Creating Local Peace Committee: A Participatory Action Research Project in Ojoo

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Abstract

The human society has experienced one form of violence or the other, and there have been efforts at various times and various communities to prevent violence and build peace. A nonviolent conflict intervention approach has gained popularity in recent years, but for most states, the popular approach has been the use of force expressed in the deployment of security agents and their actions in conflict interventions; at best, that often results is negative peace. For an effective conflict intervention and transformation, an approach whose outcome is positive peace is desired. This is where infrastructures for peace such as a local peace committee come to play. It is a cotton-edged approach to conflict intervention and largely defines a bottom-top configuration which often brings to fore the role of insiders cum locals as well as harnesses local

resources to promote social change for peace in local communities and society at large. This study explores the idea of a local peace committee, adopts a participatory action research design to build such peace infrastructure and promotes the concepts of such local peace structure in the study area.

Key Words: Local Peace Committee, Conflict Resolution, Participatory Action Research Project

Introduction

The part of the society that deals with the demand for peace needs is regarded as the peace sector. This includes ministries for peace, local and national peace committees, national and international NGOs devoted to delivering peace services, donor organisations committed to funding and delivering peace services as well as other infrastructures for peace and peace service providers that are established to deliver peace services. These infrastructures for peace can be planned or spontaneous, established by members of the civil society (the people themselves), or by national or international agencies and institutions (Suurmond & Sharma 2013, p. 8) to respond to a rising peace needs.

Violence begets violence, and this is the more reason while a nonviolent approach rather than the use of force in addressing conflict and violent situations becomes very important. Also nonviolence as a way of life and even in campaigns for social change has proven to be more rewarding. As a weapon, non-violence is accessible to all and does not seek to alienate the opponent including the third party. Thus, it can be used to bring everyone on board. It has the potential to end cycles of violence and counter-violence, open windows of opportunity of conversion, and can draw media focus on the issue at stake as well as often producing a constructive outcome. Local peace committee is one of the infrastructures for peace that can be used to intervene in conflicts in a nonviolent way and thus build peace especially in local communities and the society at large.

The aim of this paper therefore, is to explore the concept of a local peace committee, and use participatory action research design to build and promote such peace infrastructure in the study area for the research.

Local and National Peace Committee

It has appeared increasingly difficult in recent times, to pin down a clear definition of the concept of a peace committee. A working definition however emerged from a workshop put together in June 2005, by NSC and Oxfam GB in Nanyuki. The said workshop defined a peace committee as "a group of people whose broad job is to define parameters for peace." Other definitions that have also been advanced for peace committees include:

- A conflict intervention structure that integrates both traditional and modern conflict intervention mechanisms to prevent and manage or transform intra-ethnic or inter-ethnic conflicts.
- A conflict mitigation and peacebuilding structure which integrates traditional and modern conflict interventions to address intra-and–intertribal tensions and conflicts.
- A community based structure and initiative to prevent, manage and transform intra and inter-community conflicts (Adan & Pkalya, 2006, p.13).

While a National Peace Committee is usually structured into a web that spans the entire State, District and Local Peace Committees, are focused and concerned with, a district or local community, Local Peace Committee is a general name which is used to refer to committee(s) or structures of other kinds that are formed with the intention to "encourage and facilitate joint, inclusive peace-making and peace-building processes within its own context" (Odendaal & Olivier, 2009, p. 2), either at the district, municipality, town or village levels. It is often branded with different names including, District Peace Advisory Councils; District Multi-Party Liaison Committees; Village Peace and Development Committees, Committees for Inter-Ethnic Relations, etc. Also, its implementation could be as part of national peace process, or by civil society organisations, in the context of a protracted violent conflict in many instances.

Local Peace Committees represent conflict transformation processes that use basic local peace-building methods. These are processes that engage local players and use peace-building resources among others to defuse conflicts. They are also useful local peace-building instruments. A Local Peace Committee's strategy shares a special feature that emphasises dialogue, promotion of mutual understanding, trust and confidence building, constructive and inclusive solutions to conflict, as well as, joint action that is inclusive or involves all sides of the conflict aimed at reconciliation. The need to secure durable peace at the grass-root levels in a way that defines a bottom-top approach is one key rationale for a local peace committee's implementation. In many instances, the deep-rooted nature of conflict at the grassroots or local level does provide the foundation for conflict at national level and unless the root causes of such conflict at the deep-rooted level are dealt with, efforts at achieving lasting peace at the national level may be to no avail.

