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**HIGHER EDUCATION,
PEACE & SECURITY
IN THE EASTERN AFRICA REGION**

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01

INTRODUCTION





This paper stems from issues that were deliberated on at a regional conference titled, *Emerging Issues in the Sciences, Climate Change, Peace and Security and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)*, organized in Djibouti, in May 2017 by UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa.

The paper examines the issues and challenges of peace and security in Eastern Africa region. It puts into perspective higher education in the region, in terms of assess, quality, relevance, knowledge and skill products, and capacity to solve social challenges of society. The May 2017 Djibouti Conference on Higher Education, Peace and Security aimed at placing higher education at the center of understanding the complex regional challenges with regard to peace and security in a broad context, including poverty, climate change and environment, intergenerational transfer of knowledge, colonial/neo-colonial heritage, regional integration, cultural resources, and unemployment. The centrality of education as a tool for social transformation in Africa, and elsewhere is a critical element of transforming society, however that very element is up for debate. Specifically, the impact of higher education as a means of accelerating the sciences (natural and social sciences) is due for robust debate, as to whether or not, it is leading to innovations, creativity, and research-led solutions to challenges of society.

The critical issue for the Djibouti Conference deliberations was: could Science, technology and in more recent years, information and communications technology, lead to transformation of society in the region? The other issue was: is it only the natural sciences that have the greatest potential for that transformation, or that the social sciences and humanities are relevant in this context? Besides, since issues of peace and security are complex, could multidisciplinary approaches be appropriate? This paper is not a rapporteur's report of the Djibouti conference. It is a set of reflection and reframing of issues for further debate and discussion.

02

CONTEXT

This paper is conceived within the perspective of the framework of Agenda 2063: “The Africa We Want” which stipulates the continental vision in terms of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena. In order to achieve the above vision, the African Union delineates its core mandate in terms of

- (a) democracy and governance,
- (b) peace and security and
- (c) socio-economic development and structural transformation.

The AU Member States challenged themselves to the realization that this mandate could not be possible when the continent is plagued by conflicts, they therefore; declared 2020 as the year of “*Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa’s Development*”. From this declaration, ending conflicts, especially violent conflicts became their primary concern. Realizing a conflict-free Africa is the dream of every African. Hence, the need to understand the root causes of conflicts in Africa¹. This is underpinned by the fact that Africa is the least developed continent in the world: highly indebted, great numbers of its citizens wallowing in poverty, recurrent extremist violence, and weak and unstable states. Along these structural challenges are issues of bad governance: institutional dysfunctionality, violation of human rights, transnational crimes, communal conflicts over common natural resources, climate change crises, and weak technological advancement. Every year, Africa spends USD 40 billion on arms and an estimated 500000 people die while millions are displaced due to conflicts². Given the above broad challenge, it is suggested that participation of women, girls and young people in governance processes could offer a great opportunity in reduction of conflicts. It is observed³, for example, that the African demographic transition shows that young people are expected to increase by 42 percent by 2030⁴. This should be seen as an asset, not a threat.

1 Zipporah Masau, “Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020” <https://www.un.org/africanrenewal/magazine/december-2019-march-2020silencing-guns-africa-2020>

2 Zipporah Masau (ibid).

3 Aya Chebbi, “Better Education for African youth can help silence Guns” <http://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/better-education-african-youth-can-helpsilence-guns>

4 UNECA, “Africa’s youth and Prospects for Inclusive Development: Regional Situation Analysis Report” (2017).



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To turn this resource into an asset, governments should invest in education of young people, especially the girl child. Governments should also put in place youth-led accountability mechanisms in all their programs. This will translate into empowerment of the youth, and as a consequence; positive behavioral change will be realized. However, there are key interesting issues that are linked to the search for youth empowerment. These include: a deeper understanding of the nature of the state in Africa, its colonial heritage and by its neo-colonial structure and function.⁵

Questions continue to be raised regarding the nature of state in Africa. Whereas the African Union has advanced a good case for “African solutions for African problems”, however, the African state which should be at the forefront of these efforts, suffers from what some writers have termed as “neo-colonialised post-colonial”⁶ conditions which make people’s aspirations for peace and development rather elusive. Those holding such a view, argue that total deconstruction of the African state be undertaken in all its forms, if conflicts are to be minimized⁷. Whether or not such a radical stance is tenable in short run, needs to be tested. Nonetheless, it is pertinent to observe that the African state inherently suffers from structural and institutional weaknesses partly because it has not pushed for “pedagogy of democratic engagement”⁸ (a concerted effort aimed at inclusive democratic decision making in society). There is a need to reconceptualize state-society relations in order to understand the root causes of conflicts in the Eastern Africa region.

5 Siphamandla Zondi, “African Union Approaches to Peacebuilding: Efforts at Shifting the Continent towards Decolonial Peace” <https://www.reliefweb.int/report/world/african-union-approaches-peacebuilding>

6 Zondi (ibid).

7 Zondi (ibid).

8 Kevin Kesler, “Peace Education: An Assessment of UNESCO-APCEIU and University for Peace” *Journal of Peace Education*, Vol.10, No.2, (2013).

03

APPROACH AND SOURCES

The work on this paper is purely desk review. The review utilized published works, websites of major continental organizations (both official and civil society organizations), university sources, blogs, speeches, and data from international organizations. Where possible, people's voices were captured from secondary sources and policy think tanks. The paper dwells on the following sub-themes:

- Conceptualization of issues,
- Understanding violence and diversity management;
- Climate change and environmental crisis;
- Marginalization of women;
- Marginalization of the youth;
- civic space and social engagement;
- Building a culture of peace and non-violence;
- Connecting higher education, security and peace in Eastern Africa;
- Conclusions; and
- Recommendations and policy implications



“Violent conflict contributes to low levels of human security, exacerbating poverty, insecurity, unemployment, poor service delivery and absence of peace .”

04

OBJECTIVES OF THIS DISCUSSION PAPER

This discussion paper is an attempt to highlight the salient issues relating to challenges of peace and security in the Eastern Africa region. Three broad objectives are identified to guide discussions. First, we sketch the most important factors that contribute to the different types of conflicts that continue to ravage the Eastern Africa regions, focusing on four complex challenges.

Second, we examine why African institutions of conflict prevention and conflict resolution have not been able to effectively control violent conflicts that have contributed to eroding the region's efforts at socioeconomic development and democratic governance.

Third and finally, we discuss some essential steps that need to be undertaken to assist the region in revitalizing the culture and institutions of peace and cooperation, stemming out of the culture of violence, with a focus on the role of higher education, specifically in producing knowledge, skills and taking actions that seek to address these challenges in a proactive manner.

Three broad questions inform the discussions on the challenges of peace and security in the Eastern Africa region, as follows:



1

How can universities and institutions of higher education and research position themselves to produce technological and social sciences knowledge, relevant to addressing challenges of peace and security, from policy perspectives?



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What type of actions can universities and other higher education institutions actively engage with broader segments of society, in particular, the youth demographic, and the issue of quality education for all, in seeking a collective response to the challenges of peace and security, including those associated with climate change and ICTs?



How can universities and institutions of higher education and research position themselves to produce technological and social sciences knowledge, relevant to addressing challenges of peace and security, from policy perspectives?

05

CONCEPTUALIZING PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE EASTERN AFRICA REGION

Eastern Africa region has faced a myriad of complex violent conflicts over the past five decades. The most intractable conflicts, largely revolve around problems of diversity management and nation building. Conflicts have revolved around the crating of “modern” state and ethnic identities, as well as religious identities. This type of conflict, which starts at the domestic level often spills beyond the country into neighboring countries, especially when the group fighting the state shares identity with other groups living in other countries. Another type of conflict that transcends national boundaries is inter-communal conflicts, which are mostly fought over basic resources, such as land, water and other resources.

Evidence suggests that once they break out, these conflicts usually become unmanageable, and often require serious efforts at addressing the problem, if a lasting and sustainable solution is to be found. It is observed for example, that managing and resolving conflicts requires a deep understanding of the root causes of the conflict. In Eastern Africa some of the main causes of the conflict include: governance characterized by weak states, weak institutions; lack of democratic norms (eg free and fair elections); lack of equitable access to resources by all ethnic groups; and marginalization of civil society in conflict resolution.⁹ Triggers of intrastate conflict in an African setting be many and varied, however, four key triggers are often cited. These include

- (a) internal battles between groups to gain the control of the state,
- (b) ethnic groups seeking greater autonomy from the state or to create their own separate state;
- (c) failed states where the authority of the national government has collapsed, and armed groups struggle to gain control of the state; and
- (d) impoverished states where citizens find socio-economic situation unbearable (they could free to other countries or rebel against the government).¹⁰

9 Dorina A. Bekoe and Paul Omach, *Building Peace in Eastern Africa*, IPA, Makerere University & Africa Peace Forum (2002).

10 Richard Bowd & Annie Barbara Chikwanha, “Analyzing Causes of Conflict, Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking in Africa” in Richard Bowd & Annie Barbara Chikwanha, *Understanding Africa’s Contemporary Conflicts: Origins, Challenges and Peacemaking* Monograph No.173, Africa Human Security Initiative(AHSI), 2010.



