Local Peace Committees in Africa: The Unseen Role in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

by

Abdul Karim Issifu
akissifu@gmail.com
Research Assistant, Institute for Development Studies (IDS),
University of Cape Coast-Ghana

Abstract

This article seeks to unveil the role of Local Peace Committees (LPCs) in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa. Thus, violence emanating from religious extremism, racism, ethnicity and intra/interstate warfare has long been a component of the international discourse. This is because one-third of all countries in the world have experienced violent conflicts. In the western world, however, violence caused by state supremacy and hegemony, resource competition, and political rivalry is either resolved entirely or drastically minimised. Nevertheless, in Africa, many conflicts originating from politics, ethnicity, religion, chieftaincy, natural resources etc. remain protracted, in spite of efforts by the international community and local governments in keeping peace. Notwithstanding, the review of secondary data, including articles, journals, books, internet publications etc. revealed that LPCs have played and continues to play a key role in maintaining, managing and resolving most of these long-drawn-out conflicts in Africa. Hence, the author recommends that for a sustainable peace to be witnessed in all war-torn countries, African and Western leaders should identify and support LPCs, thereby providing them with the legal mandate and the financial support to operate on a large-scale.

Keywords: Africa, conflict resolution, local peace committees, peacebuilding

Introduction

Violence of any form through religious extremism, ethnicity, intra and interstate warfare etc. have long been a component of the international discourse. This is because one-third of all countries in the world have experienced violence triggered by segregation, marginalisation, politics, power, ethnicity and others. Nevertheless, in most of the western countries, for instance, violence brought by the struggle over power or authority, boundary disputes, competition over natural resources, hegemony and political rivalry etc. are either resolved entirely or drastically reduced (Department for International Development (DFID), 2001).

However, in Africa, the story is different. Thus, violent conflicts arising from politics, ethnicity, natural resource competition or utilisation, religious radicalism, and chieftaincy disputes remain protracted, dreadful and difficult to resolve, in spite of the peacebuilding efforts executed by either the international and national development agencies or local governments. As Sadowski (1998) put it, many of these intractable violent conflicts in Africa are along political and ethnic lines. Similarly, Babatunde (2013) adds that African countries have been engulfed in political turmoil, violence and civil war in the course of competition for political power and control of resources. Therefore, Africa is faced with the roughness of a dreadful struggle in political, social, economic and religious spheres (Mbiti, 2010).

Examples of African societies that have experienced and continue to experience dreadful violence include South Africa, Nigeria, Mozambique, Angola, Liberia, Ivory Coast, DR Congo, Algeria, Burundi, Somalia, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, Namibia, Libya, Mali, Rwanda, Eritrea, Ethiopia, among others (Gordon-Summers, 1999; DFID, 2001). Hence, the extent of conflict in Africa is greater than in any other region in the world (DFID, 2001). According to Sadowski (1998), one or more of such conflicts in these African nations emanate from ethnic supremacy, power struggle, chieftaincy succession, justice, poverty, natural resources competition, politics and governance, groups marginalisation, territory or boundary dispute. This is why Ortberg (2010) argues that the African society has become so politicised that people often hear words like justice, life, poverty or compassion as code words for a partisan political allegiance in one direction or another. In effect, about 1.5 billion people live in fragile and conflict-affected communities (especially in Africa), based on land use, resources, ethnicity, exclusion, and the results of the economic and financial crisis (Tongeren, 2013a).

Although Africa is plagued by protracted conflict challenges, the role of Local Peace Committees (LPCs) (committees or structures formed at the level of a district, municipality, town or village to encourage and facilitate inclusive peace making and peacebuilding processes) in peacebuilding, conflict resolution and community development cannot be underrated (Olivier & Odendaal, 2008). For the reason that LPCs have played and continue to play a key role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, especially at the community level using traditional advocacy, mediation, negotiation, agreement, consensus building, awareness creation, community level capability building and empowerment. This is why Tongeren (2013b) has acknowledged that in many conflict-affected countries in Africa, local peace committees has had a positive impact on the local communities by keeping the violence down, solving community tensions and empowering local actors to become peace builders. For instance, in countries like South Africa, Kenya, Sudan, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Malawi and Burundi, the roles played by some LPCs were significant not only in resolving the conflicts, but also in promoting community empowerment and rural development at the grass root level (Odendaal, 2010; Tongeren, 2013b).

For example, the District Peace Advisory Council (DPAC); a LPC in Ghana, played a key role in the Dagbon chieftaincy crisis that had the potential to destabilise the northern part of the country. According to Olivier and Odendaal (2008), the conflict was dealt with through a process of community dialogue and mediation initiated by the DPAC.

Regardless of the enormous roles played by LPCs in the above named countries, they are still not recognised, especially during international and local peace and development discourses. Meanwhile, deep-rooted conflicts at the local level, and the psychological effects of violence on humanity, especially, on women and children, and the neglect on local communities where protagonists had to continue co-existing, LPCs played a cardinal role in resolving most of the conflicts and transforming some of these war-torn nations socially, culturally and economically. Gastrow (1995:83) concluded that LPCs have definitely prevented violence by solving many burning issues, promoting dialogue and monitoring protest events. "It has been instrumental in containing violence to levels that would otherwise have reached even more alarming levels." The immense contributions by these LPCs in war-shattered states provides sufficient reasons for not only rethinking the positive impacts of LPCs, but also supporting them to expand their capacity to operate extensively (Olivier & Odendaal, 2008). Therefore, it is time for the international community, civil society organisations, African leaders and relevant stakeholders have a critical look at the contributions and potentials of LPCs during peace and development discourse (Tongeren, 2013b).

