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**CARDINAL ONAIYEKAN FOUNDATION FOR
PEACE (COFP) INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH
OF PEACE AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

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EDITORIAL NOTES

This edition of peace research, published as a Special Issue under Social Development section of International Journal of Applied Research and Technology is an outcome of three (3) years practical civic engagement that COFP Ambassadors/Fellows conducted in various states in Nigeria. The six (6) geopolitical zones have peculiar conflicts and crises that were addressed by the peace ambassadors in this research.

The work of COFP has reached grassroots all over the country and by the next edition, the report will cover the whole of Africa. We hope the reader will enjoy reading the works of COFP Ambassadors for Peace and will be inspired to contribute to peacebuilding in their community.

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Approaches to Peace-making and Challenges to Transformation and Development

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Introduction

Chikun, which has an area of 4,466 km² and a population of 372,272, is a Local Government Area in central Kaduna State, Nigeria (Census, 2006). Its headquarters are in the town of Kurama. Chikun Local Government Area shares boundaries with Kachia Local Government Area to the south, Kajuru Local Government Area to the east, Kaduna South Local Government Area to the northeast, Igabi Local Government Area to the northeast, Birnin Gwari Local Government Area to the northwest, and Niger State to west, respectively. The indigenous people are the Gbagyi people. They also make up a significant population in the area.

People

The people of Kujama are mainly of one ethnic group, the Gbagyi. However, there is also the existence of other small groups. They are subsistent farmers and rely primarily on farming income. Christianity is the dominant religion and is highly practiced by more than half of the population. They have their traditional languages, and some, especially among the youths, have a basic grasp of English. Families overall are from small to very large in number. Among most of them, polygamy is accepted and practiced by many. The community is patriarchal.

Living Conditions

People ordinarily live in communities, with one extended family at times occupying one compound. Their living conditions are essential. They cook with firewood; they have wells fitted with hand pumps donated by some politicians as constituency projects. There is no electricity in most communities, and their houses normally are made of mud with pan roofing sheets though some still use thatch roofs. Furthermore, sanitation in the communities is almost non-existent, causing multiple problems of illness as well as other problems. In terms of power, the men control the power. Women are marginalized both in the home and in the traditional structure. This is true not only in terms of decision-making but also in terms of controlling finances. This holds true also in groups such as religious or social grouping. Their main source of livelihood is subsistence farming. There are some traders in the area, and especially during the dry season, some individuals will take up a small income generating project, e.g., tailoring, in order to supplement the income from farming. At times the men also move into the city seeking temporary employment. However, this practice is lessening due to the many unemployed dwellers in cities who struggle for available jobs.

Education

The level of education is deficient. Few men and women finished primary school. Literacy level is low even for those who completed primary school. Some youth in the communities will have finished secondary school; however, those who could excel in general have left the communities, some for work and some in pursuit of higher education. Because of the low level of literacy, it is often not easy for the people to determine the quality of education given to their children. Some who are more aware send their children out of the community to live in a town or city where there are better quality schools. This has the consequences at times of alienating the children from their parents; at other times, of subjecting the children to becoming servants in a home.

Economic Situation

As noted earlier, the people rely on farming for their major income. The men control the farming as women are not allowed to own land. This gives the men control over the income from farming, though all the family is involved in the labour on the farm. Men often plant cash crops whereas when their husbands give women land, the crop is usually a food crop because the women have the responsibility to provide food for the family, especially when there is a shortage of available funds. As noted earlier, the women supplement their small income through some type of income generating, often tree felling. Others

may get involved in petty trading. Efforts to assist them to see farming as a viable enterprise are slowly achieving results.

Gender Issues

Because the society is traditionally patriarchal, men control access to common goods and decision-making both in the home and in the community. Male children are given preferential treatment over female children, especially in terms of education. Female children are raised with the expectation that they are to be mothers and wives, and do not generally envision themselves as professional women with a career, unless it be that of a teacher or nurse. This is a reason that while the education of small girls and boys is generally at a par, with however, the girls dropping out in large numbers in late primary school and not going on to secondary school. The women carry the major part of the workload, assisting men in the farming and carrying the workload in the home. Female children begin carrying out the roles early in life which they see from the mothers and are given by the mothers, for example, carrying the infant on the back and looking after it, carrying water, etc. The men, socialized since childhood, feel it is their right to have the women wait on them and give them what they desire. This is often the basis for men spending money as they like while leaving women with little funds for household use, forcing her to seek for ways to supplement family expenses such as for feeding, health care, etc.

Politics

People, especially the males, in the communities are aware of much of what happens in governance. However, this does not translate into action because of the feeling of impotence where politics or advocacy is concerned. Politicians at times of voting enter the communities but once voted into office, they are not seen again. Efforts to advocate for basic rights are often frustrated, creating the feeling of impotence. Most of the communities have little if any sign of government intervention. An underlying factor is the lack of awareness of the power in the voters as well as the attitude that the government should do all. The combination of these two factors contributes to the lack of development in the communities. The feudal leadership system, which places all responsibility and control in the hands of the higher authorities, usually male, also is a factor leading to the lack of development.

Human Security Issues

Conflicts in this area are mostly religious, arms banditry attack as well as kidnapping people for ransom, or over land between individuals and family members. There are no human security networks in any of the communities. There has been effort to assist a few communities to set up conflict and peace committee teams. The teams are trained to assess dangers to the lives and livelihood of the people and also to resolve minor conflicts arising within such communities.

Problem Statement

Nigeria society just like any other society struggles with its own social problem. One among these problems is the religious crises in Kaduna State. Conflict in this State is prone to take place under any atmosphere and conditions. In the 2000 shari'a and miss world crises till date have brought about division on the state along religious line with Muslims in the North and Christians in the South. Again, Kaduna State has witnessed series of attacks leading to loss of lives and destruction of properties in several communities in Kajuru and Chikun Local Government Areas (LGAs) since the beginning of the year. The loss of lives and properties is not the only results of these attacks. Other consequences are large number of displaced people, abandonment of farms, family separations and in general, a disruption of the ordinary lives of not only the people affected but others who become the refugees for those who have no place to go. Kujama community is selected because they are the most volatile community in terms of religious violence as many persons are living in pains for the loss of their loved ones and are ready to revenge at any given opportunity, also youths in such areas fall prey in the hands of politicians who uses them to obtain their political ambition which is one of the principal cause of violence.

Past project

Two projects were carried out and sponsored by COFP and JDPC Kaduna Arch Diocese. First is a one-day training workshop (*Plates 1 - 4*), which focused on the basic concept of approaches to peacemaking and challenges for development and transformation. The purpose of the training was to bring together youths of the two major religion in Nigeria (Christianity and Islam) to review conflict profile according to context of their locality and discuss the possible ways to integrate a positive transformative strategy for sustainable peace and development. The outcome of this workshop has further strengthened the peace structure that started with youths and now extended to every ethnic groups through their various traditional and religious heads. Meetings are now held once every month to discuss peace

and tolerance. The second project was distribution of palliatives during the Covid-19 lockdown to vulnerable household. Among items shared were 60 bags of corn, 2 bags of beans, 5 cartons of Maggi cubes and 15 cartons of spaghetti.

Sustainability of the project

The government has the primary responsibility for the lives of its citizens, and it is only when the citizens can take up that responsibility and demand for their rights that those rights can be given to them. This project was to build the capacity of youths on the concept of approaches to peacemaking and challenges for development and transformation, when that is achieved, we will require follow-up and continuous capacity building of the beneficiaries to take ownership of the new developments and also learn to advocate for their rights for the Government to also take up their responsibilities in providing security and safety for the people.

Needs assessment

A self-sponsored needs assessment was conducted in Kujama community in Chikun LGA. The purpose was to identify stakeholders with their level of interconnectedness and relationship, as well as the connectors and dividers of conflict and peace. Focus group discussion were held in the chief's palace to obtain feedback from the community on their most felt needs in areas of sustainable peace. The discussion explored issues such as: -

- Key actors to conflict and peace
- What are their goals, interest, position and relationship?
- Conflict historical timeline in kujama
- Actors that can be identified as spoilers (conflict entrepreneurs)
- Capacity to facilitate peace by community
- What needs to change in order to have lasting peace

Fifty-six persons voluntarily participated in the FGD made up of 36 males and 20 females. Security ranked among high priority areas of needs because of incessant banditry and kidnapping activities in the area. Addressing this issue would require stakeholders' collaboration with the local community. With adequate funding for capacity building on early warning and early response would reduce people's vulnerability to the present security threats which has potentials of translating into religious conflicts.

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Appendix



Plate 1: Participants at one day workshop training



Plate 2: Group photograph after the workshop



Plate 4: The outcome of the one-day workshop training (first inaugural meeting of the new interreligious).



Plate 3: At the Chief's palace shortly after the focus group discussions

Interactive Sessions with Media and Interfaith Organizations on the Need to Include Association of Persons with Disabilities in Peace Activities

Rilwanu Mohammed Abdullahi

Beyond the Boarder of Disability Initiative (BBDI)

Introduction

Beyond the boarder of disability initiative (BBDI) was formed in 2015 with the sole aim of championing the causes of disability issues in Kaduna State and beyond. It has been registered with Kaduna State government as Non-governmental organization (NGO) and has about 200 registered members from different disabled clusters.

Problems and Challenges

The problem and challenges persons with disabilities encountered are mostly discrimination and stigmatization in the society.

Project Conducted and Executed (Plates 1 – 5)

- Press Conferences
- Interactive sessions with media organizations and faith-based organizations to sensitize people on the need to include persons with disabilities and their associations in peace and religious activities.
- A One-day sensitization program for persons with disabilities on COVID 19 in Kaduna South, Kaduna North and Igabi local government areas respectively.

The press conference was self-sponsored, while the interactive sessions and sensitization on COVID 19 was sponsored by Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP) Abuja. The beneficiaries are persons with disabilities (PWD) and some faith-based organizations in Kaduna.

Sustainability of the Projects and Vision

The government has the sole and overall responsibility for the protection of lives of its citizens only when citizens can take up that rights, responsibilities for their rights that rights can be given to them. This project was to build the capacity of PWD's and advocate for inclusion in the societal lives.

Needs Assessment of the Community - The Short and Long Term

An assessment was carried out by some officials of the organization, the essence was identified with faith-based organizations with regards to including association of Persons with Disabilities in their activities. An extra ordinary meeting was held after the programmes, to get feedback. At one of the assessment, we were made to understand after the interactive session with media and faith base organizations of person with disabilities that they are now fully carried along by faith-based organization in Kaduna. On issue of press conferences which we normally organize regularly it has given us recognition in the eye of the society. The Covid-19 sensitization, which was done in 3 Local Governments namely Kaduna North, Kaduna South and Igabi Local Government has thought persons with disabilities how to protect themselves from contacting the pandemic.

Appendix



Plate 1: A cross section of participants during the Interactive Session with media and Faith base organizations.



Plate 4: Executive Director Addressing Participants during 2019 world Peace Day.

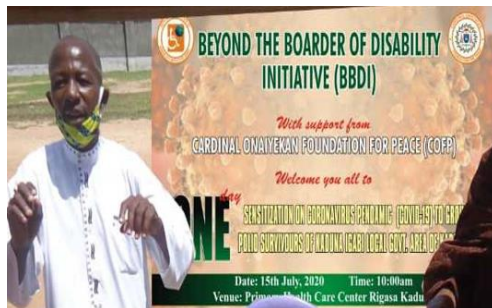


Plate 2: Delivering lecture During the Covid-19 Sensitization program for Persons With disabilities.



Plate 5: A Session of Group Picture During Interactive Session with Media and faith Base Organization.



Plate 3: Executive Director demonstrating washing of hands During Covid-19 sensitization in Kaduna South LGA.

One-Day Roundtable Interactive Session Between Muslims and Christians on Peaceful Co- Existence in Kaduna

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Introduction

The writer of this piece belongs, religiously, to Shiite community which is one of the Muslim minorities in Nigeria and particularly in my native State, Kaduna. He is the Secretary-General of Rasulul A'azam Foundation (RAAF), a CAC registered faith-based non-political Shiite Foundation, with the mandate to operate in founding a ground for Shiite community in Nigeria. RAAF adopts peaceful approaches, recognizes constituted authorities and participate in nation building activities. One of its accredited objectives, as stated by the constitution of the foundation (Article 3, subsection [c]), is thus: "To create, mobilize and propagate the principle[s] of unity in diversity, bound by cordiality and understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims of any faith from within and outside Nigeria".

In 2016, RAAF formed and registered (in 2017) a specific Peace body called Clemency and Peace Foundation (CPF) of which the writer of this piece chairs, with the aim of promoting the course of peace in Kaduna State in particular and Nigeria in general. The objectives as stated clearly in its accredited constitution (Article 3) include, but not limited to: "To prevent conflict through awareness; [4] "To provide a platform for dialogue through public sensitization of citizens on their civic responsibilities beside humanitarian aims. The writer operates peace activities under the banner of CPF, by first, undergoing COFP Fellowship Project under it, and also executes COFP Covid-19 response under its banner. This write-up is aimed at shading light on these two projects.

Statement of the Problem

With a total population of 6,066,562 (according to 2006 Census), Kaduna States is a home to many tribes and religious sects. Two predominant religion, namely Islam and Christianity, with their different sects, are found there. For a long time, the adherents of the two religions live together harmoniously. But starting from 1980, when the first conflict erupted in Kasuwan-Magani (in Kajuru LG) over disagreement of farmland, there has been series of conflicts such as: the 1987 students' riots at College of Education Kafachan, which degenerated to religious conflict in many parts of southern and northern Kaduna State; 1992 Zangon Kataf Crises; 2000-2001 Shari'a riots; 2002 Miss World riots and the 2011 Presidential Election violence and other conflicts, which were turned into religious and bloody conflicts, resulting to the destruction of many lives and properties worth billions of Naira. As a result of these conflicts, Kaduna State became an epicenter of ethno-religious crises and consequently, a one of the "Six States to watch" as put by Brussels' based International Crisis Group report in Nigeria. For this reason, Kaduna State became one of the concentration areas for peace activities for the peace communities.

