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RESEARCH ARTICLE

COMMUNITY -BASED APPROACHES IN SOUTH SUDAN: RECONCILIATION AND PEACE-BUILDING PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

Community- based approach focuses on interpersonal trust building that address the root causes of the conflict at local level, through traditional mechanisms together with formal peace agreement. It is a process of moving from nonviolent being to confidence building, compassion and trust that address specific community needs and ensure full participation of both women and youth, leading to community reconciliation and community building and allowing those who were in conflict to live together and in peace. It is a process that involves rebuilding of relationships on interpersonal stages between neighbors, families and the entire community. However, peace building should focus on national conflict with attention to community security and social cohesion, in the other hand reconciliation provides a space for truth that exposes the nature of the conflict, and mercy to restore the lost relationship. Such a reconciliation transforms the psychological attitudes of the community members from mutual suspicion to mutual coexistence with former enemies. Reconciliation is an important initiative for removing the mistrust and hatred which trigger reappearance of conflict, attaining the union of peace and enabling the recognition of a sustainable peace. This paper aims to investigate the effect of reconciliation and peace building at local level and how it impacts positively or negatively in the life of the communities in the country, it also looks at the positive attitudes and confidence that motivates the community to envision a peaceful future in the Country.

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INTRODUCTION

Peace building and reconciliation have always been used as a tool of peace, to avoid hate and violence there is a need to address the root causes of the conflict that contributed to violence and hatreds, both peace – building and reconciliation are primarily a national challenge and responsibility. It is the communities or citizens of a country where peace building and reconciliation are happening, usually with support from the government that assumes the responsibility for laying the foundations of lasting peace where national dialogue and reconciliation is essential for success. This paper focuses on the restorative and transformative potential of the local communities to support conflict- affected communities to reconcile, so as to heal the past and re-build the future.¹ The literature on international peace building spends considerable time thinking why external intervention to build peace fails. There are several ways of answering this question, but one has to gain considerable adhesion. It suggests that to understand failure there is need to focus on the people who carry out such interventions, by including local populations to help and see the interaction among them.

The fact is that the international interveners impose pre-conceived templates (models) and fail to listen to the locals. Therefore, interventions always encounter resistance by failing to respond to the local needs. This diagnostic fact leads to recommendations that interventions need to adhere to the local needs and values. This paper draws on the perceptions of this literature to argue that international peace building to understand that such occurrence contributes to injustice leading to failure of the peace building². The methodology used in peace-building and reconciliation involves a multi-dimensional approach that includes formal mechanisms such as transitional justice and informal processes like trauma healing and dialogue to address the root causes and effects of the conflict.

Transitional Justice Mechanism: Transitional justice is a formal and non- formal judicial mechanism used to address violated human rights abuses. This mechanism should be accompanied with true telling to establish an official record of the events that provides victims chance to share their experiences so as to promote accountability.³

¹ United Nations (2012) An overview of SSR in peace process

²Michael S. Lund (1996) preventing violent conflicts

³Voytas E (2022) transitional justice museums

The Need for Justice Reform: Justice reform has the goal to establish effective and proportional justice mechanisms that distinguishes between civilian and fighters and are accessible to all sections of society, including rural and marginalized populations. Governments also need to lift the state of emergency to justify extraordinary measures during crisis. The large part of the constitutional reform processes are efforts to align national law with international human rights to provide for institutional balances in the security sector, including independent oversight mechanisms such as human rights commission.⁴

Prison Reforms: The transitional context always aims at improving the conditions of detention for the prison populations and reduce their number including the liberation of political prisoners.

Peace and Reconciliation: Peace- building and reconciliation process is a long- term effort to restore relationships and transform community members after violent conflict through multi- level approaches. It is a process of sharing a future by building trust, empathy and peaceful coexistence to facilitate communication and negotiation between the so-called enemies to reach a mutual acceptable solution.

Termination of Conflict

- This stage focuses on ending violence through dialogues that secures a cessation of conflicts.
- Peace-building
- This stage involves changing of attitudes, beliefs and relationships to build a sustainable peace.

