



## Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), conflict and peace building in Africa

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### Abstract

Despite some efforts by the government, corporate bodies, civil society, national universities commission etc to reduce situations of conflict in Nigeria, peace is still elusive to her and consequently to sustainable development. This paper thus aims at an in-depth description of NGOs, conflict and peace building and proffering a way forward to reduce conflict situations through NGOs. Content analysis was adopted, using the secondary sources of collecting data from books, journals and articles. NGOs are an aspect of civil society, without government representation, embarking in conflict reduction, welfare scheme, empowerment and employment. Among the recommendations are: government recognition and support of NGOs; NGOs increased and effective performance and government/NGOs partnership in peace and conflict issues.

**Keywords:** government; organizations; conflict and peace building

### Introduction

Highest on the list of prime value for Maiduguri a town in Bornu state, Nigeria, is peace. Peace is the most valuable public commodity, yet the most elusive (Francis David, 2006). These four years (2009-2014) of Insurgency has brought loss of lives and halted economic activities in various parts of Maiduguri. The activities of bokoharam have brought devastating effects on Nigerian people which has resulted in loss of lives both human and livestock, suffering, destruction of infrastructures and public/private facilities, disruption of economic/socio-economic activities like agricultural, trade etc. This situation has threatened not only the internal peace and security of North East but also the peace in Nigeria and beyond. So alarming is the fact that most of these areas affected by insurgency lack the will to stop this social charade and have fallen prey to continuous usury and subtle manipulation by politicians who take advantage of this situation to involve in shady deals like kidnapping and arm deals using insurgency as a cover (Chiedu, 2013). Peace building has therefore become the most pressing challenge faced by Nigeria at large and Maiduguri in particular. This situation is so partly because of feudal system of leadership which encourages total submission to authority without question which carries with it, ineffective terror control means. Despite the effort of government through its institutions like the armed forces, religious bodies, NGOs etc, to curb the excesses of insurgence in Maiduguri, peace has continued to elude her and sustainable development, stopped. On that note, this project will seek to show the role of NGOs in peace building in Maiduguri.

Although insurgency is not easily defined, it may be said to be the use of force, usually violent, as a means of coercing a target population to submit to the will of the terrorists (Asika, 4:2009). Insurgency is intended to elicit or maximise fear and publicity, making no distinction as to combatants and non-combatants in a conflict.

There is no legally agreed upon definition of the term 'Insurgency', but a recent United Nations (UN) document describes it as any 'act which is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organisation to do or abstain from doing any act'. The word 'Insurgency' is both emotionally and politically laden, particularly as it imports issues of national liberation and self-determination. Insurgency takes many forms, including political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious and ecological issues. The taxonomy of Insurgency, including precipitating motivations and considerations, is now a subject of intense study. Whether the one as seen in Maiduguri can be reduced to a type may be an interesting subject, but for purposes of this work, the primary concern is the threat of insurgency. Insurgency is one objective of organised terrorism, just as terrorism is one of several strategies of insurgency. Both terrorism and insurgency may be used by states in their internal operations. Terrorism and terrorist tactics constitute part of the strategies and tactics of insurgency. The operational tactics are essentially those of guerrilla warfare. The object is to intimidate, frustrate and raise the feeling of uncertainty, imminent danger and the loss of hope, so as to cripple or limit all aspects of human activity and normal livelihoods. Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, MEND and, lately, Jama'atu Ahlissunnah Lidda'anati Wal Jihad, are currently international and local Nigerian examples of terrorist networks. Until recently, Nigerian terrorist activity was thought to be motivated by ethnocentric considerations. Currently, there appears to be a pronounced religious content in the character of insurgency in Maiduguri. A few of the earlier experiences merit examination here, as a guide in estimating the character, trend and intensity of the current campaign, as well as the role of NGOs in peace building in Maiduguri. Previous research works on the role of NGOs in peace

building in Insurgency affected areas especially Maiduguri shows that there is no government that can take on single handily, the weight of peace building in form of aid. Among the various actors that participate in these processes are the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), which fulfil a pivotal role in terms of establishing and maintaining essential services like assisting refugees and internally displaced populations and helping to strengthen societies. NGOs increasingly work "in the field," providing humanitarian relief and development assistance in post terror places like Maiduguri. As they carry out their work, they face many serious problems. Insurgency often denies them access to those in need, terrorist groups demand payoffs, and local violence threatens the safety and even the lives of field personnel. Donors also subject these NGOs to political pressure, diminishing their neutrality. Nongovernmental Organizations face a lot of challenges in the discharge of their duties often caused by Insurgent activities. They are faced with the dilemma; should they negotiate with terrorists to deliver aid, or should they maintain independence and impartiality. Some Nigerian agencies like WACOL operate only through local partners because they cannot negotiate with terrorist-affiliated groups. Red Cross has resorted to having armed escorts and allow Movement for Peace in Maiduguri (MFPIM) and Africa Awake to supervise the aid distribution. Although impartiality is valuable for the long term operation in Maiduguri, humanitarian aid agencies feel they are forced to compromise these principles in an effort to gain aid access according Osueke (2006).

### Concept of Peace Building

The history and development of the concept of peace building has evolved over time to assume different meanings for different scholars, policy makers and practitioners in different situations. The conceptualisations have revolved around the purpose, the method, time, actors, process vs. actions and organisation. In this section, the conceptual origins of peace building from the perspective of scholars and that of the United Nations and other practitioners, its dimensions and components and its theoretical underpinnings are discussed.