Hence, the aim of this article is to expose the unseen roles of LPCs in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and community development in Africa, so that it will interest a holistic recognition and support during international and local peace and development dialogue. In relation to the objective set to be achieved, the remainder of the article is organised as follows; the first part focuses on the review of related literature highlighting conflict resolution in Africa, and peacebuilding. Part two analyses LPCs and its objectives, and part three canvases evaluation studies showing the successful roles of LPCs in some selected African countries, comprising South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana and Burundi. Significantly, the final section concludes that for sustainable peace to be witnessed in several war-torn countries; the international community and African leaders should identify and support LPCs, thereby providing them with the operational legal mandate and the financial support to expand their commitment on a large scale.

Review of Related Literature

Conflict Resolution in Africa

Conflict is a universal phenomenon of the human society that cannot be prevented completely. As Kendie (2010) rightly asserts, conflict cannot be avoided in social life, but it can only be contained. More so, conflict is neither good nor bad (Marshall, 2006).

It can occur at any given time and in any place, originating between two individuals or groups when there is a disagreement or difference in values, attitudes, needs or expectations (Conerly, 2004). Essentially, conflict might ensue at the class level, local government level or even international level with an underlying interest or goal. Oyeniyi (2011) also add that conflict usually occurs primarily because of a clash of interests in the relationship between parties, groups or states, either because they are pursuing opposing or incompatible goals.

Although conflict cannot be avoided entirely, violence is normally frowned upon. Therefore, in Africa when the unanticipated savagery occurs, there is a growing effort to resort to a peaceful conflict resolution method in building a sustainable peace. Hence, conflict resolution as observed by Miller is "A variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflicts through the constructive solving of problems, distinct from management or transformation" (Miller, 2003:8). The central objective of any conflict resolution agenda is simply to identify the main cause of a conflict and put a total end to it so that a sustainable peace can be achieved. In Africa, the process of applying conflict resolution methods to end a conflict involves mediation through an impartial third party. Ajayi and Buhari (2014) also add adjudication and arbitration to the methods of conflict resolution in traditional African societies. More so, Bukari (2013) add-ons alternative dispute resolution, collaboration and conciliation to the conflict resolution and peacebuilding attempts in Africa. The main reason why most conflict resolution techniques in Africa ensures sustainable peace is that it take into account the cultural needs of the people and go deep to underline the structural causes of the conflict before providing a holistic solution. Essentially, conflict resolution seeks to provide a one-time closure to conflict through a joint-problem solving and human centred approach.

Accordingly, the successful resolution of any conflict should be based on a human centred approach, comprising of the improvement of security and good relations among people as well as the improvement of human well-being and rural development (Bukari, 2013). Principally, there is no right or wrong conflict resolution style and each conflict's participant is capable of choosing the approach deem fit in a given situation. For that reason, the appropriate method may depend largely on the source, origin, nature, manifestation and the outcome of the clash. Decisively, the application of negotiation, mediation, reconciliation, advocacy, joint problem solving, community conferencing and the like are part of the African conflict resolution components used by the local peace committees to guarantee most of the positive conflict tenacities in countless war-prone states in Africa.

Conceptualising Peacebuilding

Several departments, institutions, schools, agencies, scholars, etc. have defined the concept of peacebuilding. For instance, Call and Cousens (2007) refer to peacebuilding as those actions undertaken by the international or national actors to institutionalise peace, understood as the absence of armed conflict (negative peace) and a modicum of participatory politics (as a component of positive peace) that can be sustained in the absence of an international peace operation. Similarly, peacebuilding means to preserve and ensure enduring peace in society, removing the root causes of the conflict and genuinely reconciling the conflicting parties (Nwolise, 2005). Lederach (1997) also defines peacebuilding as the term that involves a wide range of activities and functions that both precede and follow formal peace accords.

Drawing an inspiration from Lederach (1997) and Nwolise (2005), Porter (2007) defined peacebuilding to involve all processes that build positive relationships, heal wounds, reconcile antagonistic differences, restore esteem, respect rights, meet basic needs, enhance equality, instil feelings of security, empower moral agency, etc. after identifying and addressing the structural causes of the violence. As a follow up to the earlier submissions, peace psychologists have described peacebuilding in terms of prevention, being proactive, problem solving, meeting human needs, and ending oppression and inequality (Wessells, 1992; Christie, 1997). It is against these diverse definitions that Smoljan (2003) argued that at present there is no definitive definition of peacebuilding. Consequently, this raises the question of what exactly can be considered the acceptable definition for peacebuilding (Issifu, 2015a)

However, the definition by former United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali has received some level of global attention. Thus, Boutros-Ghali defined peacebuilding in his *Agenda for Peace* as "The process by which an achieved peace is placed on durable foundations and which prevents violent conflict from recurring by dealing with the underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems responsible for the conflict" (UN, 1992: 57). Boutros-Ghali reiterate that peacebuilding is the action undertaken by national or international actors to identify and support structures, which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict (Call & Cousens, 2007). Since then, the concept of peacebuilding and its agenda have evolved significantly with the UN playing a decisive role (Issifu, 2015a).

