Sustainable Peace and Development in the Great Lakes Region, Africa

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Abstract

This paper comprises information from referenced literature and the author's experience in the study area. The focus for this paper is to recall some of possible areas of socio-economic areas that can be reinforced under cooperation between Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for sustainable peace; leading to sustainable development in the Great Lakes region, Africa. It has been revealed that although different conflicts that have characterized these countries, there are yet wealthy opportunities that can jointly be utilized towards sustainable peace and development of the region. However, the paper shows that, for any sustainable development initiative, there is a well recognized need for peace makers or "peace holders" to play rightly their roles to allowing potential investors to commit their capitals to investment in the region. Among these include the role of local leaders and local population (followers), the International Community, and the civil society and the media. The paper concludes its reflection with hope that once initiatives are taken in preventing conflicts and its related consequences, development agents are likely to significantly play their roles towards sustainable development in the region. Finally, the paper offers areas for deepen analysis of some of the arguments by further researchers in a multidisciplinary approach and policy intervention to fostering efforts to peace and hence to development of the region.

Key words: War and Conflicts, sustainable peace and development, CEPGL, Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC.

1. Introduction

The process to development in the Great Lakes Region, Africa, has been restrained by many factors including wars and conflicts resulting partly from the failure in leadership of some leaders in the region. Various leading ideologies mostly related to citizenship rights of all citizens (Georges, 2004), was one of the main ingredient of intensive conflicts that have characterized the region in the last decade. Additional to this, poverty, unemployment, and inadequate economic opportunities also seem to create a fertile ground for reoccurrence of conflict and insecurity in the region (Nanyonjo, 2004). Therefore, institutional innovation aimed at poverty reduction and conflict resolution, are likely to contribute to conflict management and to sustainable peace and development. However, joint uses of available development opportunities in different sectors of the economy seem to be part of ways; leading to prosperous development

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plans and sustainable peace in the region. French (2005) affirms the possible correlation between an economic solution and promotion of peace. Accordingly, economic deprivation may cause aggression and conflicts if human basic needs are not adequately met. Likewise, linking the issue of nationality and land ownership is seen as one of the driving forces of conflicts in the region (Vlassenroot & Huggens, 2005).

The region, due past and ongoing wars and conflicts, has lost human and physical resources. For example, the 1994 war and genocide in Rwanda has caused Rwanda to lose about one million people, increased number of widows and orphans, increased number of war casualties, increased refugee cases, destruction of available social and economic infrastructures, and other related consequences that the government is yet to cope with. This has not only a social impact but also an economic one in terms of labour which, in turn, affects production functions in different sectors. Furthermore, this has also led to negative spillover impacts to neighbouring countries, especially the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi. Given that most of genocide perpetrators fled to these countries; this has led to continuous killing of innocent citizens in the host countries such as in the Eastern DRC. Clearly, these perpetrators are currently trying to naturalize themselves and creating new identities which, later, may cause another generation of conflicts if appropriate measures are not taken. Additionally, pre- established institutions for socioeconomic development in the region such as the CEPGL become inefficient with respect to their original vision, mission statements and objectives although the ongoing negotiations between Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC. The main focus become to investing to conflict resolution processes by compromising investments in economic and other related social sectors.

This paper aims, based from referenced literature and the author's experience, at recalling potential opportunities to reconstructing and developing the Great Lakes region for the sake of a sustainable peace; leading to sustainable development (SPD) of its population. Ideas of this paper are grounded to the only experiences of Burundi, Rwanda, and the DRC as these are members of the CEPGL (Communauté Economique des pays de Grands Lacs) and have in common some historical characteristics. The paper does not go to details which, in turn, require more additional information for further research. The next section shows the importance of peace as a key determinant of economic development. Section 3, evokes respective roles from different holders of the "light for peace" or actors to sustainable peace and development. Finally, section 4 deals with some economic opportunities that can jointly be considered for the development of the region. The paper ends with some conclusions and recommendations to offer to policy makers and development workers towards sustainable peace and development in the Great Lakes region, Africa.

2. Sustainable peace - key factor to sustainable development

Conflicts in the Great Lakes Region (GLR) were the main factor that has made it difficult to identify and exploit possible development opportunities available in the region for the benefit of its population. The region has experienced many types of conflicts mostly ethnic related, leading to the 1994 war and genocide in Rwanda, different types of wars in Burundi and the DRC. Again, during 1996 to 2004, the ethnic oriented war and conflict in the DRC mostly due to violation of citizenship rights of the 'Kinyarwanda speaking population' such as Banyamulenge by other groups of people especially in the Northern and Southern part of Kivu Province (Georges & Hans, 2001). These situations have made the country more cloudy leading to the real need of peace as a 'light' to easy re-allocation of development efforts in different sectors. There is a range of literature that clearly shows the relationship between peace and economic growth. In the past, more attention was paid to other factors such as industrialization in defining economic growth of a given country; but peace is seen as more determining development process in most parts of the World including the region.