### Conceptual Origins of Peace-Building

The concept of peace building was popularised by Johan Galtung in 1975 in his pioneering work "The three approaches to peace: Peace keeping, peacemaking and peace building". As a sociologist, Galtung was interested in the causes of conflict in society and his work led to the conclusion that the root cause of all conflict is the nature of social and economic structures and he used the term "structural violence" to describe the type of conflict that arises due to institutional structures. His work called for a structural change approach in creating a "culture of peace" in society. Lederach (1997), another sociologist arguing along the same lines, proposed a grassroots approach where local leaders, NGOs and international players take part in creating peace. He also emphasizes the importance of building relationships among the involved parties, thus encompassing the psychological, spiritual, social, economic and political aspects of a community.

In 1992, peace building entered the United Nations language when the then Secretary General, Boutros Boutros Ghali presented a report titled "An Agenda for Peace" in which he

talked of the need of peace-building as a strategy to enhance the UN's peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts (UN Secretary-General, 1992) <sup>[26]</sup>.

The definition of peace building by some scholars and practitioners has left some confusion as to what the concept really means. One school of thought believes that peace-building is a peace operation undertaken where a comprehensive peace agreement has been negotiated with provisions for addressing the root causes of conflict. This view sees peace-building as involving a wide array of actors and activities. Others tend to see peace-building as relevant only to post-conflict situations. According to this school of thought, peace-building, is a process that occurs at the end of a conflict's "life cycle," when the fighting has stopped, a negotiated agreement is in force, and international peacekeepers are present. This is the position of peace-building that seems to have dominated the UN until recently. Evidence from the literature, however, suggests that peace-building should not be limited to post-conflict situations, nor should it be confined to averting a relapse into conflict. Such a restrictive conceptualization may, in theory, undermine the prospects for sustainable peace.

### Concepts of Civil Society

For the purpose of this study it is necessary to first clarify the role of civil society as a concept before analyzing its nexus and potential for peace-building. The essay therefore, first considers the fundamental theoretical concepts and the different forms civil society has taken over time. It then explores the main roles and functions currently ascribed to civil society, taken from current research on civil society and development cooperation. This functional scheme is then used to analyze the link between civil society and peace-building in Sudan.

The concept of 'civil society' itself is complex, however the term is widely used, seeming at times to be "the big idea on everyone's lips" (Edwards 2004:2). In order to define civil society, scholars within the field describe it as a position in relation to other sectors of the society. There is, however no commonly agreed definition. The notion that civil society is the arena of voluntary collective actions, shared interests, purposes and values is non-controversial (Sriram 2008:7). The research institute <sup>[25]</sup>,

*Centre for Civil Society* in London considers society as its own vis-à-vis with three other main sectors state, business and family. Although there are some contradictions regarding this approach where some researchers argue that family is not a separate sector and belongs to civil society (Glaius 2004:1).

A slightly different approach stresses that civil society is not a sector of its own but the space between societal sectors (Sriram 2008:7) <sup>[25]</sup>. Thus, actors that are attributed to specific sectors can also act in civil society. This understanding helps to uncover other actors who have a role in civil society, such as traditional groups in Africa (Croissant *et al.* 2000:18).

### Peace building and Civil Society

Understanding the role civil society can play in peace-building becomes inherently more complex when attempting to assess the relative strengths or weaknesses of a society, particularly at the local level. Part of the challenge in such instances is that countries are frequently ambiguous as to their location on an active conflict/post-conflict

continuum.

For instance, the end to hostilities has been officially declared in Afghanistan, but there are nevertheless episodes of active conflict. Similarly, civil society is neither inherently “strong” nor “weak,” but will fall somewhere in between, often being strong in some respects, while weak in others. For instance, a country may contain an active and vital NGO sector, while traditional structures have been broken down as the result of the displacement of citizens; conflict may lead to a fallback on primary groupings within society, with kinship, tribal, religious, and traditional structures serving as coping mechanisms, but with a prevailing lack of trust towards government officials. In other words, the relationship between civil society and peace building is complex, and working with civil society groups in peacetime is quite different than during or following armed conflict.

In conflict, civil society is simultaneously torn apart while constituting a source of social support. At the most fundamental level, war undermines civil society. It displaces people, and divides up communities; looting and theft depletes communities of vital resources; and, the basic dehumanizing nature of war weakens the basic fabric that binds society together. At the same time, civil society functions as a source of support by those affected by conflict. Traditional structures become more important as people seek refuge in the familiar when facing upheaval and suffering; village, family, ethnic, and religious solidarities are reinforced; and, there is a development of a parallel subsistence economy or a black market. Importantly, although civil society is broken down by war, it is nevertheless resilient, and new and traditional structures will emerge during times of conflict (Harvey; 1998).

Conflict disrupts the relationship between civil society, the state, and the market.

During conflict, the state may assume a more authoritarian stance and place restrictions on civil society, thereby reducing the room to manoeuvre for civil society groups. A paradox of civil society is that, while civil society is thought to act as a check on the powers of the state, it is the state that sets the parameters for civil society. One way in which the state can define the boundaries for civil society is through changes to the institutional framework, such as by curtailing the legal rights of citizens and their right to organize. In so doing, the state can avert criticism and hinder the watchdog function of civil society. For instance, restrictions to the right to organize or free political expression can serve to weaken civil society, particularly during conflict. However, the encroachment of the state does not necessarily mean that there is not an active civil society; as the revolutionary movements in Latin American countries bear witness to, totalitarian regimes often sow the seeds for change as civil society organizes against its oppressive policies. The relationship between civil society and the market will also be altered as the result of armed conflict. Economies of societies in the midst of war may increasingly become oriented towards providing goods and services directly and indirectly related to the conflict. This may either assume a legal nature, or it may be part of a “gray” sector, or even the illegal black market. NGOs, for example, may be drawn into becoming providers of intelligence, used as vehicles for the trafficking of drugs, or laundering money. In many cases, there will develop an economic sector that operates parallel to the legal financial

market (Strand *et al* 2003).

