



Religio-Ethnic Response to African Armed Conflicts

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Abstract

This study, *Religio-Ethnic Response to African Armed Conflicts*, was aimed at investigating the root cause and impact of African armed conflicts, and to show how religion and ethnicity can be given opportunities to have a smooth entry point in peacebuilding with some well-grounded conflict management mechanisms. The study discovered that the African continent suffers a number of armed conflicts where women and children have been the most disadvantaged. These conflicts originate from religious and ethnic organizations as a result of theological disagreements, cultural and political dissatisfaction, which all require, among other solutions, religious answers. As people are deprived of access to justice, peace becomes the first victim. While friends and neighbors become permanent refugees if not enemies, militia groups emerge under the umbrella of freedom fighters, and if not checked, they are most likely to resort to criminal activities. The study further discovered that lack of respect for religion and humanity has made life difficult for both the army and the citizens on the continent of Africa. This has made Africa one of the World's war-torn areas throughout history with ethnic and religious solutions not provided. Crimes against women and children continue to increase. Sexual violence is estimated at higher levels and little or nothing has been done to heal the pain caused by war trauma and the post-war situation. The study concludes that as a result of armed conflicts, political instability, diseases, internal displacement, mass migration and refugees' movement are making violence on the continent worse than ever before. The study recommends that religious authorities, particularly Christian and Islamic leaders, as well as ethnic or traditional leaders should put hands together to conduct dialogue in order to help manage and reduce violent conflicts in Africa.

Keywords: *religion, ethnicity, dialogue, states, weapons, peace, misunderstandings*

Introduction

The Origin of Human Supremacy

Africa was developed before the Europeans came. Western Sudan empires, for example, produced fishermen and there were Nomadic Fulani herdsmen up to AD 1500. During this era when religion was the leading factor in civilization, peoples' understanding was on the ideal rather than the material world, and thus less violence was registered until when the people were taught to separate religion from medicine, politics and geography (Hayford and Rodney, 2005).

Africa is one of the world's resource-endowed continent where leaders have failed to make good use of the resources, even though all people on the continent are typically Africans, and these are not at conflict with anybody in the Diaspora (Waters, 1990). This situation has made Africa dominate the international media coverage in terms of high incidences of violence, the frequency of endless armed conflicts, to the extent that in 2007, eight out of ten most unstable countries in the world were in Africa, (Francis, 2008).

Intractable Conflicts on the African Continent

This paper examines the fifty-four-member states of the African continent, and the associated intractable armed conflicts that have frequently been presented on the agenda of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and African Union (AU) but with minimum solutions to have the conflicts amicably resolved. The Great Lakes Region (GLR) of the African continent comprises eleven member states: Angola, Republic of the Sudan, Southern Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo "DRC", the Central African Republic, Kenya and Zambia. The horn of Africa, Central Africa and West African states like Mali, Chad, Nigeria, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Liberia have lived in unnecessary armed conflicts from independence to date. The same is evident in Libya and Egypt. There is a high rate of religious-ethnic armed conflicts within these states, and at times the fighting is against their neighbors, which has led to loss of human lives and dignity.

Statement of the Problem

On the African continent, there are countries like DRC which was made a state where ordinary people were not regarded as citizens but clients of powerful patrons. The patrons also served as clients to other powerful masters of DRC in the Diaspora. On the other hand, the rich Congolese also extracted wealth from the poor and deprived them of their goods. This resulted into widespread corruption and violence (Diamond, 2008). The Congolese people are made up of more than 200 separate ethnic groups and speak distinct languages. The major languages are Kiswahili, Lingala, Kikongo, Tshiluba, and French which is the language used in government, commerce and education. Social discrimination on the basis of ethnicity is widely spread and practiced in marriages, hiring, business and other aspects of life (Alston, 2008). Africans attach great value to historical backgrounds, leading them to identify with one another or to distinguish from their

groups on the basis of certain biological characteristics (Lauer, 2001).