Local Peace Committees are mechanisms suitable for building peace at the grassroots level even under challenging circumstances. Their non-threatening space created for an inclusive search for mutually beneficial options to addressing problems in the communities, offers local peace committees the said suitability for peacebuilding in any given circumstances.

The functions of local peace committees can include the following:

- ✓ Violence prevention or reduction: Local Peace Committees are very effective in reducing the level of violence in the communities. Their efficacy can be further boosted amid adequate early warning, which allows for their timely meetings for collective preventative steps.

- ✓ Dialogue: Local Peace Committees are successful in the promotion of dialogue which helps to deepen mutual understanding. The importance of dialogue as "a central mechanism within the social integration -process" (UNDESA, 2007: xv), is fast becoming well recognized and implemented. The purpose of dialogue is to uncover shared meaning and promote better mutual accommodation and understanding (UNDESA, 2007: 3). Structured national dialogue processes were implemented in, for example, Guatemala and Nepal (International IDEA, 2007).

- ✓ Problem-solving and community-building: The ability of a local peace committee to facilitate processes of joint problem-solving, is certainly one of its greatest strengths, especially considering that in a context where coercive decision-making is counterproductive

- ✓ Reconciliation: Local Peace Committees are endowed with capacity to promote true reconciliation and violence reduction, as well as contribute to joint problem-solving. As Lederach (2005: 160) has pointed out, reconciliation is "dealing with the worst of the human condition, in an effort to repair the brokenness of relationships and life itself." Local peace committees may depend on support from outside. The quality of such a support system is a key ingredient of the success of local peace committees. The main areas of support needed often include:

- ✓ Access to facilitation support: It is often necessary for local players to enjoy support from competent outsiders, who could work with the local peace committee, to mediate or facilitate problem-solving processes.

- ✓ Training and orientation for Local Peace Committees: Training and orientation are very necessary to boost the capacity of members of local peace committees especially in the context of the emergence of local peace committee which, for many, is a paradigm shift from the aged traditional approach, as well as the authoritative style in the court system.

- ✓ Access to peace-building resources: The ability of local peace committees to access funding and other supportive resources from the national and other levels could help to add value to efforts to address complex local processes, as well as boost an informed need for local peace committees, at local levels by all a sundry.

In sum, the overall or general role and goal of Peace Committees is to enhance the peaceful co-existence of various component groups within and between districts via dialogue, peacebuilding, mediation and negotiation as well as arbitration in the event of conflict scenario. The specific roles and responsibilities, according to Adan and Pkalya (2006, p.13), include the facilitation of peaceful dialogue and forums for reconciliation, to raise conflict awareness, and to coordinate peaceful initiatives.

Odendaal (2010) further listed the potential impacts of local peace committees to include:

- The enablement of communication between and among protagonists to deal with issues such as rumours, fears and mistrust among others, which are potentially destructive;

- The prevention of violence via collaborative monitoring, negotiation facilitation including cooperative planning for events which are potentially violent

- Local peace-making facilitating processes that could lead to local peace agreements

- Mediation of conflicts in order to achieve joint problem-solving

- Fortify social cohesion via Local Peace Committee facilitated dialogue

- Facilitating reconciliation

- Enable information flow at both local and national levels, so as to draw attention to local peace-building challenges at the national level.

Local Peace Committees are critical to making a major impact in the promotion of communal peaceful relationships and facilitating dialogues in communities. As posited by Odendaal (2010, p. 3), 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", intervene and transform conflict. Local Peace Committees enable communication among protagonists, to address potentially destructive rumours, fears and mistrust; mediate ongoing or new disputes to achieve joint problem-solving; facilitate reconciliation; strengthens social cohesion via LPC-facilitated dialogue - a necessary precondition for sustainable, collaborative and inclusive governance; prevent violence via joint monitoring, facilitate negotiations and joint planning for potentially violent events, including enabling local and national information flow, so that local peace-building challenges can receive proper attention at the national level (Odendaal, 2010).

