

German Libraries in consideration of historical and demographic changes in the 20th century.

A case of HAMM Library



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Abstract

This paper highlights the growth processes and changes that Libraries in Germany have undergone through until to date. It is worth to note that the Library collections of both print and electronic are in many other languages apart from German language. Interestingly, Libraries in German do not work under any Library legislation. Conflicts are unheard of since the formation of the united Germany,

Besides, the experience Germany went through the first and second World war made them rethink on how to solve and evade crisis; The author opines that one way of creating understanding among the many German (Migrants and immigrants) was to establish an intercultural Library.

The paper concludes by taking a quick language contrast with Kenya, it was observed that out of the 42 different speaking groups; only 35 entries were of Kikuyu while others were not reflected.

Introduction

Hamm Library is located in Hamm Town, a relatively poor town of old industries (coal mine, steel, and hardly anything else) in the Western parts of Germany. The Library consists of a central Library, other 4 branches and a mobile Library. The Library's current stock stands at about 250,000 media items, purchased on a yearly basis of about 30,000 media since 2007. Hamm Library has introduced the services of the loan of virtual media meaning that customers can now get a temporary access to only virtually accessible media like e-paper, e-books, e-music and so on.

Achievements of HAMM library:

- A library in a midsize town, the town ranked 40 in terms of inhabitants made a landmark of receiving 400,000 physical visitors and 200,000 virtual visitors. Both physical and virtual visitors wanted to use their Library rich collection.
- The staff efforts in the advancement of reading and writing skills of pupils and the advancement of creative writing and literature
- Year 2005 awarded “Library of the year” award, normally advertised by the German Library Association and the ZEIT(weekly) foundation

Information and Knowledge management for conflict resolution, peace and reconciliation

What does this topic mean to the younger history of my country?

Germany has undergone several distinct phases of history particularly in the 20th century. This is marked by radical changes in political-and during these phases Libraries (as one part of social life) either served as political instruments or to a large extent kept outside the direct political life.

Precisely, the period 1914-1918 (WW1) Show Germany loose all its colonies including Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. In 1918-1933, German was a productive inquietude and cultural glamour. 1933-1946, the Nazi movement reigned under Chancellor Hitler whom defined antagonists of the good German, the Jews; the left wings etc. This period of turmoil had an immediate impact on the German Libraries and the spring of 1933 as it marked the first step in German history that Libraries were political instruments.

Effects of World War II (1945) marked the split up of the Germany in two independent States (1949) thus came into the map-East and West German. This split set up had an enormous impact on the development of public Libraries, which for the second term had to develop under political restrictions. For instance, for 40 years, stock management was undertaken under the signs of a pro-socialist and anticapitalist worldview

In their re-union in 1990, the former two German States became linguistically homogenous and this become a concern of the native population,

therefore public libraries especially the ones in the big cities-have tried to take into account of the new target groups who have arose with the upcoming migrant population. Precisely, the Libraries are putting into their collections print and electronic materials of the migrant languages. The point behind their initiative is to see all people informed. Within the policy of German, public libraries knew that the migrant groups could and would become a more relevant target group. For better resolving of the crisis, it cannot be claimed that the German Libraries have dealt with intercultural issues only for the last five years but for more than six decades.

The individuals and groups struggle to make libraries survive in Germany, as there is no national libraries legislation. Without library legislation, there is no possibility to develop obligatory plans, key, figure and whatever else could be defined by legislation-the only way to proceed and would be to develop a modular system of devices an offerings of which the public Libraries in Germany could benefit. This could become a very difficult task without any commitment of public libraries of all sizes and all kinds of aspiration

Focus at this moment

For evading, the language conflict, the following languages were identified-partly because of the amount of speakers in Germany, partly because they are spoken in the neighboring countries and partly because they are used as a common language of migrants such as Albanian, Arabic Bosnian, Chinese, Dutch, Greek, French, Hindi, Japanese, etc. In total, 20 languages have been declared as relevant in the efforts concerning intercultural Library management.