However, such values are never given a chance to bring people together. It suffices to say that conflicts start as a result of poor economic performance, underdevelopment, corruption, bad governance, unemployment, political exclusion, social ethnic marginalization, as well as ethnic victimization. These conflicts escalate into violence when not managed.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive correlation and qualitative research design so as to investigate the causes of African armed conflicts, impact and the relationship between the African armed conflicts and the entry point for religious and ethnic organizations.

The study employed a purposive and simple random sampling as members had equal chances to be sampled. The study sampled 70 members. These comprised religious members from the Muslims and Christian communities, members with interests in ethnic organizations, politicians and political leaders. Non-government organizations that serve as humanitarian and gender equality service providers were also given maximum consideration.

The study used interview guiding questions and questionnaires as research instruments for data collection. Secondary data was also one of the methods of information gathering whereby, valid information was carefully selected and shared with content experts before it was considered important for this study.

Theoretical Perspectives

The study of religio-ethnic response to African armed conflicts is guided by the theory of liberalism which discusses “freedom for the individual” as it is believed that human beings are well natured. Liberalism’s core ideals stress individualism, human rights, universality, freedom from authority, right to be treated equally under the protection of law and duty to respect and treat others as “ethical subjects” as well as freedom for social action (Fukuyama, 1992; Doyle, 1983).

The theory also asserts that we should believe in progress in human nature, in the state system and in the international system. It’s upon this background that, integration towards greater interdependence in the form of transnational ties between countries can lead to peace. Cooperation should be arranged by expert technicians, not by politicians. This means that, African religious societies and ethnic systems have the capability of working together with political leaders in order to manage African armed conflicts that have become intractable.

Literature Review

This study is guided by the following body of literature. Selected information from secular and religious (revealed) books is examined in order to concretize the authenticity of this study.

Armed Conflicts in DRC

Before the downfall of Mobutu up to 2008, different rebel groups were actively fighting in

the eastern DRC where the prevalence of rape, defilement and other sexual violence were described as the worst in the world. This war was described as Africa's First World War, the world's deadliest conflict since World War II, battle of the GLR where 5.4 million people lost their lives as mentioned by Clark (2003).

The genesis of conflicts in the DRC can be traced from its neighbors (Rwanda and Burundi), where the 1994's genocide in Rwanda which was forewarned but those who could take action refused to respond for different reasons (Tajudeen, 2004). In summary, racism and bigotry are cited as one of the major causes of violence in Africa. It should be noted that the history of genocide in Rwanda goes back to 1959, 1966 and the latest one was in 1994. These are all interlinked with that of Burundi of 1965. No one can tell whether genocide will reoccur in the post-1994 Rwanda. One thing is certain: the role of religion was extremely high in fueling violence, but it was expected to provide a long-lasting solution to the genocide.

In the case of the DRC's civil wars where more than 5.4 million people died with the presence of outside or external participants and their forces, it was discovered that not less than a million Hutus were killed in the DRC. The Hutus were forced out of Rwanda by the RPA when it took over power in 1994. This means that whatever change in leadership in favor of the Hutus, civil conflicts are more likely to take place in the republic of Rwanda, Burundi and DRC since whatever goes around comes back.

Religious Response and the Regional Armed Conflicts

Although most of the GLR states profess Christianity, the majority of their leaders kept a deaf ear and closed eyes when the killing of people was taking place in Rwanda. Hundreds were raped, defiled or butchered in religious centers including cathedrals, churches, or schools. At times, nuns led their fellow countrymen into the hands of the waiting killer group popularly known as *Entarahamwe*. These were citizens from the Hutu majority ethnic group who were well trained to kill human beings. Hence, men of the collars were also employed for the job of killing their followers and countrymen (Greal, 2000). These religious centers in which massacres of hundreds of thousands of people took place included Nyarubuye catholic mission with more than 4000 people killed, Kibuye, Kibeho in Rwanda, The Hema, Lendu settlements in DRC and many more others. Whereas in Nigeria, in 2000, ethnic conflicts turned into religious that culminated into attacks by both the Christians and Muslims, causing loss of property and lives (Dogo, Abdu and Ajibauh, 2015)

The Role of Sub-Saharan States in the African Armed Conflicts

With the Dar-es-salam declaration on peace, security, development and democracy in the Sub-Sahara and GLR on 19-20 November 2004, African state leaders were deeply concerned about the endemic conflict and persistent insecurity caused or aggravated by inter alia- economic stagnation and poverty aggravation, mistrust and suspicion between governments. Concerns were also registered on massive violation of human rights and other policies of exclusion and marginalization, gender inequality, use of violence for conquering or conserving power, impunity of crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity, war crimes, illicit trafficking of small arms

and light weapons proliferation of armed groups, organized crimes and illegal exploitation of national resources.