These conflicts may take various forms vis: structural conflict, violent conflict and transformative conflict. Structural conflict will occur when society experiences dominance of coercive relationships, for example authoritarian governments. Violent conflict will emerge when society experiences intricate political polarization that is not easily resolved by dialogue. On the other hand, transformative conflict arises when society is able to accommodate conflict alongside cooperation between contending parties¹¹.

Though conflict is not always negative, violent conflict could produce unstable societies due to psychological fear, increased uncertainty; social stagnation; and at the extreme end, destruction of property and lives and dislocation or displacement of people. Such situations of conflict partly explain why there are high numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons in Eastern Africa. In dealing with violent conflicts, three approaches are distinguished¹²: the first one is conflict management, the second is conflict transformation and the third

is conflict resolution. Conflict management refers to the use of formal institutions and instruments (eg early warning, preventive diplomacy, sanctions, coercive actions etc) to deal with a conflict. Conflict transformation is where a combination of informal and formal methods is used to address the root causes of a conflict, especially collective violence. In this approach, human security is critical, for example addressing basic needs of the people, supporting the quest for justice and initiating reconciliation. Conflict resolution attempts to address the root causes of the problem, so that they are minimized or eradicated, hence building new relationships in society. In this way, conflict may be de-escalated, and peacebuilding starts. Peacebuilding is conceived in terms of maintaining peace and stability once hostilities have ceased. It may be defined as "a set of strategies which aim to ensure that disputes, armed conflicts and other major crises do not arise, and if do arise, they do not subsequently recur".¹³

¹¹ Richard Bowd & Annie B. Chikwanha, *ibid.* p.xii.

¹² Cilja Harders (undated) *Gender Relations, Violence and Conflict Transformation*. Accessed at: <https://berghof-foundation.org/files/publications/harders-handbook>

¹³ Necla Tschirgi (undated), "Defining Peacebuilding." Accessed at: <https://www.idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/bitstream/handle/10625/23281/112813.pdf?sequence=>



The UN Agenda for Peace conceives peacebuilding as a post-conflict activity involving actions aimed at identifying and supporting structure that could strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict. Several strategies for peacebuilding may be used, including: preventive diplomacy, mediation, local elders' initiatives, ceasefire monitoring, reintegration of ex-combatants into public offices, building mutual confidence

and trust of all parties; ensuring that all concerned parties adhere and play by the rules; and opening up spaces for democratization and broad participation. In Eastern Africa, some of these methods have been adopted eg *Gacaca* courts in Rwanda and *Mato Oput* in Acholi, Uganda at the end of genocide and end of Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) wars respectively. It is observed by scholars and humanitarian aid workers that traditional mechanisms of dispute



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“The key driver of radicalism in East Africa is religious fundamentalism, the religious beliefs geared towards superiority of one belief over others. .”

resolution and peacebuilding are more durable than the formal state systems.¹⁴ In both of these countries, these community-based mechanisms worked quite well in rebuilding communities in the post-conflict periods. One professor of Philosophy at Makerere University who studied the Northern Uganda prolonged conflict has argued that in

peacebuilding, the focus on justice should shift from punishment to re-constitutive processes that could lead to healing and harmonious co-existence, hence rebuilding the community¹⁵. The issue here is not to glorify traditional peacebuilding over the formal systems. The issue is that there are some advantages that come with grassroots approach. For example, the following advantages associated with the traditional peacebuilding mechanisms have been cited amongst the cattle-rich people of Teso and Karamoja in Uganda. In these communities, they have challenges of water and pasture during dry spells. These cause conflicts. However, sophisticated norm-bound traditional mechanisms are reported to embed these advantages: widespread trust and confidence, believing that their systems are close to minds and hearts, less corruptible, rehabilitation of victims and easy re-integration of the victims and offenders into society. And more than the formal system of justice, in the traditional mechanism, justice is seen to be done as it is not a one man or woman’s decision, but a council of reputable persons, usually Elders¹⁶. In context of Eastern Africa, the main approach has been a combination of both formal and informal mechanisms of peacebuilding.

¹⁴ Paul Omach, “Democratization and Conflict Resolution in Uganda” *The East African Review*, vol41, 2009.

¹⁵ Wilfred Lajul, “Justice and Post LRA War in Northern Uganda: ICC versus Traditional Justice System” *IAFOR Journal of Ethics, Religion and Philosophy*. Vol3, Issue2, 2017.

¹⁶ Chris Chapman & Alexander Kagaha (undated), “Resolving Conflicts Using Traditional Mechanisms in Karamoja and Teso Regions of Uganda”. Briefing Paper for Minority Rights Group International

06

VIOLENT CONFLICTS, EXTREMISM AND SOCIAL DIVERSITY

Eastern Africa, as indeed is the case with other African regions, violent conflict is responsible for direct and indirect death of millions of people. Besides, violent conflict contributes to low levels of human security, exacerbating poverty, insecurity, unemployment, poor service delivery and absence of peace¹⁷. Also, these and other conditions have contributed to emergence of an increased incidence violent extremism, radicalization and terrorism in the region. For example, such violent attacks broadly referred to as “terrorist” have occurred in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Somalia. It may be argued that forms violence, its causes and drivers should be delineated. For example, the following terms should be contextualized, vis: radicalism, extremist violence and terrorism, for they have different meanings, and forms of action. Radicalization has been on the increase in Eastern Africa. Radicalization is referred to as a process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly extremist political, social or religious ideals and aspirations that reject contemporary ideas

and expression of freedom of choice¹⁸. Radicalism may be violent or non-violent. However, an understanding of why and how some people get radicalized because this is critical for security, reconciliation and peacebuilding. It is observed that recruiters

With hundreds of linguistic groups, the Eastern Africa region is a mosaic of identities and cultures

of people into radical beliefs and ideals take advantage of weak and fragile states, desperate economic deprivation, fear of uncertainty or persecution, and social marginalization. However, the key driver of radicalism in East Africa is religious fundamentalism, the religious beliefs geared towards superiority of one belief over others. For example, Armstrong posits that

¹⁷ Bowd and Chikwanha(opcit).

¹⁸ Patrick Devine, “Radicalization and Extremism in East Africa” Journal of Mediation an Applied Conflict Analysis,” vol.4, no.2.

fundamentalism aims to create a world where religion is at the centerstage of secular society or a rebellion/counterculture against liberal ideals.¹⁹ In some cases this accompanied by violent extremism. This refers to a situation where radical ideals and rhetoric extend into violent extremism, described by United Nation Office on Drugs Crime (UNODC) as a violent action encompassing a wide range of manifestations- religious, ideological, political, cultural or social to commit terrorist acts²⁰.

In Eastern Africa, violent extremism has a tinge of terrorism²¹. In region, violent extremism is associated mainly with indigenous dissident groups such as al-Shabab in Somalia, Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda (LRA), and Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) based in DRC and Western Uganda, and other groups linked to them. Though these group use religion as a mobilizing ideology, it is not clear that they are fighting for religious piety.

Their surreptitious aim appears to be the capture of state power, and their immediate target is to gain material wellbeing. Amongst these groups, al-Shabab in Somalia has been most dangerous - it has brought the once prosperous nation to its knees, with economy devastated, people's lives shattered, 1.5 million people living as internally displaced and depending food aid; 900,000 living as refugees in Eastern Africa countries (308,700 in Kenya, 255,600 in Ethiopia) and 246,700 in Yemen²². One of the most destructive types of conflicts in the Eastern Africa region has been the state-identity conflicts, which are related to a host of factors, including poor management of diversity, and a failure of the nation-building project. With hundreds of linguistic groups, the Eastern Africa region is a mosaic of identities and cultures. It is also a host to various immigrant

Uneven inter-identity opportunities of empowerment, along with the state's failure to establish inclusive institutional platforms for addressing grievances, obstruct a peaceful process of nation building.

populations. Diversity and partition of ethnic identities do not, in themselves, condemn the region to conflicts. When managed properly, diversity does not hinder peaceful nation building that creates a s community of citizens who share common institutions of governance and cooperate in building a decent standard of living for all citizens. It is often recognized that diversity strengthens and enriches societies. Taking a leaf from a theoretical perspective advanced by a German sociologist, Francis²³, the ethno-nation building project in Africa could be explained from his three-plonged assumptions. He envisions that nation building would along these continuums, vis:

- demotic nationalism which aims at homogenising culturally heterogenous populations, included arbitrarily into political units according to democratic principles,
- ethnic nationalism aiming at inclusion of each major society into one state of its own; and
- restorative nationalism which aims at advocating for the autonomy and ultimately independence of formerly independent units, submerged into the larger political structures.

19 Karen Armstrong, "Fundamentalism and the Secular Society" *International Journal: Canadian Journal of Global Policy Analysis*, Vol.59, No4, 2004.

