The Role of Dagbani Movies in Promoting Peaceful Co-existence in Northern Region, Ghana

Damasus Tuurosong

Department of African and General Studies,

Simon Diedong University of Business and Integrated Development Studies (SDD-UBIDS)

dtuurosong@uds.edu.gh

ABSTRACT

This study explores themes in Dagbani movies which enhance peace-building, and discusses cultural conflict resolution techniques employed in Dagbani movies for peace-building. Qualitative research design was employed for the study. Focus group discussions and interviews were used for data collection. The study used Agenda Setting theory as analytical framework, and undertook thematic analysis to tease out messages in the content of selected movies. It showed that Dagbani movies contain lessons on peace-building and have become reference materials for opinion leaders and peace campaigners within Dagbon. Out of 11 movies sampled, six exposed bad traditional leadership with a view to admonishing Dagbon chiefs to desist from acts that could promote conflicts. Dagbani movies, re-establish working relations among warring factions, deal with systemic issues underlying conflicts and rebuild mutual relationships. The movies advocate the use of traditional peace-building techniques for conflict resolution. The study concludes that if movie producers get the support of relevant stakeholders, Dagbon movies could be effective in resolving conflicts. It recommends that film makers solicit funding from donor agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to produce movies targeted at maintaining peace in Dagbon.

Keywords: Dagbani Movies, Peaceful Co-existence, Chieftaincy Disputes, Conflict Resolution and Culture

INTRODUCTION

Africa has over the years, witnessed numerous bloody conflicts, with grave political, social, economic and humanitarian consequences for affected countries. One can

mention Nigeria (1967-1970), Uganda (1979), Somalia (since 1991), Liberia (1989 – 1997, 2000-2003), Sierra Leone (1992-2002), Côte d'Ivoire (2002-2010), Rwanda (1994) and Kenya (2007) as some countries which have had their fair share of conflicts on the continent. The effects of these conflicts have been loss of lives and property, mass displacement of people, bad governance leading to failed states, unemployment, insecurity and poverty (McGowan, 2005).

Compared to its regional neighbours such as Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and even Nigeria, Ghana has enjoyed relative peace. However, the country has experienced numerous inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts, chieftaincy conflicts and land related conflicts. Notable among them are the prolonged conflicts between Peki and Tsito, Nkonya and Alavanyo in the Volta Region (Gati, 2008); Mamprusi and Kusasi in Bawku, in the Upper East Region as well as Konkomba and Nanumba, and the Abudu and Andani in Dagbon, Northern Region (Mahama, 2002). In particular, the Abudu-Andani chieftaincy crisis popularly referred to as the Dagbon Crisis, which resulted in the death of Ya Na, Yakubu Andani II, the King of Dagbon and about 40 others (Takyi, Tika & Anin, 2013), has been a major development challenge not only for the Northern Region, but the entire country.

For many decades, the Abudu and Andani royal gates were in dispute over the rightful claimant of the Dagbon skin. The conflict situation, however, came to a head in 2002 when the then Ya Na, Yakubu Andani II, was assassinated (Tonah, 2012). On 25th March 2002, an attack on an emissary of the Ya Na by a group of Abudu youth and the destruction of his bicycle ignited violent conflict between the two sides. This led to hostilities which continued for three days and eventually resulted in the murder of Ya Na, Yakubu Andani II and forty others including his elders on 27th March, 2002 (Tsikata & Seini, 2004; Macgaffey, 2006 and Wuaku-Commission Report, 2002 cited from Mahama and Longi, 2013). The conflict spread from Yendi to Tamale, Bimbilla and other towns leading to many losses of lives and destruction of property valued at billions of Ghana cedis (Tonah, 2012).

On 25th April 2002, the then President, John Agyekum Kufuor, set up the Wuaku Commission of Inquiry with Constitutional Instrument, 2002 (C.I.36). The three-member commission of inquiry was chaired by Justice I. N. K. Wuaku and was given the task of investigating the Yendi disturbances. The Commission found that the late Ya Na and all those killed within the Palace and its environs were killed by Abudu fighters. The Commission recommended the arrest and prosecution of several individuals for their alleged involvement in offences such as conspiracy to

murder, attempted murder, causing unlawful damage, assault, illegal possession of weapons and unlawful military training (Issifu, 2015).

Aside the setting up of the Commission to investigate the violence, government also used some traditional approaches to resolve the conflict. Former President John Agyekum Kuffuor set up a committee of four eminent chiefs chaired by Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, King of Ashanti to mediate the conflict. After a long period of deliberations and a series of negotiations, representatives of the two feuding gates, the Abudus and Andanis signed a "Roadmap to Peace" on 30th March in 2006. The "Roadmap to Peace" enumerated five major benchmarks in the peace-building process to include the burial of the late Ya Na Yakubu Andani II, the installation of the regent of the late king, the performance of the funeral of the deposed Mahamadu Abdulai IV, the performance of the funeral of Ya Na Yakubu Andani II and finally, the selection and enskinment of a new Ya Na for Dagbon (Tonah, 2012).