African Children and Military Services

In the same declaration, it was resolved that there should be a prohibition in the recruitment of children into the armed forces or their participation in hostilities. In resolution number 66 of the same declaration, state leaders resolved that all necessary measures should be put in place to ensure that former child soldiers are exempted from compulsory military services, re-integrated into their communities, rehabilitated, counseled and resettled as agreed upon in the Dar-es-salam declaration on peace, security, development and democracy in the Sub-Saharan and GLR of 19th to 20th November 2004.

However, almost everything that could bring peace was covered, and the implementation became a problem, yet the message remained on paper. That is why in situations where child soldiers lost every family member, it becomes difficult for them to drop the gun. This was because the environment was conducive for them in the army than elsewhere since they lost parents and relatives.

Religious Armed Men and Conflict Escalation on the African Continent

According to Vannasselt (2003), between 1990 and 2000, 118 armed conflicts worldwide claimed approximately 6 million lives. In 1999, more than two thirds of conflicts had lasted for more than 5 years and almost one third had lasted for more than 20 years. The effect of these wars spilled and spread to neighboring villages and countries, thus leading to loss of more lives and property. On the African continent, it was possible for these conflicts to spread from one state to another because the Sub-Saharan Regional states did not put in place a strong mechanism to supervise territorial security.

Examples of these religious fighting rebel groups that have affected the population on the African continent and GLR include the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), West Nile Bank Front (WNB) in North West Uganda, Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) in North Eastern Uganda, SPLA in Southern Sudan, Darfur and the rebel groups fighting in Eastern DRC. There are also Seleke rebels and Anti Balaka in CAR, Boko Haram in Nigeria, Alshabab in Somali land. Some of these countries were shortlisted to have caused the world's worst humanitarian crisis since 1990, where out of 11 countries (Gabriel, 2009), 10 were from Africa as chronologically indicated below:

Table showing a list of countries that caused the world’s worst humanitarian crisis since 1990

Year	Country
1990	Angola
1992	Somalia
1994	Rwanda
1996	Zaire
2001	Afghanistan
2002	Zimbabwe
2004	Darfur
2005/ 06	Congo
2007	Somalia
2008	Congo
2009	Somalia / East Africa (Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia and Uganda)

Source: Research 2016

The Impact of Armed Conflicts on the African Continent

The negative impact of these conflicts can be discussed country by country depending on the magnitude of the impact. By 2008, up to 5.4 million people had lost their lives in the first and second Congo wars, including loss of property. People in the Congo were said to have died at a rate of an estimated 45,000 per month. The high death toll was due to widespread disease, famine and violence (Geer, 1998).

There are a number of political, social economic and religious armed conflicts in so many countries of Africa where humanity is highly terrorized, and the terrorists are branded as freedom fighters. Saundry (2008) observed that, armed conflicts in Africa and outside Africa cause a very big social economic negative impact on humanity. Rebels use land mines and powerful weapons which increase the extent of isolation in the rural communities, diminishing their sense of citizenship, and crumbling infrastructures which results in the loss of markets and other economic opportunities.

The civil conflicts further result into trauma, violence and death. The survivors of these conflicts are always traumatized by the memories of their lost loved ones. Most of the refugees and refugee related problems like famine, poverty, illiteracy, and ill health in African states are highly caused by civil conflicts. The Sub Saharan, GLR in particular, has been highly affected, but the DRC has had the deadliest and most complex conflict since 1998, followed by Rwanda where a million Tutsi ethnic group members and Hutu moderates were progressively exterminated in only one hundred days, killings that were organized by the government and implemented by hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens, including judges, human rights activists, doctors, nurses, teachers, priests, friends and relatives or spouses of the victims as described by Melvern (2008) and Mamdam (2001).

