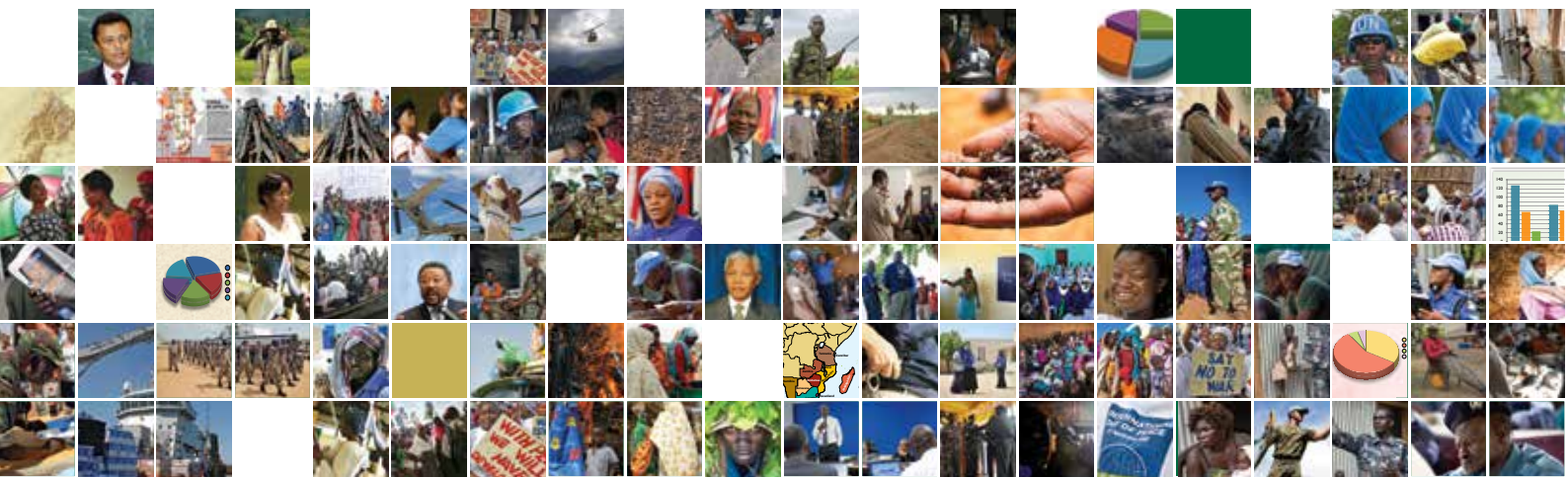
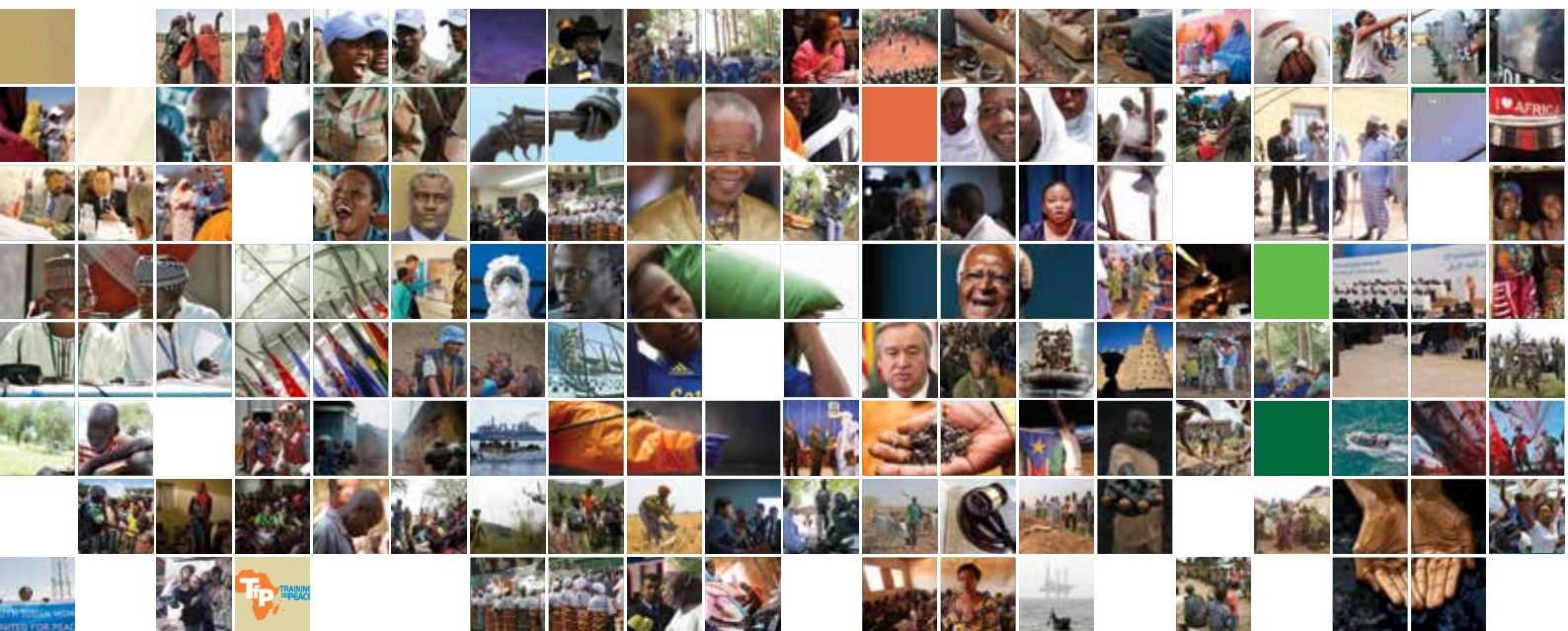


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The year 2018 is significant on the global calendar, as we celebrate the birth of Nelson Mandela exactly 100 years ago. Mandela – the lawyer, the political activist, the prisoner, the peacemaker and finally the president – started an armed resistance movement, *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (“Spear of the Nation”) to fight against apartheid. Following his release from prison and 27-years of a life sentence served, he did what many thought would be impossible: he led his political movement, the African National Congress, into negotiations with the apartheid regime’s ruling party.

Mandela was elected in 1994 as the first president of a democratic South Africa. He used the strong mandate his party received in that first democratic general election to begin the process of uniting a divided country, through a number of reconciliation initiatives. Mandela stepped down after one term in office, despite having the opportunity to serve another term as president. As South Africans and others around the globe prepare to observe and celebrate the 100th anniversary of Mandela’s birth, many conflicts in the world sadly continue to be driven by deep divisions, exclusion and marginalisation, as well as the refusal of leaders to step down from office after reaching their statutory term limit – and, in some cases, even using violence and other means to extend their terms in office.

Mandela used his international standing as a global icon to build a new normative framework for a peaceful world. On 21 September 1998, Mandela addressed the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and called on the nuclear-weapon states to make a firm commitment to eliminating nuclear weapons. Mandela recalled the very first United Nations resolution, adopted in January 1946, which called for “the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction”. He said that “we still do not have concrete and generally accepted proposals supported by a clear commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to the speedy, final and total elimination of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons capabilities”. Mandela went on to ask those who justify “these terrible and terrifying weapons of mass destruction – why do they need them anyway?”

In the context of Mandela’s impassioned plea at the UNGA in 1998, it is significant to note that on 1 July this

year, the world will observe the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, limiting the spread of military nuclear technology to non-nuclear states wishing to acquire them. Despite the signing of this treaty and Mandela’s impassioned plea, the world is again confronted by the prospect of nuclear war.

It is encouraging that Africa’s position was declared when the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty was signed in 1996. The treaty, which, ultimately became known as the Pelindaba Treaty, came into effect on 15 July 2009 with the 28th ratification.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrines the basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which all human beings are entitled. It was adopted 70 years ago, on 10 December 1948, and was motivated by the experiences of the preceding two world wars. In the same address to the UNGA in 1998, Mandela said, “Born in the aftermath of the defeat of the Nazi and fascist crime against humanity, this Declaration held high the hope that all our societies would, in future, be built on the foundations of the glorious vision spelt out in each of its clauses.” It is also significant that in 2018 we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War – the armistice was signed on 11 November 1918.

As we celebrate all these events and the remarkable life of Mandela, we must remember his closing remarks to that 53rd Session of the UNGA, when he hoped for an end to poverty and war and said, “Were all these hopes to translate into a realisable dream and not a nightmare to torment the soul of the aged, then will I, indeed, have peace and tranquillity.” The greatest tribute we can bestow on Mandela is to work to realise his dream for us and our children.

Our modest contribution to Mandela’s dream will be the launch of the Global Peace Forum in 2018. It will build a global compact between civil society, the private sector and governments to create a peaceful world free from poverty, unemployment and inequality. ▲

Vasu Gounden is the Founder and Executive Director of ACCORD.

SUSTAINING PEACE IN THE “NEW GAMBIA”: THE NEED FOR INVESTMENT IN PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

BY LESLEY CONNOLLY



Introduction¹

According to the 2017 Global Peace Index, The Gambia has fallen 18 places since 2016 and is among the top five countries to have experienced the largest deterioration of an ongoing conflict situation.² In addition, The Gambia is facing a range of socio-economic challenges including increasing poverty, high unemployment, a growing rural-urban divide and a decreasing literacy rate.³

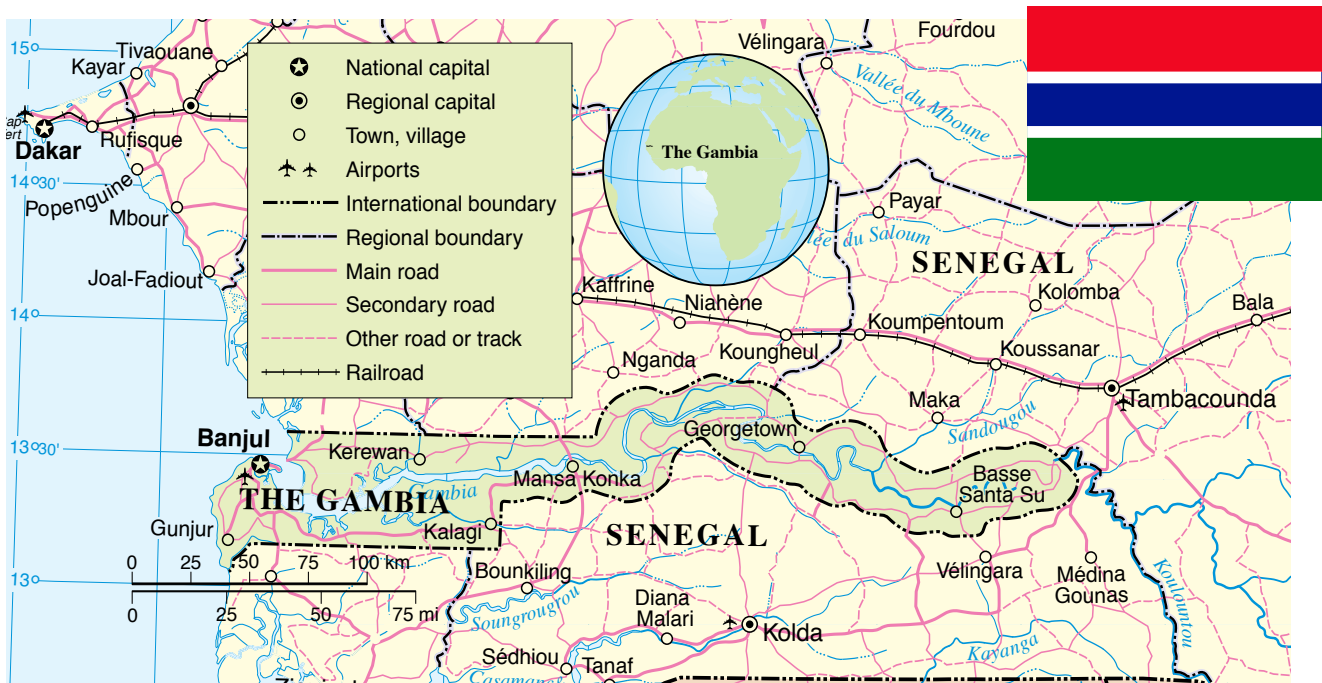
Yet despite the country's fragile socio-economic and political climate, in 2017 The Gambia peacefully transitioned to a new political authority through democratic means. On 1 December 2016, Gambians took to the polls and replaced then-president Yahya Jammeh with the current president, Adama Barrow. Jammeh, who had been in power since 1994, surprised the international community by initially conceding the electoral defeat, and committing to make way for Barrow.⁴

A week later, however, Jammeh contested the results and, subsequently, declared a state of emergency. In an

effort to avert a crisis, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with the support of the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU), responded swiftly, launching a series of high-level dialogue efforts and deploying ECOWAS troops to the border. These efforts were successful and President Barrow was sworn into office in January 2017, paving the way for a peaceful political transition.

This transfer of power was heralded as a landmark win for democratic governance on a continent that has struggled to rid itself of the stigma of authoritarian rule. The “New Gambia”, as it is now commonly referred to, is re-engaging with the international community, and political and development initiatives are already underway.

Above: Adama Barrow is sworn in as the president of The Gambia on 19 January 2017.



The question remains, however, whether The Gambia will be able to sustain its peaceful state during this transition and in the long term. In an effort to answer this question, this article examines The Gambia through the lens of “sustaining peace” – a concept formally introduced into UN vocabulary in April 2016 by dual resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly. The resolutions define sustaining peace as “a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account”.⁵ It is further stated that sustaining peace is “a shared task and responsibility that needs to be fulfilled by the Government and all other national stakeholders”.⁶ The concept should be seen as flowing through all three pillars of the UN’s work to promote an integrated approach to peace, development and human rights, where peace is seen as both an enabler and an outcome.⁷

This article highlights three main areas that, in the name of sustaining peace, should be prioritised in The Gambia: youth engagement, women’s empowerment, and transitional justice and rule of law. It explains how investment in these areas prevents the escalation of conflict, and how it contributes to the maintenance of long-term national peace and stability.

THE YOUTH IN THE GAMBIA, HOWEVER, ARE A STRONG FORCE THAT, DURING THE POLITICAL IMPASSE, EMERGED AS A POLITICAL FORCE IN THE MOVEMENT CHALLENGING JAMMEH’S AUTHORITY

Youth Empowerment and Entrepreneurship

The Institute for Economics and Peace has found a strong correlation between “positive peace” (a concept similar to sustaining peace) and the Youth Development Index. While the relationship between youth and peace is not simple or linear, there is evidence that “peaceful and resilient societies can better promote and benefit from youth development and youth-led entrepreneurship”.⁸ This is especially true in The Gambia, where youth make up 65% of the population.⁹ Youth unemployment in The Gambia is at 70%, while the ratio of youth unemployment to adult unemployment is 2.3. A major contributor to youth unemployment is lack of access to high-quality education and training systems and a lack of skills, or mismatch between the skills possessed and those demanded in the labour market. This has contributed to young people seeking alternative means of livelihood, including irregular migration and employment in the informal sector.

The youth in The Gambia, however, are a strong force that, during the political impasse, emerged as a political force in the movement challenging Jammeh’s authority. This group of the population was largely responsible for the #GambiaHasDecided movement, by popularising it via social media platforms. This movement was created to ensure the people’s voice was heard through the election results, and played a crucial role in educating Gambians on their rights as voters and in opening space for political debate, especially during the political impasse.¹⁰

With the change in government in The Gambia came the expectation of a higher quality of life, with better employment opportunities, greater access to education and improved delivery of social services. The Barrow government has realised this need and has made tackling



The youth made the #GambiaHasDecided movement popular through social media. The movement challenged President Jammeh's authority and ensured that the people's voice was heard during the elections.

youth unemployment a priority, offering skills training and apprenticeship schemes through the National Youth Service Scheme. However, a recent survey of 16- to 30-year-olds found that “many young people were unaware of these programmes, or did not believe they were effective”.¹¹ More is needed from the government to communicate opportunities and connect with youth to understand their expectations. The National Youth Council offers an opportunity to establish this link.

The National Youth Council was established in 2000 and has played a central role in empowering Gambian youth during the transition. Several interviewees from civil society and the private sector stressed that there has been little communication from the new government on what is being done and what plans it has for the country. There have only been isolated incidents of protests and demonstrations, but many interviewees warned that these illustrate brewing tensions. The National Youth Council has managed to diffuse a number of protests planned by youth, but the fear is that if youth are not engaged in the short term, their “energy [to bring about change] can easily slip to dissent”.¹² There is a sense that they feel responsible for putting this new government in power, so they are anxious to see the results of this change, including more employment opportunities and a better quality of life.¹³

In addition to the government initiatives, several private institutions have launched initiatives in an effort to meet the demand for improved access to and delivery of

education and training. One example is the UN Conference on Trade Empretec programme, which works to “help existing and aspiring entrepreneurs become innovative and internationally competitive small and medium-size enterprises”.¹⁴ The initiative focuses on assisting entrepreneurs through an “integrated behavioral change program anchored on two flagship methodologies: Entrepreneurship Training Workshops and a comprehensive Business Development Support and Advisory Service”.¹⁵ With the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the initiative was set up in 2014 and has worked with 2500 entrepreneurs across six regions in the country so far. It delivers seven programmes that focus on entrepreneurship-training workshops, including specific programmes for youth and women. Investment in these programmes could not only help expand their reach but would also assist in developing and strengthening the skills youth need to increase their economic opportunities.

Due to The Gambia's high youth population, prioritising initiatives aimed at empowering youth should be a central focus of the new government's work for the purpose of sustaining peace within the country. In this regard, among other things, investing in entrepreneurship as a means of job creation is an investment in sustaining peace.