In order to complement government's efforts, civil society, non-governmental organisations and specialised United Nations agencies on their own initiatives and in collaboration with the state have played diverse roles in mitigating against the adverse effects of the Dagbon conflict (Ahorsu & Gebe, 2011). Apart from the provision of relief services to the displaced during the crisis, they helped organise sensitisation programmes aimed at educating people on the need for peaceful co-existence in Dagbon (Ahiave, 2013). In spite of all these approaches to peace-building in Dagbon, the situation remained volatile for almost 17 years. Indeed, efforts aimed at ending this age-old conflict did not begin in 2002. Prior to the re-ignition of the 2002 conflict, various conflict resolution mechanisms were adopted to resolve the dispute. Ahiave (2013) found that western models of conflict resolution – mainly the legal system and commissions/committees of inquiry set up by different governments were employed in attempts to resolve the crisis. Unfortunately, these efforts proved futile over successive governments.

One wonders whether the search for peace had to take so long, and whether alternative dispute resolution mechanisms could not have worked faster. For instance, some have suggested that arts-based approaches to peace-building offer an important avenue to assist with peace-building efforts (Zelizer, 2003). Besides, in the process of resolving conflicts such as that between the Abudus and Andanis, the media could be influential. In being available even in the darkest of places, the media have the capacity to change social and political behaviours as a means of assisting to resolve conflicts. Since the media can alter perceptions about conflicts,

they have the capacity to influence people's ability to resolve disputes and peace -building initiatives (De, 2009: 52).

In particular, movies on television are powerful communicative modes, which could be used to curtail conflicts. Film's effectiveness as a peace-building and reconciliation tool is the result of its uniqueness as an art form, which allows people to relate to others. Film audiences get emotionally connected to what they view or to characters in the film to the extent of being totally absorbed in the film world. That experience, if explored strategically, could foster understanding and empathy between groups of people who are at loggerheads. The film experience could also create a conducive environment for productive dialogue and allow people to view themselves in a way that would be hard to achieve through other peace-building techniques. Besides, collaborative filmmaking is a means of empowering people and creating cordial relationships between groups, as a means of averting conflicts (Kierran, 2013).

Nurudeen (2013) indicates that some movies are geared towards the promotion of peace among the people of Dagbon. For instance, in "Torbu Nyanga" (The Aftermath of War), Jehanfo attempts to warn the people of Northern Ghana about the repercussions of conflict, if allowed to degenerate into violence. According to him, the failure of two villages to amicably resolve a raging conflict led to a bloody confrontation that resulted in a near wipe out of the population of the two villages. The lesson we learn from that experience is that nobody wins in war (Nurudeen, 2013: 3). This article not only reflects the important role of Dagbani movies in the socio-economic development of the northern region but also discusses the themes addressed in them. There is no evidence, however, to show if the themes explored in Jehanfo's movies, for instance, have reached the intended audience and whether or not the theme has had a positive influence in the lives of the audience in the promotion of peace or enhancing the peace-building process.

In the face of contradictory evidence on the media's role in containing the Dagbon conflict and the paucity of research which is focused on the contribution of movies to the resolution of this conflict, this study gathers evidence on the effects of Dagbon movies on the Abudu-Andani dispute. The study was conducted on grounds of evidence that in spite of many movies having been produced during the period of the conflict, the chieftaincy dispute raged on for decades. In view of evidence to the effect that movies have been instrumental in conflict resolution in some jurisdictions, the following questions are asked: Why did Dagbani movies fail to resolve the Dagbon crisis? To what extent are Dagbani movies effective

tools for peace-building? This paper tries to examine the themes related to peace-building which are explored in Dagbani movies, discuss cultural conflict resolution techniques employed in Dagbani movies for peace-building and establish how challenges in the Dagbani movie industry affect the use of movies for peace-building.

Theoretical and Conceptual Underpinnings

This study is based on McCombs and Shaw's Agenda Setting Theory, and examines how Dagbani movie producers set an agenda for peace-building in Northern Ghana. The theory recognises the fact that the media can exert substantial influence on audiences. However, the media alone cannot determine the public agenda. Therefore, this study assesses not just how effective Dagbani film producers were setting the agenda for peace-building. The basic assumption of democracy which states that people have sufficient wisdom to determine the course of their states, nations or communities has nullified the assumption that the media have substantial influence on audiences (MacCombs, 2014: 8). In particular, the people are quite able to determine the basic relevance – to themselves and to the larger public arena – of the topics and attributes advanced by the news media. The media set the agenda only when citizens perceive their news stories as relevant (MacCombs, 2014: 8). Indeed, news can influence what the public is thinking about. However, the ability to influence exactly how the public thinks is less understood (Rogers & Dearing, 1988).

Interest groups desirous of change try not only to get their issues on the media agenda but to also seek public reactions to the issues placed on the agenda. Denham (2010) noted that groups build public agenda most successfully by taking advantage of the personal relevance and social significance of the issues being espoused. Research has shown that when the public believes an issue is more likely to affect them, they are more likely to get involved and informed on the issue (Baird, 2015).