In some parts of the continent like Eastern DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, Southern Sudan and CAR, people who are about to die get to know about it, but they remain helpless. The only thing they can do is to pay to the killers for a “nice” or quick death as was seen during Rwanda’s 1994 Genocide (Mamdan, 2007). This was because in one way or another, almost everybody who participated in the genocide of Rwanda had a chance to escape into the DRC. Some tricks of killing that were employed in Rwanda were carried on to the neighboring DRC.

The Spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons

According to Schroeder and Lamb (2006), small arms are seized or stolen from government forces, looted from state armories, purchased from corrupt soldiers while others are stolen from private owners. Even other arms are received from the peacekeepers. He further stated that rebels and other armed groups are also major sources of illicit small arms. On the other hand, unlicensed gunsmiths have the collective capacity to produce up to 20, 000 fire arms a year, some of a quality comparable with industrially produced guns. Therefore, the availability of small arms combined with the experience of protracted armed conflict has resulted in the emergence of a gun culture in so many villages on the African continent.

It can therefore be concluded that in order to eliminate small arms and destroy its market on the African continent, reinforcing arms embargoes and bolstering national arms controls plus destroying small arms will not have a decisive effect on the illicit small arms economy unless the root causes of violence and conflict are comprehensively addressed.

This therefore means that most of the African states need to address the root causes of armed conflicts within and between their borders. This can help the regional leaders to look for permanent solutions that can be employed to resolve African armed conflicts. The table below shows some African states with armed conflicts.

Table showing some African states with armed conflicts

Armed Conflicts / Wars	Years of Independence	Colonized by	State	S/N
1964-1965, 1979,1997-2001,2006, 2016...	1960	France (1880)	Congo (DRC)	1
1997-1999	1960	France (1880)	Congo Brazzaville	2
2005-2006, 2015 to date	1960	France (1894)	Central African Republic	3
1997-2001, 2015, 2016... to date	1962	Germany, Belgium	Burundi	4
1961,1975-1995, 1998-2001	1975	Portuguese (1482)	Angola	5
2007 election violence, frequent terrorist attacks to date	1963	Portuguese, British (1890)	Kenya	6

	1964	British (1922)	Zambia	7
Participated in ousting I.AMIN. 1979, Terror attack of 1998 on USA Embassy	1961	Portuguese, Germany (1500), (1885)	Tanzania	8
1979-1991, 1992-2001, 2006	1962	British (1890)	Uganda	9
1963-1972, 1983-2001, 2010, 2015, 2016.... to date	1956	Egypt, British (2600BC), (1898)	Sudan/ South Sudan	10
1963, 1979, 1991-1994	1962	Germany, Belgium, France	Rwanda	11

Source: Field Research 2016

Table showing African conflicts and the impact on humanity in 2005

Refugees 2005	Deaths	Country
438,663	350,000	Burundi
430,625	817,000	DRC
65, 293	300,000	Ethiopia
	1,000,000	Nigeria
40,447	100,000	Sierra Leone
294,760	100000	Somalia
693, 267	2,250,0000	Sudan
10,793	20,000	Zimbabwe

Source: UNHCR, Genocide Watch and Global Refugee Trend (2005)

There are traditional factors that can be identified for causing conflicts in the above African states. These include traditional rivalries over resources, the struggle between entrepreneurs or elite groups from places next to wealth, individuals competing for leadership to use the state for personal wealth. There are other groups that stand up to challenge their states because of failure to enforce its authority over the people's welfare. That is why in the DRC alone, there were almost several fighting groups each within either one of the above-mentioned characters which worked

for the rebels as identity maker that created reason for violence.

Discussion of Findings

The study discovered that the African continent suffers a number of armed conflicts where women and children have been the most disadvantaged. These conflicts originate from religious and ethnic organizations as a result of theological disagreements and other social misunderstandings. Not reconciling using secular justice creates an impression that these organizations have conflict management within their areas of jurisdiction once given an opportunity. This has been discussed below.

