliation processes between elders of the rival Abgal and Haber Gedar clans with a pact to end hostilities in 1994. The mission also mediated in the Kismayo initiative same year between the representatives of over 19 clans. IGAD Initiative Peace Support Mission to Somalia (IGASOM) in 2002 also embarked on conflict resolution processes in Somalia. This was done with the help of its neighboring State- Kenya and the African Union. The two-year conference by the initiative succeeded in 2004 by bringing in the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) (Bradbury and Healy, 2010). Efforts towards peace in Somalia have similarly been made within the region by both the regional bodies and some States within the continent. The African Union Mission in Somalia was also a peacekeeping mission, created in 2007 to succeed the IGASOM Mission. AMISON aimed to support a national reconciliation congress (AU, 2020). In addition to these peace efforts, several other peace processes have been implemented by neighboring countries; including the peace conferences supported by Ethiopia in 1996 and by Egypt in 1997 which initially brought in the Benadir Administration but was however short-lived. Another effort was in 2000 by the Djibouti government which hosted a Somalia national peace conference in Arta (Bradbury and Healy, 2020).

Democratic Republic of Congo Crisis

DRC has similarly experienced two major civil wars and several crises since its independence. The first war broke out in 1996 and the second broke out in 1998 and ended in 2003 (Zapata, 2011). Notably, before the civil war in 1996, Congo had suffered various conflicts since the 1960s shortly after its independence from Belgium. The crisis which started as a rebellion grew into several successionists and militia groups around the country (Hurst, 2009). The conflicts in Congo which was described by James (2018) as “A war that will never stop” in describing the breakout of severe crisis in 2007,2008, 2016 till date after the taking control of some regions by rebels.

The impact of the crisis in Congo has greatly affected children over the years. According to UNICEF (2017), about 1.5 million children in the Kasai region have been affected by the ongoing violence with over 600,000 displaced just within this region. Similarly, those children who survived are traumatized by their experiences from the barbarism perpetrated by armed groups that they witnessed. Also, tens of thousands of children are recruited and used by all parties of the conflicts (Reliefweb, 2003). And the lingering conflicts resulting in a child mortality of 167 deaths out of 1000 live births (Lindskog, 2016).

Consequently, ongoing efforts to resolve the conflicts and for peace in the DRC has been made. The UN in its effort has embarked on two separate missions in the country; MONUC in 1960 which was withdrawn in 1964, and MONUSCO in 2010. Another role the UN played was the broker for a ceasefire deal among belligerent parties by the then Secretary-General Kofi Annan during the France-Africa summit in Paris. Another is the negotiation in Lusaka whereby the UN Special Envoy for the DRC peace process was established. The UN with support from the AU, SADC has also embarked on several peace processes including the Sun City Agreement in 2002, the Pretoria Agreement, and the Luanda Agreement. Furthermore, in a combined effort by the international, regional and sub-regional bodies, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC was signed in Addis Ababa in 2003 (UN Missions, 2020). Like the UN, the Africa Union has also been active in the peace processes in the DRC, although there was no established peacekeeping mission in Congo by the AU, it, however, was active in various mediation efforts. In 2016, the

AU sent in representatives to mediate in the crisis (Africa Center, 2017). Although the framework for peace in the DRC was done to address the underlying causes of the conflict and ensure sustainable peace, however, the country continues to be plagued by recurrent waves of conflict.

Central African Republic Crisis

Like most conflicts in Africa, the war in CAR is still ongoing and has spanned for decades since it gained independence from France in 1960 with waves of violent conflicts. However, the country plunged into a full-blown war after the coup by Francois Bozize in 2003, Which led to rebellion by the Seleka rebel group from the Northern region against the government-controlled by the Sothern region of the Republic. The Seleka milia allege of the marginalization and injustice of the Northern minorities. However, the war ended in 2007, after a peace agreement between all belligerents and the government. But in 2012, another war ensured with the Seleka milia lurching another rebellion after it accused the government and the Southern region for not honoring the peace agreement of 2007 (Concern Worldwide, 2017).

The crisis in CAR has affected over 2.3 million children across the country due to various forms of violence. 11% of children from the region are orphaned due to the conflict (Reliefweb, 2014) and over 643,000 children are internally displaced (UNICEF, 2018).