Currently, in Rwanda, evidenced is a positive trend to development due mostly to prevailing peace which, in turn, makes it more attractive ground to various types of investments. In comparison to Burundi and DRC, there is also a conditional hope for these countries if the ongoing administrative reforms are taken with more accommodative manner by integrating all parties involved in the conflict in the past. Again, not only the success of election can guarantee peace in these countries but also the way institutional arrangements are made to implementing respective political orientations. The question is whether these political orientations envelop the interests of all populations including those excluded by previous powers. If this is not taken into account, there is no doubt to the likely conflicts and hence; unsustainable development process. Looking at historical mirror of these countries, one may, therefore, relate them to the 'three legs of an African cooking pot – 'Amashyiga' by which ; if one leg breaks or not well positioned, it affects the whole pot. This could simply symbolize that any war or conflict in one of these countries- Burundi, Rwanda, and the DRC- is likely to affect at certain extend the rest as experienced in the nearest last years. This pot could also represent sustainable peace and development cooked by different stakeholders or actors under respective leaderships. For example, due to the last conflicts in the region, Rwanda accommodates camps for Congolese refugees (Cyangugu, Kibuye, and Byumba) and Burundian refugees (Gikongoro). The DR Congo also has got Burundian and Rwandan refugees (e.g., in the Eastern Kivu). Again, Burundi also accommodates Congolese refugees (e.g., Cibitoki, Mwaro, and Gasorwe).

Clearly, apart from accommodating one country's people, there are still a lot to share. Thus, joint policing in terms of international relations for sustainable peace as well as sustainable development in these countries needs to be improved and sustained. Consequently, the light of peace will be regained and allow to clearly tracing possible areas of investments. Albeit last experience in conflicts and wars , one may not lose hope to rebuild all sectors of economy for the benefit of local population. However, the main defy is for all development stakeholders to mapping the available development opportunities and commit their investments in activities that are mostly based to the needs of local people. Additionally, peace building process is not solely the role for leaders themselves, but also of local people at lower level. The sake for peace should be a daily motivated goal leading to sustainable peace and development. Shie (2005, citing UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, 2004), contend that 'human security encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfil his or her potential'. Again, it is well known that the UN institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank in supporting these countries, good governance, democracy, and respect of human rights are part of key criteria for a country to worthy any development support. One of the reasons to emphasising on the above criteria should be the sake for sustainable peace leading to sustainable development. However, the machine of international organizations and insti-tutions such as the World Bank and IMF should serve the interests of the 'beneficiary' countries rather than serving the hidden objectives of respective countries that pool money in them. Thus, peace is seen as a key determinant factor for the above institutions (others) to commit their support to any country. In the next section, I present in summary the likely stakeholders –those with 'stakes' to the ongoing developments – assumed to seemly address constraints to sustainable peace and Development in the region.

3. Actors to promoting peace: what expected roles ?

In the previous section, I contend that conflict is the main factor that inhibits the use of possible opportunities for developing the region. Sustainable peace is regarded as a prerequisite for any developmental initiative under cooperation between Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC. This section deals with possible holders of the needed "*light of peace*". Many actions have been attempted to bring peace in the GLR, Africa up to the 2002 Lusaka Peace Accords. However the application of conclusions resulted from such actions led also to other sort of conflicts due to misunderstanding of different ruling parties in transitional governments, such as in the DRC. Furthermore, can we expect that elected president and members of the government especially in the DRC and the transitional government in Burundi will lead to the needed peace and development of their respective populations. Again, can one affirm that the elections in the DRC guarantees the inclusion of interests of all parties? Once an

'optimum' combination of different solutions is obtained; sustainable peace and development can then be expected. Therefore, here comes the contribution of each in respect to one's scale of intervention towards the goals of peace and development in the region. The future of these countries is basically grounded to the current visioning of respective local leaders and local population, International community, and the civil society - including governmental and non-governmental organizations, churches, the like. If one's role of these key stakeholders or actors in promoting peace and development is well channeled and in an integrative and inclusive way; repacking processes to sustainable peace and development should not have high costs.

