Peace-building through African civil society: The role and place of NGOs with special reference to the Democratic Republic of Congo

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INTRODUCTION

- Cycles of violence and peace have been the shared history of each region of the world. For centuries, international conflicts occurred in many countries.
- As human beings on this planet we enjoy a very interesting existence in a fascinating environment.
Introduction (continued)

- One of the most gripping elements of human life is the everywhere present phenomenon of conflict.
- That conflict is always caused by a problem may of course be regarded as a truism. It is, however, a concise way of emphasizing three useful insights:
- The obvious truth that every conflict is caused by a particular difficulty.
The acknowledgement that conflict may arise as a valid way of highlighting a basic problem.

The prospect of solving the problem concerned and thereby resolving the conflict.
Ending war and starting broad-based recovery are crucial tasks for the international development community.

Nowhere is more urgent than in Africa, which has seen devastation and human misery on an unprecedented scale (88% of world conflicts).
- Communities have been displaced, and many poor people have lost control over their lives and livelihoods.
- Conflict has also undermined development strategies, eroding the capacities of state institutions to an alarming degree, while political uncertainty has deterred private investment, both domestic and foreign.
The ability of unscrupulous leaders to ferment ethnic hatred has been facilitated by economic decline. Political turmoil has made it easier to plunder the continent’s abundant natural resources.
The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is the site of one of the world’s worst ongoing humanitarian crises.

Although the country emerged from what has been called “Africa’s first world war” in 2003 when the former warring belligerents came together to form a transitional government,
credible mortality studies estimate that up to 1,200 people continue to die each day from conflict-related causes, mostly disease and malnutrition but ongoing violence as well.

- Rampant corruption and pervasive state weakness allows members of the national army and members of armed groups alike to perpetrate abuses against civilians.
DEFINITION OF BASIC CONCEPTS

1. Conflict:
   - A situation in which people, groups or countries are involved in a serious disagreement or argument.
   - A violent situation or period of fighting between two countries
   - A situation in which there are opposing ideas, opinions, feelings or wishes
   - A situation in which it is difficult to choose
2. Peace:

- A situation or a period of time in which there is no war or violence in country or an area.
- The state of being calm or quiet
- The state of living in friendship with somebody without arguing

4. Civil society:
   - The term "civil society" dates back to British philosopher John Locke. He saw civil society as people who have "a common established law and judicature to appeal to, with authority to decide controversies between them. ...
Civil Society consists of informal and formal networks, groups and organisations which act independently of the market and state. ...
Mapping of conflicts in the D.R. Congo
The DRC is a country rent by ethnic strife and civil war since 1994, culminating in the First Congo war that toppled Mobutu in 1997.

Since 1998, the country has suffered greatly from the impacts of the devastating Second Congo war (sometimes referred to as the African world war) and believed to be the world’s deadliest conflict since World War II.
The underlying reasons behind these conflicts are nothing other than a deficiency in good governance.

These conflicts are ultimately political conflicts and hence each has its own historical dynamics.

Political conflicts will continue unless congolese sit down together truly to deal with the key and recurrent political questions.
These conflicts reoccur despite DRC being endowed with enormous human and natural resources, this is the paradox.

The country, once referred to as one of the richest countries in the world, because of persistent conflicts and corruption, we have seen the country turned into one of the poorest in the world and its greatest resource — it's people — continues to struggle in the face of war.
The major conflicts in DRC which require the attention and action of Civil Society

- Armed conflicts
- Political conflict especially militarism, dictatorship, bad governance, political greed and discrimination
- Ethnic differences: discrimination, tribal/ethnic wars and cultural and traditional conflicts
- Land disputes/wrangles
- Economic injustice
- Corruption
- Nepotism and tribalism
- Gender imbalance: oppression of women
- Domestic violence: family conflicts
- Family institutions conflict
- Economic/development imbalance between East-West, rich and poor disparities.
- Religious conflicts: doctrinal differences
The role and place of NGOs in peace building and reconciliation in D.R. Congo

- The civil society, who are directly affected by the conflicts have had until recently no role in conflict resolution.
- The African continent in general and D.R. Congo in particular have in recent years realized that conflict resolution; prevention and peace building can only be sustainable with the involvement of government, military, and civil society in a tripartite team.
- This, of course, is not to the exclusion of the corporate business world that has a stake in control of world economic resources.
The conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo induced the largest humanitarian disaster since World War II, with an estimated 5,400,000 Congolese lives lost.

