CONFLICT TRENDS

ACCORD
THE AFRICAN CENTRE FOR THE CONSTRUCTIVE RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES

CONTENTS

Cover photo by Neil Palmer, International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), photograped in the Mount Kenya region for the Two Degrees Up project.

EDITORIAL

BY **VASU GOUNDEN**

The abduction of over 250 young schoolgirls from Chibok, Borno State in Nigeria this past April, and the killing of Yazidi men and the abduction of their women and children in August this year, sent shockwaves throughout the world. Viewed in isolation, these reprehensible acts stand out for their symbolism and magnitude, as well as for the swift and universal condemnation towards previously barely known groups, such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Viewed within the context of current conflict dynamics throughout Africa, the Middle East and south-west Asia, however, the Chibok abductions and Yazidi killings and kidnappings constitute perhaps the most glaring evidence that we are once again transitioning to asymmetrical conflict and warfare.

Interstate conflicts that pitted nation-states against one another were predominant between the advent of the Westphalian state concept in 1645 to the start of the cold war 300 years later. During the cold war, there was a shift towards intrastate conflicts between governments and various coalitions of non-state actors within defined territorial boundaries.

The end of the cold war signified a definitive turning point in conflict theory, as the number of intrastate conflicts peaked at 53 in 1992.[1] Over the past 23 years, we have both witnessed and responded to the complex challenges that are intrastate conflicts. Asymmetrical warfare has become a primary method and strategy employed by relatively weaker parties. It refers to a situation in which one of the belligerent parties in a conflict who have far weaker military means than other parties use unconventional means and methods of violence to prosecute its strategy and achieve its goals. The stronger party is often a nation-state that has disproportionately greater access to military resources to deploy conventionally tried and tested methods and strategies to achieve its political goals. The weaker party usually operates outside any defined local, regional or international legal framework while the stronger party is expected to adhere to all laws governing war, and particularly the protection of civilians.

From ISIS in Syria and Iraq to the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the African Sahel and Al-Shabaab in the Horn of Africa, these complex and multifaceted coalitions of non-state actors are directly transforming the way in which conflicts manifest and evolve. They are innovating and further defining an age-old concept of asymmetrical warfare with greater intensity, complexity and creativity, rendering the resolution of these conflicts extremely difficult and the protection of civilians almost impossible. These transnational insurgencies – whether rooted in nationalist, religious, political or socio-economic grievances – are very often rational actors engaging in asymmetrical warfare against the prevailing governments. Driven by powerful ideologies, these insurgents undertake complex strategic attacks to achieve clearly defined and coherent objectives.

We live in a world where the spread and pace of technology makes it possible for insurgents to acquire sophisticated weapons – albeit limited in quantity, but nevertheless devastating in impact – and where demographics make it increasingly possible for greater numbers of civilians to be caught in the middle and suffer the consequences. To eradicate these insurgencies, we must push for a renewed emphasis on dialogue and negotiation as a means of supplementing – and, if necessary, complementing – the preferred response of strategic military attacks. We must start a more systematic interrogation of these groups, and seek to examine their underlying grievances and the institutionalised imbalances that fuel those who turn to violence. We must commit to identifying and engaging more moderate leadership within these insurgencies, so that we can uncover potential areas for negotiation and dialogue. And we must uncover and support those individuals who can serve as emissaries to these groups and build relationships to open the channels for meaningful dialogue. ▲

Vasu Gounden is the Founder and Executive Director of ACCORD.

1 Harbom, Lotta and Wallensteen, Peter (2010) Armed Conflicts, 1946–2009. *Journal of Peace Research*, 47 (4), pp. 501–509, Available at: <http://www.janeliunas.lt/files/Armed%20 conflicts%201946-2009.pdf>.

SOUTH AFRICA AND SOUTH-SOUTH APPROACHES TO POST-CONFLICT DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

BY **FRITZ NGANJE**

Introduction

Since 1994, promoting cordial and strategic relations with other countries in the Global South has been a key objective of South Africa's foreign policy. Until recently, the pursuit of this goal appears to have dovetailed well with South Africa's ambitions to play a leadership role in the stabilisation of Africa and catalysing the continent's socio-economic development. The apparent complementarity in the advancement of these two foreign policy objectives is captured in the claim contained in the 2014 election manifesto of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party, which asserts: "In the last 20 years… we have advanced the African agenda for peace and development while contributing to south-south cooperation."[1] However, the current global realignment of power, represented by the growing political, economic and development influence of new actors in Asia, Latin America and the Middle East and their active engagement on the continent, has dispelled any notion of a natural complementarity between South-South cooperation and the promotion of peace and development

in Africa. This article[2] reflects on the dilemma inherent in a foreign policy that prioritises the promotion of both South-South cooperation and peaceful and sustainable development in Africa, within the context of the growing hierarchisation of the Global South and the so-called 'new scramble for Africa'. With a focus on peacebuilding and post-conflict development, it argues that South-South cooperation comes with both opportunities and challenges to the advancement of South Africa's interests on the continent. Consequently, South Africa's approach to South-South cooperation must be as pragmatic as it should be strategic.

Above: For most developing and least-developed countries, particularly those in Africa, functional South-South cooperation represents a new window of opportunity for fast-tracking much-needed socio-economic development.

Labourers employed by a large Chinese company work on the construction of new wings at the University Hospital Centre in Brazzaville, Congo (March 2013).

The New Dynamics of South-South Cooperation: A Brief Critique

The past decades have seen an unprecedented number of developing countries recording remarkable economic growth, which has enabled them to make the transition from low- to middle- and high-income economies within a relatively short period of time. In this context, the notion of South-South cooperation – which, in the second half of the 20th century, was little more than political rhetoric and the expression of ideological solidarity among developing countries dissatisfied with the Euro-American-dominated world economic order – has taken on an unmistakeable developmental character. In the last few years alone, development-oriented cooperation among countries once considered to be part of the Global South has increased considerably – no doubt driven by the newfound economic fortunes of countries such as China, India, Indonesia, Turkey and Brazil. Trade, foreign direct investment, and technical and other forms of development cooperation among emerging and developing economies are growing rapidly, and have now become important components of global economic and development activities. For most developing countries and least-developed countries (LDCs), particularly those in Africa, functional South-South cooperation represents a new window of opportunity for fast-tracking much-needed socio-economic development. In addition to benefiting from the increased demand of their raw materials and investment

flows from emerging economies, developing countries and LDCs have also been beneficiaries of development finance and technical cooperation from their wealthier counterparts in the Global South. Also flowing from the resurgent South-South cooperation is the improved policy and development space that most developing countries and LDCs now enjoy as a result of the alternative and relatively less prescriptive forms of support they receive from emerging economies. To this list can be added the increased potential for the development agenda of the Global South to influence global debates on issues such as trade, climate change and finance, thanks to a new wave of southern multilateralism.

However, what is paraded today as South-South cooperation is not without its challenges, insofar as the cohesion of the Global South and the distribution of the benefits of cooperation are concerned. Notwithstanding their relative economic success, most emerging economies have not yet overcome the socio-economic challenges that have historically defined the Global South. As a result, the promotion of narrow economic interests occupies a central place in their relations with other developing countries. Moreover, as aspirants for global and regional leadership, these would-be powers are driven by a set of geopolitical and strategic interests that in no small measure shape their multilateral and bilateral engagements, including with other countries of the Global South.[3] It is in this context that criticisms have been directed against new southern blocs

such as India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) and Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS), on the grounds that their engagement with the established order is predominantly self-centred and often fails to prioritise or sufficiently represent the interests of other developing countries. In this regard, it is worth noting that the most strategic bilateral relations of emerging economies such as India and China are not with other southern states, but with the United States (US) and the European Union (EU). For example, Delhi considers cooperation with Washington, DC to be central in realising its aspirations for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council (UNSC), while the US and EU remain China's most strategic economic partners. Consider also the divergent voting behaviour of BRICS on UNSC Resolution 1973 on Libya,[4] or the failure of the bloc to unanimously challenge Western-backed candidates for the positions to lead the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank – two key institutions of the global governance architecture that BRICS would like to see reformed.[5]

The direct and active engagement of emerging powers in Africa has also come with its own set of challenges. In the context of the power asymmetry among the countries of the Global South, reconciling the lofty South-South cooperation principles of mutual benefit and self-reliance with the economic and other strategic interests of the more economically advanced developing countries has proven to be very difficult. Empirical evidence of the engagement of emerging economies in Africa points to practices and outcomes that are not always in the best interest of the continent. For example, there are concerns that African countries might be mortgaging their resources to countries like China, India and Brazil, at a very high cost to the future viability of their economies.[6] Concerns have also been raised about the role of Chinese businesses, for example, in exacerbating environmental degradation, displacing local labour and stunting domestic manufacturing industries in Africa.[7] This is in addition to concerns about the implications of so-called South-South land-grabbing for food security and livelihoods in affected African states such as South Sudan, Madagascar, Ethiopia or the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).[8] Similarly, doubts have been cast on the developmental value of South-South cooperation when such interactions are underpinned by solidarity and non-interference principles, which encourage dictatorship, unaccountability, corruption, elitism and the abuse of human rights.[9]

A few basic observations can be made from this brief review of contemporary South-South cooperation. While South-South cooperation comes with significant development opportunities for Africa and the rest of the developing world, it could also reinforce underdevelopment, dependency and instability in some of these countries. However, the shortcomings associated with South-South cooperation are not unique to this form of international cooperation. In fact, it is the same crude pursuit of national interests, which sometimes only pay lip service to the principle of mutual development, that has made North-South cooperation less desirable for the development aspirations of the Global South. More importantly, recognising that despite its avowed principles of mutuality, South-South cooperation is not immune to the power politics of international relations, it is incumbent for South Africa and Africa to adopt a strategic and nuanced approach to South-South cooperation – one that balances ideological and political solidarity with

Concerns exist that new southern blocs, such as India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA), may not sufficiently represent the interests of other developing countries.

the pragmatism, efficiency and foresight needed to defend and advance the continent's development priorities. This is particularly the case in so-called fragile and conflict-affected settings where cooperation that is insensitive to local dynamics – be it from emerging or traditional powers – risks exacerbating conflict and instability.

South-South Cooperation and Post-conflict Development in Africa

Because most conflict-affected states in Africa are also rich in natural resources (arable land, water, minerals and oil), they have become quite attractive to the emerging economies that drive contemporary South-South cooperation. In other words, a significant proportion of South-South cooperation in Africa takes place in volatile or post-conflict contexts. As the World Development Report 2011 notes: "Middle- and new higher-income countries have become important donors, investors, and diplomatic and trading partners for countries affected by fragility, violence, and conflict. They bring with them additional resources, lessons from their own economic and institutional transitions, and strong regional connections."[10] It follows from this observation that perhaps the most important contribution of South-South cooperation to post-conflict reconstruction and development is the fact that it brings to these challenging environments additional/new resources, expertise and experiences – especially at a time when traditional sources of support for post-conflict countries have had to contend with austerity measures to

BUT, MORE SPECIFICALLY, IT IS WORTH UNDERLINING THAT SOUTH-SOUTH DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IS CONCEIVED NOT AS AID FROM A RICH DONOR TO A POOR AND NEEDY RECIPIENT, BUT AS DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS WITH MUTUAL BENEFITS

enable them to cope with the economic downturn currently experienced in the West.

But, more specifically, it is worth underlining that South-South development cooperation is conceived not as aid from a rich donor to a poor and needy recipient, but as development partnerships with mutual benefits. In this context, development financing and support to post-conflict countries more generally come as a package, which often includes trade promotion, investment, project-specific financing and technical cooperation. This approach to development cooperation comes with at least two significant benefits for post-conflict reconstruction and development. First, the strong focus on project-specific financing, as well as the willingness to engage with the private sector, means that South-South development support in post-conflict contexts prioritises investment in often damaged infrastructure and struggling productive sectors in these countries – areas that

The environmental group 'Friends of Lake Turkana' (FOLT) protest outside the Chinese embassy in Nairobi, Kenya against the involvement of Chinese companies in the construction of the Gibe 3 hydroelectric dam along the Omo river in neighbouring Ethiopia, which is the main tributary for the closed-basin Lake Turkana in Kenya. The banner in Chinese reads "Gibe 3 is dangerous! The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China must remove itself from this issue!". According to campaigners, if completed, the Gibe 3 Dam will devastate the fragile ecosystems of the lower Omo Valley and Kenya's Lake Turkana, on which 500 000 farmers, herders and fisher-folk rely for their livelihoods.

Leaders of the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) group of emerging powers gathered at the 6th BRICS Summit in Brazil to launch a new development bank and reserve fund that are envisioned as counterweights to western-led financial institutions (15 July 2014).

are largely overlooked by traditional donors. This plays an important role in stimulating economic growth and laying the foundations for long-term economic development – which, in turn, provides employment and much-needed government revenue and legitimacy for other reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts. Second, South-South technical cooperation has been crucial for developing local capacities in post-conflict environments, thereby promoting greater local ownership and sustainability of reconstruction and development processes. This is particularly the case given that the ability to provide technical support to post-conflict societies is not limited to the economically wealthy countries of the Global South. Even LDCs have important capacities, development experiences, technologies and governance best practices, which have been shared with countries emerging from conflict without incurring huge financial costs. A recent example of such cooperation is the technical support provided by Timor-Leste to the 2013/2014 electoral process in Guinea-Bissau, in the context of the Fragile-to-Fragile Cooperation initiative under the auspices of the g7+ group of fragile states.[11] What is more, South-South technical cooperation enjoys a comparative advantage over traditional technical assistance in developing local capacities in post-conflict settings, because it is often based on relatively shared historical experiences and development philosophies.

However, post-conflict societies are by no means immune to the shortcomings associated with the

South-South cooperation framework. If anything, these challenges become more serious in such contexts because of institutional fragility and weak regulatory frameworks. The negative effects of South-South cooperation also tend to be severe in developing countries emerging from conflict, as a result of the already polarised nature of post-conflict societies. Notwithstanding their good intentions, development interventions in these countries that fail to be sensitive to local power relations and social dynamics run the risk of reinforcing existing conflicts. In this regard, South-South development cooperation – with its sometimes uncritical embrace of the principles of non-interference and demand-driven cooperation – has the potential to do more harm than good to post-conflict societies. For example, despite the positive contributions of Chinese investments to post-conflict reconstruction and development in Sudan and South Sudan, the predominantly state-to-state approach that has underpinned the process of identifying, designing and implementing some of the projects is believed to have undermined peacebuilding efforts by stoking perceptions of marginalisation, while also fuelling already strained relations between local communities and the respective governments in Khartoum and Juba.[12]

As suggested previously, engagements in post-conflict environments that are insensitive to local dynamics are not unique to actors that employ the rhetoric of South-South cooperation. Traditional donors have historically also

been guilty of using foreign aid to promote their national interests – often in ways that have perpetuated conflict and undermined peacebuilding and development in African states recovering from violent conflict. As Besharati correctly points out, putting aside rhetoric, development cooperation – be it from the Global South or from the Global North – is often intertwined with the desire to promote the national interests of the 'donor' state.[13] In this regard, it is imperative that both South-South and North-South development cooperation adhere to certain basic norms and principles, which would guarantee that supposed development interventions do not reinforce existing patterns of marginalisation, poor governance and conflict, but instead contribute to peacebuilding in societies emerging from conflict.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development–Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) aid effectiveness processes represent an important step in the right direction to align development assistance to the needs of LDCs in Africa and elsewhere. In particular, the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) and its New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States offers a unique opportunity for concerned stakeholders to scrutinise and bring greater accountability to the activities of development partners in conflict-affected countries. However, for a number of political and technical reasons that cannot be discussed in detail in this article,[14] the rising powers in the Global South have been quite reluctant to engage with these OECD-led processes, as reflected in their cautious attitude towards the Busan conference on aid effectiveness and its outcomes. In fact, although China and Brazil participate in the IDPS, neither of these countries have endorsed the New Deal adopted on the sidelines of the Busan conference. This is not to suggest that emerging powers have generally been irresponsive to calls for their development assistance to be aligned to the needs of conflict-affected countries. On the contrary, there is evidence to suggest that while refusing to subject their development cooperation to the scrutiny and regulation of processes that are perceived to be still dominated by Western norms, principles and agendas, emerging powers such as China are gradually adopting conflict-sensitive approaches to their development cooperation – albeit on a voluntary basis.[15] The point here is that in the absence of a truly global framework to guide development cooperation – particularly with regard to engagement in conflict-affected states – or a southern alternative to the OECD-DAC aid effectiveness regime, the contribution of South-South cooperation to post-conflict development in Africa will continue to be determined by the interplay of three major dynamics: the national interest calculations of emerging economies; the quality of the dialogue and engagement on development effectiveness between established and emerging 'donors'; and the nature of the political leadership on the continent itself. This is where South Africa's leadership role in Africa becomes particularly important.

South-South Cooperation for Post-conflict Development in Africa: What Role for South Africa?

Promoting South-South cooperation is one of the five priorities of South Africa's foreign policy, which also includes

a commitment to the stabilisation and development of the African continent. Thus, South Africa's commitment to South-South cooperation can best be appreciated in light of the strategic opportunities that this framework offers for the promotion of its domestic interests and those of the continent. In particular, the South-South cooperation framework presents Pretoria with an additional set of resources, partners, experiences and expertise to pursue its post-conflict reconstruction and development agenda in Africa. Yet, as argued previously, the celebrated rise of the Global South does not only present opportunities. It also brings to the development space its own set of agendas, interests and tensions, which do not always serve the interest of the continent. For South Africa, this means adopting an approach to South-South cooperation that is conscious of the country's southern African identity, and tilts less towards ideology and political solidarity and more towards pragmatism and foresight. This strategy should be reflected in at least three areas.