Secondly, Kaduna is among the Nigerian states hit badly by Covid-19 pandemic, which brought about social and economic problems and so when COFP decided to undertake COVID-19 interventions, Kaduna State was chosen.

2018/2009 COFP Fellowship Project in Kaduna

As a result of the aforementioned, A Day Round-Table Interactive Session between Muslims & Christians in Kaduna on Peaceful Coexistence in Kaduna was convened by COFP Project in Kaduna Metropolis on the 4th March 2019, at NUT Endwell Conference Hotel, Mogadushu – Kaduna. Thirty 30 participants (15 from each religious group) were invited for eight hours condensed interactions. Also invited were Imam (Dr.) Nuryin Ashafa, Pastor James Movel Wuye, Sheikh Sani Isah (all from Inter-Faith Mediation Centre, Kaduna); others were representative of COFP (who introduced the noble missions and visions of Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP) on peace social justice and tranquility) and two 2018/2019 COFP Fellows from Kaduna State (one from Muslim faith and one from Christian faith). Keynote addresses were delivered (by Imam & Pastor) on "The Imperativeness of Forgiveness in Breaking the Circle of Violence". There was also motivational comment by Imam Sani Isah, one-minute silence and a tribute to late Rex Cyprian Aniah Idigie (a COFP staff who lost his life in a

fatal accident on his way from Gombe to Katsina to represent the Foundation in the Fellowship Projects). These were followed by observations and interactions between the two sides of the main participants on “Christians in the lenses of Shiite Muslims” and “Shiite Muslims in the lenses of Christians” in attempt to break stereotypes and prejudices.

Project Impact

The impact of the project can be summarized as follows:

1. Formation of a WhatsApp platform for peace discussion between Muslims and Christians adherents in Kaduna. Though it is yet to be fully operational due to some challenges, it is partially in operation and will fully be active after recovery from coronavirus.
2. Propagating peace teachings on pages of some social media platforms by the participants in the Project.
3. Bridging the gap between the participants from the two religions by attending to each other’s religion center needs. This has had tremendous impact as it reduced the stereotypes against the beliefs of one religion against another.
4. Illustration of how families can cooperate in tackling the common difficulties and disasters, as exemplified by joint efforts in addressing the challenges or dangers of Coronavirus.

Sustainability of the two Projects (Plates 1 – 8)

1. The project can be sustained through continuous engagement and regular repeat of the project in the community and other areas.
2. The project should be fully funded by governments or donor agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Evaluation and Assessment

From the follow-ups and the feedbacks of the two projects, the following steps were taken:

- 1- Winning the confidence of the COFP from the first project which was assessed to influence the sponsorship of the second one (on Covid-19).
- 2- Forming a working group of people from different professions, who took it as their responsibility to reduce religious and ethnic tensions in their various vocations in Kaduna metropolis, Zaria and Saminaka.
- 3- Feeling of accomplishments by the members of the group which they profess at different times in their meetings.
- 4- It became the basis for relationship between the Baptist Church members and the Rasulul-A’azam Foundation, which continued to flourish day by day.
- 5- Provide an avenue for introducing the noble missions and visions of Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP) on peace, social justice and tranquility.
- 6- Bringing together the members of the two communities with different religions to provide an example of tolerance to others.
- 7- Introduction of newly established Clemency and Peace Foundation (CPF) from Kaduna, with the sole aim of championing the course of peace in Kaduna State, Nigeria and the world.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that, despite various challenges, ranging from financial, social and bureaucracy rigidity, the project is successful, and it shows that a lot can be achieved if hard work and persistence is exercised. It is also clear from our experience that many members of religious communities are ready for constructive dialogue for sustainable development if they trust the source and anticipate justice from the outcome.

Appendix



Plate 1: CPF Peace-Group Meeting at Kaduna Poly on 19th Feb 2019.



Plate 2: The Convener's COFP Project - Roundtable Muslims Christians Interaction in Kaduna 4th March.



Plate 3: Imams and Pastor: COFP Project - Kaduna 4th March 2019



Plate 4: COFP Covid-19 Response Project at Zaria [Baptist Church]



Plate 5: COFP Covid-19 Response Project at Zaria [Palliatives]



Plate 6: COFP Covid-19 Response Project at Zaria



Plate 7: COFP Project - Roundtable Muslims Christians Discussions



Plate 8: Group Pictures after the successful Session in Kaduna

Peace Dialogue Religions/Cultural Tolerance Via Empowerment, Skill Acquisition and Covid-19

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Introduction

Bachit community of Riyom Local Government Plateau State consists of only two ethnic groups which is Berom and Fulani and most of them practice Christianity and Islam respectively.

Objective

The project was to foster peace building through interfaith and intercultural communication between the Berom's and the Fulani's in Bachit district Riyom LGA, Plateau State. (During Covid-19 lockdown, palliatives were distributed to 150 vulnerable people within Bachit community of Riyom Local Government Area. Also, we sensitized with various communities to create awareness on Covid-19 prevention).

Statement of the Problem

Building peaceful coexistence in Bachit community through interfaith dialogue has been a major concern in the area. The program had in attendance 50 participants comprising religious leaders, traditional leaders, youths, farmers and herders. The aim and objectives of the workshop is to build peace and actors will use interfaith dialogue to lead community driven social change and to strengthen the capacities of religious and traditional leaders through interfaith dialogue so that they will learn to appreciate, respect and accept their similarities and differences for peaceful living

Project Outcome

The peace building required the people of different religions and tribes in the community to reach consensus through dialogue and participation. During Covid-19 awareness, the people were enlightened about the need for carefulness and personal hygiene in order to fight the disease (*Plates 1 - 4*).

Appendix



Plate 1: Workshop speaker



Plate 3: Group picture



Plate 2: Workshop participants



Plate 4: Workshop participants

Women Leader Justice Peace and Reconciliation Movement Plateau State, NG

Aishatu, A. U.

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Introduction

Jos North is a Local Government Area in Plateau State, Nigeria. Its headquarters are in the city Centre. It has an area of 290km square and a population of 429,300 at the 2006 census. Both Christians and Muslims live in the area. Rusau community is behind the University of Jos. Students of the university rent houses in the community. Sabon Layi community is behind Zaria Road new stadium. The two communities are opposite to each other. Majority of the people living in Sabon Layi community are Muslims and Hausa by tribe who settled for decades while Christians are minority. The people leaving in Rusau are Christian's majority who settle for decades, they are Jarawa, Berom and Anaguta by tribe, and Muslims are minority.

Statement of the Problem

Plateau State has witnessed a series of crises since 2001, especially the state capital. These crises affected people in these communities who have been living together for decades. These people have been living together in peace and harmony; however, struggle for leadership, land ownership, religious sentiments, inciting speeches from political and religious leaders have threatened and destroyed the peaceful co-existence of the various ethnic groups. As a result of ethno-religious crises between these communities, boundaries were created to serve as a battle ground in some area. Many lives and properties were lost to these conflicts, passersby were also victims, as some of these boundaries are major roads that link other communities.

Project

Considering the looming dangers within and outside these communities, a project on "*Amplifying the Voices of Women and Youth in our Communities*" was organized in January 2021. The program was held at Justice Peace and Reconciliation Movement conference hall in Gwash, Jos Plateau State, with over 36 participants drawn from the two communities. The participants include community leaders, youth leaders, and women leaders. The project is to strengthen the voices of women and youth, as women are at the receiving ends of any conflict but are not included in decision making process in the communities. The youth were chosen because they are used as instruments of violence. The program had such sub themes as: the understanding of women as peace mothers and peace makers; the role of youth in our communities and the importance of involving women and youth in peace process and security issues in our communities.

Project Impact on the Communities and Beneficiaries (Plates 1 – 6)

Before the end of the workshop, the participants who have been separated since 2001, met with each other and interacted collectively. They were excited to come together again to talk about their issues; they agree to come together and work as one united community, even though it might not be like before due to their separation. The youth also agreed to checkmate the activities of other youths within and outside their community (as they were used as political thugs thereby losing their lives). The women agreed to form a forum in which they will be meeting regularly to discuss issues that may arise and take them up with their community leaders.

Sustainability

Sustainability is meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In addition to natural resources, the project could be sustained when there is continued utilization of its results can be assured. A sustainability plan that was designed by the groups focused on enlightening other communities in their churches, mosques and gathering women for group discussion from time to time

Vision

To create a non-violence community, filled with love and trust.

Needs Assessment - A need assessment is a systematic process that examines what criteria must be met in order to reach a desired outcome. The first step in a need's assessment is to conduct gap analysis that identified the differences between the current state and the desired state. The ongoing kidnapping, burglary, cultism, gangsterism, drug addict, child abuse, poverty among others have been disrupting the existing peace amongst these communities. These have negative impact on peace and security of these communities and has affected livelihood and income generating activities of the people. After a session with the women from one of their meetings, it was revealed that the short term and immediate needs of the communities are education and more awareness on peaceful co-existence while the long-term needs are employment, skills acquisition and a continuous peace workshop.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conflict is inevitable, as its part of our daily lives, one way or the other, we come to agree, disagree and then agree. Peace is a process and can be gradually achieved through reconciliation and dialogue the following recommendations were therefore made; Food distribution partners needed to support these communities and other communities. Setting up a skill acquisition programmes to empower the communities. Advocating for funding support from NGOs and philanthropist.

References

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Appendix



Plate 1: Workshop participants



Plate 4: A round table discussion with all the participants



Plate 2: A youth leaders contributing to their roles in the community



Plate 5: A participant contributing to the role of youth



Plate 3: Facilitating the role of mothers as peace builders



Plate 6: A round table discussion with the facilitators Mr.Mugu Zakka and Mrs. Justina Mike Ngwobia

Achieving Interreligious Maturity Through Higher Institutions' Interfaith Programmes for Dialogue, Peace and Social Cohesion

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Introduction

There is a renewed interest in research and knowledge sharing relationship between NGOs, individuals and academic institutions towards conflict prevention, resolution, management and transformation as well as achieving peace and social cohesion. This logically prevails on academic institutions on the need for them to be able to demonstrate how their research and learning outcomes are having an impact upon society. Thus, there are opportunities for more engagements between academics, their institutions, and other actors and practitioners in joint research projects and in sharing expertise and knowledge (Subbiondo, 2012; Kimball, 2004; Bagir, 2008; Holland, 2016).

All academic institutions are established for the purpose of teaching and learning. Accordingly, the core aim of such institutions is the development or “unlocking” of the logical-cognitive-analytical potential of the learners. The purpose of institutions of learning is to guide learners to cognitively analyze, fathom and master segments of reality in the form of subjects or learning areas (Abdool, Potgieter, van der Walt & Wolhuter, 2007). Profoundly, institutions of higher education have room for improvement with regards to collaboration and developing interreligious maturity not only amongst their students but also in the society. Lessons learned in the classroom stay with us as we continue to grow, and our learning does not stop once we have left the classroom. Hence, academic institutions can take on a central role in promoting religious diversity as well as achieving interreligious maturity through higher institutions' interfaith programmes for dialogue, peace and social cohesion.

According to Bagir (2008), programmes on interfaith dialogue are “commonly understood as aiming to facilitate understanding and tolerance between different religious communities or traditions. Although understanding seems like a personal enterprise, dialogue is seldom done only for personal objectives. In different historical and political contexts, that understanding is expected to serve different purposes.” The 2004 Special Report by the United States Institute for Peace examines that, interfaith dialogue brings people of different religious faiths together for conversations. These conversations can take an array of forms and possess a variety of goals and formats. They can also take place at various social levels, and target different types of participants, including elites, mid-level professionals, and grassroots activists. Interfaith dialogue programs may resemble secular peacebuilding programs in some ways. Consequently, the benefits of such initiatives, as depicted by my project, have the potential of changing the lives of university students, staff and members of their host communities as well as and those with whom they engage both inside and outside of college campuses.

My project used Kwara State University as a base to showcase the importance of higher institutions in interfaith dialogue. Kwara State University, also known as KWASU, is the 77th university to be registered by the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC). It is the 95th university to be recognized in Nigeria. The university was established by the administration of Dr. Bukola Saraki in 2009 and envisioned to be more than a typical university in Nigeria. It was designed to be a centre for community service and entrepreneurship. In a country where the fundamental values of volunteerism and community involvement are yet to be fully embraced, The university recognises itself as a part of a community, and has the position of a Director for Community Development for the purpose of mobilizing the community, setting assessment strategies, and identifying the needs within the community so that lecturers can use their expertise to impact directly on the communities.

The journey towards establishing a state university in Kwara State began on 11 July 2007 when the Kwara State Governor Bukola Saraki inaugurated a planning committee under former governor of Kwara State, Alhaji Mohammed Shaaba Lafiagi to prepare the ground for the establishment of the Kwara State University. The Bill for the Kwara State University was signed into law on 24 December 2008. The certificate and instrument to operate the university was obtained on 9 February 2009 from the National Universities Commission (NUC). The pioneer Vice-Chancellor, Professor Abdul Rasheed Na'Allah, who until his appointment, was Chair of the African American Studies Department of the Western Illinois University, Macomb, United States of America, assumed office on 28 July 2009.