20 <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/terrorism/module-2/key-issues/radicalization-violent-extremism.html>

21 David H. Shim, "Terrorism in East Africa and the Horn: An Overview." Accessed at: <http://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/jcs/article/view/218/376/> last

22 UNHCR, Somalia Situation 2017. Accessed at: <https://www.unhcr.org/591ae0e17.pdf>

23 E. K. Francis, "The Ethnic Factor in Nation-building" *Social Forces*, vol. 46 no.3, 1968.

These tendencies have been emerging at different times in Africa. The most recent examples in Eastern Africa where separatist struggles led to new nations include: South Sudan gained independence from Sudan, Eritrea did the same from Ethiopia, and in Somalia, the region of Somaliland has been struggling for autonomy from the rest of the country. Even in a country like Ethiopia with a federal political structure, which has allowed broad political powers to its regional political units, still ethnic uneasiness continues to resurface,

Sudan as refugees, and left millions internally displaced²⁴. Before launching the attack on TPLF, the Ethiopian Prime Minister told the federal army to “carry out their mission to save the country”²⁵. Before concluding this section, there is a need to cast an eye on the concept of ethnicity. An ethnic group may be defined as a community whose members share a collective name, myth of common ancestry, a shared historical memory, common culture, sense of solidarity and a specified homeland²⁶. Also, it needs to be stated that ethnicity is



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for example the Oromo ethnic group with its security apparatus-the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) has been demanding more powers, even when the current Prime Minister is one of their decent. On a more radical stance, in November 2020, the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) of Tigray region dared the federal government forces in an open insurgent war over their right to determine their political processes without consultation with the Federal Government, a confrontation that pushed thousands of Tigrayans into

not one thing. It has dimensions which explain the context in which it may be used. The main dimensions are: primordial, instrumentalist, and constructivist²⁷. The *primordial* aspect is that when ethnicity is used, it connotes identity acquired at birth, the values, and traditions that shape the individual and the community. The *instrumentalist* perspective conceives ethnicity as a bargaining chip for the community or some of its members to secure a share of national resources or to overcome social marginalization. The *constructivist* perspective

24 Samuel Gebre, “Ethiopia Prime Minister Orders Army to Respond to Tigray Attacks” Accessed at: <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/ethiopia-prime-minister-orders-army-to-respond-to-tigray-attacks>

25 Samuel Gebre (ibid).

26 Michael Otieno & Israel N. Nyadera, “Ethnicity and Politics in Kenya’s Path to Democracy and Development” *Journal of Social Policy Conferences*, Vol.78, 2019.

27 Otieno & Nyadera (ibid).

takes ethnicity as a socially constructed to serve certain conscious purposes, hence, ethnicity is not a fixed realm of society. It has been noted by some scholars that ethnic diversity is not the main problem of Africa. Some look at ethnicity as a colonial narrative that should be debunked²⁸. However, because the state in Africa was constructed by the colonial powers on a shaky ground, a question that continually pops up is: “to whom does the state belong?” In terms of ethnic identity of those holding state power at a particular moment in time, the



Because the state in Africa was constructed by the colonial powers on a shaky ground, a question that continually pops up is: “to whom does the state belong?”



state belongs to them and their clients; while others are marginalized²⁹. Depending on the extent of marginality, conflicts do arise. Francis Deng³⁰ is very categorical in this debate. He argues that colonialism stripped Africa’s people of the dignity of building their nations based on their own indigenous values, institutions and heritage. He asserts that the “modern state” in Africa is a product of Europe, not Africa. Yet at the moment, Africans face a predicament: to try

to reverse this would lead to collapse of some countries. However, the contemporary state has been hijacked by political entrepreneurs to promote, not the interests of the people but their own ambitions. This is the predicament. This has led some scholars to assert that ethnic diversity can easily become a curse, especially where there is a deficit in political will, or in the capacity to manage it effectively³¹. When the state fails to provide all identities with equitable opportunities to participate in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of their countries, crisis after crisis emerges. Some groups, who may see themselves as underprivileged relative to others in terms of economic, political, cultural and religious opportunities, may engage in conflict against the state³², which is the dispenser of privilege. In other words, uneven inter-identity opportunities of empowerment, along with the state’s failure to establish inclusive institutional platforms for addressing grievances, obstruct a peaceful process of nation building. Uneven access to opportunities, especially under conditions of poverty and resource scarcity, fosters discontent, protests, riots, and even civil wars. Often political entrepreneurs among the political elite also exploit the situation of uneven development in their efforts to gain power³³. Nevertheless, there is a strong view that it is not ethnicity perse that causes conflicts in Africa, it is the nature of African politics and management of societal issues by the leaders that causes cause conflicts. Such challenges include poverty, economic inequality, failure of political institutions, conflicts over natural resources and social exclusion that are the drivers of conflicts³⁴. It is argued that African conflicts are not caused by ethnicity, if anything, ethnicity could spur constant intergroup negotiations, hence, act as a catalyst for development and peaceful co-existence of the people.³⁵

28 Adele Jinadu, “Explaining and Managing Ethnic Conflicts in Africa: Toward a Cultural Theory of Democracy,” Claude Ake Memorial Papers No 1 Uppsala University and NORDIC Africa Institute

29 Adele Jinadu (ibid.)

30 Francis M. Deng, “Ethnicity: An African Predicament” Accessed at: [https:// www.brookings.edu/articles/ethnicity-an-african-predicament](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/ethnicity-an-african-predicament)

31 Rock Ajulu, “Politicised Ethnicity, Competitive Politics and Conflict in Kenya” *African Studies*, Vol 61, No.2 2002.

32 Amanda L. Robinson, “Ethnic Diversity, Segregation and Ethnocentric Trust in Africa” *Afrobarometer*, Working Paper No. 166, 2016.

33 Andrew Eke Ojie & Christian Ewruhjakpor, “Ethnic Diversity and Public Policies in Nigeria” *The Anthropologist* vol. 11, Issue 1, 2009.

34 E. Elbadawi & N. Sambanis, “Why are there so many conflicts in Africa?: Understanding and Preventing Violent Conflict” *Journal of African Economies* Vol. 9, Issue 3, 2000.

35 Elbadawi & Sambanis (ibid).

07

ENVIRONMENTAL CRISES AND CONFLICT

Worldwide, climate change is an issue of great concern. The world is experiencing depletion of the ozone layer, rising of sea waters, loss of balance of the eco-systems, drying of rivers, floods, locust invasions, unexplained death of sea animals, loss of pasture for pastoralists, and degradation of soils of farmlands. These global climatic changes have sparked a multitude of uncertainty, economic and social ramifications that have no immediate solutions, as well as accelerating all kinds of conflict. In Eastern Africa, most climatic and environmental changes have manifested in forms of frequent droughts, deforestation, loss of vegetation and biodiversity, increased soil erosion, desiccation, and desertification. Conflicts are emerging over water bodies (lakes and rivers), forest resources and grazing and agricultural lands. The frequent cycles of droughts, along with irregular rainfall, have made the traditional economic systems of subsistence peasantry and pastoralism, which together employ over 70% of the Eastern Africa region's population, increasingly unsustainable. It is reported that in semi-arid areas the majority of people, are dependent on both agricultural and animal grazing. People living in semi-arid areas live in

abject poverty, lack food, have high maternal and infant mortality rates, low levels of literacy, poor housing, poor access to health services and enjoy limited political participation³⁶. In terms of gender, of gender equality, women in pastoral communities are marginalized. Masculinity rules the world of pastoral communities. Women have designated roles: roofing houses, fetching water and firewood, growing and preparing food, looking after children and many other chores. These societies are patriarchal, men dominating the economic sectors of cattle and other animals, selling them and determining the use of the finances, owning the land, controlling water points. The men have elders' councils that determine literary all the decisions in the community³⁷. Surprisingly, it is reported that women have a tendency of encouraging their spouses to go out and fight for animals, otherwise they are perceived not to be strong men.³⁸ From a governance perspective, there are weak linkages between national policies and community aspirations or wishes, for example, it noted in the case of Karamojong pastoralists in Uganda, that first government policy makers have little knowledge of what these people want, and secondly, government fails to

36 Michael O. Odhiambo, *The Karamoja Conflict: Origins, Impact and Solutions*, Oxfam Report, 2003.

37 USAID, *Climate Change and Conflict IN Uganda: The Cattle Corridor and Karamoja* CMM Discussion Paper No.3, 2010.

38 Odhiambo (ibid).

appreciate the intertwined linkage between the people and their ecology, which sustains their livelihoods³⁹. For example, in trying to control cattle rustling in Karamoja, the government of Uganda adopted a militant approach. However, it is nevertheless observed that cattle rustling had increased circulation of small weapons increased criminality, for example, raping women, killing innocent people, destabilizing and looting from neighboring communities, and causing havoc. Possession of weapons had intensified conflicts. Besides, the cross-border conflict between the Karimajong, Pokot and Turkana had for time immemorial become a perennial problem, requiring attention of the national leaders of Kenya and Uganda. For example, in September 2019, Presidents Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Kenyatta of Kenya signed a bilateral agreement, at which Kenyatta said “Peace is the foundation of all that is good. Where there is no peace, no development, there is no wealth that can be made”.⁴⁰ Fighting over increasingly scarce resources is fueling conflict in environmentally degraded areas. As natural resources become increasingly scarce, the more communities tend to fight over their use. The traditionally established systems of conflict management have become weak with time⁴¹. There have been other conflicts over water resources. First, the conflict over Mizingo island in Lake Victoria between Uganda and Kenya. A tiny island in this giant lake is said to be surrounded by deep waters with plenty fish resources. Hence Uganda and Kenya have been squabbling over it since 2004, and no settlement has been arrived at to-date⁴². A bigger contestation has been and is still raging between Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt over the waters of the mighty Nile river, the longest international river in the world, covering several countries, and a source livelihood for millions of people-supplying domestic, industrial, and agricultural purposes. The construction

of a mega USD 4 billion electricity dam (the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam) rubbed the other Nile water users the wrong way. The negotiations have not yielded results yet⁴³. Given that the growth rate of the modern sector of the economies of majority of the countries in the region is inadequately developed to absorb the unemployed rural and urban areas populations, there is a lot of pressure on natural resources. Although some researchers have noted that the ecosystems of East Africa have been severely degraded, the leaders have not fully taken up climate change as the main priority for development.⁴⁴ The prevailing trend towards of unemployment, intensification of



As natural resources become increasingly scarce, the more communities tend to fight over their use



forced migration, and social instability can be expected to intensify. The countries of the region lack carefully developed coping mechanisms much less a strategy of transformation of the subsistence sector of their economies.⁴⁵ As result, vulnerability to climate change will continue to threaten lives and socio-economic development. This situation clearly undermines peace in the region, and the social and human dynamics of these environmental challenges of climate change, are too severe for the states to effectively manage on their own. UNEP challenges this debate by asserting that though these climate variabilities will cause tremendous conflicts, it is incumbent on policy makers to realize that natural resources and environment have a significant impact on peace and security.⁴⁶

39 Ashley D. Inselm, “Environmental Degradation and Conflict in Karamoja: The Decline of a Pastoral Society” *Journal of Global Environmental Issues*, Vol.3, No.2, 2003.