Studies into the media's agenda setting roles in conflict situations often concentrate on their roles in escalating conflicts (Thompson, 1999; Des Forges, 1999; Chebii, 2015). The role of radio and television, in particular, in exacerbating conflicts has been widely researched into, with evidence often pointing at Rwanda and Bosnia as case studies. Besides, the Danish cartoon controversy is also seen as a test case of how the media could even trigger violent conflicts (Gilboa, 2009). In Ghana, concerns have also been expressed about media coverage of the Dagbon crisis,

and the possibility of such coverage exacerbating the conflict. In recognition of the potential negative impact of media reports on conflicts, the Northern Regional Security Council (REGSEC) convened a meeting of media owners, managers and editors prior to the funerals of the late two Dagbon Overlords, Ya Na Mahamadu Abdulai IV and Ya Na Yakubu Andani II. At the meeting, REGSEC Chairman, Salifu Sae-ed, called for circumspection on the part of the local media in the region in their coverage of the impending funerals (Sae-ed, 2018).

REGSEC's concerns resulted from the fact that some media houses often published untruths which have the tendency of fueling violence. For instance, the Andani family had occasion to express their outrage at what they referred to as attempts by some media houses to twist the facts of Dagbon history by referring to former Ya Na Mahamadu Abdulai's regent as regent of Dagbon. They felt this was an attempt to denigrate the authority of the rightful regent, the Kampakuya Naa. The Andani family was of the view that biased and inaccurate media reportage could ignite unnecessary tension in Dagbon, and cautioned journalists covering the crisis to practise peace journalism (Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, 2018)18 Sometimes, the media also introduce ethnic dimensions into their reportage, thereby whipping up sentiments which have the potential of fueling violence. On 7th May 2002, the Ghanaian Chronicle newspaper carried a story in which it indicated that almost the entire top National Security positions in Ghana were occupied by the Abudus. The paper stopped short of alleging that these top security personnel masterminded the murder of the Ya Na Yakubu Andani II. It indicated that right "…under the watch of these men, the nation watched as the horrors of Yendi were visited on us." (The Chronicle, May 7, 2002).

It is worth establishing the extent to which the Dagomba movie producers prioritised the Dagbon conflict and made it an issue for discussion. It is equally worth exploring the level of interest that those who patronise the Dagomba movies showed in movies that discussed the Dagbon conflict. The directors, producers and marketing personnel within the industry are the gatekeepers, deciding what movies are made and the themes to explore. It is worth noting that the experiences of the people of Dagbon feed into the agenda that is set by the Dagbani movie industry. Is it the case that movies produced on the conflict eventually become public agenda within Dagbon, and thereby, influence the course of conflicts within the area?

The Concept of Peace-building

There are many possible definitions of peace-building and varying opinions about what it involves. The term was coined through the work of Johan Galtung. In his paper, "Violence, Peace and Peace Research," Galtung (1969) presented his theory of the Conflict Triangle, espousing three main elements of violence which constitute this "triangle." The theory posits that peace must be understood to constitute widely accepted social goals, since any state of peace is characterised by the absence of violence. Galtung (1969) advocated the setting up of peace-building structures to promote sustainable peace. He felt that it is only when peace-makers address the "root causes" of violent conflicts and employed indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution that peace could be attained.

The major theoretical approaches to peace-building provide for the systemic and cultural dimensions in the peace-building process (Assefa, 1993). However, the cultural dimensions have not yet been well integrated into the systemic dimensions of peace-building. Lederach (1997) outlines four stages in what he terms conflict transformation, namely: (1) dealing with the immediate crisis, (2) re-establishing a working relationship between the conflicting parties, (3) dealing with the systemic issues underlying the conflict, and (4) finding a way to introduce the systemic issues so as to uphold, reinforce and strategically build on the mutual relationships established in stage two. In stages three and four, he includes cultural factors, and although he does not integrate them into the systemic issues as thoroughly as they need to be, he sets the stage in a way that this can be done.

This study analyses some of the indigenous capacities (Galtung, 1969) and the cultural dimensions (Assefa, 1993) to conflict resolution as demonstrated in Dagbani movies. Within the realm of culture, the study focuses particularly on how movies portrayed the role of chiefs in peace-building. In keeping with the findings of Lederach (1997), the study establishes the extent to which Dagbani movies made use of the four stages of conflict transformation as means of resolving chieftaincy disputes.

The Role of Movies in Peace-building

Movies basically tell stories with a lesson embedded in the story for the purposes of sending a message to the audience. For instance, movies about life after the Rwandan genocide led the way in promoting unity and reconciliation. Some movies looked at the entire story of where Rwanda has come from and what was being done to rebuild that war-ravaged country (Kierran, 2013). The role of movies in

peace-building can also be identified in the way audiences relate to the characters in the movies and the effect that such a relationship can have on the audiences. One of the best ways of promoting reconciliation is to make movies which preach reconciliation, with characters that the audience can connect with and relate to. When audiences watch movie characters reconcile, such audiences are encouraged to solve their problems in similar ways as the movie characters (Kierran, 2013).