EMERGING POWERS SUCH AS CHINA ARE GRADUALLY ADOPTING CONFLICT-SENSITIVE APPROACHES TO THEIR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION – ALBEIT ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS

First, South Africa could use its bridge-building role to improve the quality of the dialogue and engagement between established and emerging 'donors'. This is necessary to safeguard the interests of LDCs in Africa, particularly those affected by conflict, in the midst of the ideological and often paralysing North-South debate on the peace-security-development nexus. South Africa could use its agency in multilateral forums like the G20 and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to encourage a two-way socialisation process that is built on best practices drawn from both South-South cooperation and the OECD-DAC aid practices, and which seeks to address the legitimate concerns of emerging and traditional 'donors' without compromising the interests of countries emerging from conflict and other LDCs. A more active and strategic engagement with the emergent development effectiveness architecture, notwithstanding its imperfections, is also advisable. For example, with its relatively strong diplomatic capital, South Africa's participation in the IDPS, as well as other emerging powers such as Brazil and China, could serve to augment the African voice in this forum and contribute to better articulating and promoting the interests of African member states in the g7+ group of fragile and conflict-affected states.

Second, South Africa's privileged participation in influential South-South minilateralism offers it an opportunity to promote its agenda on post-conflict reconstruction and development in Africa. Here BRICS and IBSA are of paramount importance, as they bring together some of the major emerging powers actively engaged on the continent. With regard to the former, a good starting point would be to capitalise on the Durban BRICS Leaders-Africa

Dialogue Forum to make peacebuilding a major theme in the BRICS-Africa development dialogue. Moreover, South Africa should use the IBSA Trust Fund as a policy laboratory to pioneer the search for practical approaches to reconciling South-South cooperation principles with the imperative for conflict-sensitive development in Africa. Demonstrating strategic leadership in other forums by bringing together emerging powers and Africa, such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the India-Africa Summits, could also be another way in which South Africa could promote conflict-sensitive development within the framework of South-South cooperation.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, South Africa would have to set a good example for its southern peers through its own engagement in fragile and conflict-affected African states. South Africa cannot play a successful leadership role in aligning South-South cooperation to the development and peacebuilding needs of post-conflict states in Africa without first working towards closing the gap that has developed over the years between the declared objectives of its Africa policy and its actual diplomacy on the continent. To lead by example, it must start working towards correcting the way it has engaged with some conflict-affected states in Africa, such as the DRC and Central African Republic (CAR).[16] There is no gainsaying that the imperative to induce a stable political environment which is conducive for promoting narrow economic and other strategic interests has sometimes driven South Africa's engagement in conflict-affected African states, often to the detriment of peacebuilding considerations. Pioneering responsible and conflict-sensitive South-South development cooperation means South Africa would have to deploy the necessary political will to mainstream and sustain peacebuilding objectives in its bilateral cooperation with conflict-affected African countries, while also working to develop the capacity to monitor, coordinate and align the engagements of different substate actors with its overall post-conflict reconstruction and development goals on the continent. ▲

Dr Fritz Nganje is a Post-doctoral Research Fellow with the South African Research Chair in African Diplomacy and Foreign Policy at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Endnotes

1 African National Congress (2014) 'Together We Move South Africa Forward: 2014 Election Manifesto', p. 48, Available at: <www.anc.org.za/2014/wp-content/themes/anc/downloads/Manifesto_Booklet.pdf> [accessed 15 January 2014].

2 An earlier version of this article was presented at the international conference entitled Enhancing South Africa's Post-conflict Development and Peacebuilding Capacity in Africa, hosted by the Institute for Security Studies, January 27–28, in Pretoria, South Africa.

3 For more on this, see Hurrel, Andrew (2006) Hegemony, Liberalism and Global Order: What Space for Would-be Global Powers? *International Affairs*, 82 (1), pp. 1–19.

4 UNSC Resolution 1973 of 17 March 2011 authorised the imposition of a no-fly zone over Libya and the use of "all necessary measures" to protect Libyan civilians from Gaddafi's regime in the wake of violent uprisings in Libya. While South Africa voted in favour of the resolution, the other BRICS members abstained from the vote. For more on this, see Nganje, Fritz (2011) The UN Security Council Response to the Libyan Crisis: Implications for the African Agenda. *Global Insight*, 93.

5 See Beri, Ruchita (2013) 'BRICS: In Search of Unity?', *IDSA Comment*, 3 April, Available at: <http://idsa.in/idsacomments/BRICSInSearchofUnity_rberi_030412> [accessed 17 January 2014].

6 Kimenyi, M.S. and Lewis, Z. (2011) The BRICS and the New Scramble for Africa. *Foresight Africa: The Continent's Greatest Challenges and Opportunities for 2011*, Brookings Institute report, p. 20.

7 Meidan, Michal (2006) China's Africa Policy: Business Now, Politics Later. *Asian Perspective*, 30 (4), p. 86.

8 See, for example, Ferrando, Tomaso (2012) 'Land Grabbing under the Cover of Law: Are BRICS-South Relationships Any Different?' Paper presented at the Oxford-Sciences Po (OXPO) Doctoral Seminar, Oxford University, May 18, in Oxford, UK.

9 See, for example, Hodzi, O., Hartwell, L. and De Jager, N. (2012) Unconditional Aid: Assessing the Impact of China's Development Assistance to Zimbabwe. *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 19 (1), pp. 79–103.

10 World Bank (2011) 'World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development', p. 183, Available at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/WDR2011_Full_Text.pdf>.

11 See Government of Timor-Leste (2014) 'Guinea-Bissau "Thanks for the Support and Help of Timor-Leste"', 8 April, Available at: <http://timor-leste.gov.tl/?p=9942&lang=en> [accessed 28 August 2014].

12 Campbell, Ivan, et al. (2012) China and Conflict-affected States: Between Principle and Pragmatism. *SaferWorld Report*, January, pp. 105–130.

13 Besharati, Neissan (2013) Common Goals and Differentiated Commitments: The Role of Emerging Economies in Global Development. German Development Institute Discussion Paper, December, p. 19.

14 The reluctance is motivated mainly by perceptions that attempts to bring emerging powers into the OECD-led aid effectiveness framework are intended to transfer unjustified responsibility to these developing countries, and therefore encumber their rise to global influence. Emerging 'donors' also do not have the capacity to carry out the kind of reporting, monitoring and coordination required in the OECD-DAC process. For more on this, see Besharati, Neissan (2013) op. cit. See also Schulz, Nils-Sjard (2011) Why Europe Must Tune-in to the Multi-polar Development Agenda. *FRIDE Policy Brief*, 86.

15 Campbell, Ivan, et al. (2012) op. cit.

16 South Africa's recent engagements in the DRC and CAR suggest the emergence of a utilitarian logic at the centre of the administration's bilateral cooperation with conflict-affected but resource-rich African states; one which narrows the scope of engagement to creating favourable security and diplomatic conditions for promoting narrow economic interests. As the events in CAR have revealed, this narrow approach to post-conflict engagement – which shies away from broader issues of governance, social justice and reconciliation – is not amenable to sustainable peace and can actually undermine South Africa's credibility as a peacebuilder in Africa.

"MONROVIA IS NOT LIBERIA": A ROCKY PATH TOWARDS DECENTRALISATION

BY FRANZISCA ZANKER

Map No. 3775 Rev. 7 UNITED NATIONS
October 2010

Department of Peacekeeping Operatons
Cartographic Section

Decentralisation has the potential to address one of the most deep-rooted causes of conflict in Liberia. Yet, as the planning continues, a myriad challenges have emerged.

Liberia has long been characterised by a deeply entrenched centralism. This was created by the American Colonisation Society (ACS) in 1847 for freed and repatriated slaves – known as Americo-Liberians – who became the ruling minority for over a century, largely suppressing indigenous Liberians. Attempts at decentralisation prior to the war were limited and never fully materialised under either presidents William V.S. Tubman (who introduced an integration strategy) or William R. Tolbert, Jr (with his Rural Development Taskforce). During the reign of Samuel K. Doe, no decentralisation was provided for – despite introducing a new constitution in 1986 – largely due to the politicised nature of the reform consultations.

Whilst many factors contributed to the conflict years in Liberia between 1990 and 2003 – including endemic poverty, lack of access to resources and perceived state failure – there is no doubt that the overcentralisation of power and an 'imperial' presidential system played a central part.[1] The centralisation of power fostered not only nepotism and corruption, but also led to a lack of services in the so-called hinterlands, as well as a continued debate over the identity of Liberia and its inhabitants. Scholars are still divided on the link between conflict management and decentralisation; nevertheless, many advocate decentralisation as a tool to help the poor and marginalised by improving access to services on the one hand, and political empowerment on the other. Decentralisation, scholars argue, aims at alleviating conflicts based on social exclusion and regional polarisation.[2]

Liberian president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, has indicated that she is committed to decentralisation and ensuring that all citizens of the country are served.

Thus, the idea of decentralisation has often been discussed in post-conflict contexts; for example, in relation to security sector reform. In Liberia, this is most notably the case regarding the decentralisation of security and justice in the form of regional hubs.[3] At the launch of the first Justice and Security Hub in Gbarnga in February 2013, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf remarked: "We are committed about decentralization; we are committed to serving all over the country, ensuring all our citizens that Monrovia is not Liberia!"[4]

Plans for Decentralisation: Open Puzzles

Whilst decentralisation can be defined rather broadly and implemented to different degrees, it has the ability to change the way a state is structured. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which was signed to end the war in 2003, resulted in the creation of the Governance Reform Commission, assigned to, inter alia, "ensure subsidiarity in governance through decentralisation and participation."[5] With the help of this Governance Commission (GC), President Johnson Sirleaf launched the National Policy on Decentralisation and Local Governance in January 2012.

The GC then put together a Local Government Bill, after several years of both expert and grassroots consultations. The focus of the Bill is on political, fiscal and administrative decentralisation. Notably, superintendents and district commissioners currently still appointed by the president are to be elected. In addition, 15 decentralised county councils are planned, which will be able to pass ordinances, regulations and approve development plans. Along with an implementation strategy, the GC passed the Bill on to the president in August 2013. This is the first major roadblock. Whilst legislators can technically table this Bill themselves, this is in practice a rare occurrence. Thus, a discussion of the Bill will be 'off the table' until the president finds the time to introduce it, behind a long list of other priorities – not least the recent outbreak of Ebola in the region.

THUS, A DISCUSSION OF THE BILL WILL BE 'OFF THE TABLE' UNTIL THE PRESIDENT FINDS THE TIME TO INTRODUCE IT, BEHIND A LONG LIST OF OTHER PRIORITIES – NOT LEAST THE RECENT OUTBREAK OF EBOLA IN THE REGION

Implementation is further problematised by a long list of puzzles and contentious issues that remain unresolved. For example, it is still undecided whether the candidates for elected positions at the decentralised level can belong

Liberian chiefs have long been used for local government administration, but many feel they have lost some of their political and cultural relevance over the years.

to political parties or have to be independent contenders. Those in favour, including civil society advocates, stress the importance of strengthening a weak political party system from the bottom up, as well as decreasing tension and competition between political parties at the national level. Opponents – likely to include legislators who are yet to discuss the matter – rather fear increased political polarisation at the local level. At worst, for the more cynically minded, the decrease of personal influence from national legislators could follow, as the failure to deliver becomes more evident when additional political competition – from the same political party, no less – is carried out at the local level.

Boundary harmonisation remains another major issue: new administrative districts will replace current statutory districts, but the plans remain largely incomplete. This is also reflected in the current overhaul in the system of chieftaincy. Over time, especially during the years of warfare and chaos, an increasing number of chieftaincy seats have been created, sometimes giving authority over the same area to more than one office holder. Chiefs have long been used for local government administration, but for a variety of reasons feel that they have lost some of their political and cultural relevance over the years.

Hoping to buy in through the plans for decentralisation, political momentum is building up. The chiefs from Nimba County (in north-eastern Liberia) gathered in 2013 to write a 'Joint Resolution', which they passed on to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The demands are mainly related to benefits, salaries and allowances of chiefs and their support staff, and have since been acknowledged by other chiefs. Without a doubt, if thorough decentralisation materialises as planned, chiefs will have to get used to playing a different role to that they do today, the exact contours of which remain uncertain. Whilst technically chiefs hold an elected office, local elections have not taken place since 1985, due to financial constraints. Despite the difficulties of holding elections, representative positions will be expanded under the decentralisation reforms – notably to include seats for women and youth. Yet how this will take place, and if these representatives are to be elected or appointed, has also not yet been clarified. One of the most contentious issues, however, is that of constitutional amendment.

Constitutional Changes

If the Local Government Bill is to be enacted in its present form, some changes will need to take place in

Liberia's constitution. New elements, such as the creation of county councils, will need to be added, as well as the election of local government officials (superintendent and district commissioner), curtailing the current power of the president to appoint them. Thus, a constitutional referendum will need to take place.[6] The recent experience with a referendum, in 2011, illustrates the difficulties of such an undertaking. On top of organisational problems – including the misprinting of ballot sheets and confusion in the information campaigns – the results were disputable. In the end, only 34.2% of registered voters took part in the referendum. Furthermore, throughout the process, it was not yet determined whether a two-thirds majority was needed from all registered voters, or only the valid votes. The Supreme Court later accepted the latter interpretation, yet most of the changes were still not constitutionally approved.

The GC has spent years working on the decentralisation policy, with an entire suboffice being dedicated to decentralisation. It has carried out numerous grassroots consultation campaigns in developing its ideas. Yet, the GC can only pass on its recommendations and draft legislation to the executive. In the meantime, a six-member Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) was set up in 2013 to review the constitution and advocate amendments where necessary. The CRC is currently carrying out further consultations with a wide spectrum of Liberian society, to finalise its recommendations. Whilst the CRC is, of course, aware of the work of the GC, and will seek to include the decentralisation issue in its list of recommended changes, the two bodies effectively have overlapping mandates. The CRC, too, will only be able to pass on its advice and report to the president. By this time, the list of proposed changes to the constitution will be long, and thus likely to be shortened. Financial constraints means that a constitutional referendum will probably need to be held alongside elections. It is too late to do this, with senatorial elections due to take place in late 2014, so what remains are the next national elections in 2017. The constitution may have to wait until then – and with it, decentralisation.

Institutional Framing of Decentralisation

Decentralisation, like other post-conflict reform in Liberia, is entangled in a myriad of governmental and international institutions. Whilst links have been established between the CRC and the GC, this has not yet been institutionalised with other important actors. The National Election Commission, for example, has not been systematically involved, despite the obvious contributions in planning a possible referendum and eventual local elections. Further, the involvement of various donor agencies and seconded experts add more layers to the already-unstructured and overlapping mandates.

Liberians generally envisage decentralisation in terms of access to services and economic growth, rather than political empowerment.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been a key funder of the decentralisation work. In turn, it receives funding from various sources, including a recently launched (in 2013) pool fund, with the European Union (EU) contributing over five million euros. The UNDP, along with donor partners, will help the Government of Liberia implement the Liberia Decentralization Support Program (LDSP) for the Period 2013 to 2017, approved in April 2013.[7] Donors such as the EU insist they are only there to help work out the technical details and do capacity building to ensure plans for decentralisation can be implemented smoothly. Nevertheless, whilst surely inadvertently, systems of dependencies are being reinforced, just as donors and partner agencies are looking to draw down their commitment after the 'decade of peace'.

The GC is currently focused on putting pressure on the legislature to implement the (proposed) Local Governance Act in a speedy and comprehensive manner. For this endeavour, the GC is turning to civil society actors. Whilst stakeholder meetings to discuss these issues are informative and productive for all parties involved, it also pushes civil society actors further away from their traditional watchdog function, as they help governmental institutions implement their policies.

The idea of decentralisation has resulted in numerous grassroots campaigning, consultations and donor-funded implementation policies. How then do Liberians feel about decentralisation?

Reflections on Decentralisation

When asking a variety of stakeholders – including local government officials, chiefs, civil society actors and academics – what they thought about decentralisation, most of them talked about it in terms of development, rather than political empowerment.[8] As such, the benefits of decentralisation are primarily envisaged in terms of access to services and economic growth. A major complaint from civil servants and other government officials was having to return to Monrovia, often at their own cost, for every basic service (receiving salaries) or in the fulfilment of their duties (such as passing on a report to superiors). Most goods and services (including those related to the justice and security sector) still remain in the capital. However, in light of increasing stability in Liberia, numerous foreign investors are returning and businesses have been rebuilt in some of the peri-urban areas outside Monrovia. For example, several banks have (re-)opened in Ganta, a bustling border town in northern Liberia, which means that at least civil servants residing there no longer need to travel to the capital to

The availability of banks and other important services outside of Monrovia means that people no longer need to travel to the capital to access such services.

Youth in Liberia feel the most disenfranchised from their local government leaders.

receive their salaries. Whilst this has effectively nothing to do with the governmental decentralisation reform policies, this was often accredited to exactly that.

Similarly, in focus groups, decentralisation was understood as access to goods and services. Whilst the deconcentration of services is a major – and, to date, the most visible – part of the decentralisation policy, there is also a distinct political spirit to the decentralisation project. Access to services may play a prominent part in overcoming conflict roots related to the overconcentration of state power at the centre, but it is surely also a question of changing the nature of politics in Liberia. If decision-making power along with accountability mechanisms is given to the local level in an effort to curtail executive power, it will be a historical change. It would mean that the whole identity of the country may change, currently still principally emphasising the Americo-Liberians. The motto remains 'The Love of Liberty Brought Us Here' – just as much as the constitution, the flag and other institutions are those originally inspired by the ever-influential United States of America. In interviews, however, only those who had personal political ambitions reflected on the political nature of decentralisation.

The discussions in the focus groups consistently showed a lack of knowledge about decentralisation. In nine groups of market women, teachers and youth in Monrovia, Gbarnga and Ganta, with over 70 participants, only a handful were truly familiar with the idea of decentralisation. Most

discussants were unsure how – or if at all – it could change their lives. For the time being, the idea of decentralisation remains either mythical or meaningless for many Liberians.