THE NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL WAS ESTABLISHED IN 2000 AND HAS PLAYED A CENTRAL ROLE IN EMPOWERING GAMBIAN YOUTH DURING THE TRANSITION

Women's Empowerment

The connection between women's empowerment, stability and peace is supported by a wealth of evidence. Indeed, “gender equality is a stronger predictor of a state's peacefulness than its level of democracy, religion, or gross domestic product (GDP). Where women are more empowered, the state is less likely to experience civil conflict or go to war with its neighbors.”¹⁶ Moreover, there is a positive correlation between economic growth and gender equality and evidence that increasing “women's participation and representation in leadership and decision-making positions leads to higher levels of peacefulness and better development outcomes for society”.¹⁷

The Gambia ranked 173 out of 188 on the UNDP's 2016 Gender Inequality Index, with women still struggling to access economic resources, healthcare and education.¹⁸ Women and girls continue to be disadvantaged due to patriarchal norms and practices, including in customary law, which does not allow women to inherit land, and which does not give women equal status in judicial processes. In addition, women cannot control or own land, despite their predominant role in farming and the reduction of malnutrition. Women disproportionately face financial

access barriers that prevent them from participating in the economy and from improving their lives, including lack of access to credit and bank accounts.¹⁹ Many women have poor access to social services, healthcare and education, and work in low-wage jobs. Gender-based violence is a frequent occurrence in The Gambia, with 20% of women (15–49 years) having experienced physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime.²⁰ Further, despite being illegal, underage marriage is still prevalent, with 30% of women (20–24 years) married before the age of 18, forcing many girls to leave school prematurely.²¹ Fully 75% of women (15–49 years) have undergone female genital mutilation,²² and the maternal mortality rate in 2015 was 706 deaths per 100 000 live births – which, while it has been decreasing over the past 25 years, is still high in comparison to the global average.²³

The Jammeh regime did demonstrate a commitment to addressing gender inequality by, among other things, empowering women through establishing the National Women’s Council within the Department of State for Women’s Affairs. The National Women’s Council acts as a forum for women to access legal support. The ensuing adoption of the Women’s Act (2010), the Sexual Offences Act (2013) and the Women’s Amendment Act (2015), banning female genital mutilation, also signified progress in advancing the rights of women. In 2012, The Gambia adopted a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, recognising the impact that conflicts in neighbouring countries continue to have on women in the country. Enforcement, however, has been a challenge. This is particularly the case in the provinces, where certain cultural practices, such as female genital mutilation, are still prevalent. Further, there is concern that many in the country associate strict enforcement of these laws with the former regime, and that the change of government will result in greater disregard for these protections.

THE GAMBIA ADOPTED A NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY, RECOGNISING THE IMPACT THAT CONFLICTS IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES CONTINUE TO HAVE ON WOMEN IN THE COUNTRY

Furthermore, women in The Gambia face financial exclusion, mainly due to limited access to land and credit. Social and cultural norms make it difficult for women to acquire vital information on available financial services, while the lower literacy rate among women (35.5% compared to 45.7% for men) means more women have difficulty processing and comprehending the information they do have access to.²⁴ Simply being able to open a bank account and access credit would help expand the economic opportunities available to women in The Gambia.



GETTY IMAGES/MYLOUPE

The National Women Farmers Association in The Gambia promotes commercially viable agriculture and food security among female farmers.

There are however, efforts by non-state actors to address some of the challenges faced by women, and thereby advance gender equality and equal opportunities for women. The National Women Farmers Association (NAFWA), for example, is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) with the aim of promoting commercially viable agriculture and food security among female farmers, to move them from subsistence agriculture towards economic self-sufficiency. NAFWA builds women’s capacity to open and manage small businesses and advocates for more land ownership rights for women. The Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (TANGO), an umbrella organisation of NGOs operating in The Gambia, takes a slightly different approach. It works to educate men in The Gambia on how women can contribute to society, and how they can support women in this effort. It is also teaching fathers the importance of education for girls, especially in rural regions.

Taking into consideration the strong links between gender equality and sustaining peace, initiatives targeted at increasing women’s empowerment and improving gender

equality should be prioritised on The Gambia's national agenda. This should include ensuring the mobilisation of necessary resourcing of organisations working to empower women, the upholding of laws promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, and efforts to ensure that women have equal access to all resources and opportunities in the country.

Transitional Justice and Good Governance

The resolutions sustaining peace emphasised the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict, strengthening the rule of law and fostering national reconciliation. This includes ensuring "inclusive dialogue and mediation, access to justice and transitional justice, accountability, good governance, democracy, accountable institutions, gender equality and respect for, and protection of, human rights and fundamental freedoms".²⁵ Transitional justice refers to the ways that countries which have emerged from periods of conflict and repression address mass human rights violations, for which the traditional justice system cannot provide the necessary response. Some of the aims of transitional justice include establishing a functioning rule of law system and accountable institutions in society, which enable individuals to voice grievances and seek justice

for past and present human rights abuses. Having strong national institutions "plays an important role in promoting and monitoring the implementation of international human rights standards at the national level".²⁶

In line with this approach, when Barrow assumed office, he committed to enhancing and improving "human rights, access to justice and good governance for all".²⁷

To achieve this, the government has formulated a plan that consists of efforts to improve the rule of law and address grievances of the past through a transitional justice process. After decades of bad governance, the Barrow administration appears dedicated to regaining the trust of the population, strengthening the country's institutions and rebuilding The Gambia's historical reputation as a beacon of democracy on the continent.

To strengthen the rule of law in the country, the government will be reforming the judicial sector and solidifying proposals for the establishment of a national human rights commission. This will include a comprehensive review of existing criminal justice legislation to reform laws restricting political and civic freedoms, particularly those relating to freedom of expression. The government intends to establish more courthouses and ensure that judges and magistrates can work full time in rural areas, where justice



GETTY IMAGES SEYLOU

Women's participation and representation in leadership and decision-making positions leads to higher levels of peacefulness and better development outcomes for society.



Initiatives that aim to strengthen the rule of law and deal with past violations are important for enabling national reconciliation and the unity needed for the country to move peacefully forward into a new era.

is often difficult to administer and access. These efforts to expand the judicial infrastructure will help make people more aware of their rights.

Another key area of concern in regard to the rule of law is the personal security of Gambians during the political transition. Paradoxically, during the Jammeh rule, the country was considered one of the safest on the continent. The Jammeh regime had zero tolerance for crime, with harsh punishment. The intention behind this was to ensure that The Gambia remained a safe country and attractive for tourists.²⁸ However, since Jammeh left office, reports of rape, home break-ins and petty crime have been rising, leaving many concerned that the new government is not prioritising the safety of Gambians.²⁹ To strengthen the population's trust in the security forces, the government has begun to undertake security sector reform. Central to this process is the formulation and adoption of a comprehensive national security policy, along with the necessary legislation. The policy would aim to identify threats to national security, clarify the functions of the country's key security institutions,

TO STRENGTHEN THE POPULATION'S TRUST IN THE SECURITY FORCES, THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEGUN TO UNDERTAKE SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

and structure them in line with the provisions of the policy, ultimately strengthening the rule of law and accountability in the country.

The government has also committed to establishing a truth and reconciliation commission to address the gross human rights violations of the past. This process seeks to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions, provide closure for those affected by human rights violations, help the government establish and document an accurate historical record of events, and pay reparations to victims.³⁰ The Ministry of Justice held a three-day National Stakeholders Conference on Justice and Human Rights in May 2017 to conceptualise the mechanism. The conference identified challenges and gaps in the justice system, and allowed for discussions on the design of a transitional justice strategy and the establishment of applicable transitional justice mechanisms for The Gambia moving forward.³¹

Many interviewees, however, highlighted that there is anxiety around whether transitional justice should be the priority for The Gambia, and how it should tie in to other aspects of development. Many question why the central focus has been transitional justice when there is widespread lack of access to electricity and a need for economic growth.³² While the focus of the new government should not rest exclusively on transitional justice, initiatives that aim to strengthen the rule of law and deal with past violations are important for

enabling national reconciliation and the unity needed for the country to move peacefully forward into a new era.

Conclusion

As The Gambia moves forward in its transitional period and solidifies its national development plans, the new government must address transitional justice alongside investment in economic growth, gender equality and youth employment, among other things, to maintain peace and stability throughout the country. Neglecting any of these elements risks disgruntling a population seeking improvements in its quality of life and demanding justice for past abuses.

Looking at a country through the lens of sustaining peace, it is peace rather than conflict that is the starting point. This requires identifying and relying on what is still working in a society, rather than on what is broken and needs to be fixed. A sustaining peace approach focuses not just on restoring stability after violence but also on investing in structures, attitudes and institutions associated with peaceful societies. Further, it focuses on all countries – regardless of whether or not they have experienced conflict. Using this approach can help keep attention on countries, such as The Gambia, that are not faced with current violent conflict as such, despite internal vulnerabilities and external pressures, but are nonetheless in need of long-term investment efforts to sustain peace. **A**

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CIVIC SPACE RESTRICTIONS IN AFRICA: HOW DOES CIVIL SOCIETY RESPOND?

BY DAVID KODE



REUTERS/AFOLABI SOTUNDE

Introduction

Across Africa, major advances in democracy have been affected by restrictions on civic space and on the activities of civil society organisations (CSOs), the media and individual activists. Civic space is the foundation for civil society to make its contribution to society, provoking discussion and debate, advocating for a more inclusive society, providing services, building community spirit and challenging those in authority on the decisions they make.

CSOs, individual activists and journalists who raise concerns about the actions of governments, or who call for transparency and accountability, often face reprisals from both state and non-state actors. The CIVICUS Monitor,

an online tool that monitors the state of civic space in countries across the world, shows that half of the countries whose civic space is rated as closed in the world are found in Africa.¹ The Monitor defines closed as contexts where state and non-state actors create an atmosphere of violence and intimidation, and kill, detain, persecute and injure people who

Above: Civic space is the foundation for civil society to make its contribution to society, provoking discussion and debate, advocating for a more inclusive society, building community spirit and challenging those in authority on the decisions they make.

simply exercise their right to assemble, express themselves and associate. These closed countries include Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan.

Overall, civic space in Africa is shrinking and this downward trend is precipitated by laws, policies, physical attacks, threats and demonisation of those who stand up for the rights of citizens. While the state, government officials and security and intelligence services are the main perpetrators of these restrictions, non-state actors – including armed groups, terrorist organisations and the private sector – also carry out such restrictions. These restrictions continue, despite the fact that many African governments have committed to upholding fundamental rights as they are signatories to international and regional human rights instruments, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR). In addition, the constitutions of most countries guarantee the most fundamental rights including freedom of association, assembly and expression.

Restrictions increase in many countries during politically sensitive periods such as elections, as has been observed recently in Kenya, Uganda, Gabon and Zambia, and when incumbents amend constitutions and electoral laws to extend their mandates and terms in office, as experienced in Burundi and the DRC. During periods of elections, members of the

political opposition and civil society groups that work on electoral issues and the media are targeted. Media houses are often closed or have their accreditation withdrawn – sometimes for simply providing space for members of the political opposition to express their views. Governments sometimes accuse the private media and CSOs of colluding with the political opposition.

Civil society groups that work on human rights, corruption and governance, and activists and citizens who speak out against the excesses and policies of the government, are mostly victims of the restrictions perpetuated by the state. There is also an increase in the spate of attacks on and persecution of activists working on land, environmental and indigenous rights. Governments justify these restrictions by stating they are aimed at ensuring state security, protecting sovereignty and addressing challenges related to terrorism.

This article looks at the various sources of these restrictions or threats to civic space and examines how they affect those who are critical of government actions. It also looks at how civil society and individual activists are pushing back on these restrictions. As governments across the African continent use legal means and policies to regulate and restrict the activities of CSOs and physically target human rights defenders, CSOs and human rights defenders now use innovative ways to raise awareness of human rights violations and the excesses of governments.



REUTERS/THOMAS MUKOVA

Members of the Kenyan media march in a peaceful protest to denounce the new draconian laws tabled by parliament to impose fines and restrictions on journalists (December 2013).

Restrictive Legislation and Policies Used to Curtail Fundamental Rights

The enactment of restrictive legislation that affects the functioning of civil society is not unique to Africa. Governments in Hungary, Poland, India and Russia have put in place laws aimed at restricting the formation, activities and financing of civil society. From Cameroon to South Africa, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia and Malawi, many African countries have promulgated or are in the process of promulgating legislation and policies that restrict – rather than open up – the space in which CSOs and their representatives operate. Most of these laws contain draconian provisions that are carefully embedded to constrain the space and activities for civil society groups. Other provisions in the laws are worded in broad and ambiguous terms, and this enables state authorities to interpret them subjectively when dealing with civil society groups. The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law recently released its freedom monitor – a tool that explains the legal dynamics affecting fundamental freedoms.

In Ethiopia, the environment for civil society is governed by the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSP). It was adopted in 2009 and its effect on the operations of civil society was almost instantaneous. Almost all human rights organisations closed down, significantly scaled down their operations or changed their focus to include activities that are not human rights-based. According to the CSP, national CSOs are prohibited from receiving more than 10% of their funding

from foreign sources if they focus on human rights including democratic rights, conflict resolution and gender rights. CSOs are also not permitted to spend more than 30% of their budget on administrative costs, and this remains problematic because the law does not define what administrative costs are.² In the immediate aftermath of the promulgation of the law, Ethiopian authorities froze the bank accounts and assets of the Human Rights Council (HRCO) and the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA).³

The HRCO has a track record of doing advocacy on human rights, and EWLA provided legal assistance to thousands of women each year. Several organisations that still operate have been forced to self-censor because the government has used the term “administrative costs” inconsistently. The ambiguity in the term means that investigating human rights violations or providing free legal assistance can be defined as administrative by the authorities. CSOs are forced to obtain approval from the authorities if they want to raise funds locally. The implementation of the CSP has given rise to a climate of fear, resulting in high levels of censorship. Many human rights defenders have fled Ethiopia to avoid persecution by the authorities.

In Egypt, the government ratified a new law regulating non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in May 2017. The Law for Regulating the Work of Associations and Other Institutions Working in the Field of Civil Work prevents NGOs from carrying out activities that impair national security, public



REUTERS/MOHAMED ABD EL GHANY

A man, with his hands tied to a chain, participates in a protest against the crackdown on activists and a new law restricting demonstrations, at Talaat Harab square in downtown Cairo, Egypt (December 2013).

order, morality and public health. It provides the government with powers to monitor the activities of NGOs. The law controls funding for NGOs, as it states that associations must obtain permission from the authorities 30 days before they receive funding from funders in Egypt – and upon receipt of the funds, they must inform the Ministry for Social Solidarity.⁴ In addition, the law states that associations receiving funding from outside of Egypt must notify the authorities within 60 days of the receipt of the funds, but that associations are not permitted to use the funding within 60 days. It goes further to state that Egyptian authorities may reject the funding within 30 days. The implications of this is that several NGOs have had their bank accounts frozen for engaging in activities that are against national interest, and many others have stopped receiving funding from overseas donors.⁵ These restrictions on freedom of association increase the administrative burden on CSOs and have forced many human rights organisations to change their focus so that they can continue to operate.

Attacks and Burglaries on Civil Society Organisations

In September 2017, Ugandan police and security services raided the offices of Ugandan NGOs Action Aid Uganda, Great Lakes Institute for Strategic Studies, Solidarity Uganda and Uhuru Institute. The attacks were part of a crackdown to curb the voices of those that opposed a parliamentary proposal to lift the presidential age limits, to allow President Yoweri Museveni to contest elections when his current mandate expires. Uganda has a long history of attacks and burglaries on the premises of NGOs. Since September 2012, the offices of at least 24 CSOs have been broken into.⁶ Most of these organisations work on human rights issues, and sensitive human rights reports, and computers and laptops are stolen during the burglaries.

THE ATTACKS ON THE PREMISES OF CSOS AND THE BURGLARIES AIM TO SEND A MESSAGE TO CIVIL SOCIETY TO STOP WORKING ON ISSUES CONSIDERED SENSITIVE BY THE STATE

CSOs in South Africa condemned a military-style armed robbery on the offices of the Helen Suzman Foundation in March 2016. A security guard was tied up and the robbers made away with documents and computers.⁷ The burglary occurred at a time when the organisation sought to interdict the then-head of South Africa's corruption and crime's fighting investigative unit, the Hawks, from exercising his duties while there was a judicial review of the process that led to his appointment.

In Cameroon, the offices of the *Réseau Des Défenseurs Droits Humains en Afrique Centrale* (REDHAC) – a network of human rights defenders and CSOs in the Central African region, headquartered in Douala, Cameroon – was broken

into in 2014, and confidential documents and expensive equipment were stolen. REDHAC documents human rights violations in eight countries in the Central Africa region and advocates to protect these rights. Unidentified individuals broke into the offices of REDHAC after its staff met with the United States ambassador several hours before. In almost all the cases mentioned here, none of the perpetrators have been held accountable or brought to justice. The attacks on the premises of CSOs and the burglaries aim to send a message to civil society to stop working on issues considered sensitive by the state.

Assassinations and Intimidation of Civil Society Activists

In March 2016, anti-mining activist and chair of the Amadiba Crisis Committee, based on South Africa's Wild Coast in the Eastern Cape province, Sikhosiphi "Bazooka" Rhadebe, was brutally killed in his home after campaigning against the mining interests of Australian mining company Minerals Commodities Ltd (MRC) for more than a decade. His murder was a reflection of the reality faced by anti-mining activists in South Africa's Wild Coast mining area.⁸ Shortly before he was assassinated, he had allegedly expressed fears to his colleagues about a possible hit list that included him and other members of the committee.

In Kenya, human rights lawyer Willie Kimani was assassinated, together with a client and a taxi driver, by police officers, after all three were declared missing on 23 June 2016.⁹ He was a lawyer and activist who defended individuals in poor communities and exposed corrupt police officers. At the time the three were killed, Willie was defending his client Josephat Mwenda, who himself had been shot and wounded by a police officer. In the DRC, human rights defenders Tsongo Sikuliwako Alex and Alphonse Luanda were killed in 2017, and Marcel Tengeneza and Father Vincent Machozi were killed in 2016.¹⁰ In only a few cases are thorough investigations carried out and the perpetrators identified and brought to justice. The high levels of impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators enables them to repeat such actions.

Internet Shutdowns

African governments are increasingly taking attacks and restrictions on freedom of expression to online platforms. This phenomenon started in Egypt during the Arab Spring, when the Egyptian government completely shut down the internet for several days to prevent citizens from mobilising and sharing images from protests. As citizens, journalists and CSOs increasingly use the internet and social media to share information, these platforms have become the new frontiers for restrictions on freedom of expression by governments around the world. Governments use shutdowns on the internet as a tool for social control and censorship.

At least nine African countries – including Cameroon, Ethiopia, the DRC, Mali, Morocco, Senegal, South Sudan, Somaliland and Togo – shut down the internet in 2017.