Trust is an important part of relationship transformation. Potential players and personal transformation, is often a product of trust cum confidence building and

improved relationships between stakeholders in conflicts. The inherent ability of infrastructure for peace to help build trust and confidence makes it essential in personal transformation and in the transformation of potential players. Also, its conflict transformation capability can be traced to its inherent potential to build the capacities of conflict stakeholders, in addition to its capacity to promote their active participation in the peace process and other forms of dialogue. According to Hopp-Nishanka (2012), it "brings stakeholders and their constituencies together, change agents and creates space for joint problem-solving as well as creates, consolidates and maintains a network of transformative actors" (p. 4).

Infrastructure for Peace capacity for conflict intervention has been expressed in various contexts in many countries. For instance, Local Peace Committees are increasingly recognised for their conflict interventional and transformative roles. It has been defined as a "conflict intervention structure that integrates both traditional and modern conflict intervention mechanisms, to prevent and manage or transform intra-ethnic or inter-ethnic conflicts" (Adan & Pkalya, 2006, p. vii). Their capacity for conflict intervention, transformation and prevention, was brought to fore in Kenya in 1993 through 1995 and in Ghana in 2003 among others. A list of some National/Local Peace Committees include, National and District Code Monitoring Committee in Sierra Leone, District Policing Partnership in Northern Ireland, Local Peace Commission in Nicaragua, Committee for Intra-community Relations in Macedonia, National Peace Committee in Nigeria, National Peace Council in Ghana, Wajir Peace Committee in Kenya, etc.

Challenges Facing Peace Committees

Financial challenges are the bane in the progress of some local peace committees. In the context of dwindling or inadequate funds to advance their work, some of these committees have been compelled by their prevailing unfavourable circumstances occasioned by insufficient funding to modify their structure, in order to attract funding support from donor organisations. The Wajir District Peace Committee that established a secretariat, Wajir Peace and Development Agency. The Agency has been registered as a Non-Governmental organisation (NGO), in order to be able to access external donor support (Adan and Pkalya, 2006, p. 20).

Again, most external donors are less interested in funding long term projects, as they seem to only be 'good at emergencies'. Even registered Peace Committees, are still confronted with challenges, in view of the fact that Peace Committees are peace-building structures that often focus on long term prevention and management of conflicts, (Jenner & Ibrahim, 2000, p. 20). Peace Committees, indeed need funding support in any case, in spite of Jenner and Ibrahim's (2000) assertion that "as long as you are dependent on the outside funding, the bottom-line is that you are in vulnerable position" (p. 21), as such funding is often channelled into facilitative mechanisms.

Other challenges include, lack of a legal and policy framework, lack of volunteers amongst peace committee members, gender and age insensitivity in its membership and activities, ethnicity and political interferences, "lack of capacity to intervene in inter-district and cross-border conflicts, lack of an enforcement capacity and mechanisms for its resolutions, tension between traditional institutions of conflict management and the peace committees and uncoordinated structure and activities of the committees" (Adan & Pkalya, 2006, p. vii)

Peace Committees and Traditional Institutions

The approaches and methodology of peace committees are modelled on the customary or traditional institutions of managing conflict, in any given community in question. The traditional approach places emphasis on local values and customs, and because it costs less than the court system, it is more affordable and accessible to local communities as well as more flexible in procedures and scheduling, and usually utilises local languages and symbols that come with greater clarity to the local people. Nonetheless, unlike the local peace committees, the composition of traditional peace institution is not sensitive to age and gender factors, as well as does not draw from modern approaches to addressing conflicts. The ability of local peace committees to blend the traditional approaches and the modern approaches in addressing conflicts, coupled with age and gender sensitivity in its composition, as well as its accessibility gives it a special vantage, over and above, other approaches of addressing conflicts.