Mhando and Tomaselli (2009: 34) argued that film transposes audiences into the world of events being chronicled. According to them, film serves as a form of memorialisation. "What is necessary and important and indeed required by the victims [of conflict] is a facility whereby they can reconstruct the trauma in a form through which they can negotiate the various meanings derived from the catastrophe, and to be able to express it and convey meanings from and about it".

Some argue that movies do not necessarily have to treat themes of peace or peace-building to be able to play a role in the peace-building process. According to Pasovic (2001, cited from Zelizer, 2003), during war, it is essential to continue watching films since they transpose audiences to a different world and assist audiences to release emotions. Additionally, film has a built in "cooling-off period", which significantly strengthens the resulting dialogue, because it avoids the serious confrontational atmosphere that threatens productive dialogue (Kierran, 2013: 12).

Antonio Traverso and Tomas Crowder-Taraborrelli's article entitled, "Political Documentary Cinema in the Southern Cone" points out some proven success documentary film has had in promoting dialogue in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. According to them, documentary film has, "not only enriched public debate in these three countries but also transformed the genre into a tool of political activism, social denunciation, and even judicial prosecution of perpetrators of genocidal atrocities" (Traverso and Crowder – Taraborrelli, 2013: 3, cited from Kierran, 2013:12). Johnston (2020), on the other hand, examines how movies promote peace by bearing testimony to happenings during war and, in so doing, provide a healing process for victims. He found that films can transform the perspectives of both international and local audiences, and promote peace. For Schirch and Bratic (2009) a significant role of drama, and by extension film, in bringing about peace is to create a calm, controlled and moderate community of people who dialogue and get along with one another.

Traditional Approaches Adopted in Resolving the Dagbon conflict

Mediation and arbitration by chiefs, elders and religious leaders were the major traditional approaches employed in the Dagbon crisis. Among the Dagombas, every community has a chief who resolves minor disputes among residents of the communities, with the highest level of conflict resolution being referred to the Ya Na's palace. In Dagbon conflict resolution process the principle of an 'elder is never wrong' is usually applied. This is a situation where the younger party in a dispute is expected to apologise to an elder irrespective of whether the elder is right or wrong. Similarly, when there is a dispute between two communities, the community whose chief is lower in rank is expected to apologise to the senior chief even if the senior were the provoker of the dispute. In such conflict resolution processes, the decisions of the chiefs were binding on all parties. The chief was clothed with powers to impose sanctions, which take various forms not excluding banishment of offenders (Ahiave, 2013). As regards chieftaincy conflicts, especially over the Yani (Ya Na's skin), Kuga-Naa, who is the supreme father of both the Abudu and Andani gates, is called upon to mediate. Usually, the Kuga-Naa's decision is respected by all factions to a dispute. Where his intervention fails to douse the dispute, the issue is referred to the Nayiri, king of Mampurugu. Aside mediation by traditional authorities, chieftaincy succession conflicts were often prevented by using soothsaying and divination for selecting candidates to sit on vacant skins of Yani (Yakubu, 2005; Ahorsu & Gebe, 2011). In the face of such well-established traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in Dagbon, one wonders why the Dagbon crisis was allowed to rage on for so many years. Perhaps, the apparent conflict between tradition approach to conflict resolution and western approaches that were used simultaneously to resolve this conflict explains its protracted nature.

Ahiave (2013) indicates that some traditional sanctions for wrong-doing such as banishment, consultation of oracles, sacrificing to the gods are frowned upon by modern constitutions and practices, and prohibited by international treaties and conventions. Besides, traditional conflict resolution techniques are pacifist, while western approaches are often adversarial. The dichotomy between the two approaches explains why majority of respondents to a study in Dagbon (57.7%) felt that traditional conflict resolution methods were not applied to the Dagbon conflict (Ahiave, 2013). Those who opined that traditional mediation efforts were not employed may not have been oblivious of the mediation efforts of the eminent chiefs led by the Asantehene. However, the respondents may have been referring to the failure to use indigenous Dagbon chieftaincy dispute resolution mechanisms. Majority (33%) of respondents felt that the Abudus' refusal to admit to

their role in the conflict and to apologise to the Kuga-Naa accounted for the failure of the traditional conflict resolution processes. More than a fifth of the respondents (26.7%) also pointed at political partisanship as the reason for the ineffectiveness of the traditional mediation efforts, while a fifth (20%) each felt that the traditional approaches could not be used either owing to people's intransigence or the involvement of the very chiefs who should be the mediators (Ahiave, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