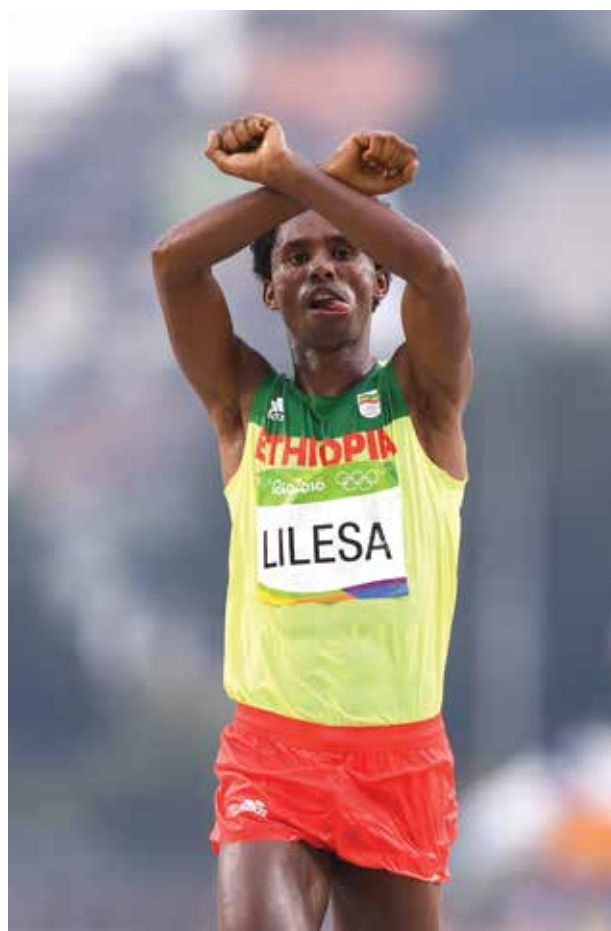
The length of these shutdowns varied from a few hours to several months. Cameroon holds the unenviable record of one of the longest shutdowns on the internet in the world, after it ordered telecommunication service providers and mobile phone companies to block access to the internet and social media in the two Anglophone regions of the North West and South West for three months. Governments often claim they restrict access to the internet to preserve security, stop terrorism and protect the territorial integrity of their state. Often, access to the internet and social media is denied during politically sensitive periods, such as elections, and before or after mass protests. Like in Cameroon, the authorities in Togo shut down the internet in August 2017 as civil society and political opposition parties held demonstrations calling on President Faure Gnassingbé to step down, and for constitutional reforms.¹¹ The government cut access to the internet to prevent protesters from mobilising and protests spreading to different parts of the country.

The problem has become so pervasive that the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council passed a resolution in June 2016 recognising that the right to freedom of expression on the internet is “of increasing interest and importance”, and condemned “measures to intentionally prevent and disrupt access to or dissemination of information in violation of international human rights law and called on states to refrain from and cease such measures”.¹² But the deliberate interruption of communication on the internet also has huge economic costs. Entrepreneurs who run internet cafes and their employees are without work during periods when the internet is shut down, and many other businesses that rely on the internet are unable to engage in business transactions.

Addressing Restrictions on Fundamental Freedoms: Push-back from Activists

As African states arrest, detain and persecute representatives of CSOs, and as governments declare states of emergency and use violence to disperse protests, activists and CSOs are using other means to highlight restrictions at home and to make the international community aware of human rights violations. During the 2016 Olympic Games in Brazil, Ethiopian athlete Feyisa Lilesa crossed his hands over his head in a symbolic gesture when he crossed the finish line during the men’s marathon, and made the same gesture when his silver medal was presented to him.¹³ His gesture was a cry for justice and protest of the brutal repression and marginalisation of the Oromo people by the government of Ethiopia. Risking his life, his reputation and career, he used the platform of the Olympics to bring to the world’s attention the atrocities that have been committed in Oromia. The gesture was a replica of that made by protesters in Oromia. Prior to these protests, the Ethiopian security forces had massacred hundreds of Oromo people over the attempted use of indigenous land in Ginchi, a town in the Oromia region, for investment.¹⁴

Uganda has a very dynamic civil society working on human rights, democracy, elections, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), media rights and gender rights,



During the 2016 Olympic Games in Brazil, Ethiopian athlete Feyisa Lilesa crossed his hand over his head in a symbolic gesture as he crossed the finish line in the men’s marathon. His gesture was a cry for justice and protest of the repression and marginalisation of the Oromo people.

and continues to hold the government to account. However, Museveni’s government, in power since 1986, has often targeted human rights organisations, media houses and journalists who criticise the actions of the government. Ugandan activist Stella Nyanzi uses unconventional means in Uganda’s conservative society to criticise the actions of the government and call for reforms. In a social media post, she compared Museveni to a “pair of buttocks” for renegeing on a promise he made during his electoral campaign to provide free sanitary pads to school girls in Uganda.¹⁵ She was arrested for the post and spent more than a month in prison. In Zimbabwe, human rights activist Pastor Evan Mawarire used the Zimbabwean flag and social media for the #ThisFlag movement to mobilise citizens and call for reforms and change in Zimbabwe. In July 2016, he organised “stayaway” protests against corruption, the failing economy and human rights violations. He has mobilised protests against the actions of government and continues to be a voice for citizens who call for change in the political and economic situation.

Rise of Social Movements

As governments target formal CSOs, their premises, leaders and representatives, using legal and policy restrictions and physical force, social movements and informal, loose civil society formations have arisen to challenge the undemocratic and authoritarian actions of governments and call for reforms. These movements use social media to mobilise citizens quickly and are vocal on socio-economic and political issues affecting citizens. In the DRC, the *Lutte pour le changement* (LUCHA) movement was created in 2012 in Goma, North Kivu, and comprises predominantly youth, who use innovative methods to call for change.¹⁶ It exercises non-violence and its members are spread across the different regions of the DRC. It uses peaceful sit-ins, community mobilisations and social media campaigns for advocacy on issues ranging from calls for President Joseph Kabila of the DRC to respect

THESE MOVEMENTS USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO MOBILISE CITIZENS QUICKLY AND ARE VOCAL ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ISSUES AFFECTING CITIZENS

the Constitution and step down, to access to clean water in communities and employment opportunities for youth.

In Senegal, the *Y'en a Marre* (or "We have had enough") movement was formed by journalists and rappers in 2011 in response to the ineffectiveness of the state. It uses rap music, poetry, rallies and public assemblies to call for reforms, and engages in door-to-door campaigns to encourage youth to participate in democratic processes and vote in elections. The *Y'en a Marre* movement played an important role in thwarting attempts by former Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade to extend his term in office.

Progress for Civil Society

Despite the increase in restrictions on civil society activities and fundamental freedoms, several changes in legislation and policy have been made at the national, regional and international level to improve the environment in which civil society operates. Calls for such changes were led by civil society, which engaged in sustained advocacy efforts and campaigns. In December 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on the protection of human rights defenders, which enjoins states to hold perpetrators of violence towards human rights defenders accountable and



REUTERS/JAMES ARENA

Ugandan academic, Stella Nyanzi, stands in the dock at Buganda Road Court for criticising President Museveni and his family on social media (10 April 2017).



REUTERS/FINBARR O'REILLY

Members of the hip-hop group *Y'en a Marre* perform during a community concert in Dakar, Senegal, to encourage youth to register and vote in the next election (June 2011).

to release human rights defenders who are in detention. The resolution recognises the role of human rights defenders in advancing economic, social and cultural rights, and calls on businesses to respect the rights of human rights defenders to assemble, associate and express themselves in a peaceful manner.¹⁷

In October 2017, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) adopted its Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa. These guidelines provide direction to states and serve as a reference for civil society for the protection and implementation of rights of association and assembly in Africa.¹⁸

In 2016 in Swaziland, the Supreme Court ruled that sections of the draconian Suppression of Terrorism Act (of 2008) and Sedition and Subversive Activities Act (of 1938) were unconstitutional, because they violated the freedom of expression and association. These laws had been used to target civil society groups that called for reforms in Swaziland and to restrict freedom of expression, association and assembly. In Kenya in 2013, civil society successfully defeated attempts by the government to amend the Public Benefits Organisations Act of 2013 to include more restrictions.¹⁹ On 11 June 2014, Côte d'Ivoire became the first country in Africa to adopt a law on human rights defenders as a measure

to protect them. Burkina Faso and Mali adopted similar laws in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

Conclusion

The use of restrictive legislation, policies and laws and physical attacks on and assassinations of journalists and human rights defenders and other critics of governments is not new in Africa. What is alarming is the blatant manner and frequency with which they happen. It is also surprising that the main perpetrators of these actions are not held to account – even when they are known – and in cases where there is need for investigations to take place for justice to be done, such investigations are not prioritised. The failure of the state to hold those accountable for these restrictions breeds impunity and leads to additional attacks. Under these circumstances, some representatives of civil society and the media have been forced to self-censor to prevent further attacks, while others continue to defy the odds while defending human rights and voicing concerns over restrictive government policies.

African states must realise that representatives of CSOs, human rights defenders and journalists are not enemies of the state. Rather, they have a key role to play in holding the government accountable, contributing to policies and ensuring that governments adhere to their human rights

commitments. The adoption of the law on human rights defenders to recognise and protect human rights defenders in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali is a commendable step in the right direction. But these laws can only be useful if they are adhered to and implemented by states. African governments also have a responsibility to respect the rights of all citizens, including those working for the media and for civil society, in line with the government's national, regional and international human rights commitments. Most of these rights are guaranteed in the constitutions of states, but they are threatened by the promulgation of laws that inhibit the activities of civil society groups. The starting point will be for governments to review and amend these laws in cases where they constrain the activities of civil society groups, and for adequate consultations to be held with citizens and feedback received before laws are passed.

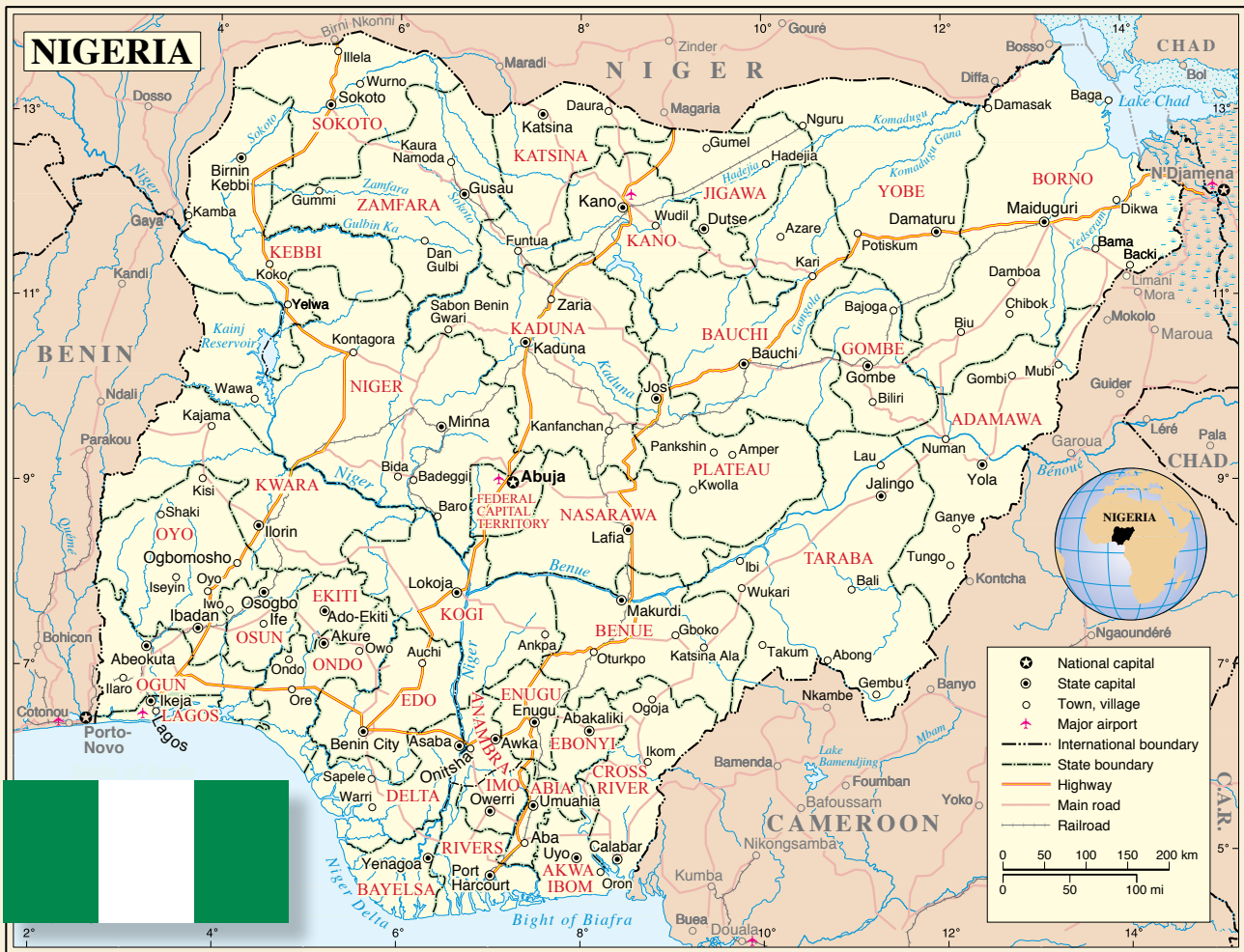
For civil society, it is imperative to build on some of the successes that have been achieved in terms of resolutions passed by international human rights mechanisms and the amendment of laws by the judiciary. Where possible, resources should be allocated for strategic litigation in cases where restrictive laws have been passed, or where CSOs have had their bank accounts frozen or their registration annulled. National, regional and international CSOs should also continue to engage in cross-campaigns that highlight human rights violations, and engage in advocacy – including in cases where such advocacy cannot be done at the national level, due to increased restrictions. For more impact, formal and institutionalised CSOs have to work together with informal civil society networks and individual activists to ensure that advocacy efforts are sustained until the desired change is realised. **A**

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REPATRIATION AND RECONCILIATION CHALLENGES IN NORTH-EASTERN NIGERIA: TOWARD AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS AND ACTION

BY TATSUSHI ARAI

Introduction

This article analyses the findings from field research, conducted in north-eastern Nigeria in late 2017, which explored the repatriation and reconciliation needs of the communities displaced by Boko Haram’s armed insurgency and the military operations that followed. Major findings include the displaced communities’ diverse contested outlooks on forgiveness, coexistence, physical separation and

extermination, with respect to how they would like to interact with rehabilitated former Boko Haram foot soldiers wishing to return home. A secondary focus of this article is to explore how to develop practical and sustainable mechanisms of government–civil society collaboration capable of building the trust and security necessary for repatriation and reconciliation. To establish an informed basis for analysing these two issues, a brief introduction to the regional context is in order.



The Nigerian military and police, together with local vigilante groups, have led an all-out campaign to drive Boko Haram fighters out of their strongholds and hideouts.

Regional and Social Context

Boko Haram – or “Western education is prohibited” in Hausa – is a religious-inspired insurgency movement based in north-eastern Nigeria.¹ Its campaign of violence against Nigerian law-enforcement personnel and establishments started in 2009 in Borno State and Yobe State. The geographic scope and nature of the targets expanded exponentially in subsequent years. Boko Haram’s attacks, and the government’s counter-offensives, have since killed tens of thousands of people on all sides. Moreover, as of October 2017, some 1.6 million people remain displaced across three of the most conflict-affected north-eastern Nigerian states: Adamawa, Borno and Yobe.²

Under the leadership of presidents Goodluck Jonathan (2010–2015) and Muhammadu Buhari (2015–current), the Nigerian military and police have led an all-out campaign to drive Boko Haram fighters out of their strongholds and hideouts. Local vigilante groups fought side by side with the government forces and played an essential role in intelligence-sharing, combat missions and stabilisation support. As of early 2018, population centres in north-eastern Nigeria once controlled by Boko Haram are mostly clear of

its active presence. Relative calm has been restored in these places and normal day-to-day activities have resumed. With these military gains, the Nigerian government and international agencies are terminating the crisis and emergency phase of their activities and refocusing their resources and programmes on stabilisation, repatriation and reconstruction. However, low-intensity fighting, guerrilla-style attacks and security incidents caused by dispersed Boko Haram fighters, including female suicide bombers, still take place in isolated pockets of resistance. Importantly, many rural areas outside the government-controlled population centres remain insecure, because of the sustained presence and infiltration of Boko Haram fighters.

The significant military gains and the return of relative calm present a unique challenge to the long-term efforts and collective self-reflections necessary to decisively tackle the three interconnected roots of the acute crisis that found its distinct expression in the form of Boko Haram’s armed insurgency. The first of these roots is dysfunctional governance. At the heart of this systemic problem is the need to establish inclusive, accountable and efficient mechanisms of governance, capable of making and implementing policies



Women gather at a water collecting point at the internally displaced people's camp in Bama, Borno State, Nigeria (August 2016).

at the federal, state and local level. Importantly, improvement in governance must pave the way for the effective delivery of law enforcement and justice. The second root cause is underdevelopment. The core challenge in this area is how to secure and allocate development resources equitably so as to uplift the rural and urban poor; how to provide education, health services and basic infrastructure universally; and how to create sufficient employment, especially for the growing population of unemployed youth. The third issue is identity crisis. At its very core, this crisis is about how the socio-economically deprived, politically marginalised and religiously misinformed population, especially the youth, can establish self-esteem and positive future outlooks.

Importantly, neither Boko Haram's armed insurgency nor the government's counter-offensives have helped resolve these underlying crises. Instead, the campaigns of violence – however important for their respective causes – deepened the existing crises by depriving Nigerian society's existing resources and capacities of governance reform, development and psychosocial healing. Yet, one may choose to view a decade of destruction and suffering in north-eastern Nigeria as a wake-up call for Nigeria, its neighbours in the Lake Chad region and the international community at

large to make a fresh start. Viewed from such a historical perspective, the task of repatriation and reconciliation in north-eastern Nigeria is an unprecedented opportunity for the country to generate political will and social conditions for resolving the three underlying crises. It is within this broad historical context and sensitised awareness that conflict-affected Nigerian communities' needs for repatriation and reconciliation must be analysed.

