
Effect of Conflict on the Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The consequence of conflict affects people's economic incentives, for understanding structural problems in developing countries and designing appropriate post-conflict reconstruction policies, it is essential to understand in what ways conflict affects the economy. The fact is that whenever conflict occurs, the development of the society in most times is seriously affected. The study discloses the costs of conflicts in Nigeria in terms of loss of human life and property, and the destruction of social infrastructure that are enormous. While many factors contribute to creating conflicts, this study claims that conflicts in Nigeria are mainly as a result of poverty rooted in political corruption, weak states and institutions, and these have had a devastating impact on Nigerian's development. The implication of the above discussion is that there appears to be a link between poverty, conflict and development in Nigeria. The purpose of this paper is to ascertain the effects of conflict on the socio economy development of a developing nation like Nigeria. This study proposes among other things that the denial of basic needs by irresponsible governance in Nigeria has been at the heart of conflict, as well as the nation development problems.

The need for the study of conflict in socio-economic development of any nation especially of developing countries is necessitated for many reasons. Conflicts have taken a new dimension in several countries and despite the global searched for peace; they appear to be a lost battle, we expect to see a drop in the number of conflicts in the

world. However, it is instructive to note that the opposite is observed. Between 1960 and 1995, approximately 18.5 million people were estimated to have died from internal conflicts with over 80% occurring in low-income countries while half of these took place in Africa (King and Murray, 2001).

Poverty tends to be a familiar bedfellow of conflicts. In the last decade, there has been a renewed interest in the investigation of conflict as a crucial factor in economic development and performance. That conflict is inimical to development is one of the major findings in the empirical literature, although the reverse may well be the case, leading to complications in the analysis.

Merely seeking to discover the causes of economic development among countries on the basis of only economic factors may be misplaced, in that socio political factors can be crucial in the development process (Joachim, 2002). Conflicts, especially those that take violent dimensions can have significant impacts on personal safety, health, education and many other areas of economic life, thus affecting both individual and national productivity. It has been found that it has a negative impact on trade, economic growth and development as well as overall well-being and subjective happiness. Consequently, conflicts can affect virtually all sectors of the economy and in such important areas ranging from investment, financial markets to agriculture, depending on their nature, type and intensity. It is therefore plausible when it is argued that it is not possible to understand economic development without understanding violent conflicts (King and Murray, 2001).

Nigeria, with over 160 million people comprising some 300 ethnic groups, remains underdeveloped even with abundant human and natural resources, occasioned partly by conflicts of various forms. The country's budgetary revenues derive mainly from oil, located in the south, while the north remains relatively poor, although the latter has dominated the political landscape since political independence in 1960. The country was enmeshed in a devastating civil war, which consequently provoked the need to ensure some sort of balance through the adoption of a federal structure. Despite this measure, tensions have often proved difficult to control.

Nigeria was subjected to military rule, a serious consequence of which was the erosion of institutions that make for good and effective governance. Although the military left the political space in 1999, the underlying problems are left more exposed, and in greater need of attention. Studies confirm that there are conflicts in all parts of Nigeria, and this has tended to increase with the passage of time, with youths accounting for a high proportion of violent conflicts in the country Otite and Albert (1999). Conflicts in Nigeria are particularly intriguing due to their frequency and magnitude, coupled with sheer complexity and seeming intractability.

Virtually in all the geo-political zones of Nigeria, there are entrenched structures of violent conflicts. Whether it is in the oil-producing Niger Delta region of the south-south, where resource control and environmental conflicts waged by ethnic groups have tended to threaten the stability of the region and the country at large; or the South-West, where the youths are the principal protagonists of ethnic and communal violence, the story is the same. In the three geo-political zones of the north, incessant outbreak of ethno-religious conflicts and disputes relating to land rights and community

squabbles between “indigenes” and “settlers” is common place. The North-east has been ravaged by the activities of Boko Haram, in the south-east; social fragmentation is compounded by political turbulence (Otite and Albert (1999). There is also the nationwide problem of politicization of primordial ethnic and religious identities exacerbated by political violence. On the whole, what appears to be a major highlight of the historical background of conflict in Nigeria is that it is mainly rooted in stiff competition for resources, injustice and ineffective governance. The inequality in the distribution of the gains of globalization may be a causal factor on the distribution of violent conflicts. This may in part help to explain the violent conflicts in the less-developed regions of the world where conflict-oriented sectors such as oil and other natural resources tend to attract foreign direct investment at the expense of such activities as agriculture, manufacturing and non-oil mining.