IN NINE GROUPS OF MARKET WOMEN, TEACHERS AND YOUTH IN MONROVIA, GBARNGA AND GANTA, WITH OVER 70 PARTICIPANTS, ONLY A HANDFUL WERE TRULY FAMILIAR WITH THE IDEA OF DECENTRALISATION

Social discontent is no doubt linked to socio-economic disparities. In a fragile post-war environment, any policies that would allow better access to goods and services are therefore likely to have a positive effect. Nevertheless, if Liberia is truly to become something beyond just Monrovia, more concrete changes will need to take place, at the socio-economic as well as at the political level. A mere technocratic approach to decentralisation, such as deconcentrating services, will not suffice. Current attempts at fiscal concentration indicate why: to let county administrations spend money on development projects of their own choosing, the Johnson Sirleaf government introduced County Development Funds.[9]

These funds have been suspended on several occasions, due to corruption and mismanagement allegations. There is no oversight apparatus in place, which is why national legislators have assumed this role. Instead of increased transparency, this has resulted in further accusations of excessive meddling in the way the funds are spent. However, these funds are not just illustrative as an example of how deconcentration can amount to 'decentralised corruption'. Rather, over the years, stronger consultation rules have developed regarding decisions on how to use the funds and the way they are audited, in large part thanks to constant critique and advocacy from civil society organisations. They have pushed – and continue to do so – for better and more transparent administration of these funds.

Such accountability mechanisms can only be strengthened through increased political empowerment. Even if the primary aim of decentralisation is to improve rural development and access to services, it can be better implemented simply with tighter checks and balances. In the absence of a strong institutionalised system, as is often the case in post-conflict settings, pressure has to come from the population. When citizens are strengthened politically through decentralised decision-making, or devolution, this can also improve the oversight role of civil society actors. This means, however, that these actors need to be given more space to work on their watchdog role, instead of effectively becoming implementing partners for national government agencies or international donors. Education campaigns will need to be carried out, but – at least partially – through other channels, such as the media.

At the moment, many Liberians feel that they neither have access to basic services, nor can they hold their local government officials accountable. When asked in focus groups whether their local government officials – ranging from mayors, superintendents and chiefs to local magistrates – are fulfilling their tasks (the actors and tasks determined by participants themselves), there were strikingly negative answers (see Table 1). Notably, the youth participants felt the most disenfranchised from their local government actors.

Table 1: How many of the named local government actors are fulfilling their tasks?*

	Market Women	Teachers	Youth
Gbarnga	5/9 (55%)	2/9 (22%)	0/8 (0%)
Ganta	7/10 (70%)	5/10 (50%)	4/8 (50%)
Monrovia	5/10 (50%)	3/7 (43%)	2/13 (15%)

*Based on a majority of the participants agreeing.

Generally, there is political will for decentralisation policies in Liberia. It differs, however, according to the degree or extent that it is envisaged. Any eventuality – be it mere deconcentration of services or fully blown political devolution – is likely to contain a myriad challenges. Those outlined here are only in the first stages of development and implementation. However, this does not mean that decentralisation should be foregone. Whilst the final verdict on the usefulness of decentralisation for conflict resolution remains uncertain, a country with a conflict experience that was at least partially caused by its centralised governance style certainly needs to reconfigure itself. ▲

Franzisca Zanker is a Research Fellow at the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA) Institute of African Affairs in Hamburg, Germany.

Endnotes

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4   Speech available at: <http://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/Gbarnga_Justice_and_Security_Hub.pdf> [accessed 8 July 2014].

5   Article XVI Section 2 (d) Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

6   It has also been suggested that a new constitution would be more fitting. See Al-bakri Nyei, Ibrahim (2013) 'Towards Constitutional Reform in Liberia', Available at: <http://ibrahimnyei.blogspot.de/2013/02/towards-constitutional-reform-in-liberia_1496.html> [accessed 8 July 2014].

7   For a rather critical evaluation of the predecessor programmes – the Liberia Decentralization and Local Development (LDLD) Program and the County Support Team (CST) Program – see UNDP (2012) 'Joint County Support Team and Liberia Decentralization & Local Development Evaluation', Available at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluationadmin/manageevaluation/viewevaluationdetail.html?evalid=6652> [accessed 8 July 2014].

8   Fieldwork was conducted in Monrovia, Gbarnga (Bong County) and Ganta (Nimba County) over a period of four months in 2013 and 2014. During this time, the author conducted over 80 interviews, as well as carried out nine focus group discussions with market women, teachers and youth in the respective locations. The research was part of the Local Arenas of Power-Sharing Project, funded by the German Research Council (DFG) Priority Programme 1448 'Creativity and Adaptation in Africa'.

9   Each county is allowed to administer these funds according to a system of their own choosing, and those counties with foreign investors also administer a Social Development Fund. See forthcoming report by Search for Common Ground <https://www.sfcg.org/> for more.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY IN PEACEBUILDING: LESSONS FROM KENYA'S TANA DELTA

BY **CHRISTOPHER TUCKWOOD** AND **CHRISTINE MUTISYA**

Overview

This article describes the underlying nature of ethnic conflict in the Tana Delta and explores the peace processes that have been undertaken, some of which are ongoing. It then examines the role of information and communications technology (ICT) in peacebuilding, successful cases of use, and a specific example from the current use of ICT for peacebuilding in the Tana Delta of Kenya. This discussion is followed by an outline of the lessons learned and challenges faced in the region by Una Hakika (Swahili for 'Are you sure?'), a mobile phone-based project that aims to reduce the risk of renewed ethnic violence in the Tana Delta by monitoring and countering the spread of harmful misinformation, such as rumours.

The Tana Delta Conflict

The Tana Delta is located in eastern Kenya and comprises the southern part of Tana River County, which borders Lamu, Malindi and Garissa counties. The Tana Delta covers an area of 38 437 square kilometres and had a recorded population of 240 075 in 2009.[1] Tana River County is inhabited primarily by the Pokomo and Orma communities, though various other ethnic groups such as the Wardei, Somali, Malakote, Munyoyaya, Wata, Bajuni and Miji Kenda also live there. Overall, the county has a varied landscape including semi-arid regions, grasslands and dense forest. The Tana River for which the area is named is the longest river in Kenya, ending in the Indian Ocean, where it broadens into the Delta proper, which is rich in water, land and wildlife resources.

Since the nineteenth century, the Tana Delta has experienced conflicts between the Pokomo, who are settled farmers, and the Orma, who are pastoralists, mainly because

Above: Kenyan police patrol a village in the Tana Delta following consecutive months of violence and revenge killings between the Pokomo and Orma communities (2013).

of disputes over land use and access to water. However, the intensity of these conflicts has increased in recent decades, due to increasingly easier access to weapons, growing poverty, the pressure of limited resources and political interference. The failure of government institutions to recognise the social and environmental consequences of their land-use schemes has increased tensions between ethnic communities in the Delta.[2] The Pokomo-Orma conflict has also gained attention in the political arena, since ethnically affiliated political groups vie to exert influence over society, often using ethnic tensions to garner support. Whichever group gains power at a given time dominates and ensures that its own ethnic community benefits from the resources at its disposal, thus translating into ethnicised abuses of power. This has exacerbated bitterness and hatred between the two communities and raised the stakes in any given election.

The Tana Delta experienced its worst violence during late 2012 and early 2013, coinciding with the period leading up to the Kenyan general election in March 2013. Hostilities began on 22 August 2012 with the massacre of more than 50 people in the village of Riketa, and triggered a cycle of attacks between the two communities that did not end until January 2013.[3] These killings took the lives of an estimated 166 people, displaced tens of thousands from their homes, and have impacted both the local economy and other ethnic communities living in the area. Many observers attributed the violence to the type of pre-election tensions often seen in Kenya, but underlying factors such as land-use competition, land ownership and misinformation played major roles. The situation has been relatively stable since January 2013, due to a strong presence by Kenyan security forces and the conclusion of the 2013 general election on 4 March 2013. Fortunately, the government and various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) responded quickly with peacebuilding activities that continue up to the present, though some stakeholders have decreased their presence in light of the relative calm now seen in the area. Although no fighting has taken place between the Pokomo and the Orma since January 2013 and the area remains peaceful, tension can still be felt. Some small-scale violence and individual killings have taken place, but fortunately they have remained few in number and resemble individual crimes more than ethnic violence. However, recent attacks allegedly carried out by the Somali militant group Al-Shabaab (and possibly local allies) in nearby Lamu County and then Tana River County itself have increased insecurity and tensions, as people fear for their lives.

Multidimensional Peacebuilding Process

Peacebuilding is a multidimensional process involving the integration of economic, social and political aspects of a given region, all of which need to address the underlying psychocultural issues that exacerbate conflict. Development and peacebuilding theory and practice need to go hand in hand, since it is highly doubtful that sustainable peace can be achieved without the integration of these factors. Peacebuilding methods include the resolution, management or transformation of conflict, with the latest conceptual framework being conflict transformation theory.

Sharma[4] reviews the styles, theories and approaches to conflict resolution, focusing on principles of conflict resolution and its models and strategies. Dodson quotes Paris, who strongly challenges peacebuilding methodologies that try to impose the institutions of a market economy and electoral democracy as the first steps in peacebuilding.[5] Dodson argues for the sustainability of peacebuilding efforts and uses the successes and failures of the United Nations (UN) to illustrate this, arguing that UN efforts are short term, while long-term goals need to be pursued by local authorities. This leads back to the multidimensional nature of peacebuilding, in which the local community needs to be involved with capacity transferred to local residents. Dodson also argues that while longer-term activities are being implemented, a strong policing and judicial structure is essential for peacebuilding, since it will prevent additional deaths. For the purposes of this article, peacebuilding is defined as any action – whether project, intervention or policy – that leads to peace or prevents conflict.

Peacebuilding Approaches in the Tana Delta

Traditional means of containing violence and resolving conflict existed in the Tana Delta long before outside actors were present in the region. Although pastoralists and farmers fought in the past, this was not as frequent as it is today, since elders would give pastoralists a piece of land

Orma men stand around the remains of Pokomo bodies killed during a raid on Kipao village in the Tana Delta (21 December 2012).

upon which to graze their cattle when moving from drought-prone areas in search of pasture and, if any conflict arose, it was resolved by a tribunal of local elders. However, due to land and water pressures, the modern land tenure system, an increasing number of ethnic groups and a growing population, this mechanism is no longer appropriate – though some residents do argue that the removal of this system has led to increased conflict.

Challenges in the Peace Process

Current peace processes in the Tana Delta have not fully resolved the ethno-political conflicts in the region, and although there is now an absence of violence between the Pokomo and Orma, the situation is still tense. The peacebuilding process currently being implemented is mainly a top-down approach, where government officials and local leaders initiate peace efforts and institute them in the region. This may be effective in the short term, but its sustainability is questionable. The Kenyan media often portrays peace as having returned to the Tana Delta, but the voices of the local people contradict this claim, saying that although there may be relative calm, tensions remain and even a small incident could trigger further violence in the region.

Many members of the general population have called for a bottom-up approach, in which all residents are given the tools to initiate individual or small community peace processes. This does not mean that the top-down approach should cease; instead, the two should work in a complementary multidimensional approach. If the community owns the peace process and is confident that its concerns will be heard and implemented, then the peace process will contribute to lasting peace in the region. As Byrne highlights, a peacebuilding process that involves all citizens as active participants could help to forge a holistic and inclusive transformational resolution process that addresses ethno-political conflict.[6]

The Use of ICT in Peacebuilding

For the sake of this discussion, we will use the United States Institute of Peace's (USIP) definition of ICT, which is "the diverse set of tools used to create, disseminate, and manage information". These tools include mobile phones, social media and Internet, as well as other services related to ICT.

Governments and NGOs have not placed great emphasis on technology in peacebuilding, even though technology plays an increasingly important role in daily life. Some organisations have, however, found a place for technology in peacebuilding, but mainly for needs assessments and beneficiary communication as well as monitoring and evaluation.[7] Little emphasis is placed upon the use of technology for attitude and behaviour change, collaboration, dialogue or policy advocacy.

Kogen and Sheth[8] argue that because communication is essential for peacebuilding, the nature of communication flow within and around conflict has a significant impact on peacebuilding, because violent incidents always stimulate a communication ecosystem that disseminates information about the violence. This has happened in the Tana Delta, where we have seen an increase in rumours, especially during violent incidents such as the Lamu County attacks in June–July 2014.

KOLTZOW AFFIRMS THAT CROWD-SOURCING FOR CRISIS MAPPING HAS THE GREATEST POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT PEACEBUILDING, WHILE THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED TECHNOLOGY IS SHORT MESSAGE SERVICE (SMS) DUE TO ITS ACCESSIBILITY, WITH THE INTERNET LAGGING FAR BEHIND MOBILE PHONE USAGE RATES

Violence usually occurs in stages, and before any attack can be carried out there must be preparation and planning, in which the perpetrators usually make use of some sort of technological outlet, such as social media or conventional broadcast media, to mobilise support before it becomes full-blown physical violence. As seen in the Tana Delta, violence begins through the propagation of hate speech or rumours, which spread quickly through the use of mobile phones. Misinformation is increasingly significant as ICTs become more accessible and therefore enable the ever-more rapid and widespread dissemination of information. Now, this same technology can be used to bring peace to the region. According to Kogen and Sheth,[9] conflict monitoring and early warning, civilian protection and community security have the common goal of responding to incidents in ways that stop violence and prevent immediate escalation.

Koltzow affirms that crowdsourcing for crisis mapping has the greatest potential to support peacebuilding, while the most frequently used technology is short message service (SMS) due to its accessibility, with the Internet lagging far behind mobile phone usage rates.[10] This can be attributed to limited access to Internet infrastructure, unavailability of Internet-enabled phones and low levels of literacy, among other factors. There have been successful cases of using technology in peacebuilding, such as the famous case of Ushahidi – the crowdsourced crisis-mapping software developed in Kenya in the wake of the 2007–2008 post-election violence.

In the Tana Delta, both the Orma and Pokomo communities hold inaccurate perceptions of each other and of the violence that has occurred in the past. In some cases,

GALLO IMAGES/AFP

In the Tana Delta, violence often begins through the propagation of hate speech or rumours, which spread quickly through the use of mobile phones.

Ushahidi, a non-profit software company, was established by a group of bloggers who invented a way to track (and thus prevent) bloody post-election violence in Kenya. Ushahidi, which means 'to witness' in Swahili, has become a worldwide success and is used in many conflict and disaster zones.

such perceptions have led members of both communities to view each other as being untrustworthy and threatening. This has then contributed to the atmosphere of fear in which violence is most likely to occur. For example, rumours have circulated that an outside actor has given the Orma community thousands of AK-47s with which to destroy the Pokomo. In another case, a Pokomo health worker was rumoured to have tried injecting Orma children with poison instead of vaccine. Such rumours are unlikely to be true, but the important thing is that at least some people believe them, thereby contributing to the atmosphere of fear, distrust and hatred in which violence is more likely. Understanding how such misinformation forms and spreads is essential to the success of violence prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

In partnership with iHub Research and with the support of the International Development Research Centre, the Sentinel Project has implemented a project called Una Hakika, which uses ICT – specifically mobile phones – to monitor and counter misinformation with the aim of reducing the risk of future violence. The Una Hakika project has dual research and impact-focused objectives, and aims both to better understand how the issue of misinformation in conflict can be addressed, as well as to reduce the risk of future violence in the Tana Delta. Una Hakika does this using the telecommunications system already in place throughout the Tana Delta to operate an information verification service, which follows a three-step process. First, users report questionable information they hear; second, Una Hakika

staff members document these rumours and attempt to verify their truthfulness through independent investigation; and third, Una Hakika staff work to contain and counter the spread of the rumour, predominantly by reporting back to the community in question with neutral, accurate information.

Lessons Learned from Una Hakika

Understand the psychocultural aspects of the community and information flow

As Kogen and Sheth[11] recommend, successful projects using ICT for peacebuilding require analysis of existing communication flow rather than simply proposing new strategies without understanding the local context. Before setting up Una Hakika, the project team conducted a baseline survey to understand what technologies Tana Delta residents use and how they use them, the nature of misinformation in the area, and how respondents receive, process and relay information. The understanding gained through this process was essential for creating a system that would be appropriate for local conditions and serve the real needs of the beneficiary population.

Build strong local partner partnerships

To be effective, it is essential for those implementing any peacebuilding project to have partnerships with other NGOs working on violence prevention, as well as disaster response. Good relations with local authorities are also necessary for

Una Hakika uses mobile phones to monitor and counter misinformation with the aim of reducing the risk of future violence.

success. Since the Una Hakika project contributes to security and stability in the Tana Delta, it is of great relevance to the local authorities, including village chiefs, security forces and the deputy county commissioner (the chief government administrator of the area). Thus, establishing a close circle of collaborators has been imperative to create a mutually beneficial relationship. Coordination with other NGOs has also eliminated overlap in resources and efforts, and strengthens the overall peace process.

Community-led initiative

For Una Hakika to be successful, it needs to be locally driven, since ICT is just a tool that will not prevent violence by itself – people need to utilise such tools in the course of their interpersonal work. A project like Una Hakika must be led by the local community, since these are the people whom the project is intended to benefit and who will have the best insights on how it can be most effective. Without Tana Delta residents providing input into the design of Una Hakika as well as acting as end-users, peacebuilding would be ineffective – since they are the ones who must influence the attitudes and actions of their communities towards peace, using the technological tools made available to them. Equipping the community with resources and mechanisms to use the system makes it sustainable, which is why the team has trained 192 community ambassadors throughout 16 villages. These community ambassadors will be the human

link between the technological aspects of the system and the people in their own communities, while also providing valuable feedback to continuously improve the system.