The students' population of the university is put at over 20, 000 consisting of over 12,000 undergraduates, over 300 postgraduates, and over 50 Doctoral students.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's climate of conflict and tension has arisen out of divisions in a society where religion has long since been a source of at best lively debate and at other times a cause of explosive violence. Africa's most populous nation is equally divided between Muslims and Christians and much debate, sometimes resulting in hostilities, persists as to which religion is in the majority, is more divine, and the best acceptable to the Divine Being. Kimball (2004), as cited in Bagir (2008), observes Christian-Muslim encounters and clearly concludes that, "One overriding impression remains front and center: the large majority of Christians and Muslims continue to view each other with 'detailed ignorance'." This is because Christians and Muslims are actually aware of many details, ideas, images, and sound bite impressions of each other coming mostly from mass media, but not the broader, more coherent framework of understanding them. He further states that, "the obstacles are larger than a simple lack of knowledge. Much of that many people think they know is incorrect or rooted in a long history of misunderstanding and bias." Undoubtedly, this is an interesting reason for interreligious dialogue.

Understandably, young adults account for a large portion of participants in Nigeria's religious groups. With a population of 190.9 million (2017), and more than half of it below the age of 30, young person's studying in Nigeria have to engage with an increasingly religiously diverse population. Higher institutions are inevitable meeting place for young adults who are also adherents of the two major Abrahamic religions in Nigeria, and as such they play host to young minds of different political, social, economic, and religious backgrounds and convictions. Therefore, identifying the problem of unfortunate rise in conflicts orchestrated by religion, religious cold war resulting from misconceptions and unhealthy debates, and the increasing religious diverse population especially amongst the young populace attending higher institutions, there is the need to present educational institutions as machinery for the implementation and execution of religious values, knowledge, belief, art, morals, law and all other capabilities or habits of members of a society. Ultimately, the need arises for religious adherents in our institutions of higher learning and their host communities to be recognized as essential actors in modern conflict prevention, management and resolution as well as post-conflict reconstruction.

Projects

Achieving Interreligious Maturity through Higher Institutions' Interfaith Programmes for Dialogue, Peace and Social Cohesion

The project community is the Kwara State University, Malete, Malete, Kwara State. The project targeted fifty (50) university students who are young adults in the age range of 17 and 25, drawn equally from the two religions – Islam and Christianity (*Plates 1 - 6*). The geographical scope is the Kwara State University, Malete covering all its Colleges and Departments. The project was a day training programme scheduled for Tuesday, February 11, 2020. The programme involves two strategic objectives: 1) Partners effectively to support Muslim and Christian, particularly youth, to work together on practical connector projects in their communities. 2) Partners academic and educational bodies more effectively to engage in interreligious development and peace initiatives. Other goals are to: raise awareness within wider society on the importance of inter-faith issues, create opportunities for linking and sharing good practice, and provide advice and information to help the development of new inter-faith initiatives and the strengthening of existing ones.

In the same manner, the project was designed with some expected outcomes that include confidence building measures towards understanding and cooperation among participants; positive orientation of university students in relation with whom they engage both inside and outside of college campuses; and recruiting and retaining well-informed individuals who will continue and sustain the essence of the project, and by extension that of the Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP). The project was sponsored and organized by the Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP) in collaboration with PINAC Program for Peace and Interfaith Dialogue (PPPID).

In achieving the objectives and goals of the project, as well as its expected outcomes, participants were ably guided on two (2) vital topics: "*Fundamentals of Christian Faith on Interreligious Coexistence: Theories and Practices*" delivered by Dr. Sunday Ojo, Director of the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Pastor at the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Kwara State, and "*Essentials of Islamic Faith on Interreligious Relationship: Theories and Practices*" by Mallam Tajudeen Alabede, a fellow of Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP). Both speakers explicitly conclude that effective Interfaith maturity and engagement can be achieved through recognizing that at the heart of Inter-Faith engagement is Human Connection (our Common Humanity); respecting the

Scriptures of other Faiths; understanding the Fundamentals of other Faiths; applying the Traffic Light Principle; and being genuinely committed to Peace and the Common Good.

Importantly, the occasion was graced with the presence of the then Acting Vice-Chancellor, Kwara State University, Malete, Professor Sakah Mahmud. He said the training has come at a very appropriate time as the nation is faced with violence, insecurity, and interreligious conflicts. The Professor of Political Science further reiterated the importance of peace for human development, “as a nation, nothing significant can happen without peace. Once you have conflicts, you destroy everything: culture, economy, religion and politics.” He also expressed his optimism on the changes such programme could bring to the world, “We hope we can pick up important information from this training that will help us, various important information for the progress of the world has come from very few people but the news is spreading, that’s how major changes are made in the world. As a University for Community Development, we must emphasize peace. Humans are not perfect, but KWASU is putting its best to be a community where we coexist, where we don’t discriminate between religions, and we make it our guiding principle to promote peace.” He finally promised that interfaith programmes, such as this, “will be made compulsory for all students in the bid to foster religious tolerance in the institution.”

Participants were presented with certificates of attendance. As envisioned, the programme lived to its expectation as contained in the general feedbacks received. Participants who are majorly students confessed to the fact that the programme was first of its kind for them. They also confirmed that the programme gave them the opportunity to gain outstanding knowledge of the other person’s religion, and especially remove some misconceptions they used to have on the religion of their colleagues. They, therefore, reiterated their desire to be good and astute ambassadors who will continue and sustain the spirit of the project in relation with whom they engage both inside and outside of the university campus.

Interfaith Guidance on Safe Practice during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Another project titled “Interfaith Guidance on Safe Practice during the Coronavirus Pandemic” was carried out between June and August 2020. The project reflects the unique and critical roles played by religious leaders and actors, in influencing values, attitudes, behaviours and actions that affect the development and wellbeing of the world’s citizens. This project was committed to strengthening interreligious action and community mobilization, in countering the COVID-19 pandemic. It showcases a Covid-19 mission that embraces initiative to adapt, promote and provide care and support through education and awareness for parents, children, the elderly and those experiencing disruption and distress in order to provide a source of support, peace, comfort and hope.

Therefore, as the world was, at that period, striving to curb the menace of coronavirus pandemic, the project joined forces to launch a community based Covid-19 Initiative to raise awareness on the impacts of the pandemic on all citizens. Thus, radio jingles were broadcasted on Sobi FM 101.9 for weeks to create awareness on safety measures, stickers produced and pasted on strategic places and spaces to create peoples’ consciousness, and face/nose masks were distributed to people to prevent the spread of the deadly virus.

Project Sustainability

Project sustainability is, according to APM (2019), an approach to business that balances the environmental, social, economic aspects of project to meet the current needs of stakeholders without compromising or overburdening future generations. It involves both individual and organizational responsibility to ensure that outputs, outcomes and benefits are sustainable over life cycles and during their creation, disposal and decommissioning. Without doubt, sustainability is relevant across all areas of project-based operations. Sustainability involves balancing different concerns: environment, such as climate change; society, such as community; economy, such as affordability; and administration, such as health and safety. When these four elements are considered, we can build sustainability into projects (Fernley, 2005; APM, 2019).

As a way to ensuring sustainability of the projects, the PINAC Program for Peace and Interfaith Dialogue (PPPID) was founded to serve as a platform for guidance, implementation, and coordination of peace and conflict resolution as well as interfaith dialogue. This will assist in carrying out more projects in collaboration and partnership with State and non-State actors such as academic institutions, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), international donors, corporate bodies, religious and traditional institutions, government agencies and individuals of like mind.

Needs Assessment

Explicitly, the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2017, concludes that,

“The primary purpose of needs assessment is to identify which people are in need, disaggregated by different categories of people (for example, all affected persons,

pregnant women, children) and different types of needs; determine the severity of their needs; and pinpoint the type of assistance they require to ensure prioritized, focused, response planning. It is triggered by a need to better assess and monitor a particular situation and the conditions faced by populations of concern, whether in the context of a response to a sudden crisis or as an ongoing planning effort during a protracted crisis.

In sum, a needs assessment is a part of planning processes, often used for improvement in individuals, education/training, organizations, or communities. It intends to refine and improve a product such as a training or service a customer receives. It is an effective means to identify problems and recognize suitable solution and interventions. By clearly identifying the problem, finite resources can be directed towards developing and implementing a feasible and applicable intervention (Fulgham and Shaughnessy 2008; Altschuld and Kumar, 2010). Needs assessments can help improve the quality of policy or program decisions, thereby leading to improvements in performance and the accomplishment of desired results. Improving in performance and result is typically a worthwhile and valuable effort.

Consequently, the feedbacks from my project revealed the immediate desires of the project community. For a desired level of interreligious understanding and coexistence, people need to be well informed through continuous training, education, guidance and focus group interactions. More sponsored training activities such as workshop, symposium, conference, as well as educative and interactive interreligious programmes targeting the young adults and academic institutions should be organized. There is the need for the use of other information and education channels, such as radio and television interfaith programmes, as well as the opportunity created by the social media – Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, among others. On the overall, adequate financing and sponsorships from local and international donors, corporate bodies, etc, are the ultimate needs for continuity.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Without doubt, one cardinal agent of information and socialization is the school. Educational institutions play a crucial role in building and enhancing the immunity and resilience of every society in confronting external and internal voices and forces advocating for exclusion and violence. Education has a profound effect on individual development and can promote or prevent prejudice and conversely promote or prevent tolerance. However, when used rightly education and all its appurtenances will prevent prejudice and promote tolerance. From the foregoing, we recommend as follows: Organize more projects to achieving interreligious maturity through higher institutions' interfaith programmes for dialogue, peace and social cohesion in institutions of learning across the country. Adequate interfaith networking and information sharing by adherents of the two major religions in Nigeria through active links and visitations to places of worship. Organize a couple of interactive workshops, seminars, symposiums and conferences for knowledge and experience sharing. Using electronic media such as radio and television programmes and interviews, and websites and social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter to create interreligious consciousness and cooperation. Creating more awareness by means of well-structured and glowing designed banners, posters, and handbills. Academic publications to include Full, Executive Summary and Plain English summary reports of research, peer review research articles and local university-based newsletters. Ultimately, advocating for assistance, sponsorship, partnership from NGOs, international donors, corporate bodies, educational, traditional and religious institutions, as well as philanthropists.

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Appendix



Plate 1: Workshop speaker



Plate 4: Some certificate recipient



Plate 2: Workshop speaker



Plate 5: Some certificate recipient



Plate 3: Workshop speaker



Plate 6: Some certificate recipient

Inter-Religious Dialogue and Funfair for Youths and Children

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Publicity Secretary, Interfaith Youth and Peace Building Network of Nigeria.

Introduction

The task of building a peaceful society is one that involves all and sundry considering the fact that it paves way for progress, economic growth and development. To engage in dialogue and conflict resolution one must wear the belt of truth and armor of righteousness. You should purge yourself of every religious and tribal sentiments, extremism and bias.

As a fellow of the Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for peace (COFP), it was required of me to carry out a PEACE PROJECT in any community of my choice in order to foster inter religious dialogue and mediation among adherents of different faith and culture. This project was executed at Tudun-Wada Lugbe on the 25th of January 2020 with over 400 participants in attendance and this included the Guest speakers, youths, children, the police, MOD, Islamic security Outfit, parents and staff of Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP). This project was largely sponsored by Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP).

Statement of the Problem

Tudun-Wada is a community under Lugbe, Abuja. It is made up of persons of different religions and tribes. In recent times, the community has witnessed some crises among the residents of the community which has led to series of attack. The tension became so high at a time to the extent that people could no longer sleep with their eyes closed. The burning desire to change this ugly narrative overshadowed me having attended the first and second module of the Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace “Fellowship Program”. The program as the title implies was targeted at young ones who were the major stakeholders in the crises.

Project

The project (Interreligious dialogue and fun fair for youths and children) was organized majorly for the debriefing of the youths and children (*Plates 1-8*), creating an enabling environment for peace to strive in the community, the need for the participants to acquire knowledge on the need for interreligious dialogue and having happy youths and children at the end of the program. Some of the activities that took place were; Talk on peace building, Prayer sections, Parade by the Islamic security outfit, Games, Dancing competition, Presentation of gifts to participants, Refreshment, and so on.

Impact of the Project

- Increased level of Peaceful co-existence in Tudun-Wada.
- Participants are calling for more of such programme.
- Increased level of awareness on inter-religious dialogue.
- More participation in interfaith activities and programs.
- The project has given birth to the establishment of a branch of Interfaith Youth And Peace Building Network of Nigeria (IYPBNN).
- The project has also contributed to the achievement of COFP’s vision and mission.

Project Sustainability

The need to sustain this laudable project cannot be overemphasized though it’s not an easy one. However, there is a plan to sustain through project considering the impacts. The resources to sustain this project would be gotten through Non-governmental Organizations, friends, I and so on.

Needs Assessment

A needs assessment helps you determine what needs to be accomplished to reach your project goals. This assessment of needs then informs a project’s overall plan and approaches by helping you identify targeted strategies and prioritize resources. With this, I was able to identify the needs of the people which to a large extent contributed to the crises.

Conclusion

The task of building a peaceful society is one that requires prayer, courage, consistency, determination and sacrifice. Just like the humming bird, never underrate your effort, though it may appear little but makes impact.