Findings: Diverse Outlooks on Repatriation and Reconciliation

Six focus group meetings with internally displaced persons (IDPs) of diverse regional and ethnic backgrounds from Borno State were held in Maidiguri in November 2017. The participants in these meetings were all Muslims. A set of two gender-specific meetings – one for women and the other for men – was held at each of the two government-sponsored formal camps. The remaining two meetings – one for women and the other for men – were held in an informal IDP settlement, which is outside government control and hosted by a local community. These six focus group meetings aimed to: (1) learn about the IDPs' views on necessary conditions for their future repatriation; and (2) explore their outlooks



The government should formally endorse senior traditional leaders to assume leading roles in convening and facilitating reconciliation dialogues in their respective states.

on the nature of relationships they would like to build with demobilised and rehabilitated members of Boko Haram in their home communities. The gender-specific method of inquiry was intended to ensure each gender-specific group's independent expression of opinion. A total of 130 IDPs from diverse regional and ethnolinguistic backgrounds participated in the meetings, which had 22 participants on average per meeting. The language used in the meetings was either Hausa or Kanuri or both, depending on the participants' needs. Interpretation in Hausa and Kanuri was provided by local humanitarian assistance professionals with whom the meeting participants were already familiar.

The method of data collection consisted of first asking open-ended questions about conditions under which these IDPs would like to return home, and then asking them to raise their hands in support of or opposition to a set of

A TOTAL OF 130 IDPS FROM DIVERSE REGIONAL AND ETHNOLINGUISTIC BACKGROUNDS PARTICIPATED IN THE MEETINGS, WHICH HAD 22 PARTICIPANTS ON AVERAGE PER MEETING

propositions presented by the researcher. In response to the open-ended question, "What are the most important conditions under which you will be willing to return home?", the most frequently observed responses across the three locations were:

- security assurances – some respondents elaborated on their security needs by requesting a sustained conspicuous presence of the military and/or well-disciplined vigilante groups;
- shelter;
- means of livelihood including agricultural instruments, fishing nets and shops for petty trade;
- schools;
- health clinics; and
- basic infrastructure in general.

Asked to name specific leaders and organisations whose public announcements on the presence of adequate security are deemed most credible, many respondents identified village heads, senior traditional leaders (known as *emirs* in northern Nigeria), and the military and other authoritative government agencies. Some of the IDPs from Bama, a local government area severely affected by violence, explicitly mentioned that they would know the presence of adequate

security when their revered king returns to his palace and sits there.

Building on the respondents' feedback on these open-ended questions, the researcher listed four possible conditions, the fulfilment of which may help the IDPs feel safe enough to live in the same geographic areas as demobilised and rehabilitated Boko Haram members. More specifically, the researcher asked the respondents to raise their hands to indicate whether they would consider the fulfilment of the four conditions as a sufficient reason to *coexist* (that is, to live in the same geographic area with or without daily contact) with those who previously fought as Boko Haram members. The four suggested conditions are:

1. disarmament of Boko Haram members and the seizing of their weapons;
2. their explicit commitment to a renunciation of force;
3. their confessions of their crimes and their expressed desire for forgiveness; and
4. their completion of a government-sponsored rehabilitation programme.

The proposal of these four conditions stems from the researcher's previous fieldwork and training experience in north-eastern Nigeria.³ It is also informed by the researcher's cumulative experience in diverse conflict-affected societies.

After asking about the respondents' willingness to coexist with demobilised Boko Haram members under these four conditions, the researcher then asked them whether they would be willing to *forgive* former Boko Haram

members who have met these conditions. The participants' responses are summarised in Table 1.

At Formal Camp 1 – the first location where the focus group meetings took place – the respondents were asked to consider the first three conditions (disarmament, renunciation of violence, and confession/request for forgiveness) only. The fourth condition (rehabilitation), which was not on the initial list of conditions presented at Formal Camp 1, was proposed by focus group participants at Formal Camp 2, the second research site. The fourth condition was then added to the working list. An expanded list of four conditions was presented to the rest of the focus group meetings to learn about IDPs' repatriation needs more comprehensively.

In the Informal Settlement – which was the third and final site for the inquiry – the respondents requested that the *separation* and *isolation* of demobilised Boko Haram members be given full consideration as an alternative to coexistence. (For this reason, separation from Boko Haram as a possible scenario was not discussed in any of the focus group meetings at the two formal camps.)

To learn from a small number of respondents who rejected both coexistence and separation, additional open-ended questions were introduced. The additional questions explored what these respondents wished to see happen in terms of demobilised Boko Haram members in the respondents' home communities. Follow-up interviews with them revealed their hope to have all the remaining Boko Haram members executed. These respondents explained that their desire to completely exterminate Boko Haram

Table 1: IDPs' views on conditions for coexistence with former Boko Haram members and for forgiveness

	IDPs' regions of origin	Male		Female	
		Yes to coexistence	Yes to forgiveness	Yes to coexistence	Yes to forgiveness
Formal Camp 1 (N=55)	Majority from Mafa; some from Bama and Konduga	60% (N=30)	(This question, unavailable at this point, was not asked in the meeting)	95% (N=25)	95% (N=25)
Formal Camp 2 (N=30)	Mostly from Bama and Kukawa	90% (N=12)	100% (N=12)	90% (N=18)	95% (N=18)
Informal Settlement (N=40)	Majority from Konduga; some from Gwoza and Bama	0% (N=20) 75% (15) stated no to coexistence 25% (5) abstained	100% (N=20) 90% (18) demanded <i>separation</i> from Boko Haram as another requirement	0% (N=20)	100% (N=20) 25% (4) demanded <i>separation</i> from Boko Haram as another requirement

Note: N refers to the number of respondents



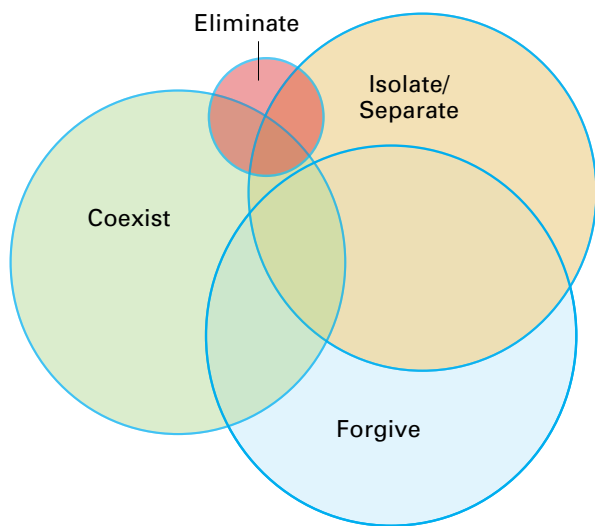
Borno State, Nigeria

members stemmed from their deep distrust in Boko Haram fighters’ hidden motives. There were only one to three respondents in each of the three male focus groups who expressed options of this nature. Interestingly, there was

not a single female respondent who explicitly supported the extermination of Boko Haram members.

Figure 1 summarises these findings. It presents the relative sizes of the selected Maiduguri-based IDP populations favouring one future scenario over the others.

Figure 1: Relative sizes of the IDP populations under study favouring one future scenario over the others with respect to their future relationship with demobilised Boko Haram members



The overlapping areas of the circles indicate the overlapping options and preferences with respect to how the IDPs would like to interact with demobilised Boko Haram members.

IDPS WITH A DEEP COMMITMENT TO FAITH CONSIDER FORGIVENESS AS A REQUIREMENT IN LIFE

Threats to the validity of the research method, as well as the findings of the research, must duly be acknowledged. The small sample size for the research, and a limited geographic and demographic scope of the displaced population under consideration, for example, indicates the tentative nature of the findings. The possibility of tacit peer pressure to follow groupthink in the distinct culture and structure of north-eastern Nigeria’s IDP communities cannot be ruled out, especially when these IDPs respond to a foreign researcher’s questions. Moreover, the reliability of the respondents’ verbal feedback on hypothetical scenarios about potentially life-threatening repatriation decisions as a predictor of their actual choices in real-life circumstances must be considered. Finally, the prevailing norm of masculinity can undermine the female respondents’ freedom to express their views on repatriation when they are brought together with their husbands, fathers and other male decision-makers.

Despite these and other possible limitations, the findings in this study are still evocative and merit serious attention. Importantly, these findings provide a promising basis for more in-depth, systematic research on repatriation that

must be undertaken in the near future. To support this vision of future inquiry further, implications of the findings are articulated as follows:

1. Many displaced Nigerians of diverse geographic and ethnolinguistic backgrounds are open to *coexistence* with demobilised and rehabilitated Boko Haram members under well-defined conditions.
2. Many of them are also willing to *forgive* Boko Haram attackers once these conditions have been met.
3. Those in favour of *exterminating* current and former Boko Haram members make up a very small minority of the displaced population under study.
4. IDPs with a deep commitment to faith consider forgiveness as a requirement in life. (IDPs’ elaborations on their responses demonstrate their faith-based commitment to forgiveness.)
5. Forgiveness inspired by faith is a choice of religious devotees striving to honour God’s will. Victims of violence can therefore forgive their perpetrators in God’s name without accepting the prospect of intercommunal coexistence. This is why it is possible for some of the IDPs to express their willingness to forgive Boko Haram, while simultaneously demanding separation from Boko Haram.
6. The implication presented in point 5 is significant, because it highlights the unique worldviews and challenges that inform the distinct nature of reconciliation practices in north-eastern Nigeria. For the purpose of this inquiry, reconciliation refers to a sustained reciprocal process of victim–offender relationship-building. It requires not only forgiveness, but also *mutual acceptance*. Importantly, forgiveness in the name of God alone falls short of embracing mutual acceptance.
7. As illustrated by points 5 and 6, the relationship between the four suggested future scenarios – elimination, separation, coexistence and forgiveness – is highly complex and interconnected. All the male and female respondents from Konduga, for example, categorically rejected the prospect of coexistence, but they nevertheless expressed their willingness to forgive the perpetrators. Moreover, despite their commitment to forgiveness, they requested separation from demobilised Boko Haram members because of their deep distrust in the latter.

It is highly plausible that the communities in north-eastern Nigeria continuously alter their preferences about the four suggested scenarios according to their actual experiences in repatriation, stabilisation and reconstruction. It is also possible that within each community, multiple scenarios are considered, debated, adopted and/or rejected at any given moment. Alternatively, two or more scenarios may be used sequentially in such a way to respond to the evolving dynamics of the community’s psychosocial

readiness, its perception and condition of security, and its ability to meet its livelihood needs.

The findings from this inquiry, which build on the researcher's earlier study, suggest that there are at least seven considerations whose dynamic interplay inform communities' preferences about which future scenarios they choose to adopt at any given moment. These considerations, which serve as critical determinants in community-based decision-making, are as follows:

1. *Direct versus indirect experience*: Whether the community's experience of Boko Haram's attacks is direct, recent and still fresh in its memory, or whether its experience is indirect, secondary and somewhat remote due to the passage of time⁴.
2. *Rural versus urban*: Whether the community that experienced Boko Haram's attacks is located in a rural area or an urban centre.⁵
3. *Gender*: Whether the community members are men or women, considering that the gender difference can critically affect their social experiences in violence.
4. *Age*: Whether the community members are young or old, considering that their ages may correspond to different mindsets – which can, in turn, influence their future outlooks.
5. *Nomadic north versus agrarian south*: Whether the community embodies the traditional nomadic culture of northern Borno State or the modern and/or agrarian culture of southern Borno State.⁶ (While cultural generalisation and stereotyping must be avoided, the working assumption stated by informed local interviewees is that unlike agrarian culture, nomadic culture tends to express a distinct commitment to honour, remember harm done to in-group members, and seek retaliation. The spread of liberal education in southern Borno reinforces this cultural difference between the north and south.)
6. *Ethnicity and tribalism*: Whether the ethnic and tribal leadership, governance structure and norms of the community favour coexistence over separation, and forgiveness over extermination.
7. *Level of sensitisation*: Whether, and to what extent, the community is sensitised on the sources, effects and responses to Boko Haram's violence.

A FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT REQUIRED IN FUTURE SECURITY OPERATIONS IS A PLANNED TRANSITION FROM MILITARY-LED OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS TO COMMUNITY-BASED PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

An integrated understanding of the four requirements of repatriation, the four future scenarios of community responses and the seven determinants of preferred collective action offers a useful framework of thinking when policymakers, communities and humanitarian agencies make decisions about stabilisation, reconstruction and reconciliation initiatives. Further research is needed to find out how interactions between these factors work in context-specific situations across time and space.

Institutional Mechanisms for Meeting Repatriation and Reconciliation Challenges

To put the proposed framework of coexistence and reconciliation into practice, the Nigerian government and civil society must work together to mobilise political will and resources. The key to broad-based sustainable initiatives for public mobilisation is to activate the existing social practices and mechanisms of conciliation with which Nigerians are already familiar. One way of envisioning such initiatives is for the federal government to formally endorse senior traditional leaders (*emirs*) to assume leading roles in convening and facilitating broad-based reconciliation dialogues in their respective states, and in the Local Government Areas (LGAs) within each state.⁷ These traditional leaders can utilise the existing governance mechanisms in which they exercise significant influence. They can support district, village and ward heads working within the existing mechanism of traditional governance to convene and facilitate reconciliation dialogues at the grassroots level. The federal government will need to provide these local leaders with not only an overarching vision and framework of national and regional reconciliation, but also with a sustained commitment to offering resources, mandatory skill-building opportunities and technical advice to ensure programme success. Partnership with trusted religious, political and business leaders, and various other prominent figures in the respective communities, must be established. Moreover, to be truly impactful and sustainable, these reconciliation initiatives must actively promote an inclusive representation of participants from different gender, ethnolinguistic, tribal, religious, age and urban/rural backgrounds.

Finally, a prerequisite to repatriation, reconciliation and reconstruction is security – a requirement mentioned explicitly in all six focus group meetings. Security is necessary not only in conflict-affected population centres and IDP camps, but also in the rural communities to which both IDPs and rehabilitated former Boko Haram members will be returning. Moreover, adequate security must be established along the long, unprotected roads that returnees will need to travel.

A fundamental shift required in future security operations is a planned transition from military-led *offensive* operations to community-based *peacekeeping* operations. While the former actively goes after insurgents and fights them, the latter prioritises building zones of security, livelihood and coexistence capable of detecting, deterring and coping with

existing and potential security threats. Community-based peacekeeping also relies heavily on the collective will, empowerment and collaboration among local communities and civil society actors committed to actively creating and sustaining conditions for improving security. The military and police will continuously play a significant supportive role in these peacekeeping operations. This is because these operations must still rely on the use of force for law enforcement and self-defence from imminent threats from time to time.

To implement this transition on a large scale, strong political leadership at the highest level is necessary. One way of realising such a major transition is to establish a high-level federal security taskforce comprised of the ministers of Defence, Information and Interior; the inspector general of the police; the military chiefs; and/or other senior officials capable of making or influencing decisions on matters related to national security. Working closely with the president and technical experts, the taskforce can guide the overall planning of the war-to-peace transition, allocate necessary resources and personnel, and support the implementation of the presidential initiative for north-east Nigeria's reconstruction⁸ from the defence and security leaders' perspective.

An essential element of the broad-based transition to peacekeeping is the federal government's effort to establish a formalised partnership with a broad range of qualified local vigilante groups.⁹ Such a partnership is essential, because many of the trusted vigilante groups can provide security in unprotected rural areas in which the formal military and police forces can neither establish security nor sustain their presence. In Borno State, an estimated 26000 vigilantes (as of September 2016) belong to the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), a loosely organised network of homegrown groups that have played an essential role in fighting Boko Haram since its establishment in early 2013.¹⁰ The proposed partnership can establish a multiyear agreement between the federal government and qualified vigilante groups. The agreement will need to ensure that qualified vigilantes will regularly receive stipends, equipment and mandatory training, in exchange for the security and peacekeeping services they will need to deliver in designated areas. The training will need to cover human rights and gender norms; well-defined roles of vigilante groups in law enforcement support; best practices in neighbourhood watch and community-based security arrangements; and basic knowledge of repatriation, conflict management and reconciliation. The proposed federal security taskforce can endorse and support this process to enhance its credibility.

Conclusion

The field research conducted in north-eastern Nigeria revealed conflict-affected communities' diverse perspectives about how to meet reconciliation challenges. Their faith, culture, social experience and various other determining factors will shape and reshape their decisions about whether

and how to coexist and reconcile with former insurgents they will encounter upon repatriation. To ensure the success of this transition, formalised government–civil society partnerships must be established to promote reconciliation initiatives and community-based peacekeeping. In turn, these activities must be purposefully designed and implemented to pave the way towards overcoming Nigeria's long-standing challenges in governance, development and inclusive social identity. **A**

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Endnotes

- 1 For a succinct summary of Boko Haram's rise and expansion, see the introductory section of Arai, Tatsushi (2017) Conflict-sensitive Repatriation: Lessons from North-eastern Nigeria. *Conflict Trends*, 2017 (1), Available at: <<http://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/conflict-sensitive-repatriation/>> [Accessed 22 January 2018].
- 2 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (2017) 'Nigeria: Humanitarian Dashboard (January–November 2017)', Available at: <<https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/nigeria-humanitarian-dashboard-january-november-2017>> [Accessed 22 January 2018].
- 3 Findings from the previous research are reported in Arai (2017) op. cit.
- 4 Arai, Tatsushi (2017) Interview with a Nigerian medical doctor and senior official in Borno State's Ministry of Health on 21 November. Maiduguri.
- 5 Arai, Tatsushi (2017) Telephone interviews with Nigerian humanitarian support professionals in north-eastern Nigeria on 17 and 18 October.
- 6 Arai, Tatsushi (2017) Interview with a Nigerian humanitarian support professional with a background in anthropology on 21 November. Maiduguri.
- 7 This proposal of reconciliation initiatives, led by traditional leaders, is based primarily on Arai, Tatsushi (2017) Interview with a senior Nigerian civil society leader, Abuja, 25 November.
- 8 The Presidential Committee on the North East Initiative (<<https://pcni.gov.ng>>) was launched in 2016 to lead the federal government's effort in the post-conflict recovery and development of the region.
- 9 This recommendation, in broad outline, mirrors that of Ogbonor, Ernest (2016) 'Understanding the Informal Security Sector in Nigeria', United States Institute of Peace (USIP) Special Report 391, Available at: <<https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR391-Understanding-the-Informal-Security-Sector-in-Nigeria.pdf>> [Accessed 22 January 2018].
- 10 The 2016 estimate of the number of CJTF members is based on Jaafar, Mohamed (2016) 'The Home Guard', *The Economist*, 29 September, Available at: <<https://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21707958-volunteers-who-helped-beat-back-boko-haram-are-becoming-problem-home>> [Accessed 22 January 2018].



THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE INITIATIVE IN SOUTH SUDAN: ASSESSING PROGRESS AND PITFALLS

BY CLAYTON HAZVINEI VHUMBUNU

Introduction

The 14 December 2016 announcement of a National Dialogue Initiative in South Sudan by the country's leader, President Salva Kiir Mayardit, although met with divergent reactions locally, regionally and internationally, presented a rare and convenient opportunity for South Sudanese to engage, build peace and reconcile. This came against a background of cross-country intercommunal violence, political power struggles, national governance challenges, economic instability, massive internal displacement of

citizens, disunity and disintegration, which had been aggravated by the near-collapse of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) in July 2016, following the resumption of fighting between forces loyal to Kiir against those aligned to the then-vic president and leader of the Sudan People's Liberation

Above: President Salva Kiir of South Sudan attends the launch of the National Dialogue Committee in Juba, South Sudan (22 May 2017).



South Sudanese policemen and soldiers patrol a street following renewed fighting in the capital city, Juba (July 2016).

Movement and Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), Riek Machar Teny Dhurgon.

The National Dialogue consultation process started in early November 2017 at local and regional level and is envisaged to end in mid-2018. This process is paving the way for regional dialogue conferences, which will culminate in the National Dialogue Conference in late 2018. Accordingly, it may be timely and worthwhile to take stock of progress made so far, identify current and possible obstacles to the process, and recommend ideas that may assist to sustain the National Dialogue. Granted, a lot of ground is yet to be covered, as the National Dialogue consultations intend to cover each of South Sudan's 32 states, in addition to refugee and international outreach consultations in 15 countries in Africa, Australia, Europe and North America.¹ An assessment of progress and challenges at this stage will allow for early diagnosis of impediments that may hamper and encumber the smooth progression of the process, and thereby provide room for amends.

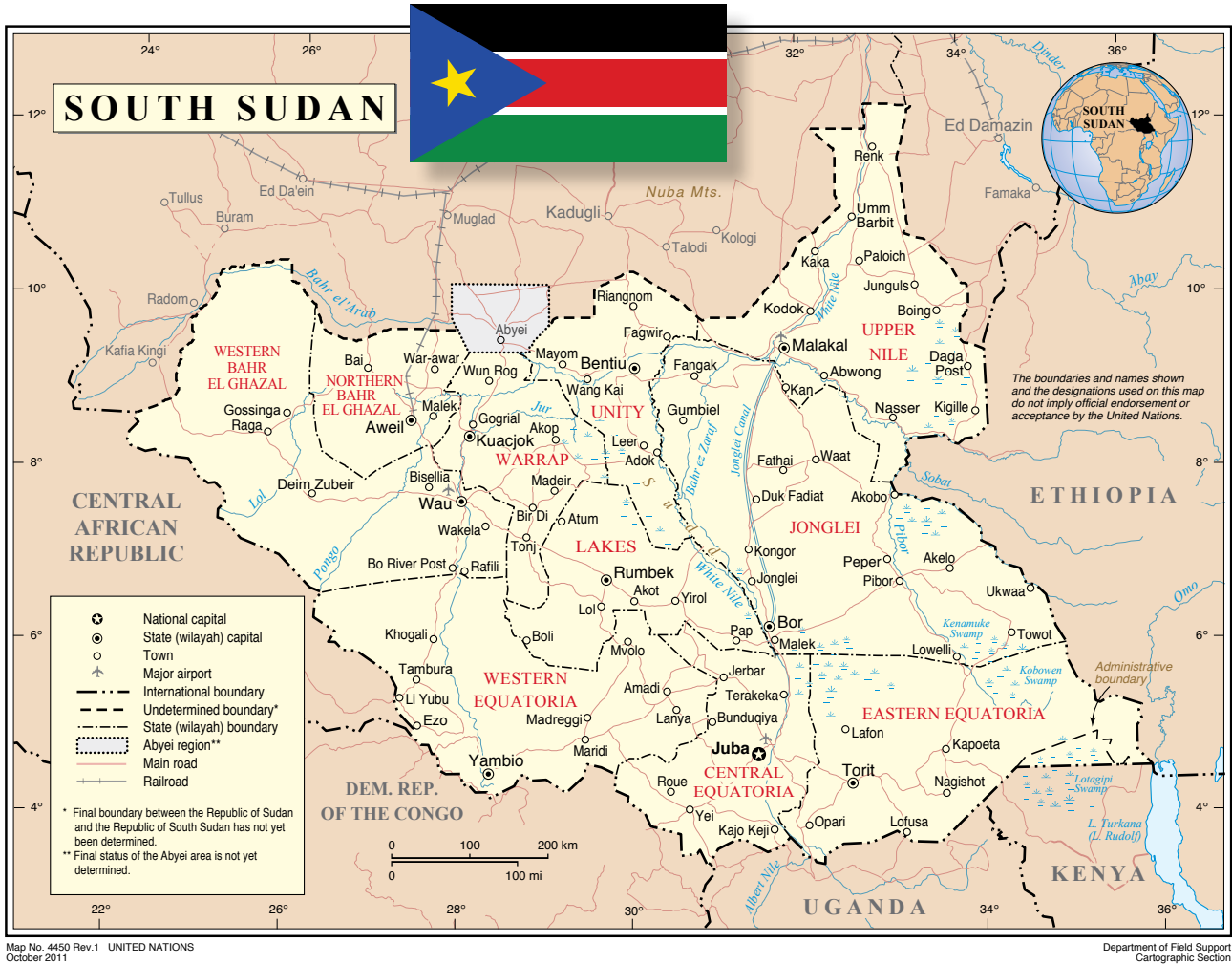
Contextualising South Sudan's National Dialogue Initiative

The initiation of the National Dialogue in South Sudan may be traced to the outbreak of fighting between Kiir and Machar's presidential guard personnel at the presidential palace in Juba on the night of 6 July 2016. This fighting later spread to other parts of the country. The fight was triggered by disagreements within the presidential guard

following alleged orders to disarm Machar-aligned Nuer members due to an alleged coup plot.² This had been preceded by continued factional struggles within the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). This contestation for power had become rife in 2013 as the country approached the general elections scheduled for 2015, with the senior leadership openly criticizing Kiir and declaring their intentions to contest him in the elections.³

Since then, the Transitional Government of National Unity's implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) – which had sought to resolve the conflict in South Sudan following the initial outbreak of violence on 13 December 2013 – has been minimal. After political tensions and the clashes that followed when Machar and other influential opposition figures fled the country into exile, there was a general deterioration of peace, security and stability in South Sudan as conflict intensified across the country.

Thus, the National Dialogue Initiative came at a time when the political and economic situation in South Sudan had been so dire that it warranted more sustainable interventions to restore stability. Even Kiir, in his National Dialogue Initiative speech, acknowledged without denial that South Sudanese people had been distressed by the continued political conflict and "drastically declining economy". Accordingly, the time was ripe to engage in a national dialogue process to "end violent conflicts in South Sudan, reconstitute national consensus, and save the



country from disintegration and usher in a new era of peace, stability and prosperity".⁴

Structural Framework of the National Dialogue Initiative

It is imperative to examine the structural framework that was put in place to facilitate the National Dialogue process. In a way, this constitutes part of the broader challenges that may threaten the efficacy of the dialogue. The structure comprises the National Dialogue Leadership (nine members), the National Dialogue Steering Committee (NDSC) (97 members), the National Dialogue Secretariat (13 members), and the National Dialogue stakeholders and partners.⁵

The National Dialogue Leadership comprises two co-chairpersons: Angelo Beda and Abel Alier Kwai. Gabriel Yoal Duk, Bona Malual and Francis Mading Deng serve as the deputy co-chairperson, rapporteur and deputy rapporteur/spokesperson respectively, whilst the other members of the leadership are Mary Bensusio Wani, Elizabeth Achan Ogwaru and Lilian Riziq. The role of the leadership is to set policy and strategy, as well as to carry out official communication with political and diplomatic leaders.

The NDSC has 97 members who serve in 15 subcommittees: one subcommittee for each of the 10 states of South Sudan; one subcommittee for the capital city, Juba; two area subcommittees for Pibor and Abyei; one Subcommittee for Refugees and International Outreach; and one subcommittee for security matters⁶ The mandate of the NDSC is to organise consultation forums and document input from forum participants, and report on this to the Steering Committee. On the other hand, the National Dialogue Secretariat, which is made up of 13 members, has the role of vetting the work of the NDSC and leadership, as well as communicating to the public and the press.

The stakeholders to the National Dialogue are South Sudanese citizens within and outside its borders, the government, political parties, civil society organisations (CSOs), academia, think-tanks, and national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The composition and configuration of such important structures define and shape their sustainability, as well as people's confidence and trust in the National Dialogue process. This will be assessed next.

The Envisaged National Dialogue Milestones

Local dialogue consultations are envisaged in each of South Sudan's 32 states. These will feed into regional



Local dialogue consultations are envisaged in each of South Sudan’s 32 states.

conferences in the capitals of all the large states, and will be followed by a national conference. All in all, the National Dialogue will conduct 80 local consultation forums, international outreach forums in 15 countries around the world, 20 regional consultation forums, and one national consultation forum.⁷ Implementation of the dialogue outcomes has been set for late 2018 to late 2019. The milestones for the National Dialogue have also been set, as shown in Figure 1.

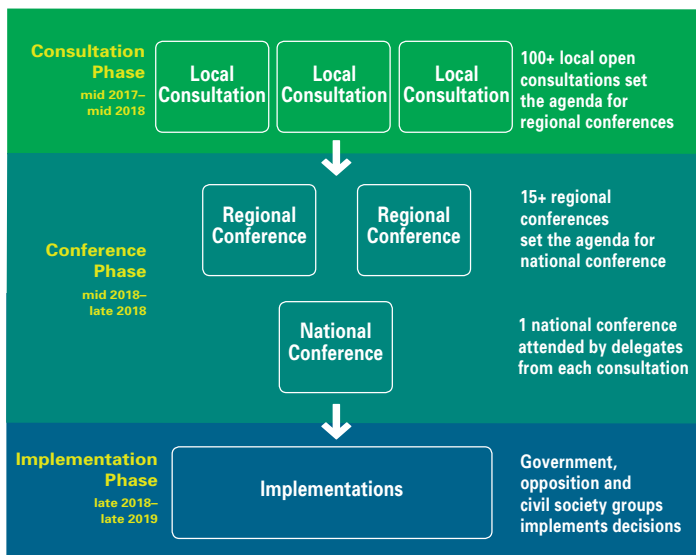
Notable Progress and Milestones Achieved

A fact that cannot be disputed is that considerable effort has been invested into the National Dialogue process, and there are notable achievements that have been recorded to date by the National Dialogue institutions working with the various stakeholders.

The first achievement is national acceptance of the concept. To some extent, almost all South Sudanese have embraced the National Dialogue in principle, although differences still exist with respect to timing and implementation modalities, among other issues of contention. There appears to be a profound acknowledgement by a substantial portion of the population that there is need to engage in a national conversation to manage their differences, renegotiate the social contract and reach common ground on the way forward to secure lasting peace, stability and prosperity. This is evidenced both by attendance at the national and regional consultation forums and public opinion presented in various South Sudanese media platforms.

Second, the government – to its credit – was able to set up the structure and organisational framework to operationalise the National Dialogue. The National Dialogue Leadership, NDSC and subcommittees, and National Dialogue Secretariat are all in place. Whilst Kiir had initially self-appointed himself as the patron of the NDSC in 2016, his decision in June 2017 to recuse himself by relinquishing his patronage of the committee brought some semblance of independence and credibility to the institution.

Figure 1: Timelines and phases for the South Sudan National Dialogue agenda⁸



Source: South Sudan National Dialogue Secretariat



Progress has already been made with a number of local consultations forums already conducted in South Sudan.

Although the committee appears to be regionally balanced, there are still questions raised over the selection criteria – and, consequently, the extent of independence of the NDSC members. This undoubtedly erodes some of the committee’s credibility. A case in point is that of those who turned down their appointment to the NDSC, such as Roman Catholic Church Bishop Paride Taban, and Sudan People’s Liberation Movement Former Detainees (SPLM-FDs) officials Rebecca Nyadeng de Mabior and Kosti Manibe Ngai. They cited various reasons, including disagreement on the terms of reference, and the absence of “level ground for dialogue, and lack of pre-consultation and transparency”⁹.

Third, to a considerable extent, the National Dialogue institutions have managed to secure regional and international buy-in to the process. In principle, the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), African Union (AU) and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have all expressed their support of the National Dialogue process in South Sudan. However, their support may be interpreted as equivocal and non-committal, as they have consistently stressed that they would support a National Dialogue process that is all-inclusive, independent, transparent and constructive, whilst underscoring the fact that the dialogue initiative should complement rather than supplant the ARCSS.¹⁰ For instance, the IGAD Council of Ministers emphasised the need for the South Sudan NDSC to reach out to the opposition and ensure that the National Dialogue was conducted in an “inclusive, genuine and transparent manner”.¹¹ Similarly, the AU Peace and Security Council, in its Communiqué of the Ministerial Meeting held in September 2017 relating to South Sudan, reiterated that “the National Dialogue must be all-inclusive,

independent and transparent to ensure the credibility and public acceptance of its outcomes”. It added that the process “should complement and not be perceived as replacement for the full implementation of the ARCSS and the Revitalization process led by the IGAD Council of Ministers”.¹²

Fourth, progress has been made in terms of conducting the actual consultations. To its credit, the NDSC (working with its 15 subcommittees) has already managed to conduct local consultation forums, regional consultation forums and international outreach forums in Uganda and Kenya. In the period between early November 2017 and early January 2018, local and regional dialogue consultation forums have been conducted in several districts in Yei River State, Central Upper Nile State, northern Bahr El Ghazal, the Lakes states, the eastern Equatoria region, Torit, Imatong State, Jubek State, Malakal, Renk and Terekeka State.¹³ In Kenya and Uganda, the Subcommittee for Refugees and International Outreach carried out dialogue consultation forums in the capital cities and refugee settlements in the two countries between 13 November and 1 December 2017. Nonetheless, the pace of coverage is behind schedule, considering the stipulated time frame.

Pitfalls of the National Dialogue Initiative

Notwithstanding some progress achieved thus far, the National Dialogue process in South Sudan faces its own challenges, and its success continues to be under threat from both internal and external factors. Drawing from an analysis of the situation in South Sudan, an evaluation of various reports emanating from the dialogue consultation forums conducted so far, and observation of live recordings

of some of the consultation sessions, these challenges relate to the exclusion or non-involvement of key stakeholders to the conflict; non-existence of a conducive environment for peaceful dialogue; mistrust and misperceptions by some stakeholders to the conflict; low levels of attendance during dialogue consultation forums; shortage of resources; and the prevalence of fear among some citizens. Whilst some of these challenges can be addressed with ease, a number of them appear to be complex.

Perhaps the most difficult factor is that some key stakeholders to the dialogue have excluded themselves from the process. Given the nature of the South Sudanese conflict, any dialogue process that excludes the opposition parties and rebel groups may be counterproductive. Without engaging influential figures who are instrumental in the power matrix that is perpetuating the conflict, it is difficult to achieve peace in South Sudan. Whilst agreeing to the dialogue in principle, almost all the influential opposition leaders – SPLM-FDs, SPLM-IO, the National Democratic Movement (NDM), South Sudan National Movement for Change and several other parties – distanced themselves and their followers from the dialogue. This was done on the basis that the dialogue lacked pre-consultation engagements, the inappropriateness of the venue, concerns over the proposed methodology or implementation modalities, inclusivity, transparency, impartiality and that there is an absence of an enabling security environment.¹⁴

GIVEN THE NATURE OF THE SOUTH SUDANESE CONFLICT, ANY DIALOGUE PROCESS THAT EXCLUDES THE OPPOSITION PARTIES AND REBEL GROUPS MAY BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE

Although Kiir decided to continue the dialogue process without the opposition, having failed to meet their preconditions, the entire National Dialogue becomes a monologue and risks not achieving its intended outcome. As Paffenholz et al point out in *What Makes or Breaks National Dialogues?*, using case studies of 17 national dialogues in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America, one of the success factors of national dialogues is the inclusion of key national elites, both unarmed and armed significant opposition parties and, occasionally, the military, over and above other representative groups.¹⁵ The main goals of the South Sudanese dialogue are to end all forms of violence, re-establish unity, address issues of diversity, settle historical disputes and further national healing and peace – yet some of the major players and parties to the conflict are uninvolved. Above all, the resolutions of the National Dialogue process are expected to be binding on all stakeholders to the conflict in South Sudan, against a background of exclusivity. Experiences in the recent past should remind the South

Sudanese leadership that non-inclusive peace processes are unsustainable. For example, the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access, signed by the government and some opposition parties on 21 December 2017 in Addis Ababa, has already been violated several times¹⁶ – largely because it excluded some key opposition players, such as Machar.

Another critical constraint is the absence of a peaceful and conducive environment to maintain and sustain a genuine National Dialogue consultation process. This has been echoed by the opposition. It may be argued that the initiation of a dialogue process will bring an end to the ongoing hostilities, but that may only be the case if all the parties to the conflict have consented to the dialogue.

As it stands, the political, social and economic situation in South Sudan is not conducive for genuine dialogue within the country. Reporting on the economic developments and security situation in South Sudan for the period between early September and mid-November 2017, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) noted that the country faced “serious economic challenges”, characterised by triple-digit inflation and an annual consumer price index of 131.9%. In addition, there were clashes between SPLA forces and the pro-Machar SPLM/A-IO, as well as intercommunal violence in regions such as the Lakes, Greater Bahr el-Ghazal, Greater Upper Nile and Greater Equatoria.¹⁷ Relating to the sociopolitical status quo, the UNSC Report for December 2017 indicated that 1.86 million people had been displaced by conflict across South Sudan, with an additional 2.1 million people having fled as refugees to neighbouring countries, including Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Uganda, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, among others.¹⁸ The report added that an estimated 4.8 million people faced severe food insecurity, and projected that the number was likely to rise to 5.1 million people by the start of 2018.¹⁹ As of 11 January 2018, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) had received 204 172 displaced South Sudanese civilians at its bases in the Central Equatoria, Unity, Upper Nile, Jonglei and Western Bahr El Ghazal regions due to continued fighting, violence and intercommunal clashes.²⁰

Perhaps there was merit in the proposals tabled by the opposition parties for inclusive pre-dialogue commencement engagements between the government and armed and unarmed opposition parties to commit to a mutually agreed ceasefire. Although well intentioned, the unilateral ceasefire declared by Kiir will remain ineffectual. Ceasefire declarations by all parties to the conflict would have had a greater prospect of soliciting the much-needed cooperation, commitment and accountability from all parties in terms of implementation. Such an approach would create a conducive environment where citizens are free and secure to participate in dialogue.