Counter-messaging

At its heart, Una Hakika is about providing accurate information to counteract rumours, while simultaneously encouraging long-term attitudinal change in the way that Tana Delta residents react to rumours. Influencing attitudes towards things like rumours as well as improving relations between ethnic communities requires the employment of counter-messaging in response to misinformation and hate speech. The process of creating attitudinal change in a society is slow but it is hoped that over time, before anyone acts on any information they receive, they will question both themselves and others about the accuracy of the information. An inclusive peacebuilding process provides opportunities for people to change misperceptions to new beliefs, builds trust and peaceful relationships, provides sustainable socio-economic development and builds both political and human sustainability.[12]

Challenges Faced in the Use of ICT for Peacebuilding in the Tana Delta

ICTs are not a panacea in any field, let alone peacebuilding, and they present challenges that may hinder any peace process if not addressed. Some of these as they have been encountered in the Tana Delta are highlighted below.

Literacy Level

The use of ICT is highly dependent upon the ability of end-users to interact with electronic devices, which is most often text-based and therefore hindered by low levels of literacy. This prevents people from using social media and even SMS, but has been mitigated in the case of the Tana Delta through the recruitment and training of volunteer community ambassadors to assist people who are uncomfortable or unable to use ICTs.

Lack of Trust

Distrust of various actors is common among the residents of post-conflict regions. Due to the trauma that people have experienced, they are unwilling to trust new ideas – particularly since many live in fear that new initiatives may be used against them. This is especially true when it comes to ICT-based projects, since many people distrust the government and are fearful of surveillance. Lack of trust between the Orma and Pokomo communities in the Tana Delta does not make the situation better, and care must be taken when selecting volunteers to ensure that one ethnic group does not feel discriminated against.

Gender Discrimination

Working in some communities can be challenging due to their cultural practices, such as the marginalisation of women in some Tana Delta communities. Thus, when conducting the baseline survey for Una Hakika, we found that fewer women than men own mobile phones. This has had an adverse effect, since women play a crucial role in peacebuilding. Women are also adversely affected during violence, since they are the ones who are mostly in the homesteads when they come under attack. As such, they value the ability to receive information quickly and at the same rate as men. Information in this particular society usually flows from men to women, but in times of violence, there needs to be a rapid flow of information to all people to save lives – even if this means overstepping some cultural boundaries.

WOMEN ARE ALSO ADVERSELY AFFECTED DURING VIOLENCE, SINCE THEY ARE THE ONES WHO ARE MOSTLY IN THE HOME-STEADS WHEN THEY COME UNDER ATTACK

Conclusion

The Tana Delta conflict has a multidimensional nature with many historical and contemporary factors driving hostility and violence, including land rights, political manoeuvring and misinformation. This means that any successful approach to bringing peace to the area needs to be similarly multidimensional, by including development as well as peace and security. All these approaches need to work hand in hand to achieve peace. The Una Hakika project contributes to this by countering misinformation, thus contributing to a more trusting and informed atmosphere in which actors can effectively address other issues in parallel.

By using technology to fight misinformation, Una Hakika is taking a route not frequently used. The lessons learned and subsequent recommendations arising from this work are of great value to peacebuilders, not just in the Tana Delta, but also in other parts of Kenya and beyond. ▲

Christopher Tuckwood is the Executive Director and Co-founder of the Sentinel Project, a Canadian NGO dedicated to assisting communities threatened by mass atrocities worldwide, as well as the current Project Leader for the Una Hakika project in Kenya.

Christine Mutisya works for the Sentinel Project and is a Project Coordinator for the Una Hakika project.

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PEACEBUILDING IN FRAGILE AFRICAN STATES: THE CASE FOR PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT

BY **DENNIS J.D. SANDOLE** AND **INGRID STAROSTE**

Peacebuilding

The subfield of peace and conflict studies known as peacebuilding is still relatively young. Although established in the literature by peace studies pioneer Johan Galtung in 1975,[1] it was not until 1992, when United Nations (UN) Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali highlighted the concept in his *An Agenda for Peace*[2] – shortly after the onset of the genocidal unravelling of former Yugoslavia – that policymakers, development practitioners, conflict researchers and conflict resolution practitioners began to take the concept seriously. The hard work of designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating peacebuilding interventions into 'broken states' across the world then began in earnest.

Generally viewed as a comprehensive state-building, economy-building and civil society-building effort before, during and/or after the 'new wars' that have replaced the traditional, Clausewitzean interstate warfare as the dominant mode of warfare globally,[3] peacebuilding has generally been a failure. A major reason is that most peacebuilding efforts have been 'minimalist' in nature, where third-party interveners have aimed to achieve and maintain 'negative peace' – the absence of hostilities.[4] These efforts have been at the expense of the more ambitious and, within a realpolitik perspective, unrealistic objective of achieving and developing positive peace – the objective of maximalist peacebuilding – where third-party interveners identify and address the deep-rooted causes and conditions of conflict.

Because most peacebuilding efforts have treated violent conflicts only as symptoms, ignoring their underlying causes and conditions, there has been, in the past 15 or so

Above: Conflicts often recur, as peacebuilding efforts tend to address violent conflicts by their symptoms only and ignore the underlying causes and conditions.

years, a significant spike in conflict recurrence. According to the World Bank, for instance, war recurs five years after violence has stopped in 44% of all post-conflict cases.[5] Paul Collier and his colleagues report that war resumes for 50% of post-conflict countries during the first 10 years of negative peace.[6] More startlingly, according to the comprehensive datasets compiled and analysed by Joseph Hewitt, Jonathan Wilkenfeld and Ted Robert Gurr:[7] "In recent years, the number of conflict recurrences has surged to unprecedented levels. Since the mid-1990s, recurrences outnumber new onsets by significant margins." In their 2010 report, Hewitt and his colleagues reported that, "of the 39 different conflicts that became active in the last 10 years, 31 [79.5%] were conflict recurrences."[8] Accordingly, depending upon the source and the exact time period considered, roughly between 40% and 80% of the 'new wars' that have been dealt with by the international community have reignited into full-blown wars, reinforcing in their wake the status of 'failed states'.

Africa's Failed States and New Wars

The Failed States Index 2014, which ranks 178 countries on 12 indicators of state stress, lists 66 countries worldwide – slightly more than a third of the UN's membership – that qualify as 'very high alert' to 'very high warning' of state failure.[9] Variously labelled as 'fragile', 'weak', 'failing' and other denotations of state distress, failed states tend to encompass the bottom billion of impoverished people worldwide who live on less than a dollar a day.[10] Well over half of the 66 distressed states are in Africa, where most of the 'new wars' worldwide also occur.[11] Again, many of these intrastate wars recur because the international community

has failed to deal with their deep-rooted, underlying causes and conditions, one of which is poverty. According to the World Bank, "countries affected by conflict face a two-way relationship between conflict and poverty – pervasive poverty makes societies more vulnerable to violent conflict, while conflict itself creates more poverty."[12]

Relevance of the Private Sector to Addressing Poverty and Related Issues in Africa's Distressed States

If the deep-rooted, underlying causes of recurring conflicts include poverty, economic underdevelopment and unemployment, especially among young males (that is, the 'youth bulge'), then what is better positioned than the private sector to address and deal with these factors?[13] Yet, the private sector has tended *not* to be a significant part of peacebuilding narratives and operations, which are usually driven by the public sector (governments, international governmental organisations) and civil society (non-governmental organisations – NGOs). One reason is that many members of the development and conflict resolution communities view the private sector as part of the problem – for example, as with the 'blood diamonds' trade – and not the solution, while the private sector itself has not, until relatively recently, seen itself as an agent of conflict transformation or peacebuilding.

This state of affairs began to change with the publication, in 2003, of *Conflict Prevention: The Untapped Potential of the Business Sector* by Andreas Wenger and Daniel Möckli.[14] Converging with the appearance of this pivotal volume were path-breaking efforts by, among others, International

Failed states encompass the bottom billion of impoverished people worldwide who live on less than a dollar a day.

Pervasive poverty makes societies more vulnerable to violent conflict, while conflict itself creates more poverty.

Alert (a global conflict resolution NGO), the establishment of The Portland Trust in London and the Business for Peace Foundation in Oslo. These developments highlighted the working hypothesis that the private sector can play a pivotal role in addressing the root causes of violent conflict and, therefore, prevent conflict recurrence in fragile states where "a lack of economic opportunity [is] an underlying cause of social and political instability".[15]

> ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN BUSINESS LEADERS HAVE BEEN QUIETLY HOLDING TALKS OVER THE PAST YEAR, WITH THE AIM OF PUSHING THEIR RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS TO AGREE ON A TWO-STATE SOLUTION THAT WOULD SEE AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE CREATED

One notable example to bring the private sector to bear on addressing the deep-rooted causes and conditions of violent conflict can be found in the efforts of former British prime minister, Tony Blair, to appeal to international business leaders to help create the economic infrastructure for an eventual Palestinian state. Prior to the relaunching of negotiations between representatives of Israel and the Palestinian Authority in 2013, Blair brought international business leaders together to explore investments in Palestinian agriculture, construction and other sectors that could, over a three-year period, increase the Palestinian

gross domestic product (GDP) by 50%.[16] Business leaders from among the conflicting parties themselves have also been participating in the economic dimension of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process – for example, "Israeli and Palestinian business leaders have been quietly holding talks over the past year, with the aim of pushing their respective governments to agree on a two-state solution that would see an independent Palestinian state created."[17]

These and similar efforts build upon the momentum generated by The Portland Trust, a British non-profit 'action tank' established in 2003 to promote "peace and stability between Israelis and Palestinians through economic development". As part of its goal to promote the contribution of the private sector to Israeli and Palestinian peace and stability, The Portland Trust developed a framework to assess how business impacts conflict resolution and peacebuilding by focusing on four categories in any conflict system, specifically:[18]

1. Politics, where business leaders act as:

   (a) lobbyists and advocates for peace within select communities, and with regard to political actors;

   (b) facilitators and supporters of peace processes, who provide money, time and expertise; and/or

   (c) brokers of talks, or as members of negotiating teams.

2. Economics, where business leaders act to:

   (a) enhance the environment within which business transactions occur, in part, by investing in appropriate activities (for example, infrastructure development);

   (b) stimulate economic transactions and growth, in part, by creating jobs;

   (c) lobby for comprehensive reform of policy and governance; and/or

   (d) encourage joint economic projects and trade across communities.

The Rwandan capital city, Kigali. The Rwandan Development Board states that it is fast tracking development using the private sector as a catalyst. Rwanda is positioning itself as a regional hub, twenty years after genocide ravaged the country.

3. Security, where business leaders:

(a) generate jobs for those rendered unemployed by a cessation of hostilities;

(b) provide financial and other support for weapons collection programmes; and/or

(c) develop and maintain effective early warning systems; in particular, monitoring for evidence of conflict recurrence or breakdowns in security.

4. Reconciliation, where business leaders take steps to:

(a) develop and maintain connections between different communities and between state and society; and/or

(b) eliminate any sign of discriminatory practice and promote reconciliation between diverse categories of employees within their own workplaces.

The Portland Trust has used this comprehensive framework in a study of 23 conflicts to explore lessons learned that could be applied to the Middle East.[19] After an initial analysis, researchers determined that four conflicts had great promise for further study: Cyprus, Northern Ireland, South Africa and the South Caucasus. Among these, South Africa stands out as the most salient case. South African businesspeople "were among the first to see the need for a change in the policy of apartheid, and took a leading role in maintaining contacts with the African National Congress (ANC) at a time when the peace process seemed to have reached a sticking point".[20] During hostilities and an absence of talks, "businessmen met with ANC leaders in Zambia and afterwards issued a call for political negotiations and the abandonment of apartheid."[21] This was a critical development that led to the collapse of apartheid. In this case, the white Afrikaner business community had played a major role in convincing the country's leadership that apartheid was undermining the viability of the South African economy and had to go – a development captured in the 2009 motion picture *Endgame*.

Willie Esterhuyse, a prominent professor of philosophy at Stellenbosch University in South Africa – a bastion of Afrikaner hegemony – was a participant in the talks. In his book, also titled *Endgame*, published a few years after the release of the film, he reveals:

The role played by business leaders in reform initiatives and the transition process in South Africa should not be underestimated. Naturally, they had a vested interest in developments in this regard. Once the Afrikaner business elite realised that apartheid did not make economic sense, they began to change their political tune. They put a great amount of pressure on the Botha regime, albeit mainly for strategic rather than moral reasons. The process of transition to an inclusive democratic dispensation was also inspired by economic forces and realities, even in the ranks of the ANC.[22]

Thabo Mbeki, the ANC leader involved in the talks and successor to Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa, had a keen appreciation for the role of the Afrikaner business community – not only in ending apartheid, but in making the transition to a prosperous, all-inclusive society. Again, as Esterhuyse[23] reports:

The business sector, Mbeki stressed repeatedly, would have to play a key role in the transition to an inclusive democratic dispensation as well as thereafter. It was an aspect to which he would return time and again: "Without the cooperation of businesspeople and without a growing economy, we will struggle with the democratisation project." I recall that he once told me more or less the following: "The political process of transition to an inclusive democracy with international status should not be too difficult. We would be able to manage that. The socioeconomic transition process, though, is the more complex issue. There is terrible poverty, and the legacy of apartheid is visible everywhere. There are also high material expectations on the part of the oppressed. The gap between rich and poor is massive. How are we going to integrate 30 million blacks, mostly poor, in an economic process that is currently controlled by a rich, white elite? The right to vote isn't going to be our problem. Socioeconomic rights, access to the economy and a share in South Africa's natural resources, including land, will be the real issue. You can't eat the right to vote. You can use it, however, to achieve socioeconomic rights. Afrikaners, given their history, ought to understand that."

To capitalise and build on the South African experience – still a work in progress – we have developed a framework to enhance exploring the role of the private sector in peacebuilding in fragile, violent, conflict-affected states in Africa and elsewhere.

The Three Pillar Framework

The Three Pillar Framework (3PF) can be used to analyse violent conflict systems as a basis for designing viable peacebuilding interventions, comprising the private as well as public and civil society sectors, to prevent or resolve deadly conflict. The utility of the 3PF is that it comprises a number of discrete perspectives on conflict and conflict handling, allowing peacebuilding analysts and practitioners to capture the complexity of the turbulent systems they are addressing:

"… the more distinct, or even overlapping [the discrete perspectives] the better, as one would then have different, albeit interrelated insights into a given conflict situation. Such insights could enable an analyst and potential third party intervener to see a conflict from different angles, thereby enhancing the likelihood of a more effective response."[24]

"[T]he more angles or perspectives we have on [a] conflict [therefore,] the more likely it is that we are capturing the whole [system] and not just any one part of [it]."[25] This can only enhance efforts to mount a maximally effective response to any conflict, involving the private as well as public and civil society sectors.

Accordingly, **Pillar 1** of the 3PF deals with the elements of conflict such as the parties, issues, objectives,

means, preferred conflict-handling orientations, and the conflict environment[s] within which the conflict occurs. **Pillar 2** addresses the drivers of the conflict, which operate at the individual, societal, international and/or global/ecological levels. **Pillar 3** deals with third-party objectives and third-party means for achieving objectives. Under third-party objectives, a policymaker may seek: (1) [violent] conflict prevention (also known as preventive diplomacy); (2) conflict management (peacekeeping); (3) conflict settlement (coercive peacemaking); (4) conflict resolution 'writ small' (collaborative peacemaking); and/or (5) conflict transformation (peacebuilding). Under third-party means for achieving objectives, a policymaker may opt for (1) confrontational and/or collaborative means; (2) negative peace and/or positive peace orientations; and (3) track 1 or multi-track actors and processes.

A Comprehensive Mapping of Conflict and Conflict Resolution: A Three Pillar Approach (3PF)[26]

Pillar 2	Pillar 1	Pillar 3
Conflict causes and conditions	**Conflict elements**	**Conflict intervention**
		Third-party objectives
Individual	Parties	[Violent] conflict prevention
Societal	Issues	Conflict management
International	Objectives	Conflict settlement
Global/ecological	Means	Conflict resolution
	Preferred conflict-handling orientations	Conflict transformation
	Conflict environment	*Third-party means for achieving goals*
		Confrontational and/or collaborative means
		Negative peace and/or positive peace orientations
		Track 1 or multi-track actors and processes

A major feature of the 3PF is ensuring that gender is an integral part at all levels of analysis delineated across the three pillars. The rationale for a gender analysis is that gender equality is a matter of human rights and social justice and, therefore, central to successful conflict resolution and transformation. A well-established body of research demonstrates that sustainable peace can be achieved and maintained only when both women and men participate *equally,* and "that countries with practices evidencing higher degrees of gender equity tend to resolve disputes

more peacefully. Conversely, those countries experiencing low degrees of gender equity appear to be more prone to violence."[27]

Therefore, "one way to curb some of the societal violence would be to improve the opportunities for women in the economy" because "countries that... [are] more violent are also countries where women are systematically excluded from business opportunities".[28] The private sector generally, and multinational corporations in particular, can play a pivotal role in implementing policies that are not only good for business but promote sustainable peace. They can ensure women's right to work, fair incomes, training, mentoring, non-discrimination, harassment-free workplaces and family-friendly policies.[29]

The 3PF could be used to develop a regional security system for parts of Africa, within the confines of a model developed to prevent the kind of warfare associated with the genocidal implosion of former Yugoslavia during the 1990s. Labelled the 'new European peace and security system' (NEPSS),[30] this applied model comprises the nine tracks of Diamond and McDonald's multi-track framework[31] as the horizontal axis, while local, societal, subregional, regional and global levels of analysis constitute the vertical axis:

The Structure of NEPSS

	Track 1	Track 2	Track 3	Track 4	Track 5	Track 6	Track 7	Track 8	Track 9
Local	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺
Societal	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺
Subregional	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺
Regional	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺
Global	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺	⸺

Regarding the need to prevent a recurrence of violent conflict, one assumption underlying NEPSS is that 'all conflicts are local'. That is, once an early warning system, including a 3PF-based system, indicates that a conflict is developing in any locale, track 1–9 resources – inclusive of the private sector track – from the local to the global levels would be activated in response to the event; if not simultaneously, then over time.

Once all of the details of a NEPSS-type response to a given developing or manifest conflict have been identified and spelled out, researchers would identify potential partners for funding and otherwise participating in the comprehensive peacebuilding intervention.

