

Powering Peacebuilding from Below with Local Peace Infrastructure in Sub-Sahara Africa

Oseremen Felix IRENE PhD

Abstract

The greatest resource for sustaining peace in the long term is always rooted in the local people and their culture. This study focuses on exploring the concept of local peace infrastructures (LPI) with attention on local peace committees. The qualitative study adopts participatory action research design. It uses purposive sampling techniques to select samples for the study. It sourced primary data from individual interviews, focus group discussions, observation and diarizing. The study reveals that informal local peace infrastructures such as local peace committees (LPC) are very effective in grassroots peacebuilding, and in addressing multiple threats occasioned by violent conflicts and problems associated with low or absence of social cohesion. Furthermore, it points out that LPC can be mainly sustainable if established through collaborative efforts by the grassroots with shared sense of ownership and inclusiveness which in turn earns legitimacy for such LPC.

Keywords: Peacebuilding, Local Peace Infrastructure, Local Peace Committees, Africa

Introduction

There are many local communities in Africa that are under strain and multiple threats by violence, and are gradually slipping into the edge of precipice. Many conflicts are rooted in local contexts and individual level, be it conflicts at societal, state or global scale. To address conflicts without given adequate attention to grassroots and individual level concerns can pose a big challenge to conflict resolution, and in most cases glide conflicts into protraction. Embracing cultural and grassroots mechanisms are important steps in building peace from below. This is why it is important for conflict managers and parties to pay attention to cultural and grassroots dynamics. Nganje (2014) corroborates this when he argued that, parties strive to understand the cultural dimension of conflict, and identify the mechanisms for handling conflict that exist within that cultural setting. Building on cultural resources and utilizing local mechanisms for handling disputes can be quite effective in resolving conflicts and transforming relationships.

In Africa, conflicts often revolves around struggle to control mineral resources and political power. Bad leadership exacerbated the conditions of human insecurity in many countries in the continents. Galtung (1969) pointed out three types of violence- direct, indirect and cultural violence, and these abound and interplay in the continent. Africa seems to be most overburdened by the three types of violence, and the contribution of local peace infrastructure in dealing with the various types of violence requires adequate attention.

Genuine efforts towards dealing with all forms of violence whether direct, structural or cultural would involve a collaborative approach of top-down and bottom-up peace infrastructures. In fact, factors contributing to violence, be they attitudinal or behavioural factors, or factors relating to the broader socio-economic, cultural and political conditions can be altered (World Health

Organisation, 2002). Infrastructures for peace embody important mechanisms, structures and tools required to alter these factors.

It is against this backdrop that this study explores the concept of local peace infrastructures, creates and promotes local peace committee as well as uses the peace structure to intervene in grassroots conflicts in the local community for the study.

Infrastructures for peace

Infrastructures for peace are institutional structures or mechanisms for preventing and addressing conflicts at local, regional, national and global level (van-Togeren, 2011). They are network of interdependent systems, resources, values and skills held by government, civil society, and community institutions that promote dialogue and consultation; prevent conflict and enable peaceful mediation when violence occurs in a society (Kovacs & Tobias, 2016). They may be created to mediate intra-state or intra-communal violence. Through harnessing local resources, local peace infrastructures can enable communities to resolve conflicts using problem-solving approach (Irene, 2015).

Infrastructure for peace acts through dialogue, promotion of mutual understanding and trust-building as well as inclusive, constructive problem-solving and joint action to prevent violence (Odendaal, 2010) to intervene and transform conflicts. They are crucial to planning peace. Hopp-Nishanka (2012) describes infrastructure for peace as giving peace address given its nature as standing peace structures. This is on the ground that they are standing peace structures, and transcends the small-scale approach to peacebuilding, peace trainings and peace activities into a large scale more effective and long term approach that involves sustainable peace architecture.

Proponents of infrastructures for peace (I4P) argue that it affords local actors and communities the opportunity to call on political and infrastructural resources at national [and international levels], while still rooting their peacebuilding initiatives in the relevant local context, history, and culture (Odendaal 2010). It is, therefore, seen as an alternative peacebuilding approach with the potential to transform the power dynamics inherent in it, and harnesses the positive aspects of it, and the relationship between local, state, and international actors.

Infrastructures for peace can be local or non-local, top-bottom or bottom-top. The top-bottom or non-local peace infrastructures include; ministries of peace, national peace councils, national peace committees, peace commissions and other formal peace structures created by states through legislations, proclamations or other related ways that government established structures. The National Peace Council in Ghana, and the Ministry of Peace in Ethiopia are examples of top-bottom peace infrastructure in Africa. According to United Nations Development Program (UNDP 2010a), the National Peace Council was initiated in 2005 by the UNDP to promote community dialogue and raise early warning on potential conflicts. Other examples of top-bottom peace infrastructures in the world are, Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace established in the Solomon Islands in 2002 and renamed in 2019 as the Ministry of Traditional Governance, Peace and Ecclesiastical Affairs; Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction in Nepal established in

2007; the Ministry of Peace and Justice established in Costa Rica in 2009; and the Ministry of Peace in Ethiopia established in 2018.