Appendix



Plate 1: Group photo



Plate 5: Workshop speaker



Plate 2: Group photo



Plate 6: Group photo



Plate 3: Group photo



Plate 7: Group photo



Plate 4: Group photo



Plate 8: Group photo

Sowing the Seed of Community Peaceful Co-existence: The Role of Food Security

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Introduction

Ilorin city is a traditional emirate, and capital of Kwara state, Nigeria. It is located on the Awun River, small part of the river Niger. The state was founded in the 18th century by Yoruba people; it became the capital of a kingdom that was a vassal state of the Oyo empire. Ilorin is a Muslim emirate, subjugated several towns in Yoruba land though with a good number of Christians. The city is a confluence of cultures, populated by the Fulani, Yoruba, Hausa, Nupe, Bariba and Kanuri tribes from across Nigeria, as well as foreign nationals. There are good numbers of Christian and Islamic populations. Many religious activities hosted by Muslims and Christians takes place in the city throughout the year. Ilorin has a friendly environment called the “Ome of Peace in the State of Harmony”. Different religious practices and training institute are resident in the state which include but not limited to; the degree-awarding United Missionary Theological College (affiliated with the University of Ibadan and University of Ilorin) produces many church ministers, teachers and theologians of all denominations. The College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies in the Adeta area trains Muslims in various Islamic, Arabic and social science disciplines. Modern Ilorin is mainly inhabited by Muslim Yoruba people, although its traditional ruler is a Yoruba-speaking Fulani emir. Throughout the 19th century, Ilorin served as a major trade centre between the Hausa of the north and the Yoruba of the south. It strongly resisted British rule, and not until 1897, when the army of the Royal Niger Company arrived after conquering Bida (106 miles east-northeast), did Ilorin recognize British supremacy. In 1900 Ilorin emirate was the only part of Yorubaland to be included in the Northern Nigeria Protectorate, which, later in the colonial period, developed into the Northern Province and then the Northern Region. With the subdivision of the country’s administrative regions in 1967, Ilorin became part of West Central (later Kwara) state. However, inter-religious and political crisis which leads to rancor and chaos is as a result of un-employment, idleness then poverty and food insecurity. Hence, food was then considered as a tool for peaceful co-existence.

According to Food and Agriculture Organization, (2002) food security is defined as a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Food security is a huge problem in Nigeria, as the nation is ranked 103rd out of 119 countries on the 2018 Global Hunger Index. This shows that the level of hunger and under nutrition in Nigeria falls into the serious category. These situations poise the nation to be food insecure. Despite this situation and while all hands should be on deck to find lasting solution to this, the nation constantly witness many unpalatable conflicts and religious crises. Though, several efforts have been made by the government and other institutions to ameliorate this situation. The involvement of non-governmental organizations to educate and empower citizenry most especially the vulnerable groups have been reported to be a way forward for assurance of food security and peaceful co-existence in our community. Food will continue to remain the primary needs of man. No life will exist without quality and quantity foods. Availability, production, marketing, transportation are factors that assure food security. The fact therefore remains that no meaningful food security can be achieved in an atmosphere of rancour and chaos because common resources are required to produce, process and market food. A community ridden with violent or any form of conflicts weakens food security both at household and national level. Analytically, it is extremely challenging to disentangle such a complex web of impacts. Reports abound that people living in a community affected by conflicts are likely to be food-insecure and undernourished. Evidence also available is that today’s conflicts also have a more localizes nature, which implies that the impacts on food security also tend to be more localized. Without peace the dream of a world without hunger may prove elusive and conversely hunger (an index of food security) is a possible trigger of conflict, while interventions to improve food security can be essential for national peaceful coexistence. There is therefore the need to constantly train, educate and empower the vulnerable groups (youths and women) of conflicts on elements and interventions of food security that will not only engage them physically or bring economic benefits but that grant them opportunity to interact, relate and live with other people peacefully no matter their age; sex; ethnic and most importantly religious belief.

Statement of the Problem

According to Ijaya *et al.*, (2015) the rate of poverty and the decomposition of poverty status in the urban informal sector of Kwara using consumption-expenditure per adult equivalent and the P-alpha class poverty measure the rate of poverty. The result of the analysis indicates that the rate of poverty was high and placed at 63 percent of consumption-expenditure per adult equivalent falling below the poverty line of N9,837.66 per month. The poverty gap index is 0.43 and the severity of poverty index stood at 0.28. The consequences include the inability to participate in development decisions that affect their lives and their lack of power and voice to change things in their favour. Sufficient funds by financial institutions and government to help expand their businesses, public investment in infrastructural facilities, especially in electricity supply and self-help/communal assistance and the tenets of social and human capital development were suggested as remedies.

Previous Projects Conducted and Sponsorship

I have conducted series of projects in the past sponsored by different grant donors some of which include but not limited to; Training of Home makers (married women) and Local farmers in Ayetoro communities, Ogun State on Dietary intake and Strategies for better Nutritional status of Children, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Yewa Campus, Ogun State. Global Affairs Canada and Action Aid Nigeria Grant on Study on Linkages Between Covid-19, Women and Girl's Wellbeing, sexual and Gender Based Violence in Nigeria, Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP) Grant For Public Enlightenment and Distribution of Food Palliative For Covid-19 Pandemic, Ilorin, Kwara State to mention few.

Projects Impact on the Community or Beneficiaries

The project trained selected youths and women from University of Ilorin Same Mind Evangelical Ministry, Redeemed Christian Church of God and NASFAT Society, Kwara Zone on elements of food security and peaceful coexistence in the community and then expose the participants to the concept and importance of food security in our community and national development; importance and ways of achieving peaceful coexistence in the community, roles of religion on food security and peaceful coexistence and how to be facilitators of trust-building and religious cohesion for community food security (*Plates 1 - 5*).

Sustainability of the Project and Vision

The training exposed the participants to the importance, process and impacts of peaceful co-existence from the religious view. The influence of peaceful co-existence on food security was also treated through training on production of some traditional foods. The participants were delighted and agreed that, peace is a condition for eradicating hunger. The interrelationship between interreligious conflict, peace and food security is complex and multi-dimensional. The optimistic way forward is at the heart of rationale to build a virtuous relationship with one another regardless of one's religion where peaceful co-existence supports peacebuilding and reinforces food security.

Needs Assessment of the Community

The city needs more enlightenment and empowerment in area of training, workshop on value addition to indigenous foods and their products and business grants so as to be busy. When they are busy, there will be no time to think of how to raise alarm on religious or communal matters. Also, rate of food insecurity will be reduced and peaceful co-existence among inter-religious groups will be achieved.

Conclusion

The project was executed successfully on behalf of COFP. A total of one hundred and ten participants in Ilorin, Kwara State were trained on 'Sowing the Seed of Community Peaceful Co-Existence: The Role of Food Security'.

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Appendix



Plate 1: Group photo

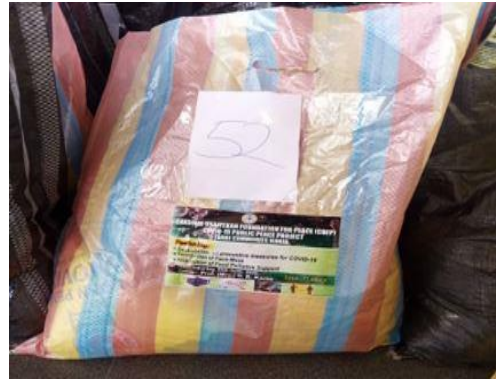


Plate 4: A Gift



Plate 2: Workshop speaker



Plate 5: Workshop participants



Plate 3: Gifts

Voice Participation and Possibilities for Discovery and Dialogue in a Moment of Conflict

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Introduction

The counsellor normally tells a worrying and panicking patient to create possibilities and embrace a positive outlook when faced with problems. This is not only true for individuals but also for group of people, companies or business enterprises and nations. Nations have forged through natural and human disasters to build very strong and reliable governments. Some have harnessed what would have been setbacks and drawbacks for the feeble, into mighty pointers to greatness and unrivalled advantage. As a nation, Nigeria has not converted its size, humongous manpower, history of war, multi ethnic and religious identities into catalyst for development and greatness. All these factors have rather been disadvantages due to questionable foresights and deficient governances. The recent plethora of crises bedeviling us have also not been transformed into catalysts for growth through dialogue, peace and social cohesion. Here is a proposal for an integral approach that encourages a paradigm shift in conflict management that will bring parties to a table of dialogue for better results that will benefit all parties to the crisis.

A Nation Divided in Crisis, Conflict and Agitation:

We have in recent times experienced heightened violence resulting in many negative predictions about the Nigerian state. Pundits have even likened the crises in Nigeria as being worse than that which led to civil war. While this may sound so damning, you would not blame the premonition of imminent disaster after seeing the indices of death, the divisions, rancour and agitations that have characterized our discussion in recent times. These of course are the existential threats of war that have bedeviled the Nigerian state yet without proper management capabilities to assuage our agitations and outcries. The Vanguard Newspaper tagged Nigeria as a 'killing field' with about 1,525 Nigerians killed in just six weeks. This is beside the 3,188 lives lost between January and December of 2019. In climes with value for life, these are very alarming figures. There have been incessant cases of violence, kidnapping, agitations for cessation as in the case of IPOB and Odudwa republic; the various protest for good governance the most famous of which was the quashed ENDSARS protests targeted at police brutality, bad governance, injustice and corruption. As though this is not enough, resident doctors are currently on strike with people on both sides throwing strong fists while being interviewed on television. Apart from agitations against government policies, the Nigerian society and communities are strongly divided along political, religious and tribal lines with very uncompromising intolerance resulting in killings, evictions, and drums of anger and rejection. The Fulanis who used to work freely in other communities with women selling their cow milk called 'nunu' and villages even visiting their huts can no longer walk through any community without suspicion and reciprocal disconcertment.

The Present Model of Conflict Management

When the government banned Twitter and gave several and sometimes discordant reasons for the ban, it was clear to many that there was a more iron fisted paradigm in quelling agitations and ensuring peace and harmony in a multi-ethnic and so strongly divided polity as ours. While the many agitations come under different roots and dimensions, the common response from handlers of power has been that of exertion of control, superior power and untethering of military might to 'achieve peace'. In spite of the iron fisted approach, there seems to be a multiplication of violence across board, with the geographical locus of violence spreading to every facet of our lived experience as a nation. It will also be wrong to only be conscious of the violent manifestation and neglect the rampart anger, dissatisfaction and intolerance in living domains which are yet to manifest in external violence and war. It is difficult to see how any government perceived to be predatory can enjoy loyalty and legitimacy. These like patriotism, peace, and equanimity are not achievable in an environment where the handy response at disposal of government seems to be arrest, intimidation, condemnation and ignominy.

A Better Approach

During the course of my work as a peace advocate of this great foundation, I have had the opportunity to organize small discussion groups, community meetings even among opponents. It is clear

to me that one of the very best approach to conflict is listening. One of the very basic needs of a people is having somebody to listen to them. When people fight, when they shout, when they get violent, even in family settings, one of the things they are saying through those actions is: 'please listen to me. Voice participation is entrenched in our recently signed ethical values. Our ethical core values describe voice participation as right to express opinion and influence decision. This right is also an entrenchment in chapter IV of the 1999 constitution as amended which provides that aggrieved parties are represented in decisions that will affect them. One will wonder if the electoral amendment bill was a product of voice participation or a construct of the political class wanting to achieve peace by coercion.

While this is not an exoneration of those who blatantly harm society and hide under shadows to perpetuate evil, it is proper to argue for a collective approach to conflict resolution in a society of fragrant bloodletting and dangerous divisive patterns as ours. Resolving the current crisis will require government to dig deeper into the root causes of each conflict in an objective and transparent manner. No conflict can be resolved without acquaintance with the various roots of it be it political, economic, historical or religious. Government cannot ask people to listen to them without listening to the people. We cannot run a peaceful society when leaders only dialogue and listen while seeking help on their way to power and become deaf and dumb while in power. A better approach for managing the various conflicts will actually take the edge off the bloody and unwanted escalations and result in a better and tranquil society. While apparently effeminate, many of these are opportunities for nation building and development. Countries emerging from war are supposed to be stronger and more united because lessons must have been learnt, swords sheathed, and consensus built. Ours should not be the story of war ended through might but a truly 'no victor no vanquishes' paradigm which understands that the absence of war is not really guarantee of peace. But that peace is built through justice and the enthronement of the rule of law and delivery of the benefits of democracy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, one can navigate through what he/she instinctively perceive as negative and form a better and informed understanding for better results through reasoned and professional approaches. That is the role of conflict resolution and management. For so long as every dissenting voice been perceived as the alarm bell of an enemy who speaks disgustingly only to bring others down and assert relevance, there are more to the placards, the strikes, the agitations and the unrests. While some may see opposition and rivalry, there is some goldmine there for economic growth, social cohesion, and inclusive governance that will yield both social and economic growth for all which will be for the betterment of and a united country called Nigeria, held together not by force of wheels but by patriotic spirits knitted together by common goals and objectives (*Plates 1 - 8*).

References

- National Ethics and Integrity Policy: This is a National Document approved by the Federal Executive Council in 2020 and published by the Independence Corrupt Practices and other Related Offenses Commission in September 2020.
- Vanguard Newspaper, March 1, 2021: An article titled: 'Killing Fields, 1525 Nigerians Killed in Six weeks of 2021'

Appendix



Plate 1: Group photo



Plate 5: participants



Plate 2: Workshop speaker



Plate 6: Delegates



Plate 3: Workshop speaker



Plate 7: Delegates



Plate 4: Delegates



Plate 8: Workshop speaker

A Shared Humanity under God

Rev. Dr. Dachomo. S.¹ and Chikelue Agatha, G.²

¹National President CANEP.

²Nile University of Nigeria, FCT, Abuja.

Introduction

The need to live in a world free of rancor, animosity, hatred, subjugation, and evil is one born of God. God has made life to be lived in a symbiotic relationship, making our differences the colours that give beauty to life. What makes us humans is God given and should be expressed as he would want us to, living as his creatures. This report is made of the following sections: A reflection on our shared humanity as programmed by the Creator and a brief on my project during the COFP programme in the 2018/2019 Maiden set.

Definitions

Shared

derived from the word “share” which means a portion of a larger amount which is divided among a number of people, or to which a number of people contribute. It also means have a portion of (something) with another or others.

Humanity

Describes human beings collectively and the quality of being humane; benevolence and kind. It is also the quality or state of being human encompassing the entire human race.