The libraries including the Hamm Library presents itself as a low threshold institution with multilingual offerings for different groups of migrant and minority groups to be attractive for wide range of the local community, this includes;

- Multilingual library websites
- Helsinki city library
- Hamm city libraries, etc
- Bilingual library staff
- Non-verbal guidance systems

Hamm library has geared towards developing different kinds of intercultural offering to gain and to keep migrants and foreigners as their main customers. This includes:

- Specific introduction to the library-action-oriented and/or bilingual learning.
- Story telling and reading aloud.
- Intercultural library feasts where different ethnic groups present their tradition.
- Cultural events such as author reading in foreign languages or bilingual.

Besides, the local migrant institutions, organizations and groups have to take into account that the intercultural library is a service partner for day-care centre and schools in terms of stock exchange. A good example of big libraries in Germany is that one of Nuremberg Public Library, which offers media, boxes for multilingual language and reading promotion.

The library has to think beyond its borders and start to become catalyst or promoter of so-called “social inclusion” programs in terms of reading aloud in its city. These programs do not explicitly encourage groups of migrants, but they do reach them by not making distinction between the majority of the population and the migrant population. Examples for those “social inclusion” programs in Germany are:

- Bookstart, until recently accomplished only in particular cities
- Reading bags for first graders

How are Libraries regarded?

Libraries could be presented in two environs:

- Physical library building and
- virtual library.

These two libraries combined have given birth to hybrid library, which is today’s library. Of the two, the author further states that the physical library building is the most democratic place imagined of as it provides a law-threshold physical space for reading, learning, further education, talking and so on.

In general the stocks of the library can only be as its funding e.g. a

library with old fashioned and timeworn stock loses its customers. To subsidize the old library collection, one possible solution could be taking the advantage of the Internet. It is observed that since the introduction of Internet in libraries in Germany and more particularly the Hamms library, the term access has become a catchword. This access enables customers to get information worldwide without any filtering and in all languages spoken and written in the third world.

The main pre-requisite is that information is available in as many languages as possible; here we have to face a new prerequisite:

- The existence of information
- The written representations in the internet

It is demonstrated that people of different backgrounds in terms of language, ethnic groups, religion, and education and so on can live amicably so long as they accept one.

Kenya has been considered in this discussion. Kenya is found to be having about 45 languages of which two are official. While performing a quick search and retrieval on the Kenya languages, it has been found through wikipedias, that English is the most spoken. Others that follow English are Arabic with 60 entries and ranking no.31, globally, Swahili with 90 entries, Gujarati with 800 entries, Somali with 400 entries, etc. the most popular Kenyan tribal language captured through the wikipedias is the kikuyu, the first African language spoken in Kenya with a population of 5.3 million speakers and has a total of 35 entries. Precisely, the author wanted to know whether Kenya encourages the growth of indigenous and typical Africa languages to be used both formally and informally. Besides, whether any literature has been put down in the stocks on these languages.

Conclusion

Like many other coming libraries, the German libraries have had a health growth in their demographic changes that began in the 20th century. For a better growth in the librarianship and information science, standards and legislation are essential in any country; unfortunately, German National library does not run on any legislation. A library collection with a multi-cultural kind of collection such as the Hamm Library assists to bring together all kinds of ethnical and language users together and closely. Due to the

rich intercultural literature proffered in German libraries, great mutual understanding among the many communities exists and therefore co-existence is the most accepted “catchword”. Hence information and knowledge management found in this kind of scenario is one that relates people and makes them to understand one another through language and electronic materials. Hence it is the duty of Librarian to spread peace and reconciliation through the literature stocked in his/her custody.

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Use of Information and Knowledge Management in Conflict Resolution

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Abstract

This paper discusses how the use of information and knowledge management can assist in conflict resolution. A conflict is more than a mere disagreement, it is situation in which people perceive a threat to their well being, and when there is a conflict, there is need to resolve it. This paper attempts show how the right information could be used in conflict resolution. It examines the sources of information and gives an account on use of right systems & channels to provide and disseminate this information to aid in conflict resolution. It explains how to generate the right and timely information through managed interaction within the society.