Empirical review on economic growth and conflict

Empirical studies on the impact of economic growth on conflicts have been rather scanty, especially for developing countries, and most studies tend to be on specific areas of the economy rather than on broad categories like national output. This is hardly surprising, given the relative difficulty of quantifying the nature and dynamics of conflicts. Moreover, many studies tend to employ proxies of conflicts as an independent variable explaining the variation in growth. This is due to the belief that conflicts can harm economic growth and that the latter may not have any role to play in the analysis of the former. While it is plausible to assume that conflicts can have some impact on growth, it is not equally out of place to contend that economic growth can help explain the trend of conflicts in many parts of the world. As incidence of conflicts can impact specific sectors and regions, so can economic growth in different regions and sectors impact the incidence of conflicts?

According to Hegre and Sambanis (2006), the relationship between low levels of national income and the incidence of violent conflict is probably one of the most firmly established findings in economic literature. They found that more than half of the countries with a GDP per capita of US\$2000 or less in 1990/1991 experienced some form of civil war between then and the year 2000; less than one-fifth of countries with GDP per capita over this mark experienced conflict. Moreover, conflict tends to be more persistent and intense in poorer than in richer countries, so that on the average, each country below the \$2000 mark in 1991 spent an average of a third of the subsequent ten years in conflict, whereas countries above this mark spent on the average less than one year of the decade in conflict.

That conflicts can lead to huge losses is not in contention. Even for the most developed of countries, considerable losses can be the aftermath of a conflict. For example, the United States lost some US\$47 billion following the September 2001 terror attacks, in addition to US\$41 billion in various forms of taxation, approximately US\$10 to US\$13 billion in property damage, not to talk of losses in market capitalization at US\$1.7 trillion (Navarro and Spencer, 2001). Conflicts are inimical to trade, domestic or international, as it is disrupted by a variety of impediments, so much so that some scholars view conflicts in the form of violence and war in the same vein as

import or export taxes. Conflicts can exert negative influence on economic growth and development due to their impact on such economic activities as trade, agriculture, services, tourism and the like, in addition to financial market operations. Li and Schaub (2004) found that economic openness is associated with a lesser number of terror incidents. Using bilateral trade data for a set of 96 countries for the period 1999 and 2000, Pasteels, Fontagné, and Brauer, (2003) estimated the cost of war on trade. Their findings indicate that on average, each step ` is comparable to a 33 percent increase in average tariffs. A study using a sample of more than 200 countries for the period 1960 to 1993 show that the volume of trade was significantly reduced by terrorist activities, while trade was reduced by about 4 percent due to a doubling in the number of terrorist incidents (Nitsch and Schumacher, 2003). Thus, violent conflicts harm trade, while trade has the potential of reducing conflicts between countries (Li and Schaub, 2004).

In the case of Nigeria, only a handful of empirical work can be found linking conflicts to economic growth, and where such analyses are attempted, they are generally non-quantitative in nature. On the causes of conflicts in the country, what appears to be dominant is the argument that in addition to poverty and unemployment, dysfunctional structural divide and discrimination at various levels of state and society are causative agents, all of which impact adversely on issues of employment, promotion and public appointments. Also noteworthy are issues of group and community relations and land rights, often linked to the problem of indignity. Dunmoye (2003) maintained that land or boundary disputes are a major factor leading to communal conflicts in the middle-belt region of the country, implying that crises are triggered by scarcity of production factors occasioned by rising population pressure, land alienation or concentration of land in the hands of a few. Communal conflicts in the country are aggravated by economic crisis while ethnicism, religious differences and their manipulation, land hunger and increasing population, chieftaincy disputes and the "native/settler" syndrome are major causes. According to IPCR (2003), conflicts in the country and specifically in the North-Central region are driven largely by ethnic plurality, acute competition for political and traditional power, in addition to land ownership tussles, all of which are underpinned by systemic issues of access to economic resources and opportunities. Moreover, high poverty and unemployment levels and general limitations to alternative economic opportunities and bad governance are central to the phenomenon.

This is because poverty and unemployment tend to encourage frustration, divisiveness, alienation and insecurity, all of which promote the preference to seek some sort of social security in ethnic nationalities, with the belief that other groups are responsible for the misery. On the effects of conflicts on the economy, NIPSS (2004) maintained that the magnitude and value of various losses have not been fully determined. However, there have been huge losses of lives and property, a growing class of youth unemployment and sometimes displacement of humans.