As a means of getting detailed understanding of the role of movies in conflict resolution, the study used qualitative method of enquiry. The contribution of movies to peace-building is a specialiased area of study requiring the views of experts. Therefore, qualitative method was appropriate in allowing respondents, who were key informants, sufficient opportunity to freely discuss their experiences, knowledge and opinions. Purposive sampling techniques were used to select respondents for interviews, three key informants, two of whom were Dagbon traditional rulers, one each representing the Abudus and the Andanis, and a peace-building expert who is the Executive Director of the West African Network for Peace (WANEP). Traditional leaders were at the centre of conflicts in Dagbon, either as provokers of the conflicts or peace-makers during such conflicts. Therefore, their perspectives on how movies could contribute towards resolution of disputes were considered useful. WANEP is a civil society organisation, which facilitates processes towards conflict resolution across Ghana. The Executive Director is a conflict resolution expert whose expert view was required for this study. That aside, the researcher interviewed 11 producers of movies which had themes related to conflict resolution. First, the researcher took from NORDRAFIM office in Tamale, a list of all Dagbani movies which were produced during the period of the Dagbon crisis, numbering 71. Out of this number, nearly half (35) had themes related to peace-building and conflict resolution. The researcher purposively sampled 11 movies, which were produced to directly address the Dagbon conflict, and selected their producers for interviews.

Focus group discussions were conducted with eight members of the Northern Drama and Filmmakers Association (NORDRAFIM) and nine members each of two Dagbani movie viewer clubs. As producers and actors of Dagbani movies, members of NORDRAFIM presented useful insights into how their movies contribute towards peace-building in Dagbon. Another critical group of respondents was members of the movie viewer clubs. As audiences for Dagbon movies, no one would know the

effects of such movies on peace-building better than those who actually view the movies.

In analysing data gathered through interviews and focus group discussions, the researcher categorised the data into the following thematic areas: movies focusing on conflicts, cultural conflict management techniques in movies, lessons learnt from movies and challenges to the growth of the Dagbon movie industry. The data were analysed thematically, and recurring themes were interpreted on the basis of language used, opinions, beliefs, knowledge and experiences of the respondents.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study set out to discuss the contribution of Dagbani movies to peace-building in Dagbon, analyse the themes related to peace-building, which are explored in Dagbani movies and to examine the cultural conflict resolution techniques employed in Dagbani movies for peace-building.

Themes Related to Peace-building Explored in Dagbani Movies

Interviews conducted with selected Dagbon movie producers showed that many movies advised against usurping chieftaincy positions, bad leadership and disregard for one's culture or ancestors. Table 1 shows some themes explored in sampled Dagbani movies.

Table 1: Themes explored in Dagbani movies

SN	Title of Movie	Theme Explored
1	Alahachi Nam	Bad leaders receive punishment
2	Nabiyoli	Bad leaders will be punished
3	"Arising", Zag Yini	The need to live in unity
4	Yel kpema Yili	Conflict leads to underdevelopment
5	Mabi Zabli	Family disputes must not be allowed to develop into full blown conflicts
6	Kal Duu	God ordains the chief
7	Suhu garigu	Bad chiefs are punished
8	Gbewaa Ya'ansi	Money cannot buy leadership positions
9	Ya Na	Respect God's ordained leaders
10	Dagbon Nabihi	Consequences of not following the line of succession to Chieftaincy
11	Dagbon Politics	Conflicts impact negatively on development

Source: Field data, 2018

A movie producer indicated that "Dagbon Nabihi" (Princes of Dagbon) discusses the Dagbon conflict and ways of resolving it. A Chief, who is the leader of kingmakers in Yani (Dagbon) indicated that many Dagbani movies carry peace-building messages. According to him:

> Movies teach how men and their wives can live in harmony. Movies teach chiefs how to relate to their kinsmen, elders and followers. Movies teach us how to live as a family. Anytime a movie teaches a good lesson, I call and encourage the producers.

He gave an example of the movie, "Dagbon Politics" which discussed how two feuding chiefs were further divided by politicians. Eventually the viewer is taught to see politics not as a divisive factor, but one that can bring about peaceful co-existence and development.

An expert in peace-building and conflict resolution corroborated the chief's assertion:

> Dagbani movies teach forgiveness, expose negative stereotypes which are dangers to peaceful co-existence. Some movies contain messages about feuding factions apologising for their wrongs. Other films preach friendship among all Dagombas. As a means of bringing about peaceful co-existence, some movies used the celebration of culture and tradition as a unifying force, while others used festivals for renewal of vows to remain united under one traditional leader to spearhead development.

When movie producers were asked whether their movies had any impact on peace-building in Dagbon, all of them responded in the affirmative. Discussants at focus groups agreed that Dagbani movies have contributed to peace-building. According to the movie audiences, movies teach them how to support the development of their communities and to prevent conflict. They indicated that majority of the movies they watched espoused virtues including peaceful co-existence, while other movies gave warning signals of potential conflicts. A discussant at a focus group session remarked:

> Like football, movies have become our passion. We gather at common places to watch, argue about the story and message in the movie. Sometimes, we take sides with some of the movie characters and debate issues. As we watch the movies together, we do not discriminate on tribal, religious or political bases. We are all

one, members of the same movie club, united by the movies which
bring us together.