Conclusion

The core thesis of this discussion is that the private sector (business), working collaboratively with the public (government) and civil society (NGO) sectors, can play a significant role in preventing, resolving and transforming deadly conflict in Africa. Indeed, the relative dominance of bisectoral in lieu of trisectoral multi-track peacemaking and peacebuilding may be a core reason for the documented upsurge in conflict recurrence during the past 10 to 15 years.[32] As indicated earlier, one explanation is that agreements to end violent conflict have failed to address deep-rooted causes, among them poverty and the continuing absence of socio-economic opportunity. This makes the relevance of the private sector to address this deficit in people's lives obvious. Moreover, there is the private sector's own emphasis on corporate social responsibility (CSR), which advocates for trisectoral/trans-sectoral conflict

Members of a sewing circle run by women entrepreneurs pose with garments in the town of Fungurume, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (January 2013).

Women helped by the French cosmetics company L'Occitane work in the production line of their soap making factory in Leo, Burkina Faso (January 2014). L'Occitane has been working with women since the 1980s with the objective of co-development. In 2006, the L'Occitane Foundation chose to build on its partnership with the women of Burkina Faso by focusing its activities on supporting women's entrepreneurship.

prevention through institutions such as The Portland Trust and Business for Peace Foundation.

Building upon these attitudinal and structural changes in the private sector's role in peacebuilding, former United States president Bill Clinton made a clarion call for action to achieve significant global change.[33] His appeal was followed by comments by agents of global change, such as Christine LaGarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund; Bill Gates, founder and chairman of Microsoft and co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; and Mo Ibrahim, founder and chairman of the foundation bearing his name. Ibrahim commented that his and the other narratives highlight the value of working with "the widest possible partnership with businesses, academics, media, women, young people and … governments to advance good governance and leadership among Africa's 52 nations".[34] Clearly, a call for comprehensive peacebuilding in Africa, with business being assigned a leading role.

Playing a significant role in advancing "good governance and leadership among Africa's 54 nations" is not only the right thing for business to do, given the tenets of CSR, but, given the ubiquitous 'bottom line', is also very practical. In this regard, the *Financial Times* has defined Africa as "one of the world's most exciting markets" and, consequently, is working with Bank of America and Merrill Lynch, among

others, to help the continent realise its economic and financial promise.[35] Linking this effort to Africa's fragile states and 'new wars', the *Financial Times* is also working with the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank on 'Business After Conflict: Investing in the New Africa', to encourage conflict-sensitive international business investment in 'Africa's post-conflict states' such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and South Sudan.[36]

Accordingly, the argument advanced in this article does not call for something entirely new, but reflects emerging trends: The private sector is already beginning to invest in fragile, violent, conflict-affected states in Africa and elsewhere. Our contribution has been to reinforce the case for the private sector to continue in this regard and to proffer a conceptual framework, the 3PF. This can enhance prospects for elements of the private sector, locally and globally, and other agents of peacebuilding, to make conflict-sensitive rather than conflict-exacerbating investments in the post-conflict rebuilding of Africa's fragile states. ▲

Dr Dennis J.D. Sandole is a Professor of Conflict Resolution and International Relations at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR), at George Mason University, USA.

Dr Ingrid Staroste is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, and the Women and Gender Studies Programme, at George Mason University, USA.

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DEMYSTIFYING THE WHITE ARMY: NUER ARMED CIVILIANS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE SOUTH SUDANESE CRISIS

BY **INGRID MARIE BREIDLID** AND **MICHAEL J. ARENSEN**

Background[1]

Less than three years after gaining independence, South Sudan faces a new civil war. Since December 2013, over a million people have been displaced and more than 10 000 killed in fighting between the government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), led by former vice president Riek Machar.[2] Political divisions within the ruling party, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), quickly devolved into violent clashes within the army (Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army – SPLA) in the capital Juba, and subsequent army defections. Atrocities committed by government forces against the Nuer in Juba during the same period triggered a mass mobilisation of Nuer civilians in Greater Upper Nile and revenge killings of Dinkas in areas captured by

the SPLM/A-IO. Reinforced by politicised ethnic rhetoric, the brutal targeting of civilians by both sides has since continued, resulting in condemnations from the region and international community.

The involvement of armed civilians in carrying out such atrocities, and their relations with the conventional forces, is poorly understood. In particular, the White Army – Nuer civilian fighters aligned with the opposition – have gained notoriety. Media reports have perpetuated popular narratives of the White Army as a ferocious, tough and brutal group of uncontrollable Nuer youth. This article intends to demystify

Above: The White Army membership includes young Nuer cattle-herders who are armed and given the responsibility to defend the village.

Media reports have perpetuated popular narratives of the White Army as a ferocious, tough and brutal group of uncontrollable Nuer youth.

the White Army by examining its history, role in Nuer society, structure and cooperation with the SPLM/A-IO. Increased comprehension and engagement with armed community structures, such as the White Army, is necessary to facilitate a durable solution to the current conflict.

Understanding the White Army

The use of the term White Army – or *dec bor* in Nuer – to describe Nuer youth or warriors seems to have originated sporadically during the second civil war. The name is commonly thought to derive from the ash youths use to cover their bodies with, to protect themselves from mosquitos. However, current and former White Army members claim the name is instead based on its opposition to the Black Army – or *dec char,* a Nuer term for trained and uniformed soldiers. While the term White Army has been used for the past 20 years, there is still a lack of understanding regarding its history, structure, leadership and role in the community. The White Army is not a single cohesive force, but comprises Nuer defence groups at various levels in the Greater Upper Nile region. These are organised according to tribal sections and village units, and members, primarily cattle camp youth, are given responsibility to defend the community. Any youth initiated into manhood is expected to participate. Although comprising various age-sets, these initiated boys and men are locally defined as 'youth', with a specific set of privileges and responsibilities in the community.[3] Insecurity and a need for fighters during the second civil war and post-Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) period have

contributed to broaden the age range of youth among Nuer and other rural communities. Boys as young as 10 years of age are initiated in some areas, while men in their late forties continue to constitute part of the White Army. Large-scale revenge attacks, often accompanied by cattle raiding, killings and abductions – as seen during the Murle–Lou Nuer and Jikany Nuer–Lou Nuer conflicts – constitute part of this role.

The White Army continues the traditional mobilisation structures of Nuer communities described by Evans Pritchard in the 1930s. In line with his principles of segmentation and opposition between segments, mobilisation usually takes place at section and subsection levels within larger tribal segments, such as the Lou Nuer and Jikany Nuer.[4] For example, *Mor* and *Gun* (Lou Nuer primary sections) often fight each other, but they also unite against an external enemy, as during large-scale mobilisations against the Jikany Nuer and lowland Murle. On rare occasions, larger tribal segments unite to face a common enemy, as the Jikany and Lou have done in the current conflict. These alliances are extremely fragile and could easily falter in response to the dynamic environment. Importantly, the Nuer youth of Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity do not fight under one command structure, but are mobilised and organised under separate leaders (*kuaar burnam*).

Each unit of organisation within the White Army is, in fact, represented by its own leader, selected by the members. The role of a *kuaar burnam* is to mobilise, organise and lead the men they represent in war, as well as to mediate internal disputes. The *kuaar burnam* therefore hold the dual role of

Boys as young as 10 years of age are initiated into the White Army.

peacemaker and war leader. As the chain of command is very clear from the lowest tribal segment level to the top level (county), communication, mobilisation and coordination within the White Army is very efficient. If a conflict requires mobilisation across counties, an overall leader will be selected from the leaders of the counties involved. In the post-CPA period, the Lou Nuer selected a *kuaar burnam* for Greater Akobo for each major revenge attack against the Murle, and the Jikany and Lou Nuer have selected respective leaders for Upper Nile and Jonglei to lead them in the current war. If leaders are perceived to perform poorly, they can be – and often are – voted out and replaced.

While these mobilisation structures have existed for generations, the political economy of the second civil war and large-scale violence in recent decades have altered leadership structures and tactics. In the course of the previous war, Nuer faction leaders armed youth from their own communities. They manipulated kinship and section identity to mobilise support, which also contributed to increased militarisation and fragmentation of Nuer communities. Moreover, participation in large-scale attacks is no longer confined to cattle camp youth, but also includes educated town youth and members of government security forces. Uninitiated boys are also brought along to observe older age-sets. While revenge and compensation for looted livestock remain primary motivations, other economic and social incentives – such as respect in the community and accumulation of cattle – also play significant roles.

Community defence forces are not unique to Nuer society. In response to threats by rival communities and armed elements, many rural communities formed defence forces during the previous civil wars. The government's failure to provide the rule of law and security in the post-CPA period necessitated the continuation and re-establishment of community defence forces. Multiple attempts by the government to disarm civilians have been largely unsuccessful and, in some cases, even exacerbated violence and negative state-society relations. The government's establishment of village policing throughout Jonglei in February 2013 reinforced a perception that responsibility for security had been delegated to traditional community defence structures.[5]

White Army Versus the Black Army

Distinct from the White Army, Nuer who have defected from the SPLA to the opposition are known as the Black Army. While they cooperate militarily against the government in the current conflict, they have fought in parallel and under different command structures. Members of the White Army claim that they (not professional soldiers), under the command of the overall *kuaar burnam* in Upper Nile, were responsible for capturing Malakal in December 2013. Not only do most youth have their own weapons and extensive experience of warfare during the second civil war and post-CPA period, but their sophisticated mobilisation

and leadership structures enable them to organise and coordinate a large number of fighters very quickly.

To ensure greater control and command, the SPLM/A-IO claims to have been attempting to integrate the White Army into professional military units through training. As during the second civil war, some White Army leaders are given ranks to integrate them further, and overall command is now in the hands of professionals. However, many youth feel more comfortable fighting in traditional structures with people they know, and even some defected soldiers prefer to fight alongside their community members. This should be seen in relation to the tendency among many Nuer commanders to mobilise youth from their own sections in the factional fighting during the previous civil war, and the largely unsuccessful integration of many militias (under the umbrella of the South Sudan Defence Forces) into the SPLA following the 2006 Juba Declaration.

It remains to be seen whether the youth will be further integrated into the opposition forces or if they will continue to fight in parallel. However, even if the White Army should be integrated fully into the military command structure, the officers' ability to exercise greater control or discipline will be questionable. Indeed, the poor human rights record of the SPLA raises the question of whether discipline among professionally trained soldiers is much greater than among civilian fighters. Many SPLA soldiers themselves never received proper training; many atrocities during the current conflict have been committed by professional soldiers on both sides. The distinction between armed civilians and rebels can also become blurred, and will likely become even more so if the conflict is prolonged.

Social Support

Although participation in intercommunal warfare and large-scale attacks in the post-CPA era has been extensive, in many Nuer communities mobilisation and social support for the current conflict appear even more widespread than usual. While participation in the White Army is primarily voluntary, every able-bodied male is expected to take part. Even some women, mainly from the police and prison services, have joined the fighters. Various segments have different roles, from fighting on the frontline to carrying food and water and taking care of the wounded.

In past inter-ethnic conflicts, many older women expressed discontent with the participation of their own youth, because they feared revenge attacks. This time, however, social pressure is stronger, and it is difficult for men to stay behind. In some communities, social sanctions include insulting songs performed by young women.

A young Jikany Nuer woman explained: "If a man wants to stay at home, we cannot trust him. We can even

A rebel commander for the Upper Nile State, General Gathoth Gatkudth (centre), holds a White Army flag as he poses for pictures with Jikany Nuer White Army fighters in Upper Nile State (10 February 2014).

A United Nations peacekeeper stands guard near the scene where about 200 people were killed during an attack in Bentiu, Unity State in South Sudan (20 April 2014).

encourage him to go. But all the youth are going, [...] we need to keep fighting with the Dinka. There is no other way."[6]

Despite this, some men have held back, while others have fled to neighbouring countries with their families. Social pressure may also dissipate owing to war fatigue as the conflict is prolonged. Importantly, while support for the conflict appears widespread in many rural areas, civil society voices across South Sudan have been calling for peace since the outset.

The Power of Nuer Prophets

Spiritual leaders play a significant role in the Nuer worldview.[7] The most significant example is Ngundeng Bong, whose 19th century prophecies continue to influence the Nuer. Many perceive the current crisis as fulfilment of his prophecies. Other Nuer prophets and spiritual leaders played significant roles during the civil war and post-CPA period, and a few are important actors in the current conflict. While the international community primarily engages with political and military leaders in times of crisis, spiritual leaders are too often ignored.

The most influential spiritual leaders are relied on for blessings, through the sacrifice of bulls, and are perceived to protect and direct youth during fighting through visions of the future. They also act in resolving internal disputes, and have on some occasions been instrumental in unifying

rival Nuer sections in the face of a common enemy. Because of their powers, they often enjoy close relations with White Army leaders and youth in general. As elsewhere, the influence of these spiritual leaders waxes and wanes in accordance with the efficacy of their pronouncements.

As stated by a Jikany Nuer student: "Some people respect the rules [of prophet Dak Kueth], but others loot and bring cattle. Those who violated these rules had bad things happening to them."[8]

Ngundeng's original prophecies are constantly reinterpreted to explain historical events as well as to meet current circumstances. Some recent intercommunal wars – for example, the Jikany–Lou Nuer and Lou Nuer–Murle conflicts – are commonly seen as direct outcomes of Ngundeng's prophesies and curses, and many Nuer believe that Ngundeng predicted the second civil war as well as the current conflict. According to popular interpretation of one of his songs, which is believed to prophecise the current conflict, a new leader will rise and the Nuer will ultimately defeat the Dinka. Not surprisingly, Machar has tried to present himself and his rebellion as the fulfilment of these prophecies. Already in 2009, in an effort to increase his prestige, he brought back to South Sudan the original rod of Ngundeng from the United Kingdom. The continued importance and influence of spiritual leaders has also been exploited by political elites and military leaders during and

since the second civil war. In the current conflict, Machar has invoked Nuer spiritual leaders to consolidate power and ensure the continued motivation and participation of youth.

Targeting of Civilians – A 'Game Changer'?

Since the outbreak of the conflict in Juba in December 2013, both parties have committed gruesome atrocities against civilians.[9] The brutal violence that followed the capture of the town of Bentiu by opposition forces in April 2014 has been labelled a 'game changer' by the United Nations.[10] But such extreme violence against civilians is sadly not unprecedented. The second civil war saw a similar targeting of civilians, including murders and rapes of women and children.[11] Around two million people lost their lives and four million were displaced. Atrocities against civilians continued to take place after the CPA in 2005. This has been witnessed in multiple intercommunal conflicts, such as the large-scale violence between Lou Nuer and Murle communities in the period between 2009 and 2013. Armed rebellions and counterinsurgency operations have also seen the brutal targeting of civilians, including the SPLA military operations against George Athor in Pigi in 2010, Peter Gatdet in Mayom in 2011 and David Yau Yau in Pibor in 2013.[12] Grave human rights abuses have occurred during SPLA disarmament campaigns as well – for instance, during the forceful disarmament of the White Army in 2006 and the Murle in 2012.

BUT, IMPORTANTLY, THERE ARE INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES: SOME YOUTH KILL AND LOOT, WHILE OTHERS TRY TO PROTECT THE VULNERABLE

The brutality must be considered in the context of decades of civil war and large-scale violence, as well as the militarisation of civilians and a gradual erosion of fighting ethics. The breakdown of security and the rule of law during the post-CPA era, especially in rural areas, has necessitated the continued militarisation of youth and the use of revenge to provide a sense of justice, including compensation for the loss of lives and property. Civilians have therefore been able to commit atrocities with full impunity, in the name of justice and security, which further entrenches the cycle of violence and undermines community relations for future generations. Limited trauma-healing programmes and the lack of a national reconciliation process until recently have contributed to the transfer of a culture of violence and historical grievances to younger generations. But, importantly, there are individual differences: some youth kill and loot, while others try to protect the vulnerable.

In the ongoing conflict, ethnic rhetoric by political leaders on both sides has further promoted the targeting of civilians and contributed to a cycle of revenge attacks along ethnic lines. However, the warring parties and international community's overemphasis on historical grievances between the Dinka and Nuer disguises the complex relations within and between these groups. It further masks the grievances many civilians hold towards the government and political

The Protection of Civilians (POC) site near Bentiu, in Unity State, South Sudan, houses over 40,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) seeking shelter from armed conflict in the area.

elites. Some alliances across ethnic lines have continued, despite the ongoing violence. Moreover, ethnically targeted killings are not limited to the Nuer and Dinka, but have also been directed against anyone perceived as loyal to opponents – as seen in the killings of members of the Shilluk and Darfuri communities in Malakal and Bentiu respectively. The peace agreement between the Murle, Lou and Jikany Nuer early in 2014, after years of intercommunal violence, also illustrates how pragmatism can take precedence over historical grievances in the current fluid political context.

Implications for Peace Actors

The ability of political elites to control and limit violence against civilians is often assumed, but the current dynamics prove otherwise. Some political leaders and military commanders have reportedly advised the White Army to refrain from looting and committing atrocities against civilians. However, as long as impunity exists for the perpetrators, such appeals are likely to meet deaf ears. At the same time, although some Nuer prophets have created specific rules of warfare and prophesied various curses upon those who violate them, many youth who are actively involved in battles and capturing towns admit to ignoring these rules. The failure to adhere to these rules may also be related to inconsistencies of various prophetic messages:

other prophets encourage revenge. Not surprisingly, youth have tended to adhere to those messages they find best suited for their immediate interests.

For the commander of SPLM/A-IO, Machar, cooperation with the White Army is a double-edged sword. While he likely recognises the risk of the youth committing abuses in his name, he also depends on the youth to fight on his behalf. Their primary motivations are revenge, looting, and other grievances of their kin – not his political cause. Moreover, while the use of ethnic rhetoric increases motivation, it also increases the likelihood of ethnic targeting against civilians. This, of course, has serious implications for any attempt to prevent further atrocities.