Fundamentally, two main approaches to peacebuilding have been used in the past and are still in use in recent times to transform post-conflict countries. They are the western/conventional and the indigenous/traditional approaches to peacebuilding. The western/conventional approaches to peacebuilding refer to the use of external bodies and systems to transform countries recovering from civil wars, violent conflicts and natural disasters. It is also defined as the use of formal and external bodies and structures in attempting to end a conflict (Bukari, 2013). Paris, Newman and Richmond (2009) observes that the prevailing paradigm of western/conventional approaches to peacebuilding; liberal peacebuilding and liberal internationalism refer to the transformation of war shattered states into market democratic states and holding an immediate democratic election.

In support of this view, Hoffmann (1995) adds market liberalism, humanitarian assistance, formal court systems and the rule of law to the principles of the western/conventional approach to peacebuilding.

On the contrary, the indigenous approach to peacebuilding refers to the process of identifying the structural cause of a conflict and using elements such as mediation, truth-saying, joint problem solving, rituals, negotiation and others from within African origin to promote sustainable peace (Issifu, 2015a). In a similar vein, Udofia (2011) argued that the indigenous or traditional peacebuilding approach centres primarily on negotiation, mediation, conciliation, pacification and appeasement. Supporting the same viewpoint, Okrah (2003) opines that, traditional societies resolved conflicts through culture and internal social control mechanisms. Certainly, traditional approach to peacebuilding seek to promote a win-win or non-zero sum game in the aftermath of violent conflicts (Issifu, 2015b).

Taken all together, Zartman (2000) emphasises that, the task of indigenous approach to peacebuilding is to re-establish contact between individuals, families and communities with the goal to rebuild social harmony. Significantly, LPCs is a part of the indigenous approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This is because LPCs originate from within Africa, and critically assesses the structural causes of all conflicts before providing a feasible all-inclusive solution via a joint problem solving, a win-win situation, re-establishing connexion between individuals, families and communities in conflict.

What is Local Peace Committee?

Local peace committee is an umbrella title. Thus, it is a generic name for committees or other structures formed at the levels of a grass root district, municipality, town or village with the aim of encouraging and facilitating inclusive peace making and peacebuilding processes within a local context (Olivier & Odendaal, 2008). Moreover, LPCs encompasses a variety of names; these names include district peace advisory council, district multiparty liaison committee, village peace and development committee, committee for intercommunity relations (Odendaal, 2010) and district peace council and so on. LPCs by its nature take into account the felt needs, culture, norms and aspirations of the local people when exercising its activities of creating peace and enhancing security. LPCs are initiatives from inside Africa and have been used in resolving conflict at the local level, serving as a traditional conflict resolution technique. A number of peace actors have argued that the philosophy behind the establishment of local peace committees is the need to institutionalise and legitimise traditional conflict resolution mechanisms (Adan & Pkalya, 2006).

In the past, most LPCs were established locally because indigenous communities felt threatened by the rampant violence, and the lack of justice in their society. Tongeren (2013b) added that, due to the frequent violence and chaos in many rural settings and the delay in intervening during violence by the appropriate state agencies, local people took troubles into their hands, by finding a participatory method of resolving conflict or preventing violence, hence the formation of LPCs. Among the major features of all LPCs includes; an encouragement of active community participation by bringing the conflicting parties together, fighting against marginalisation and discrimination to promote community empowerment and capacity building, and inspiring community level peace initiative ownership to promote the sustainability of peace projects. In effect, LPCs by its nature are inclusive of the different sections of the community that are in conflict and has the task to promote peace within its own environs (Olivier & Odendaal, 2008). Olivier and Odendaal reiterate that LPC's successes are characterised by its emphasis on dialogue, promotion of mutual understanding, trust-building, constructive and inclusive solutions to conflict and joint action that is all encompassing aimed at reconciliation.

LPCs have been very instrumental in the search for peace and community development not only at the local level, but also at the national level. As LPCs are mostly found in conflict-affected countries, they have had a positive impact in these countries by keeping the violent conflict calm and empowering local peace actors to become agents of peacebuilding. More so, empirical evidence exists to highlight the successful roles played by LPCs in calming, managing and completely resolving tensions in many conflict-devastated communities in Africa. In the next section, I have presented cases from some selected African countries (South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana and Burundi), where LPCs played key roles in transforming their war-shattered communities into peaceful societies.

Methodology

The article is an exploratory study that seeks to divulge the unseen role of local peace committees in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa. To achieve this objective, a critical analysis of relevant data was gathered for the study. Therefore, data for the study was drawn and thoroughly examined from a wide range of secondary sources, including textbooks, journals, articles, magazines, newspapers, occasional papers and internet publications. Finally, data for the study was collected between August 2015 and January 2016.

Results and Discussions

South Africa: The Case of the Harambe Women's Forum

The first people to live in South Africa were black Africans who raised cattle and sheep near the coast (Callinicos, 1996). In 1652, the Dutch migrated to settle in South Africa, and although, they were immigrants, they believed the land was theirs. These Dutch immigrants defeated many native South Africans and forced them to work as servants and slaves as they established a colony. In 1806, Great Britain captured the colony from the Dutch. The British and descendants of the Dutch settlers, known as the *Boers,* fought for control of the country for about 100 years. The British finally won in 1910. Afterwards, the British forced Black people off the mineral rich lands onto land they thought had little value, known as "reserves", and subsequently, the British stayed in the places with rich minerals (Callinicos, 1996).