The paper also expounds on the ways knowledge management can help in conflict resolution. Knowledge in itself is not enough if it is not properly managed. The paper discusses practices that can be used to identify, represent, create, manage and distribute knowledge so that it could help in conflict resolution. It also looks on how knowledge can create awareness, understanding, facilitate dialogue in times of a conflict, and on how best to engage in mediation when conflicts arise. This paper also identifies and examines the factors that contribute to conflicts, priorities for conflict resolution, and discusses issues and priorities for conflict prevention and peace building through information and knowledge management. On the basis of this discussion, a number of conclusions and recommendations are proposed on ways in which the stakeholders could contribute towards concerted efforts of curbing violent conflicts involving different ethnic communities.

Introduction

Conflict is always concerned with a distribution of power. Indeed, an

exertion of power is prerequisite to the retention of a share in the determination of future relations - as well as for the acquiring or retaining of other benefits. Conflict can also be seen simply as a distinct category of social behavior - as two parties try to get something they both cannot have. Moreover, conflict can be apprehended as a potentiality or a situation, as a structure or a manifestation, as an event or a process.

A conflict exists when two people wish to carry out acts which are mutually inconsistent. They may both want to do the same thing, ... or they may want to do different things where the different things are mutually incompatible (Nicholson 1992). Conflict is a balancing of vectors of powers, of capabilities to produce effects. It is a clash of powers. Conflict is however not a balance or an equilibrium of powers. It is not a stable resultant. Conflict is the pushing and pulling, the giving and taking, the process of finding the balance between powers

In their colonial conquest, for instance in Kenya, the British followed a policy of divide and rule, allying with some African groups against others. The Maasai, who had suffered a series of 19th Century civil wars over water and grazing rights and had lost much of their livestock to disease and drought, were one group with whom the British allied themselves to impose their rule. To aid colonial administration, the British divided Kenya's Bantu, Nilotic, and Cushitic-speaking peoples into ethnic classifications based on linguistic variations and locality. Thus, specific ethnic subgroups, called "tribes," were created in a form that had not existed previously. The ethnic groups were assigned to live in separate areas of the colony. Within each subgroup, colonial administrators designated one "chief," who became responsible for collecting taxes levied by the colonial state.

East and Central Africa's volatility has been seen by what is sometimes referred to as "Africa's World War" during the 1990s. After the Cold War, many African economies crumbled while scarce resources were squandered by corrupt regimes as health care rapidly deteriorated. These circumstances contributed to ethnic tension as people became frustrated and aggressive, and it only took a small event to trigger quick vertical escalation of violence, as in the case of Rwanda. The Rwandan genocide created a huge refugee population in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which spurred the late Laurent Kabila to overthrow Mobutu Sese Seko.

To the North of Kenya, Eritrea and Ethiopia were fighting a war, and Somalia was torn apart by warring clan leaders. There was a 40 year-old war in Sudan, between the Islamic government of the North against the Christian Sudanese People's Liberation Front (SPLF) of the South.¹ All of these situations created an enormous influx of refugees into Kenya, particularly in the northern camps of Kakuma and Dadaab. In 1992 the number of refugees in Kenya reached 420,000.²

In Europe, the Balkan wars profoundly influenced the subsequent course of European history. By creating a strong and ambitious Serbia, the peace settlements engendered fear and anti-Serbian sentiment in neighboring Austria-Hungary. The dismantling of the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria created equally caused dangerous tensions in southeastern Europe. These conditions greatly intensified the contemporary forces in shaping a general European conflict, which generated onto far reaching impacts into far reaching in economic and social-political environments.

There are significant numbers of pastoral Maasai living in the Rift Valley area of Tanzania, so ethnic violence involving Kenyan Maasai could diffuse into Tanzania. There are also significant numbers of Luo living around the Lake Victoria region of Uganda that could easily be affected by ethnic violence involving Kenyan Luo. So far the ethnic violence of Kenya has been contained within the borders of Kenya, but the ethnicities of Kenya extend into the border areas of surrounding countries.