40 <https://www.independent.co.ug/museveni-kenyatta-sign-cross-border-peace-agreement>

41 UNEP, *From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role Natural Resources and Environment* Nairobi, 2009.

42 <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2019/2/18/mizingo-island-africas-smallest-war>

43 <https://www.bbc.com/news/news-africa-53494604>. For an earlier discussion, see Ashok Swain, “Ethiopia, the Sudan and Egypt: The Nile River Dispute” *Journal of Modern African Studies* Vol.35.No.4, 1996.

44 Donald A. Mwiturubani & Jo-Ansie van Wyk, *Climate Change and Natural Resources Conflicts in Africa*, Institute for Security Studies (ISS), 2010.

45 FAO, “The Economic Lives of Small Farmers: An Analysis based on Household Data” Accessed at: <https://www.fao.org/3/a-i5251e.pdf>

46 UNEP, *From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role of Natural Resources and Environment*, UNEP, Nairobi, 2009.

08

MARGINALIZATION OF WOMEN



President Barack Obama, the former United States President asserted thus: “Communities that give their daughters the same opportunities as their sons, are more peaceful, are more prosperous and develop faster.” Though Eastern African countries have adopted gender-sensitive policies, marginalization of women and girls remains a major issue in the region.

According to the Gender Inequality Index (GII), a widely accepted measurement of inequality between men and women, the countries of the region have a very poor record on gender equality with the GI in the region ranging from 0.53 to 0.63 (with 0 indicating absence of inequality). It is also likely that the actual gender gap in the region is much worse than indicated by the already poor GI scores. The GI estimates women’s inequality mostly on the basis of three criteria, namely:

- (a) the participation rate of women in the workforce,
- (b) the state of reproductive health of women, as measured by maternal mortality ratio and adolescent fertility; and
- (c) the political empowerment of women relative to men measured by the percentage of parliamentary seats women hold and by their attainment of secondary and higher education⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ World Economic Forum. Accessed at: <https://www.reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/the-global-gender-gap-index-2020/>



Women's participation in the workforce is rather high in the subsistence economies of rural areas in most of the countries of the region



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Women's participation in the workforce is rather high in the subsistence economies of rural areas in most of the countries of the region, although there are stark differences in the division of labour and in the control of the fruits of labour between men and women. Merely measuring workforce participation therefore severely underestimates the level and nature of the gender gap. The index also does not include robust indicators, such as

lack of access to property inheritance from parents, and even from diseased husbands, and lack of equitable participation in decision-making. Measuring the gap with proper indicators is likely to produce much worse scores. Developing sound policy also requires appropriate indicators in assessing the nature and magnitude of the problem. Enhancing the capacity of women in the region to become more active participants in decision-making can empower them to tackle the various cultural practices that suppress women's aspirations for equality. Among such cultural practices, include early marriages, polygamy, and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Empowerment of women to tackle such oppressive practices would also enable them to participate effectively in decision-making and to contribute to peace-building in the region. In terms of gender equality, males take a disproportionate share of resources, yet, research indicates that women produce 70% of food in Africa. It has been suggested that if women were to have as much access to land as men in Africa, food yields would increase by 20 % to 30%, and would reduce hunger by 17%⁴⁸, hence food insecurity would be solved.

performance-by-region

48 World Economic Forum. Accessed at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/03/women-farmers-food-prod> World Economic Forum. Accessed at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/03/women-farmers-food-production-land-rights>

09

MARGINALIZATION OF THE YOUTH AND CONFLICTS

A major debate that is dominating policy and academic practitioners is focused on the youth. Africa with the highest youth population in the world. This could represent a “youth dividend” or a “youth bulge.” In this context, UNDP has noted that Africa’s young people will be 830 million by 2050. The point of contention is whether this will present a promise or peril⁴⁹.

The UN Secretary General has observed thus: “The frustration generated in young people that have no hope in future is a major source of insecurity in today’s world... Many of Africa’s young people remain trapped in poverty that is reflected in multiple dimensions, blighted by poor education, access to quality health care, malnutrition, and lack of job opportunities.”⁵⁰ It is reported that the World Bank estimates that 40% of the young people who join rebel activities to create insurgency are motivated by lack of economic opportunity⁵¹. Most governments in Eastern Africa have not harnessed the youth demographic dividend.

First the youth have not been given adequate opportunity to effectively participate in decision-making. The youth continually receive lip-service promise as “leaders of tomorrow”. For example, youth participation in decision-making remains low, especially in politics, where their participation is limited by monetization of

politics, election-related violence, intimidation and harassment⁵². The 2010 Constitution of Kenya attempted to address this situation; however, several challenges still stand on the way.⁵³ In countries like Uganda where the Constitution provides for inclusion of the youth, the youth demographic dominance is manipulated by the interests of the elite rather than serving the majority of the youth⁵⁴. The weak economies of the region have also subjected the youth to disproportionately high unemployment. This is largely attributed to structural issues in society and economy such as: the fast movement of youth from rural to urban areas, education that is not imparting relevant skills for available jobs, economies that are not creating enough jobs, low levels of technology, and lack of entrepreneurship. It is therefore, estimated that youth unemployment is more than double of the older population. Yet, the youth are prone to engaging in crime and undermining security and the social cohesion

49 UNDP, “Promise or Peril? Africa’s 830 million Young People by 2050.” Accessed at: <http://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/blog2017/8/2/Promise-Or-Peril-Africa-s-830-Million-Young-People-by-2050>

50 UNDP (ibid).

51 UNDP (ibid).

52 The Carter Center, “Youth and Women’s Consultations on Political Participation in Kenya: Findings and Recommendations” Accessed at: <https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdf/news/peace-publications/democracy/Kenya-youth-and-women-politicalparticipation>

53 Women’s Empowerment Link, “Young Women’s Political Participation in Kenya” Research Report for IDRC, 2013.

54 Michael Mugisha et al, “Youth Participation in Political Processes in Uganda” Journal on Perspectives of African Democracy and Development, vol. I, No. I, 2016.

of society⁵⁵. It is not uncommon for leaders in Africa to tell the youth to ‘go back to the land.’ The land tenure systems in many of the region’s countries are also not flexible enough to create sufficient access to land for the youth, hence not easy to create youth employment⁵⁶. The combination of these factors has fostered a growing disenchantment and despair among the youth. The youth are increasingly vulnerable to recruitment for participation in ethno-nationalist conflicts as well as terrorism and other risky adventures such as illicit extraction of natural resources⁵⁷. Some of them are also increasingly radicalized and have engaged in violent extremism. Many others are swelling the ranks of international migrants, despite all the hardship and abuse migrants are subjected to on the way to their destinations and the discriminatory practices they often face in their host countries. UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on *Youth, Peace and Security* adopted in 2015, provides a framework that recognizes and further calls for the engagement of young people as agents of change and transformation in their respective societies. Furthermore, the resolution acknowledges the special qualities that the youth possess in building peace, enhancing social cohesion and promoting national unity, provided those qualities are properly harnessed. The resolution urges multiple stakeholders, including UN Member States, UN agencies and other entities to support the youth by facilitating their roles and responsibilities as peacemakers. In many respects, Resolution 2250 is quite similar, not the least in spirit, to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on *Women, Peace and Security* adopted in 2000. To be clear, Resolution 1325 was adopted at a moment when the world was alarmed at the devastating impact of armed conflict on women as victims, hence the urgent need by the international community to embrace them as positive agents of peace and security, and supporting them in playing

that role. Similarly, Resolution 2250 was also adopted at the climax of global outrage at the increasing participation of young people in what has now become part of our everyday lexicon, namely; violent extremism, hence the need to equally embrace the youth as positive contributors to peacebuilding, and relevant actors in quest for an inclusive, secure and prosperous world. Despite the above stated international efforts to overcome the negative portrayal of the youth as forces of destruction, and all efforts geared toward curtailing the negative actions of the youth; it is imperative to reinforce their agency as productive and change-making members of society.