In 1948, citizens of the state unwillingly elected the racist Nationalist Party to power. The Nationalist government combined all the poor treatment of African people into an official policy called apartheid, meaning apartness in *Afrikaans*. Under apartheid, the government divided the people into racial categories. The whites controlled the government, factories, large farms, education, military and the press (Callinicos, 1996). The apartheid was so severe that Black groups began resisting the white government. Many Blacks frustrated by the apartheid system joined the African National Congress (ANC) to fight the apartheid system.

The government responded by enforcing its laws, keeping Blacks separated and in discouraging Black culture. In 1986, the white South African government continued to destroy those who resisted the apartheid. For three years, they arrested, tortured, discriminated and imprisoned over 20,000 people (Helliker, 2008). Darby and McQuinn (2003) add that, during the apartheid era over 18, 000 people were killed. Coleman (1998) also concludes that 80, 000 anti-apartheid people were illegally detained without trial. These are clear indications that the apartheid system caused a massive distortion in the social fabric of many communities in South Africa.

Notwithstanding the challenges in the apartheid system, during the post-apartheid period, local women who in the face of their devastating poverty, violence and trauma, strived to develop their distraught communities and building peace through local initiatives. For instance, Zandile Nhlengetwa and some local women to build peace in South Africa after the apartheid era established the Harambe Women's Forum (HWF), a local peace committee (Issifu, 2015a). Significantly, Nhlengetwa, a native of Kwazulu-Natal experiences in the apartheid; the untimely death of her husband, and the murder of her fifteen (15) year old son by minors, coupled with the firebombing of her home, all parts of the apartheid consequences, intensified her passion for a violence free society not only in Kwazulu-Natal, but also in the whole country.

The aim of the HWF include promoting sustainable peace in the aftermath of the apartheid and providing reintegration opportunities for ex-convicts, especially minors and youths charged with apartheid crimes. In effect, the HWF worked to find a lasting security during the post-apartheid regime and created a better future for children as it fought against poverty.

In addition, the HWF's initiatives and local policies in the post-apartheid era empowered many women, facilitated educational policies for young prisoners' burden with apartheid crimes, and equipped other rural folks with the requisite skills to promote peace using local cultures. According to Noma et al (2012), the HWF worked in different communities for many years to champion the foundation for peace, security and community development through adult literacy and community based peace classes. Finally, although the social fabric of many rural communities was wrecked after the apartheid era, the commitment of the HWF to restore social order and provide a lasting peace in KwaZulu-Natal and other neighbouring communities through building trust, healing trauma, adult literacy classes, and personal empowerment, etc. cannot be ignored in the global peace discourse (Noma et al, 2012).

Kenya: The Case of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee

Wajir is a district located in the northeastern province of Kenya. It is characterised by high poverty; marginalisation, discrimination, inadequate human capital, scarce resources; including water and vegetation. The dominant population in the area is the nomadic pastoralists who compete over extensive areas to move with their livestock in search of pasture and water. The community is also fragile to extremisms and the survival of the fitters' syndrome, and rivalry between different clans over controlling and utilising the scarce natural resources.

Additionally, the region is highly faced with underdeveloped; lacks social infrastructure, including education and health facilities, and lag in economic development, causing the high unemployment rate among the youths. All these challenges, especially, the struggle over scarce natural resources between clans precipitated the 1991/2 conflict in the region causing several people and properties perished. After the violence 1,200 people died (Tongeren, 2013b), and thousands of people were either robbed, raped or wounded, livestock estimated at a value of $900,000 were also destroyed (Menkhaus, 2008).

Ibrahim and Jenner (1997) add that during that period, 165 civil servants and teachers either left their posts or refused to go when assigned to Wajir. However, it took the effort of a local peace committee: initially called the Wajir Women for Peace Group before becoming Wajir Peace Group, with members of all the clans in the district and finally, the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC) that helped to build peace in Wajir after the violence. Thus, the WPDC formed in 1995 worked tirelessly in securing sustainable peace in the area, following a series of failed formal peace architects (Tongeren, 2013b).

WPDC facilitated a meeting of clan elders from all the lineages in the district that culminated in the Al Fatah Declaration, which set out guidelines for the return of peace and future relations between the feuding clans (Menkhaus, 2008). More so, a rapid response team composed of both government and civic leaders was formed on the supposition that early response could avert many manageable conflicts from spiralling out of control. And essentially, most disputes were handled not according formal code, but the Somali way–"Customary law and blood compensation payment was utilised to manage murders, and collective punishment in the form of confiscation of a clan's cattle until a culprit was apprehended and stolen animals or goods returned" (Menkhaus, 2008:26). All these efforts contributed to the economic, social and psychological stability of Wajir.