Understandings of civil society at times originate from the optimistic position that civil society is an inherently positive or noble force in peace-building. As the discussion here has sought to make clear, civil society can constitute a catalyst for peace building and reconciliation. However, that civil society becomes perverted through engagement in the conflict or involvement in criminal activity itself challenges the conventional wisdom that civil society is generally a positive force. Notions of civil society thus need to be tempered by the reality that they contain the potential for so called “spoilers.” Within any country segments of civil society will assume “uncivil” roles and seek to advance their own interests first and foremost (Maley & Saikal 2002), particularly in conflict situations where there is both greater need and opportunity. This may include former warlords or so-called “strong men” who see civil society primarily as a means to further cement their hold on power, instances where civil society actors become drawn into advocacy for one or more part in the conflict, operate as promoters of ethnic or religious interests, or function at the behest of clientelist networks with a vested interest in the conflict. Nevertheless, even civil society groups that may have assumed an uncivil role during the conflict may prove invaluable in the post-conflict reconciliation process. It is thus important to bear in mind that roles may change from conflict to post-conflict. For instance, the church in Rwanda can be said to have played an uncivil role during the atrocities, but its inclusion in the subsequent peace building process was nevertheless essential. In short, well-meaning policy that does not incorporate an understanding of the roles civil society can play runs the risk of strengthening its uncivil rather than civil components (Maley & Saikal 2002). If discussions of peace building can be couched in terms of top-down and bottom-up approaches, one of the central challenges confronting policy makers is how to effectively utilize both approaches. That is, peace building has mostly concerned itself with the implementation of national level agreements, or interventions by international agencies, while less attention has been paid to how local civil society can contribute (Prendergast & Plumb 2002) <sup>[20]</sup>. In the wake of Boutros-Ghali’s concept of peacebuilding in 1992, for instance, focus was placed on the capacities of donors and international actors in addressing an ambitiously broad – albeit undifferentiated – set of needs. This included disarming warring parties, weapons destruction, election monitoring, repatriating refugees, along with far less tangible objectives such as advancing human rights, strengthening government institutions, and promoting political participation.

Problematically, however, this also led to a disjointed approach to peacebuilding, with little attention to the actual needs of societies, or to how each component fit into the overall effort; nor was there much in the way of sustainable initiatives (Cousens 2001).

In contrast, the bottom-up approach takes as its starting point the needs of those impacted by conflict, and looks to redress the root causes of war in each context. In the bottom-up approach, the emphasis is clearly on a more prominent role for local civil society. While bottom-up approaches are not without their problems – and it is important to underscore that they should by no means be accepted uncritically – they do address several concerns within peace building. By diagnosing the problem before

offering a solution, bottom-up approaches provide greater insight into the specific needs of a society, without the presumption that all conflict-affected countries will benefit equally from a standard repertoire of practices. Furthermore, bottom-up approaches pay greater attention to the crucial dimensions of peace and security at the local level (Cousens 2001). The majority of wars over the past decades have been civil wars.

Reconciliation and peacebuilding must thus also involve local groups and provide these with a sense of ownership. Solutions that involve only military leaders or state officials will likely be fragile, while a sense of local ownership in peacebuilding can influence reluctant military leaders to contribute in constructive manner. In the end, designing effective peacebuilding strategies should entail a pragmatic evaluation of the specific context and its needs, combined with a realistic assessment of the resources and competence available to outside parties. In the following sections, we describe the interrelationship between civil society and conflict along two basic dimensions: where a country finds itself on a conflict/post conflict continuum, and according to the relative strength or weakness of its civil society.

### 1. Conflict – Strong Civil Society

In situations characterized by active conflict, the response of the international community has generally been to prioritize initiatives designed to save lives and avert a humanitarian crisis. In emergency situations, building sustainable peace and addressing the root causes of conflict often become secondary objectives. For communities exposed to conflicts, coping mechanisms become stretched.

Nevertheless, the resilience of community leaders, activists, and women can come to expression in unexpected ways. As traditional livelihoods become impossible to sustain in the face of conflict, self-help based on community solidarity can reveal itself as a vital resource. Prior to the arrival of emergency relief, war-affected communities will often improvise means of survival, including trade of goods with opposing ethnic and interest groups. Effectively, when humanitarian agencies arrive in an active conflict situation, there is already a local self-help network in place that has begun the process of adapting to the upheavals and realities of armed conflict. In such situations, the challenge for external agencies is to determine to what extent it is possible or even desirable to build on these largely informal networks (Quinn 2002).

### 2. Conflict – Weak Civil Society

In active conflict cases where civil society is weak, the challenge for outside actors is twofold: address the needs of communities impacted by conflict, and; work to develop civil society institutions that can serve as the foundation for sustainable peacebuilding. These may initially appear to be separate objectives, but can in reality constitute two sides of the same issue. Alleviating the immediate effects of conflicts may entail engaging the same parties and addressing the same issues that will likely manifest themselves during the reconciliation process. That is, the search for long-term sustainable solutions should be taken into consideration at an early stage, rather than through a series of ad-hoc arrangements.

The challenge in conflict situations where civil society is weak is identifying existing resources. While conflict disrupts civil society, there will always be vital elements of

civil society that can be mobilized. During conflict, there will be a tendency to use traditional kinship, tribal, and religious structures as a means of coping with the effects of war, institutions that help provide a sense of social stability that would otherwise not exist. In Afghanistan, for instance, traditional *shuras* have been important in retaining trust throughout times of war (Harvey 1998:207). The emergence of fundamentalist religious organizations in countries such as Somalia is yet another indication of the way in which traditional structures may be reinforced during conflict. That not all elements of civil society are inherently positive forces underscores the need to understand the potential for uncivil roles.