Justice for Peace

If the deprived people do not take up arms but stand out to challenge their respective states for the poor services, the complainants are considered as enemies to the authority who should die amidst demonstration. This therefore calls for an understanding that in order to have a sustainable peace agenda on the African continent, there is need to exercise justice and fairness. The leaders must recognize the values and interest of their followers and train them on how to live peacefully and this can be easily done together with religious and cultural input.

Some African leaders lead their governments in the most reckless ways. They lead their people to a disease destination and in fact this is one of the reasons why their leadership style ends with them. It is hard to identify a potential leader other than those elected from the ruling family. In line with other countries where freedom fighters concentrate on the agenda of restoring freedom in their nations, the reality seems to be different for the African freedom fighters.

When Freedom Fighters Become Criminals and Criminals Become Freedom Fighters

It is discovered that most of these freedom fighters struggle for money, sex and power as the last item on their agenda. This is because so many insurgence groups never expect to take power as they have less support and logistics. In the process, a big number of people are kidnapped, raped or defiled while others have their property looted and money stolen.

On the African continent, leaders come to power with celebrations. They keep reminding people not to forget the day and date their governments were born and how old they are, year by year. They are remembered from the time they came to power to the time they leave. It is surprising to note that those who die during their time in power are never recorded and those who lead them to death are not brought to book. Lack of respect for religion and human life has made it difficult for both the army and the citizens to respect each other's blood in the horn of Africa, West Africa, GLR and throughout the continent.

Walter (2006) indicated that the GLR, Central Africa, was one of the Worlds war torn areas that faced violence caused by turbulent political history of nearly 50 years. The worst of this conflict was the Rwandan genocide of 1994, when Hutu tribal members exterminated almost one million members of Tutsi minority. Such overt belligerence subsided, but the neighboring states remained alert for new outbreaks of violence as this can be realized in many states, as religion is in total silence.

The Impact of Africa's Armed Conflicts on Women

It can be described that during the civil wars, more women are raped, and the numbers escalate. Sexual violence in the DRC is estimated at higher levels as stated by Clinton (2009). It was also indicated that the numbers would have been higher had it not been the fear for the deadly HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and other related problems.

According to Ameenah (2005) whose effort was to show the religious rulings on the major problematic issues of female hygiene, a woman in her monthly flowing blood (Haydh), which is not as a result of child birth and the post child birth bleeding (Nifas), are exempted from sex. This is strongly confirmed in the Holly Qur'an Chapter 2:222. Because of the restrictions and difficulties with menses, women feel inconvenienced and thus sex also becomes a health hazard. From the prophetic teachings, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) is mentioned to have fixed a fine to be paid in the Dinar for a person who performs sex with his wife during her menses. He explained that if sexual relations occurred in the beginning of the menses, the penalty was one Dinar and if at the end of the menses, the penalty was half a Dinar. The essence behind the fines is not in the money paid, but the gravity of the offence under which the fine is fixed.

Women at Their Worst

Despite the health situations that women face on monthly basis that do not allow them to have sex, the situation on the African continent becomes a disastrous one for the female creatures. This is at times because they are not given time to narrate their health status as regards obstacles to sex. The study discovered that a big number of women are either raped or defiled even when they are in their menstruation periods or post-child birth bleeding. Sex during child birth bleeding is an abominable act and highly discouraged in all strongest possible terms (Muhammed, 2004; Al – suyuut, 2002; Ibin Kathir, 1997; Swafiy, 1990).

Ebrahim (1994) described rape as a sexual crime which is done with force and violence, and the pregnancy resulting from rape is very unlikely, but one cannot rule out the possibility of its occurrence. In Africa's civil wars, rape related problems need treatment of the physical injuries, crisis intervention with emotional support, and prophylaxis for venereal diseases and medication for potential pregnancies. Despite the above-mentioned problems that need immediate medical attention, more women especially the teenagers fear to report rape cases to medical service providers as a result of dishonor and their chances of getting married would be jeopardized.

