

THIRD ASIAN PEACE PRACTITIONERS' RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Peace Infrastructure Initiatives; Raising Awareness to Build Sustainable, Locally rooted Peacebuilding Programs.

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1. Introduction: Chairperson, distinguished peacebuilding practitioners, researchers and scholars, participants of this 3rd Asian Peace Practitioners' Research Conference, I am most grateful for the invitation and for the opportunity to be part of this important conference. Coming from Africa to be with you and to be part of this conference is not just an incredible experience for me in the community of peacebuilding practice but also a unique expression of south-south, Asia-Africa solidarity. I express gratitude to the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies and its Executive Director, Emma Leslie a dear Friend and Colleague for providing me the opportunity to be at this momentous conference and to learn from your Asian experience.

2. Africa and Asia Context: The main thrust of this conference is to explore Peace Infrastructures and how such initiatives contribute to building sustainable, locally rooted peacebuilding programs. This subject inevitably underpins the closeness and the context of the African and Asian experiences in the search for building sustainable peace. When we think of Infrastructures for peace, the underlying assumption is that the mechanism we appear establish is something we own. In my cultural worldview, it is most humiliating when we helpless in dealing with conflicts. The assumption is that people from the outside are always in a better position to help when they see us trying to own and lead in how we solve problems. In my personal experiences of peacebuilding practice, ownership is critical in our efforts to build and sustain peace. In his groundbreaking work, John Paul Lederach (1997) talked about five operating principles in Peacebuilding. That peacebuilding should be comprehensive, it should be interdependent, and it should be sustainable, strategic and should have an Infrastructure. The interconnectedness of these key principles is critical and yet the least effort has always been put on the principle of Infrastructure.

The context in which conflicts are happening in Africa and much similar to Asia is the protracted unaddressed issues that are rooted in our communities but have been exacerbated by history, most of it colonial. As our nations consolidate democratic cultures, we create limited spaces for the sharing of our narratives and experiences of intra state and inter communal feuding. The Institutions we have created to build the so-called modern states such as Parliaments are relegated only to resolving the political issues and choices of the governance of the state. In large part however, most of the issues of conflict that later on take on a political dimension are cultural and social and require the types of institutions that can convene all stakeholders to share their narratives and together establish the human respect and dignity for all that is so important for sustaining genuine *justpeace*. In the way we conceptualize and design Infrastructures for peace, it compels us to provide responses or undertake activities and programs that are forward driven with emphasis on the prevention of the

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escalation of violence. Where violence has escalated, Infrastructures for peace make it more expedient to mitigate conflicts. Peacebuilding processes that are outcomes of mediated agreements have a higher success rate in the implementations of the agreements when a well-designed infrastructure is outlined to guide the implementation process. This understanding defines peace infrastructures to be locally owned, locally driven with the prospective of bridging the gap between peacebuilding research and practice. This perspective also provides the rationale for infrastructures for peace to be effective methods for the prevention and reduction of violent conflicts.

3. Evolving conceptual framework of Infrastructures for Peace:

Chairperson, distinguished participants, International Peacebuilding efforts during the 1990s were informed by the ambitions of the *Agenda for Peace* which included official mandates of UN departments and other agencies under the rubric of peacebuilding. The conceptions of National Infrastructures for Peace evolved thereof with the report of the Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali to the General Assembly (1992) entitled *An Agenda for Peace*. He first talked about “reforming or strengthening Governmental Institutions (para 55). Following on this in the supplement to *An Agenda for Peace* (1995), he emphasized that the essential goal was the “creation of structures for the institutionalization of peace” (para. 49). There is abundant evidence in research including a recent one on broadening inclusion in Peace Processes and Political Transitions² that conflicts are happening much more within nation states and less at inter-state levels. The concept of the state in which it is the Government alone that has sole possession of coercive instruments of the state is now under threat as non-state actors in some countries are engaged in various forms of armed conflicts within the state. It is compelling now on the basis of emerging threats to establish institutions that are adaptable and more responsive to these new threats. The question is, why has there not been the political will and the commitments required at all levels to pursue the efforts at establishing National Infrastructures that should be in the frontlines of engaging in conflict prevention and mitigation at national levels before such conflicts become internationalized. The significance of this question lies in the fact that peacebuilding will be optimized to make global peace and security much more effective when we develop the capacity and resourcefulness to prevent and mitigate violent conflicts at community to national and regional levels.

After President Nelson Mandela was released from imprisonment in 1990, violence escalated in South Africa. Because of the foresight and the efforts by peace practitioners to establish Local Peace Committees [LPCs], community mobilization through these committees enhanced a peace movement that contained the spiraling violence. Instead of a total implosion into violence, South Africa witnessed a massive voter education and preparation that led to a peaceful election and a transition from an oppressive apartheid system to a new democratic state. It is interesting that after this remarkable contribution to a peaceful transition in South Africa, these LPCs have not been sustained and neither has South Africa built a National Infrastructure for Peace.