Relationship between conflict and economic growth

There appears to be divergence of views in economic literature on the relationship between conflicts and economic growth. While it is the contention by

many that the relationship is positive, others maintain that it is the reverse. Theoretical and empirical reasons have been advanced as to why an increase in wealth can induce conflicts. The argument is that if economic growth leads to an increase in the value of assets that a country possesses, this may induce higher propensity by individuals and groups to have control over the productive resources. In addition, the increase on assets is capable of enhancing the inducement to use violence by people, whose interest is to have access to the assets by all means. This situation can induce the coexistence of conflicts and economic prosperity, to avoid this situation, it has been suggested that stateless societies avoid wealth accumulation (Colson, 1974).

An argument which seems highly plausible in the context of many developing countries is advanced by Bates (1973). He contends that modernization may be an incubator of violence, in that a positive correlation between wealth and violence is related to the process of economic development which is capable of generating a radical re-organization of political structures that can consequently engineer conflict. Thus, explanation is given for ethnic politics, which is usually conflict-ridden and which is in fact a function of modernization rather than being atavistic. Another argument is that in poorer countries, an increase in economic growth or wealth impels the need for more goods and resources, and that shortages create the need to have more direct control over resources (Choucri and North, 1972). This idea was however heavily criticized by (Collier & Dollar (2002) who notes that the conflict-oriented states of the period (1870-1914) studied by Choucri and North could provide for their own resources and where it was not possible, did so through international trade, so that the idea that wealth is a motivation for conflict may not be tenable and that it instead provides the means for the phenomenon. There are a number of studies linking reduced amount of conflicts to wealth. Studies conducted by Collier and Hoeffler (2002) found negative and statistically significant correlation between conflicts and the wealth of nations.

Effects of conflict on poverty and hunger

Several studies confirm the popular perception that conflicts exacerbate poverty and hunger. Collier and Hoeffler (2002) argued that “conflict causes food insecurity and that civil conflict in Africa since the mid-1960s until 2000 cost the region more than “\$120 billion worth of agricultural production.” Studies carried out in post-conflict countries like Angola also found a marked increase in poverty and hunger during war.

In his submission, Bates (1973) found that malnutrition rates were severely affected by conflict, but that “one year after the cease-fire, Angola had been able to leave behind the high rates of crude mortality and malnutrition that field surveys had recorded during conflict.”

For Mozambique, Colson, (1974) found a more lasting effect of conflict. In the northern part of the country in 1997, 5 years after the civil war ended, 39% of all children fewer than 3 years of age [were] moderately or severely underweight. Mozambique had a prevalence of undernourishment among the population of 52% in 1997. In comparison, in Burkina Faso, which has a similar GDP per capita but has

largely avoided conflict, undernourishment affected only 12% of the population. According to the World Bank, Sub-Saharan Africa alone remains seriously off-track to achieve the poverty reduction MDG (World Bank, 2007). We are not aware of any cross-national studies of conflict's effect on undernourishment beyond those reported here, or any systematic cross-national studies of the relationship between conflict and the poverty headcount variables. Poverty and undernourishment, however, are to a large extent determined by economic development broadly defined and captured by the GDP measure (Collier 1999). In this regard a substantial literature on the effect of conflict on economic factors exists, dealing both directly with issues such as GDP growth, but also with the composition of a country's economy and on the effect on, for example, military expenditure. Collier (1999) found that during "civil war the annual [GDP] growth rate is reduced by 2.2%." These results are confirmed by the results we present below. Collier found a difference between long and short wars. While short wars "cause continued post-war [GDP] decline, sufficiently long wars give rise to a phase of rapid growth" (Collier, 1999, Organski & Kugler 1980). The continued decline in GDP after short wars Collier attributes to post-war environments being less capital-friendly than a country's pre-war capital environment. Collier (1999) found that the "average level of per capita GDP is significantly lower after the war than before it," and this they argue is "undoubtedly a direct reflection of the cost of war." They too find that after "the destruction from war, recovery is achieved through above average growth," but this growth follows the pattern of "an inverted U, with the strongest results achieved in the fourth or fifth year after the onset of peace" (Collier 1999). The effects of civil wars also tend to spill over into neighbouring countries. The effect on neighbours manifest in two ways: increased risk of civil war and lower economic growth rates (Murdoch & Sandler, 2004).

Theoretical approaches to poverty and conflict:

Poverty is a multidimensional problem that goes beyond economics to include among other things, social, political, and cultural issues. Scholars have been trying to develop a theoretical approach to poverty and conflict for a long time.

Poverty as a result of lack of human needs lead to reactions that result in conflict. The human needs theory championed by Burton (1997) argued that there are conflict and instability in developing countries because people are denied not only their biological needs, but also psychological needs that relate to growth and development. The overriding importance of this theory is that it understands that needs, particularly basic needs (such as food, water, shelter and health) unlike interest cannot be traded, suppressed, or bargained for; thus any attempt to do this, leads to conflict. According to Aristotle (in Okanya, 1996), social strife and revolutions are not brought out by the conspiratorial or malignant nature of man, rather revolutions are derived from poverty and distributive injustice. Therefore, when the poor are in the majority and have no prospect of ameliorating their condition, they are bound to be restless and seek restitution through violence. No government can hold stability and peace when it is created on a sea of poverty.

In Africa, the case is that of absolute poverty (*poverty qua poverty*). This means that lack of basic needs (like food, clothing, shelter and health) in Africa is the seed of conflict (though, as a matter of emphasis; all African countries are not equally poor and equally conflict prone). '*Poverty qua poverty*' is a situation no human being would be contented with, because of the agonising pains that follow the lack of these basic needs. People in most cases react negatively to such situation, in order to show their grievances and discontent, particularly when the government is corrupt. Conflicts are therefore often caused by an attempt to clamour for these basic needs by violent means. Africa, as a volatile mix of poverty and conflict has continued to be poorly developed. Thus, as long as absolute poverty remains in Africa, conflict is inevitable. The argument of this study is that poverty, conflict and underdevelopment in Africa are traceable to political corruption. Hence the question, how can Africa develop politically in order to effectively alleviate absolute poverty; in effect manage conflict in Africa to avoid further human losses.

It is important to point out that there other theoretical strands, beside the Human Needs Theory (HNT), these include dependency theory, international liberalism and modernisation theory, but HNT is adopted because the paper finds it most relevant for analysing basic needs, which is its concentration (Okanya, 1996).

Factors that lead to conflict:

Modernisation, democratisation and colonisation

Scholars have emerged with different theoretical explanations for the causes of conflict in Africa. In the face of present crises in Africa, the flaws underlying both modernisation and democratisation theories and the theory of colonialism are being exposed. The long held notion that modernity would result in smooth transition from authoritarian system to democratic system, with gradual elimination of conflict has failed woefully in Africa (Okanya, 1996). Again, the view that the end of colonialism (1960 onwards) – the theory that the end of social, political and economic control of the developing countries by the advanced capitalist nations, particularly the colonialists would lead to peaceful African states did not stand, as Africa has been besieged with plethora of conflicts since the end of Colonialism.

Economic:

The proponents of economic theory contend that the propensity to indulge in violent conflict is higher for low income or less educated people (Ehrlick, 1973). A corollary of this position is that poor economic conditions and low quality of life could serve as a breeding ground for conflict. However, for the fact that poor economic conditions might result from different problems bedevilling Africa, economic factors could not fully explain conflicts in Africa. For example, Ehrlick, (1973) argues against economic factors noting that political leaders often encourage individuals and groups to engage in violence conflict in order to promote their parochial and egocentric interests.

Militarisation:

Militarisation has also been employed to explain the cause of conflict in Africa. The exponents of this theory argue that violent conflict in Africa could be understood in

the series of military weapons that have been employed in devastating and disintegrating many developing countries, particularly in Africa. Mohammed (1999) for example argues that the intensity and frequency of civil wars in developing countries have increased unabated throughout the 1990s. However, Omitoogun (2004) argued that in associating militarization and conflict, caution needs to be taken because rather than the proliferation of arms in the society, it is the welfare-reducing effects of militarisation that causes violence. Besides, it is appreciated that developed countries with more sophisticated arms than Africa are not in conflict like the later, militarisation as an explanation becomes weak.

Ethnicity:

Ethnicity is another crucial explanatory tool to the continent's plethora of conflicts. Theorists believe that ethnicity underlies virtually all conflicts in Africa, since ethnic groups in their bid to compete for scarce resources such as property rights, jobs, education, and social amenities engage in violence. In his study Nnoli (1980) employed empirical evidence associating conflict to ethnic problems. However, Elbadawi and Sambanis (2000) questioned the ethno-cultural and linguistic explanation for conflict in the continent, rather linking Africa's conflicts to other factors – poverty, absence of democratisation and over dependence on natural resources. Collier (1997) argued that Africa is not inherently prone to war as a result of ethnic disparities, but the continent's experiences of many wars, is fundamentally because it is poor and poverty is both the cause and consequence of Africa's wars.

Population:

Population is another important factor to African conflicts. It is argued that there has been tremendous increase in the population of developing countries, which has superseded economic growth. According to the UNDP (1994), between 1980 and 2002, the population of Sub-Saharan Africa has grown from 383 to 689 million people, which is an increase of 80 percent. In contrast, in much of Africa, very little economic growth has occurred over the past fifty years.

For example, no other region of the world more urgently needs economic growth. However, instead of the desperately needed economic growth, Sub-Saharan Africa as a region has seen a decline in per capita GDP from \$575 in 1980 to \$524 in 2003 (World Bank, 2005, in Schaefer 2005). Some countries are even poorer today than they were thirty years ago. Sub-Sahara Africa has had the lowest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for decades (Marke, 2007). Supporters of this explanatory tool therefore argue that high population growth has made things difficult in developing countries, as people have to scramble for available resources, which results to conflicts. However, countries like India, China and others have larger populations than most African countries, but they are not in violent conflicts like Africa.

Volatile climate and environmentalism:

The argument that African conflict is as a result of volatile climate and elementary forces (such as drought and famine) in its environment that have affected growth, has been challenged by scholars. Sen (1999) for example argues that famine, drought and related disaster are not allowed to occur in democratic politics because people have

established mechanism to compel governments to address their needs and pressing problems.

Sen (1999) argues that drought and other environmental problems cannot directly explain the 1986 disaster that hit 13 African countries since ten of these thirteen affected countries have experienced other problems such as war, civil strife, destabilisation (including apartheid) and a massive influx of refugees.

Political corruption:

Trends of events in the past three decades reveal that political corruption is the 'root' cause of conflict in Africa. The contention here is that political corruption by sapping the economy of Africa renders the continent poor or worsens its poverty situation. This renders most of the states in the continent incapable of providing the basic needs of the people. Burton's (1979) human needs theory on conflict and conflict management recognises the indispensability of these needs, by pointing out that wherever such non-negotiable needs are not met, conflict is inevitable. Since political corruption is perpetrated by leaders entrusted with a nation's coffers, the masses normally react by engaging in violence. According to the United Nations Human Development Report (Fapohunda, 2002), sixty percent of

Africans live in abject poverty. The problem of poverty is compounded by the issue of corruption of the state resources, 37% of Africa's assets are held abroad; Fapohunda (2002) argues that this figure, the highest for any region in the world, was more of the fruit of corruption. Egbo (2002) maintained that, 'this is public money siphoned overseas by corrupt political and military rulers for their personal use, the problem of poverty and breakdown among most third world countries has its root in the illegitimate and arbitrary methods of these men... the growth of the society becomes stunted'.

While all these competing factors are useful in the explanations of the rise in conflict in Africa, this paper sees political corruption as the most persuasive. In other words, while all these factors contribute to conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa, political corruption is the most compelling.

Historically, when youths are not engaged in meaningful work and are lacking the basic necessities, they bring attention to their plight by engaging in destructive behaviour (Marke, 2007), this underscores the importance of Human Needs Theory. This view point substantiates the argument of this paper that when youths cannot bear their poverty (particularly lack of basic needs), caused or worsened by political corruption of most African leaders (who appear to be above the law or the law themselves) anymore, they react by engaging in conflict, with its negative effects, which stunt development. The case of youths in the Niger-Delta conflict in Nigeria is a good example, the youths committed lots of atrocities, including the kidnapping of UK expatriates (Onyeiwu, 2004). This is also the reason why prisoners in Africa are mostly the poor who did little or nothing, just as Wentling (2002) critically argues that as long as political elites and the wealthy can do as they please without fearing any kind of legal sanctions, the huge and growing gap between the great mass of people who have little and the small percentage of the population who possess much will grow. Corruption (particularly by leaders) is endemic throughout the continent and at virtually all levels of society. In fact, sometimes Africans who defraud the government or private firms to enhance the

status of their family are looked upon as role models than criminals. Justice is very much lacking: small-time thieves who steal food for themselves or their families are severely punished while big government officials who embezzle millions from the state treasury and live grossly opulent lives are applauded.

The CIOB (2004) pointed out that the embezzlement of public funds by unscrupulous and corrupt leaders of developing countries leads to poverty, high debts and other socio-economic problems that impact negatively on development. Irobi (2005) stated that the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, including Sierra Leone, DRC, Ivory Coast, Liberia and so many others are a volatile mix of insecurity, instability, corrupt political institutions and poverty. However, the argument so far suggests that it is the corrupt political institutions, particularly political corruption that causes or worsens poverty (the lack of basic needs) that leads to instability in Africa.

The effect of conflict in Nigeria

The effect of conflict on the socio-economic wellbeing of citizens in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized as all geopolitical zones have their peculiarities; some of the major effects are highlighted below:

Loss of revenue: the Nigerian government losses revenue whenever there is a conflict. Tax charges and rates on different goods or items by local government cannot be collected during violent conflict. This therefore leads to a hug loss of revenue that would have being used for development purposes (Onyeiwu, 2004).

Loss of Human lives: Loss of human lives has implication for the nation's economy as the killings have effect on the agile work force. The civil war of 1967-1970 for instance, had produced the largest casualty in which an estimated two million lives were lost by the hostilities. The Niger Delta violent conflicts have claimed the lives of hundreds of oil workers, both expatriates and indigenes (Onyeiwu, 2004). In 2013, Boko Haram conflict in the North-east claimed more than 1,000 lives, in 2014 the figure escalated dramatically to 10,849 deaths (Dunmoye, 2013). The Jos crisis has also claimed thousands of lives, with over 500 lives massacred in one night in 2013 at Dogon Nahawa. So many human lives are still been wasted till date (Dunmoye, 2013).

Lack of foreign investment: Violent conflicts in Nigeria have retarded foreign investment inflow and growth of the economy; as no investor will be encourage in investing on and unstable economy. The presence of relative peace, security is a cardinal motivational factor for foreigners (Irobi, 2005).

Low commercial activities: most commercial activities are negatively affected during crisis. For instance, at the peak of violent conflict in Jos, commercial centres such as terminus market, Katakoto and Bukuru markets and so many other local markets recorded low patronage even after the conflict. In some areas, there was segregation on the bases of religion. The Gyel market for example became a substitute market for the Christians in Bukuru town, while the Bukuru market situated in a Muslim dominated area was mostly patronized by the Hausas who are predominantly Muslims (Dashit, Gwom & Dabo, 2015).

Psychological instability: The most prevalent consequence of persistent conflict in general is post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This is a psychological disorder

characterised by persistent flashback or nightmares, extreme irritability or jumpiness, and emotional numbing or avoidance of reminders of the trauma. Others may develop Anxiety disorders, depression and problems with substance abuse. Beaton and Murphy (2006) reviewed responses to conflict events suggests that up to two thirds of those directly affected either as victim or as a relative are Psychologically impaired to some degree.

Conclusion

It is evident from the above analysis that Nigeria is currently experiencing some measure of conflict with its attendant consequences; the following are the viable options for Nigeria:

Addressing the root causes of youth involvement in violent crimes and ethno religious violent conflicts entails the promotion of good governance and prioritizing investment in human security and human development in a sustainable manner.

Recommendations

The country has witnessed recurrent conflicts since the attainment of independence. Government response to these conflicts which is largely characterized by a “fire brigade” approach, points to the absence of a systematic and institutionalized way of obtaining early warning signal. If such is in place, it would be possible to anticipate conflicts by detecting the various flashpoints of violent conflicts that have torn many communities asunder.

For the purpose therefore, of designing effective conflict prevention and peace-building strategy, government needs to put in place the structure, requisite personnel and equipment for monitoring conflicts and transform existing conflict situations into enduring and sustainable peace.

However, it is a requirement for success that such conflict management schemes be inclusive to include community leaders (of both “settlers” and “natives”), religious leaders, traditional rulers, CBOs and NGOs involved in conflict management and human rights, intellectuals and researchers, and women groups and leaders.

In recognition of the role of the media in promoting conflicts through Information (mis)management, it is necessary to expose media practitioners to the importance and need for moderation, less sensationalism, integrity and professionalism. This can be done through continuing peace education workshops and seminars aimed at sensitizing media practitioners to the national political objectives of building a united, strong and prosperous society in the context of diversity and pluralism.

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