9. (a) YOUTH CIVIC AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

In a world where narratives on youth, and around issues related to youth, are increasingly associated with negative phenomena such as *violent extremism, radicalization, and rebellion*. Sometimes, the youth are considered to be apolitical or to possess low civic consciousness. However, experience shows that through their associations and engagement on social media platforms, the youth can engage critical issues in society; seeking change at local and national levels; speaking out against corruption, oppression and injustice. They do all this through mainly through non-hierarchical organizations. Others have formed or joined structured civil society organizations to advance their cause⁵⁸. Most of the engagements the youth have with the state are to change society for the better. However, the older generation of leaders perceive the youth as disruptive which portrays the youth as a negative force in society. However, in Africa, it is the youthful individuals and groups that contributed to the attainment of independence from colonial masters in 1960s and thereafter. Their engagements today are somewhat an extension of those struggles,

55 Semboja H.H. Haji, “The Youth Employment in East Africa: An Integrated Labour Market Perspective” *African Integration Review* Vol. 1, No. 20 2007.

56 IFAD, “Youth Access to Land, Migration and Employment Opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa” Papers of the Rural Development Report, 2019

57 Roos Haer, C.M. Faulkner & B.E. Whitaker, “Rebel Funding and Child Soldiers: Exploring the relationship between Natural Resources and Forcible Recruitment” *European Journal of International Relations* Vol 26, No 1, 2020.

58 UNECA, *Africa’s Youth and Prospects for Inclusive Development: Regional Situation Analysis Report*. 2017.

except that the target is different. Young people can, and are, indeed major agents of change and social transformation of their communities by virtue of their daily activities in the civic spaces where they operate, with tremendous positive impact on peacebuilding and social cohesion in their communities, localities and greater society. For example, the works of artists and musicians, whose messages about their societies, call for transformation and better governance.

The visual paintings and music lyrics, the youth advocate for peaceful and non-violent change in undemocratic states. It has become convenient these days for autocratic leaders to label young people as a burden on society.

The youth issues need to be carefully studied. Nevertheless, the youth experience challenges in their civic engagements. First, the youth aspirations and their world view are not well understood by the older people, they refer to them as 'disgruntled' people. What seems to emerge in the narratives is the concept of "youthhood", which has come to mean a time in the life of the youth that signals possibilities, overcoming constraints, and putting up creative energy for the youth to act on their interests⁵⁹. It is also important to highlight the role of university students who constitute a significant percentage of the youth population across countries in the Eastern Africa region. Years of political fragility and social turmoil have virtually brought some of these countries to a brink of collapse. In these countries, in the post-conflict period, the leaders have emphasized security has overshadowed any form of positive youth contribution to development, it is also true that as the main development goal at the expense of other goals. For example, when students call for better education and provision of study materials, they are labeled 'anti-government' and their organizations are targeted and infiltrated by state agencies with the aim of disorganizing or pulling them down. In some cases, such as Somalia

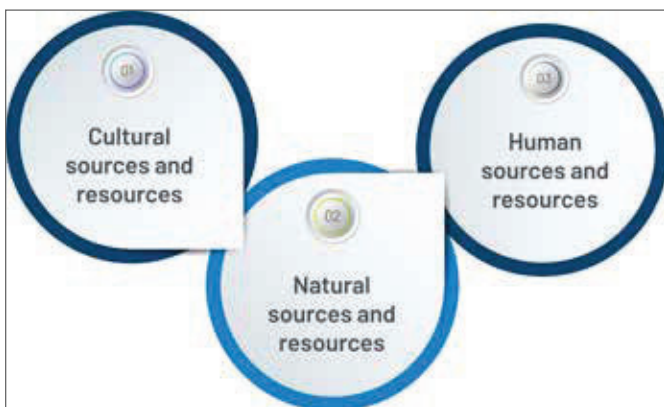
where the militant and violent *Al-Shabaab* (an Islamist outfit) remains active, however, students have very much been at the frontline agitating for change through peaceful and non-violent means. In 2016, UNESCO launched the first *Somali Youth Peace Dialogue* in Mogadishu, a platform designed to place youth as central actors in the conversation on peace and security in Somalia, with the participation of decision makers, including political leaders such as the then Prime Minister of the Federal Republic. During the four-day *peace dialogues* which took place at Mogadishu's *Al-Jazeera Hotel*, more than one hundred Somali youth, most of them from the country's premier university, Somali National University, participated in the robust deliberations about the future of Somalia, and placing at the center the positive role that young people can play in promoting a peaceful and socially cohesive country. In a city where *Al-Shabaab* militants are constantly looking for opportunities to exterminate innocent Somalis, many of who do not subscribe to their so-called message of *radicalization*, it is refreshing to note the determination of young university students articulating a non-violent path to change and social transformation in Somalia.

9 (b) WORKING TOWARD A CULTURE OF PEACE IN EASTERN AFRICA

A culture of peace is a set of *values, principles, attitudes and behaviour*, underpinned by respect for others, *tolerance* of opposing views, and preference for *non-violent resolution* of disputes and conflicts. Peace, in this sense, and a culture of peace for that matter, is not a condition or an event, but rather a *way of life*. To paraphrase the great American civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., peace is after all not just the absence of war but the prevalence of justice. In other words, to build an inclusive and peaceful society requires also uprooting the structural underpinnings of violence such as inequalities,

⁵⁹ UNECA (ibid).

which in our world today is so prevalent within and among countries, thus making violence an attractive option to many young man and women. A Culture of Peace calls upon all people to take steps towards internalizing the concept and incorporating it in every aspect of life. At a time when the world is faced with the major challenges of security, with the youth caught in that maze, the concept is even more relevant now. To internalize the concept and practice of the Culture of Peace on a sustainable basis, some fundamental pillars are worth reflecting on. These pillars are:



Cultural sources and resources refer to domestic and community-based resources such as language, traditions, folk stories, idioms symbols, arts and crafts, musical lyrics, dance and ceremonies. These are sources of indigenous knowledge; and play key role in transferring messages of conflict resolution and peace.⁶⁰ Natural sources and resources refer to the continent of Africa as a place of abundance in terms of natural resources. The concept of culture of peace looks at this abundance of natural resources either as a blessing or a curse. They can be a blessing if rationally and sustainably exploited and utilized. However, they can be a curse if squandered by a few greedy people. Human sources and resources

refer to the African continent as one with the highest number of young people in the whole world⁶¹. These can be tapped as agents of social, economic and political change in society. These days the young people are using social media networks to communicate their issues, and to advocate for the change they want. It is pertinent to suggest that to counter the participation of the youth in violent extremism, the above pillars of a culture of peace be internalized and propagated. The countries in the region should put in place mechanisms to enhance a culture of peace to dissuade young people from violent behavior. The education systems need to be transformed to focus more on hands-on skills rather than pure academic pursuits. Hands-on training will empower young people to be self-providing, and independent, hence work for betterment of society. Civically competent citizens are able to stand on their own, promoting values of non-violence. Building well-rounded citizens who understand their civic responsibilities is key to transforming society. As the Eastern Africa region grapples with the fast-changing global dynamics, it will only be able to adapt by strengthening its own societies through a culture of change and peacebuilding. One thing is certain though, that promoting civic and social engagement by the youth and involving them in nation and peacebuilding as meaningful partners will significantly contribute to dissuading them from accepting the ideologies of violent extremism. However, every process of social change such as a culture of peace faces challenges. For example, in Eastern Africa region, such challenges include: undemocratic states that do not encourage broad-based participation of citizens in civic affairs, curtailing the work of civil society, and imposing harsh restrictions on enjoyment of people's rights and freedoms. Also, abject poverty can increase people's apathy and social frustration. Besides, some social or religious ideologies have strong appeal, they easily recruit young people into the ranks of extremist groups. This is particularly possible amongst the unemployed youth.

60 UNESCO, *Africa Sources and Resources for A culture of Peace*. Accessed at: <https://unesco.org/new/filesadm/MULTIMEDIAHQ/AFR/pdf/Eng/brochure>

61 Ibid.

10

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISMS

Countries of Eastern and the Horn of Africa are known to have a strong culture of peace making with age-old institutions of dispute resolution. It is observed that African indigenous institutions have great potential for conflict resolution. Some observers have noted that peacebuilding is not new in Africa, that the continent's rich history contains abundance of diverse approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding; only that Western approaches have overshadowed them.⁶² It is further pointed out that certain embedded concepts of peacebuilding are unique to Africa such as *ubuntu*.

The concept and practice of *ubuntu* encapsulates humanity, and the interdependence of each member of the community being there for others, and others for him/her. It is social capital that helps resolve conflicts. It has its own unwritten rules that shared amongst the members of a community⁶³. The main factors that fuel *ubuntu* include: participation of community members in conflict resolution, responsibility of members to support the victim and perpetrators to overcome guilt. There is social solidarity in dealing with challenges associated with conflict. In general, the people espouse practices of empathy, forgiveness, remorse, repentance, sharing, unity and solidarity when conflicts occur. They proceed to peacebuilding on those grounds. Such institutions of peace making still operate rather effectively at the local level, mostly but not exclusively in rural areas. Apart from *ubuntu*, there are other similar approaches across Africa, these include: *Baraza*, *Gacaca*,

Mato Oput, *Indaba*, *Lekgotla*, *Sankofa*, and *Imbizo*. The various council of elders, such as the *Kaya elders* of the Miji Kenda, the *Njuri Ncheke* of the Meru people, the Eritrean village *Baito*, and the council of elders of the Dinka and Nuer are well known institutions of peace making. Traditional leaders, such as the *Sultans* of Somalia, the *Leopard Skin* chiefs of the Nuer, and the *Abba Gada* of the Oromo, to name but a few, are active in the processes of making peace. Amongst the pastoral communities of Karamoja and Teso in Uganda, the traditional systems: *Akiriket*, council of elders in Karamoja and similarly *Arriget* in Teso are institutions for settling disputes in their communities such as murder, rape or conflict over grazing lands. The culprit is cleansed and the offended family is compensated with 30 to 60 cows⁶⁴. The shared core principles of the various traditional institutions of conflict resolution, the primary aim is to reconcile the parties in dispute rather than to impose punishment on the offenders.