God

God in Christianity is the eternal being who created and preserves all things. God is both transcendent (wholly independent of and removed from the material universe) and immanent (involved in the world). Christian teachings of the immanence and involvement of God and his love for humanity exclude the belief that God is of the same substance as the created universe, but accept that God’s divine nature was hypostatically united to human nature in the person of Jesus Christ in an event known as the incarnation. In Islam, God is the only one deity of absolute oneness, uniqueness, and perfection, free from all faults, deficiencies and defects; who is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and completely infinite in all of His attributes; has no partner or equal; being the creator of everything in existence. Islam insist that God is strictly singular; unique; inherently one and also all-merciful and all-compassionate, whose mercy embraces everything. Two things speak clearly from these brief definitions of God in Christianity and Islam: the Oneness of God and that He is the Creator.

One Shared Humanity under God

This write up intends to bring to bear that man as created by God has this humaneness that ties all humans together. Our understanding of the place of man before God may defer, but the Bible tell us that man is created in the image and the likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). King Solomon understood this truth when he wrote, “God has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11). God has ‘set eternity in the human heart’, means that we can never be completely satisfied with earthly pleasures and pursuits. Because we are created in God’s image, we have a spiritual thirst, we have eternal value and nothing, but the eternal God can truly satisfy us. This also means that God has built in us a restless yearning for the kind of perfect world that can only be found in his perfect rule. He has given us a glimpse of the perfection of his creation, only a glimpse. We cannot see into the future or comprehend everything. So, we must trust God now and do his work on earth cherishing all he has cherished – All Humans.

Islam and Christianity affirm that God is All-Powerful. The Quran in the following passages affirms the all-powerfulness for God – Al Baqara 225; Al Imran 54; Al Araf 99 and Al Qamar 41-42. The Bible in the following passages also affirms the all-powerfulness of God – Isaiah 40:28; Job 42:2; Matthew 19:26 and Jeremiah 32:17. These verses in both the Quran and the Bible are just but a small portion of what the scriptures say on the all-powerfulness of God. It then behooves on all true adherents of these faiths that the power to ‘make’ lies completely in the hands of the Creator. If he wished that all become the other, he could have done it. This brings us to the place that our differences and variety as

allowed by the Creator makes for the beauty of life. Embracing our shared humanity comes with self-Compassion which is another attribute of God. One of the most important elements of self-Compassion is the recognition of our shared humanity under God. We are all created by God and to him shall we all return. Compassion literally means 'to suffer with', which implies a basic mutuality in the experience of suffering. The emotion of compassion springs from the recognition that the human experience is imperfect, that we are all fallible. When we are in touch with our common humanity, we remember that feelings of inadequacy and disappointment are universal. The pain that I feel in difficult times is the same pain that you feel in difficult times. Even when the circumstances are different, the degree of pain is different, but the basic experience is the same. God is calling us to this shared humanity under Him.

COFP Project

My project title was 'Love Language Vision'. The project community was Gindiri Theological Seminary in Gindiri, Mangu Local Government Area in Plateau State. It aimed at targeting pastors in training who are from different parts of the country, it has forty people in all – thirty males and ten females. The current and growing animosity and suspicion between Christians and Muslims in Plateau State and most parts of the country has become a matter of concern to all and sundry. From 2001 to now most communities in Plateau State and other parts of the country have faced and are still facing situations of crises and insecurity that must be addressed. The project intervention is that it worked on **trust, respect and acceptance** on the pastors in attendance for peoples of other faith traditions and in this case the Muslims. A robust curriculum was followed for the three-day training. The project had a lasting impression on the minds of the participants on trust, respect and acceptance of peoples of other faith: Islam. The project was unique because it covered quite a wide range of areas from understanding Biblical Christianity to understand Islam and its teachings. The project activities included the following topics: Love Language, Genuine Christianity, Basics on Islam, Healing the wounds of Trauma and Justice. By the end of the three-day session, the project achieved the following: Participants had a better understanding of Christianity and Islam, participants experienced some healing over past sad experiences, forgiveness offered to the perceived aggressor and the participants understood that God is a God of justice and will seek to pursue justice as well. The Love Language Training is now a continues activity to people in need (*Plates 1 -3*).

Conclusion

The Nigerian Nation is one that shares in this act of God's all-knowingness. A nation of over 200 million people who are adherents of basically Christianity and Islam. We must insist in living acknowledging this 'Shared Humanity under God', by this we would be reflecting the attribute of God.

Appendix

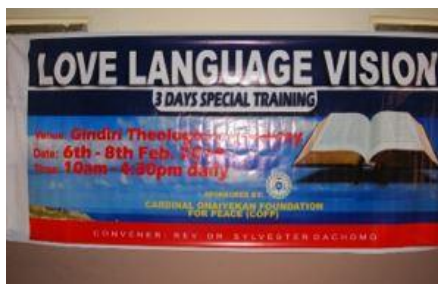


Plate 1: Local Emergency Preparedness Response Workshop



Plate 3: St. Patrick Catholic Church Sopp, St. Lawrence Parish Riyom.



Plate 2: Evang. Sixtus B. C.

Local Emergency Preparedness Response Workshop

Evang. Sixtus B. C.

St. Patrick Catholic Church Sopp, St. Lawrence Parish Riyom.

Introduction

Sopp Community is a village located at the southern part of Riyom along Akwanga forest road. It belongs to Bachi district among the three districts of Riyom. The village is a federal political ward comprising the following small areas – Kak, wull, Rangam Gura, Dep, Tom, Tigi, Fiss, Ranchol, Tingamangwe, Dajack and Tinariah it has an area of 1.73 kilometer and boundry with Kaura, Jama'a, Sanga LGA in Kaduna while B/Ladi LGA in Plateau State.

Culture

They are farmers, hunter, farming the farm crops like acha, maize, g-corn, millets, potatoes both black and arish, beans, tamba, carbage carrot etc all are for commercial and feeding at home. Hunter are yearly festival in the community that's why our names are named by animal names eg Vou as Davou or Nvou.

Religion- The churches in Sopp village are COCIN, Catholic, ECWA, New Life and our neighbors Moslems. Christian are in the majority.

Tribe - The village comprises of the following tribes: Berom Attakar, Fulani, Nenzon, Marwa. All the tribe have cordial relationship and share thing in common. Except that the Fulanis that do not allow their girls to be married to Christians.

Statement of the Problem

The problem in my community are land-grabbing and flooding. Land-grabbing is done by the Fulanis herdsmen. They build houses on our farmlands without the knowledge or consulting the community with head or anyone and when any member of the community goes to cultivate his/her land, he/she would be beaten or killed, and his/her crops destroyed. Another problem is the flood which is a natural disaster that sometimes occurs during the rainy season and destroy crops, lives and properties of the community.

Previous Project Conducted And Sponsorship

The project was a successful due to the assistance given by COFP Foundation and myself. Those who were nominated from the community members to assist me did not contribute adequately during the process. However, few illustrious sons and daughters of the community participated from the beginning to the end of the graduation.

Project Impact on the Community or Beneficiaries (Plates 1 - 3)

- The trainees had a successful learning time as they can now make cloth on their own to an extent.
- They have been empowered by the knowledge/skills they acquired to boost their capacity beyond the local or usual farming during the training.
- A little token was given to participants of the project to support themselves at home.
- Some community members contributed soft drinks, food and cultural dances were also showcased as to add colour to the occasion.

Sustainability of the Project and My Vision

- Education and empowerment program/project should be extended or continued to enable our ladies have a solid foundation on the skills acquired.
- Adequate machines or equipment to enable the trainee's practice constantly for a progressive and sustainable management of their talents.

- There is also the need for certificates to be given to the trainees after a confirmation of their performances.
- My vision is to enable our young and old ladies have better means of livelihood in the society and be independent or self-sufficient in their homes.

Needs Assessment of the Community for Short time and Longtime

Short time

By September 2021 same people should be trained for another six months as they would be given certificate of attestation for the project.

Longtime

Another set of people should be nominated for same kind of scheme and the scheme should be made a continuous project for the community. I am thus working towards having a center or a training ground which could transform into a school for as many that would be aspiring for the tailoring and other related professions.

Appendix

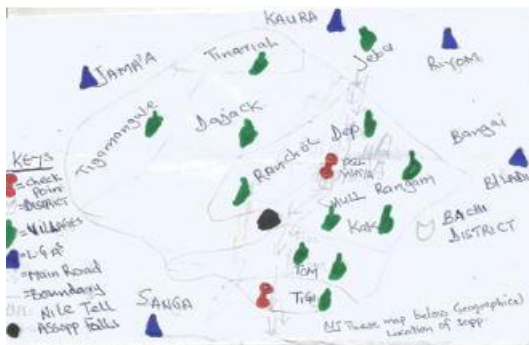


Plate 1: Covered Area



Plate 3: Delegates



Plate 2: Delegates

Restoration of Peace and Unity Among Persons with Disabilities

Achinihu, I. N.

President: Global Foundation for Persons with Disabilities, Imo State.

Secretary: Association of Disabled Women (ADW), Imo State.

Introduction

Owerri is the capital city of Imo State with about 10% of its population with persons with Disabilities. It speaks of high social life, hospitality and industries in the south East zone of Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

Peace aids harmonious co-existence and development while elections most times create friction and disaffections among Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). Hence program that would put in place Alternative Dispute Resolution, to settle disputes softly and peaceful.

Sponsorship: COFP

It was a two-day peace dialogue that brought persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and other stakeholders together to brainstorm on ways to conduct a peaceful election devoid of rancour and crisis. Held at Lodan International Hotel Owerri. It was moderated by Ambassador Iyke Ibe and Chief Ikechukwu Ukeje (JP), the SSA to the Governor on Disability Matters as the resource person. They all called on - cabals, cartels and leaders to embrace peace and select credible leaders to steer the ship of disability affairs in the next three (3) years as rancor and constant disunity will deny some people their rights.

Participants

The participants include:

- Disabled leaders from the LGAs.
- Cluster heads.
- INEC Official.
- Electoral Committee

Impact:

- Consciousness on the rights of PwDs.
- Dialogue and resolution in place of squabbles and fighting.
- The program influenced the outcome of election to the satisfaction of the disabled community
- Need for constant review.

Sustainability:

- Need for periodic review and meetings to address issues of common interest
- Preaching unity and love for all PwDs despite cluster differences.
- Sensitizing families on the need to empower their child with disability.
- Domestication of the National Disability Act.

Needs Assessment:

- Sponsorship of programs aimed at foisting unity and cooperation.
- Empowerment of PwDs.
- Respect for one another's views.
- Periodic reviews.

Interfaith Conversation: Panacea for Peaceful Coexistence Amongst Different Clusters and Faith in the Disabled Community on Corona Virus.

Ibe I. A.

South East, Anambra.

Introduction

Owerri Municipal LGA of Imo State is a municipality that harbors all shade, strands and strata of the society including the State's Capital city - Owerri. It is metropolitan in nature, densely populated, with high social life and hospitality industries, cultural and religious activities at its peak. It is the heartbeat of the Eastern Zone.

Statement of Problem:

Religion as the opium of the masses. It plays a key role in diverting people's attention from their rights. Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) are not left out in this as they are divided along cluster lines-with more than 7clusters. Each sees the other as a threat interns of leadership and protection, as well as on religious lines. It is against this backdrop that the community must have a clear understanding of the benefit of peaceful coexistence within the context of the organization (intra) and in relation to the society (inter).

There is the need to draw the attention of the public to issues of psycho-social dimensions, effect on PWDs inclusion and integration in the scheme of things vis-a-vis appointment, empowerment, employment and the need for domestication of international treaties on PWDs. Despite facing conflicts among different clusters, PWDs should as well live in peace with non-Disabled Persons and people of other faiths. There is need to educate the populace on the need for peace, tolerance and love for one another.

Sustainability:

There should be constant interaction with critical stakeholders and government. Quarterly review meetings should be held. There is need to get donor agencies and partners to get more involved. Secondary and tertiary educational curriculum should have peace and dialogue contents

Impact

1. Persons with Disabilities should speak with one voice and advocate for their rights as an integral part of the society; Ensure that PWDs live above stigma and discrimination and There is need to demystify the hitherto beliefs on PWDs not been able or capable
2. Participants discover that peace and dialogue are prerequisites for a better and harmonious living
3. The training has widened participants' horizons on the different faiths
4. They have new and better of understanding and new approaches to issues such as the essence of forgiveness, sacrifice and knowing the sanctity of human life
5. They now acknowledge that peace aids development

Program Carried Out

It was a one-day peace summit with the topic "Interfaith Conversation: Panacea for Peaceful Coexistence amongst different Clusters and Faiths in the Disabled Community". Held at Lodan Hotels and Towers, MCC Road, Ikenegbu, Owerri on the 21st January 2021 and sponsored by Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace with African Hope Development Initiatives.

Resource persons were drawn from the Christian and Muslim faiths to enlighten the participants about unity and peaceful coexistence. Sheikh Animashaun Nola, Deputy Chief Imam of Imo Central Mosque, a radical Islamic preacher and advocate of peace building techniques x-rayed biblical and qoranic origins of conflict, and how misrepresentations and interpretations of the holy books by scholars gave rise to conflicts and indoctrination. At the end, the speaker said there was no alternative to peace and dialogue. Government at all levels should create enabling environment and provide basic necessities. The minds will be sound with positive thoughts.

Lady Emmanuella Amaefule, of the Anglican Communion and Civil Defense Corps, with the Bible and other sources, dwelt on self-esteem, strive to live above disabilities and poverty to the fervent belief in contributing to the task of nation-building. Conflicts are all over, but the ability to conquer conflicts makes the people outstanding. The speaker urged people to look up to their forefathers in the

faiths and called on government to make life more meaningful by putting in place policies that are PWDs friendly. Violence does no good. It was followed by an an interactive session where people bare out their minds and some misconception on Islam being a religion of violence and force were debunked.