Among the key successes of the WPDC, include bringing home-grown peace to the district. This soon led to the initiative in other parts of the countryside. In 2001 for instance, the Kenyan government commission the National Steering Committee (NSC) on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management with the aim to support local peacebuilding initiatives. Besides, the National Accord and Reconciliation Act of 2008 advocated for the establishment of a holistic district peace committee throughout the country based on the success stories of the WPDC. Adan and Pkalya (2006) observed that local peace initiatives have been replicated in many pastoral and semi-pastoral areas in Kenya, following the achievements of WPDC. Crucially, during the post-election violence in Kenya in 2008, where many people died and several properties croaked, the northeastern region, including Wajir did not engage in any violence because, prior to the 2008 election uprising, the WPDC had spread the need for peace and a violence free society. Tongeren (2013b) has confirmed that, northeastern Kenya was quiet and stable in the face of the post-electoral violence. Based on WPDC's experiences and success stories, the Kenyan government and some civil society organisations also realised the need for peacebuilding using local conflict mechanisms such as LPCs. Since then, the Kenyan government and particularly the Provincial Administration is being acknowledged for their pivotal role in supporting local peace actors.

Adan and Pkalya (2006) conclude that the effort of WPDC in the peacebuilding process in Kenya has been successful and has increased optimism that such model can work in other similar pastoral contexts.

Uganda: The Case of the Karamoja Peace Committee

Socially, Uganda is characterised by high levels of poverty, including malnutrition, geographical disparity, marginalisation and the lack of social amenities such as health care facilities, educational and recreational facilities. More so, the political arena in Uganda is no exception. Thus, political exclusion and discrimination, political rivalries and inequality exist. And economically, high unemployment rate, sharping income inequality, economic hardship and unfriendly economic policies which tend to discourage local entrepreneurs.

These myriad of developmental challenges have led to an increasing armed rebellion by dreadful rebel groups. Most of these rebellious groups draw their grievances from the various socioeconomic and political problems faced by the country (Tongeren, 2013b). For instance, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel group, hailing from the northern part of the country has been at warfare with the central government over geographical disparity and marginalisation. Since 1986, the central government through its military contingents and the combatants of the insurgent LRA have been fighting in Uganda. The upshot of this insurgency includes hundreds of thousands killed, and possibly more than 500,000 citizens forcibly displaced (Tongeren, 2013b).

Essentially, formal institutions and committees helped in their own way to bring some form of partial peace in Uganda. For instance, the Juba Peace Talk (JPT). Briefly, the Juba Peace Talk was a series of formal peace negotiations held between the Ugandan central government and the LRA group over the terms of a ceasefire held in Juba (the capital city of Southern Sudan) in July 2006 with Riek Machar (vice president, Southern Sudan) playing the role of mediator. Somewhat, the JPT championed a ceasefire accord between the Ugandan government and the LRA leadership in September 2006. However, the ringleader of LRA (Joseph Kony) refused to append his signature to the peace accord schedule for April 2008, after been denied top government position, and subsequently he attacked several Southern Sudan's communities. In effect, the rampant attacks forced the Southern Sudan government to withdraw from the mediation process (BBC, 2008).Moreover, a few formal peace attempts failed in bringing a lasting peace in Uganda.

Notwithstanding the failure of the formal peace process to ensure a sustainable peace agreement between the Ugandan government and the LRA (BBC, 2008), the roles played by local peace committees helped to restore some form of social order and security in the country. For example, the Karamoja Local Peace Committee (KLPC) and the Village Peace Committees (VPCs) played a vital role in the peacebuilding process in rural communities and the entire country.

As part of the peacebuilding initiative, KLPC and VPCs in the Karamoja and Acholi regions in the northern part of the country, engaged in a pragmatic peace activities, including conflict prevention and resolution initiatives, conflict situational assessment, early warning signals, the reporting of potential violence, and the retrieval of stolen or raided livestock by some conflict entrepreneurs (Tongeren, 2013b).

Besides, the District Peace Committees (DPCs) in Karamoja in the face of their limited resources promoted peacebuilding through advocacy, community adult peace literacy classes and peace making counselling sections. Tongeren (2013b) reiterate, apart from the DPCs, village peace committees also existed whom in a collective manner initiated holistic activities to confine the youth within the village through awareness creation, caution and early warning system such as reported an impending raid to the right quarters for immediate redress.

Supplementary, the Kotido Local Peace Committee (KLPC) facilitated and accompanied other community based peace committees that collectively engaged in conflict early warning and response to follow up violence and massive cattle rustling by the *Kenyan Turkana* from the Jie in Karamoja. There is no denying the fact that, the diverse roles played by the LPCs helped to ensure not only sustainable peace in Karamoja and other neighbouring communities, but also helped to promote community development in the entire region.

Ghana: The Case of the Peace Councils

In the northern part of Ghana, a number of post-independence challenges have conspired to create pockets of relative instability and armed conflict, including inter-ethnic disputes over power and control, intra-ethnic disputes over chieftaincy succession, land-disputes and pre/post-election related tensions. According to Issifu and Asante (2015), the northern parts of the country have experienced the greatest aggregate of dreadful conflicts. And most of these conflicts in the northern regions are because people feel politically and economically marginalised in relation to the most powerful and prosperous of the south (Odendaal, 2010). In addition, the chieftaincy institution in Ghana has become a major causative agent for several communal conflicts, particularly those related to succession to traditional political office (Issifu, 2015b).