62 GSDRC, "African Approaches to Building Peace and Social Solidarity" <https://www.gsdrc.org/document-library/african-approaches-to-building-peace-and-social-solidarity>

63 Ibid.

64 Chris Chapman & Alexander Kagaha "Resolving Conflicts Using Traditional Mechanisms in the Karamoja and Teso Regions of Uganda" Briefing, Minority Rights Group International. Accessed at: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4a97dc232.pdf>

The process of reaching a resolution is usually transparent, participatory, and consensus-based. In other words, participation in the deliberations is open to all adult, although women rarely participate. Minority views are also respected in the deliberations since decisions have to be consensual reached through negotiations that narrow differences rather than based on the choice of the majority. Recent studies, however, suggest that in some cases, indigenous dispute mechanisms do not succeed. A study done on indigenous conflict resolution among the Turkana, has there is partial success. It is reported that among the Turkana, their indigenous dispute resolution mechanism known as *Ekisil* is used when they want to access pasture in the dry season, once the rains come, they flout it⁶⁵. This indicates that some African traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution should not be assumed to succeed all the time. Despite the presence of a rich culture of peace making in Eastern Africa, the region finds itself ravaged by endless conflicts. One explanation for these continuing conflicts seems to be that the traditional systems

are essentially neglected by the states and their operations, and are confined to intra-community conflicts at the local level. The core principles of the traditional system have the potential to serve as the basis for the advancement of a peaceful process of nation building. The participatory and consensus-based system of conflict resolution can, for example, be developed and applied to resolve state-identity conflicts. Inter-party relations can also benefit from the consensus-based system on key issues and mitigate post-election conflicts. Unfortunately, while traditional systems of conflict resolution provide judicial services to large segments of the population, they are rarely utilized in addressing conflicts beyond the local level. The long-term survival of these valuable institutions is also under threat, as traditional leaders lack effective mechanisms of transmitting indigenous knowledge about the institutions to younger generations since schools hardly incorporate the traditional systems of peace making into their curricula. This needs to be rethought, as there are valuable lessons to be learned from the traditional systems.

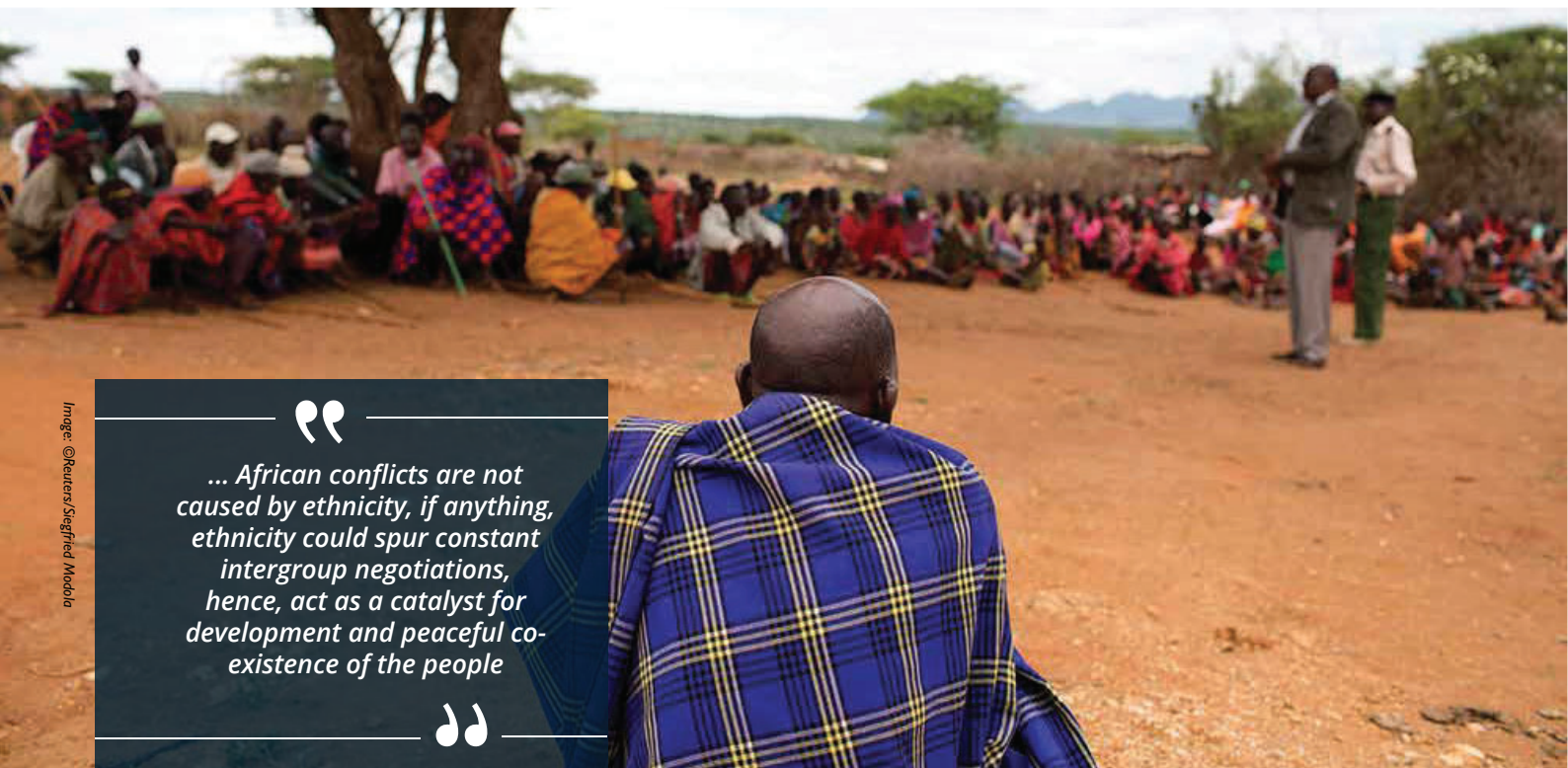


Image © Reuters/Siegfried Modola

“
... African conflicts are not caused by ethnicity, if anything, ethnicity could spur constant intergroup negotiations, hence, act as a catalyst for development and peaceful co-existence of the people
 ”

⁶⁵ Apio Jackline Adhiambo, “Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms among the Pastoralist Communities in the Karamoja Cluster: A case Study of the Turkana” MA Dissertation, University of Nairobi, 2014.

11

HIGHER EDUCATION, CONFLICT AND PEACEBUILDING

Education in its broadest sense, be it informal (family based) or formal (institutionalised) provides a good window of opportunity for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in all societies. Education may be referred to as a system of acquiring and transmitting knowledge, values and skills from one person to another, or from one generation to another. In the modern world, education is provided both at home and in established institutions outside the home. In the latter, education has an additional role of socialising young people into values of the larger society, giving the learners a world view, and futuristic approach to life.

An exposition to modern technology, music, diverse cultures and values has the effect of modelling young people to become tolerant, humane and reasonable beings. It is also known that education provides one of the clearest goal-path for humans to acquire skills and knowledge necessary for their economic prosperity, contribution to economic development, establishment of order in society. Education is a foundation for rational behaviour and actions of most people.

Higher education on its part, consolidates the broad knowledge, conceptual skills and the specialised technical aspects of the people who go through it. The cognitive capacity and application of practical skills acquired at the higher level of education, drive people to become problem-solvers in their societies. Through such processes, peacebuilding becomes part of human daily endeavours.