The war abuses and rape result into negative attitude towards marriage. There is also poverty and famine which lead to increased prostitution. This causes unwanted pregnancies coupled with incurable diseases like HIV/AIDS and trauma. On the other hand, women are least privileged, poorest, often combined with hard labor and highly affected humans as a result of wars. Some women in the war affected areas face the problem of bearing children whose fathers will never be traced anywhere on earth. This is because these children are the products of rape and defilement since their female parents were not free and responsible to decide for the pregnancies. The alarming situation of rape and defilement in the DRC and other African societies make a number of women to bear children too early or too late, which endangers their brains, bodies and babies.

The level of poverty caused by civil wars in Africa coupled with the environmental hazards in the forests causes miscarriages in many women due to lack of clean water, nutritious food, clothes and shelter which are the basic needs of mankind. The medicine that is available and very familiar is the traditional herbal medicine that consists of leaves, stems and roots but this does little to heal the pain caused by trauma and poverty.

The Impact of Africa's Armed Conflicts on Children

It was discovered that an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 children are serving with armed groups in eastern DRC. Despite the fact that the Congolese national army - the Front for Army of Democratic Republic of Congo - formally ended child recruitment in 2004, many children still served in the national Army by 2012. These included children associated with armed groups, who were integrated into the FARDC of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

It became expensive to have these children released into the care of an appropriate child protection agency and relevant UN agencies. This was because these children were not trained in anything other than fighting and killing human beings. Religious institutions and NGOs could be given access to all military installations to identify and remove child soldiers. This was not possible because by the time they were done with the sensitization programs, other stronger fighting rebel groups were already in place calling them to join another struggle, where more rape, defilement and other war crimes were highly expected to occur.

Problems Associated with African Conflicts

The study discovered that armed conflicts that are widely spread across the continent are mostly caused by the states own armed forces. The inaccessibility of the areas in which they usually arise, and the exceptional levels of violence coupled with social disruption that accompany them have not only made guerrilla movements in Africa extremely difficult to study, but also made life difficult for human rights activists. This is true in the sense that in most cases, those who come to rescue others are only given a chance to do their work with strict or rigid deadlines which are at times accompanied by threats of death. These make it difficult to end armed groups (Clapham, 1998).

Outside Africa, it is easy to secure job employment once someone goes to school, because education matters in employment (Eitzen and Leedham, 2001). However, it is observed that so many Southern Sudanese, Somalis, CAR, and Congolese children never went to school, never had time to grow their own food and therefore have no access to jobs so that they could be lifted from poverty. The continent has become the world's manufacturer of future violent members than the expected peace makers and peace builders. To some extent, some children will always dine with those that will kill them the next day, as there will be no value for human life.

The Impact of Refugee Influx as a Result of Ethnic-Religious Wars

On the African continent, the refugee influx and their related problems have never come to an end. The armed groups of LRA, RPA, ADF, SPLA, Ant Balaka, Seleke, Janjaweed Movement,

AQIM, and many more others in Eastern DRC including Al-shabab that has always caused a refugee conducive environment on the GLR are causing more harm than good. In addition to this problem, individual countries have failed to cater for its refugees.

In some situations, refugees fail to contend with the refugee environment and instead form a union and get trained to fight against those who forced them out of their country. This is the same with prisoners of war and other religious groups like Alshabab, LRA, ADF in Uganda, SPLA and others. This implies that they graduate from refugees to rebel groups who turn into freedom fighters from where it makes it easy for them to get internal and external support and continue terrorizing their countrymen while justifying their cause. Thus, this study helps to show that religious and ethnic organizations have a great role to play, and indeed, have the answers to questions regarding Armed conflicts caused by religious and ethnic issues on the African continent.

Conclusion

It can be observed that in Africa, non-military dimensions of security such as environmental degradation, poverty resources, scarcity, ethno-religious and nationalist identities, crimes, drugs, floods and mass migration of people have all threatened individual and societal security, survival, and even national security. Yet, at times the concept of security goes beyond military consideration. As a result of armed conflicts, political instability, internal displacement, mass migration and refugees' movement are making continental violence worse than ever before. It is also important to mention that Africa's abundant mineral and human resources coupled with the enormous wealth they produce, have not, however, translated into poverty reduction, long term economic growth, increased livelihood or welfare for the majority of Africans (Francis, 2008). In a situation where the rich want to get richer thus increasing the inequality gap between the rich and the poor, it makes it clear that the continent becomes a natural resource curse. This makes it clear that Africa's ethnic groups and religious communities have greater opportunities to conduct reconciliation where politicians have not managed to create peace.

In January 2000, the Security Council resolution 1308 stated that HIV/AIDS is a global threat that was not given the urgency that it deserved in some regions of Africa. Wars, political instability, internal displacement, mass migrations and refugee movement were mentioned to have spread the disease in Africa, to the extent that by the year 2000 an estimated 20 million people had died from HIV/AIDS, and 13 million children lost one or both parents to AIDS, and more 40 million people were living with HIV/AIDS. There is a strong belief that religious and ethnic institutions can be entrusted to move together as behavioral agents and as holistic workers to enlighten the African communities on the dangers of wars and their long-term impact which includes AIDS/HIV.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following: religious authorities, particularly Christian and Islamic leaders, should be brought at the forefront to condemn armed conflicts in Africa. This means that if the situation is not well handled in conjunction with religion, we are likely to register

future religious and ethnic violence, which is susceptible of spilling over to the neighboring regions (Adedeji, 1999).

The civil war in Southern Sudan where the Nuer and Dinka in Upper Nile, the Dinka and Baggara, Dinka and Bari compete for leadership and use of natural resources mainly grazing land should be given attention through the use of religious conflict resolution mechanisms. Once given an opportunity, religion and ethnicity can also take an initiative in managing the Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria, Alshabab in Somali land and the Great Lakes Region, and many other armed conflicts. Other rebel groups that have affected the population on the Great Lakes Region include, the LRA, ADF, WNBF in North West Uganda, Holy Spirit Movement in North Eastern Uganda, SPLA in Southern Sudan and the rebel groups fighting in Eastern DRC. There are also Seleke rebels and Anti Balaka in Central African Republic, Alqaedah in Maghrib –Mali and many other armed groups whose identity is religion or ethnicity.

In the Dar-es-salam declaration on peace, security, development and democracy in the Sub-Saharan and GLR of 19th to 20th November 2004, state leaders were deeply concerned about the endemic conflict and persistent insecurity caused or aggravated by inter alia- economic stagnation and poverty aggravation, mistrust and suspicion between government. Concerns were also registered on massive violation of human rights and other policies of exclusion and marginalization, gender inequality, use of violence for conquering or conserving power, impunity of crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity, war crimes, illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons proliferation of armed groups, organized crimes and illegal exploitation of national resources. This study recommends that the above resolutions should be supervised from time to time and be implemented effectively. However, religious organizations and ethnic leaders should not be left behind since they have an upper hand as they interact with their community members who are the agents behind the catastrophic situations.

Religious and ethnic institutions should be encouraged to preach against armed violence, and to ensure that children are not trained in the army. Through the same initiative, former child soldiers should be re-integrated into their communities where religious and ethnic institutions have a say. These should be rehabilitated, counseled and resettled for education. The above-mentioned steps should all be implemented and supervised by African states security organs in order to create the conditions for a violent free generation.

Africans should respond towards the ongoing armed and non-armed conflicts by attaching value to the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. These include Gachacha in Burundi and Rwanda, Mato-oput in Northern Uganda, Ubuntu in South Africa and many other mechanisms, depending on the nature of conflicts. This is a humanist carrier that requires one's generosity, intra exceptional good behavior (Omeje, 2007).

People should be recruited for jobs without looking at politics as a determinant. Where possible, loans should be given. Though, work is highly prized as a political value in society, employment links a person to a network of socially rewarding interaction. Without work, people feel disenfranchised from their social political system and become alienated thus leading violent acts (Guy, 1995).

Finally, to the African leaders, there is need to consider the general welfare of the society. Religious and ethnic organizations should be encouraged to put emphasis on the community needs rather than on individual interests (Kaiser, 1990).

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