Mistrust, negative perceptions and misperceptions are also part of the challenges faced by the national dialogue process. Some citizens are still sceptical and suspicious of the



About 17 000 people who fled to a United Nations Protection of Civilians site in Wau following recent violence, put up basic structures to shield from the hot sun (20 April 2017).

motive, intentions and goodwill behind the National Dialogue Initiative. As the Report of the UN Secretary-General on South Sudan observed, “[M]any stakeholders perceive that the Government is using the national dialogue to override the implementation of the peace agreement [ARCSS].”²¹ In the end, citizens and stakeholders lose confidence in the whole process, as they perceive elite manipulation. This may explain the reason why the attendance figures, as reported by the NDSC, are not very encouraging. This has also been coupled with the fear of reprisals, which still exists among some citizens whenever they are given the platform to discuss National Dialogue agenda issues. For example, the Subcommittee on Refugees and International Outreach reported that “[t]here was a sense of misinformation and apprehension of what exactly was the mission of the National Dialogue in Kenya”.²² This definitely affected the quality of deliberations, as well as the outcome of the dialogue sessions. However, it is encouraging to note that in a number of consultation sessions, citizens were reported to be engaging in frank, open, honest and fearless discussions, as observed by the NDSC.

The resource factor cannot be underestimated, as it has potential to undermine the scope of coverage and to pose logistical impediments. The NDSC admitted from the beginning that the government has no capacity to fund the dialogue process.²³ Whilst donors – the governments of Japan and Germany, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNMISS – have plausibly committed to and still assist with funds, resources, technical and governance support, there should

not be over-reliance on external funding sources for such an important national process, as this may have its own demerits in terms of process ownership and sustainability.

Further, there is a possibility that the National Dialogue process in South Sudan may be yet another initiative that will trap the country in the never-ending conflict cycle, if the South Sudanese leadership refuse to learn from their past mistakes and calls from the UN, AU, IGAD and its immediate neighbours. The consistent call has been that the South Sudanese leadership should exhibit political will and the maturity to refuse to be ensnared in the unproductive politics of a power struggle, implement all peace agreements as per commitment, respect the rule of law, establish and maintain vibrant institutions of good governance, and lead by example in cultivating and fostering a culture of peace, tolerance and unity in diversity. Whilst Kiir stated that the National Dialogue process will ultimately culminate in the adoption of resolutions emerging from the consultations, which will then be forwarded to “different processes such as constitutional conference, peace, healing and reconciliation, etcetera, for consideration and inclusion therein”,²⁴ the implementation of such resolutions by the leadership in power – based on the leadership’s governance track record and the South Sudanese political culture – may be possible, but highly improbable. In any case, all the views that are emerging from the consultations (such as separation of powers, unity in diversity, accountability in governance, ending power struggles, anti-corruption, broad-based economic development, de-ethnicisation of politics and governance, human rights observance, among others) are not new – they are eloquently expressed and enshrined in the Transitional Constitution

of the Republic of South Sudan, as well as the ARCSS. Unfortunately, if the past mistakes are not acknowledged and addressed, there may be no guarantee or political assurance that the outcome of the dialogue process (resolutions) will be respected and implemented, and this will signal a conflict cycle trap.

Conclusion and Way Forward

Based on the analysis of the progress and pitfalls of the National Dialogue in South Sudan, it is evident that whilst there are notable milestones achieved, the dialogue faces a number of challenges that may affect not only the quality of its output, but also threaten the ultimate attainment of the initiative's overall purpose. As stated, it is difficult to envisage a successful dialogue that excludes the key parties to the conflict. As a way forward, efforts should be made to innovatively address the conditions tabled by the opposition parties, to ensure that all opposition parties and armed groups are part of the dialogue. On the part of SPLM-IG and all opposition parties in South Sudan, there is need for a paradigm shift from destructive combative, hostile and confrontational politics towards politics of constructive engagement, national convergence, tolerance, consensus-building and cooperation, punctuated by a commitment to agreements, goodwill, constitutionalism and respect of the rule of law – and good governance rather than empty rhetoric, pretence and the selfish pursuit of political power. 🗡️

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POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION AND RECONCILIATION IN RWANDA AND SRI LANKA

BY DHAMMIKA HERATH



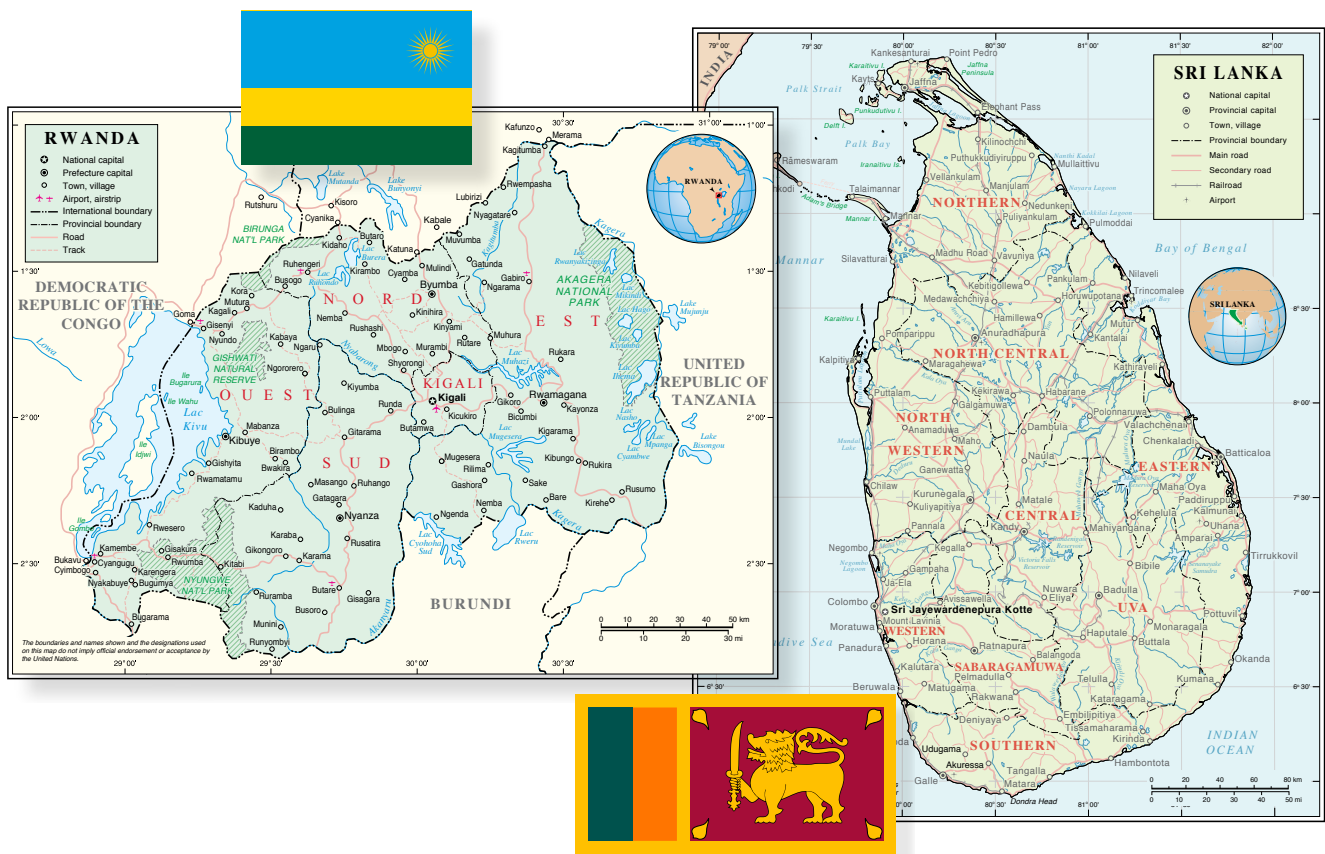
GETTY/ABDELHAK SENNA

The thrust of this comparative analysis is to examine the extent to which reconstruction processes in Sri Lanka and Rwanda lead to social reconciliation, and the strengths and weaknesses of the divergent mechanisms of reconciliation adopted in the two countries. The process and outcomes of reconciliation and the effectiveness of different mechanisms are subject to debate and discussion. This article argues that Rwanda and Sri Lanka have succeeded in certain respects but failed in others, and hence can learn lessons from each other. How do countries coming out of wars achieve reconciliation among the polarised ethnic groups? Do we have sufficient knowledge on efficient and effective mechanisms of fostering

reconciliation and stabilising peace? I try to respond to these key questions through a larger study on peace education in Rwanda in which I was one of the researchers, and several research endeavours in Sri Lanka in the last five years.

The term “reconciliation” has Latin roots and is derived from the Latin expression *conciliatus*, which means “coming together”. Reconciliation is social when such a

Above: A Tutsi soldier from the Rwandan Patriotic Front shakes hands with Hutu soldiers from the former Rwandan army (August 1994).



process involves social groups rather than individuals. Kumar¹ argues that in the general understanding, social reconciliation refers to a process of re-establishing the broken relationships between social groups. Therefore, at a very basic level, social reconciliation must begin with former enemies accepting each other's right to exist. Then, a process of social reconciliation attempts to promote tolerance and understanding between and/or among groups, to promote non-violent conflict resolution, and finally to heal the wounds of violence in the long term.² There are three objectives of a process of social reconciliation: to prevent violent conflict, to address negative emotions (anger, prejudices, misunderstandings), and to establish or re-establish positive relationships among the conflicting parties. Scholars also agree that reconciliation aims to address the trauma experienced by the victims of conflicts to bring closure between the victims and the perpetrators. Reconciliation is a "reciprocal and gradual process" that attempts to make it possible for people to live together. Reconciliation essentially has three stages: simple co-existing, democratic reciprocity, and the reconstruction of bonds among former victims and perpetrators.³

Nurturing reconciliation among war-affected people is seriously challenging, both theoretically and empirically, but is an existential necessity. There is ample evidence to show that there are many cases of violent conflict in which conflicts have restarted after brief periods of relative peace, when parties to conflict feel that their needs have not been addressed. According to conflict resolution literature, the majority of conflicts in the world end in military victory for one of the parties. Although there are many success stories

of conflict being solved through peace negotiations, most intrastate conflicts have generally tended to cease with a military victory for one of the protagonists.⁴ However, at the same time, most conflicts ceasing due to a military victory end up in renewed violence after a period of five to 10 years.⁵ The failure to address the underlying root causes of conflict and address original or subsequent grievances can cause post-conflict reconciliation to fail, and hence increase the risk of renewed violence. Military victories are rarely sustainable, especially while genuine grievances remain unaddressed – seeds for future conflict can gradually grow.

Sri Lanka and Rwanda have experienced violent conflicts in the past and have witnessed immense human cost in intrastate conflicts, although the human cost was massively greater in Rwanda. These countries can currently be identified as post-conflict societies, given that overt violence has ended. Rwanda entered the post-conflict phase after the 1994 genocide and when the former Rwandan government was overthrown by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) through its armed wing, the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA). The RPA fought against the *Interahamwe* militia and government soldiers who committed the genocide against the Tutsi and certain sections of the Hutu community that opposed the genocide.⁶ Compared to Rwanda, Sri Lanka is a relatively new entrant to post-conflict status, after having won a three-decade war in 2009 against a rebel group, called the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The LTTE fought against the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) to carve out a separate homeland for the Tamil ethnic minority in Sri Lanka.⁷ When the Sri Lankan military defeated the LTTE in 2009, the conflict – at least the military confrontations – ended.

The conflicts in Sri Lanka and Rwanda have both parallels and stark dissimilarities. In both cases, ethnic segregation and polarisation, fuelled by politics of ethno-nationalism, was at the root of the conflicts. Both countries involve a government and a rebel group, representing the majority and minority ethnic groups respectively. In both cases, colonial interventions used “divide and rule” policies, fuelled hatred between communities and solidified the significance of ethnicity as a source of mobilisation. And in both cases, there were grievances attached to ethnicity and post-independent discrimination of a minority by the government, which largely represented the majority ethnic community. However, despite a high number of battle-related deaths (60 000–70 000⁸) in Sri Lanka, the intensity of violence was nowhere near that of Rwanda, which is considered to be one of the deadliest genocides in human history. Nevertheless, in the Sri Lankan conflict, both the GOSL and the LTTE have been accused of serious and gross violations of human rights. Therefore, these two conflict settings provide interesting cases to compare from the point of view of conflict and post-conflict dynamics.

There is another sense in which both these cases warrant serious systematic academic scrutiny: as mentioned, both

countries presently experience post-conflict reconstruction in which social reconciliation supposedly constitutes an important component. The Rwandan government claims to be attempting to build “one nation”, devoid of ethnic divides. For example, the Rwandan government has banned the use of ethnic labels such as Hutu, Tutsi or Twa and compels its citizens to identify themselves as “Rwandans”, and tries to build cooperation between formerly antagonistic groups through grassroots cooperative activities. The Rwandan government is determined to downplay the social and political significance of ethnic identity or differences, and this approach is predicated on the belief that by creating a common identity as a Rwandan, the country will be able to heal the wounds of violence and roll back on polarisation. Nevertheless, ethnic identity and differences remain strong in Rwanda, and this issue requires political space where

BOTH COUNTRIES INVOLVE A GOVERNMENT AND A REBEL GROUP, REPRESENTING THE MAJORITY AND MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS RESPECTIVELY



REUTERS/JAMES AKENA

The Rwandan government is attempting to build “one nation” and a Rwandan identity devoid of ethnic divides.



The Sri Lankan government, which came to power in 2015, reintroduced the national anthem in both Sinhala and Tamil, and has started teaching Sinhala and Tamil as compulsory subjects in primary education.

people have the freedom to express and negotiate their differences. The Sri Lankan government is attempting to build a society where ethnicity is recognised, acknowledged and expressed socially and politically, and groups can co-exist in peace. For example, the government, which came to power in 2015, reintroduced the national anthem in both Sinhala and Tamil, and has started teaching Sinhala and Tamil as compulsory subjects in primary education.

Some scholars point out that sponsoring material development in post-war contexts is one of the instruments of social reconciliation. Development can be a highly significant instrument for sustainable peace, especially in the context of civil wars where protagonists fight over the inequitable distribution of scarce resources. In such a context, there can be calls for the integration of development into peace processes as a conscious strategy aimed at sustainable peace.⁹ This argument is especially relevant in Sri Lanka, where both real and perceived inequitable distribution of resources among different ethnic groups was one of the causes of the ethnic conflict. For example, dry agricultural development in Sri Lanka from 1930 to the 1980s caused ethnic tensions between Tamils and Sinhalese. After the end of the war in 2009, Sri Lanka invested heavily in large-scale development projects in war-affected provinces, including the development of infrastructure such as roads,

schools, hospitals, highways, railways, bridges, power plants, ports and state buildings. These investments have improved access to markets and essential services, and have fostered mutually beneficial interactions with the south of the country.

Similarly, in Rwanda, distribution of state resources – such as employment and education – was important in causing ethnic polarisation, and the current government has therefore undertaken an ambitious development drive. However, compared to Sri Lanka, one finds less attention on equitable material development in the grassroots in Rwanda as a conscious tool of reconciliation. Although certain attempts have been made to provide primary education to all children, and to support poor families, Rwanda still has high levels of poverty.

In terms of transitional justice, there is a significant difference between Rwanda and Sri Lanka. The Rwandan government appears to be determined to create a common identity and “one nation” to prevent a recurrence of violence. Although the Rwandan government highlights the need to create a viable socio-economic base, it was forced immediately to approach the issues of reconciliation, due to the large-scale involvement of the Rwandan people in the genocide. From the very inception of the reconstruction process, Rwanda has emphasised and implemented a

WAR-AFFECTED PEOPLE FIND FEW OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPRESS THEIR PAINFUL MEMORIES, MOURN THEIR DEAD RELATIVES AND FIND EMOTIONAL CLOSURE TO THE WOUNDS OF VIOLENCE

conscious strategy of transitional justice¹⁰ and various programmes such as cooperatives (where people of a village work together for community development); the *Ndi umunyarwanda* programme (“I am Rwandan” campaign, where people talk about history, repent on past crimes committed on the other ethnic group, and heal); *Umuganda* (a day dedicated to collective community work such as cleaning infrastructure, repairing roads and so on, once a month); *Umugoroba w’ ababyeyi* (parents’ evening, where parents of the same village talk about various issues, from politics and development to family issues) and *Ijisho ryumuturanyi* (eye of the neighbour), as well as many other measures intended to foster social reconciliation. These measures have seen various levels of success and failure.

Some case studies in Rwanda commend that the structure of cooperatives in Rwanda – due to long-term interactions and gradual relationship-building – contributes to genuine reconciliation among direct victims and perpetrators of the genocide.¹¹

In comparison to Rwanda, Sri Lanka has failed to give sufficient priority for social reconciliation, and instead has employed a strategy of development-led material reconstruction. Although the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) was appointed, its mission was more fact-finding in nature, and many of its recommendations remain to be implemented. Meso-level and grassroots measures – such as peace committees or forums that bring formerly divided communities together – have been absent in Sri Lanka, although non-governmental organisations have undertaken micro measures such as youth exposure visits, awareness meetings, youth camps and so on. War-affected people find few opportunities to express their painful memories, mourn their dead relatives and find emotional closure to the wounds of violence. Therefore, one could argue that attention on social reconciliation has been inadequate in Sri Lanka, except perhaps the setting up of the Office of Missing Persons (OMP). The GOSL hoped that the



REUTERS/DINUKA LIYANAWATTE

Resettled internally displaced people listen during the government-appointed Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission’s first session in Vavuniya, Sri Lanka (14 August 2010).



Sri Lanka has employed a strategy of development-led material reconstruction in war-affected provinces.

physical and economic development of war-affected regions of the country would help it to win the hearts and minds of the Tamil community, which had been backing the LTTE for nearly three decades to procure them a separate homeland.¹² The GOSL seems to believe that a recurrence of the conflict will be prevented by addressing material conditions – which initially contributed to creating the ethnic conflict.