Reconciliation: The concept of reconciliation can be understood as the convergence (union) of multiple processes that move a society to restoring broken relationships and building new relationships in the context of violence. A process that can be facilitated by different actors (political leaders, civil society, business leaders, and religious leaders), it impacts on a range of intermediaries (victims, perpetrators, witnesses), it takes place at a number of levels (grassroots, macro – political, inter-group, intra-group), can draw on a variety of potential tools, mechanisms and institutions (trials, truth, commissions, repatriations, apology, acknowledgement, reforms, etc.)⁵ Reconciliation is a key part of peace- building which includes coexistence that replaces fear with nonviolent existing, confidence and trust building which creates a base for renewed relationships, empathy development that raises understanding between victims and perpetrators and beneficiaries, as well as balancing justice and accountability for both truth and justice that enables behavioral and emotional change, in addition, social and psychological interventions are applicable as means of addressing emotional impacts of violence for sustainable peace.⁶

Importance of Reconciliation in Peace-building Process: Reconciliation is an important initiative for eliminating the mistrust and hatreds which spark the recurrence of conflict, achieving the consolidation of peace, and enabling the realization of a sustainable peace. In specific terms reconciliation promotes an encounter between the open expression of the painful past, and the search for the

articulation of long term, independent future, reconciliation provides a place of truth and mercy to meet and renew relationships. Reconciliation recognizes the need to give time and place to both justice and peace were restoring the wrong is held together with the envisioning of a common future.⁷

Initial Approaches and Ethics

Reconciliation Approaches: This approach focuses on changing individuals and local community's perceptions overcome hatreds and mistrust restoring damaged relationships and building a common vision of the community's future, and apologies. However, the concept of reconciliation involves promoting partnerships and cooperation, and experiencing changes in the goals, beliefs and attitudes as outcome reconciliation has to bring about positive changes in intergroup relationships, mutual acceptance, changed perceptions of self with a possibility of forgiveness.⁸

Sustaining Peace Approach: This approach focuses on a continues variety of measures to prevent the outbreak of conflict by strengthening national and local capacities at all levels, rather than just intervening after a conflict has ended.

Community based Approach: This approach empowers local communities and institutions to identify their own needs and lead the planning and execution of projects. This in turn fosters local ownership and sustainability which is vital when government institutions are weak.

Conflict Transformation approach: This approach focuses on transforming the fundamental conditions and relationships that caused the conflict. It emphasizes dialogue, communication, and restoring trust to build a sustainable peace.⁹

Inclusion and Local Ownership: This approach emphasizes on the local context because external interventions repeatedly fail for ignoring local context. The approach stresses for the need to involve diverse local stakeholders for example, women, youth, various ethnic and religious groups in all stages of the peace process.¹⁰

Non- Western Perspectives: This approach focuses on non-Western approaches that prioritizes norms of non- intervention, accountability and application of democracy that offers alternative models for attaining peace and political stability at local context.

Addressing Root Causes and Justice: Addressing root causes of conflict requires a multifaceted approach that tackles issues like injustice, inequality, poverty, poor resource management, and weak governance. While sustainable peace and reconciliation require that the root causes that led to the conflict are addressed, by applying justice, truth, fairness in the peace process, this will help to repair distorted relations and prevent unresolved trauma from creating new violence.¹¹

⁷ John Paul (1997) Building peace: sustainable reconciliation in divided societies

⁸ Dawop D. (2023) How contact can promote societal change and conflict

⁹ Haider H. (2024) Approaches to reconciliation in conflict affected societies

¹⁰ Voca S. (2022) contact with former adversaries through mass-media link to forgiveness

¹¹ Sokolic I. (2020) the roles of everyday and formal in successful conflict reconciliation

⁴ Palanza V. (2022) Evidence from a field Experience

⁵ Bilewicz M. (2023) Intergroup conflict resolution

⁶ Clancy S. (2021) Anew paradigm for conflict resolution and intergroup reconciliation s

Adaptive Peace-building: Adopting peace building is process implementing comprehensive long-term strategies and actions designed to address the root causes of conflict, prevent a deterioration into violence, and lay the foundations for sustainable peace. Adoptive approach allows strategies to progress and adjustments based on monitoring and local feed rather than following inflexible predetermined plan. Most peace building happens when conflict and large-scale violence have ended. But some peace building responsibilities start during conflict. For example, civil society organizations, local governments and traditional actors may promote conflict resolution mechanisms to provide basic services and develop livelihood opportunities. It is important to assess national capacity and other potential capacities in the country such as resident staff or NGOs. This preparatory ground work enables international actors to respond quickly and effectively once negotiated elements of peace are established.¹²