On the other hand, examples of bottom-up peace infrastructures are, informal local peace committees, peace clubs and community peace centres, communities and nongovernmental organizations and local peace communities and their related peace structures that are informally created by grassroots or locals. Others are local resources of all forms design for violence prevention, peacemaking, conflict management, conflict resolution, conflict transformation and peacebuilding. A good example is the Kenya Wajir Peace and Development Committee.

Overall, infrastructures for peace have recorded positive results in mitigating and tackling different types of conflicts and violence including election related violence. Kumar (2011) for instance, linked peaceful electoral outcomes in Guyana in 2006, Ghana in 2004 and 2008, Sierra Leone in 2007, Togo in 2010, Kyrgyzstan in 2010, Solomon Islands in 2010 and the constitutional referendum in Kenya in 2010 to UN-backed initiatives of developing infrastructures for peace which was aimed at strengthening national capacities for conflict prevention and transformation.

Three examples of infrastructures for peace in Africa

Kenya

The need for a grassroots peacebuilding initiative was first prompted by the severity of conflicts in Kenya's pastoralist and agro-pastoralist community in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As Adan and Pkalya (2006) posit, the realization that community members themselves are better placed to manage their own conflicts was anchored on the inaccessibility of the formal judicial system and lack of trust in government led conflict prevention interventions. The government's failure to provide security and justice, as well as its inability to address communal issues at the time, laid the groundwork for the local peace committee in Kenya. This was made worse by the fact that many of the NGOs in the district had left. However, the NGOs's withdrawal from the district turned out to be a blessing in disguise because it allowed the local population to take initiative on their own (Juma 2000).

The local peace committee in Kenya was established, among other things, to deal with interethnic conflicts and cattle rustling in the Rift Valley (Odendaal and Olivie 2008). The first local peace committee in Kenya was the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC). The process was entirely owned and driven by the locals, and it was largely successful (Odendaal 2010). Civil society actors, elders from various clans, district commissioners, and parliamentarians collaborated on the creation of WPDC. The Wajir peace initiatives were incorporated into the district development committee during the process, which eventually evolved into the Wajir Peace and Development Committee, chaired by the district commissioner. WPDC's expansion to the northern part of Kenya was facilitated by the model of its formation and success. The government and civil society organizations saw an opportunity to establish a local peace institution as a result of this.

The situation in Kenya is typical of a bottom-up approach to building peace infrastructure. The post-election violence in 2007 further informed the recommendation of the National Accord and Reconciliation Act of 2008 to establish district peace committees in all Kenyan districts. During

the conflicts, there was less violence in districts that already had peace committees as a result of the Wajir District Women group initiatives. Wachira, Arendshorst & Charles (2010) emphasized the significance of promoting local capacities for peacebuilding. In light of this, the Kenya government made the decision in 2001 to set up the National Steering Committee (NSC) on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management. In 2004, the President's office used the National Steering Committee to start the process of making peacebuilding and conflict management policy.

Ghana

Among the options for constructing a national I4Ps are: utilizing a cooperative, non-violent, and dialogue-based approach to conflict resolution that includes all stakeholders; developing culturally appropriate institutional mechanisms to promote and manage this approach at the district, national, and local levels (van Tongeren 2011).

A more in-depth examination of Ghana's experience reveals that the need to end a devastating violent conflict typically leads to the establishment of a few I4Ps. The northern region of Ghana saw 23 conflicts between the 1980s and 2000, culminating in the 2002 killing of the King of Dagbon and some of his elders. The affected region was placed under a state of emergency by the government, which then urged the UN member states to assist her. The UNDP responded by appointing a Peace and Governance Advisor (Odendaal, 2010) to intervene and assist in putting an end to the aforementioned violent outbreak. This development could be considered the beginning of the journey toward the establishment of I4Ps in Ghana. In May 2006, the National Peace Council (NPC) was established in Ghana with UNDP support.

The body played a crucial role in ensuring that Ghana's 2008 election was peaceful and that the transfer of power went smoothly. According to Odendaal (2010), Ghana's national peace architecture became the first official African national programme for peacebuilding, as it matches the Resolution of African leaders at the 2002 First Standing Conference on Stability, Security, and Development in Africa, which proposed a resolution that each country establish a national framework to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts (Ghana's national peace architecture became the first official African national programme for peacebuilding).