Interestingly, since gaining her independence in 1963, Kenya has been consistent in efforts to find negotiated solutions to conflicts on the continent and especially in her own neighborhood. Kenya believes that pursuit of objective social-economic and political development would best be served if there were peace and stability in the neighboring countries and beyond. After attaining her independence in 1963, the late H.E Jomo Kenyatta the founding president of Kenya, was appointed Chairman of African Union Conciliation Commission on civil war in Congo in 1964, and in 1989, the

¹ The idea of "Africa's World War" and its escalation and diffusion of violence was explained by Dr. Timothy Sisk in his lecture entitled, "Outside In, Inside Out: Trans-border Dimensions" on 02/07/02.

² Jeff Crisp, "A State of Insecurity: The Political Economy of Violence in Kenya's Refugee Camps," *Africa Affairs* (2000), No. 99, p. 616.

second President of Kenya H.E Daniel Arap Moi took part in resolving political conflict in Mozambique. Subsequently, leaders of the National Resistance (RENAMO), they were prevailed upon to seek a negotiated solution to the armed conflict in Mozambique. In 1993, the Sudan peace process under the auspices of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has begun its conflict resolution under the leadership of the then President Moi as the IGAD Chairman.

Post-colonial Kenya is an excellent case study in the myriad difficulties that multi-ethnic states face during the processes of development and democratization. History, political science, and ethnicity have all played key roles in the process of Kenya's development into modern state. Kenya has for a long time been viewed as an Island of peace in the East African region and in indeed the whole of Africa. No one ever thought that a country that has been peaceful for the last 40 years would ever get to war with itself. On 29th, December 2007, Kenyans went for the general election and after the announcement of the disputed election outcome; Kenya went into war with itself, leaving about 1,200 people dead and over 300,000 internally displaced. It took the concerted effort of the International community and the African Union, to have the two major political protagonists, Hon. Mwai Kibaki and Hon. Raila Odinga, under the Chairmanship of the former United Nations Secretary, Koffi Annan to agree to a negotiated and mandated political settlement, through their various appointed negotiators. Before dust had settled in Africa over the Kenya crisis, an election crisis looms in Zimbabwe. The incumbent Robert Mugabe is still in power and the leader of the Movement of Democratic Change (MDC) Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai claims he won the general election held on 29th March 2008. He has met Botswana's President Seretse Ian Khama and traveled to other four South African countries to meet the head of states to seek for assistance in putting pressure on Mugabe to accept the verdict of the people of Zimbabwe. "The issues are to help Zimbabweans realise or resolve their crisis. We have done our bit and Mugabe was defeated," Mr. Chamisa the spokesman of the Movement of Democratic Change (MDC) said. The MDC Secretary-General Tendai Biti said regional leaders should push for Mugabe's resignation at the South African Development Community (SADC) summit in April, 2008. But the country plunged deeper into a political quagmire on 3rd May 2009 when the

Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) announced the results of the March election and the leader for the Movement of Democratic Change (MDC), Tsvangirai rejected them, and saying he will not participate for the second round of voting set 21 days from the day of announcement. Unlike the Kenyan story, Zimbabwe is trying to resolve its conflict through dialogue, discussion and mounting pressure on the incumbent to give in, although the issue is yet to be resolved.

There is no doubt that most countries in Africa and the rest of the world experienced some form of conflicts. Most fundamentally, therefore, conflict is correlative to power. Power, simply, is the capability to produce effects; conflict is the process of powers meeting and balancing. To understand power, there is need to comprehend conflicts, and this involves untangling the powers involved. According to Heracleitus, conflict is universal. Information and knowledge are key in resolving conflicts.

One of the most common ways to define information is to describe it as one or more statements or facts that are received by a person and may add value in making might decision. For example, Monster (1999) describes information as “news or facts about something,” *Random House College Dictionary* describes information, as “knowledge communicated or received concerning a particular fact or circumstance; news.” Monster’s definition is consistent with the common notions that information is that which reduces uncertainty to recipient.

This approach to information, leads one to emphasize the meaning and use of message, for example: “what the message is about?” and “what is known already”. When the message is essentially random, or the message is of no value to the recipient, such as a repeated message previously received and understood, it is colloquially said that no information was received and no information was transmitted, hence no knowledge was created.