Among the several chieftaincy conflicts in northern Ghana alone include the Dagbon chieftaincy conflict between the Abudu and Andani royal gates the Bawku succession conflict between the Kusasis and Mamprusis, the Buipe chieftaincy crisis between the Jinapo and the Lebu gates, the Bolgatanga chieftaincy conflict, the Nadowli and Wallembele skin affairs, the Yapei/Kasawgu chieftaincy dispute and so on. Specifically, the Bawku chieftaincy succession conflict in the Upper East region of Ghana is a deep-seated and longstanding ethno-political conflict between the Kusasi and the Mamprusi ethnic groups (Bukari, 2013). Additionally, the conflict is ethnic and identity-based, and revolves around the claim for chieftaincy succession between the two feuding parties. Having its source greatly from the colonial legacy of divide and rule, the conflict has caused several obliterations to livelihoods; loss of properties, rampant killing and has displaced several people.

In a bid to help resolve the conflict, many approaches, especially, the western tenets, including peacekeeping, committees of enquiry, the law courts, and peace enforcement mainly by the government have been used (Bukari, 2011). In spite of these efforts, the conflict remains protracted. However, the role of the Kumasi Peace Talks (KPT), a local peace initiative has been very useful in bringing the factions to a roundtable discussion on how to end the conflict, and have since ensured some level of relative peace in the area, which the government of Ghana have struggled to guarantee. Interestingly, LPCs are not mentioned in the manifestos of politicians in Ghana, although these LPCs have been in existence long before the advent of colonialism and continues to contribute to the protection and safety of people, particularly in rural communities where the state apparatus, including police and military are either not seen or delays to intervene during violence.

To add more, one of the potentials of the local peace committees in Ghana can be drawn from the Centre for Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies (CECOTAPS). For instance, CECOTAPS's role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in northern Ghana was evident during the conflict between the Nanumba and Kokomba ethnic groups in 1994-1995, where 5000 people were killed (Issifu, 2015c). Thus, CECOTAPS quickly initiated and implemented a local peace making principle of awareness creation, rural peace education etc. to ensure a sustainable peace between the Kokombas and the Nanumbas. The initiatives also included a community based early warning signal and a timely participatory intervention with other non-state actors in some neighbouring communities that could exaggerate the conflict. The initial intervention by CECOTAPS prevented the conflict from spreading to other communities, from becoming protracted and finally resolved the struggle (Issifu, 2015c). The experiences and successes of CECOTAPS have led to the creation of a more holistic local infrastructure for peace in Ghana known as the National Peace Council (NPC), Regional Peace Council (RPC) and the District Peace Council (RPC), with the guiding principle of locally based approach to peacebuilding. Since its establishment in 2005, these locally oriented, but state sponsored peace councils have made significant contributions towards not only national peace and stability, but also community level peace, security and development.

The independent, local ownership, integrity and convening power of NPC, RPC and DPC helped reduce tensions in the very closely contested presidential and parliamentary elections of 2008 and 2012. The NPC purportedly played a major role in ensuring a peaceful election in 2008 and enabled a smooth transfer of power (Odendaal, 2010). Again, before the 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections, a Tripartite Initiative in Kumasi (Kumasi Declaration) organised by the NPC and the Asantehene (King of Ashanti) resulted in a peace accord of a fair play declaration by all the presidential candidates to accept the will of the people after the election (Issifu, 2015c). Obviously, Ghana's local peace processes have made a major contribution to national security. The Dagbon chieftaincy conflict, for instance, was-handled as a distinct conflict cycle, and a relative peace is being secured in the area by the engagement all local peace participants and local stakeholders such as chief, the district security council, NPC, churches etc. in a carefully facilitated process that defuses national political tension (Odendaal, 2010; Issifu & Asante, 2015). No wonder anytime there is a feared violence, the national peace council via its regional and district local levels are thus, called upon by the citizenry to act.

Burundi: The Case of the Kibimba Peace Committee

Burundi is an inland country in the African Great Lakes bordered by Rwanda to the north, Tanzania to the east and south, and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west. The country is poor and densely populated, with over four-fifths of the population engaged in subsistence agriculture (Global Security, 2011). Burundi has witnessed one of the dreadful civil wars in Africa, which led to a great disappointment by the international community in African leaders.

The civil war in Burundi lasted from 1993 to 2005 following the long-standing ethnic division and a historical past hatreds between the *Hutus* and the *Tutsis.* On 21 October 1993, the country held its first ever-democratic election since independence from Belgium in 1962 (BBC, 2008), and elected a Hutu President, Metchior Ndadaye. Soon, *Tutsi* extremists assassinated the newly elected President, Ndadaye. Because of the murder, war broke out between the *Hutus* and *Tutsis*. One of the outcomes of the war was that an estimated 300, 000 people died (BBC, 2008).

However, in a bid to find a lasting peace, the UN deployed its peacekeeping mission to Burundi while African leaders began a series of a formal peace talks between the feuding parties. Hence, in 2000, the Burundian President signed a treaty with the feuding ethnic groups. Conversely, smaller militant *Hutu* groups such as the Forces for National Liberation (FNL) remained active and caused political turmoil. Nevertheless, it took the intervention of LPCs to restore some degree of peace in Burundi. According to Tongeren (2013b), it procured the efforts of LPCs to achieve some form of stability and conflict resolution even in the midst of the civil war in Burundi. The LPCs in Burundi used a holistic partaking village approach to accomplish its impact in the peacebuilding process. For instance, the Kibimba Peace Committee (KPC) operated for more than seven years as a village peace actor for peace.