It’s estimated that 1,200 people die every day from epidemics and emergency situations related to that conflict, most particularly in the eastern part of the country.

Recently, over 1,6 million people have been repatriated to DRC from neighbouring countries whereas some more 1,6 million are still displaced.
Every month, about 40,000 people flee their homes for fear for their security.

The survivors of war and ethnic conflicts suffer for long time from trauma and physical related impairment including the widespread use of rape as an instrument of war.
The challenge for us is to help people change their attitudes towards each other, empowering people to engage in economic activities to ensure economic gains are fairly distributed, by:

- Joint advocacy for peaceful resolution of conflicts and addressing the basic needs of the voiceless: shelter, food security, health services to orphans and widows.
- Collective promotion of human values, justice, accountability, peace, reconciliation, transparency, good governance and respect for life.
- Joint involvement in the process of national and regional elections
- Intermediary role between political leaders and civilians
- Promoting dialogue between conflicting parties
- Setting up community based projects that contribute to reconciliation between conflicting parties.
- Promoting and enhancing collective interventions
- Working towards strengthening the family ministries
- Continue preaching message of forgiveness and reconciliation
- Enhancing continued interactions among NGO
- Promoting joint effort in resettling of the displaced people in war torn areas.
- Be role models in the fight against corruption
NGOs to be represented in conflict resolution efforts

Encouraging information sharing among member organisations of the Civil Society

Educate communities at all levels on peace and peaceful resolution of conflicts

Mobilise communities for peace and reconciliation
- Participate in rehabilitation of communities affected by conflicts by providing psycho-social and spiritual support
- Advocate for respect for freedom of speech, equity in distribution of resources, good governance and demilitarization of politics.
- Research on conflict, peace building and reconciliation
From armed forces to civilian life
From crisis to rehabilitation
From crime to repentance

- Healed militia-girl, giving repentance testimony.
- She used to be the body guard of a top war lord in north-east of DRC).
- She had massacred many people during the war and looting including her own husband.
Repentance marching and reconciliation session in Bunia and Nyankunde
SHARING OF PEACE BUILDING EXPERIENCES BY PPSSP

The Programme de Promotion de Soins Santé Primaires (PPSSP) was created in 2002 as a consortium of three Faith Based Organisations (FBO) namely the Evangelical Medical Centre of Nyankunde (CME), the Evangelical Community at the Centre of Africa (CECA-20) and the Panafrican Institute for Community Health (IPASC).
Following the interethnic conflicts in Ituri district, the civil war and the politico-economic crises which were prevalent in the eastern Congo, these 3 organisations had to flee towards Beni territory after the destruction, looting and killing they were victims of.

They joined together to form an emergency and relief programme in order to assist more effectively the displaced people as themselves were displaced.
Its effort in peace building include:

- Humanitarian assistance to IDPs from all ethnic groups respecting humanitarian rules
- Health promotion among IDPs, returnees and host communities
- Recruiting staff from all ethnic groups regardless their conflict
- Trauma counselling towards IDPs and victims of sexual violence
- Training of local leaders including religious leaders in trauma counselling
- Family mediation
- Peace promotion between IDPs and host families
- Peace building education in IDP camps and communities
- Encourage communities to work together through construction of water and sanitation facilities and other community based works
- Training of community leaders on disaster prevention and impact mitigation
- Community based sexual violence prevention
- Promotion of gender balance within the organisation and in beneficiary communities
From a pond to clean water
Community capacity building
The lady in slippers is a widow who had been raped. She was about to commit suicide as she became pregnant after rape. Through counseling by PPSSP staff (in white blouse), she recovered and loves her baby (playing).
Conclusion & recommendations

- Peace doesn’t have a cost
- Everyone, everywhere needs peace
- African Civil society has been doing something in creating a culture of peace but much is still needed to be done
- In order to succeed in creating a culture of peace we need to recognize its multi-faceted dimension and nature and everyone should do his own part in the process.
- We need to promote peace, democracy and reconciliation within the culture before we do it between the cultures.
- Officials and nonofficial levels (government and NGO’s) must be involved.
- Every individual should put into practice the values, attitudes and forms of behaviour which inspire the culture of peace in our family.
community, town, region and country by practicing and promoting nonviolence, tolerance, dialogue, reconciliation and justice in our everyday lives.

Governments, International community and corporate multinationals should value people’s lives over wealth (exploitation of natural resources).

While struggling for life consider also other people’s interests
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THANK YOU VERY MUCH

MERCI BEAUCOUP

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