3.1 Local leaders and local population: to what extend the leadership responds to the needs of local population?

It is substantial to mention that local population expect from their leadership to significantly and jointly address their pressing problems ranging from basic needs such as security. The quality of service delivery by local institutions at lower level explains more at what extend the local population trusts or have confidence in their development process. The term 'quality service delivery' could simply mean to what extend government policies meet priorities of local people in uncorrupted manner. From experience, during the electoral phases of different leaders at different administrative scales, the main ingredient of their speeches or plans is what they promise local citizens. It is , therefore, important to recall the contend (which the purpose here is not to present them but to understand that they give meaning to what is planned by leaders) of these plans at electoral period and compare them to achievements. These promises should not be regarded as simple slogans to attract people during the election period, but also they need to be translated and materialized in tangible objectives and achievements in terms of development. As results, local citizens will feel these achievements through their social, economical and political security and stability.

The leadership as a development 'engine' needs to be also monitored and evaluated. Therefore, Monitoring and Evaluation systems need to be greatly institutionalized or reinforced to inform on achievements in relative to their mandates. Clearly, well crafted vision and developmental strategic plans for local population will enable them to overcome the effects of poverty. However, the roles that local people should play in helping their leaders implement crafted vision and strategies are also of high concern. For example local people can help leaders achieve their fixed objectives in responding to government policies once translated to them in an understandable ways and through active participation to the decision-making processes. Lessons learnt from the consequences of the 1994 war and genocide in Rwanda and other conflicts and wars experienced in Burundi and the DRC, should enlighten on individual actions to sustainable

peace. Again, 'peace maker spirit' should dominate the 'conflict maker spirit'. Any one could agree with me that it is important to be a "peacemaker" than "conflict maker". Self esteem and stand in promoting peace should not be easily shacked and replaced by any slogan promoting any conflict ideology that brings to the same disasters as in the past. Tolerance for diversity and respect for multiple identities are not only essential for national unity and solidarity; they are also indispensable in maintaining peace and stability (Georges, 2004), leading to sustainable development of their countries. Any external driven initiative to sustainable peace should also be accommodated neatly. Because there is need for a deepen understand of what is going at the ground to better propose an appropriate solution. Put it differently, solutions to problems of the region are more in minds and hands of Rwandese, Burundians and Congolese themselves than to any external individuals or institutions. People in the region-Rwandese, Burundians, and Congolese - know better their own problems. This could simply imply that they are also better positioned in crafting suitable policies to peace and development of their respective countries. External support should be regarded as part of needed facilities towards the goals of peace and development rather than to solely regard them as fundamental. Therefore, any external support should come to support internal driven initiatives for accuracy and long term benefits not to imposing what to do with the same support.

3.2 The International Community

The role that the United Nations (UN) and its member states could play in promoting the culture of peace and sustaining development activities in the region can not be overtaken, although their recognized failure in halting the 1994 war and genocide in Rwanda. It is good to salute the efforts of the International community to recognize the above failure. But, the question is whether there will be other excuses to the ongoing killings and burning of human beings by rebels in the presence of UN peace keeping missions in the Eastern DRC. Fore example, another sample failure of the International community is the failure in bringing into justice the perpetrators of about 160 Congolese refugees known as Banyamulenge killed and burned in the refugee camp controlled by UNHCR in 2004 in Burundi. Furthermore , how to explain the continuous killing of local citizens by rebel movements in the presence of MONUC with well equipped and paid for the service. These few examples show the need for consistency of the International community involvement in crafting and implementing a clear peace building strategy and thus sustainable peace (Champagne, 2005). The role of African Union is also very important in promoting peace in the region. The undergoing peace initiative by African Union for instance in Sudan is a real example and is crucial for the sake of peace in that country. However, the question is whether this involvement of peace keeping missions address well the root causes of such conflicts in Sudan (Pers. Comm. President Paul Kagame, during the press conference in Kigali,

March,2007). Investing more for the sake of a stabilized region; this is likely to lead to more investments since the region is a very fertile and rewarding ground for investment (Pers. Comm. by President Obasanjo , 2004 during the NEPAD Conference, November, 2004.). To a large extent, if the role of International Community and other institutional arrangements is handled successfully, investors can also be able to identify all developmental areas and commit their resources and gain possible returns and thus development of the community.