Kierran's (2013) finding to the effect that movies promote dialogue among people,
thereby preventing conflicts is supported by Dagbon movie producers, who stated
that their films give ordinary people a voice to express their displeasure on issues
affecting Dagbon. A movie producer stated:

> Movies speak for ordinary people, express their woes and concerns.
> This way, the people get satisfied when they realise that their
> concerns have been expressed. In the absence of such an avenue
> of self-expression, people could take up arms to draw attention to
> their concerns.

According to the producers, movies ensure that opposing aggrieved parties
achieve results similar to the four-stage conflict transformation that Lederach (1997)
proposes. Dagbani movies, re-establish working relations among warring factions,
deal with systemic issues underlying conflicts and rebuilds mutual relationships.
The producers further said their movies shape people's views on the need for peace
in Dagbon through peace messages such as "patience Moves Mountains". The
producers said movies have educated Dagombas to be more tolerant and patient
in dealing with one another. "Dagbani movies teach the youth how to voice out
their concerns and to be part of decision making. This way, they are able to voice
out their frustrations rather than taking up arms whenever their expectations are
not met", one producer said. A producer further intimated:

> The phenomenon of burning houses whenever there is conflict
> has completely stopped due to the way we preached against
> that practice in our movies and made the act unpopular. Besides,
> chiefs nominated for enskinment are more easily accepted now
> compared to the situation that pertained 15 years ago. We have
> been producing movies to sensitise Dagombas on the negative
> effects of chieftaincy disputes.

According to them, their movies have become reference points in conflict
resolution of all kinds. One producer stated that some NGO's especially NORSAC,
CAMFED and New Energy use movies to communicate messages of peace to the
warring Abudu and Andani gates of Dagbon. The producers said even chiefs use the
movies for conflict resolution and mediation. A producer gave the example of the
Konkomba – Dagomba war during which the chief of a town called Kanimo used

conflict resolution techniques learnt from Dagbani movies to resolve the dispute between the two warring ethnic groups.

The claims of movie producers are supported by the views of an expert in peace and conflict resolution, who had this to say:

> There are movies that talk about the greatness of Dagbon Kingdom and how the Kingdom has stood the test of time in defending the pride, dignity and the human person of the people of Dagbon from the days of slavery through colonisation to date. Such historical movies downplay issues that cause division among the people of Dagbon and emphasise the greatness, oneness and pride of Dagbon Kingdom. The movies refer Dagombas to their common roots and heritage. They also call for co-existence, reminding Abudus and Andanis that once upon a time, before you were divided, you were actually one and that you come from the same heritage, you come from the same source, you come from the same ancestor.

A powerful Chief in Dagbon, the leader of the kingmakers of Yani, the Kuga-Na also had this to say about the contribution of Dagbani movies to peace-building:

> Their stories preach peace-building. They create conflict situations and then find solutions to them, thus, telling us how to resolve conflicts. They also teach lessons on how husbands and wives can live together in peace and harmony, … how to rule our respective lands, how to relate with our elders and our followers so there will be peace. They also show the effects of conflicts and how to come together in unity and resolve conflicts. Movies also teach us the need to play politics with patience, to eschew bribery and corruption. All these are geared towards promoting peace and harmony.

The chief further noted that the fact that those who act in the Dagbani movies are a mixture of Abudus and Andanis as well as members of diverse political parties and yet work together was a lesson on how to live together in peace.

Cultural Conflict Resolution Techniques Employed in Dagbani Movies for Peace-building

Another main focus of this study was to discuss some cultural conflict resolution techniques which are contained in Dagbani movies. Movie producers, viewer club members and traditional authorities mentioned some Dagomba beliefs and cultural practices which the movies employed for conflict resolution. At a focus group discussion, one discussant indicated that in a movie titled "Kal Duu" (Sacred Room), the ancestors were invoked to maintain peace and resolve chaos in the village. This is in view of the fact that the Dagomba listen to, respect and revere their ancestors/forefathers and "smaller gods" (deities) very much. Therefore, no one dares contest the ruling of the ancestors in a conflict situation. This cultural belief is similar to another belief of the Dagomba which is also highlighted in "Zaachi" (Youth Chief).

The Dagomba believe in a hierarchical system where young people listen to and obey their elders, particularly chiefs. For instance, in a movie titled Dangbia, the youth resort to elders to determine the rightful occupant of a vacant skin. During conflict, young people, who are usually the major protagonists, drop their weapons when elders ask them to do so. For this reason, the youth would often seek the assistance of elders to assist in resolving their conflicts rather than resorting to violence. In particular, Dagomba believe in using chiefs as mediators to conflicts. Similar to the findings of Ahorsu and Gebe (2011), discussants at two focus group sessions with movie viewer clubs mentioned "Kotulum", "Tobu", "Yel Kpema Yili" and "Kal Duu" as Dagbani movies which recommended the use of elders and chiefs to dialogue in resolving conflicts. "Kal Duu" tells the story of how a protracted chieftaincy dispute was resolved when the elders decided to channel their grievances through the king who advised the community to accept the chief that has been chosen for them by the kingmakers. "Tobu" dealt with chieftaincy issues and the use of elders and dialogue to resolve conflicts.