Participants (Plates 1 & 2)

- Cluster heads of the Disability groups and their secretaries
- Disabled leaders and stakeholders
- Muslim Disabled group
- Muslim Youth Leaders
- 5 Representatives of Muslim women
- Imo Inclusive Network
- Imo Women Leaders
- Resource persons
- Director Planning, Research and Statistics, ISPHCDA

Needs Assessment

For people in the Disabled Community, we suggest that this a new thinking should be supported, funded and taken to every nook and cranny of the country as this will go along to ensure peace in the society. Divisions along religious lines should be eliminated, and indigenization and religious affiliation should be discarded

*Reduction in crises will also lessen the rising army of PwDs occasioned by conflicts and insurgency

* There should be sensitization, advocacy and quarterly review meetings.

Workshop on Covid-19

The emergence of COVID-19 has brought about a new world order. Identified in 2019, COVID-19 is a new strain of virus that first emerged in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. It is part of a large family of viruses which can cause the common cold in humans. The new strains of Corona Virus can jump from animals to humans. The global pandemic and its catastrophic effect on the human race have been a source of concern for all thus the leadership of JONAPWD, IMO STATE thought it wise to enlighten the Disability Community on the challenges pandemic and how the vulnerable group can survive it.

The well-attended event held at Dis and Dat Hotel, Owerri had over 79 participants comprising of:

- Disabled Leadership Forum
- Cluster groups reps
- JONAPWD LGA Chairmen
- Disabled Women
- Otunne Leadership
- JONAPWD State Executives

It afforded the community an opportunity to be aware of the reality of the new virus and how best to steer clear of it. The resource person, Dr Hyacinth Emele, a physician with Federation University of Technology, Owerri traced the origin of virus, how it spreads, how infectious it is, who is at risk and gave the signs and symptoms (respiratory symptoms) to include:

- 2 - 14 days' incubation period
- coughing
- sneezing
- runny nose
- difficulty in breathing
- fever
- loss of taste and smell

Precautions:

- hand hygiene,
- respiratory hygiene
- social distancing
- use of face mask
- personal protective equipment

It was stressed that since disabilities comes most times with underlying health challenges, there was need for PWDs to be extra careful at that period as the virus attacked the immune system. Hence prevention is better than cure. To him, PWDs persistently face a lot of stigma, discrimination and barriers to accessing basic social services and economic opportunities. Currently, they face greater barriers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic because majority of them are unemployed or underemployed and this makes more complex the already compounded situation in the face of poverty. All precautionary measures should be strictly adhered to. But how realistic is this in the midst of disadvantaged economic situation?

Government at all levels and non-governmental organizations must pay more attention to the vulnerable groups that constitute over 20% of the nation's population; make appropriate plans to provide palliatives as well ensure that vaccines gets to all. Enlightenment and education of the populace so as to demystify the myths surrounding PWDs. Disability groups and leaders should be carried along in decisions affecting them. (Nothing about us, without us).

The interactive session was characterized by questions and Dr Emele responded to all. The seminar then moved to post election reconciliation. Some groups challenged the electoral process in court. Members agreed to reconcile and withdraw the matter from court and peaceful resolution mechanism should be put in place.

Dr Stanley Nwachukwu, the president general of JONAPWD in Imo State also promised to take Imo Disabled Community to the next level and called on all to eschew acrimony and rancor but rather embrace peace and cooperation which will attract the dividends of the Shared Prosperity Agenda of His Excellency, Senator Hope Uzodinma to the Disabled Community.

Appendix – Images



Plate 1: Some delegates



Plate 2: Some delegates

Young People Taking Action for Peace, Here and Now

Enebe, U. J.

Young Catholic Students Of Nigeria (Ex-National President And National Coordinator) & Catholic Youth Organization Of Nigeria.

Abstract

Religion is unequivocally a vital factor to the existence, survival and development of the Nigeria State. Sadly, it is now seen as one of the major problems of the nation rather than a solution that it is. Nigeria is one of the countries that hold religion so dearly and has affected the culture and values of the people. In the multiplicity of the ethnic groups and tribes, most Nigerians belongs to a religion; most prevalent are Christianity and Islam. Thus, an element of religion could be found in most conflict experienced in the country and as a matter of fact in Enugu State.

Introduction

Nigeria is the giant of Africa with over two hundred million (200,000,000) population, making her the most populous nation in Africa and one of the most religious countries in the World. Nigeria is made of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) having people with diverse languages and ethnic groupings as well as different religious affiliations. It is blessed with abundant natural and human resources. Enugu State known as the Coal City State is located within the south eastern part of Nigeria and predominantly Christians. The ethnic and cultural diversity gives the state a rich cultural heritage, while the natural and human resources constitute a great economic potential. However, in recent years, tension and violent confrontations have been experienced in various communities and these are issues that border on ethnicity, religion and politics.

Project Main Goal:

A belvedere was staged for deep reflection, sincere dialogue and communion among youths of different faith and religions in a bid to build sustainable peace in Enugu State and Nigeria at large. Building a peaceful Society through the Young People (*Plates 1 - 6*).

Principle and tools used for the Project implementation

- Inter-faith discussions and coexistence (Ofu-Obi African Center)
- Radio Peace Talk (Godfrey Okoye University Radio Station)
- Youth Creativity & Leadership (Presentation)
- National Patriotism and solidarity (Presentation)
- See Judge and Act methodology (Methodology)

Statement of Problem and Justification

Enugu State is made up of good percentage of young people between the ages of 18-45 which should serve as great strength and a uniting factor. True religion is said to be the relationship, in accordance with reason and knowledge, which man establishes with the infinite world around him and which binds his life to that infinity and guides his actions. No matter how this relationship has varied, for different peoples and at different times, it has always defined man's destiny in the world, from which guidance for conduct followed naturally. Given its universality as applicable to all believers in their closeness to the Supreme Being or God, at different stage of human history, while religion has been used for integrating diverse groups and promotes unity. It has also been used to justify violence, disunity and intolerance in the society and Enugu State is not an exception. Being fully aware of the consequences of religious conflict, the young people who are the viable workforce of every nation rose to make a positive change starting from their individual self, their orientation, behavior, attitude and tolerance, understanding of one another's religious fundamentals, mutual respect, mediation, dialogue and peaceful coexistence.

The project provided a unique platform for the exchange of ideas, expression of grievances and solution oriented. A platform was created for young people from the different religious affiliations to sit together, learn together, reflect deeply, engage in sincere dialogue, discuss key religious fundamentals and practices, exchange, express ideas from different points of view, and clearly define and plan the society they would like to live in as believers in God and respecters of human dignity.

Related Projects Carried Out:

1. Interreligious Peace Dialogue – 2019 and Sponsored by Kukah, UFUK and YCSI
2. Interreligious Dialogue by YCS – 2014 and sponsored by Kukah foundation

Impact and Outcome:

- Knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of different religions.
- Thousands coverage/audience reached through the 30minutes Radio Peace Talk.
- Peace testimonies, group workshop and discussions, visits and documentation
- Grass root Outreach and awareness. Very vital is the individual resolve for peace and a harmonious environment, through the “I am because you are” slogan.
- Pre and Post Test Evaluation

Conclusion

The choice for peace is the choice for all and for the hope of a better society were everyone enjoys fullness of life. May God help and reward the project we are all executing for fruition and lasting Peace.

Appendix



Plate 1: Workshop speaker



Plate 4: Some delegates



Plate 2: Workshop speaker



Plate 5: Some delegates



Plate 3: Some delegates



Plate 6: Group photo

Strengthening the Role of Youth in Peace Building in Awka

Rev Sister Dr Onwurah, C. C.

Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka

Introduction

Rev. Sr. (Dr) Chrysantus Chinyere Onwurah is a Catholic Nun of the Daughters of Divine Love Congregation, Enugu. She hails from Nawgu, Dunukofia Local Government Area of Anambra State. She obtained a B.Sc in Health Education from University of Nigeria, Nsukka, M.Sc and Ph.D in Public Health Education from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

She is a Lecturer at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and is a member of the Nigerian Red Cross Society, Health Education and Promotion Association of Nigeria (HEPRAN), National Association of Health Educators (NAHE), Society for Public Health Education and International Union of Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE). She was motivated to join the fellowship as a peace builder, to be more equipped on how to improve and educate children, students, youth, men and women on peace, dialogue, peace building and conflict transformation project interventions. The Peace project was done on 16th December 2020 and had 42 participants made of 28 male and 20 female youths and for four hours. The project's aimed was to train youth leaders of the different villages in Awka Town on their roles in strengthening peace building in Awka.

Aims of the project were to:

- Teach Peace Education
- Train the Youth leaders in Awka on the strategies for peace building
Strengthen Youths Involvement in Peace building
- Build peace agents among Awka youths for establishing conflict transformation in Awka town
- create awareness for peaceful co-existence, understanding and accommodation among the youths in Awka

The activities included presentation which includes the concept of peace, who is a youth, the concept of conflict and perpetrators of conflict and consequences of conflict, conflict management and its styles, concept of peace building and youth as a peace builder, and discussion. A specific part of the session included group work to identify a local problem affecting youth and to put together an action plan to manage and solve the problem together. Given the fact that youth will be part of the future local development and assume important roles in the resolution of conflicts within their families, communities and building their capacity as peace building actors were taken as key to strengthen democratic governance and solve problems at the town level. After a break, the Youths were divided into four groups where they were given questions to answers on how they can strengthen Youth-led peace building among themselves and also in their villages and town. They came back from break and presented their different answered topics, after which the speaker concluded the presentation and questions were asked and answered. Arrangements were made for them to have peace building program at the village level and eventually to the entire town. That was the first time Awka Youths come together after years of prolonged town crisis. The Youth leaders of the 33 villages in Awka were represented (*Plates 1-6*) and they listened to the presentation with kin interest, asked questions which were answered.

Project Impact

The Youth applauded the presentation and were happy with the Peace project and promised to help to educate other Youth members of their village. Awka Youths present were happy to come together to share their problems and the possible means by which there can be conflict mitigated in the Awka town (*Plates 1-3*).

Personal Impact and Conviction from COFP Program

The resource person confessed that the COFP programme has exposed her to the basic tenets of Islamic Religion and has provided her with knowledge of dialogue, peace education and various ways through which Peace can be maintained. Through the programme she got the knowledge of the concept of conflict, different types of conflicts, actors of conflicts and its consequences. As a lecturer in the higher

institution, COFP programme enriched her knowledge of the various ways through which conflicts can be managed, which she resolved to take to her profession by educating the students on this. Most importantly, the programme provided her with the knowledge of peace building and different ways through which peace building can be achieved and strengthened, and also the understanding of how people can co-exist not minding their religion, ethnicity, tradition, culture, as “what cannot divide us will unite us”.

Finally, the COFP programme exposed the resource person to maintain peace culture anywhere she may find herself. She thanked the Founder, Director and the Staff of Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP) and said they were healing the world by training peace ambassadors who are working and helping to bring peace to the world. She further thanked the sponsors of the great Peace Foundation and said they were yielding fruits through COFP.

Appendix



Plate 1: Some delegates



Plate 3: Workshop speaker



Plate 2: Some delegates

Interfaith Dialogue an Effective Tool for Conflict Resolution and Peace Building

Julia Akerele

National Secretary, WOWICAN & Zonal Secretary, South West Zone, CANEP

Introduction

Being a report of a one-day step down of a seminar on the theme: Interfaith Dialogue an effective tool for Conflict Resolution and Peace Building organised in Mushin, Lagos, South West Nigeria by Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace. The national body of the Women's Wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) of which I am the Secretary, organized the seminar for the six geopolitical zones. Participants were charged with the responsibility of doing same in a chosen State in their various Zones. The South West Zone of WOWICAN chose Lagos while Lagos State Chapter selected Mushin as the location of the seminar. The seminar held on 16th March 2021 in Mushin Lagos State.

Mushin is a very active commercial area of Lagos State. It is one of the major homes of the indigenes of Lagos State thus, the predominant culture is Yoruba culture. Other ethnic groups such as Hausa, Igbo and those from the South South zone and even foreigners who have lived in the community for a long time have comfortably adopted the Yoruba culture. The three major religions practiced in this area are Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion. What usually triggers conflicts in Lagos is not religion or cultural differences but mainly poverty and cultism arising from a high number of secondary schools drop outs. The main focus was on dealing with secondary school students by using the interfaith forum to stem cultism and the consumption of hard drugs in schools. participants believe that with such interventions, the students will be able to make good meaning of their lives and not be reduced to touts and garage boys who are readily available to be used in times of crisis.

As a first step towards engaging the students, the one-day seminar was organised for respected leaders and adherents of the two faiths, Christians and Islam, in Mushin community as they are the key civil society actors who are expected to go back to their various areas to positively influence their members on how peace can be maintained. Mushin was chosen because it is one of the trouble-prone areas in Lagos state probably because of its commercial nature. It is also home to high number of cultists and drug addicts in the state. Illiteracy too contributes to the volatile nature of the area as some of the inhabitants do not believe in education. Rather, they believe in trading and when the tide of business changes direction, probably due to lack of discipline and poor management, frustration sets in leading to personal crisis which could sometimes lead to bigger conflicts that can eventually lead to disruption the peace of the community. Some even believe in making a living from touting.

The two Resource Persons, Mrs Mary Mogaji and Ustaz Saheed Salmon agreed that both faiths believe in the worship of only one God; both believe that living good lives earns people salvation and promote peace; they also believe that Satan is real and evil, tempting people to follow him instead of following God; both believe that Satan and his followers will be condemned to hell fire. Both believe that religion is an invaluable source of promoting understanding and can provide a foundation for peace building as both religions preach peace. As a result of this, they both agreed that each faith should look within and bring together the good in the various faiths in order to bring solutions to the situation. Lastly, they advocated that discussions should include primary, secondary, tertiary institutions and vocational training centres. The seminar ended with everyone feeling satisfied that they had learnt how they too can be ambassadors of peace (*Plates 1-4*).