3.3. Civil Society and Media

In post conflict countries, the role of the civil society in contributing to the culture of peace is very important. Many organizations have been effective instruments in reaching segments of civil society in conflict and development programs (Herisse, 2002). This intervention has contributed in coping with consequences of different conflicts experienced in the region although possible weaknesses and limitations in their operations. However, beneficiaries of different humanitarian support programs mostly lack appropriate skills in managing different aspects of the support (Shepard *et al*., 1997). Building capacities and strengthening positive values "connectors" within beneficiaries and the targeted community should be more promoted. French (2005) states that "a lack of knowledge may cause conflict yet knowledge itself can also be used as a tool to encourage conflict through a process of conscientisation". Again, reinforcing activities related to unity and reconciliation may contribute towards sustainable peace. However, it is very difficult to assess the achievements in unity and reconciliation. One of the possible ways to evaluating them should be through "story sharing" as adopted by the "Healing of Memories approach" in South Africa. Therefore, this is subsistence for further researches in social interactions in post conflict countries to indicate what indicators that could clearly inform on the monitoring and evaluation of achievements with respect to unity and reconciliation objectives. Numbers of people grouped in the form of solidarity camps (reference to Rwanda) to sharing stories and other related topics should not be regarded as achievements in unity and reconciliation; but as processes to reconciliation.

The very role that churches can play towards establishing and sustaining peace activities in the region can not be ignored. As stated by the Rwandan president Paul Kagame (2005)[2], "the church is strategic because it involves people of all ages and social class". Accordingly, the church as one of the developmental agents, can significantly contribute to this goal- sustainable peace and development- through different innovations. It is currently known that, the church is not only concerned by the development of the inner man "spiritual life" but also the outer- man "physical life". Thus, such innovations from church

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[2] In the New times Journal, 17 July, 2005.

can considerably contribute to the Five Global Giants as identified by Warren (2005)[3]: (1) Spiritual emptiness, (2) self-centered leadership, (3) poverty, (4) diseases (especially HIV/Aids pandemic), and (5) illiteracy. If a well oriented and integrated role of churches in cooperation with the government and the private sector, such as business services is carried out, changes in the region can be anticipated and enjoyed. However, the problem with church dominations is within the geographic biasness. It is clearly observed in many parts of the above countries church activities concentrated in cities leading to possible competitions and conflicts. The indigenous way of disseminating church activities even in the rural areas need also to be carefully accommodated.

With respect to the role that the media could play in peace building and in development is well documented. However, biased journalists are observed in the "online journalism" where the values of "neutrality and truth" are not considered in collecting or diffusing the information by some journalists (Nkunsi, 2005)[4] and this cause the decline in relying in what is published. It is important to make sure that the provided information does not harm the situation rather than to contributing to solutions towards sustainable peace and development. Self interest should not motivate journalists and other people in posting their articles in different means of publication. Therefore, as one is motivated for the sake of his security and his well being, this should be the same as well in promoting peace and development for the rest of the community. Thus, self oriented interests are of short-term, but the sake for common interests endures for long-term and this is likely the main reason of one's being.

4. Possible areas for joint development activities   between Burundi, Rwanda and the DRC

According to Herisse (2002), there are more positive lessons from collaborative work than worse. However, the problem is to integrate the principles of group work towards development (Pretty,1995). The available economic opportunities and positive values within Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC can jointly be utilized through different networks and institutions such as CEPEGL to meet different needs of local populations. The time has come where it is a pressing need for the above countries, as already started, to jointly and consistently think on different positive socio-economic and political values that can be streng-thened to rebuilding their relationships or cooperation in different aspects. There are better to share than worse. For example, economic daily exchanges characterize people of respective countries. When any country decides to close its border for any political reason, respective populations are immediately and

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[3] The same

[4] Personal communication in the meeting with government and independent journalist 21st Agust2005, Kigali, Rwanda

involuntarily affected by such decision. Sustainable peace in the Great Lakes region by starting in Eastern DRC- currently found to be the trigger of all current conflicts- will guarantee new initiatives for the development of the region. The future for this region depends on how currently the leadership and local population are trying to define it. In the following, a brief look at possible areas of cooperation between these countries for sustainable development is outlined.

4.1 Agricultural related opportunities

For a well oriented development, existing resources serves for raw materials and inputs in each sector of the economy namely the agriculture, industry and services sector. However, lack of new technologies to add value on the available resources is yet of concern. With regard to the agricultural sector, traditional cultivation methods are the main applied by farmers in both Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC, followed by no clear land tenure to secure landholders. For example, in the DRC, given that there are many unoccupied places, shifts from one place to another are motivated by the *try to find fertile soils*. Farmers suffer from shortages in use fertilizers and improved seeds, and thus the cultivated area and natural soil ingredients are the main to explain the level of farmer productivity and crop yields. There is an opportunity to jointly invest in this very sector and allow local people enjoy possible returns. Collective actions in this region can be done in the form of developmental projects and may promote agricultural sector and then other sectors. The respective governments could bear transactions costs related to the implementation of any adopted project. Again, policy makers need to define clearly in which institutional form this can easily be done.