In many of the movies, whenever a party to a conflict is dissatisfied with the ruling of a Dagomba chief, they appealed to other chiefs, especially Mamprugu chiefs. Indeed, the movie, Dangbia, reminds Dagombas that the paramount King of Mamprugu plays an important role in the Dagbon Kingdom when it comes to disputes regarding the enskinment of the Ya Naa. Also, Dagbani movies use dialogue as a cultural mediation technique. When there is a conflict, the chief and elders convene a dialogue session with the aggrieved parties where both sides are listened to. Usually, establishing the truth is at the centre of resolving the dispute.

Discussants at a focus group mentioned "Yel kpema Yili" (Village of Controversy) as an example of a film where this cultural value is espoused. The movie cautions Dagombas to be patient and always speak the truth no matter the situation or personalities involved. It advises people to be truthful regarding the rightful occupants of their skins. The film indicates that if everyone is truthful and patient, Dagbon will be peaceful, and development will follow. The film also brings to the fore the need to prevent conflict at home so that it does not spread to society. It cautions the youth to use their energies for positive ventures and not be delinquent.

These views expressed by movie viewer clubs were supported by a prominent Dagomba chief who said:

> Dagbani movies teach us that culture and tradition is always the way to go. Our culture and traditions prescribe solutions to every situation. When politicians fight, they sometimes appear before chiefs for mediation. As our traditions dictate, we listen to both sides individually before knowing what solution to prescribe to the conflict. For instance, we are not using the culture and tradition to solve the Dagbon chieftaincy crisis and that is why we have not found a solution yet. If we follow the culture and tradition as prescribed by our forebears, we will find a solution. But we have allowed politicians to deceive us to fight among ourselves just so they can get votes.

This view is supported by the views of an expert in peace-building. He reiterates the fact that Dagbani movies teach how culture and traditions can assist in conflict resolution. The expert said:

> Dagbani movies use the passing of cola nuts to a visitor as a sign of welcome and open-heartedness to engage in dialogue for the resolution of disputes. In Dagomba tradition, when the cola nut is passed at the Ya Na's palace, if you pick a piece of that cola nut, it is because you have opened your heart to be part of any process that is ongoing. You cannot pick cola nuts and still bear grudge against another person.

An analysis of a movie titled Dangbia showed that the breaking and chewing of cola nut before a dead body was a strategy used to resolve conflict between two feuding factions. Similarly, the Kingmaker of Yani stated that: "the use of Dagbon culture and tradition in movies teach the youth the culture and tradition of Dagbon

and how we relate to each other as one people with the same background." He cited the movie, Kal Duu, as a movie which teaches a lot of lessons in peace-building in Dagbon. According to him, the movie, which has 20 episodes, dramatises how many conflicts could not be resolved using modern conflict resolution techniques. Eventually, culture and tradition proffered solutions to the conflicts.

Challenges of Using Movies to Promote Peace-building

Movie producers, viewers and experts gave several challenges that the industry encounters in its attempt at using movies for peace-building purposes. Producers were emphatic that the Dagbani movie industry is starved of the necessary finances required for quality movie production. According to them, producing a movie entails huge financial outlay which majority of producers cannot afford. The situation is worsened by the fact that many financial institutions refuse to give producers credit to produce their movies. "We cannot raise sufficient finances to produce quality movies to meet international standards. This is part of the reason why our movies do not win national or international awards, and we get little patronage from audiences other than Dagombas", a movie producer lamented. The effect of producers' inability to harness sufficient resources to produce their movies is that, they are often unable to recruit and motivate professional actors and crew members to ensure quality movie production.

Patrons of Dagbani movies complained during a focus group discussion that the industry lack formally trained and experienced actors, directors and other crew members, leading to the production of poor quality films. Another reason for poor quality movie production which can be attributed to resource constraints is producers' failure to use quality equipment for movie production. Producers corroborate movie patrons' compliant that cheap and substandard equipment are used to produce movies, thereby compromising the quality of movies produced. The producers indicate that state-of-art film production equipment come at very high cost which they are unable to afford. According to them, post-production equipments are particularly difficult to afford. Besides, many property owners do not permit movie makers to use their properties as locations to shoot movies, or as props or costumes for the movies. According to the producers, property owners shy away from the publicity and attention that they might get should they give out their properties to be used to shoot movies.

Both the producers and patrons of Dagbani movies admitted that national television stations' preference of foreign movies especially foreign telenovelas

over local films is negatively affecting the patronage of Dagbani movies. An expert in peace-building indicated that rather than promoting local films on national television, many TV stations, including state-owned GTV, screen foreign films much of the time. This denies Dagbani movies the publicity required to be patronised by a wider market. A discussant at a focus group confessed: "I love the Indian telenovelas and so when any such film is being shown simultaneously with a Dagbani movie, I opt for the Indian film." Compounding the challenge of low patronage of Dagbani movies is poor marketing. Many producers have little knowledge of how to market their movies. According to a peace-building expert, Dagbani movies have failed to earn much national and international recognition not because of language barriers, but owing to failure to market them appropriately to a national and international audience. He cited the case of Indian movies which are produced in languages that are alien to many viewers and yet gain much international patronage due to good marketing employed for such movies.