In Kenya, regardless of the experiences of internal communal violence including the post election violence of 2007, LPCs over the past two decades have been effective in

² Read more on research on Civil Society, Civic Engagement and peacebuilding led by Thania Paffenholz, a Senior Researcher at the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding of the Graduate Institute Geneva.

holding down violence to manageable levels particularly in pastoral communities. It is in such national context of Kenya that in the mediation efforts after the post election violence, the National Accord and Reconciliation Act 2008 strongly recommended the establishment of LPCs in all Kenyan districts. This in large part accounted for the establishment of the National Cohesion and Integration Commission with the mandate to promote national unity. In my own country Ghana, we have been developing a Peace Infrastructure from 2006. We now have functioning National Peace Council with a decentralization of these councils to the ten regions of the country. They have been instrumental in ensuring peaceful transitions in 2008 and 2012 following highly contested and closely fought elections in which the country is politically spilt down the middle.

4: The Regional and National Examples of ECOWAS and Ghana: In this reflection on Peace Infrastructure Initiatives, raising awareness to build sustainable, locally rooted peacebuilding programs, I am delighted to highlight two key examples as a thrust of my keynote address. The first is the Regional Peace Architecture for West Africa and the second, the National Peace Council of Ghana that I mentioned already. I will then conclude with a quick comparative case analysis of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire on mitigating election violence.

In West Africa, we recently concluded a study initiated by the Early Warning Directorate of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS).³ The study highlighted the risks and vulnerabilities of the region. Despite the considerable progress made in development and peace consolidation in some parts of the region (and in some instances the notable democratic and socioeconomic advances), there are also apparent structural deficiencies, which have made much of the region particularly susceptible to the emerging threats. The vulnerabilities have been identified as weak border control systems (leading to porous territorial boundaries), the inability of criminal justice systems to ensure effective operation of the rule of law and inadequate coordination and information-sharing among relevant national agencies, as well as limited institutional cooperation across borders with neighbouring countries. As a consequence, the emerging security threats identified in the region include:

- Drug Trafficking and Organised Crime
- Terrorism (Boko Haram, MUJAO, ANSAR DEEN, etc.)
- Challenges to Democratic Governance (The Conundrum of Democratic Elections based on "Winner Takes All", Principle Renewed Propensity to Unconstitutional Changes of Government)
- Piracy (Benin-Nigeria and Ghana-Cote d'Ivoire axes)
- The Ebola Syndrome
- Climate change related menaces (coastal erosion, flooding, bush fires and desertification which has caused an increase in conflict between nomadic cattle breeders and local farmers all over the Region)

The ECOWAS Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) deployed in 2004 is developed around a dynamic network of field reporters operating in all 15 Member

³ ECOWAS is the Regional Economic Community for West Africa. In a revised treaty in 1993 and subsequently through protocols in 1999 on Peace and Security and 2001 on Democracy and Good Governance, ECOWAS provides collective leadership for Peace and Security in West Africa. The Early Warning Directorate is one of the three key departments in the Commission for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS).

States of ECOWAS and analysts in the Commissions's Headquarters' Situation Room providing a real time baseline analysis of the peace and security situation in the region.

ECOWARN has operated since its inception as a government-civil society partnership. The ECOWAS Commission drafted in March 2009 a vision for the future, titled *ECOWAS of the People: Towards a Democratic and Prosperous Community*. The ECOWARN approach is "bottom up," in that it involves varied segments of the population including a large number of ordinary citizens through such consultative mechanisms as an interactive website, questionnaires, surveys, media outreach, consultations, focus groups and fact-finding missions. The collaborative design, development, deployment and operation of ECOWARN embody this vision, evidenced by a civil society-implementing partner, WANEP – West Africa Network for Peacebuilding. Among the five pillars of this approach, women, children and youth play a particularly strong role in ECOWARN. Each of the indicators was developed with gender differences in mind, and operational notes highlight for the focal points special considerations required to illuminate the unique challenges faced by women, children and youth in conflict situations.

Similarly the African Union Commission operates the Continental Early Warning System that includes ECOWAS and the other seven Regional Economic Communities (RECs). CEWS is a key component of the overall security architecture of the African Union. The RECs along with their civil society partners are integral to CEWS, and CEWS is integral to ECOWARN. Thus the tasks of harmonizing, coordinating and working together with the African Union Commission and other Regional Mechanisms and their civil society partners are considered central to ECOWARN.

The ECOWARN Reporter is a web-based field monitoring, interactive analysis and visualization tool with content customized for the ECOWAS region. The tool is compatible with those used by CEWARN and AU-CEWS. The network is animated by Field Reporters (Government and Civil Society) and the analysts of the Headquarters' Situation Room. On daily basis several comprehensive early warning reports are produced with the objective of having a firm monitoring of the peace and security situation in Member States. These products, which appear as Daily Highlight, weekly and monthly situation reports, situation or other thematic reports are distributed among the hierarchy and partners according to established EW data sharing protocols.