Farmers are yet to cope with transaction costs related to long distances from home to markets (Matungul *et al*, 2001). Consequently, distances to marketing their agricultural surpluses constitute also another constraint to their development. For instance, in some provinces, markets are fixed on daily basis in both Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC(like in the high plateau of Itombwe of the Eastern DRC) where, in some locations farmers may gain access to market once per week due to transport constraints. This recalls the existing opportunity to invest in transport (e.g., roads construction), which in turn, may allow local population to gain access to markets within their own countries or within the region and thus improved commercial relationships due to commercial advantages.

4.2 Industrial Related Opportunities

With the potential contribution of the industrial sector in the economy, there is a need to review and extend the list of industrial opportunities that can be collectively undertaken by Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC. Peter (2002)

summarizes the effects of the industrial sector to the overall development in three points: "The industry's substantial contribution to economic growth helps to create a large portion of the resources needed to fund social development Programmes. Secondly, creation of employment and hence generation of income takes place in the industrial sector directly and are indirectly fostered in other sectors like agriculture or services through their linkages to industry. Lastly, industry promotes various aspects of social integration through its general thrust towards modernization and makes a specific contribution to the integration of women by way of productive employment". Enhanced job opportunities are likely to promote employment and improve household incomes leading to peaceful states. Unemployment is also likely to nourish rebel movements and cause under-aged young people to join rebel forces as it is currently observed in the region.

It is evident that industrial possibilities including sugar industries, transport industries such as maritime due to Lake Tanganyika and Lake Kivu, and Cement industries, are collectively feasible, since the population from the above countries benefit differently from these lakes and the cement industries in terms of job employment and income in the form of salaries. These are part of possible industries that can jointly be developed under the CEPGL or any other institutional framework for a sustainable development in region. However, this requires self commitment and consistent devotion of the region leaders and the local populations. Reinforcing or creating development institutions such as CEPGL, is likely to allow transfer of skills from one country to another, promotion of social integration (through working together), share of experience (knowledge), share of markets for different products and more. The list of opportunities is not exhaustive and they are likely to serve for the well being of local population. However, looking the region in the mirror of conflicts, investors are likely to be reticent in committing their capitals for development activities.

4.3 Services related opportunities

The service sector is regarded as all economic activities other than agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing, mining and carrying, and manufacturing (Vijayakumari, 2003). The most important services that can alternatively increase the well being of local population under possible cooperation are education and health services. For example, services provided by education and health institutions in the region are benefited at certain extent   by people from both in Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC. At the education level, students gain reciprocally education from different universities in the above countries as well as lecturers do also teach in the same universities. Hospitals in both the above countries receive respective people with no discrimination. Through streng-thened cooperation, the benefits of such services as education and health care

can be shared importantly among these countries. Collaboration in education and Health by the above countries is partly explained by the lack of sufficient qualified staff in the domains. Therefore, well crafted policies for such cooperation will prevent internal and external migration of qualified human resources. Yet, it is the responsibility of the respective leaders and policy makers to implement such policies for a better service delivery within the region.

5. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The aim of this paper is to recall some possible development opportunities within Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC to sustainable peace and development in the Great lakes region. The information used in this article is as referenced in addition to the author's experience in the area. Although different failures and conflicts that have characterized the region, there are yet rich opportunities for sustainable peace, leading to sustainable development. The role of each developpment actor or agent should be well oriented for the benefit of this goal – sustainable peace and development. Thus, the role of leaders and local population is crucial towards this process of promoting peace and development. The International Community and its member states could review or reinforce their intervention approaches in peace keeping mission. The role of civil society is regarded as crucial; hence an integrated collaboration of the civil society with governments and the private sector is likely to promote peace and development. Possible initiatives under cooperation between Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC are also highlighted. Attempting to any developmental activity without the commitment of all identified peace holders in the scope of this paper, this will turn to the continuous misery of the local population. This paper intends not to be in-depth, but part of incentive information for further researches and studies leading to sustainable peace and development in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Moreover, this paper ends with hope for sustainable peace and development in the Great Lakes region that is likely to result from the joint and efficient use of available resources for the sake of peaceful and prosperous nations.

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