Furthermore, as argued by many peace players, the philosophy behind the creation of peace committees was drawn from the exigency to "institutionalise and legitimise traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution, as well as to widen the constituency of traditional institutions, that were construed as insensitive to gender-age relations in modern conflict management systems" (Adan & Pkalya, 2006, p. 8).

Merit of Peace Committees over Traditional Structure

Unlike the traditional structure, where community leadership and decision making obligations and mandates are restricted to male elders, Peace Committees draw members from various community representation including elders, women, youths, civil society groups, community organisations, political leaders, Government and aliens, and as such, it is more inclusive and presents a superior structure, that values and recognises the role and contributions of various groups within the community.

Again, whereas successive structured steps and criteria such as age system, kinship/clan, often defines the membership of traditional structures that of a Peace Committee, is via a selection process. This approach helps to widen the "constitution of peace committees with a cumulative effect being the emergence of all-inclusive peacebuilding structure/approach/process" (Adan & Pkalya 2006, p.15).

Types of Peace Committee

There are two categories of Peace Committees. The first one involves Peace Committees that obtain their mandate from a central process or national structure. Examples include that of South Africa, Macedonia or Northern Ireland, or Peace Committees that obtain their mandate from a national statutory body, like that of Malawi Electoral Committee or the Sierra Leone Political Parties Registration Commission. It could also be through the mandate following the decision of Government as seen in Ghana and Nepal.

Local Peace Committees with national mandates are often characteristically able to leverage collaboration from bodies that approved their creation. They are part of a nationally recognised process and enjoy a formal mandate. The mandates of such structures may vary from one context to the other, and may even be fairly general, which may be "to prevent violence" or "promote reconciliation" like in the experience of South Africa, or specific, as in the case of focus on policing in Northern Ireland (Neyroud & Beckley, 2001) or violent prevention during elections in Sierra Leone and Malawi. These types of peace committees, often draw their members from political parties, security forces, government bodies and civil society, and are referred to national peace committees.

The second type of Peace Committees are those created by civil society initiatives, and are often products of locally facilitated processes, as well as lack a formal national mandate. This category represents the "bottom-up" approach, and is known as local or district peace committees. They reflect a stronger civil society presence, and usually present more space for volunteer members who share personal passion and capacity for peace-building.

While some local peace committees may focus on general issues concerning violent prevention, and the promotion of peace, as experienced in Burundi, Sri Lanka and Liberia, others may be created for a specific purpose, as was the case of cattle rustling in Kenya.

Local Peace Committee: Experience from some Societies Nicaragua

The Central America peace accord formally ended the internal wars that raged throughout the 1980s in Central America. Five countries were signatories to the accord. The National Peace Commission, region-specific commissions and a network of local commissions were established by the Nicaraguan Government. Religious leaders combined efforts in the South of Nicaragua, to establish small commissions of local residents, in order to promote dialogue between the Contra rebels and the Sandinista Government. The structure was involved in sorting out intra-community disputes, land conflicts and crimes. About 60 commissions were created by 1990.

Also, the International Support and Verification Commission of the Organisation of American States, was the second type of peace commission that was created as a component of the regional peace settlement. It commenced work in 1990, and initially had the onus to oversee the demobilisation of over 22,000 contra combatants in the country's West and Northern regions. The International Support and Verification Commission instrumental in the establishment of 96 peace commissions by 1995, and these commissions got engaged in "mediation, verification of human rights protections, promotion of human rights and facilitation of community projects" (van-Tongeren, 2013). The Peace Commission created space for dialogue within which citizens safely expressed their views.

Local Peace Committees are useful instruments for local peace-building. In Nicaragua several local peace agreements were carried out by Local Peace Commissions. The peace structures recorded tremendous successes, particularly in engaging Contra guerrillas who re-armed after cease-fire agreement. The structures also helped in easing their re-integration into the society when other attempts to deal with them came to no avail.

The Philippines

Following the fall of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986 as a result of the People Power Revolution, the new Philippine Government initiated talks with the rebel forces. The move led to the creation of the Office of the Peace Commissioner under the office of the President. The position of Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (PAPP), with cabinet ranking, was established under President Ramos, and was saddled with the responsibility to manage the comprehensive peace process and was assisted by a full time Secretariat (OPAPP). Government peace negotiating panels were established for negotiations with the rebel groups.