### 3. Post Conflict – Strong Civil Society

The aftermath of armed conflict presents a host of challenges, ranging from reconciliation between former warring factions to long-term sustainable development. Where civil society is strong, local civil society groups, due to their close proximity to the implementation level, can play a key role in ensuring a sustainable peace. Local civil society groups can strengthen peace agreement by providing a sense of local ownership in the peace process (Prendergast & Plumb 2002) <sup>[20]</sup>.

Grassroots civil society organizations in particular have demonstrated their importance in forging lasting peace. In South Africa, for instance, it was not only sanctions and international pressures that ended apartheid, but also the activity of hundreds of local civil society groups. Moreover, these groups were instrumental in facilitating the largely peaceful transition to post-apartheid democracy. In El Salvador, the gradual manner of the UN's withdrawal, with increasing ownership of UN-led processes by local actors facilitated the building of sustainable peace (Kumar 2001). Contexts where civil society organizations are developed and there is social capital upon which to draw, present the potential for the active involvement of civil society actors for long-term peace building.

In particular, local groups and associations hold the most promise for building sustainable peace due to their knowledge and contextual understanding of barriers and opportunities at the local level. Local groups can serve as linkages between international actors, governments, and local communities, and can be instrumental in policy debates, dialogue, and the implementation of peace agreements.

### 4. Post-Conflict – Weak Civil Society

Once a country enters into a post conflict phase, utilizing existing elements of civil society becomes important in maintaining the momentum of peace building. Protracted armed conflict undoubtedly stretches the capacities of civil society. While this does not necessarily mean that lengthy conflicts will automatically lead to a weakened civil society, it is nevertheless likely that, once a country has begun the shift towards a post-conflict situation, civil society has been adversely affected. The challenge in such situations is to both strengthen civil society in such a way as to contribute a sustainable peace building process. In this regard, one of the central discussions within peace building initiatives and humanitarian assistance in general is whether or not external NGOs further undermine efforts at strengthening an already weakened civil society. For instance, do NGOs seek to draw on the knowledge possessed by local communities? Do

international actors seek to build long-term capacities? Will local communities be forced into unsuitable models of democracy for that specific context? Can NGOs be said to be neutral, or do they appear as advocates for one part in a conflict? NGOs are becoming more prevalent within peace building as the result of the vacuum left by the absence of local authorities, the preferences of donors, and the limited capacities of international institutions (Abiew & Keating 2004). The good governance agenda, for example, has entailed an increase in donor support to NGOs within development planning in general (Lewis 2002) <sup>[15]</sup>, and the increasing involvement of NGOs within peacekeeping can be seen as an extension of this mandate.

There is, however, reason to raise concerns about the reliance on NGOs, particularly in post conflict situations. NGOs can at times exacerbate divisions and conflict rather than mediating them, while questions as to the neutrality of many NGOs have also been raised. For instance, in providing relief to Rwandan refugees in Goma, assistance was delivered to camps controlled by the Hutu militia; in so doing, NGOs may have impeded peace building by aiding the military objectives of the militia (Abiew & Keating 2004). Concern can also be raised about the efficacy of NGOs in the long-term. For instance, the many professional NGOs that have sought to promote democracy in Nepal have not succeeded; meanwhile, it was township organizations and civic groups that played a central role in the struggle against South African apartheid in the 1980s (Ottaway 2001). A further dilemma is the influence donors have on NGOs. Recipient NGOs may tailor their programs and ideas to suit those of the donors rather than addressing real needs, thereby turning civil society organizations into “creatures” of the donors. Donors have also had an underlying ideological agenda, providing support to NGOs that seek to oust what is perceived as unfriendly governments and regimes. For NGOs to avoid such traps, they must demonstrate political savvy and the understanding that their personnel are operating in a highly politicized arena. One lesson to be gleaned from all of this is that NGOs must adopt a “do no harm” approach, and develop programs that support those who seek an alternative to conflict (Anderson 1999) <sup>[1]</sup>.

Ultimately, the greatest promise lies in investing in local groups and organizations; outside NGOs, meanwhile, can play a supporting role in building a sustainable peace.

### Features of Civil Society Organizations

There are four rather distinguished features of civil society in general. First and foremost, civil society is concerned with the public rather than the private. Civil society is independent of the state but is nonetheless related to it in terms of seeking benefits such as policy changes, relief or accountability (Diamond 1994). Importantly, civil society organizations are not only independent of the state but also of political parties. They can, however establish working relations with parties in order to achieve a particular goal but do not affiliate themselves with political parties more than necessary (Diamond 1994).

Pluralism, respect and tolerance are crucial definitions of civil society. Organizations that do not embrace pluralism because they believe that they have a monopoly on truth or because they believe that their way is the “only legitimate path” do not qualify to be a part of civil society. There has been an increase of ethnic, clan and faith-based

organizations in Africa and among African diasporas communities (Chazan 1992:283). Ethnic or faith-based organizations are detrimental to civil society because instead of connecting, they disconnect groups and instead of bridging social relations, they encourage and exacerbate differences by reinforcing inner-group bonding on the basis of exclusive identities. Their structure may not always bring positive achievements towards relationship building.

Associations that do not maintain an open system of recruitment because gaining membership are based on particular attributions of criterion such as religion, ethnicity or prohibit their members from joining other associations (Hadenius & Ugglä 1996:162). The fourth and critical attribute is the ability to forge alliances with other groups that have different objectives and goals (Chazan 1992:287).