RWANDA HAS UNDERTAKEN LARGE-SCALE JUDICIAL SCRUTINY OF CASES OF PERPETRATORS AND HAS USED THE GACACA COURTS AS AN ALTERNATIVE FOR JUDICIAL REVIEW

Challenges

Both Rwanda and Sri Lanka face the serious challenge of bringing together highly polarised ethnic groups, which were set apart by a history of ethnic polarisation, perceived as well as real discrimination, prejudices and violence. In both cases, the military victory of one party against another has brought the conflict to a halt. Yet, ethnic

prejudices, mistrust, and perceived and real discrimination continue to plague the two countries – and hence, the possibility of relapsing into violence remains real. Based on data collected in the two countries, including my observations,¹³ it is possible to state that both Rwanda and Sri Lanka have made significant strides in their post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. Economic development in Rwanda has picked up in the capital city, although the rural areas need much more investment and state patronage. Primary education has been opened up and made compulsory, but it is higher education that determines socio-economic mobility; opportunities to get a higher education needs improvement. Rwanda has undertaken large-scale judicial scrutiny of cases of perpetrators and has used the *Gacaca* courts¹⁴ as an alternative for judicial review. This has enabled a rapid transitional justice process. However, there are still a large number of people awaiting trial. Any viable reconciliation process requires solid democratic space and a vibrant civil society so that people are able to debate, critique and change in their methods of reconciliation. Rwanda requires further scrutiny and constant reconsideration of its methods to improve post-conflict reconciliation.

In Sri Lanka, elections have been held in the war-affected provinces, and have enabled people to choose their

provincial representatives. At the grassroots, significant attention has gone into the reconstruction of houses and basic facilities, such as schools and health facilities. Nevertheless, unlike in Rwanda, attention to social reconciliation has been weak in Sri Lanka, and there are criticisms that material development alone has not been able to win the hearts and minds of the people. Although certain strategic measures – such as the singing of the national anthem both in Sinhala and Tamil, and the rehabilitation of former rebels – have been undertaken, concrete measures for reconciliation have been weak. The north and east of Sri Lanka have also suffered various social and emotional break-ups as a result of the war, and these remain largely unaddressed so far. Such social and emotional break-ups include marital instability among war-affected people, more suicides, increased alcoholism and a high prevalence of household violence.¹⁵ These are the social wounds of the war, which require the strong intervention of both the government and non-governmental actors. Although the Sri Lankan reconciliation process has marked some important achievements, there is a long road ahead and more concrete actions needed.

Conclusion

Rwanda and Sri Lanka are both interesting post-conflict cases, having remarkable similarities as well as profound differences – which makes them attractive for qualitative comparative analysis. Both countries have a history of colonial interventions, ethnic prejudices, polarisation and violence – and both currently implement post-conflict reconciliation programmes. This article has argued that the approach of the two countries is rather different. Rwanda has taken concrete measures towards transitional justice but is weak in terms of economic restoration, equitable grassroots development, providing essential services, restoration of vital infrastructure and access to health and education. Sri Lanka, on the other hand, has invested massively in the economic development of the former conflict-affected regions and has fared well in terms of economic restoration, provision of basic services and improving infrastructure and livelihoods, but has been weak in terms of transitional justice and social reconciliation. Further, Rwanda is trying to suppress ethnic identity to create a common nation and common identity, whereas Sri Lanka is consciously facilitating expression and the recognition of ethnic identity. Therefore, the outcomes of their reconciliation programmes remain somewhat incomplete and weak in relation to the efforts made in each context and impacts on long-term peacebuilding. There is much that these two countries can learn from each other to ensure that their social reconciliation is more effective. 🇨🇪

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WHAT DO NETWORKS OF WOMEN MEDIATORS MEAN FOR MEDIATION SUPPORT IN AFRICA?

BY IRENE LIMO



REUTERS/JAMES GHAHYUE

Introduction

To avoid the recurrence of patterns of marginalisation, oppression and neglected grievances that drive groups to conflict in the first place, an inclusive approach to conflict resolution is often considered key. The three United Nations (UN) peace and security reviews – conducted in 2014–2015 on peace operations, peacebuilding and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 – highlighted an inadequate recognition among member states and within the UN system of the potential of fully integrating a gender perspective into peace and security processes.¹

The absence or low level of African women’s participation in mediation and at the peace table is the unfinished business of UNSCR 1325. The 1994 Kampala Action Plan on Women and Peace² recommended the creation of a mechanism to facilitate the involvement of African women leaders in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict at the

Above: The involvement of African women leaders in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict at the highest level, must be facilitated.



Participants at a mediation workshop, in Juba, South Sudan, develop a collective action plan on strategies for effective engagement of women in the prevention and management of conflicts (May 2016).

highest levels. Following such early commitments, women have mobilised for peace and participated in the processes in different countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya and Liberia, to name but a few. However, much more needs to be done to further realise the optimal benefits of having women as mediators, part of mediation teams, part of negotiating parties, as signatories, as observers and in other substantive roles in peace processes.

The capacities, expertise, lessons and good practices from the experiences of women mediators and women mediation experts can inform and strengthen mediation processes. However, there is a disconnect between the available mediation capacities of women and the formal and informal peace processes. There are efforts to bridge this, in some cases, through organised approaches such as networks and associations that bring the experiences of women in mediation to a common or/and shared platform, for ease of access and use.

This article discusses the emergence of and the role of networks for women mediators, and their impact in responding to needs and gaps associated with the different aspects of mediation support in Africa's mediation efforts.

Challenges Hindering Women's Participation in Mediation

For peace initiatives to remain sustainable in the long term, women must be included in every level of the

process. Yet, current formal peace processes often remain largely male-dominated, while women are simply seen as war victims and/or are often not given enough space to engage effectively in peace processes. While there has been marked improvement in inclusivity, challenges still exist that impede the involvement of women in peace processes. Some of these challenges include lack of access to formal processes by women mediators or women with mediation expertise. In some cases, women lack sufficient and sustainable funding to support the peace process directly or indirectly. Sometimes, women lack the capacity and experience in mediating conflicts, and this locks them out from opportunities to be involved in mediation efforts. There are insufficient trained women mediators in most African countries; even where they exist, they are mostly involved at the grassroots and in local mediation efforts, but absent in high-profile mediation or negotiations. To ensure the active participation of women mediators, there must be increased training of women in negotiation and mediation skills.

Women remain drastically under-represented in peace processes. This is not entirely due to lack of capacity, but also due to lack of power and access. In most African contexts, patriarchy continues to play a key role in excluding women from formal and informal peace processes. Further to this, culture, perception and beliefs play a key role in entrenching the exclusion of women in peace processes, and in some contexts, men already represent women's and general societal needs. For example, when women show interest in



There are insufficient trained women mediators in most African countries.

participating in local peace processes, they are seen by men as violating culture and tradition – stereotypes that have often placed women at the margins of decision-making. In some contexts, peace processes have been – and continue to be – highly militarised with a heavy security-oriented approach, which has been considered a man’s world, further discouraging women from getting more involved. The imbalance between what is offered and what is needed in mediation support further complicates the provision of tailored mediation support by women mediators and mediation experts. Also, in many cases, the mediators and mediation teams have had challenges in accessing the mediation capacities of women, citing reasons such as the women were not well known. Thus, networks have gained momentum as a platform to consolidate the experiences of women mediators and make it easy for them to be accessed, in a more structured manner.

Emergence of Networks of Women Mediators

While important gains have been made in the implementation of UNSCR 1325, formal peace processes have lagged behind in effectively engaging and meaningfully involving women as members of the teams facilitating and leading peace processes. Research shows that between 1992 and 2011, only 2% of chief mediators, 4% of witnesses and signatories, and 9% of negotiators in peace processes were women.³ The inclusion of women during peacemaking processes has, however, seemed to focus on mobilising women outside of peace processes, rather than in securing their participation within formal peace processes.⁴ In seeking to create space for women’s engagement in mediation processes, several networks have been established at national, regional, continental and international level. In a global context of increasingly complex and interconnected challenges, there is growing evidence to suggest that multiple collaborative efforts are perhaps the most

comprehensive way of addressing these challenges and envisioning a collective future. This momentum has seen the rise of networks of women mediators that seek to increase the number of women who are actively involved in local, continental and international peace mediation efforts.

Some Networks/Platforms for Women Mediators in Africa and other Continents

Network	Region
Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa)	Africa
Association of African Women Mediators (AAWMN), South Africa	Africa
Women Network for Peace and Dialogue, Burundi	Africa
Women in Peace Network (WIPNET), Liberia	Africa
Mano River Women’s Peace Network (MARWOPNET)	Africa
South Sudan Women’s Peace Network	Africa
Sudan and South Sudan Joint Women’s Task Force for Peace	Africa
Regional Faith Women Peace Mediators Network	Africa
N-Peace Network	Asia
Sangat	South Asia
Swedish Network of Women Mediators	Europe
Nordic Women Mediators’ (NWM) Network	Europe
Peace Women across the Globe (PWAG), Switzerland	Europe
Mediterranean Women Mediators Network	Mediterranean
Syrian Women’s Advisory Board to the UN Special Envoy for Syria	Middle East
Commonwealth Network of Female Mediators (to be created) ⁵	Commonwealth
Global Network of Women Mediators (to be created) ⁶	Global

Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa)⁷

There is no doubt that women should have an integral part in decision-making during peace processes. To increase women's access to, and participation in, peace mediation and negotiation in Africa, women's capacity in mediation and negotiation skills needs to be improved. The impact of women's role in peace processes also needs to be better exposed and reflected on to ensure that gains made are not reversed. Against this backdrop, the African Union (AU) has taken three landmark decisions,⁸ ultimately leading to the establishment of the FemWise-Africa. FemWise-Africa aims to strengthen the role of women in conflict prevention and mediation efforts in the context of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The network provides a platform for strategic advocacy, capacity-building and networking aimed at enhancing the implementation of the commitments for the inclusion of women in peacemaking in Africa.

Priorities of FemWise-Africa

1. professionalising the role of women in preventive diplomacy and mediation at Track 1, Track 2 and Track 3 levels;⁹
2. ensuring a channel for women's meaningful and effective participation in peace processes, including as heads of official high-level mediation missions;
3. initiating women's action that will catalyse and mainstream the engagement of women in mediation, in line with the AU's Agenda 2063 and the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
4. bridging the gap between Track 1, Track 2 and Track 3 mediation, and synergising efforts towards inclusive peace processes with sustainable outcomes; and
5. strengthening the mediation interventions of FemWise-Africa with the facilitation of quick impact projects and the establishment of local and national peace infrastructures as foundations for medium-term and longer-term initiatives to ensure stability and development.

Importance of the Networks to Women Mediators

The networks seek to broaden access and space for women's participation in peace processes, as well as to enhance their participation in peace processes. Thus, most networks of women mediators serve as a repository of women experts in conflict resolution to be deployed in mediation. The networks also provide a platform for sharing good practices, expertise and peer-to-peer learning, where women engaged in mediation in different contexts learn from each other. For example, women in the networks working at Track 2 and Track 3 mediation efforts can benefit from the experiences of women engaged in Track 1 mediation efforts, often on the dynamics of the highly political formal processes. The women engaged in Track 1, on the other

hand, can also learn and benefit from the experiences of women working in Track 2 and Track 3, more particularly on the issues affecting women and the community at grassroots level. Thus, bringing women involved in Track 1, Track 2 and Track 3 together can be a powerful partnership and learning approach for women peacemakers on the ground, who are often not in the spotlight.

The networks also seek to provide a coordinated approach to influencing policy processes at different levels on issues relating to women's participation in peace processes, as well as in other areas. In this regard, the presence of the networks makes it easy for local women peacemakers to be linked with formal processes. This also ensures that their work translates into influence and impact.

The networks have also been credited for activating and multiplying the role of women in community-level peacemaking. In Burundi, the Women Network for Peace and Dialogue, with 534 mediators, has engaged in resolving conflict. By their count, working as community peace mediators, the women mediators have addressed over 5000 conflicts at the local level in 2015. They also initiated dialogues in 17 provinces with political actors, security forces and civil society.¹⁰ The networks have identified and exposed "hidden" women mediators who are working in community-level mediation processes – experiences often not known at local, national and international level. They also provide a pool for appointments of women as lead mediators and special envoys.

BY THEIR COUNT, WORKING AS COMMUNITY PEACE MEDIATORS, THE WOMEN MEDIATORS HAVE ADDRESSED OVER 5 000 CONFLICTS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IN 2015

The networks have created opportunities for training women in mediation, negotiation and other mediation-related thematic areas, further equipping women with necessary skills. In addition, the networks provide a platform for mentoring young women to be an integral part of peace mediation, so building a strong base for the current and future generation of women mediators. Some networks, such as those at regional and continental level, have brought together women who are part of smaller networks (often at national or community level), linking their efforts to those of the regional economic communities/regional mechanisms (RECs/RMs) and the AU. The networks have also provided women and society at large the space for reconciliation between divided groups, where women use the networks as a space for dialogue. For instance, in Burundi, the Women Network for Peace and Dialogue was developed in light of the ongoing need for reconciliation, post-civil war in the country.¹¹ Women in other countries such as South Sudan



Nobel peace laureate Leymah Gbowee, head of the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), stands in front of a sign calling for peaceful elections in Monrovia, Liberia (October 2017).

have also used the networks as platforms for dialogue aimed at reconciliation.

Importance of the Networks of Women Mediators for Mediation Support

Why do these networks of women mediators continue to emerge? Having names in a database or a roster is one thing, but that these women have the necessary skills to respond to gaps in mediation support is key. Women in the networks can support peace processes, and mediators, special envoys/representatives, mediation teams and other mediation actors can access these women in the networks. These networks are an important option that exists for improving the quality of mediation support.

There are several roles that networks of women mediators play in supporting mediation:

- **Accessibility to women mediators and women experts and practitioners working on mediation and other areas key to mediation processes:** Women are excluded in mediation processes, sometimes for the reason that there are no competent or high-profile women with adequate experience and skills to lead the mediation

process. By having these women with mediation experience in a known database, the networks increase mediators' access to the women. Further, the networks have a membership of women with different levels of expertise and experience in mediation. Most of these women are often not known by the mandating institutions. Their presence in the networks continues to increase opportunities for their engagement in formal and informal mediation processes. Special envoys, mediators and their teams can access the women in the networks, and this allows them to know who the supporters of the process are even before they arrive in the country.

- **Rapid identification and deployment of qualified women:** Often, where there is a need for quick deployment, institutions note that they do not have a roster of women who are available immediately for deployment. Thus, the availability of women who are trained and have prior experience in mediation makes it easy for the rapid deployment of women mediators. The networks can therefore be linked to operational and expert mediation standby teams.

- **Access to lessons and good practice from women's experiences in mediation:** The networks create opportunities for women mediators to document their experiences in mediation, with the aim of developing recommendations for strengthening future mediation efforts. This research and documentation undercuts the argument that there are no qualified women who can contribute to mediation processes effectively, especially in formal peace processes.
- **Research and analysis:** Most women in the networks already undertake research on the various issues and aspects of the conflict in which the mediators will be engaging. The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) is an example in this regard, noting that the research output of ACCORD feeds into the work of FemWise-Africa. The mediators and mediation teams can work with these networks to strengthen mediation-specific conflict analysis and to help in triangulating the information that mediators and mediation teams get from their sources.
- **Commission, publish or prepare position papers:** Like the role played by women's groups and networks during Kenya's 2008 peace talks,¹² women within the networks engage in constructive dialogue and submit position papers on common issues in the peace process, further

making recommendations to the mediators, special envoys or representatives on gender and other thematic issues to be included in the discussion. These insights contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the situation and enhance the ability of the mediators to explore alternative proposals for the resolution of the conflict.¹³

- **Structured and consistent engagement with women peace actors:** Mediation teams with the mandate to address an extensive range of issues need to speak with a broad range of stakeholders to forge an understanding of the situational dynamics and perspectives that contribute to a conflict context.¹⁴ When mediators consult women's groups, it is often a once-off consultation among many other special interest groups, thus leaving (often male-dominated) mediation teams attempting to unpack complex women's agendas after only a single consultation with women's groups. The networks provide a platform for more structured and consistent engagement with women who are working on peace processes; these women can then reach out to other women in the community to support the official peace process. This was seen in Kenya's 2008 peace process, where the AU Panel of Eminent African Personalities made a deliberate move to ensure that stakeholders



REUTERS/AKINTUNDE AKINLEVE

Women attend a community dialogue meeting in Uzo-Uwani village, Nigeria. Networks make it possible for local women to be linked with formal peace processes.



Mediation strategies that systematically include women are more likely to generate broad ownership and support for a negotiated settlement, as well as lead to a more sustainable peace.

such as civil society organisations and women were given an effective voice in the mediation process. This approach was made easy because of the networks. In some cases, such as in the peace process in Syria, the mediators convene a women's advisory committee to ensure that women have access to the mediators and are invited to provide input to the mediator's work. These are experiences that can be strengthened in peace processes in Africa. These networks have been helpful in proposing the names of qualified women to be part of mediation teams, as well as in providing support to women to be part of such advisory committees. In some cases, the mediators establish sub-commissions on gender, and qualified women who are in the networks may be selected to join such committees.

- **Provision of technical expertise:** The AU and RECs/RMs can also draw mediation expertise from the networks. The women in the networks have gender expertise and perspectives from different contexts and regions. Thus, these women can provide substantive support – for instance, in conflict analysis, in assessing the differentiated impact of armed conflict on men and women, and in identifying gender dynamics and the unique opportunities and challenges for peacemaking in their contexts. The networks can also play an important role in advancing inclusivity by offering alternative approaches to women's engagement in peace processes.

In addition, they can assist in explaining how normative frameworks and cultural settings are structured in the context in which the mediators will be operating. Monitoring, verification and reporting mechanisms are critical for the implementation of cessation of hostilities or ceasefire agreements. The inclusion of women in such mechanisms facilitates access to information and reporting on violations against survivors and witnesses, such as conflict-related sexual violence.

THE NETWORKS CAN ALSO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN ADVANCING INCLUSIVITY BY OFFERING ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN PEACE PROCESSES

- **Training of negotiating teams and the community:** The women and organisations in the networks have expertise in delivering training on mediation, negotiation, dialogue and other key areas relevant to the mediation process, including gender, human rights, reconciliation and electoral processes, among others. Mediators and mediation teams benefit from these capacity-building efforts aimed at the negotiating teams, the parties to the conflict and the community at large.