The establishment of a High Commissioner for Peace and Reintegration in the President's office and regional offices by President Uribe's led administration in Philippines contributed to almost 47,000 persons handing their weapons in as at year 2008. Also, the contribution of civil society participants in the various parts of peace-making and peace-building, helped to achieve greater buy-in at the local level, which eventually led to a lasting peace. The Ramos administration in Philippines, established the Office of the Peace Commissioner under the office of the President. Also, the position of the Presidential Adviser on peace process was created. The peace structures together with Government peace negotiation panels engaged the rebels/rebel groups in negotiation for peace.

Peru

The reconciliation process is ongoing in Peru following the bloody civil war that occurred in the 1980s among rural indigenous communities. The Ombudsperson

office was created in 1993 as an autonomous public institution and was saddled with the onus to defend human rights as well as promote mediation and conciliation initiatives. A programme was launched by the Government in 2008 to prepare groundwork for a decentralised national system for prevention and constructive conflict management and transformation. The program was funded by international cooperation, and the central goal of the said programme, whose funding was administered by UNDP, was to "institutionalise dialogue and peaceful mechanisms for channelling social demands timely and through democratic institutions" (van-Tongeren, 2013).

In Peru, the Government structure, the National Office of Dialogue and Sustainability (ONDS), working in varying relationships with Civil Society Organisations, has been involved in programmes that aided in the establishment of broader capacity building throughout the country, although inconsistencies in Government approaches decreases or its impact. Given the positive impacts of infrastructures for peace, one cannot gainsay the fact that planning peace through the use of architectures for peace is critical to promoting conflict intervention and transformation for lasting peace in our society, especially amid the threatening effect of climate change for which experts submit may increase conflicts.

Columbia: Local Peace Communities

Infrastructures for Peace, such as Local Peace Communities, Peace Committees, Peace Labo Laboratories, and Zones of Peace in the country, are well pronounced in some vulnerable zones of conflict in the country. The conflict involving the government and various guerrilla groups, such as the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia) and ELN (National Liberation Army), could be traced to La Violencia, occasioned by the assassination of Gaitan in 1948. The development has left about 250,000 as casualties and millions of people displaced. The objectives of the aforesaid Peace Structures, include both the protection against surrounding violence, establish participatory democracy and to encourage local development including intervention in local conflict issues.

The history of the four decades of internal armed conflicts in Columbia triggered the creation of local peace committees in the country. The Local Peace Committees established institutions that created space for maximum participation in decision-making. According to van-Tongeren (2013), a 'Constituent Assembly', open general assembly or Municipal Forums for all members of the community. The forums began to carry out diagnostic assessments with a view to determining the factors responsible for violence and poverty in the various communities and to come up with a development and peace plan for the community.
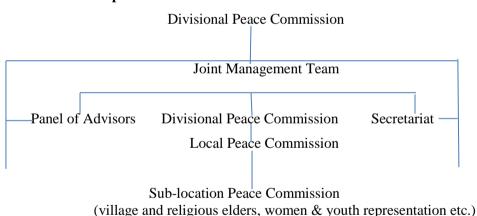
Peace Shuras in Afghanistan

Several hundreds of Peace Shuras have been established in Afghanistan by NGO – Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU), and Sanayee Development Organisation (SDO). While CPAU reported to have established 500 Peace Shuras, SDO also reported to have established 530 local peace committees within 13 provinces. Members of Peace Shuras include community elders/leaders, school teachers, community youth, local businessmen and village mullahs (religion scholar).

Leadership Structure of Peace Committees:

The diagram below depicts the proposed leadership structure of peace committees following the report of the 2005 Nanyuki District Peace and Development Committees' Terms of References (TORs) harmonisation workshop. The Joint Management Team was designed to be the technical, managerial and strategy organ in the structures, and was to be formed in all districts. The composition of the Joint Management Team includes NGOs, women, youth, Government, religious groups and Peace Committee Secretariat Coordinator. The Sub-Location Commission is lowest in cadre of the structure and is to report to Divisional Peace Commission, which will also report to The Joint Management Team (van-Tongeren, 2013).