Piracy is another hindrance to the use of movies for peace-building purposes. The movie producers stated that instead of buying authentic DVDs and CDs from movie production houses, many people purchase pirated ones. A producer said:

> Piracy is collapsing our businesses. People burn our films onto CDs and sell at a cheaper cost to audiences. Others copy the movies from friends who download them from the internet. Few people would buy CDs directly from us. So we are losing to pirates money that should have been invested into producing more movies on peace-building.

Patrons of Dagbani movies admitted that piracy is a great hindrance to the development of the Dagbani movie industry. They also indicated that various conflicts have occurred between movie producers and operators of some movie screening centres who failed to pay copyright before screening their movies.

A peace-building expert summarised the challenges of the Dagbani movie industry as follows:

> The crave for money rather than achieving the purpose of the narrative is the bane of the industry players. Dagbani movie producers should produce movies that will bring people together and as a result make money out of it. Movie producers must choose themes that are relevant. Blind copying should be eschewed. The Dagbani movie industry should develop its own unique form rather

than try to copy another industry, say, Kumawood. The writers, producers and actors, are they well-grounded in Dagbon culture and tradition to be able to make movies that bring peace?

CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to investigate the role of Dagbani movies in the peace-building process. From the findings of the study, several logical deductions can be made. First, the study concludes that like other performing arts, Dagbani movies could be effectively used to champion peaceful co-existence within the Northern Region of Ghana. Fortunately, both movie producers and audiences recognise the potential of movies in peace-building since all respondents unanimously agreed that movies are effective peace-building tools. Indeed, Dagbon movie makers have conscientiously produced movies aimed at promoting peaceful co-existence of Dagombas. Some films preach virtues which are in conformity with Dagomba culture and promote peace by glorifying patience, selflessness, communal spirit and respect for elders among other virtues. Other films preached against vices including over-ambition, greed, selfishness, abuse of power and disrespect for elders. More importantly, the practice of gathering in groups to view movies was seen as unifying force among Dagombas. Movie patrons often engaged in useful discussions at popular movie centres on the themes of movies they watched, leaving many in no doubt about the messages behind the films they watched. Some movies, including "Kotulum", "Tobu", "Yel Kpema Yili" and "Kal Duu" were produced using cultural conflict resolution techniques. Indeed, Dagbani movies have a lesson or two to teach modern conflict mediators. This explains why some NGO's adopted some of the movies for conflict resolution purposes. This underscores the fact that Dagbani movies are more effective as tools for peace-building when they are produced based on Dagomba cultural norms. However, many challenges faced by movie producers have prevented the sector from contributing its full potential to the development of Dagbon. Scanty financing and pirating of movies have robbed the industry of its commercial attraction. With low investment in producing movies, the quality of Dagbani movies are often found wanting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Dagbani movies to play an effective peace-building role, they must be produced by professionals to enhance their quality and give them a wider market. As an expert in peace-building indicated, the movie producers, directors and actors need

to be schooled on conflict resolution and peace-building strategies. The producers, cast and crew members also need to have in-depth knowledge of Dagbon culture and history. Besides, quality movie production is a capital intensive venture. Dagbon movie producers need sufficient capital to expand their businesses and marketing opportunities for their films. As a means of supporting the Dagbani movie industry and enhancing its peace-building capacities, the following recommendations are worth considering:

- The Northern Drama and Filmmakers Association (NORDRAFIM) should seek funding from donor agencies and NGOs, particularly those into peace-building, to organise training programmes aimed at enhancing the skills of film producers and improving upon their marketing skills. Additionally, the movie producers could also seek sponsorship from NGO's and enter into partnership agreements with corporate organisations which would fund the production of such movies in return for marketing opportunities from the movies.

- NORDRAFIM could partner the National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) to organise special training programmes for film producers, actors/actresses and film crew members to improve their skills in acting and film production.

- National television stations, particularly GTV, need to devote more transmission time to airing locally produced movies including Dagbani movies. That aside, as the Dagbon Movie Viewers Club recommended, NORDRAFIM could collaborate with TV Stations located within Northern Ghana to telecast Dagbani movies and in doing so, market them more effectively to a larger audience.

- Dagbani movie producers need to register their businesses and run them professionally enough to qualify for and seek credit financing from financial institutions.

- To ensure that movie producers reap the maximum benefits of their business, NORDRAFIM is advised to seek the support of the Cyber Crime Unit of the Ghana Police Service and the Dagbon Movie Viewer Clubs to track down and punish people who are pirating Dagbani movies.

- As happened in Rwanda after the genocide (Kierran, 2013), Ghana Government and other development partners need to support Dagbon movie producers to produce movies on the post-Dagbon crisis period, with emphasis on how the people can move on after the war. Such movies must

stress the need for unity and peaceful co-existence with a view to preventing any such conflict among the Abudus and Andanis.

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