### Theoretical Framework

Peace-building is difficult to define and even more difficult to achieve in practice (Cousens; 2001). There is, however a number of researchers, important to the success of post-conflict peace building, who have identified definitions of peace-building. The view on peace-building however is diverse and may refer to many different meanings depending on the circumstances. Scholars as Stephen J. Stedman and Donald Rothchild define peace building as “strategies designed to promote a secure and stable lasting peace in which the basic human needs of the population are met and violent conflicts do not recur” (Stedman & Rothchild 2002:65) <sup>[20]</sup>. Also, as argued by Gareth Evans (1993) that “at the heart of the notion of peace-building is the idea of meeting needs: for security and order, for a reasonable standard of living, and for recognition of identity and worth” (Evans 1993:39). This focus on satisfying human needs derives from the conflict resolution theories of John Burton (Burton 1990:36-48). As the process for peacebuilding strives for new attitudes and practices, there is a need for flexible, consultative and collaborative approaches that can operate from a contextual understanding of the root causes of conflict. This approach is based on terminating something undesired (violence) and the building of something desired through the transformation of relationships and construction of the conditions of peace (Lederach; 2000).

John Paul Lederach’s theories on peace-building identify relationships as a central component. Lederach also argues that one of the most important needs is for peace builders to “find ways to understand peace as a change process based on relationship building” (Lederach; 2000). Further, he mentions that the need of peace-building framework towards relationship-building and similar processes is essential rather than a heavy focus on the political and legal aspects of peace agreements, truth commissions and criminal tribunals. In the international community’s past peace-building practices, the main focus has turned towards the political rather than the personal which has tended to mask the underlying psychosocial processes that mainly contribute to the willingness and readiness of people to choose a path of peace and reconciliation rather than engaging in further mass violence and/or abuse of human rights. As argued by J. Lewis Rasmussen (2001) <sup>[22]</sup>, there is a need to set light to relationship building and reconciliation in which peace building can take place (Rasmussen; 2001) <sup>[22]</sup>. Although relationship building is a long-term process and it has to be started as soon as possible in order for

peaceful achievements to take place.

The approach to peace-building is versatile and the general view is that peace-building aims to create sustainable living conditions for states or specific societies after violent conflicts. Peace-building is used as a method for post-war regions/states in order to erase or minimize previously causes of conflict. In order for peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts and operations to be truly successful, it has to include comprehensive efforts to consolidate peace, identify and support structures within the fragile society. This process will advance a sense of confidence and wellbeing among people. Through talks, negotiations, agreements and most important, integration, ending civil strife can be the only chance for survival. Efforts may also include disarming the previously warring parties and the restoration of order, the custody and possible destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees, advisory and training support for security personnel, monitoring elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation. An important element in the definition of peace-building is the work toward reconciliation.

It means that peace building should incorporate citizens for the purpose of integration that is separated ethnically or by other means.

### History of Civil Society and Philosophical Roots

The history of civil society and its conceptual debates derive from different roots and by a number of important political philosophers like John Locke (1632), Alexander de Tocqueville (1805) and Antonio Gramsci (1891). The scholars have contributed to the discourse and definitions of civil society.

John Locke was first in 'modern' time to state that civil society is a body in its own right, separate from the state. He argued that people form a community which their social life develops and in which the state has no say. Locke referred to the sphere as pre-or-un-political and where the first task of civil society is to protect the individual- his/hers rights and property- against the state and its arbitrary interventions (Sriram; 2008) [25].

Alexander de Tocqueville stressed even more the role of the independent associations as civil society. He saw these associations as schools for democracy in which democratic thinking, attitudes and behaviour are learned, also with the aim to protect and defend individual rights against potentially authoritarian regimes and tyrannical majorities in society. de Tocqueville also stated that these associations should be built voluntarily and at all levels (local, regional, national). Antonio Gramsci focused more on civil society from a Marxist theoretical angle. According to him, civil society contains a wide range of organizations and ideologies, which both challenges and upholds the existing order. The political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes and societal consensus is formed within civil society. Gramsci's ideas influenced the resistance to totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe and Latin America (Lewis; 2002) [15].

Two broad conclusions can be drawn from this short overview of the fundamental principles of the notion of civil society. First, different meanings and interpretations of civil society have influenced theoretical debate. Second, civil society has been an almost purely Western concept,

historically tied to the political emancipation of citizens from former feudalistic ties, monarchy and the state during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is still a debate on whether these concepts of civil society are transferable to today's non-Western countries with different levels of democracy and economic structures (Lewis; 2002) [15]. Marginalized groups in particular need to be organized and find a way to articulate their interests.

### Role of Civil Society in Peace-building

Civil society is a concept with a long history dating to the era of Greek philosophers such as Aristotle and others such as John Locke (1632–1704) and Jürgen Habermas (1929) and more recently Merkel and Lauth (1998) [16]. According to Merkel and Lauth (1998) [16] cited in World Bank (2006) [28] and Ho-Won Jeong (2005) [9], civil society has recently gained prominence as a tool to check the excess use of power by the state and to reduce its potential to oppress its citizens and interfere in the exercise of individual freedoms. Civil society is composed of a diversity of actors made up of all types of alliances independent from the state. They all tend to have differing objectives, interests and even ideology and although they make explicit political demands on the state, they also interact closely and operate within set laws of the land. The concept of civil society as defined by the World Bank (2006) [28] comprises all types of NGOs that interact with people. They tend to champion the values of their target groups and may be organized around religious groups, women's associations, labour unions, religious and traditional associations or foundations set by people who want to give back to society. It is characterized by voluntary actions distinct from the state, political, private or economic spheres. According to Paffenholz and Spurr (2010) [18], civil society operates in the space between the state, business and the family and some scholars have coined the term "third sector" to describe its independence from the state and business, profit making sector (Salamon and Anheir (1996:3) [24].