Leadership Structure of Peace Committees

Divisional Peace Commission

Joint Management Team

Panel of Advisors   Divisional Peace Commission   Secretariat

Local Peace Commission

Sub-location Peace Commission
(village and religious elders, women & youth representation etc.)
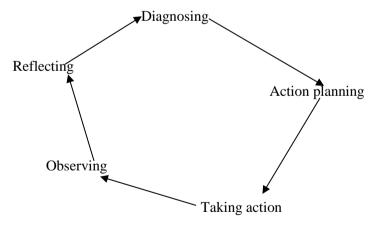
The Joint Management Team is also to relate directly with the panel of advisors and the secretariat in addition to the Divisional Peace Commission. The Joint Management Team finally reports to the Divisional Peace Commission. It be recalled that said meeting in 2005 came up with the decision to modify the District Peace and Development Committee to Development Commission, even as the meeting suggested the above structure for Peace Committee.

Some of the qualities to be considered in selecting people into peace committees according to Adan and Pkalya (2006, p.47) include, honesty, integrity, impartiality and neutrality, fluency in local language, in addition to the points that such person(s) must be knowledgeable, be a local resident and a non-political office holder, as well as being accessible and available.

In view of the importance of communication as an effective tool for peace work, the said meeting also proposed as a significant aspect of the communication process, that minutes of meetings must be well documented and disseminated by the Secretariat, that the executive/secretariat should have monthly meetings, and that there should be quarterly meetings for the wider committee, as well as biennial meetings for members of the community. Others include weekly situational reports to the secretariat and recruiting and training of on the ground field monitors.

Fieldwork

Participatory action research approach was adopted as research design for this study. Reason and Bradbury (2001) have defined PAR as "a participatory, democratic practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview" (p. xxiv). It describes a process during which participants explore collaborative and action-based project approach that reflect their knowledge and mobilise their desires. According to Reason and Bradbury (2001), 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" (p. 12). 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.

PAR Cyclical Process

To this effect, the fieldwork was organised in line with a pattern that defined participatory action research design. The researchers selected seven locals in the target area of study to constitute the participatory action research team, and alongside with the researcher who himself also a member of the team, co-diagnose problems, co-plan, co-implement, co-observe, and co-reflect as well as co- re-plan where necessary, and going through the cyclical process again where necessary.

PAR Cycle: Local Peace Committee

Diagnosis:

Violence has been identified by the PAR team in their diagnosis stage as the bane of progress and societal development in Nigeria. Various reasons have been argued as causes of violent conflicts in the country (Irene, 2015) and in the study area. The team further identified gap in community security system, and as such, believed that implementing project involving the creation of infrastructure for peace, could help remedy and fill the said gap.

The Participatory Action Research team plan was centred on promoting the idea of a local peace committee, which is a practical bottom-top peace-building approach. The PAR team planned to conduct interviews with stakeholders in local communities in the study area as well as initiate a non-violent campaign to promote the concept of a local peace committee with a view to promoting the concept and creating a local peace committee in the target community for the study area.

In a meeting to that effect, the PAR team pointed out Ojoo community as her area of study. The PAR team planned to promote the concept of a local peace committee as well as establish the peace structure. The team reiterated that it was necessary to secure communal support for the implementation of the strategic plan to establish a local peace committee that is expected to bring about social change in the community, and that frantic effort would be made to ensure the appropriate grand strategy, the right strategy and result oriented tactics including methods were employed in implementing her plan in the study area.

The narrative of the PAR team pointed out that Ojoo community is strategically located and cannot be disregarded in the scheme of things- whether political or economical in the life-wire of the larger state. There is the popular Ojoo market and the office of National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) in the community. It is the commercial nerve centre of Akinyele local government area. The PAR team believed that a peace institution such as a local peace committee can help intervene in conflicts, build peace and ensure social change in the community.