The Role of Local Governments in Peace- building: Within the perspective of local peace-building, there is a line of analysis that has focused on the union of state institutions at the sub-regional level and the role of sub-national governments in achieving peace objectives. Accordingly, the method of union of legitimate and efficient institutions in the local scope is crucial since the state apparatus in post-conflict context suffers from weakened institutional capacity, leading to inefficient public institutions.¹³ It is considered that local governments can have legitimacy and capacity to address the needs of the population and have potential dedication to resolve conflicts. To achieve this effort, it is essential that subnational governments have sufficient resources and autonomy (independence). Subsequently, promotive intervention is necessary to reconciliation and development activities that promotes economic and social well-being and contribute to confidence- building between stakeholders and their constituencies. Preventive intervention promote reconciliation as an explicit objective through active engagement sand relationship building. Pre-emptive intervention focuses on tackling emerging challenges to harmony.¹⁴

Requirements for Promoting Reconciliation: To promote reconciliation, it is necessary to recognize the existence of the reconciliation process in response to differences social status and disparities levels of influence. By disparate levels we mean those in a position to advise political leaders holding policymaking powers such as intellectuals' public movement leaders capable of influencing public opinion. The promotion of reconciliation on the civic level is developed in the context of the various school educational programs, the reality is that confrontational relationships are diverse in nature, thereby, demanding the research and development of effective reconciliations programs to suit each case. The international community's support for the promotion of peace building is a process of reconciliation, and a crucial requirement in conflict-torn societies that have suffered material and personal losses as a result of conflict.¹⁵

The Role of Learning Institution in promoting Peace: Learning institutions in South Sudan play a crucial role in

promoting peace education into the curriculum, serving as civic engagement and fostering mutual national identity. This is achieved despite the significant challenges such as delay of salaries and economic instability accompanied with insecurity. Integrating peace education into primary, secondary and university help students develop the skills and attitudes necessary for conflict resolution and non-violence. This has also provided a framework for developing a common identity that stabilizes the society recovering from conflict. It bridges ethnic and regional disparities by promoting an inclusive environment that values equity and cultural sensitivity. Education empowers individuals to pursue peaceful actions for change rather than restoring to violence. Studies in South Sudan prove that educated individuals, particularly female students prefer non-violent methods for addressing grievances.¹⁶

The Way Forward to South Sudan Peac Process: According to this paper the way forward to the peace process in South Sudan involves a multi-faceted approach that includes implementing the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, increasing women's participation, improving security and transitional justice, and ensuring coordinated efforts among all stakeholders. There is also need for strengthening coordination, enhancing gender sensitivity initiatives and clear pathways for civilian input into peace- building and address ongoing insecurity and the return of displaced populations. The implementation should also include strengthening the institutions established by the agreement, and ensure its effective functioning, and adhering to the agreed – upon timelines for implementations. Women participation involves ensuring their inclusion in all peace and security efforts, creating inclusive selection criteria that supports women's coalition, and establish channels for them to influence decision making. For enhancing security and justice there is need to address the root causes of the conflict, improving security sector reform and ensuring that transitional justices are implemented effectively with gender- sensitivity provisions. As for the trust building and civil engagement the key element for creating such process allow citizens to participate at all levels from local to national levels through mechanisms like national dialogue. Effective coordination is crucial to avoid duplication and ensure that all efforts being by local women and international actors are complementary. Addressing humanitarian needs is vital to the needs of the large displaced population by creating conditions that allow for safe voluntary return to their homes.¹⁷

CONCLUSION

In conclusion learning institutions face challenges such as inadequate funding, lack of resources for research work.

¹⁶ Dr. Salih M. (2024) Case Study, s University of Juba

¹⁷Revitalized agreement document

¹²Radnitz S. (2018) conflict management and peace Science

¹³Bruneau B. (2022) promote peace in Colombia

¹⁴ Bock J. (2001) Sharpening conflict Management: Religious Leaders

¹⁵Rabah Halabi (2000) the school for peace Approach

However, there is mutual collaboration among the government, national organizations and organizations like UNESCO are improving the quality of education for peace building efforts, this will in turn open ways for peaceful dialogue and reconciliation.

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