Although there is no clear definition of civil society, Paffenholz crafted the following definition that encompasses many of the views expressed by different scholars:

"...a sphere of voluntary action that is distinct from the state, political, private and economic spheres, keeping in mind that in practice the boundaries between these sectors are often complex and blurred. It consists of a large and diverse set of voluntary organizations— competing with each other and oriented to specific interests— that are not purely driven by private or economic interests, are autonomously organized, and interact in the public sphere. Thus, civil society is independent from the state and the political sphere, but it is oriented toward and interacts closely with them" (Paffenholtz, 2010:3) [18]

The concept of civil society has gained prominence in Western Countries and Latin America but scholars have raised concerns about its effectiveness in the African Context and Asia to some extent especially when defined from a Western perspective (Paffenholz 2010) [18]. The legacy of colonial rule is thought to have left a large majority of the population disempowered, with small urban elite oppressing the majority. While traditional associations exist, they have little space for participatory governance and usually succumb to manipulation by state apparatus. However, with the adoption of new constitutions and greater

awareness of individual rights and wider democratic space, civil society has reengineered itself so that even traditional institutions are developing into strong civil society actors that are able to confront the state through judicial and quasi-judicial system. Recent examples from Kenya include the Mau Mau Veterans Association who won the right to sue the British government for human rights abuses during the last years of colonial rule. Another example is the ruling by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights condemning the expulsion of the Endorois people from their ancestral land for tourism development around Lake Bogoria in Kenya.

The involvement of civil society especially NGOs in peace building is attributed to the work of Lederach (1997) <sup>[13]</sup>. He advocated for the prominent involvement of local civil society organizations in peace building exercises rather than international organisations as he believed that internal actors have the ability to find local, culturally applicable and long term solutions to their own problems. He supported this suggestion with his multilevel model indicating three types of actors and approaches to peace building. The levels range from top level leadership who have limited scope, middle level leaders who engage in problem solving activities and the grassroots level leadership who engage in local peace commissions and relationship building among the parties in direct conflict to build sustainable peace. The TLPP falls within tier three as it engages with the grassroots perpetrators of the conflict who are engaged directly in peace races and other programmes organized by the Foundation.

From the literature, it is evident that the role of civil society in peace building has taken two approaches: one focuses on the actors and the other on functions. The actor oriented approach focuses on the performance and features of the actors. Most researchers have criticized this approach as narrow as it relies on case studies inspired by just one philosophical foundation. As a result, the function oriented approach has found wider acceptance among researchers and practitioners as it provides a better framework for analyzing the role of civil society in peace building and that is the approach that is adopted in this essay to analyse the role of the TLPP. Advancing the function oriented approach, Merkel and Lauth (1998) <sup>[16]</sup> cited in Paffenholtz (2010) present a model with seven functions namely: protection of citizens against violence; monitoring of human rights violations focusing on the implementation of peace agreements; advocacy for peace and human rights; socialization to values of peace and democracy as well as to develop the in-group identity of marginalized groups; inter-group social cohesion by bringing people together from adversarial groups; facilitation of dialogue on the local and national level between all sorts of actors; service delivery to create entry points for peace-building. These functions are further discussed by World Bank (2006) <sup>[28]</sup> and Paffenholz (2010) <sup>[18]</sup>. The next section of this essay evaluates the TLPP against the seven functions of civil society in peace-building.

### **Civil Society Organizations in Mediation and Peacebuilding**

CSOs have also been actively involved in negotiating for peace and constructing a viable post-conflict environment in the region. Principally, faith-based institutions and women's groups have reached across national borders to mediate

conflicts and engage in reconciliation, humanitarian action, and advocacy within their countries.

### **Rwanda**

In Rwanda, the churches have sought to construct a viable and hospitable post-conflict environment through humanitarian intervention during and after the genocide. They were also centrally involved in promoting integration and assuaging the distressed population. Muslim groups, an often-obscure constituency in a largely Christian country, also played crucial roles in saving lives by maintaining peace in their areas and providing humanitarian assistance for escapees.

Women's organizations were instrumental in ensuring the inclusion of citizen rights in the country's new constitution which was promulgated in 2003 although full implementation of that constitution remains a challenge - and were also deeply involved in the elections of that year. Human rights and democratic institutions have gradually begun to take root, and the country is edging toward integration in other regional peace-building initiatives. One participant saw the rapid expansion of CSO activities in Rwanda as a positive signal that the Patriotic Front government is broadening political accommodation and civic participation.

### **Burundi**

Women's groups have mostly been in the forefront of demobilization and reintegration of former combatants in Burundi. 1.5 An All-Party Burundi Women 's Conference in 2000 confronted issues such as gender based violence and focused on peacemaking actors in their responsibilities to protect women and children.

The conference discussed women's rights in the constitution, sex discrimination, and women's participation in political life. The Burundi Women Refugee Network, which was granted observer status during the Arusha negotiations, met with political representatives during the negotiations and urged them to integrate gender issues into the discussions and the official peace plans. The Coalition of Women's Organizations and NGOs (CAFOB) also agitated positively to be represented in the male-dominated negotiations at Arusha.

### **Uganda**

In Uganda, CSOs were at the forefront of exposing human rights violations and advocating for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the north. Through their lobbying, government offered amnesty to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) leaders in 1998 and 1999 - although the amnesty law was amended in 2003 to exclude the LRA leader, Joseph Kony, which subsequently led to considerable reversals in the mediation process.<sup>17</sup> The Church of Uganda and the Uganda Joint Christian Council were particularly instrumental in the peacemaking efforts. While the Church has provided humanitarian assistance to the victims of the LRA rebellion and the general population in northern Uganda, the Council was in the forefront of advocating for reconciliation.

### **Cross-Border Initiatives**

An equally important feature of CSOs in the Great Lake s region is the propensity to reach outside national borders to engage in conflict mediation. The Africa Peace Forum

(APFO) of Kenya has been deeply involved in the conflict management initiatives in Somalia and Sudan, while the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation, a Tanzania-based organization, has been active in mediation efforts in Burundi and Rwanda. In the DRC, civil society groups were engaged in the peace negotiations, including those in Arusha (Tanzania), Lusaka (Zambia), and Pretoria (South Africa) that ended with the signing of the *Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo* in December 2002. These collaborations testified to the positive outcomes of state/civil society cooperation in participatory peace-building initiatives.

### **The Role of NGOs in Conflict and Peace Building in Nigeria**

It is an understatement to state that the aim or purpose of peace building is to prevent conflict and create peace. A suggestion was made that peace has two different concepts—negative peace and positive peace. Negative peace refers to mere absence of violence, but positive peace is said to be a stable social equilibrium in which the surfacing of new disputes can-not escalate into violence and war (Henning, 1998). The emphasis on finding and resolving the root causes of conflict is criticized on the grounds that it is an overtly negative view of social conflict. Conflict may contribute to a dynamic and innovative society once it is not violence. Since it is increasingly acknowledged that social conflict is inevitable, some approaches to peace building have shifted the emphasis from the root causes of social conflict to good governance and peaceful settlement of dispute mechanisms.

In conflict resolution, NGOs embark on problem solving workshops and seminars aimed at internal conflicts like the religious crises in Kano and Kaduna states, Bauchi and Plateau States, Enugu-Ezike crises in Enugu State where especially the women groups had series of meetings resulting in the follow-ing:

1. Deciding to engage in dialogue to resolve mutually intolerable problems;
2. Coming together to map the elements of the problems and the relationship that perpetuate the problems;
3. Uncovering the underlying dynamic of the relationships and beginning to see ways to change them;
4. Planning steps together to change the relationships and;
5. Devising ways to implement their plan.

Indeed what conflict resolution offers is more than enough theoretical and practical ways of developing peace in conflict environments. These can be exploited at several levels so as to channel global, regional and national norms of interdependence, human security and democratization into unstable local environments. It is therefore in, this situation that NGOs contribution to the process of conflict resolution is very critical. NGOs play the role of facilitating a linkage between global, regional and organization, thereby resolving one of the most serious problems of the conflict resolution genre related to the trickle- up and down effect of conflict, (Henning, 1998). This is be-cause NGOs conduct humanitarian, developmental, human rights, and conflict resolution activities that enhance the process of peace making.

NGOs place in peace-building in society cannot be over emphasized. The inadequacies of first generation approaches to conflict resolution both nationally and

globally has called for settlements to be based upon just political orders that promote democracy and human rights, new norms, participatory governance structures, civil society, international tribunals and truth commissions. Thus, under the auspices of the United Nation (UN), disarming, repatriating refugees, building a consensus for peace and moderate local political leadership appear to be important issues in building peace. Since this is based on conflict resolution and perspectives of conflict, it requires deep access into local environments and grassroots processes rather than top-down approaches. Thus NGOs can always provide these conditions as a result of their official and human security oriented base.

### **Challenges Facing Non Governmental Organisations in Africa**

With the milestones achieved by NGOs in peace building in Africa, they could have done better if not for some challenges militating against their effectiveness. These challenges include the following:

**Lack of Funds:** NGOs are expressing difficulty in finding sufficient, appropriate and continuous funding for their work. They find accessing donors as challenging as dealing with their funding conditions. They perceive there to be certain cartels of individuals and NGOs that control access to donor funds. They have limited resource mobilization skills and are often not looking for funds that are available locally, preferring to wait for international donors to approach them. There is a high dependency of donors and a tendency to shift interventions to match donor priorities. There is a lack of financial, project and organizational sustainability.

**Poor Governance:** was recognized within the sector as a whole, within the NGO Council and within individual NGOs. Knowledge of good governance varied widely, with some regions indicating very little understanding of why NGOs are required to have Boards or what their roles and functions should be. Many other participants explained that it is difficult to achieve good governance with founders who wished to own their NGOs for their own purposes. Participants with better understanding of good governance appreciated that this is fundamental to NGO accountability and transparency. Many NGOs mismanage their resources, quite often with the involvement and encouragement of their Boards that eat their NGOs resources. Finding Board members can be difficult if you are not willing to pay them or provide allowances.

**Absence of Strategic Planning:** Few NGOs have strategic plans which would enable them to have ownership over their mission, values and activities. This leaves them vulnerable to the whims of donors and makes it difficult to measure their impact over time.

**Poor Networking:** was identified as a major challenge. It is the cause of duplication of efforts, conflicting strategies at community level, a lack of learning from experience and an inability of NGOs to address local structural causes of poverty, deprivation and under-development. Negative competition for resources also undermines the reputation of the sector and the effectiveness of NGO activities at community level. As a result there is a great deal of

suspicion among NGOs, secrecy and lack of transparency. Many NGOs, large and small, intervene at community level without any community mapping and implement projects without due regard to ongoing community initiatives. NGO politics: one fighting another, one with resources but no community presence, another with community presence but no resources.

**Poor Communications:** NGOs also recognize that there is very poor communication within the sector. The majority of NGOs have little or no access to reliable email and internet connections; they receive almost no literature on development issues and are generally out of touch with issues of global, regional and national importance. There lack of understanding of the difference between the Board and Council is just one example of the knowledge gaps that exist.

**Limited Capacity:** NGOs recognize that many of them have limited technical and organizational capacity. Few NGOs are able or willing to pay for such capacity building. Weak capacity was identified in fundraising, governance, technical areas of development, and leadership and management. Some NGOs felt that the existence of quality standards would assist them to develop the required capacities. The speed of technology changes is also a challenge particularly in areas of IT capacity.

**Development Approaches:** Many NGOs are still focusing upon what some refer to the 'hardware' approach to development, i.e. the building of infrastructure and the provision of services; rather than what some refer to as the 'software' approach of empowering people and local institutions to manage their own affairs. Other NGOs seem unaware of changes in the role of government, the changing Aid paradigm, and the effectiveness of a "right's based" rather than "welfare" approach. While it is becoming harder to fund and sustain service delivery interventions, most local NGOs persist with them. Community poverty and illiteracy rates remain significant. NGOs are acutely aware of the increasing and enormous needs of poor people and feel at a loss as to how they can respond to all these needs. There is a lack of sustainability and ownership of development interventions by communities. Some communities have been spoilt by dependency creating interventions and are not inclined to do things for themselves. It is difficult to keep our programmes relevant to changing situations and the culture of handouts is hard to counter. There is no accepted code of ethics and conflicting approaches.

**Relationships with INGOs:** There is considerable concern among local NGOs that the giants, mainly INGOs, occupy so much space that it is very difficult to find room for themselves. INGOs often intervene without any concern for the building of sustainable local CSOs. They pay government and community members to participate in their projects while local NGOs have no facility for doing so. INGOs are also perceived to be driven by short-term project approaches that are not locally sustainable. They pay high salaries and attract local NGO personnel. They are also responsible for creating the high cost image that undermines the credibility of the sector. It is difficult and inappropriate for local NGOs to compete with the international and national giants. Many external organizations are not

working with local CSOs, they simply provide unfair competition and hold back the development of our sector and cost effective development interventions. International NGOs should not be allowed to work on the ground, they pay allowances and manipulate the people; cannot run this nation on the whims of international NGOs; they suppress local NGOs.

**Political Interference:** In some regions, in particular South Rift and North Eastern, NGO leaders identified the interference of local politicians and civic leaders as a major hindrance to their work. Where NGOs are involved in sensitive issues, such as land disputes, local leaders can threaten NGOs with de-registration. NGOs are not aware that the Board - and potentially the Council - are there to protect them from such intimidation.

**NGO Board and NGO Council:** Many participants were poorly informed of the difference between these two institutions, NGO Coordination Board and the National Council of NGOs; and unaware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to them. Most participants expressed the opinion that the NGO Code of Conduct is outdated and needed updating soon. This group of participants also complained that the NGO Council is poorly governed and doesn't provide any services to the NGOs. They were aware that the NGO Board does not respect the Council and that there is mistrust between the Government and NGOs. Participants are well aware that the NGO sector has a very poor public profile which they see as mainly due to the leadership wrangles, politics and infighting at the Council and among NGOs. While most participants appreciated the positive role of the NGO Board in creating an enabling environment for NGOs, a few participants felt there was a lack of political good will towards NGOs in some parts of government. Some branches of government are thought to deliberately frustrate NGOs. A few participants felt that government bureaucracy holds back the NGO sector and its members.

### Recommendation

As a way for improvement of the performance of NGOs in conflict and peace building in Africa, the following are recommended.

- NGOs should recognize that peace building is a political undertaking rather than a development and humanitarian one;
- Funding of NGOs from the local government should be increased for effective performance of their responsibilities;
- Since the importance of NGOs in conflict resolution and peace building has been recognized by the international community, the Nigeria government should also recognize NGOs important contributions towards the grassroots involvement in peace building and accord them same;
- The NGOs should recognize the different phases of conflict and ensure that each phase is effectively aligned with their peace building activities;
- NGOs should embark on going into the communities to teach them non violent conflict resolution;
- The NGOs members should be committed to the activities for peace building and be honest in discharging their responsibilities;

- An integrated effort of NGOs with other civil organizations requires effective partnership to yield better activities and aggregate for a significant impact;
- Africans should recognize the importance of NGOs in conflict resolutions and peace building in societies, and therefore undertake researches on the activities of NGOs in Africa for significant documentation.

### Conclusion

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are doing even more peace building activities than any official governmental agencies. In many of the areas of the world at large and in Africa in particular, they have a long term presence that is afflicted with intractable conflicts. NGOs are in an excellent position to engage in a wide variety of peace building activities. Added to the process of providing humanitarian aid and mediation, they are also well positioned to engage in empowerment and capacity building among the local population in getting them involved with the adversary in a variety of joint activities. In accordance with official government peace building efforts, the goal NGO efforts is usually conflict reduction and/or resolution, not just between official actors but also among ordinary citizen.

Again, much peace building efforts especially peace church members like Christian union, Christian women group try to foster reconciliation through apology, prayer and forgiveness. Some other organizations work for mutual understanding and prejudiced reduction. This is pursued through development of joint projects and confidence building activities involving opponents, at the grassroots level. Even though their projects and strategies vary, they all encourage increased contact and co-operation between people on all sides of the conflict.

Conflict and peace building exist in literature. Nonetheless, most opinions accepted that conflict involves disagreement, frictions, and misunderstanding, violent and non-violent, in the course of relationship with others or with inner self. Peace building actions to create and sustain peace results in all its ramifications are also available.

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