The seminar was sponsored by Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace. Participants intend to reduce youth involvement in conflicts by catching them young, while they can be guided to live worthy live. This will be a continuous exercise.

Appendix



Plate 1: Catechist Mrs. Mary A. Mogaji making her presentation



Plate 2: The Chairman of the day making his contribution and asking, 'how do we get there?'



Plate 3: Ustaz Saheed Salmon making his presentation



Plate 4: A participant making his contribution

Violence Among Youths: A Bane to Societal Peace

Dr. Basirat, O. D.

Women Servant of Allah, Ahmadiyya Jam'at Nigeria.

Introduction

Ijede (Community) Local Council Development Area (LCDA) was carved out from the old Ikorodu Local Government. The LCDA consists of the following communities: Ijede, Egbin, Oke-Eletu, Ginti, Igboodu, Abule-Eko, Igbopa, Ilupeju, Igbe Kapo, Igbe Ogunro, Igbe Oloja, Ayetoro, Ipakan, EwuOwa, etc. The people are predominantly into agriculture. The LCDA has good arable land fertile enough to engage in massive mechanized farming as well as agricultural and agro allied businesses.

Ijede LCDA has four political wards, namely: Wards A, B, C and D. Ward A consists of Egbin, Ipakan and Ebute Olowo while Ward B consists of Aledo, Oju Ayepe, Ayebami, Etita, Oju Ogun, Itundesan, Okomabude. Ward C consists of Abule-Eko, Igboopa, Oke Eletu, Gbodu, Igboodu Jabe, Ilupeju. Ijede Local Council Development Area is bounded in the east by Imota Local Council Development Area, in the north by Ikorodu North LCDA and in the west by Ikorodu Central and Igboodu Bayeku Local Governments.

The people of Ijede are predominantly Ijebus, a sub-ethnic group of Yoruba, but other tribes like Igbo, Hausa and others also reside in the community. The people of Ijede are mainly into farming and fishing. The 2006 census placed the population of Ijede LCDA at about 1,600,000. There are four public primary schools and one secondary school with more than 40 private primary and secondary schools in the community as at today. The people of Ijede are mainly traditional religious worshippers. The community also has Christians and Muslims.

Statement of the Problem

Ijede community from history has been a peaceful environment. People that inhabit the community co-habit peacefully. The peace of the community has been negatively affected in recent times with the growth of the new millennium youths in Ikorodu that spread to other suburbs of Ikorodu Local Government in Lagos State. Ikorodu Local Government Area and the Local Council Development Areas in Ikorodu have been bedeviled by reoccurring cult clashes. News of cult clashes has been aired severally on dailies, radios, televisions, and the social media. These clashes have resulted in loss of lives and property and there exists mayhem in that community.

The most dangerous impact of this menace is the initiation of upcoming youths in both primary and secondary schools into cult groups. There are different fraternities in Ijede, among these are: Eiye, Aiye, KK, Buccneer, Black Axe, Awawa Boys, Jezebel, Osanle & 10 Millennium Boys. The peace of Ijede community has been affected in recent times because when these groups engage in battles for supremacy, they disrupt the socio-economic growth of the community and lead to loss of lives and destruction of valuable property. A community that witnesses incessant disturbances from cult activities needs to be enlightened on how to get rid of the menace of cultism and drug abuse because, the two go together. Most youths who perpetrate all sorts of vices in the society do so under the influence of drugs.

To address the issue of insecurity in Ijede community, I took proactive steps towards ensuring that the right mentality is prevalent amongst the youths – most vulnerable groups in our society. Since we are sure that a nation cannot witness reformation without the transformation of its youth, it is imperative that we equip our youths with the necessary intellect to face the bad elements in the society who are ready to take advantage of their youthfulness.

Consequently, a one-day Peace Symposium themed, “Violence among Youths: A Bane to Societal Peace” was organized to enlighten the youths in secondary schools in and around Ijede community on the dangers of cultism and to discourage them from joining these bad gangs. Another theme was the emphasis on the benefits of being peace ambassadors as agents of peace building. The dangers of insecurity cannot be underestimated. Insecurity affects the growth and development of the society and it jeopardizes the future youths.

Project Conducted

A one-day Peace Symposium themed: Violence among Youths: A Bane to Societal Peace was organized. The event was held at Ijede Town Hall on 12th February 2020.

Goals and Objectives of the Project:

The symposium was targeted to meet the following goals and objectives in Ijede community:

- To encourage youths to appreciate peace.
- To equip youths with conflict resolution skill.
- To motivate youths to be peace ambassadors.
- To discourage youths from joining cult groups.
- To motivate youths to aspire towards academic excellence

Attendance

One hundred and twenty secondary school students from both public and private schools in and around Ijede community were in attendance (*Plates 1-8*). Also, fifty-six members of Ijede youths club were in attendance while special guests of honour like the Executive Chairman of Ijede Local Council Development Area, Alhaji Salisu Fatihu, his entourage and the peace awardees were also in attendance. The total population at the symposium was two hundred and six in all. The symposium featured lectures by three youths from the State Youth Council, namely: Ambassador Lana Promise, first Lagos State Youth Ambassador; Barrister Bashirudeen Abdus Salam, Conflict resolution expert; and Mr Abbas Agbaja Oluwaseun, a Commonwealth scholar and motivational speaker. All participants were educated with talks on how to shun violence among youths. The aim of these talks was for the preservation of societal peace and by extension their future careers. Participants were also taught conflict resolution.

Sponsorship

The project was majorly sponsored by Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace and the Executive Chairman of Ijede Local Council Development Area.

Impact of the Project on the Community

The project had a great influence on the youths in the community. For instance, some youths renounced their membership of cult groups. Students that attended the programme were inaugurated into Peace Ambassadors Club and stickers with the Peace Ambassador inscription were distributed to them. They were encouraged to continue the campaign at their different schools.

Sustainability of the Project and My Vision

The project of peace intervention in Ijede community is a continuous one. Peace talks at any of the programs organised in the community will be adopted. Campaign for peace among the youths in the community is the main concern of the Peace Ambassadors Club. Students that have been inaugurated into the club are encouraged to continue to get new members that will Shun Violence in the community schools and this will extend to the community at large.

The main vision of the club is to have a community free of violence and it intends to achieve this by carrying the message of peace to everyone starting one individual at a time. The Club will be funded to ensure that such meetings should be more regular and localized in other communities. Ijede community has been known for peace in the past and with the peace project, the community will experience total peace among the youths and the entire populace.

Appendix



Plate 1: Participants listening to the lectures



Plate 7: Male section of the participants during the symposium



Plate 2: Guest Speakers at the symposium



Plate 4: Invited guests with participants after the symposium



Plate 3: LTV crew interview the Local Government Chairman Alhaji Fatihu Salisu



Plate 6: Female section of the participants during the lecture



Plate 5: Members of Ijede Youth Club receiving Peace Award for the club



Plate 8: Invited guests at the symposium

Bridging the Communication gap Between Christian and Muslim Youths

Bello, A.

Nasfat Peace-Promoters Network Aje Villa, Stadium Area, Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Introduction

Ogbomoso is the second largest city in Oyo State, South-western Nigeria. It was founded in the mid-17th century. The 2006 census put the population of the city at approximately 245,000. The majority of the people are members of the Yoruba ethnic group, and the town is dominated by Muslims and Christians. Ogbomoso has about 257 surrounding villages and emerging towns which amalgamated under the rulership of Soun of Ogbomoso, the city's paramount ruler. The major economy in the area is agriculture. Yam, cassava, cashew, mango, maize and tobacco are some of the notable agricultural products of the area. There are also cashew and mango plantations. Ogbomoso was one-time the largest harvester of cassava in the world. The people of the area also engage in trading as well as rearing of domestic animals like goats and sheep. A prominent veterinary hospital exists in Ogbomoso for vaccination of livestock. The people of Ogbomoso are widely travelled.

In Ogbomoso, there are three-degree awarding institutions which include Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary and Bowen University Teaching Hospital. Industries in Ogbomoso include trading, banking, small-scale manufacturing and construction. There are two radio stations and a TV station in Ogbomoso, namely: Parrot FM, Ajilete FM and NTA Ogbomoso.

Ogbomoso has two Local Government Areas, namely: Ogbomoso North Local Government and Ogbomoso South Local Government. The main street in Ogbomoso is the Oyo-Ilorin Road. One of the prominent landmarks is the central mosque, which towers over the traditional walled compounds of private houses and the parts of the old wall that remain. Ogbomoso has many other mosques and churches. It houses the headquarters and theological seminary of the American Baptist Church of Nigeria. The closest airport to Ogbomoso is Ilorin Airport which is approximately 42 miles away. Inadequate government investment in infrastructure facilities and poor policy guidance for local initiatives undermine economic growth and development of the town. The location of the town, its terrain and poor road network make it unattractive to manufacturers and investors.

Notable People in Ogbomoso include:

- Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola, former Premier of Western Region
- Maj. Gen Oladayo Popoola, former Military Governor, Oyo and Ogun States
- Col. Ibrahim Taiwo, former Military Governor, Kwara State
- Chief Christopher Alao-Akala, former Governor of Oyo State
- Lt. Col. Shittu Alao, former Chief of Air Staff
- Chief Sunday Adewusi, former Inspector General of Police

Statement of the Problem

Overtime, there had been a lot of misconceptions about different religions which have always brought up series of unanswered questions in the mind of every patriotic and concerned citizen. This is as a result of lack of gatherings where these questions can be properly handled without rancor and compromise. This has brought about division among unions, families, peer groups and communities along religious line. This usually opens the door of opportunity for political gladiators to work primarily for the success of co-religionists. In schools, students from the same religious groups prefer to be friends with only students who share their faith.

This is obviously a time-bomb which may explode and consume the country as a whole if necessary, steps are not taken to nip it in the bud. Incessant crises in Kaduna and Plateau States are ready examples and which are still fresh in people's minds. Had the critical stakeholders in these states being proactive, perhaps, the havoc done by these crises would have been minimized if not avoided.

Project Implemented

To address this problem, a one-day Seminar was organised for youths and other stakeholders on February 7, 2019. The project focused on bridging the communication gap between Christian and Muslim youths. It was held at Ogunlola Hall, Ogbomoso Central LCDA Secretariat, Oja'gbo, Ogbomoso, Oyo

State. Invited speakers at the seminar were Evangelist Oladipupo Olalekan and Dr Abdul-Wahab Danbaba. Key guests at the event included HRH Alhaji Tajudeen Ameenullah (Iba of Abogunde), Rev. Dr. Dele S. Opatoyinbo (CAN Chairman, Ogbomosho Zone), Late Imam Abdul-Rosheed Jamiu (Chairman, Muslim-Christian Peace Committee) and Engr Abdur-Rouf Ayodeji (NASFAT VP 1).

Aim

Respect and acceptance of other peoples' beliefs for lasting peace and harmony.

Objectives

The underlisted are the outlined goal and objectives of the project:

- Re-orientation of the youths
- Creation a network of peacebuilders
- Answering burning questions
- Changing the whole community for good through groups of patriotic individuals
- Equipping participants with basic knowledge of interreligious dialogue and mediation
- Addressing youth apathy towards community development.

Project Sponsors

The project was sponsored by Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace with Nasrul-lahi-l-Fatih (NASFAT) as counterpart.

Impact / Effects

This programme has become a subject of discussion at every religious gathering, owing to the fact that it was unprecedented in the community. Besides, there was commitment on the parts of the youths to establish a peace network tagged "Peace Promoters Network". The moral support received from the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), League of Imams and Alfas (LIA) and Muslim-Christian Peace Committee in Ogbomosho was critical to the success of the Seminar.

The program greatly broadened the horizon of many youths on the reason why they should embrace and promote peace through intra/inter-religious dialogue and mediation. Meanwhile, the aforementioned platform serves as a means of enlightening the members and the larger community on conflict management. More so, those who declined to take part in the programme upon learning about the turnout of people, its non-partisan nature and the fact that it was rancor-free were impressed to the point that the people of the community had clamored for the programme to hold monthly or on quarterly.

Sustainability of the Project / Vision

To sustain the programme, there should be periodic organization of the programme either monthly or quarterly. The programme should focus on attitudinal change and societal development. However, the main focus or vision of the programme is to ensure a wider scope and lasting duration of peaceful coexistence and interaction among young Christians and Muslims in our communities. There should be regular assessment of the state of inter-religious peace in the community with a view to ascertaining the level of impact of the project on the community and identifying challenges for action (Plates 1-7).

Appendix



Plate 1: Presentation by the Convener of the programme, Imam Abduljelil Bello



Plate 2: Cross section of participants at the programme



Plate 3: The Late Imam Abdul-Rosheed Jamiu, with some participants.



Plate 6: Analysis of peace work and experience sharing by the Late Imam Abdul-Rosheed Jamiu, Chairman, Ogbomoso Muslim-Christian Committee



Plate 4: Short admonition by the Chairman, CAN, Ogbomoso Zone, Rev. Dr. Dele S. Opatoyinbo



Plate 7: Anchors of the programme, Mr Surajudeen Alawiye and Ms Adewumi Adediran



Plate 5: Cross section of participants at the programme

Security of Lives and Properties: The Role of Ayere Youths

Obaditan Hakeem Otitoju

Organization: Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at State, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Introduction

Ayere is a town in Ijumu Local Government Area, belonging to the Okun-land in the Western Part of Kogi State in the North-Central geo-political zone of the of Nigeria. It shares boundaries with Akunu and Ajowa Akoko of the present Ondo State. Ayere among others in Okunland are typically Yorubas claiming strong ties with Oduduwa, the father of the Yoruba race, and tracing their origin to Ile-Ife. Ayere which means "a conducive environment" has been in memorial a place that accommodates different ethnic groups. Ayere accommodates other ethnic groups in her community to farm and carry out other commercial activities as the land is very fertile for all kind of annual and cash crops. Ibirra tribe is one the major tribes in Ayere land. They have been living there for over a century. They dominated a major village known as Arinma. Other tribes/ethnic groups include the Fulanis, Tiv, Bassa, and Gwari respectively. In order for their neighbours to be well organized and coordinated, they gave each clan the opportunity to have leaders or Obas for smooth and effective governance. There has never been a report of inter-ethnic conflict within the community.