- **Trust-building and confidence-building in the process:** Often, mediation teams may be small and have a short period of time to engage in effective trust and confidence-building in the peace process. Mediation teams can leverage the trust-building skills, experience and connections of women in the networks with other women and the community. Formulating a two-way communication strategy for informing the wider society of the mediation progress, and for soliciting suggestions for consideration at the table, is an important means of building trust. The connection of the women in the networks is key in this regard.
- **Bridge intergenerational gaps:** A challenge for mediators and the mediation process is inclusivity. Increasingly, mediators, mediation teams, mandating institutions and negotiating parties are being asked to include women in their processes. Young women are frequently part of movements demanding change, but tend to be excluded from peace and transition processes. If women are included at all, they are usually older and better-connected woman leaders.¹⁵ FemWise-Africa, for instance, has a provision for mentoring young women who are interested in mediation and other related peace processes. This will assist the mediation team to easily find and access young women who can be involved in mediation efforts.

Conclusion

Conflict and post-conflict environments in Africa present unique challenges and opportunities for women. There have been some positive trends in addressing certain challenges that plague women in these societies. However, these successes are small when the grander scheme of challenges are considered, especially involving women in peace processes. Mediation is a broad and rapidly growing field and there is a need for inclusivity, representation, greater solidarity and collaboration. Mediation strategies that systematically include women are more likely to generate broad ownership and support for a negotiated settlement, as well as lead to a more sustainable peace. With the increasing number of networks of women mediators, it is expected that women's capacities available in these networks will contribute to strengthening mediation support in Africa. ▲

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Endnotes

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- 4 Bell, Christine (2004) Women Address Problems of Peace Agreements. In Coomaraswamy, R. and Fonseka, D. (eds) *Peace Work: Women, Armed Conflict, and Negotiation*. New Delhi: Women Unlimited.
- 5 The UK government's campaign on women in mediation, building on the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, will include the creation of a Commonwealth network of female mediators.
- 6 The Nordic Women Mediators Network, in dialogue with the UN, has undertaken to initiate a process with the aim of establishing a global network of women mediators in the fall of 2019. Such a network will have the overarching goal to promote women's increased participation in peace processes. As part of this process, the Nordic Women Mediators Network is organising a meeting in March 2018 to discuss the development of a global network of women mediators.
- 7 Terms of Reference of the Network obtained from Secretariat of the Panel of the Wise, African Union Commission (AUC) (n.d.) 'Operationalisation of "FemWise-Africa": General Information', Available at: <<http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/final-concept-note-femwise-sept-15-short-version-clean-4-flyer.pdf>>
- 8 The 2010 Decision of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) asking the Panel of the Wise to undertake a study on women in armed conflicts; the 2014 Decision of Ministers of Gender calling for the creation of an association of women in mediation; the 13 March 2017 Decision of the PSC to create FemWise-Africa.
- 9 Peace processes take place at different societal levels (tracks) and are often supported by external third parties. The first level (Track 1) comprises the leadership of a country (for example, political and/or military). The second level (Track 2) covers leading figures in society such as religious dignitaries, intellectuals, political parties and regional power figures. Track 3 comprises leading civil society figures at the local level, and grassroots initiatives. For more, see: Initiative Mediation Support Deutschland (IMSD) (2017) 'Basics of Mediation: Concepts and Definitions', Available at: <http://www.peacemediation.de/uploads/7/3/9/1/73911539/basics_of_mediation_concepts_and_definitions.pdf>
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- 11 Ibid.
- 12 In preparing for the talks, the AU Panel of Eminent African Personalities sought the views of the different stakeholders, including women, and listened to their concerns and recommendations. This helped them to elaborate the agenda for the negotiations. The women's organisations within civil society were able to come together to articulate a position for women. This was done through the creation of a common document expressing a unified position, which was handed to the AU Panel. Some of its provisions found their way into the final agreement.
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DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILISATION AND REINTEGRATION IS NOT ENOUGH: IMPROVING THE MICRO-LEVEL (RE)INTEGRATION OF FORMER CHILD SOLDIERS

BY ANNE-LYNN DUDENHOEFER

[P]icking up the pieces of broken children after a conflict is hugely difficult, the necessary and ongoing effort is hard to sustain, and success is unpredictable to gauge.¹



UNMISS / ISAAC BILLY

In most instances, post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes do not sufficiently address the hardships of child soldiers. To achieve successful reintegration, former child soldiers require more than the usual DDR programme – they are in desperate need of community-based and community-governed initiatives. As such, it may be essential to redefine the third step of DDR as an “integration” rather than “reintegration”.

DDR programmes are coordinated and conducted by United Nations (UN) agencies or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working together with national governments and local communities. In practice, it is

challenging to navigate large numbers of ex-combatants in a chaotic post-war society. This is why DDR programmes have been significantly criticised for being uncoordinated and lacking impact on the lives of former child soldiers: “Overall, [...] DDR efforts are inadequate, and many children have failed to receive the assistance needed to successfully return to their families and communities.”² To investigate such criticism, the individual stages of DDR have to be assessed.

Above: South Sudanese child soldiers leave their rifles on the ground during a disarmament ceremony (February 2018).



Officers of the United Nations Children’s Fund and the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) set apart demobilised child soldiers as the Mai-Mai militia surrenders itself to Congolese government forces (November 2013).

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration

Disarmament, the first part of the programme, involves weapon “collection, disposal, or destruction”.³ This step can already have significant difficulties – such as former soldiers possessing more than one weapon, or having no weapon at all. Reportedly, in Liberia, the effort was organised as a “one man, one gun” programme, which “worked against the best interests of children, especially girls, because rebel commanders confiscated children’s weapons prior to their release”.⁴ There are alternative initiatives such as “gun buy-back” or “food for guns” programmes⁵ that encourage former combatants to turn in their weapons. However, those initiatives offering monetary rewards appear to have limited effectiveness as they leave children vulnerable to adult exploitation – adult commanders can easily take advantage by sending children with their guns to DDR initiatives, only to strip them of the DDR money later on.⁶ In addition, “[i]n the countries in which these schemes have been tried, it has been learned that they can only operate for a limited period, in order not to generate a trade of arms in the country.”⁷

More creative disarmament methods have proved useful in targeting children, in particular, such as “bikes for guns” or “goats for guns”.⁸ However, these ideas will only remain effective in the long run if they are part of a larger integrative programme that involves the destruction of collected small

arms, to prevent them from falling back into the hands of fighting forces or ending up on the black market.

Demobilisation, the second step, describes the formal process of separating or releasing soldiers from the armed forces or groups. This is especially complicated when it targets children, due to the fact that “[i]ronically, departure from an armed group can be very stressful because of the loss of valuable psychological support”.⁹ Another issue undermining demobilisation efforts revolves around the so-called security dilemma.¹⁰ The lack of mutual trust and fear of being attacked might cause parties to refuse the demobilisation of their troops. Thus, demobilisation requires a credible and strong authority – often a third party – to make warring factions demobilise and discharge their fighters.¹¹ Often, the process of demobilisation also involves so-called interim care centres (ICCs), where former child soldiers remain for a certain period of time before they are reunited with their family or community. These care centres are transitional places where children stay for limited periods of time – up to several months – and receive healthcare, food and psychosocial support. In Sierra Leone, for example, “children under 15 were sent to Interim Care Centres (ICCs) under the care of UNICEF and child protection agencies, after which they were reunited with their families or went to foster families, and entered education projects.”¹² Based on the



Girl child soldiers gender-specific needs must be taken into consideration and served in a more direct way.

fact that it is important to cut children's ties with recruiters and, as a result, minimise the risk of re-recruitment, demobilisation remains a necessary process that has to be executed by all means.

Reintegration is commonly regarded as the most complicated and complex part of the DDR process. For it to be successful, the previous two steps (disarmament and demobilisation) have to be characterised by a stable design and thorough implementation.¹³ Unlike disarmament and demobilisation, reintegration is a long-term process that could take years to achieve measurable results. It can be defined as "a reciprocal process that includes not only the adaption of former soldiers but also the rebuilding of healthy families and communities, without which former soldiers have few positive roles and options".¹⁴ When involving reconciliation between perpetrators and victims who will have to learn how to co-exist in the same neighbourhood, reintegration can become particularly challenging.

DDR: Main Issues

It is precisely the duration of this last DDR step – reintegration – that is significant. Few international institutions can afford to govern the different reintegration phases of former child soldiers for several years. According to Wessels, reintegration includes five key elements that have to be completed:

1. family tracing and reunification support;
2. participation in educational opportunities;
3. psychosocial therapy;
4. providing education, but also training in "vocational and life skills that enable youths to obtain and hold jobs and also small loans that help them to earn an income";¹⁵ and
5. community mobilisation and sensitisation.

Regarding the complexity of any post-conflict landscape, most DDR programmes will encounter significant difficulties, which can be grouped into three main categories: programme length, age and gender, and economic environment and effectiveness.

WHEN INVOLVING RECONCILIATION BETWEEN PERPETRATORS AND VICTIMS WHO WILL HAVE TO LEARN HOW TO CO-EXIST IN THE SAME NEIGHBOURHOOD, REINTEGRATION CAN BECOME PARTICULARLY CHALLENGING

First, reintegration processes require years – meaning that long-term funding is essential. Severe gaps in funding for the reintegration phase arise because "[f]unding for national DDR programs has typically been provided for immediate post-conflict demobilization and short-term reintegration support, normally for a one-year period".¹⁶

Second, DDR programmes were originally designed to target adults, which is why children were often left out of the entire process and simply assumed to be taken care of by their families. Even today, with more child-sensitive campaigns, the programmes fail to account for children's gender-specific needs. In Sierra Leone, although 30% of former child soldiers were estimated to be girls, only 8% (513 girls) of former child combatants in the actual DDR programme were female.¹⁷ Hence, scholars and practitioners such as Roméo Dallaire have proposed not to have one DDR programme including all former child fighters, but rather two separate programmes. In this way, the children's gender-specific needs would be taken into consideration and served in a more direct way.¹⁸

Third, the local environment that the children return to may hold severe existential challenges. Although well intended, DDR programmes have reportedly failed to take the children's economic environment into account, and hence have not provided desperately needed reintegration training for both the former child soldiers and the local communities.¹⁹ The reintegration phase of the United Nations' (UN) 2002 DDR programme in Sierra Leone serves as a reminder of the children's gruesome reality. At the macro level, the Sierra Leone DDR programme was celebrated as a huge success: "A total of 72 490 combatants were disarmed, 71 043 demobilised, and 63 545 former combatants participated in



The challenges former child combatants face when trying to adjust to civilian life can be substantial. Among other things, they include individual issues such as identity crises and trauma.

the reintegration segment, including 6845 child soldiers.”²⁰ The micro-level analysis, however, tells a different tale: despite the fact that the initial participation rates in the nationwide DDR programme were high, former child soldiers lacked community acceptance and support, and soon found themselves navigating an unstable economic environment. Following the programme, “[e]vidence [...] surfaced that between two thousand and three thousand former child soldiers were subsequently engaged in heavy labor under harsh conditions in diamond mines”.²¹ To improve the reintegration process at the micro level, its multilayered nature has to be deconstructed and investigated in more depth.

Reintegration: Challenges and Possible Improvements

*The critical challenge of the moment is to bridge the gap between existing standards and the catastrophic situation of children on the ground.*²²

Reintegration often appears to be successful at the macro level, as it is measured in the numbers of former combatants who have or have not been re-recruited. This success story does not necessarily transpire to the micro level – on the contrary, the challenges former child combatants face when trying to adjust to civilian life can be substantial. Among

other things, they include individual issues such as identity crises and trauma, as well as collective challenges such as community involvement and emergency education.

Identity Crises

After staying with armed forces or groups for a certain amount of time, child soldiers may escape, be released or be formally discharged. Depending on the duration of their group membership, each child will face different struggles when reintegrating into society.

Many are confronted with the issue of having undergone intensive indoctrination processes during their time with the fighting forces. Even though pecuniary rewards might be a powerful method to make children stay,²³ indoctrination rituals and in-group socialisation play a more crucial role in turning children into soldiers. While some former child combatants reintegrate easily, others have acquired the identity of a fully-fledged group member through systematic manipulation, drugs, comradeship, repeated exposure to violence and committing atrocities themselves. Some armed groups that cannot provide pecuniary rewards rely almost completely on their socialisation processes. Socialisation, in this instance, can be defined as:

[...] processes whereby naïve individuals are taught the skills, behaviour patterns, values and motivations

needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up. Paramount among these are the social skills, social understandings, and emotional maturity needed [...] to fit in with the functioning of social dyads and larger groups.²⁴

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda, for instance, is known for relying heavily on indoctrination. Formal socialisation is accomplished by a so-called "bootcamp" involving military training, whereas the informal part comprises a "welcome ceremony" and registering the newly arrived children.²⁵ When entering the LRA, the children have to take part in the "shea-nut butter ritual", after which they will be reborn as soldiers, leaving their old identities behind. During this ritual, "[t]he butter is smeared on the body of the abductees to protect them from bullets."²⁶ Commanders and peers frequently become the child soldiers' substitute family, providing protection and guidance.

There is no shortage of examples illustrating the difficulties of child soldier reintegration. Anna, a 17-year-old girl who had been fighting with the LRA, "did not understand the way of life in her village and according to which standards people behaved towards each other."²⁷ Anna's explanation demonstrates why third-party mediation and reintegration support should be sustained over longer periods of time:

It was very difficult. I was not used to them and I did not like it in the village. People looked at me and they

did not want to talk with me. [...] I wanted to go back to the bush, back to my friends and fight. One day my father was angry at me because I wanted to go back. He did not understand being a rebel is good. My mother took me into the hut and we started cooking. She asked me to go out and get some cassava from the field. She gave me a panga [machete]. When I came out of the house my father was sitting there. He made me so angry. I took the panga and cut his head. He fell on the ground and I finished him. People were screaming and crying. My mother cried and yelled to me. I did not understand why all these people screamed so much, this is what we do in the bush. He was not a good man and I am a good rebel.²⁸

To improve ex-child soldiers' functionality and well-being in civil life and overcome stigmatisation by local communities, re-identification with a non-violent lifestyle has to be accomplished. Due to in-group socialisation and the time periods some children spend with armed forces and groups, scholars argue in favour of using the term "integration" instead of "reintegration".²⁹ Broadly speaking, "reintegration is less about reinserting former soldiers back into communities or jobs than about helping children become functional in their society – helping them find meaningful and respected social roles and create civilian identities."³⁰ Even though this is undoubtedly a complex undertaking, it may be possible to achieve through community involvement, sensitisation and reconciliation.



REUTERS/THOMAS MUKOVA

Former child soldiers, in particular, girls, face severe stigmatisation by communities.



A former child soldier receives vocational training in Beni, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo (2007).

Despite inherent shortcomings, pioneering programmes such as the 1992 Return to Happiness programme or the Community Development Committees (CDCs) in Sierra Leone attempted to achieve just that.

Community Involvement

One of the crucial parts of reintegration is reconciliation with families and communities. As defined by Wessels, reconciliation means “the rebuilding of positive relationships following destructive conflict”,³¹ and to restore such positive relationships, local healing methods and rituals have to be supported.

In Sierra Leone, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established in 2002 to deal with people’s grief, to implement transitional justice and to listen to the children who had been abducted by and fought with the different armed forces and groups. Nevertheless, even though the “dual identities of children as victims and perpetrators”³² were acknowledged by the commission, the former child combatants – and, in particular, girls – still had to face severe stigmatisation by communities. Since child soldiers are mostly “recruited from settings with preexisting fragile institutional realities”,³³ it is the reintegration environment that remains crucial.

Restorative justice models appear to be the most applicable to the context of former child soldiers and their reintegration into communities and families – for community members to feel comfortable around former fighters, it is beneficial if the children contribute to the improvement of the whole community. This can be accomplished by the community and the children developing mutual goals and working towards their achievement. Examples for

community mobilisation are the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)-led Return to Happiness programmes in Mozambique,³⁴ and another participative strategy applied in Sierra Leone.³⁵ Both examples aim to rebuild the trust between former child soldiers and their communities.

The 1992 Return to Happiness programme “was designed to provide urgent mass psychosocial support to children affected by violence [...] [and] encourage [...] families and communities to actively participate in the recovery process”.³⁶ The programme’s key ingredient relied on adolescent volunteers to be trained as “play therapists”, who then learnt how to increase the trust of children by using “games, art, puppetry, song, and storytelling”.³⁷ By not following the Western trauma therapy approach, this model supports a community-based strategy as well as the mutual goal to improve relationships between children, adolescents and teachers.

The strategy used by the Christian Children’s Fund (CCF) in northern Sierra Leone aimed at “building positive relations through cooperative activities in twenty-six communities”.³⁸ Pre-existing committees, called Kankalay Committees or “togetherness groups”, were re-established or newly formed. Calling themselves CDCs, these groups “served as catalysts for collective planning and action”³⁹ and enabled people to gather and talk about their experiences during war. In addition to improving communication and a sense of belonging, the committees and communities also planned projects – such as building a school or improving healthcare by constructing a health post. The fact that former child soldiers were involved in most of the construction and building processes made reintegration easier: villagers learnt to see them as a valuable part of the community. In addition, conflict resolution committees, facilitated by the CCF, were established to reduce social tensions and avoid harassment throughout the working process. Temporary payment for the workers helped former child combatants reduce the stigmatisation caused by their poverty and achieve the status of diligent workers.

The achievement of mutual goals led to the disruption of “us versus them” thinking, as well as to community sensitisation and the rearrangement of social structures. Wessels calls it the “power of cooperation”, through which the striving for achievement of shared goals can mobilise a whole community, and serve the purposes of reconciliation, reintegration and restorative justice at the same time.

Conclusion

Dealing with the reintegration of former child combatants is a highly complex process that requires long-term funding and assistance. Although formal DDR programmes remain absolutely necessary, it is the third step – reintegration – that should be emphasised. The only possibility of achieving successful micro-level reintegration in an unstable and impoverished post-conflict society is to combine all the different variables in one thorough programme.

While trauma healing and educational, vocational and business training are vital ingredients for success, it is community mobilisation that plays the most important role in the reintegration process.

Reintegration efforts should not predominantly rely on third-party intervention but should also help to further develop already-given resources, such as the involvement and sensitisation of local communities. This has to involve improving local infrastructures, providing minority-sensitive and gender-sensitive programmes, mobilising communities and supporting local spiritual healing rituals. International agencies have to prioritise support and mediation over short-term solutions that impose Western values and belief systems. For DDR programmes to accomplish success at the micro level, it may be necessary to define the third stage as a post-conflict “integration” rather than “reintegration” process. **A**

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