CAR's crisis has attracted the attention of both international and regional organizations in addressing the crisis and ensuring peace processes within the country. The UN peacekeeping mission; MINUSCA in CAR has been ongoing for about 10years. Part of its mandate includes transition processes, facilitating humanitarian assistance, disarmament, demobilization as well as the BINUCA mission which is the peacebuilding office deployed to consolidate peace and strengthen democratic institutions. (UN Peacekeeping, 2021). The missions were responsible for the facilitation of elections in 2016 and together with the AU and the ECCAS facilitated the signing of the Peace Accord in 2019 between the government and 14 armed groups (Howard, 2019). The AU and the sub-regional body; the ECCAS has been similarly active in building peace in CAR, one among many is the MISCA

mission which is the AU led peacekeeping mission in CAR, the mission has been active in peacebuilding efforts both as a convener and implementer of peace responses including the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation in 2015 (Carvalho & Lucey, 2016). The first conducted mediation engagement in 2013 was facilitated by the ECCAS with the signing of the peace agreement in Libreville (PSC Report, 2019).

From the foregoing, the following issues are noted in respect to conflict prevention and sustainable peace in Africa to include:

- The trends of the conflicts in Africa are similar, from the history of its experiences with colonial rules, post-independent challenges which include civil wars influenced by rebellions, ethnic militarism etc. consequently, responses and approaches to these challenges has been the same- the deployment of various peacekeeping missions.
- The major strategy that is employed by the AU's is mostly focused on Peacekeeping Missions such as disarmament, humanitarian efforts, and dialogue/mediations which are mostly short-term thereby leaving the established peace fragile. Efforts are not focused on long-term goals which focus on the establishment of systems, structures and institutions that can promote sustainable peace.
- The impacts of the conflicts are not discriminatory by age, gender or tribe. Children are impacted both directly and indirectly, immediate and long term and are noted to face the most impacts both in numbers and magnitude. The impacts on children include death, injury, displacement, loss of parents, mental and psychological trauma etc. according to research by Kadir and Shanoda et al (2018), it revealed that the severity or chronicity of the stresses that children endure during conflicts may arise to a lifetime of “toxic stress” which may result in aggression and may thereby impact the peace of a nation at the long run. Similarly, according to Botha and Abdile (2014), happenings within an environment becomes most impressionable on children especially between the ages of 12-17, meaning, children are most influenced by the happenings within their social environment and contribute to the development of their social identities, beliefs, and influences how they perceive, interpret and respond to their environment.

- The efforts for peace within the region are not child encompassing. Children who are the most impacted by violence in Africa are still the most discriminated in the peace processes. Children are only mostly included in humanitarian interventions during peacekeeping. However, children who are the ambassadors for sustainable peace in Africa, as they are the future, and the reflection they get is what may transcend to the future. The impacts of their environment can influence their behaviors in adulthood- a continued culture of violence.

AFRICAN PEACE STRATEGY

Following the vision of the AU Agenda 2063; building a peaceful, stable, secure, integrated, and prosperous Africa, the Agenda highlights the need for a dialogue-centered prevention approach as well as management and resolution of existing conflicts. The Agenda further acknowledged that in order to achieve sustainable conflict prevention and resolution, a culture of peace and tolerance must be cultivated and nurtured on children and youths in Africa.

In pursuit of the 2063 Agenda, the heads of the AU States in 2013 at Addis Ababa adopted the “*Silencing the Gun in Africa*” strategy. Among their solemn declaration was:

“to push forward the agenda of conflict prevention, peace-making, peace-support, national reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction and development through the African Peace and Security Architecture; as well as ensure enforcement of and compliance with peace agreements and build Africa's peace-keeping and enforcement capacities through the standby force” (African Union, 2013).

In achieving the strategy for Silencing the Gun, two major frameworks were developed by the AU- the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD).

Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)

The APSA is the main existing framework of the AU in its strategy for Silencing the Gun in Africa. The roadmap for the region's mechanism takes into consideration the uniqueness of the experiences of the continent. The framework consists of five (5) major strategic priorities, these includes:

- Strategy 1: Conflict Prevention
- Strategy 2: Crisis/Conflict Management
- Strategy 3: Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Peace Building
- Strategy 4: Strategic Security Issues
- Strategy 5: Coordination and Partnership

Consequently, some of the major programs of the APSA are;

- Peace and Security Council: this is the decision-making body for peace and security in the continent.
- Continental Early Warning System (CEWs): for the provision of timely information and analysis.
- African Standby Force: for rapid deployment for management of conflicts.
- Gender mainstreaming in Peace and Security: Aimed to ensure the participation of women in peace processes (AU, 2020).

Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development

This is an expansion of the APSA framework. It is aimed to support sustainable peace, stability, and development of countries that have emerged or emerging from conflicts. Accordingly, the PCRCD framework strives to address the root causes of conflict with the objective to prevent the relapse of violence and create the foundation for sustainable peace.

The PCRCD policy framework was developed to address conflicts in three phases, short-term, medium term and long term. Like APSA, PCSD has five (5) focused scope as its pillars to address and resolve the root causes of conflicts, these includes; Humanitarian and Emergency Assistance, Political Governance and Transition,

Socio-economic Reconstruction and Development, Human Rights, Justice, and Reconciliation and Women and Gender.

The study of both the APSA and PCRD frameworks reviewed that although it recognizes children as a major contributor for sustainable peace through inculcating of peace culture, it, however, does not have a major child-focused program that centers on children as a major stakeholder for sustaining of Africa's peace. It however has its child focused programs on intervention efforts and assistance.

ENTRENCHING PEACE CULTURE IN THE AFRICAN CHILD AS AN AFRICAN PEACE STRATEGY

The greatest challenge faced by Africa is the continued system of violence ravaging the continent in various forms. Therefore, a transformation from this system requires the next generation (Children) to be taught and encouraged the choices to transition from a culture of violence (wars, terrorism, crimes, political instability, social inequalities, ethno-religious intolerance, hunger and humanitarian crisis) to a culture of peace (social justice, security, ethno-religious tolerance, human rights, political stability and participation and development). Peace culture like any other behavior can be learnt, according to Navarro and Nario (2010), those who want a violent way of living such as terrorist groups prepare young people for that, but those who want peace have neglected their young children and thus are unable to organize them for peace. The efficacy of peace culture therefore is the prevention of violence in conflicts by addressing the root causes rather than interventions after the eruption of violence and post conflict peace building (Juwe, Usifoh, Kasim & Ogboro, 2004).

Entrenching peace culture as a value on children from an early age is important to create the foundations for sustainable peace and ensuring that the coming generation live in peace, harmony and security. Similarly, entrenching peace on the African child provides them with the various values, skills and knowledge to actively participate in constructing a peaceful and humane society (Juwe, Usigoh, Kasim & Ogboro, 2004).

Ways to Entrench Peace Culture in the African Child

According to United Nations, (1991), Peace culture can be instilled on the African child through the following;

1. Peace Education: this involves building the capacity of children to understand the issues of violence and peace through the development of school curriculum from pre-schools, primary schools to secondary schools using methods that are aged based (methods suitable based on age) that promotes the values, attitudes and behaviors for peace. The curriculum for peace education includes; conflict resolution, disarmament education, human and children's rights, global education, inter-faith education, multicultural education, gender education and development education. Notably, peace education is not only teaching about conflict and how to resolve them peacefully, it also involve the participation of children expressing their own ideas and co-operating with each other to eliminate violence (Navarro & Nario, 2010).
2. Promotion of fundamental human values including human rights and respect for human dignity.
3. Equity in the distribution of common wealth as well as political powers which promotes equality by gender, age, culture and religion.
4. Promoting sustainable economic and social development.
5. Fostering democratic participation through building of democratic foundations for democratic principles, practices and participation in all sectors of the society.
6. Promotion of norms and values for peace in the family, cultural and religious institutions.

From the forgoing, the roles for entrenching peace culture on the African child is inclusive of all societal institutions including governance (political and civil society organizations), family, religious institutions, cultural institutions, educational institutions and the media.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study reveal that although the AU has a peace strategy to silence the gun in Africa with the formulation and implementation of various frameworks, however, the region continues to experience a relapse of violence. The AU has been unable to sustain peace within the region. The failure for sustainable peace is among others due to its approaches that is formulated and implemented which is not child focused. Children are the future of the continent and are therefore major stakeholders for sustainable peace. In the light of the forgoing, this study recommends that; the AU should have included in the APSA and PCRD frameworks, like gender mainstreaming, programs that are centered on children as stakeholders for sustainable peace. Also, the programs developed should among others include the imbibing of peace culture and values in children within the region most especially in regions that has experienced one or more forms of violent conflicts. Finally, this work recommends that Children should be introduced to and familiar with peace structures and processes that conform to Africa's peculiarities and needs.

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