Peace education should anchor a new culture of peace which embraces the respect for diversity, dialogue, human rights, gender equality, and democratic participation, to achieve national unity, promote greater regional integration, and in the long-term, create local, national, regional and global security. The UN General Assembly Declaration and Programme of Action of 1999 looks at a culture of peace in terms of values, attitudes, and behaviour that reflect respect for life, human rights, human dignity, rejection of violence and society's commitment to principles of freedom, justice, tolerance, solidarity, and mutual understanding between people. In this connection, it is envisaged that institutions of higher learning could play a key role in mitigation, resolving and championing peacebuilding through peace education, for example, revisiting their curricula, offering relevant education in terms of civic consciousness, education related to



“
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 all people to take steps
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 ”

employment opportunities, training leaders with peace building skills, and espousing a culture of transparent and accountable governance. Such a societal culture impacted by the college system is likely to create responsible citizenship- one which detests violence and works to create peace. The centrality of education to conflict mitigation and peacebuilding is sometimes viewed as a “two-faced”⁶⁶ phenomenon. On the one hand, certain types of education have the potential to stir or exacerbate conflict by imparting values that accentuate or even promote violence, and intolerance of other people’s values. On the hand, education has the potential to inculcate values, attitudes and knowledge that mitigate conflict in society. Three issues stand out that connect education and conflict mitigation. First, the need for all societies to protect the children’s rights to education even in conflict situations. This has the effect of guaranteeing society with people who will lead a future generation. Secondly, education should be provided in a way that “does not harm”, or what is termed as “conflict -sensitive education”⁶⁷. By this, it means that agencies responsible for education such as the state, local governments, education institutions, stakeholders in education

and funders ensure that education that is provided to the learners model them in such a way that they make conflict better, not worse in their societies. Thirdly, education can play a positive role in conflict transformation. This requires the education system as a whole is reformed and reshaped in such a way that the learners and members of society have totally different perceptions, attitudes and values from those held before or during a conflict situation. The transformative aspect of education may be undertaken in the following ways: creation of justice (especially restorative justice), institutional reforms including governance, and creating means of sustainable livelihoods and economic development. Post-conflict development should be undertaken whereby the younger generation is re-educated to understand the root causes and drivers of conflict in their society and the possibilities of averting or preventing conflict are made part of education. In this regard, Alan Smith⁶⁸ has suggested “conflict-sensitive governance of education.” This should aim to promote equity, transparency, inclusion and cohesion in society. These actions could lead to peacebuilding in a society previously beset by conflict.

66 UNICEF, The Role of Education in Peace building: Literature Review, UNICEF (2011).

67 Ibid.

68 Smith Alan, “The Influence of Education on Conflict and Peacebuilding” Background Paper Prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report on the theme: “The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education” 2011.

12

HIGHER EDUCATION DISCIPLINES IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACEBUILDING

At the centre of the debate on the role of higher education in peacebuilding is: which disciplines have the more impact on conflict resolution and peacebuilding? Is it the humanities or the physical sciences? Is it interdisciplinarity? First, by its multifaceted nature, peace education assumes an interdisciplinary character, as a means of acquiring varied knowledge and skills for non-violent conflict resolution and for promoting the values of peace.⁶⁹ Institutions of higher education can be instrumental in advancing peace education and research on conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and cooperation for socioeconomic development. Universities in Africa can also play a critical role in promoting local, national and regional for a that discuss issues of conflict, peace and peacebuilding. Students in the universities of Eastern Africa can form associations or strengthen the existing leadership forums. A good example is the Uongozi Institute of East Africa. This student leadership institute is headquartered at the University of Dar es Salaam. It brings together on annual basis, bright undergraduate students from universities of East Africa for a six-week residential

training course in leadership. The training focuses on intellectual debates on African challenges, critical thinking, values of teamwork, pan-Africanism and regional cooperation⁷⁰. Since 1998 when the Institute started, some of its alumni are already well placed in government and other agencies, and are probably making an impact on policies. Although the Uongozi Institute academy is residential, in the modern digital age, some of such academies can be virtual, benefiting from internet-based Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC). Teaching, learning, engagements and networking can be done online. For instance, it is conceivable that a consortium of universities in the region can develop online courses on issues such as conflict management, violent extremism, terrorism, global citizenship education, and peacebuilding. The universities could work with governments to deliver such course through the MOOC Platforms.

Secondly, in light of the above, the fundamental question is how then can universities and other agencies combine natural sciences, and social

⁶⁹ <https://www.encyclopedia.com/education/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/peace-education/>

⁷⁰ africa.upenn.edu/Org_Institute/Uongozi_la.html

Institutions of higher education can be instrumental in advancing peace education and research on conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and cooperation for socioeconomic development.



and human science research, and using ICT as a means, to tackle the challenges of human security, peace and climate change, working in partnership with established networks within the region, already working on these issues. Related to that, is how can universities position themselves in light of the current geopolitical realities of uncertainty, so as to be effective in producing highly qualified specialists, while at the same time contributing to knowledge production and creating an environment conducive for employment of university graduates and young people in general, so that they do not fall prey to negative forces that have in recent times capitalized on their vulnerabilities? Another good example is UNESCO's flagship programme known as Management of Social Transformation (MOST). In this programme, UNESCO partners with national authorities, scientific communities, and civil society to strengthen the link between research, policy, knowledge and action. It aims to foster positive change towards inclusive and sustainable development.⁷¹ This programme includes the issues of the youth. For example, 3-4 May 2019, at Makerere University in Uganda; MOST

held a workshop under the theme "Youth, Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa". The workshop examined key issues affecting the youth, and possible contribution to peacebuilding. The key issues discussed included: leadership building amongst the young people, youth as change agents, peacebuilding and conflict mitigation; and linking youth innovations with research and policy⁷². These kinds of workshops that bring young people together to discuss broad governance issues including the relevance of knowledge acquired at universities make a contribution to peacebuilding. One study has pointed out that one of the main weaknesses of higher education in East Africa is the failure of institutions to facilitate cross-national research, low levels of student exchange programs, and weak funding for research and innovations. Within the East African Community area, based on 2012 data only 1.8% of students crossed borders to study in another East African country⁷³. It is observed that East African researchers too, have weak networks. The third aspect is the contested terrain in the debates about natural sciences on one hand, and social and human sciences on the other hand. In recent years, some

71 en.unesco.org/themes/social-transformation/most

72 unesco-uganda.ug/management-of-social-transformation-schools/workshop

73 Ibrahim O. Oanda & Fred Matiang'i, "The East African Higher Education Area" A Global or Regional Space? *Forum for International Research in Education* Vol.4, Issue 3, 2018.

governments have shown preference for natural sciences in universities, attempting to relegate the humanities. For example, the government of Uganda, as a matter of policy, gives 75% of all government scholarships to natural science students rather than humanities at the universities and other tertiary institutions⁷⁴. Whereas, underdeveloped countries need critical technical skills⁷⁵, most of which are based in science, technology and information and communication technologies; these alone may not be sufficient to create sustainable development. A knowledge-based society should be a wholesome society, that embraces all disciplines. Whereas there is no evidence that societies with advanced science and technology have low levels of conflict, it is true that societies with low capacity in science and technology

Most studies associate conflict peacebuilding wit humanities and social sciences.

experience underdevelopment, low productivity, abject poverty, social insecurity and weak institutions. These could be drivers for conflict in society. It is argued that a solution to conflict arising from such circumstances can be tackled by science, for example, exposition of learners to integrated science would

lead to investigate nature, seek answers to challenges, and gain problem-solving capacities⁷⁶.

On the contrary, Omeje⁷⁷, notes that most studies associate conflict peacebuilding wit humanities and social sciences. This is because most university-based courses on peace studies, security studies, conflict studies are located in the humanities. On the policy front, most analysts in policy thinktanks and mediators of conflicts tend to be humanities and social science experts. Nevertheless, it argued that there are two weaknesses with peace and conflict studies in universities:

- i) compartmentalization of knowledge (that belief that those studies are for humanities/social sciences), and
- (ii) the unintended exclusion of the majority of university students from learning about conflict and peace.

It is suggested that such studies should be cross-cutting, hence students from various disciplines should access them and learn them. This view collaborates with Johan Galtung's advice that peace studies raise the need for interdisciplinarity of several branches of knowledge⁷⁸. According to this perspective, conflicts arise from various dimensions, hence the need to embrace integrated knowledge, with various approaches. Another illustrative example of this perspective is to be found in the use of information and communication technologies for conflict resolution⁷⁹. It is noted that fast communication, availability of real-time information, information sharing, facts on issues at hand, and

74 Lydia Namatende-Sakwa and Chia Longman "Government Policy on Science Education in Uganda" Accessed at: biblio.ugent.be/publication/2890724/file/2911818.pdf

75 Joana Chataway et al, "Science Granting Councils in Sub-Saharan Africa: Trends and Tensions" *Science and Policy* Vol.46, Issue 4, 2019.

76 E.O. Onwukwe and P.C. Agommuoh, "Science and Technology Education: A Veritable Tool for Peace, Conflict Resolution and National Development" *IOSR Journal of Research and Methods in Education* Vol.6, No.4, 2016.

77 Kenneth Omeje, "Strengthening Peace Research and Peace Education In African Universities" *African Sociological Review* Vol.19, No.1, 2015.

78 Johan Galtung, "Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution: The Need for Transdisciplinarity" *Transcultural Psychology* Vol.47, No.1, 2010.

79 Sujoy Paul and Sanat K. Rath, "ICTs for Peace: A Philosophical Perspective" *International Journal of Education for Peace and Development* Vo.2, No.1, 2014.

creation of networks amongst various stakeholders facilitate the processes of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Therefore, it can be discerned that all disciplines can play a role in mitigating conflicts, and may be helpful in peacebuilding. However, there is a need to point out that effective teaching and learning of both natural science and social sciences are not as effective in the higher institutions of learning in Eastern Africa. Key challenges include

- i) high tuition fees charged on the learners which exclude the children of the poor;
- (ii) poor learning infrastructure, for example lack of laboratory equipment and chemicals for research,
- (iii) lack of internet connected computers,
- (iv) low motivation of lecturers due to insufficient pay,
- (v) inadequate funding for research; and
- (vi) academic courses that do not lead to employment of university graduates.