Ayere being a multi-religious society accommodates all the available religious creeds, be it traditional, Islamic or Christian. It remains one of those places that were hitherto free of direct and indirect religious conflicts despite the vast multiplicity of religions practiced therein rather, they work hand-in-hand with one another to the extent that sometimes one wonders if the adherents of the religions are really practicing their individual religions as expected. Muslims follow their Christian counterparts to church; adherents of traditional religion pay homage to the Christian clerics and the Christians attend Muslim rites. Inter-marriage also occurs across the faiths without any prejudice or complaint.

However, the peace of the community has come under attack in recent time. Lack of knowledge and poverty are major causes of unpleasant attitudes among youths. Most of the youths in the community are school dropouts, abandoned children, single parents, political thugs, alcoholics and drug abusers. They attend neither churches nor mosques as they show no commitment to spirituality. They equally have little or no knowledge of the traditional religion which they claim to be superior to both Islam and Christianity.

Project Summary

To stem this challenge, a one-day workshop was organized in Ayere community on December 23, 2020 (*Plates 1-4*). The programme was attended by over a hundred participants consisting of the community's kings, high chiefs, religious leaders, politicians, youth leaders, women leaders, youths and the general public. The project's activities included advocacy visits to the community and religious leaders. The main goal of the project was to restore peaceful coexistence in the community of Ayere and equally bring an end to the rift going on in the community as a result of the murder of the community Imam's wife. The project also aimed at building trust, strong relationship and hope among the people of Ayere and other neighboring communities.

Security of Lives and Properties: The Role of Ayere Youths

The programme was organize establish early warning (E.W) and early response (E.R) which are essential in curbing disasters or violence in the society. This is because it was discovered that there had been some kind of enmity among the youths on different platforms due to lack of knowledge and good orientation. Some had grudges based on political differences and cultural practices. One of the major cultural or traditional ceremonies/festivals in the community is Hunto Festival (Masquerade) which usually comes-up in the month of August. Every youth in the community is involved in this festival irrespective of their religious creed. The programme was held in August because most of the youths would be around for the festival. Sadly, some youths use the festival period to carry out their bad or evil deeds. Most of the cruel and heartless people use the festival period as an avenue to revenge or retaliate against those who had problems with them. That was what happened when some youths got involved in killing Late Tayyibat Ajiboye, wife of the Chief Imam of Ayere, Alhaji Badrudeen Ajiboye, on the 20th of August 2021 at her resident in Ayere about 11pm. They had a misunderstanding with the Chief Imam for a long time, but proper action or warning was not taken thus they ended up killing the woman in cold

blood with axe while she was breast feeding a four-month-old baby. Sadly, she had three other kids around her in the same room. It was a sad development which shook the community.

The Programme

The programme (*Plates 1 - 4*) which was attended by the representatives of Alayere of Ayere (Oba Odofin Gbenga), the Elerike of Erikeland, Ayere and the incumbent councilor representing Ayere-Arima Ward, Chief Obayori Idowu, started with prayer from leaders of all the three religions (Christianity, Islam & Traditional). About 50 youths participated in the programme.

All the participants introduced themselves with emphasis on the lineage. It was discovered that everybody’s mother or father belongs to two or three or four quarters among the five quarters in the community. Thus, it was established that members of the community are like one big family. Participants were admonished on the sanctity of human life and the imperative of securing lives and properties of every member of the community. To achieve this, they were reminded of the need for them to always uphold the golden rule of loving for their brothers what they love for themselves as well as the need to respect other people’s religious and political views, avoid religious extremism and hatred for others and upholding of truth, justice and a sense of forgiveness in every situation.

Project’s Outcome/Impact

The project brought a lot of positive changes in opinions and understanding of other people’s religions. This change brought about unity, peace and harmony within the community as well as the commitment to fight against every vice. Participants yearned for a similar gathering to be organised in the community at least, once every quarter.

Appendix– Images



Plate 1: Representatives of youths in Ayere town



Plate 2: Representative of Alayere of Ayere, my humble self and the Traditional Leader, youths and cultural dancers



Plate 3: Representative of Alayere of Alayere, my humble self, some youths and masquerades



Plate 4: HRH Alayere of Ayere, High Chiefs, Imams, Pastors, councilor representing Ayere/ Arima Ward

Conflict and Peace Journalism in Volatile Societies: Analyzing the Role of Media in Rivers State, Nigeria

Rev. Fr. Gerald M. Musa¹ and Chikelue Agatha, G.²

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Introduction

Today many developing countries are confronted with a higher number of ethno-religious conflicts than ever before. Particularly, there are a number of African countries that are prone to internal political and religious conflicts. Nigeria is among the most prominent conflict-ridden countries in Africa. Growing religious extremism, a lack of tolerance and awareness and recurrent political tensions has turned Nigeria as a cradle of ethno-religious conflict and social instability. Thus, the role of media in reporting conflicts has become more crucial. When analysing the role of media in conflict situations, it is widely recognized that media can be used effectively for peace purposes and journalists can act as mediators to resolve conflicts (Galtung, 2005). For example, there is a rise in the establishment of peace media outlets during the past two decades. Some of them are the establishment of the United Nations' crises radios to foster peace and social cohesion in conflict areas of Africa. The purpose of these peace media outlets is to counter violence by suggesting ways and means to resolve conflicts (Betz, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

Notwithstanding the significant role of media and journalists in peace-building, it is argued that media can play a role in conflict situations "Either as a perpetrator of a conflict or as an agent for peace" (Guha & Mahatma, 2014). Some previous studies that have revealed the perpetrating role of media, suggesting that journalists' biases and prejudices to interpret a conflict add more fuel to the conflict and the overall tensed situation (Hoffman, 2014). Therefore, in recent times, there is a growing debate on 'what should be in news content' rather than on 'what is the news. The main problem, which this seminar/workshop addressed, is the negative role the media plays during conflicts. The seminar/workshop discussions focused on the narratives of media reporters about some major conflicts in Rivers State. Special attention was given to the media reports during the 2020 EndSARS and the IPOB versus Security forces conflict in Oyigbo. During the conflicts, some of the media reports were grossly lacking in accuracy.

Contextual Background

In Nigeria, economic, social and political conflicts often turn to ethno-religious conflicts. For example, in Oyigbo Local Government of Rivers State and in some parts of the country, the confrontation between IPOB and security forces in 2017 took an ethno-religious dimension and so was the #EndSARS protest of 2020 (Ebiri, Godwin and Diamond, 2017; Economic Confidential, 2020). Oyigbo is the headquarters of Oyigbo Local Government of Rivers State, and it is about 30 kilometers from Port Harcourt City. It is one of the most crowded local governments in the state, with a relatively cheaper rate of accommodation than Port Harcourt City. There are multinational companies extracting oil from the local government, yet, it is lacking basic infrastructure such as good roads, hospitals and schools. People who live in the area are predominantly middle class and low-income earners. These classes of people find the place economically convenient. There are different schools of thoughts regarding the indigenous inhabitants of Oyigbo, but presently Igbo people coming from nearby eastern states largely occupies the town. There is a large number of people in Oyigbo who are ardent supporters of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). There are schools of thought that say Ijaw people originally discovered the city. There are issues of land dispute between the people of Oyigbo and Eleme/Ogoni people who also lay claim to ownership of Oyigbo. The towns and villages that make up Oyigbo Local Government are as follows: Izuoma, KomKom, Obeama, Afam, Mirinwanyi, Egberu, Ndoki and Umuagbai.

Objectives of the Seminar/Workshop

- To discuss better ways of reporting conflicts by local and national media reporters/practitioners in Rivers State.

- To emphasise socially responsible role of the media and the proactive role it can play in peace building and resolving conflicts (Hamelink, 2010).
- To find ways in which media practitioners/reporters can be proactive in supporting tolerance, dialogue and conflict mitigation through their reports.

Hence, drawing on the social responsibility theory and peace journalism as the theoretical framework, the seminar/workshop was designed to investigate three major questions, namely:

- What are the contextual factors that cause ethnic and religious conflicts in Rivers State, Nigeria?
- How do media organizations and the local journalists attempt to help governments to manage, resolve conflicts and promote peace in Rivers State, Nigeria?
- What constraints do journalists experience while practicing peace journalism or reporting conflicts?

Peace journalism stresses that journalists must be conscious of the consequences of reportage (even if facts are reported), which can be achieved if journalists try to understand the political, economic and social factors that fuel conflicts, and present them in broader perspective. Although the media can never resolve conflicts by themselves, however, by presenting conflicts in a broader perspective, they can perhaps diffuse tensions. The advocates of peace journalism equate it with good journalism during conflict times as it offers a detailed, balanced and fairer approach. The prime concern of peace journalism is to enable all the stakeholders in a conflict to share their viewpoints. It calls for a multi-perspectival, contextualized and people-centric journalism. Peace journalism utilizes all the existing tools of journalism to responsibly inform the people about the conduct of wars and promotes peace and harmony.

Date: Friday 29th January 2021.

Sponsorship: Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace in collaboration with Centre for the Study of African Culture and Communication, Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA), Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Venue: Bishop Camillus Etokodoh Hall, CIWA Chaplaincy, Port Harcourt

Participants:

The coordinator of the workshop, Rev. Fr. Dr. Gerald Musa Senior Lecturer in the Dept. of Pastoral/Communication Studies, Ag. Rector of the Catholic Institute of West Africa, Very Rev. Fr. Prof. Jude Asanbe represented by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Rt. Rev. Msgr Prof. Joseph O. Faniran, the Head of Department, Rev. Fr. Dr. Inaku Kenneth Egere, the Honorable Commissioner of Information and Communication, Rivers State represented by Mr. Val Ugboma, Chairman of Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Comrade Stanley Job Stanley, the National President of Catholic Media Practitioners of Nigeria (CAMPAN), Mrs Clarice Azuatala and several participants including media practitioners from the African Independent Television (AIT), Tide Newspaper, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Radio Rivers, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN, Rivers State Television (RSTV), National Network, Surveillance, Inside Eleme, Rhythm FM, Independent Monitor, Kristina Reports, Top news, PH Times, Beacon, Naija FM, Ministry of Information and many others (Plates 1-3).

Key Points Discussed at the Workshop

- How media practitioners can be truly agents of peace,
- Media practitioners and ethical journalism, peace journalism.
- How to place emphasis on ‘what should be in news content’ rather than on ‘what is the news’.
- How Journalists can avoid judgmental representation of conflict.
- The need for journalists to investigate all claims even those given by "Eye-Witnesses" without embellishment.
- How to douse tension arising from conflict.
- Why the media should give voice to those who are advocating for peace, tolerance and negotiations in conflict situations.
- The implications of sensational journalism.
- Why media practitioners should not promote activities of troublemakers in their reportage.

Sustainability:

Since peace building and management are ongoing processes, there is need to sustain this peace project that focuses on the media. We are planning to have peace workshops for media houses annually. Media practitioners who attended this workshop expressed their appreciation for all that they have learned. Every year, we hope to focus on a given area of conflict management and the media.

The following areas are what we shall be looking at the coming years:

- Media and Elections.
- Social media and conflict management: Considerations for the use of digital media in peace building.
- Ways of mitigating sensationalism in the media.
- The political economy of the mass media in the period of conflict.
- Exploring media narratives in ethno-religious conflicts.

We hope to carry out these projects in collaboration with government and non-governmental agencies.

Needs Assessment

Needs assessment is necessary in the process of knowing the needs of target audience (media organizations) in our forthcoming workshops and seminars on peace. Some media practitioners specifically mentioned they want to know more about the role of the media in peace management, the art of reporting conflicts in the media and ways of promoting dialogue through media content. Media practitioners who attended the previous workshop on peace expressed the need to have more of such workshops in order to gain more knowledge of reporting conflicts and in promoting peace in the Rivers State. In view of the forthcoming elections of 2023, the political climate is already tensed. Election periods are known to be conflict-prone and these conflicts usually appear in the toga of ethno-religious conflicts. Therefore, in anticipation of these conflicts, there is need to build the capacity of journalists so that they can report conflicts in order to enable them report conflict professionally.

Rivers State has an advantage of having a plethora of electronic and print media organizations. In addition, there are well-trained, professional journalists and broadcasters. These media organizations have a capacity of reaching out to people in the rural and urban areas within the state and contiguous states. In addition, Rivers State has several tertiary institutions with departments of communication and centres for conflict management. We plan to incorporate media communication scholars from these tertiary institutions to serve as facilitators. We shall also look for facilitators of the seminar/workshop from near-by states and beyond, as we look out for the best. More still, there are a considerable number of veteran media practitioners in Rivers State who will be willing to share from their wealth of knowledge and experience with serving media practitioners. In preparing for the subsequent seminar/workshop, we will be administering a survey to ascertain specific areas in reporting conflicts where the media practitioners are deeply concerned about. Furthermore, we plan to have focus group discussions with managers, administrators and stakeholders of media organizations in the state. Having collected the necessary data, we shall dig into the data and identify key points, areas of concern and reflect on them. Afterwards, we shall summarize these data in narrative text and with graphs and tables where applicable.

Conclusion

Media professionals require high ethical and professional standards to foster public dialogue and to represent all voices equally. Seminars/Workshops on peace journalism serve as ongoing training for both media practitioners and professionals who are engaged in reporting conflicts. Well-trained journalists and broadcasters can collectively play a vital role in mitigating and managing conflicts through their reports and narratives.

Appendix



Plate 1: Delegates



Plate 3: Group photo



Plate 3: Participants