The KPC embarked on a collective peace making process, thereby facilitating communication between the different conflicting groups as part of its peacebuilding processes. Significantly, the LPCs in Kibimba succeeded in bringing the feuding ethnic groups together for peace and tranquillity even in the heavily traumatised communities. Aside the peace-making role, the KPC embarked on a community development projects. For instance, they built community schools and hospitals, and encouraged a co-management of the facility between the feuding groups. And the fact that both communities for a very long time were now using these facilities together indicates the achievements of peace and tranquillity initiated by the LPCs in Burundi (Tongeren, 2013b).

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is obvious from the cases above that LPCs have been very instrumental in promoting not only local peacebuilding, but also initiating the creation of a national infrastructure for peace. The case of Ghana is a good illustration, where CECOTAPS, a local peacebuilding initiative, led to the creation of the National Peace Council, whose object is to facilitate and develop mechanisms for conflict prevention, management, resolution and to build a sustainable peace in the whole country. Apparently, LPCs have contributed towards ending the downward spiral of violence and distrust, and have moved a bit upward to forge a new acme momentum in Africans peace aspirations (Tongeren, 2013b). In sum, LPCs have brought some level of peaceful sanity in some war-shattered regions in Africa, including Ghana, South Africa, Uganda, Kenya and many more.

Despite these efforts, LPCs still do not have the international and local recognition. Meanwhile, it has been argued that a lasting solution [to conflicts] can only come from a holistic, or a comprehensive approach, taking into account not only the geographical dimension, but also the more subtle and complex psychological, ethnic and perhaps ideological dimensions of the local people (Kiplagat, 1997). Therefore, what is proposed in this article is for African leaders and the international community, and other key stakeholders, including large donor countries, UN, European Union, Non-governmental Organisation, and other peace and development agencies to holistically identify, support, solidify and strengthen local peace committees, politically; with a legal mandate, and financially, with constant funding to make them more practicable agency.

In so doing, this will enable the LPCs to expand their capacity, capability and ability to provide more integrated and sustainable conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives, not only in countries recovering from war-devastations, but also in countries that have not experienced violence on a large scale to serve as a preventive measure. Above all, while the international community may play a vital role in supporting peacebuilding efforts in the African continent circumvented by frequent violence, the primary responsibility for supporting LPCs to enhance their peacebuilding, security, and stability agenda in the continent lies with African leaders themselves.

References

Adan, M., & Pkalya, R. (2006). *The concept peace committee: A snapshot analysis of the concept peace committee in relation to peacebuilding initiatives in Kenya*. CORDAID Regional Office, Nairobi, Kenya.

Ajayi, A. T., & Buhari, L.O. (2014). Methods of conflict resolution in African traditional society. *An international Multidisciplinary Journal.* Vol. 8 (2), Serial no. 33. Pp. 138-157.

Babatunde, A. O. (2013). Democratisation and armed conflict in Africa: Critical perspectives. *Peace Studies Journal,* Vol. 6 Issue 3 pp. 20-35.

Badong, P. A. (2009). *Security provision in Ghana: what is the role and impact of non-state actors?* ALC Research Report No. 5.

BBC (2008, April 18). Heavy shelling in Burundi. *BBC News, focus on Africa*. http://news.bbc.co.uk.

BBC (2008, February 19). Ugandans reach war crimes accord. *BBC News, focus on Africa.* www.bbcnews.com.

Boutros-Ghali, B. (1992). *"An agenda for peace: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping"*. New York: United Nations.

Bukari, K. N. (2013). Exploring indigenous approaches to conflict resolution: The Case of the Bawku Conflict in Ghana. *Journal of Sociological Research,* Vol. 4, No.2. Pp.86-104.