SPLM/A-IO military commanders and soldiers are not a homogeneous group, and their grievances and motives may also differ from those of Machar. Bound by kinship and patrimonial networks, control and command over the soldiers lies primarily with individual commanders, not with him. Therefore, the international community's pressure on Machar to end atrocities may not have the desired effect. Judging from history, the current alliances are extremely fragile and fluid, and the risk of an intractable conflict due to fragmentation within the warring parties increases as the conflict is prolonged. The brutal fighting between Nuer factions in Greater Upper Nile during the second civil war illustrates the danger of such a scenario.[13] Forcing Machar's hand in a political settlement without the consensus of the White Army and individual commanders is likely to lead to fragmentation of his forces, and to complicate any political solution.

A DURABLE SOLUTION TO THE CONFLICT WOULD ADDRESS LOCAL GRIEVANCES AND REBUILD RELATIONS AND TRUST BETWEEN THE STATE AND SOCIETY

While the conflict erupted as a result of division within the SPLM, the mass mobilisation in opposition areas illustrates this is not only a political dispute, but also a crisis of governance. Even if a political compromise is reached in Addis Ababa, violence is likely to break out again, unless rural populations perceive any future government as inclusive and see immediate and concrete improvements on the ground in terms of security, justice and development. A durable solution to the conflict would address local grievances and rebuild relations and trust between the state and society. Atrocities carried out by both sides in the current conflict also necessitate changes in the political leadership at the top, to regain legitimacy and confidence in government. ▲

Ingrid Marie Breidlid is a Doctoral Researcher at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). Her PhD thesis focuses on mobilisation and participation of youth in organised violence during the second civil war and post-CPA period in South Sudan.

Michael Arensen is an Independent Researcher and Adviser on conflict and peace issues. He has carried out various field studies among pastoralist youth in South Sudan, as well as advised and managed international NGO peace and reconciliation programmes.

Endnotes
1   The authors conducted separate field studies of Nuer youth/White Army structures in Greater Upper Nile (Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile) before the current conflict. Michael Arensen conducted research (on behalf of Aecom International Development, funded by the United States Agency for International Development) between October 2011 and February 2012, and Ingrid Marie Breidlid conducted research [for the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) project 'Youth and Violence in South Sudan', funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and her PhD, under the PRIO project 'Dynamics of State Failure and Violence', funded by the Norwegian Research Council] in November 2012 to December 2013. After the conflict broke out in December 2013, she conducted interviews with Nuer opposition leaders in Nairobi and with South Sudanese Nuer in the Gambella region of Ethiopia (January to March 2014).

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11 See, for instance, Human Rights Watch/Africa (1994) *Civilian Devastation: Abuses by All Parties in the War in Southern Sudan*. New York: Human Rights Watch.

12 Both George Athor, a former SPLA general, and David Yau Yau took up arms against the government after being defeated in the general elections in 2010. Athor was later killed by the SPLA (December 2011). After a short-lived peace deal in 2011, Yau Yau revived his rebellion in April 2012. In May 2014, he signed a second peace agreement with the government. SPLA general Peter Gatdet defected from the army in March 2011 to form his own movement. Gatdet returned to the government in August 2011, but defected to the SPLM/A-IO in December 2013.

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AGRICULTURE: A KEY INGREDIENT FOR PEACE AND STABILITY IN AFRICA

BY **KIZITO SIKUKA**

Introduction

Agriculture is an engine for socio-economic development in Africa. The sector accounts for about 32% of the continent's gross domestic product (GDP), and more than 65% of its citizens rely directly on this sector for their livelihood.[1] Based on these statistics, it is therefore logical to assume that any improvements in the agricultural sector would significantly contribute towards the realisation of many other developmental priorities for Africa, such as poverty eradication, industrial expansion and increased intraregional trade.

Most importantly, as argued by the African Union (AU) Commission chairperson, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, in one of her speeches to celebrate 2014[2] as the Year of Agriculture and Food Security, agricultural development is critical towards the attainment of Africa's longstanding vision of a united, prosperous and peaceful continent. "If we

continue to have hungry stomachs, unemployed youth and poor citizens, they may end up influencing poverty-induced anger, and fuel more political conflicts in our countries. It is, therefore, imperative that for us to overcome most of these conflicts on our continent, we must invest in agriculture," Dlamini-Zuma said at a regional agricultural conference held in Durban, South Africa in March 2014.[3]

In the same vein, this article argues that Africa can indeed address most of its challenges, including political instability, if its citizens have access to food, as well as means to production including farming inputs such as seeds, fertiliser, credit facilities and land to conduct their

Above: Increasing hunger, poverty and unemployment in Africa will likely influence poverty-induced anger and fuel further political conflicts on the continent.

farming business. The article also highlights some of the challenges and success stories on the African continent, where agriculture has both fuelled some conflicts as well as cultivated peace and prosperity.

Why is Agriculture Important for Africa?

It is not a secret: Africa is now regarded as the fastest-growing continent in the world. Its economy is flourishing, and urbanisation is reaching its peak as more people move into urban areas. Furthermore, the population on the continent is on the increase, and is expected to reach two billion by 2050.[4] However, the most direct consequence of this growth is that Africa now has more mouths to feed. In fact, research shows that food requirements on the continent have grown at the same rate as its population, as diets in urban areas are more diversified and richer.[5] This alone may help to summarise why agriculture is important to Africa. Agriculture is also the major contributor of GDP in most African countries. Furthermore, a number of other sectors, such as tourism and manufacturing, depend heavily on agriculture for their own prosperity. In this regard, it is imperative that Africa invests more in agricultural development to ensure that the continent is not only able to feed itself, but is also able to maintain its growing status in the global market, as six of the world's 10 fastest-growing economies are in Africa.

Cognisant of the fact that agriculture is a critical sector for development, African leaders have agreed to prioritise agricultural development in the continent. The leaders have, for example, declared 2014 as the Year of Agriculture and Food Security, to provide an opportunity for African governments to renew and recommit their support towards agricultural development. Investment in agriculture makes sense, as the sector has a greater capacity than most sectors (such as tourism and trade) to be a lynchpin for socio-economic development, mainly because investment in agriculture would naturally directly benefit the poor people – a significant number of whom are farmers on the continent. And uplifting the livelihood of the majority is the only realistic way that Africa can achieve its longstanding goal of a united, prosperous and peaceful continent.

For example, imagine the profit margins a farmer who has nine dependants could get when key inputs such as seeds and fertiliser are accessed at a cheaper rate – say, at US$150, compared to the US$500 spent each farming season? The margins are very significant, and would, under normal circumstances, allow the farmer to take care of his family – including sending his children to school – as well as increasing yields. An increment in yields would lower food prices, leading to a powerful real income effect, and that will ensure people are able to access food.

AFRICA IS NOW REGARDED AS THE FASTEST-GROWING CONTINENT IN THE WORLD. ITS ECONOMY IS FLOURISHING, AND URBANISATION IS REACHING ITS PEAK AS MORE PEOPLE MOVE INTO URBAN AREAS

However, when farmers cannot make ends meet to feed their families or are not motivated to farm, it is a sign of troubles ahead. This situation generally results in an angry farmer, hungry family and, ultimately, a dejected community. As Dlamini-Zuma rightly points out: "Hungry stomachs, unemployed youth and poor citizens… end up influencing poverty-induced anger, and fuel more political conflicts in our countries."[7] This growing and worrying nexus between food insecurity and instability is now already evident in some parts of the continent – and, if left unchecked, has the

World's ten fastest-growing economies[*6]
Annual average GDP growth,%

2001–2010[+]		2011–2015[‡]	
Angola	**11.1**	China	9.5
China	10.5	India	8.2
Myanmar	10.3	**Ethiopia**	**8.1**
Nigeria	**8.9**	**Mozambique**	**7.7**
Ethiopia	**8.4**	**Tanzania**	**7.2**
Kazakhstan	8.2	Vietnam	7.2
Chad	7.9	**Congo**	**7.0**
Mozambique	**7.9**	**Ghana**	**7.0**
Cambodia	7.7	**Zambia**	**6.9**
Rwanda	**7.6**	**Nigeria**	**6.8**

Sources: *The Economist*; IMF

GDP growth, unweighted annual average,%

Asian countries

African countries

1970s   1980s   1990s   2000s   2011–15[‡]
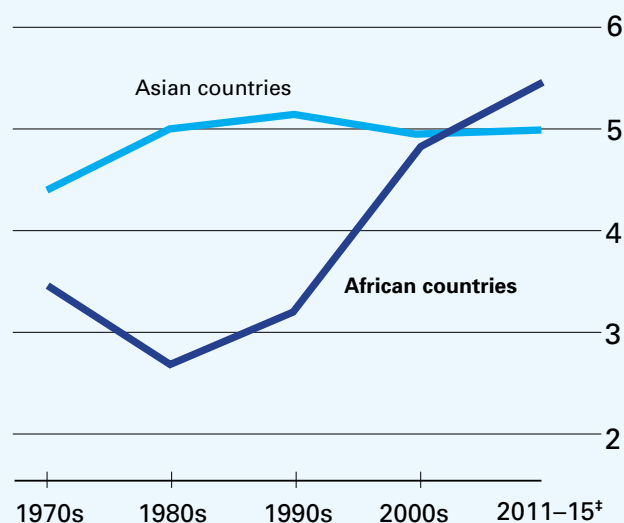
* Excluding countries with less than 10m population and Iraq and Afghanistan [+]2010 estimate [‡]Forecast

Most challenges in Africa, including political instability, can be addressed if citizens have access to food, as well as means to production.

potential to bring families, communities and countries into conflict with each other, thereby further destabilising Africa.

Food Crisis Sparks Riots across Africa

Food insecurity, particularly due to rising food prices and food shortages, have sparked some violent clashes across Africa in recent years. For example, the year 2008 was not a very good one for many African countries such as Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire, as a number of people took to the streets to vent their anger on rising food prices. During the street riots in Cameroon, there was looting in many parts of the capital city, Yaoundé, and the country's major seaport, Douala. In Côte d'Ivoire, many protestors were wounded during several hours of clashes with police, as the police used teargas and batons to disperse protestors who were burning tyres and overturning parked cars. At the height of the demonstration, it is said about 1 500 protestors were chanting "We are hungry" and "Life is too expensive, you are going to kill us".[8]

FAILURE BY THE KAUNDA-LED GOVERN-MENT TO DEAL WITH THE RISING COST OF LIVING AND FOOD SAW HIM LOSE THE 1991 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Two years later, in 2010, a similar spike in food prices also triggered deadly riots in Maputo, Mozambique. What began as a peaceful march in Maputo turned violent when protestors started throwing stones, burning tyres and looting shops – resulting in the police opening fire and, in

the process, killing and injuring a score of protestors. Other countries that have experienced riots caused by food crises include Algeria, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Morocco, Senegal and Zimbabwe. In most of these riots, the protestors were led by the youth, who make up the majority of the population yet are the worst affected by unemployment. As a result, they blame unemployment and a lack of opportunities for driving them into "entrepreneurial criminality" such as riots and looting.

Zambian president Michael Sata has since urged Africa to address the food crisis by making sure its citizens get food at cheaper rates. This is a possibility only if the agricultural sector is performing well. He said a failure to curb high food prices would cause unrest in most countries, and could led to the unconstitutional change of governments. "When people rioted during Kenneth Kaunda's [Zambia's founding president] time, it's the food riots that caused him to be removed from power. I don't want food riots," Sata said in a meeting with millers early this year.[9] Failure by the Kaunda-led government to deal with the rising cost of living and food saw him lose the 1991 presidential elections. Kaunda had served as president since 1964 when Zambia gained its independence.

In addition to the riots, the food crisis in Africa has also seen some families forced to migrate in search of food. For example, thousands of Somalis have fled to seek refuge in neighbouring countries such as Ethiopia and Kenya. In some cases, the migration has escalated the crisis, with competition for scarce water in refugee camps and scarce land among the locals. Another key feature of the food crisis has been the selling of livestock, once considered an asset, at

A Zimbabwean man examines his maize in a peri-urban suburb of Mabvuku in Harare (10 April 2014). The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) recently announced that 2.2 million locals could be impacted by food insecurity caused by a severe drought and resulting in poor harvests.

lower prices. In other cases, livestock is exchanged for food items such as a few bags of maize.

What can Africa Do to Promote Agricultural Development?

The task of turning Africa into a global player that is able not only to feed itself but the rest of the world is not an easy one. However, it is achievable. So, the question for Africa is: what should the continent do to promote agricultural development? Various measures have been made available to Africa to promote agricultural development. These include improving access to cheaper farming inputs, including seeds and fertiliser, as well as credit facilities and extension services. Such support will encourage farmers to grow more crops, thus increasing yields and making sure that there is enough food for everyone.

Other strategies include enhancing the capacity for the dissemination of research technologies to farmers, particularly smallholder farmers. Access to such information is critical for planning purposes, especially when farmers want to diversify into new crops or livestock. Infrastructure development, such as the transport network and storage facilities, also needs an action plan so that agricultural produce can move smoothly from one place to another. Storage facilities are critical as they allow farmers to store their harvest for use in poor seasons. According to the Food

Agriculture Organization (FAO), post-harvest crop losses are estimated to be as high as 40% in Africa. Furthermore, there is a need for Africa to invest in irrigation, so that the continent can be farmed all year round and not depend on climatic conditions. The percentage of arable land in Africa that is irrigated is less than 10%, yet the continent holds more than half of the world's arable land.[10]

The new executive secretary of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax, has weighed in, saying that Africa could revolutionise its agricultural sector if farmers were accorded all the necessary support, since farmers are at the centre of Africa's transformation agenda. She argues that while food production can be increased by increasing the area of land to be used for agriculture, this was not a viable option. "The most desirable and sustainable option before us is to increase productivity so that more food can be produced per unit area of land," Tax said.[11]

Most of these measures to boost agricultural production in Africa are already contained in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), which was formulated in 2003 by African leaders to encourage countries to reach a higher path of economic growth through agriculture-led development. Under this continent-wide programme, African governments made a commitment to allocate at least 10% of their national budgets to the

agricultural sector each year. Ultimately, this ambitious and broad vision for agricultural reform in Africa aspires for an average annual growth rate of 6% in agriculture.[12]

From only one country in 2009, more than 40 African countries have now signed the CAADP and are actively engaged in implementing the CAADP at different levels. For countries to access international funding such as the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), they must sign a CAADP compact. This development has had the positive effect of making African countries approach agricultural development more strategically, thus raising agriculture and food security issues as national priorities. For example, most countries have also moved towards establishing their own national and food security investment plans to spur agricultural growth.

AFRICA HAS ALL THE NECESSARY INPUTS FOR A FLOURISHING FARMING REGION INCLUDING FERTILE SOIL, A FAVOURABLE CLIMATE AND AFFLUENT WATER BASINS

Furthermore, implementation of the CAADP has seen agricultural production in Africa steadily increase in the past few years, as governments improve budgetary allocation to agriculture. This is according to a new report, *Agriculture in Africa: Transformation and Outlook*,[13] released in March 2014. The major drivers for this increase include improved access to local markets for farmers as well as the existence of a vibrant transport network to move produce from one place to another.

While African countries have made steady progress in implementing the CAADP, the challenge is for this momentum to be maintained to ensure continued improvement. Africa has all the necessary inputs for a flourishing farming region including fertile soil, a favourable climate and affluent water basins. As such, there is need for agricultural development to be accorded all the necessary political priority and support. Moreover, agricultural development should be aimed at achieving food security before achieving socio-economic development. Such an approach would ensure that measures are implemented over the long term and will not simply be superficial, unsustainable approaches.

From Importer to Exporter

The success story of some African countries' turnaround from being food-deficit countries to those producing surplus grain demonstrates that the correct agricultural policies are key to boosting production and improving food security on the continent. For example, in the 2007/08 farming season, maize production in Malawi trebled from about 1.2 million tonnes to 3.4 million tonnes, after the country introduced a raft of measures to support farmers in their production. This saved the country an annual budget of more than US$120 million that it had spent importing food.[14]

Under the Farm Input Subsidy Programme introduced in 2004, the Malawian government gave subsidy vouchers – at about one-third of the normal cost – to smallholder

farmers to buy fertiliser and seeds. A total of 1.7 million farm households were targeted each year by the programme. As expected, yields improved significantly. The country witnessed a decline in food prices, giving more citizens access to food, particularly maize, which is a staple food. The sudden increase in production also enabled Malawi to export surplus grain to neighbouring countries such as Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.
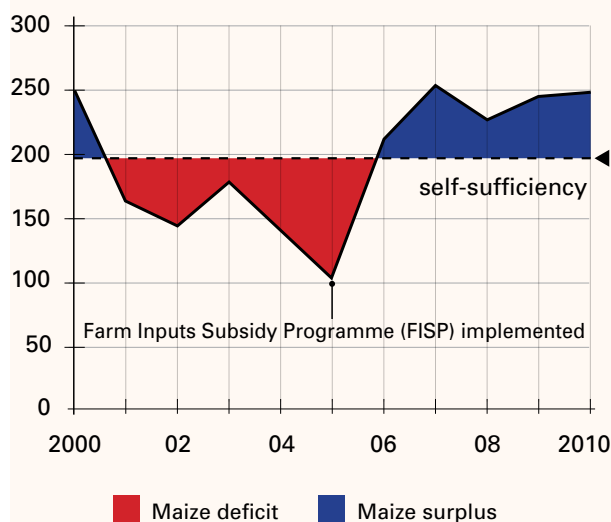

Malawi Farm Input Subsidy Programme Cost and Impact[15]
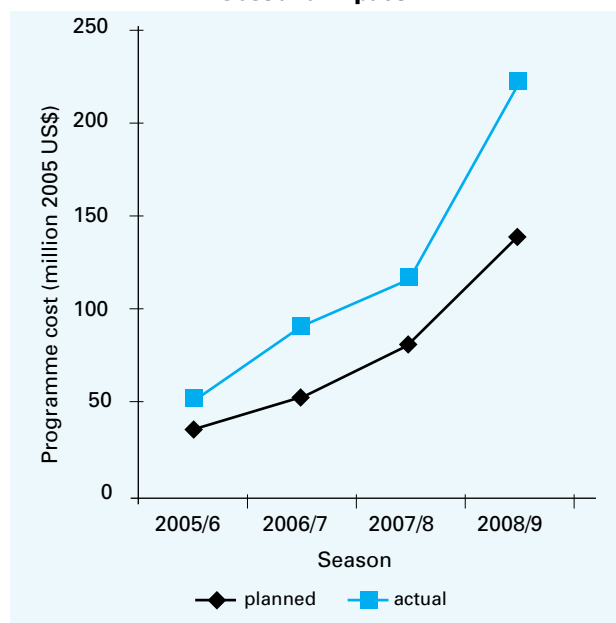
Source: Dorward and Chirwa (2009)

Contributed to maize self-sufficiency
Per capita maize production, kg, 2000–2010

Other countries are using information communication and technology (ICT) to promote agricultural development in Africa. The use of ICT including radio, mobile telephones, Internet and social media has allowed for the exchange and

GALLO IMAGES/REUTERS

Under the Farm Input Subsidy Programme in Malawi, smallholder farmers received subsidy vouchers from the government to buy fertiliser and seeds. Yields improved significantly, with a decline in food prices and more citizens had access to food, particularly maize. The increase in production also enabled Malawi to export the surplus to neighbouring countries.

sharing of information about practices and market prices for agricultural products. In Kenya, for example, the country has established *Maarifa* centres (Kiswahili for 'knowledge') that serve as valuable information hubs in remote areas, providing farmers and pastoralists with information on new agriculture and animal husbandry technologies and promoting their adoption, and thereby improving the livelihoods of poor communities.

A typical *Maarifa* centre contains a small library of publications, videos and computers with broadband Internet connectivity. Each *Maarifa* centre is managed by a field officer with interest and training in the information management of agriculture.[16] Access to information has enhanced the capacity of farmers to prepare and manage their crops. The farmers now also know more about the different markets available for their crops, including the right prices for their produce.

Conclusion

Feeding two billion people by 2050 is the challenge for Africa. Agricultural development is every person's business. All stakeholders – including political leaders, the private sector, farmers, manufacturers, researchers and academia – need to come together and address the challenges affecting Africa's efforts to fully unlock and exploit its potential. The potential for Africa to feed itself and become a global player in the food market exists.

The benefits for improved production are numerous, as access to food has become the decisive factor in consolidating peace and stability throughout the world. In fact, there are very few countries in the world that have achieved rapid economic growth without prior or accompanying growth in agriculture. Thus, improvements in agriculture can be a powerful engine for economic development and poverty reduction. Agriculture is also a critical sector that can help Africa absorb its expanding workforce, which is mainly made up of youth and women. ▲

Kizito Sikuka is a Journalist who has written widely on developmental issues. He is currently a Researcher/ Writer with the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC).

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LOCAL PEACE COMMITTEES: BUILDING SOCIAL COHESION AND RESILIENCE WITHIN THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR PEACE FRAMEWORK

BY **WILLIAM TSUMA, CECILE PENTORI AND MOE MASHIKO**[1]

Introduction

From *The Future We Want* [2] (the outcomes of the Rio+20 Summit), the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States and the post-2015 agenda consultative process,[3] development priorities are converging towards the promotion of an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for both present and future generations.[4] However, with over 1.5 billion people around the world living in communities affected by war, violence or high levels of crime, there is recognition that no fragile state or country affected by conflict is likely to achieve any of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets by 2015.[5] The post-2015 agenda, therefore, puts sustainable development at the core of any initiatives, while acknowledging the importance of statebuilding and peacebuilding by proposing specific goals.[6]

It is indeed widely understood that conflicts can exacerbate poverty, put development achievements at risk, reverse economic growth and lead to human suffering.[7] Building the resilience of societies to disasters and conflict implies strengthening both national and community's capacities to address potential causes of tensions (both natural and man-made, socio-economic, political and ethnic) and to develop locally owned mechanisms to cope with external and internal shocks. One of the key avenues

Above: A local peace committee is a structure formed at the level of a district, municipality, town or village to encourage and facilitate joint, inclusive peacemaking and peacebuilding processes within its own context.

Local peace committees are based on inclusivity, and are established to promote dialogue and mutual understanding, and to create constructive problem-solving and joint action to prevent violence.

identified for building resilience and social cohesion is the strengthening of Infrastructures for Peace (I4P). I4Ps are defined as a "network of interdependent systems, mechanisms, structures, resources, values and skills held by government, civil society and community institutions that promote dialogue and consultation; prevent conflict and enable peaceful mediation when violence occurs in a society".[8]

There is, therefore, a growing interest in the notion of I4P as a useful strategy for countries to deal adequately with ongoing and potential violent conflicts,[9] which continue to affect the capacities of nations to cope and recover. While there is not a one-size-fits-all solution, pre-existing mechanisms[10] – especially local peace committees (LPCs) – have emerged as critical tools for building cohesion, while also strengthening the resilience of communities in terms of their ability to anticipate, prevent and, in some cases, recover from conflicts.

This article discusses the roles that LPCs could play within the broader social cohesion and resilience-building framework. Supported by broadly identified case studies, the article first unpacks the concept of LPCs. This is followed by three specific functions that LPCs could play if anchored within the I4P framework. Finally, key conclusions and recommendations for policy and practice are presented at the end of the article.

Local Peace Committees Overview

The designation of LPC is an umbrella title that covers various initiatives under different names (for example, district peace advisory councils, district multiparty liaison committees, village peace and development committees or zones of peace). In the available literature on the subject, an LPC may be defined as a "generic name for committees or other structures formed at the level of a district, municipality, town or village with the aim to encourage and facilitate joint, inclusive peacemaking and peacebuilding processes within its own context".[11] LPCs are based on inclusivity, and are established to promote dialogue and mutual understanding, and to create constructive problem-solving and joint action to prevent violence.[12]

As reflected in the literature on the subject, LPCs can be divided into two main categories. Formal LPCs receive formal state recognition, as they are established through a national peace accord (for example, in South Africa, Macedonia and Northern Ireland), by legislation (for example, in Ghana and Nepal), or by a statutory body as part of its formal mandate (for example, the Malawi Electoral Committee and the Sierra Leone Political Parties Registration Commission). These LPCs tend to be part of a national infrastructure for peace, with a mandate provided by the national government.[13] By contrast, informal LPCs are established by civil society participants and are not formally recognised by the state. They are generally the products of locally facilitated processes and more representative of a 'bottom-up' approach. They may focus on the more general objective of preventing violence and promoting peace (for example, in Burundi, Sri Lanka and Liberia) or may be established to focus on a particular issue (for example, in Kenya, a group of women established a peace committee to stop the violent conflict between different clans of Kenyan Somalis in the district of Wajir, in the Northeast region). In countries such as the Democratic

Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Afghanistan, hundreds of informal peace committees coexist.

In addition, the rationale behind the creation of LPCs is context-specific. In South Africa, for example, LPCs were established in 1992–1994 as an imperfect bridge to help facilitate the transition from an apartheid regime to a democracy, because the national institutions were unable to find non-violent solutions to the intergroup conflicts.[14] In Ghana, the process was not linked to a crisis of governance, but rather linked to community-based and inter-ethnic conflicts emerging from the succession of the chieftain's throne in the northern part of the country. In Nepal, insufficient attention to securing peace at a local level was seen as a threat to the sustainability of the peace process, thus calling for the establishment of LPCs.

Local Peace Committees: Anchoring a Resilience and Social Cohesion Function

Having discussed the diversity in terms of the origin and establishment of LPCs, this section seeks to proffer strategic functions that they can play within the resilience-building and social cohesion framework. These are reviewed from three different angles: the extent to which LPCs influence or shape national peace policies, LPCs as the representatives of local needs and concerns, and LPCs as vehicles for diffusing community tensions and supporting early warning and rapid response efforts.

LPCs vis-à-vis the National Government and Priority

The nature of the mandate given to LPCs has a crucial impact on determining their operation, including the extent to which they can influence and shape national peace policies, recognising that in general, formal LPCs are more likely to exert influence on national priorities.[15] There is a common understanding that local conflict systems are invariably caused and driven by the same factors that determine the national conflict system.[16] Therefore, tackling the root causes of the conflict at a local level is critical to prevent threats to the sustainability of the country as a whole. Formal LPCs, through increased access to national resources and formal communication channels with policymakers, can avoid "political stumbling-blocks",[17] which give them competitive leverage to influence the national policy. However, in turn, this may limit the degree of local ownership. In South Africa, for example, the composition of LPCs was chosen by the regional peace committees, and was therefore perceived as imposed from above.[18]

THEREFORE, TACKLING THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT AT A LOCAL LEVEL IS CRITICAL TO PREVENT THREATS TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE

On the other hand, informal LPCs established by civil society participants to debilitate conflict are generally the product of locally facilitated processes, whose strength lies in local ownership but may lack the clout to influence political leaders or national peace policies.[19] This is largely

Informal peace committees usually include elders, community leaders, traditional leaders and representatives of local authorities.

In Kenya, various local peace committees implemented early warning and response initiatives during the 2013 election period. These measures included training volunteer monitors and providing them with cellphones to ensure rapid reporting of injustice and violence.

due to the lack of formal communication and accountability channels with national-level authorities.[20] For instance, in the DRC and Afghanistan, LPCs were not only unable to influence the national peace process, but also failed to absorb massive violence at a local level because they were unprepared and susceptible to the deteriorating situation in the absence of former communication links vis-à-vis the national government.[21]

RATHER, THE EMPHASIS MUST BE PLACED ON WAYS TO CREATE A SYSTEM THAT BRIDGES THE GAP AND LEVERAGES THE STRENGTH OF THE RESPECTIVE SYSTEMS

Despite some differences, however, formal and informal LPCs should not be regarded as two separate entities. Rather, the emphasis must be placed on ways to create a system that bridges the gap and leverages the strength of the respective systems. The "ideal situation", according to Odendaal and Olivier, is to have a nationally negotiated agreement to implement LPCs with minimum guidelines but sufficient resources and support.[22] This is to ensure that national policies interface with local priorities, while at the same time deriving their strength from specific community needs. In this regard, the issues of focusing on national priorities and respecting local ownership are actually two sides of the same coin. It is strengthened national priorities, informed by strong ownership, that can effectively address the needs of

local communities, while at the same time reinforcing policy priorities at the national level.

LPCs as Representatives of Local Needs and Concerns

The extent to which LPCs represent the needs and concerns of their respective communities is highly context-specific and depends on their mandate, structure and external relations with key stakeholders. In general, though, informal and civil society-based LPCs appear to be less indebted to political and government actors, and are more embedded in local initiatives and local ownership than the formal LPCs. In fact, some scholars note that local initiatives and local ownership are the priceless ingredients of any peacebuilding process. Odendaal and Olivier argue, for example, that "[p]eacebuilding is not about the imposition of 'solutions', it is about the creation of opportunities. The challenge is to identify and nurture the political, economic, and social space, within which indigenous actors can identify, develop, and employ the resources necessary to build a peaceful, prosperous, and just society."[23] Local peacebuilding initiatives that rely on the initiative and commitment of local actors tend to be closer to this ideal than processes that have been designed at national level. In this regard, the composition of informal LPCs – which tend to include elders, community leaders, traditional leaders and representatives of local authorities, while generally excluding women and youth – can be seen as a direct reflection of a community's power structure. Such community-based representation provides an interface between the more traditional approaches to dispute resolution and the modern structures for governance. It can also be argued that since
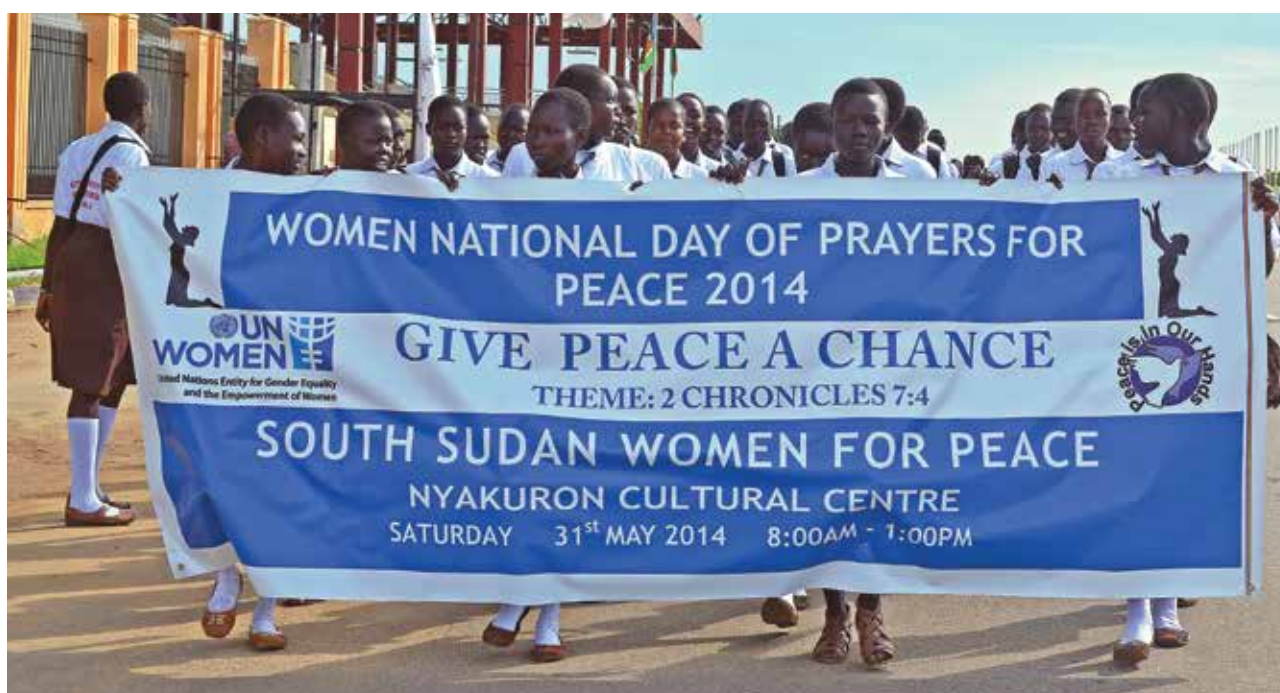
If peace committees are to be a genuine community mechanism for strengthening the resilience of all, then more effort must be made to include the wider participation of all community members, particularly women and the youth.

these LPCs are composed of volunteers, their members tend to be more committed and trusted by the communities.

On the other hand, only few civil society-based LPCs have been established solely by the efforts of a local community and without being reliant on external support. There are exceptions – such as the community of Mpumalanga in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, which negotiated its own peace accord during the late 1980s while the rest of the region was caught up in a vicious cycle of violence[24] – but generally an NGO plays a critical role in determining the success of informal LPCs' activities. Consequently, at least part of the mandate to establish LPCs, as well as the commitment to their sustainability, is located outside the local community, which often translates into a dependence on donors through NGOs.[25] This raises issues around the sustainability and stability of LPCs, due to possible shifts in donors' focus and priorities and, ultimately, on their accountability to the community.[26] For example, in Kenya and Liberia, NGOs paying 'sitting fees' have had a negative impact on the moral values of LPCs, by destroying the spirit of volunteerism and reducing the willingness to engage in community service.[27] Once the funding does not materialise, members can also decide to withdraw from the LPCs.

LPCs as Vehicles for Diffusing Community Tensions and Strengthening Early Warning and Early Response Efforts

Resilience-building, understood as a transformative process drawing on the innate strength of individuals, communities and institutions to prevent, mitigate the impacts of and learn from the experience of the conflict (whether natural or manmade),[28] is a crucial part of any peacebuilding process. LPCs, by their nature of being embedded at a community level, can be described as a vehicle or channel to foster resilience-building at the community level through a number of ways.

First, LPCs foster social cohesion by being the glue that holds people together and links individuals to a broader social community through a sense of belonging, participation, inclusion, recognition and legitimacy, which can build resilience against future conflict. LPCs can foster social cohesion by providing a space for multi-stakeholder dialogue within the community, where important issues are discussed, with the objective to diffuse tensions, address bottlenecks and reach consensus. In Macedonia, for example, the creation of LPCs enabled the establishment of a local level communication channel between formally divided ethnic communities, in a context where almost no constructive political dialogue existed previously.

In this regard, LPCs also contribute to the overall local peacebuilding process, with the potential of resolving underlying issues that feed tensions and by building community cohesion and resilience to mitigate and prevent future conflict. LPCs can potentially foster local peace agreements, facilitate reconciliation and mediate ongoing or new disputes through joint monitoring, planning and negotiations – as seen in Sierra Leone at the end of the civil war. Thus, LPCs, when given appropriate resources and guidance, have the potential to address injustices by removing the root causes of conflict, reconciling relationships, creating community-based conflict resolution

mechanisms and contributing to the sustainability of peace and development in the country as a whole.

Last, LPCs provide an avenue to integrate conflict-sensitive approaches to community development, which can help manage the complexities of rapid change, mitigate internal tensions and handle conflict in ways that avert violence and prevent disaster risks.[29] Early warning and early response lies at the heart of community resilience-building, as it strengthens the capacity of the communities to prevent and manage potential conflict, violence and risks. For instance, in Kenya, various LPCs implemented their early warning and early response initiatives during the 2013 election period. These measures included training volunteer citizen monitors, providing them with cellphones and creating local call-in centres to ensure rapid warning and responses in case of any reported injustices and violence. LPCs are not a panacea for early warning and early response, but this is a critical area that deserves more attention and resources to realise and translate LPCs' extensive local knowledge and network into the prevention of future conflict.