Ghana also has a District Peace Advisory Council in addition to its national infrastructure. According to Ojielo (2007), Ghana's decision to implement the District Peace Advisory Council was more influenced by her experiences with a few intractable community-based and inter-ethnic conflicts than by a crisis in governance—especially not at the national level. The frontiers of local peace committees have expanded to include their use in maintaining peace even in areas that appear to be peaceful due to a growing understanding of the concept and effectiveness of local peace committees. Ghana is a clear illustration of the interconnectedness of national and local conflict systems. The National Peace Council (NPC)'s contribution to ensuring a peaceful 2008 election and a smooth transfer of power in Ghana is one of its most significant effects.

South Africa

The National Peace Accord was born out of a desire to put an end to the escalating violence which was occurring in the period between the announcement of the end of apartheid in 1989 and the first democratic elections in 1994 (Irene 2014). As part of the National Peace Accord agreement in 1991, local peace committees were established throughout the country. The peace structures established to implement the Accord include, the National Peace Committee and Secretariat, the

11 Regional Peace Committees, the 263 Local Peace Committees, and more than 18,000 peace monitors (Carmichael 2022). Carmichael went on to say that the "silent majority" was mobilized by the National Peace Campaign, which was established under the NPA and gave peace an unprecedented grassroots identity and legitimacy. She continued by arguing that the formulation of the NPA by political representatives, church and business facilitators, brought an end to the political impasse, and that marked South Africa's first encounter with multi-party negotiations, and made it possible to begin discussions about the constitution. During the year prior to the 1994 elections, the confidence was high that South Africa have successfully pioneered a peace structure that laid foundation for peaceful electioneering processes in the country. At the local and regional levels, the country developed mechanisms to effectively halt the rise in violence. Even though political violence caused 2649 deaths in South Africa in the final days of the apartheid struggle in 1992 and 3567 deaths in 1994 (van Tongeren 2013), all observers agreed that local peace committees successfully prevented several potentially violent events by encouraging local dialogue and problem-solving processes. Local peace committees' role in conflict intervention contributed to the political future of South Africa, including the 1994 end of apartheid.

Local Peace Committee

The evolution and emergence of local peace committees as mechanisms for grassroots peacebuilding in the 21st century could be traced to the early 1980 with John Paul Lederach playing a key role in the entire idea of infrastructures for peace. The concept gained prominence in the 1990s following momentum built up for argument that local communities affected by violent conflict be recognized as resources, and not just recipients of peacebuilding efforts that are largely driven from the outside (Lederach 1997). It was further argued by the proponents of the concept that communities affected by violent conflict have greater incentives than any external actor to resolve such conflict, and better placed to build and sustain peace through their intimate knowledge of the local culture as well as community relations and dynamics (Lederach 1997).

Local peace committees have been defined by different scholars. Adan & Pkalya (2006) conceive local peace committee (LPC) as conflict intervention structure that integrates both traditional and modern conflict intervention mechanisms to prevent and manage or transform intra-ethnic or inter-ethnic conflicts. They defined it as a conflict mitigation and peacebuilding structure which integrates traditional and modern conflict interventions to address intra-and-intertribal tensions and conflicts or/and a community based structure and initiative to prevent, manage and transform intra and inter-community conflicts. A working definition from a workshop put together in June 2005, by NSC and Oxfam GB in Nanyuki defined a peace committee as a group of people whose broad job is to define parameters for peace.

As local peace infrastructures, LPC are established using both traditional and modern conflict resolution mechanisms and for the purposes of peacemaking and peacebuilding. Unlike the traditional structure, LPC recruit members from various community representations including elders, women, youths, civil society groups, community organisations, political leaders, government and aliens. They are envisioned as organic, inclusive and participatory standing peace structures that utilize problem-solving approach to address conflicts. Tsuma, Pentori & Mashiko (2014) opine that they serve as instruments for strengthening social cohesion and promoting

resilience of local communities, and by so doing contribute towards the attainment of sustainable peace beyond the immediate local environment. They are mechanisms suitable for building peace at the grassroots level even under challenging circumstances.

Grassroots initiatives to address conflicts are not new in Africa. According to Nganje (2014), grassroots initiatives for peacebuilding and social cohesion have a long history in Africa. In Africa, local peace committees arose or emerged as mechanisms for grassroots peacebuilding in the 1990s when local communities affected by violent conflict resorted to diverse self-help structures to facilitate dialogue, manage conflict and promote peaceful coexistence. Local peace committees in this context were essentially self-organizing community initiatives that emerged organically to fill the void left by national and international peacebuilding efforts, and generally drew on traditional African conflict resolution practices.

The inherent ability of LPC to build trust and confidence at community levels make it essential in personal transformation and in the transformation of potential actors. According to Hopp-Nishanka (2012), LPC brings stakeholders and their constituencies together, change agents and creates space for joint problem-solving as well as creates, consolidate and maintain a network of transformative actors.

The qualities to be considered in selecting people into local peace committees include, honesty, integrity, impartiality, neutrality, fluency in local language. In addition, such person(s) must be knowledgeable, be a local resident and a non-political office holder as well as being accessible and available (Adan and Pkalya 2006).

LPC is inclusive and presents a superior structure that values and recognises the role and contributions of various groups within the community (Irene 2014). Whereas successive structured steps and criteria such as age system, kinship/clan, often define the membership of traditional structures, peace committee is through a selection process of representatives from different groups in the community. Adan & Pkalya (2006) posits that this approach helps to widen the composition of peace committees with a cumulative effect being the emergence of all-inclusive peacebuilding structure/approach/process.

There are two main categories of local peace committees. There is one created by state through a national peace accord, legislation or a formal statutory body as part of its mandate and the other that has informal status. The informal LPC are often established by members of the civil society or community members. According to van Togerem (2013), memberships of LPC with informal status are often composed of volunteers with high passion and interest in peace in addition to the display of greater commitment and creativity when compared to formal local peace committee membership. They resonate well with the grassroots and local resources and have been found effective in dealing with conflicts and building peace from below.

The overall role and goal of LPC is to enhance the peaceful co-existence of various component groups within and between communities via dialogue, peacebuilding, mediation, negotiation and arbitration. LPC promote true reconciliation, and as argued by Lederach (2005), reconciliation is

concern with dealing with the worst of the human condition in an effort to repair the brokenness of relationships and life itself. Additionally, LPC contribute to violence mitigation and joint problem-solving.

Training and orientation are important to enhancing the capacity of LPC members. Resources support either from outsiders or insiders or both are important to support training activities. Training play key role in building the capacity of LPC members to address complex local processes including enabling local and national information flow so that local peace-building challenges can receive proper attention at the national level (Odendaal 2010).

Theory of Change

Peacebuilding professionals often reference theory of change (Jantzi & Jantzi 2009). This theory agrees that an intervention activity is the real causes of change or result gotten. This theory also asserts that an activity always goes with assumption that are expected of a given result, in other word, intervention contribute to intended result (Mayne 2015). Cartwright and Hardie (2012) as well described these assumptions support factors: events and conditions needed to bring about contribution to the expected cause. This postulate views violent act as behavior that can change through proper intervention of peace club, as the school of thought agrees that change occur as a result of intervention, therefore, intervention of peace clubs in secondary schools is regarded to as event which will definitely reduce and if possible eliminate the presence of violence in schools (Cartwright and Hardie 2012).

The theory comes with assumption packages. It is useful in analyzing this study because, as the theory explains, the intervention that LPC brings to the local community for this study can help bring the required change in terms of reducing violence. Although, Mayer (2012) stated that change occur as a result of several things and not just intervention in particular. However, in his work in 2015, Mayne (2015) analysed the theory further, and asserts that the extent at which the intervention occur can or will determine the summed result. Since in this study the anticipated change is to build peace in the local community, the intervention occasioned by LPC is crucial to achieving that if done at a greater extent.

Method

The study is a qualitative research and adopts participatory action research (PAR) approach. PAR resonates with peacebuilding. The main focus of the study is to examine the contributions of local peace committee as local peace infrastructure for building peace at grassroots level. It employs participatory research approach, which is believed to be very appropriate because of its relationship with peacebuilding. As opined by Chivasa (2017), PAR and peacebuilding bring individuals together with a view to addressing a common social problem, and are relationship oriented. Furthermore, he argued that peacebuilding acknowledges peace is not an accidental experience. It requires planning as pointed out by Hopp-Nishanka (2012). It also requires commitment and participation of relevant stakeholders and cooperative relationship. And all of these are critical components of PAR.

PAR is useful in linking research with action required to bring about social change. Partnerships between and among individuals and groups are essential to achieving peace because peace is often a product of networks and group efforts. Furthermore, PAR is essential to this study because it was at its core, trust, networks and social justice, and are important values that underpin both PAR and peacebuilding and remain major components for peaceful communities (Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk 2009). Members of the community participated from the design stage of the field study through the evaluation of their own activities. As such, for this study, PAR meant that local members of the community participated in the design and creation of the informal the local peace committee which is the product of the research.

Reason and Bradbury (2001) conceive PAR as a participatory and democratic. It describes a process during which participants explore collaborative and action-based project approach that reflect their knowledge and mobilise their desires. It is a process of choosing and framing an issue, creating relational experiences, effecting changes in practice, and actualizing the significance of that 'truly worthy of human aspiration (Reason and Bradbury 2001). PAR is a process of continuous cycles, where each cycle reflects the PAR principles. The components or stages of the cyclical process of PAR are diagnosing, planning, taking action, observing, reflecting, and re-planning. The diagram below illustrate the process of PAR.

The study adopts purposive sampling technique in selecting members of PAR team. Seven volunteer members who are members of the local community for the study and the researcher constituted PAR team during the first cycle of the participatory action research. For this study, the process went through PAR cyclical process twice. Before starting the second PAR cycle, seven more volunteers joined the PAR team. This increased the PAR team to 14 volunteers (self-selected) members. The need to increase the number was pointed out during the observation stage of the first PAR cycle. The PAR team co-diagnosed the problem, co-planned, co-implemented, co-observed, and co-reflected as well as co- re-planned in line with PAR approach.

In terms of the composition, the LPC comprised of two youths representing male youth group in the community, two youths representing the female youth group in the community, two adult women representing the women group in the community, two adult male representing the men group in the community, two persons representing the senior citizens (elders) group, two clerics representing the religion groups (Christian & Muslim), the researcher and his research assistant.

The 14 PAR members participated in a three-day conflict resolution workshop conducted in the community with a view to building participants' capacity in LPC approach to conflict resolution. The researcher co-facilitated the workshop. Six of the participants are females and eight are males including the researcher. All local peace committee members became partners in the research through the design, implementation, observation and evaluation stages of the study.

The primary data for the study was sourced through the use of individual interviews and focus group discussion. 14 PAR members and six non PAR members (who are all members of the study area) participated in the process. The duration of the study was from January to December 2022.

Participants' ages range from the 19 to 70 years. A brief outline of each participant is described in the table below. Pseudonyms were used to protect their identities

Table: Demographic Information of Participants (14 PAR team & 6 Conflict Parties)

Name	Sex	Age	Education level	Marital status	Job	Location of the Job
1. Mo	Female	31yrs	Diploma	Not married	Self-employed – Marketer	Agbowo
2. Dan	Female	25yrs	B.Sc	Not married	Administratio nist	Ojoo
3. Ades	Male	70yrs	High School Certificate	Married	Retired	Ojoo
4. Olu	Male	45yrs	M.Sc	Married	Self-employed	Bodija
5. Ama	Male	57yrs	M.Sc	Married	Self-employed	Orogun
6. Iwe	Female	48yrs	M.Sc	Separated	Administrator	Ojoo
7. Oluse	Male	47yrs	ACCA	Not married	Accountant	Orogun
8. Fide	Male	50yrs	B.Sc	Married	Estate Agent	Orogun
9. Okos	Male	65yrs	Diploma	Married	Self-employed – publisher	Ojoo
10. Sade	Female	35yrs	Nil	Married	Housewife with small business	Ojoo
11. Iwale	Female	20yrs	Student	Not married	Student & Self-employed beautician (Make-up Artist)	Ojoo
12. Aden	Male	58yrs	M.Sc.	Married	NILST	Samonda
13. Joy	Female	60yrs	B.Sc	Married	Self-employed – small business	Ojoo
14. Austi	Male	52	B.Sc	Divorced	Teacher	Ojoo
15. Fati	Female	36	Diploma	Married	Self-employed – small business	Ojoo

16. Abdu	Male	44	B.Sc	Married	Clergy-Imam	Ojoo
17. Kem	Female	19	Student	Not married	Nil	Ojoo
18. Sol	Female	27	NCE	Married	Teacher	Ojoo
19. Akan	Male	65	B.Sc	Married	Retired- Chief	Ojoo
20. Emma	Male	55	B.Sc	Married	Clergy- Pastor	Ojoo

Individual interviews, focus group discussions, diarizing, observation were adopted by the PAR team for data collection. The relevant qualitative data for this study was gathered using semi-structured interviews (n=20), and FGD (n=15) participants in Ojoo local community in Nigeria. The interviews allowed the researcher to explore their experiences and views on the way to establish informal LPC and the effectiveness of informal LPC in peacebuilding. The individual interviews and focus group discussion guide was a result of a collaborative work among members of the PAR team. The chair and researcher who served as the secretary of the team collaborated more to provide leadership in all activities. PAR requires recording or meticulous diarising of information as done in this study. The process involves keeping records (using the diary book) of every activity that took place in the course of the field study. Voice recorder was used for focus group discussions (FGD), and interviews including follow-up interviews were conducted in the study.

14 participants who were members of the PAR team and six community members who were not members of the PAR team but had their cases intervened in by the LPC were interviewed. Three focus group discussions were organized - two with LPC members (divided into two groups), and the third focus group discussion were with other members of the community who brought their cases for LPC intervention.

The research questions for the study is guided by the research problem leading to the specific objectives, which are: to establish informal LPC in the local community for the study; to assess the effectiveness of LPC in addressing conflicts and building peace in local community; to explore how LPC can be promoted in local community; and to examine how LPC sustainability can be achieved in local community. They were co-prepared by the PAR team in line with PAR approach. The respondents were asked the questions during data collection stage of the study.

For validity and reliability, the interview guide was prepared by the researcher with the research objectives in mind and presented to two experts and senior researchers in the relevant field for review and criticism. Their criticism and modifications were implemented while producing the final draft of the interview guide that was used by the researcher. Other validity strategies deployed include: triangulation, use of participants checking, preliminary activities that served as a pilot programme, and prolonged presence in the site of research. For data validation purpose from participants, the researcher checked on members for clarification on issues that seemed inconclusive, unclear and requires emphasis. One of the ways of finding out whether for example, an observation is 'valid' is to ask other people – especially the research participants and checking whether the participants agree with the researcher's data (Creswell 2014), and this was one of the

strategies adopted in this study. The giving of clear instructions to participants and respondents as well as not asking questions that require long explanations contributed to the reduction of fatigue and attention deficit for those interviewed. Participants agreed with researcher’s data, which establishes the reliability of the study.

The research was carried out in accordance with ethical guidelines. Ethical consideration was a priority in this study. There was voluntary participation of individuals in the interview sessions. Individuals who participated in this research work were not forced into it. Privacy and anonymity of participants were also given paramount importance in this study. The consents of the informants were sought to have their responses taped for easy analysis. Participants were assured that the purpose of the data collection exercise is strictly academic. Furthermore, works of authors used for the research were duly acknowledged.

Result and discussion

The method used in analyzing the primary data collected for the study is thematic content analysis. Thematic content analysis was adopted to analyse the collected data because it is well-suited for the analysis of primary data for qualitative study. Thematic content analysis is used to analyse classifications and present themes (patterns) that relate to the data. A collaborative approach was also deployed in selecting the themes following the interview responses and focus group discussion data. The identification of themes for discussion was effected via a coding technique developed in line with Bless and Higson-Smith (1995) advising that letters or symbols could be used to represent data in the form of codes. The themes that came out are; LPC establishment, LPC effectiveness, LPC promotion, and LPC sustainability. Themes that occurred more frequently were considered as major themes.

Key themes

No	Themes
1	Local Peace Committee (LPC) establishment
2	Local Peace Committee (LPC) effectiveness
3	Local Peace Committee (LPC) promotion
4	Local Peace Committee (LPC) sustainability

LPC establishment

Many respondents in the FGD and personal interviews activities mentioned that the creation of LPC require collaboration among stakeholders. They said LPC creation can be done through research, done through community outsider(s) and/or insiders’ motivated actions. In all of these, respondents said the best is insiders’ motivated actions. If it is something the insiders (local community members) think they want, the insiders would be motivated by the spirit of local ownership, and this would contribute in making the creation and running of the LPC more

effective. In this study, this was taken into consideration. Local people took ownership of it. They saw it as what they think would work in addressing the problem of conflicts and violence, and in build peace in their local community. A respondent comments corroborates the aforesaid point when he said;

“We are really now happy to be part of this project of creating LPC in this our community because we are convinced that it is the right approach to deal with conflicts and violence that are prevalent in this community and in building sustainable peace”. (Seg, Male, 47 years)

Another respondent added that following his experience in this project, he believe that:

“Self-initiated LPCs are less expensive. This is due to the fact that they make use of community resources which often include free manpower, free venue, and easier mobilization of volunteers or people to select into it including flexible time arrangement and local fundraising (no matter how small) even if it’s for refreshment of LPC members when addressing conflict cases during meetings”. (Iwe, Female, 48 years)

The above comment by respondent reminded me of Odeendal (2010) argument on legitimacy as critical consideration in setting up a local peace committee. LPC must enjoy local legitimacy, and legitimacy often flows from ownership. When it is available, it makes the local community members double or multiply their commitment to the LPC. The acceptability of the LPC become very high among local community members.

Community members that volunteered or selected into the LPC membership must be those whose honesty, integrity, credibility and attitudes are not questionable. In addition, they must be knowledgeable on what they are expected to do. The establishment of LPC often involves the selection of capable individuals representing different sectors and social divides of the community. The representation of all social groups or constituencies found in the community including vulnerable groups such as youth and women, offers local peace committees a platform that is conducive for creating co-existence and cohesion (Chivasa 2017) in local communities. The LPC members often undergo relevant trainings with a view to building their capacity and to empower them to carry out the LPC activities effectively and efficiently.

LPC Effectiveness

During interviews design primary date from respondents, many respondents argued that local peace committees are very effective in peacebuilding, preventing violence and in conflict intervention. Their creation can be for preventative measure, response to specific conflict cases or in peacebuilding at grassroots level. The root causes of conflicts can be effectively addressed by LPC. Many conflicts and violence that manifests at national level are also actually entwined with local factors. Many respondents describe LPC as more effective in addressing the root causes of conflicts and in building peace than some other approaches like litigation, and even the traditional

approach. Well, given that LPC is often a blend of traditional and contemporary approach, one may not want to argue the position of the respondents on LPC effectiveness. The view expressed by many respondents appeared to have been summarily captured by a respondent who said:

“We are glad for all we have put in to this project of setting up LPC. We can see by ourselves that LPC is truly effective in addressing conflicts and violence and in build peace on a solid foundation that can endure the test of time. Whether as a reaction to a specific conflict or as a preventative structure, LPC is indeed effective, and its capacity to build peace from below is not in doubt”. (Ama, Male, 57 years)

The comment of the respondent may very well contribute to the quest to further hone LPC capacity build peace in today’s world. This is important amidst the increasing rate of violence and states fragility, and the urgent need to stem the tides. Van Togerem (2012) purely connects with this when he contends that when state fragility occurs, the creation of informal LPCs help communities to address peace challenges affecting their well-being. And the addressing of their well-being brings balance to such communities, and by so doing advance their interests. Also, Odendaal (2010) and Sangqu (2014) alluded to it, when they said that communities create peace committees to advance their interests. Building peace is a paramount interest of communities and LPC is strategic to the whole engagement. LPCs build peace in local communities through creating dialogue spaces where people engage each other in search of solutions to their challenges. They also facilitate peacebuilding sessions. In some situations, they mediate conflict and act as early warning systems and work towards addressing human insecurity concerns in their areas.

All the ingredients that makes LPC effective must be available, and some of these have been pointed out in Studies by Lederach (1997). He points out, that, what makes peace committees effective is the fact that most if not all are situated in existing networks (involving Village Heads, local Councilors, Chiefs and other Leaders), particularly those created by community members themselves. Any peace committee that utilises these networks has the potential to build peace at local community levels.

All respondents from among those who brought their cases to the LPC intervention in the course of this study, agreed that their conflicts were amicably resolved by the LPC created by the study. They added that what was achieved can be rightly described as positive peace among the conflict parties. They said they were satisfied with the resolution, and that the root causes of their conflicts were fully addressed. One advantage of blending traditional approach and contemporary approach that LPC bring to fore is synergy. And this truly makes LPC strong, effective and holistic in its approach in dealing with conflicts and building peace. The comment of an informant as seen below attempt to bring clarity as regards impact when he said;

“We are happy LPC has been created and that the committee can resolve our conflicts. So we decided to come to the LPC to see how it would resolve our conflicts. We are happy we came and brought our cases here.

All we could say at this point is that, the LPC really did well when we brought our cases before it. What we saw was different from our experiences in previous cases we were involved in and took to other community groups for resolution. The LPC facilitated resolution processes that also allowed us to play major role in resolving our conflicts. What I mean is that the LPC help us to resolve the conflicts by facilitating and mediating the process". (Fide, Male, 50 years)

The above comment from a respondent did reveal that conflict stakeholders were satisfied with the outcome of the resolution of their conflicts. Respondents also pointed out that LPC helped to facilitate the process that led to the resolution of the conflicts. There was a strong collaboration between the conflict party and the members of the LPC as they work together towards the resolution of the conflicts. This is actually in line with LPC approach that is concern with facilitating dialogue, mediating conflicts and building consensus. These functions of LPC allow the conflict stakeholders to play key role in resolving their conflicts. In short, LPC help the conflict parties to address the root causes of the conflicts.

LPC Promotion

Promoting LPC in local communities can flow from LPC legitimacy. When respondents were asked if LPC is something they are willing to promote in their community, all the respondents said yes. They added that they were happy to share the idea with neighboring communities and support in promoting LPC even in those areas. They continued, saying that they have seen that LPC would be useful in dealing with conflicts and violence and in build peace in their community. The willingness to promote the LPC is an important step in the realization of my desire for the establishment of more LPC in the community. This would help reduce pressure on a single one, given the prevalence of conflicts in the community, and the need build peace as soon as possible. The extent of members' willingness to promote LPC can be seen from their actions and commitment to the project. A participant's voice summed it up by saying;

"I would like to say on behalf of my colleagues that we are glad to commit ourselves to the promotion of LPC in our domain, and even try to influence neighboring communities to establish LPC. Personally, I love the idea, and would be very much available and support the LPC in my community with my resources. I am sure the same goes for my colleagues, and from what we hear around, the community is happy to promote LPC in the community". (Olu, Male, 45 years)

When asked how they might promote the concept of LPC in their community? Many of them said it is possible, especially if the community leader is in support of the project. They added that community leaders have a system in place for supporting and promoting what they support and approve. They continued by saying that, they will continue to volunteer their time and resources for the LPC they created. And that they are sure that a combination of individuals and collective resources of the community deployed into it would go a long way in promoting the LPC. They

will promote LPC with their resources and continuously ensuring that leaders support and approval is obtained at all times.

LPC Sustainability

Of course, generally, LPC are faced with the problem of inadequate funding from external sources or outsiders. This has contributed in stifling some LPC, and eventually led to folding up of such LPC. So, when the respondents were asked about the challenges militating against the sustainability of LPC, given their experiences in this project, many of them pointed out that poor funding can actually be a major challenge for LPCs sustainability. However, for many of them, even though donor support from outsiders or external sources can add value to LPCs in their local community, they argued that with their local resources support, they believe their LPC can continue to survive. The clarity of this point is seen in a respondent remark that:

“We know as local people, we may not have adequate financial resources to support our LPC, but we believe as we put forward the little we have and make our non-financial resources available, such as our time, commitment, free venue for meetings, our local foods and palm wine to drink during meetings especially when addressing or resolving conflict cases brought to LPC, we shall have no problem keeping our LPC on the sustainable path and continue to survive”. (Dam, Female, 25 years)

What was observed from the respondents relates to the benefits with factors such as local ownership, inclusivity and legitimacy of LPC. Local ownership and inclusivity are key factors for achieving legitimacy of LPC. When a community take ownership of LPC, it raises the LPC stake for its legitimacy. The community also work to mobilize local resources and ensure the sustainability of the LPC. For LPC to be sustainable, most respondents said that such LPC should be set up by members of the community. They all agreed that outsiders cannot simply set up LPC without the leaders of the community and the insiders support. And if outsiders are interested in setting up an LPC in any community, they should first obtain the approval of the community members, and also involve community members in the set up process. The respondents in this study, added that sustainability is not a problem when community members see the LPC as part of their everyday life. The informant remarks summed it up by saying that:

“When LPC is organically developed by community members, it will run just like many other associations in the community, such as Elders’ Forum, Youth Groups, Woman Groups, traditional Leaders’ Councils, and so on. And they will survive as the community members see it as part of their everyday life. This is also true if the traditional system in place do not see it as a group competing against the Elders traditional Council that use traditional mechanisms to resolve communal conflicts. Elders will definitely don’t want to give up that, as they believe in the existing African

traditional approach to resolving conflicts. When the LPC is presented as a complementary structure to the existing system, and the elders see it as partner in progress in dealing with communal conflicts and in peacebuilding, as well as having a healthy relationship with the traditional system, it would then be seen as part of the community and part of everyday life of the community members and the community as a whole". (Iwale, Female, 20 years)

One of the important point raised by an informant in the above comment is the adaptability of LPC to local system since many local people often strongly uphold and cherish their tradition or local systems. Change is difficult, so whatever is going into local communities to change existing system often encounter resistance. So LPC must be introduced to complement the existing tradition or local system that supports peacemaking in such local community. This help to increase local people acceptability of the LPC. This is very important for the sustainability of LPC in local communities.

Informal LPC often readily resonate with local community commitment to connect the LPC to the local resources base of such community. For formal LPC, external resource support is often required for their survival. In general, whether LPCs are externally or internally motivated, formal or informal, it cannot be argued that adequate resources are required to make such LPC to function well and be sustainable.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates the potency of LPC in building durable peace from below using local resources, principles and philosophies of local agencies and initiatives. LPC are embedded in local environment and serve as catalysts for building sustainable peace. Reflecting on the power from below in peacebuilding, the study focuses on informal LPC created through collaborative efforts by 14 PAR members in Ojoo community, Oyo State, Nigeria. They came together to create local peacebuilding infrastructure (local peace committee) and used it to intervening in conflict cases among community members and promote peacebuilding.

All Participants emphasized their trust in local peace infrastructures as local mechanisms for effective peacebuilding in local communities. They believe LPC contribute significantly to violent prevention and resolving conflicts and violence in communities. They pointed out that informal LPC established through collaborative approach in local communities are very effective and more result oriented in building sustainable peace. Participants added that willingness to continuously promote LPC in local communities, legitimacy and local ownership spirit contribute significantly to LPC sustainability. Furthermore, they said linking LPC to local funding support is higher for informal LPC when compared to formal LPC.

Whilst the focus of this study was on building peace from below, it is important to restate at this juncture that a collaborative peacebuilding framework that links elites structures (national or state peace infrastructures e.g. ministries/departments of peace) and grassroots peace structures (local peace infrastructures e.g. local peace committees) presents a holistic approach in dealing with

conflicts and violence, and in building peace. Also, considering that such peacebuilding framework links local, national, regional and global initiatives and resources required to deal with complex and multi-level nature of contemporary violent conflicts, and also seeing that some local conflicts and insecurity are intertwined with national, regional, and even global dynamics.

The study reveals that grassroots peacebuilding initiatives such as LPC are effective in addressing multiple threats to local peace and social cohesion, and in building durable peace. And that sustainability of LPC can be achieved if established through collaborative efforts by the grassroots. It also reveals the willingness of community members to promote the concept of LPC in building peace in their local communities, and that local ownership LPC contribute immensely in promoting legitimacy of the peace structures. Furthermore, while recognizing the challenge inadequate funds can pose to LPC sustainability, the study submits that, it may not be much of a problem if LPC legitimacy and local ownership is strong among grassroots, as they work to link informal LPC to local community resources.

Finally, this study further reveals the relevance local peace infrastructures are in the contemporary debates in peacebuilding; on local ownership and pluralist understanding of peacebuilding beyond the state-centric, liberal-oriented, and thus top-down approaches to peace that were reflected in the immediate post-Cold War era.

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