Bukari, N. K. (2011). *Conflict and development in the Bawku Traditional Area*. Unpublished Master's Thesis submitted to Institute for Development Studies, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.
Call, C., & Cousens, E. (2007). *Ending wars and building peace*. Working Paper Series: Copping with Crisis, New York. International Peace Academy.
Callinicos, A. (1996). South Africa after apartheid. *Quarterly Journal of the Socialist Workers Party* (Britain) Issue 70.
Christie, D. (1997). Reducing direct and structural violence: The human needs theory. Peace and conflict: *Journal of Peace Psychology, 3*, 315–332.
Coleman, M. (1998). (Ed), *A crime against humanity: analysing the repression of the apartheid state*, Cape Town: David Philip, p xi.
Conerly, K. (2004). What is your conflict style? Understanding and dealing with your conflict style. *Journal for Quality and Participation.* Retrieved on October 18, 2015 from www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3616/is_200407/ai_n9425833/print.
Darby, J., & McQuinn, B. (2003). *Contemporary peacemaking: A matrix presented at the peacebuilding after Peace Accords' Conference*, University of Notre Dame. South Bend.
DFID (2001). *The causes of conflict in Africa*. Consultation document, Department for International Development, UK.
Gastrow, P. (1995). *"Bargaining for peace". South Africa and the national peace accord.* Washington DC, United States Institute of Peace.
Global Security (2011). *Burundi civil war*. (Accessed on October, 2015) Retrieved from http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/burundi.htm.
Gordon-Summers, T. (1999). *In comprehending and mastering African conflicts*, edited by Adebayo Adedeji. London: Zed Books.
Graybill, L. S. (2004). Pardon, punishment, and Amnesia: Three African post-conflict methods. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No.6, pp. 1117-1130.
Helliker, K. (2008). *Bridging the gap*. Unpublished document prepared for the Africa groups of Sweden (South Africa Office), accessed in BRC Resource Centre.
Hoffmann, S. (1995). *The crisis of liberal internationalism.* Foreign Policy, No 98.
Ibrahim, D., & Jenner, J. (1997). *Wajir community-based conflict management*. Paper presented to the USAID Conference on Conflict Resolution in the Greater Horn of Africa.
Issifu, A. K. (2015a). The role of African women in Post-conflict peacebuilding: The Case of Rwanda. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.8, no. 9, pp. 63-78.
Issifu, A. K. (2015b). An analysis of conflicts in Ghana: The Case of Dagbon chieftaincy. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 8, no. 6, Pp. 28-44.
Issifu, A. K. (2015c, October 10). The evolution of Ghana's national peace council: Successes and failures. *Modern Ghana*, Retrieved from http://www.modernghana.com.
Issifu, A. K., & Asante, J. J. (2015). An analysis of conflicts using SPITCEROW model: The Case of Dagbon chieftaincy conflict, Ghana. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 129-152.

Kendie, S. B. (2010). *Conflict management and peacebuilding for poverty reduction*. Tamale: GILLBT Press.
Kiplagat, B. (1997). 'African governments-African conflicts', in G. Sorbo & P. Vale (eds), *Out of conflict: From war to peace in Africa,* Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, Pp. 132-133.
Lederach, J. (1997). *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2005, The moral Imagination: The art and soul of building peace, New York: OUP.
Marshall, P. (2006). *Conflict resolution: what nurses need to know.* Retrieved October 2, 2015 from http://www.mediatecalm.ca/pdfs/what%20nurses%20need%20to%20know.pdf
Mbiti, J. (2010). Never break the pot that keeps you together: Peace and reconciliation in African religion. *Dialogue and Alliance* Vol. 24, No. 1. Burgdorf.
Menkhaus, K. (2008). The rise of a mediated state in northern Kenya: The Wajir story and its implications for state building. *Afrika Focus*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 23-38.
Miller, C. A. (2003). *"A glossary of terms and concepts in peace and conflict studies"*. Geneva: University of Peace.
Noma, E., Aker, D., & Freeman, J. (2012). Heeding women's voice: Breaking cycles of conflict and deeping the concept of peacebuilidng. *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, 7:1, 7-32, DOI:10.1080/15423166.2012.719384.
Nwolise, O. B. C. (2005). Traditional modes of bargaining and conflict resolution in Africa. In: *Perspectives on peace and conflict studies in Africa,* Olawale, I. A. (Ed.). John Archers Publishers Ltd, Ibadan. Pp: 152–168.
Odendaal. A. (2010). *An architecture for building peace at the local level: A comparative study of local peace committees*. A Discussion Paper: Commissioned by the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme, Washington DC, USA.
Odendaal. A. (2013). *A crucial link: Local peace committees and national peacebuilding,* Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace.
Okrah, K. A. (2003). "Toward global conflict resolution: Lessons from the Akan Traditional Judicial System". *Journal of Social Studies Research*, fall. Available at http:www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3823/is_200310/ai_nq304242. (Accessed 17 July 2015).
Olivier, R., & Odendaal, A. (2008). *Local peace committees: Some reflections and lessons learned*. Academy for Educational Development (AED) Kathmandu, Nepal.
Ortberg, J. (2010). *Preaching like a prophet: We dare not be silent about injustices, if only we can see them as God does.* [Online] available http://www. leadershipjournal.net [01/08 2015].
Oyeniyi, A. (2011). *Conflict and violence in Africa: Causes, sources and types.* TRANSCENT Media Service.
Paris, R., Newman, E., & Richmond O. P. (2009). *New perspectives on liberal peacebuilding* Tokyo: UNU Press.

Porter, E. (2007). *Peacebuilding: Women in international perspective*, London: Routledge.
Sadowski, Y. (1998). Ethnic conflict. *Foreign Policy* 111 (summer):12 - 23.
Smoljan, J. (2003). *The relationship between peacebuilding and development, conflict, security and development.* Available at http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1467880032000126930 (Accessed on September 2015).
Tongeren, P. V. (2013a, April 1). Infrastructures for Peace is a promising approach. *Peace monitor*, Retrieved from http://peacemonitor.org.
Tongeren, P. V. (2013b). Potential cornerstone of infrastructures for peace? How local peace committees can make a difference. *Peacebuilding*, 1:1, 39-60.
Udofia, D. (2011). Peacebuilding mechanisms in Akwa Ibom state oil-bearing communities in Nigeria. *African Conflict & Peacebuilding Review*, Vol. 1, No 2.
Wessells, M. (1992). Building peace psychology on a global scale: Challenges and opportunities. *The Peace Psychology Bulletin*, 1, 32—44.
Zartman, I. W. (2000). *Traditional cures for modern conflicts: African conflict 'Medicine'*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner.