

**PEACE BUILDING IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES
(WHOSE PEACE ARE WE BUILDING?)**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses issues relating to peace building in contemporary times with an answer to the question of whose peace are we building? To achieve this objective, the paper defines some basic terms or concepts, highlights the dimension of peace, clarifies the peace processes, discusses the phenomenon 'culture of peace', conceptualises peacekeeping, itemises the stakeholders in peacekeeping and presents the ways of actualising peacekeeping among stakeholders.

2. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following key concepts are central to the understanding of peace generally and peacekeeping in particular.

a. **Peace:** This refers to a condition of social harmony in which there is no social antagonism; that is, a condition in which there is no social conflict and individual and groups are able to meet their needs and expectations. It is a political condition that makes justice possible. However, peace is a process:

- i. that relates to existing social condition
- ii. that is not a dynamic and not static process;
- iii. that is not a finished condition but 'a work in progress';
- iv. that increases or decreases according to the objective of socio-economic and political conditions;
- v. that is complex and multifaceted.

b. **Conflict:** This is an intrinsic and inevitable part of human existence. It is the pursuit of incompatible and particular interests and goals by different groups. It is therefore a relationship between two or more parties (individuals or groups) who have, or think they have incompatible goals.

c. **peace building;** this refers to efforts and intervention aimed at overcoming the root causes of conflict and cultural contradictions which is at the root of conflict in order to manage the processes of peace making and peacekeeping.

3. DIMENSIONS OF PEACE

Peace, as a concept, is primarily concerned with the creation and the maintenance of a just order in society. It is subdivided into six different components, viz

- i. the absence of war (or absence of direct violence)
- ii. Justice and development (absence of structural violence – poverty, unemployment etc.)
- iii. respect and tolerance between people.
- iv. Gaia (the earth i.e. harmony or balance in, and with the ecosystem-ecosphere)
- v. Tranquillity and inner peace (spiritual peace), and
- vi. ‘wholeness’ and making whole’(being complete)

4. CULTURE OF PEACE

Despite the above, peace is further classified as

- a. Negative peace: this is the peace existence which includes only the absence of direct violence, war, fear and conflict at individual, national, regional and international levels.
- b. Positive peace: this is peace in existence with absence of unjust structure, unequal relationship, justice and inner peace at individual levels. This is the real or complete peace because it includes both the absence of war (direct violence) and absence of unjust structures (indirect violence).

A culture of peace consists of values, attitudes, behaviours and ways of life based on non-violence and respect for the fundamentals rights and freedom of every person.

In a culture of peace, power grows not from the barrel of a gun but from participation, dialogue and cooperation. It rejects violence in all its forms including war and the culture of war. In place of domination and exploitation by the strong over the weak, the culture of peace respects the right of everyone, economic as well as political. It represents a caring society which protects the right of those who are weak-(children, the handicapped, the elderly and the socially disadvantaged).

In culture of peace, people assume a global human identity that does not replace but is built on other identities, such as gender, family, community and ethnic group. The full

participation and empowerment of women is essential for the development of the culture of peace, it cannot be imposed from outside. It grows out of the beliefs and actions of the people themselves and develops differently in each country and region, depending upon history, culture and traditions.

5. PEACE PROCESSES

Four main forms of peace process have been identified. Each of these is expressed along the axis of conflict and development as shown in the diagram below:

PEACE ENFORCEMENT	PEACE MAKING
PEACE KEEPING	PEACE BUILDING

High

C
O
N
F
L
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C
T

LOW

LOW

DEVELOPMENT HIGH

i. **peacekeeping**: a situation in which conflict processes are low and the conditions for development are limited (or low).

ii. **Peace Enforcement**: A situation where conflict is high and condition for peace or development is low. This required the activities of peace enforcers to create space for increasing development and reducing conflicts.

iii. **Peacemaking**: this situation arises where conflict is high but there are viable conditions for pursuing development.

iv. **Peace building**: this applies to situation where there is low conflict and high prospect for development.

Form this diagram, the best situation in the peace process is that of **peace building**.

6. CONCEPTUALISING PEACE BUILDING

Peace bulding can be articulated from the view point of two schools of thought viz:

a. **Top -Down** peace building: this refers to the conflict intervention effort by powerful outsiders acting as experts, imposition their own conception and prescription, and ignoring local cultures and capabilities.

b. **Peace Building From Below (Bottom – up)**: this favours the respect, promotion and use of local human and social-cultural recourses in building the peace. This is similar to such notion of ‘using African solution for African problem’.

The United Nation distinguishes between several different kinds of intervention to bring about peace. In addition to humanitarian aid or emergency assistance, designed to provide the immediate means of survival for populations at risks, the main interventions are

a. **Peace-Making**: these are intervention to end hostilities and bring about an agreement using diplomatic, political and military means as necessary.

b. **Peace-Keeping**: these entail interventions such as monitoring and enforcing an agreement using force as necessary. These include verifying whether agreements are being kept and supervising agreed confidence building activities.

c. **peace-Building**: these are undertaking programmes designed to address the causes of conflict and the grievances of the past and to promote long term stability and justice.

From the foregoing, it is pertinent to emphasise the following characteristics of peace building.

1. it is not primarily concerned with conflict behaviour (who is at fault and at what point offences were committed) but it addresses the underlying conflict and attitudes that give rise to violence.
2. it concentrates on unequal access to employment, discrimination, acknowledged and unforgiving responsibilities for the past crimes, prejudice, mistrust, fear, hostility between groups.
3. it is a low-profile work that can continue through all stages of a conflict.
4. it is likely to be strongest either in later stages after a settlement and a reduction in violent behaviour or in earlier stages before any open violence has occurred.
5. it is most often used to describe work that has peace-enhancing outcomes.
6. it attaches great importance to how things happen. It is about the process as well as the activity itself and its outcomes.

7. STAKEHOLDERS IN PEACE BUILDING

- i. The political class who are divided into hostile and violent groups on the premise of electoral process that are riddled with malpractices.
- ii. The insurgents who picked up arms against democratically elected government in a political state.
- iii. The tribal or ethnic group on vengeance mission or reprisal attack on other ethnic group(s) in a plural society of a political state with history of unfair justice orchestrated by a majority against minority groups
- iv. The large pool of unemployed youths in a state with high earning from foreign export of national resources that are squandered through inefficient policies that could not generate employment.
- v. The majority female genders who are used to perpetuate the males in governance while edging out women from political office in male dominated polities.
- vi. The hostility that are generated through failed and weak state apparatus that could not sustain the crucial responsibility to protect leading to genocidal actions along religions, ethnic and tribal lines.

vii. The traumatised minority who are excluded from governance and national resources distribution leading to the diswelfare of splinter minority group who hold the majority group in prejudicial contempt.

viii. The survivor of religious and ethnic cleansing resulting in failed and falling confidence on governance capacity to be fair, just and equitable.

ix. The elderly, the infirm, the handicapped and the girl child who are subjected to unfair cultural practices that have potential to hinder the development of the victims physically, socially and emotionally.

x. The zones experiencing unfair dealing in resource sharing, utilisation and control.

xi. The policy failure that did not translate the gains of democracy to the majority in the urban area, thus creating heated policy for redistribution of national wealth.

8. ACTUALISING PEACE BUILDING FOR STAKEHOLDERS

In the light of the foregoing, peace building will fail in its outcomes if the following stakeholders are not managed in their attitudes, behaviour, and action.

a. the uneducated and those with obsolete skills in the globalised competitive world, to upgrade their skills so that they can fit into the productive system and earn a living.

b. the excluded sidelined citizens whose efforts to participate in free and fair elections remained a mirage.

c. the quest for resource control and the national strategic interests politically and economically.

d. the victims of exclusive tendencies in all national spheres mediated in corruption and sharp practices in politics.

e. the victim of smuggled arms and unchecked large scale murder generating national humanitarian emergencies.

9. CONCLUSION

While this paper supports bottom-up approach to peace building and also the use of African solution for African problems, there is the need to overcome corruption, complicity and complacency in the governance. Transparency, accountability and

legitimacy would enhance peace building and reduce incidences of violence and conflicts.

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