The list of challenges could be a full page. The issue at hand is, even with these challenges, how can the Eastern Africa region governments tap into the available human resources to reduce poverty, social frustration and alienation among young people, to tame extremist tendencies? It appears that social inclusion, poverty reduction programs targeting the youth, job training, and opening up spaces for democratic debates and engagement have a potential to mitigate conflict.



13

CONNECTING CONFLICT RESOLUTION WITH DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESSES IN EASTERN AFRICA

Progress in democratization can promote the culture of peace and complement the traditional institutional systems in curbing conflicts in the region. Unfortunately, most countries in the region have made little progress in democratization. Most of them participated in the post-Cold War wave of democratization⁸⁰. They have established multi-party systems and conducted several rounds of elections of leaders and representatives in national assemblies, as well as local councils. Some of these countries attempted to reform the state structures, for example Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya made new constitutional changes that significantly transformed the local councils' structures that increased ordinary people's participation. Though elections remain contentious in most of the Eastern African countries, all the states have attempted to hold periodic multiparty elections, unlike in the past when elections were either absent or held under one-party system. Notwithstanding the periodic clampdowns, when regimes feel insecure and threatened, many of them have also taken steps in liberalizing

the press and in extending civil liberties to their populations. This is a departure from old times when in most of the African countries, the only source of news was state media. A liberalized media, despite working in difficult environments in some African countries⁸¹; is essential for promoting democratic values in society. Moreover, a free media promotes good governance by generating information for accountability and transparency in government and other public spheres of life. Furthermore, civil society organizations (CSOs) have acted as a bridge between citizens and governments.

However, Eastern Africa governments have on several occasions accused CSOs working as agents of foreign interests or conduits for foreign monies to support the opposition parties. In Uganda, for example during January 2021 elections, some CSOs had their bank accounts closed by the state on unfounded allegations that their money was supporting the opposition parties.⁸² In literature and policy today, there is a strong view that liberal democracy which advocates for citizens participation in

80 Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in Late Twentieth Century*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

81 Tanzania's "Bulldozer" President Magufuli Tightening Grip on International Media Ahead of Elections." Accessed at: qz.com/Africa/1894421/tanzanias-president-magufuli-clamps-down-on-foreign-press

82 "Govt Freezes Accounts of 4 NGOs Doing Poll Work" *The Daily Monitor*, December 2, 2020.



Eastern Africa governments have on several occasions accused CSOs working as agents of foreign interests or conduits for foreign monies to support the opposition parties.



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decision making, free speech, freedom of association and assembly, free and fair elections; constitutes an institutionalized means of lessening conflicts. Deliberative democracy opens doors to a multiplicity of dialogues helps various groups to talk, rather than fight. In this perspective, The Community Democracies has advanced a view that...”democracy and human rights are not only goods in and of themselves, but also the most promising path to peace and security in an increasingly turbulent world”.⁸³ It has been demonstrated that while the rise of democracy since the end of the Cold War has witnessed a decline in inter-state wars, on the other hand, intra-state violent conflicts have grown tremendously, largely due the rise of extremist groups, and also the failure of states to live to their social and political expectations.⁸⁴ The issue is that while democracy promises to be accountable, representative, responsive; the reality is that in Africa, democracy stops at the ballot. Most countries in Eastern Africa are plagued by elite corruption and state

capture, repressive laws and policies, and failure of governments to deliver services such as quality education, healthcare and infrastructure. Citizens’ frustration with lack of services and governments’ abuse of human rights, and vote-rigging catalyze low-intensity conflict, which breeds larger conflicts. Extremist violence and criminality have been growing in the region. Governments treat them as terror group activities, yet there is a need to thoroughly study their root causes. The momentum for liberal democracy in Eastern Africa, has stagnated. In late 1990s and early 2000, there was a great promise of democracy in the region. However, in the region, the experiment with the multi-party system has come to be characterized by dominant ruling parties, which have put in place various types of restrictions on opposition parties rendering them ineffective as contenders for power⁸⁵. In a number of cases, the elections which usually are marked by various types of irregularities, have also led to violent post-election conflicts. For example, the

83 Medeleine Albright & Mehdi Jomaa, “Liberal Democracy and the Path to Peace and Security” Report of the Community of Democracies’ Democracy and Security Dialogue, Institute for Security Studies & Brookings, 2017.

84 Catalina Uribe Burcher & Victoria Perotti “Can Democracy Work to Prevent Conflicts? Gulf News. Accessed at: gulfnews.com/opinion/op-eds/can-democracy-work-to-prevent-conflic-1.2092694

85 Sabiti Makara “Presidential Term Limits in Uganda: Do Elections Provide an Avenue for Alternate Power Succession?” in Jack Mangala, *The Politics of Challenging Presidential Term Limits in Africa*. Springer, 2020.



Kenyan elections of 2007, and Ugandan elections of 2011 were followed by massive post-election violence. Moreover, the pre-election period as well as the voting-day in the Eastern Africa countries is characterized by violations of human rights and disregard of the rule of law, with security forces literally taking over the electoral processes. For example, the October 2020 elections in Tanzania⁸⁶ and the January 2021 Uganda elections⁸⁷ were characterized by security forces unleashing violence on opposition candidates and their supporters. These were also compounded by transgressions on civil liberties, individual rights, and clampdown on the organizational abilities of civil society organizations. In addition, the democratic principle

of checks and balances where different branches of government check abuses and failures of each other have been greatly compromised where a particular ruling party has been in power for a long time. The elites of the same party circulate themselves in all the branches of government. To that extent, members of the opposition groups seeking redress of their grievances, are simply brushed aside. In the context of chronic ethnic identity politics in Eastern Africa, those occupying the state perceive themselves as having a right to do so, even if they mostly comprise of the same ethnic background. This client-patron politics has the ripple effect of turning other 'marginalised groups' against the state.



This client-patron politics has the ripple effect of turning other 'marginalised groups' against the state.



⁸⁶ Tanzania Election Watch, Pre-Election Statement by the Tanzania Election Watch Panel ahead of the General Elections on 28 October 2020.

⁸⁷ Kristof Titeca and Anna Reuss, "How Museveni has Mastered Violence to Win Elections in Uganda" African Arguments, Accessed at: africanarguments.org/2020/11/how-museveni-has-mastered-violence-to-win-elections-in-uganda

14

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This desk work review of the theme: higher education, conflict and peacebuilding has explored a number of sub-themes. The task is to establish the extent to which higher institutions of education have engaged, influenced and caused change in the way conflicts are handled, mitigated and resolved in Eastern Africa.

This study concludes that there is no single approach that is fully capable of resolving all aspects of conflict. Instead, a multidimensional approach to knowledge and skills should be used in conflict resolution. It is further concluded that the morphology of knowledge management in the areas of peace studies, conflict studies and security has remained narrow-focused, and needs to broaden to take care of new approaches such as ICTs and governance perspectives.

From the foregoing, the following recommendations are suggested for furtherance of the policy agenda on the issues discussed in this paper. Governments in the region should work closely with partners, including UNESCO, to transform the education sector, including in particular, reviewing and revising existing curricula, incorporating components of African History, values and principles of peace, non-violence and justice

RECOMMENDATIONS

University Curricula

01

- Universities, and in particular, social sciences and humanities faculties must take steps to develop and strengthen the capacity of young researchers in research design and methodology, by developing specific courses to achieve this.
- Universities should work with regional social science and humanities research networks to take steps to develop interdisciplinary courses bringing together social sciences and natural sciences, with a view to mainstreaming peace studies across the university system.

Social Sciences, Humanities
and Policy Linkages

02

- Policymakers and social sciences and humanities researchers at the national and regional levels must put in place mechanisms to facilitate regular dialogues between the lecturers, students and policy makers, to ensure that knowledge produced in institutions of higher education contributes to the development and shaping of national and regional policies and approaches to peace and security.
- A regular (quarterly) production of regional policy briefs on topical issues of peace and security would be a good starting point.

Rural and Urban Dynamics
Climate Change

03

- Governments should work with universities to build knowledge on climate change, develop and strengthen the capacities resilience capacities of local communities, many of who depend on agriculture and pastoralism for their livelihood, to mitigate the social and human consequences of the phenomena.

Women, Peace
and Security

04

- Policymakers, working closely with universities and institutions of higher education should address the contextual issues of poverty, inequalities and structural discrimination that make women marginalised.
- Governments should work with universities should to establish and strengthen research and documentation centres, dedicated to study and understand challenges faced by women vis-à-vis peace and security, but also specifically highlighting the positive role and achievements in preventing conflicts, and resolving disputes at the national and regional levels.

Regional Integration and
Institutional Cooperation

05

- Capitalizing on regional integration schemes, UNESCO should work with governments in the region to promote cooperation and exchange among universities, through the signing of MOUs among them. The use of ICTs should be explored in promoting this cooperation and exchange of knowledge.
- UNESCO should work with governments and universities to promote inter-university conversations and dialogues between and among African institutions of higher education.
- Governments and university research communities should establish mechanisms through which universities can meaningfully contribute to strengthen the capacity of governments in negotiating agreements and contracts related to extractive industries, the environment, migration and refugee and internally displaced people's issues.

Opening Democratic
Spaces and Engagement

06

- UNESCO should work with governments, Universities and Civil Society to train young people in leadership to prepare the next generation of leaders in Eastern Africa.



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