These reports generate response mechanisms at various levels with clear protocols for engagement based on the already signed treaties and protocols that require compliance by member states. There is still a gap in the response capacities of this architecture but on the whole, it has served well in mobilization response. The last incident was around the events of 30th October 2014 in Burkina Faso when violent riots compelled the resignation of President Blaise Compaore. He had tried to amend article 37 of the constitution in order to be able to stand again for re-election after the end of his mandatory term limit in November 2015.

In the case of Ghana, the emerging National Peace Council (NPC) infrastructure, which is supported by Parliamentary Act 818, was established as an independent state mechanism to facilitate the prevention of conflicts. The national peace architecture

stands on six pillars: law and order by the National Security Council; rule of law by the Judiciary; traditional authority and alternative justice by the National House of Chiefs; oversight by the legislature and the independent national human rights body; electoral oversight and civic education by the independent Electoral Commission and the National Commission for Civic Education, respectively; watchdog and advocacy by civil society organizations (CSOs); and mediation and advocacy by the National Peace Council and supporting CSO bodies.

The National Peace Council, as established by law, is created in the same three-tier structure as the government, NSC and traditional authority infrastructure. Each level of the NPC has a board and secretariat. The national board exercises supervisory and coordinating powers over the regional and district levels.

In order to facilitate coordination with the government, a peace-building support unit is to be established within the Ministry of Interior to interface with the NPC. The Minister for the Interior, responsible for internal security and overseeing the police, immigration and prison services, is the cabinet minister responsible for NPC matters. He or she serves as a link between the NPC and the NSC and also liaises with the Minister of Finance to ensure that resource requirements of the NPC are provided through its regular budget and the peace fund.

The law stipulates that the NPC's core mandate is "to facilitate and develop mechanisms for conflict prevention, management, resolution and to build sustainable peace in the country."

In line with the above mandate, the core activities of the NPC cover mediation, good offices, reconciliation, early warning, peace education, and capacity building, networking and resource mobilization. The NPC meets at least quarterly and may establish sub-committees and recruit short-term consultants and advisers. The NPC's legal foundation has endowed it with legitimacy and sustainability. The body's inclusivity and transparency has also been important. This enables the types of engagements that bring communities together to work cooperatively in preventing violent conflicts.

5. Cote d'Ivoire-Ghana comparative cases: From 2002 and 2010, Cote d'Ivoire was divided between a Government controlled south and rebel controlled north as a result of civil war. In 2010, the country organized one of the best elections with the support of the UN. After the second round of elections on 28th November 2010, the President and his Party, the Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI) refused to accept the results of the elections. During the critical period of two days that followed, the country sunk back into renewed violence. There was simply no mechanism at national level to call all parties to dialogue. The result was a bloody democratic transition in which the country has not yet fully recovered.

Ghana, which is a neighbouring country to Cote d'Ivoire had similar difficulties in which elections were contested in 2008 and 2012 with very close results. Though the country had not experienced the same level of internal strife as Cote d'Ivoire did, the dispute over elections could have disintegrated national cohesion, peace and stability. What made the difference in Ghana was the convening power and the space provided by the National Peace Council. In both cases, it was possible to mediate and to urge any party that was not satisfied with the outcomes of the results to use only legitimate non-

violence means to seek electoral redress rather than resort to violence. Political transition was therefore easier to manage and peace and stability safeguarded.

6. Challenges and Conclusions: Peace Infrastructure initiatives require Government, Civil Society expertise to create a synergy for home grown institutional establishments that have the trust of people regardless of a political, religious or ethnic divide. The political will and commitment is often lacking. If we leave Governments alone to work on Infrastructures for peace, it is unlikely such institutions will not be established. Civil society has to bring its expertise and back it up with the advocacy skills that can allow such institutions to be established.

Another challenge is to ensure that the processes of establishing such institutions are inclusive and transparent to earn the respect of all. Where these institutions do exist, locating them within Regional frameworks and peace architectures compliments national efforts within the primary space of responsibilities of regional organizations. Effective international cooperation for peace and security should be built from the bottom up, in which the primary responsibility begins with nations, and is complimented by regional bodies and the international framework through the UN. In the current approach, which has not been effective, a top down system attempts to develop norms and principles but lacks the determination and firmness to implement resolutions that facilitate good peace processes.

International intervention in Mali in West Africa is a good example where initially, there was no operational cooperation between the UN, the AU and ECOWAS the regional intergovernmental organization. More than ever before, the need for harmonization and cooperation is critical. Regional organizations have become more assertive and will exercise leadership within the framework of regional agreements and protocols within their primary spaces of responsibility. Rather than duplicating such efforts, it will be expedient for complimentary efforts from the bottom up beginning with national infrastructures for peace, regional architectures for peace and security both complimented by the UN system.