Conclusions: Reflections and Policy Recommendations

While acknowledging the crucial role of LPCs in building social cohesion and resilience, many challenges remain to be addressed. As illustrated in this article, a balance in obtaining sound external support without undermining local ownership is critical for LPCs to fully realise their capacity. In a similar vein, a deliberate effort to include the wider participation of community members – particularly women and the youth – is necessary to provide a genuine community representative mechanism for strengthening the resilience of all. Situating the role of LPCs in the broader I4P framework is also not an easy task, as their mandates and functions span from local referral platforms to a major cornerstone of the national peace architecture, and there are overlapping roles with other existing mechanisms such as traditional conflict resolution mechanisms (TCRMs) and modern justice mechanisms.

It is therefore important to have clarity on the role of LPCs, notably for development partners to significantly and efficiently anchor their capacity-building support. Practical recommendations include, but are not limited to, the training of community mediators and facilitators within LPCs; promoting exchange visits; and increasing linkages with national structures such as national peace and reconciliation commissions, local authorities and responsible departments within the government. ⓐ

Dr William Tsuma is a Dialogue Advisor at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Zimbabwe, where he provides technical and advisory support to the integrated and collaborative Peacebuilding Programme.

Cecile Pentori is a Development and Peacebuilding Practitioner working in UNDP Zimbabwe's Governance Unit.

Moe Mashiko is a Peacebuilding Officer at UNDP Zimbabwe.

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1   This article represents the views of the authors alone and not those of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Zimbabwe.

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WHY BOKO HARAM KIDNAPS WOMEN AND YOUNG GIRLS IN NORTH-EASTERN NIGERIA

BY **BENJAMIN MAIANGWA** AND **DANIEL AGBIBOA**

Introduction

Since its re-emergence in 2010, Nigeria's Islamist group Boko Haram (meaning 'Western education is sinful') has been unleashing a systematic campaign of bombings, kidnappings and drive-by shootings across much of north-eastern Nigeria. The group, whose ultimate aim is to Islamise Nigeria, is convinced that secular education (*boko*) and Westernised elites (*yan boko*) are the twin problems of the Nigerian state. By its own definition, Boko Haram claims to be Salafist, devoted to "an austere and fundamentalist interpretation of early Islam. It is also jihadist, indicating a commitment to actively promote its cause."[1] The group's founder, Mohammed Yusuf, noted before the uprising of 2009 that: "We are for jihad, and our jihad is intended to make us [Muslims] return to the original state of Islam."[2] Boko Haram also espouses an ultra-Salafi ideology that regards women as inferior to men and considers Christian women, in particular, as "members of an infidel outcast".[3] Attacks by Boko Haram on schools in north-eastern Nigeria have been rampant.[4] In July 2013, members of the group stormed a boarding school in Yobe State and set 29 students and one teacher alight.[5] In 2012, the group distributed pamphlets and videos and delivered sermons throughout northern Nigeria, calling for girls to be denied modern education and promising to abduct "infidel women as slaves".[6] In March 2014, about 85 secondary schools were closed and over 120 000 students were sent home by the Borno State government, following increasing attacks on schools by Boko Haram.[7] On the night of 14–15 April 2014, Boko Haram gained worldwide publicity and social media activism (through the #BringBackOurGirls campaign) when it kidnapped over 200 schoolgirls sitting for their final exams in the town of Chibok in Borno State. The Nigerian government's inertia to take any action in response to the Chibok abductions, combined with the confusion over the actual number of girls kidnapped, drew widespread local and international condemnation.

Drawing insights from Africa and beyond, this article critically examines the disturbing trend of Boko Haram's relentless attacks against women and young girls in north-eastern Nigeria. The ramifications of these attacks on the right to education of women and young girls in northern

Above: Following Boko Haram's abduction of more than 200 girls from Chibok the #BringBackOurGirls campaign went viral on social media and inspired an unprecedented local and global outrage.

Nigeria, as well as the far-reaching impact on their physical and psychosocial well-being, is assessed.

Boko Haram's Attacks against Women and Young Girls

As a result of the setback it suffered from the 2009 uprising, especially the extrajudicial killing of its leader Mohammed Yusuf while under police custody, Boko Haram re-emerged from a one-year retreat in 2010 with an expanded list of enemies – including secular schools, churches, mosques, media houses, communication centres, cinemas, marketplaces, universities and the United Nations (UN) headquarters in Abuja. While the group has continued to attack this wide range of targets, in recent times it has modified its tactics and adopted kidnapping (of women and young girls) as a strategy, *à la* Al-Shabaab in the Horn of Africa and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

Boko Haram's kidnapping of women and children may be seen as a reaction to similar tactics by the Nigerian state.[8] From December 2011, the Nigerian police began to detain the wives and children of militant leaders – possibly to force Boko Haram to the negotiation table. Among over 100 Boko Haram family members arrested were relatives of Boko Haram's leader, Abubakar Shekau.[9] In January 2012, the Boko Haram leader warned that his group would begin to kidnap the wives of government officials in response to the government clampdown and arrest of the wives of group members: "[S]ince you are now holding our women, just wait and see what will happen to your own women… to your own wives according to Sharia law."[10]

IN AN HOUR-LONG VIDEO RELEASED ON 5 MAY 2014, THE BOKO HARAM LEADER THREATENED THAT HE WOULD SELL THE CHIBOK GIRLS IN THE MARKET AS SLAVES AND WIVES

So far, the most widely publicised kidnapping operation led by Boko Haram was the abduction of over 200 girls from Chibok.[11] In an hour-long video released on 5 May 2014, the Boko Haram leader threatened that he would sell the Chibok girls in the market as slaves and wives.[12] In other video footage released by the group on 12 May 2014, about 130 of the kidnapped girls were shown "dressed in conservative Muslim attire in an unidentified rural location".[13] Beyond the threats to sell the girls off as wives and slaves, the Boko Haram leader also demonstrated a 'willingness' to negotiate the release of the girls with the Nigerian state, under the strict conditions that dozens of its militants held in Nigeria's prisons are released.

Initially, the government of Goodluck Jonathan was very slow in responding to the Chibok kidnappings, until the #BringBackOurGirls campaign went viral on social media and inspired an unprecedented local and global outrage that forced the government to seek regional assistance and welcome international support from the

A newspaper front page headline and article reports that Boko Haram militants have kidnapped up to 20 women from nomadic settlements in Nigeria's northeast, close to where the group abducted more than 200 schoolgirls just two months previously (10 June 2014).

United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), France, Canada, Israel and China. The US has already sent drones and manned reconnaissance planes over the country as well as neighbouring Chad and Niger, in an effort to locate the girls. British, French and Israeli teams have also been providing specialist and technical assistance on the ground.[14] Nonetheless, as at the time of writing, the schoolgirls are yet to be found. More worrisome is the fact that Boko Haram has continued its rampage against women and young girls with audacity, reckless abandon and impunity.

Shortly after the Chibok incident, Boko Haram is believed to have kidnapped 20 more girls from a village called Garkin Fulani.[15] More so, on 5 May 2014, suspected Boko Haram militants kidnapped at least eight girls from two villages near Chibok.[16] It is not yet clear whether the kidnapped women and young girls have been subjected to sexual violence, maimed, killed or even recruited into the Boko Haram camp. However, there is hard evidence to support the fact that Boko Haram has killed civilians, raped women, stolen goods and money from traders (mostly women), forced young girls to enter marriages and converted several Christian girls and women to Islam.[17]

Meanwhile, Barrister Aisha Wakil (fondly called Mama Boko Haram), a long-time friend of Boko Haram, claims that she has spoken with the group regarding the situation of the Chibok schoolgirls. According to her, Boko Haram confirmed that most of the girls are well, but that some of them have fallen sick. Wakil also claims that the group

confided in her that it is ready to release the girls, if 70 of its imprisoned members are released. She added that Boko Haram also wants to be given amnesty, rehabilitated and allowed to return home.[18] Whatever the validity of Wakil's testimony, few are convinced that the group is actually willing or even ready to give up on its demands for the implementation of nationwide Sharia law and the eradication of Western civilization in Nigeria. Boko Haram's mission statement clearly indicates that "we will never accept any system of government apart from the one stipulated by Islam because that is the only way that Muslims can be liberated".[19]

Similar Trends: Insights from Africa and Beyond

Not infrequently, wherever you have military activity, you also have "a shadow sphere of coercive sexual relations and sex economies under duress".[20] While military fighters – mostly young men – may buy into their group's ideology and hierarchy, "it remains incredibly difficult to keep them in the bush, living a life of violence and insecurity without access to sex, women, and the social trappings of manhood."[21] As such, women and girls fulfil a crucial military, social and logistical role. In Central Africa, for example, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has abducted 'wives' for its commanders in raids spanning almost three decades.

FOR THE REBELS, SEXUAL VIOLENCE BECAME A WEAPON TO BE USED AGAINST THE CIVILIAN POPULATIONS, AS A DEMONSTRATION OF ITS POWER AND IMPUNITY

The case of Sierra Leone can offer us some insights into what the Chibok girls might be experiencing, possibly in Sambisa Forest along the border between Borno State and Cameroon. During the course of Sierra Leone's protracted conflict from 1991 to 2001, countless atrocities were committed, with civilians being the primary targets. In particular, 'fine girls' ('Operation Fine Girl') were vulnerable to kidnappings and violence during the war. The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), the Civil Defence Forces (CDF), the Sierra Leone Army (SLA), the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) forces and the Westside Boys "regularly kidnapped girls and young women, forcing them into sexual servitude for the forces, or into marriage with commanders. Women, young and old, were beaten, mutilated, raped, and killed by child soldiers and their adult commanders… For the rebels, sexual violence became a weapon to be used against the civilian populations, as a demonstration of its power and impunity."[22]

A study by Denov and Maclure captures the ordeals of captured girls who survived the Sierra Leonean war. One interviewee describes the physical consequences of being repeatedly raped at a young age:

The more senior men had the power to say "this [girl] is mine, this one is mine." After they captured
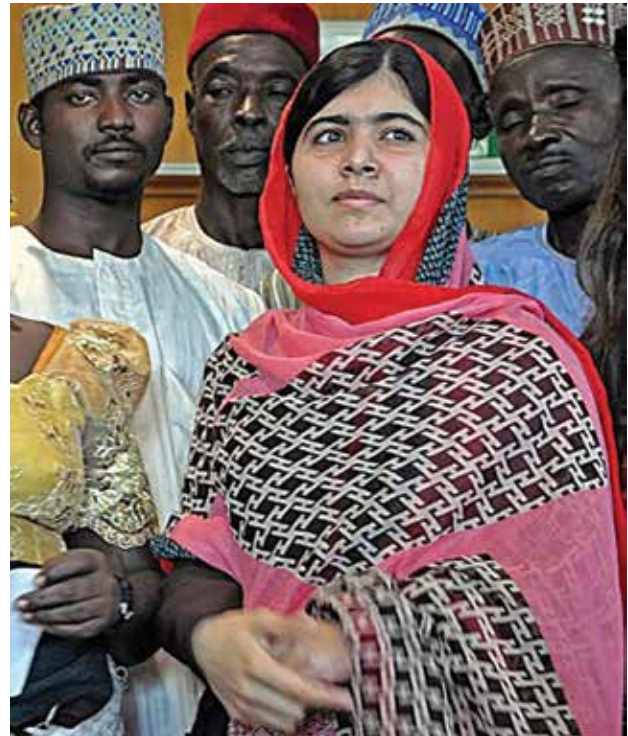
Malala Yousafzai, the young Pakistani campaigner for girls' education rights who survived being shot in the head by the Taliban in 2012, meets with the families of the Nigerian schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram militants (13 July 2014).

women, they would rape them. I was raped the moment they captured me at 12 years old… and I bled and bled … I could not walk. The man who raped me later carried me on his back.[23]

Sexual violence aside, many girls were coerced into becoming the sexual 'property' of specific males in the group (this sometimes offered some modicum of protection). This phenomenon was commonly known as 'bush marriages' or 'AK-47 marriages'.[24] As one abducted girl recalls:

I was married in the bush… It was more advisable to have a husband than to be single. Women and girls were seeking [the attention of] men – especially strong ones for protection from [frequent] sexual harassment.[25]

If Nigeria's Boko Haram is anything like these established rebel groups, then the chances that they will continue to capture girls and women to entrench their camps are very high. Moreover, Boko Haram's repugnance to secular education – and, in particular, the education of the girl-child – is similar to the practice of other militant Islamist groups in Pakistan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Mali and Algeria. A salutary reminder is the case of Malala Yousafzai, the young Pakistani girl who, in 2012, survived a shot in the head by the Taliban for upholding girls' right to education in Islam. It is also reported from Pakistan that an extremist group called Tanzeem-ul-Islami-ul-Furqan,

Women and children gather into a car's trunk as villagers flee the village of Jakana in Borno State, Nigeria following attacks by Boko Haram militants (6 March 2014).

founded in 2014, has been making threats against educating girls in the Panjgur district of Balochistan. Like Boko Haram, Tanzeem-ul-Islami-ul-Furqan has issued letters to all private schools in the district, warning them to shut down girls' schools or face the group's wrath.[26] After a bus conveying secondary school girls was attacked by the Pakistani terrorist group in Panjgur, all private schools in the district remained closed for several days.[27] Shortly after the private schools reopened, unidentified gunmen set a school van, transporting female students and teachers, on fire on 14 May 2014.[28]

Somalia and Al-Qaeda-inspired Islamist group Al-Shabaab, which has been linked to the training of Boko Haram militants,[29] is yet another group that has a tradition of forcefully abducting children, including girls, and conscripting them to fight, among other things. In 2012, Somalia's country task force documented 43 cases of girls taken from camps for internally displaced persons, schools and villages.[30] Reflecting its own sordid history of kidnapping young women and children, Al-Shabaab has justified the Chibok abductions as a consequence of the Nigerian government's abuses against Muslims. The group stated that Boko Haram 'rescued' the Chibok girls from state injustices and claimed that Boko Haram's actions are less inhumane than the government's mistreatment of Muslims in Nigerian jails. On its Al-Andalus Facebook page, Al-Shabaab has asked its followers to comment on the fate of the abducted girls, giving three scenarios:

1. Should they be released without conditions?
2. Should they be given freedom for a ransom?
3. Should they be given to other jihadists so that 200 more boys can be born to join the mujahideen?[31]

According to Al-Shabaab, all three conditions are permissible under Sharia law if the girls are labelled as part of the 'infidels' or 'disbelievers'.[32] On option 1, there is little chance that the girls will be released without conditions. As mentioned earlier, option 2 has already been rejected by the Nigerian government, which refused to accept Boko Haram's offer for a hostage–prisoner exchange (although recent reports suggest that this option is still on the table). Regarding option 3, there are claims from sources in Nigeria that some girls have been 'married off' near the Cameroon border. These claims, however, remain largely unsubstantiated.

Concluding Thoughts

The kidnapping of schoolgirls by Boko Haram highlights one of the central features of jihadist groups: the oppression of women and their continued relegation to an inferior status vis-à-vis their male counterparts.[33] The vulnerability of women and girls in northern Nigeria to radical elements and criminals is partly due to religious convictions/laws, cultural traditions and the socio-economic status of women in the region. As Diamond argues, with particular reference to northern Nigeria: "[R]igid interpretations of Islam and powerful cultural traditions interact to produce a pattern of gender stratification so extreme as to literally imprison virtually the entire female population in northern Nigeria."[34] It is not uncommon to find young girls in northern Nigeria hawking petty goods in the streets, or married off to men at a very young age. If the Nigerian government is to protect the girl-child from groups like Boko Haram, efforts must be made to challenge and punish such inhibiting cultural and religious practices. The government will need to act in accordance with the UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security to liberate girl-children from such oppressive cultural and religious traditions, and also to provide them with basic socio-economic, security, human rights and educational needs.

It is worth emphasising the important issue of protecting and assisting the victims of Boko Haram. On the current Chibok situation, it could be argued that although the girls are probably alive, their physical health and psychosocial well-being is sure to have deteriorated. This is not hard to imagine, considering not only the insights drawn from the case of the Sierra Leonean civil war, but also the brutal manner in which these girls were captured and the excruciating conditions under which they are likely to be held. Similar are the pains and trauma experienced by the parents of the Chibok girls –and this aspect often receives less attention. Reportedly, eight parents of the abducted schoolgirls died of trauma three months after their daughters were abducted.[35] This reinforces the urgent need for the Nigerian state and its foreign backers to devise a means of not only rescuing the Chibok girls, but rendering them and their family members the necessary medical, human rights, psychological and social support. As the UN Commission on Crime and Criminal Justice

Women and children, who escaped from violence after Boko Haram insurgents attacked their community, sit together at the internally displaced persons camp at Wurojuli, Gombe State (September 2014).

asserts: "[I]t is absolutely essential to identify the rights and needs of victims of acts of terrorism, to support them and to provide reparation for the damage they have suffered." [36] The Victims' Support Fund, raised by the Nigerian government through donations by some of the country's wealthiest businesspeople, agencies, individuals and politicians, should be used to address the immediate (health, educational, psychological, housing) and long-term needs (development, economic, social) of the victims of terrorism in Nigeria. Failure to do so may exacerbate the grievances and grief of the victims, and alienate the afflicted population in northern Nigeria. This has the negative effect of creating a fertile ground for extremist Islamist groups such as Boko Haram to flourish and gain local traction for their cause.

In the meantime, however, the Nigerian authorities may need to seriously and swiftly consider option 2 – the hostage–prisoner swop, or at the least, engaging discussions about it – put on the table by Boko Haram. Already, in May 2014, the US government released five Taliban prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay in exchange for the life of one US citizen held captive for almost five years in Afghanistan by the Taliban. The Nigerian government should do likewise and activate the negotiation process without delay that will finally 'bring back our girls'. Otherwise, Nigeria is likely to repeat the September 2004 mistake of the Beslan tragedy in Russia, when over 300 hostages died due to the reluctance of the Russian government to negotiate with Chechen terrorists. **A**

Benjamin Maiangwa is a Doctoral Candidate in the Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice at St Paul's College, University of Manitoba, Canada.

Daniel Agbiboa is a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of International Development, Queen Elizabeth House, at the University of Oxford, UK.

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