Action Taking:

The PAR team embarked on a fieldwork trip to Ojoo community with a view to interviewing and working with the leadership of the community to promote the concept of a local peace committee and also create such a peace structure in the community. The action taking essentially involved conducting one-on-one interview and organising one focus group discussion as well as create a local peace committee. Diarising was used to gather the data following the interview and focus group decisions.

The Individual Interview:

The interviewee on the PAR-on-one interview was the Baale (the leader of the community) of Ojoo community.

PAR team: The question posed by the PAR team to the Baale was that he should comment on his approach to promoting peace in the community.

Baale: The Baale thanked the visiting PAR team and went ahead to say that some members of the Ojoo community often come to him for intervention whenever they were in one dispute or the other among themselves in the community. He added that he usually adopts the win-win approach in the resolution of the different conflicts brought to him. He said he always give unbiased judgement whenever he was called upon to mediate or intervene in disputes by members of his community.

PAR team: The team pointed out the significant of a local peace committee and that it would strengthen and effectively corroborate the effort of the Baale in promoting peace in the community. The merit and merit as well as the characteristics of LPC including how it is build and places where it has worked were presented to the Baale by the PAR team. This was followed up by a spirited question for the Baale by the PAR team. The question: after presenting a picture of what LPC is, do you think it is what you would want in your community?

Baale: The Baale said yes, and that it is something he believed if the PAR team plan is effectively implemented, it could help add value to the community's peace-making effort especially the traditional approach which the community leadership has been employing over the years to settle disputes among community members.

The Group Interview:

The PAR team organised a group interview in which selected members of the community's leadership council participated in. The arrangement provided an opportunity for the team to meet with members of the community's leadership council, interact with them and have them share their opinions, experiences, challenges and

progress in their effort at promoting peace. The PAR team considered the group interview with the leadership council as a vital one, as the team believed that the support and co-operation of the council is critical to the effective implementation of the strategic plan of the PAR team to create a local peace committee in the community.

The PAR team: The PAR team asked the group; how the community leadership has been addressing conflicts in their domain, and what was their collective opinion as regards creating a local peace committee in the community?

Group interviewees: Firstly, the effort of the PAR team which is full of good intention is worthy of applause. The idea of a local peace committee is now well understood by and is something they now believed has the capacity to play key role in promoting peace and bringing about social change in their community. The group encouraged the PAR team not to give up her efforts towards developing and promoting a non-violent option for social change. The group went ahead to tell the team that Ojoo community also has an existing traditional mechanism for managing conflict and promoting peace, and that one of the core responsibilities of traditional institution in local community is to promote peace and harmony and to ensure co-operative co-existence of community members. The group expressed support for non-violent action for social change and the effort of the PAR team for the creation of local peace committees required to bring about social change in local communities. The group added as local chiefs in the community they have been engaging in peace-making in the community using traditional approach. The group declared her commitment to support the creation of a local peace committee and continue to play a leading role in promoting local peace-making in their domain. And with a joint effort of the group and the PAR team a local peace committee was created.

The essence of the interviews was not only to collect information but to involve the locals including the community leadership council (which constituted the group for the group interview) in the process, so as to promote ownership of the peace structure. This is critical to ensuring sustainability of peace projects.

Evaluation

Participatory evaluation was adopted in this project involving the promotion of the concept of a local peace committee and the creation of one. The participatory evaluation team which include the PAR team and members of the community leadership council adjudged that the project was a successful one as it created awareness and promoted the concept of a local peace committee including creating one the local community for the study.

Conclusion

Bottom-Top approach is critical to peacebuilding as it allows locals or the grassroots who are very people affected by the conflict, understand the dynamics of the conflicts from the insiders' perspective and who if well-equipped have the potentials to sustain the positive outcome of the intervention. A local peace committee is one peace institution that defines bottom-top configuration and allows the locals themselves to draw upon local resources to manage conflicts and promote peace in the local community. Local resources are themselves rich and when well harnessed have greater propensity to yield positive outcome in conflict intervention and transformation.

The study adopted a participatory action research design and its result include the promotion of the concept of a local peace committee as an infrastructure for peace and the creation of one in the study area.

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