Apparently, without any knowledge created, it leads to misinterpretation of the said information and the actors are likely to get into chaos. For instance, during the 29th December 2007 general election in Kenya, when the Electoral Commission of Kenya announced that Mwai Kibaki won, the information or message was never received well, it led to total chaos which

resulted to ethnic conflict. It is only when information has been received, analysed, digested and creates knowledge; this is when it will be said to be adding value.

Conflicts defined

The freedictionary.com defines knowledge as familiarity, awareness, or understanding gained through experience or study. According to the Webster Dictionary, knowledge is the sum of what is known: the body of truth, information, and principles acquired by humankind hence information is used to create knowledge.

Conflict may be defined as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals. In other words, a conflict is a state of disharmony between incompatible or antithetical persons, ideas, or interests. When conflicts escalate, they lead to non-productive results but if they are contained and resolved they lead to quality final products. Conflict result because of misinformation between people in regard to their needs, ideas, beliefs, goals or values.

Conflict resolution is aimed at alleviating or eliminating discord through conciliation, the resolution of conflicts does not aim at the elimination of conflict, and even less at the elimination of opposing interests. It's aim is the search for such forms of conflict behaviour which allow a non-violent handling of opposing news in an orderly, pre-arranged process, the course and result of which will be accepted by all parties involved (Nicholson 1992). According to SchellInberg (1999), conflict resolution may broadly be conceived as any marked reduction in social conflict. But more specifically, it is a marked reduction in social conflict as a result of a conscious settlement issues in dispute. It involves conscious settlement of issues between parties.

The conflict and Conflict actors

Conflicts are associated with what is undesirable while actors refer to those engaged in it or being affected by it. Actors differ in their goals and interest, their positions goals, capacities to realize their interests and relationships with other actors. Particular attention should be paid to spoilers, which are a specific group with particular interest in the maintenance of negative status quo. If not adequately addressed within the framework of preventive strategies, they may become obstacles to peace initiatives.

Like in most novels, the reality is that plots without conflict result in very poor novels, short stories, and movies. They are in all respects, unreadable and unwatchable. There is just no reason to bother with such storylines. They're boring. In the Art of Writing, the very nature of a plot is conflict, climax (of the conflict) and resolution. No conflict, no plot, no interest. Therefore, the conflict in itself is not bad; it is how the actors handle the conflict.

Factors that contribute to conflict

Conflict causes can be defined as those factors that contribute to people grievances, and can be further described as:

- **Structural causes:** pervasive factors that have become built into the policies, structures and fabric of a society and may create the pre-conditions for violent conflict, for example, illegitimate government, lack of political participation, lack of equal economic and social opportunities, inequitable access to natural resources, poor governance.
- **Proximate:** causes factors contributing to a climate conducive to violent conflict or its further escalation, sometimes apparently symptomatic of a deeper problem, e.g. uncontrolled security sector, light weapons proliferation, human rights abuses, and destabilizing role of neighboring countries.
- **Triggers:** single key acts, events, or their anticipation that will set off or escalate violent conflict. For instance, elections (as was the case in Kenya on 29th December 2007), arrest / assassination of key leader or political figure, drought, sudden collapse of local currency, military coup, rapid change in unemployment, flood, increased price/scarcity of basic commodities, etc.

Conflicts are thus multi-dimensional and multi-casual phenomena; there is no single cause for conflict.

Conflict types

Conflicts arise for a myriad of reasons that are often a combination



of politics, economics, and differing cultural identities.

i) Social Conflicts

Social conflict may be understood as the opposition between individuals and groups on the basis of competing interests, differing identities or attitudes. It is a conflict between or among individuals, or between or among groups. Violence may not be involved, although violence is one way a group or individuals react when under a threat.

Social conflict is not limited to hostile or antagonistic opposition; it is not wholly a clash of coercive powers as often is implied, but of any opposing social powers. Thus, the conflict of intellectual powers may be manifested through debating, arguing, or disputing; of bargaining powers through haggling, negotiating, dickering, bartering, or exchanging; of authoritative powers through adjudicating, appealing, or documenting; of altruistic powers through accommodating, obliging, or benefiting. (Cosser, 1956, p. 37). The things we love, as well as those we despise, are inexorably shaped by social conflict.

ii) Economic conflicts

This typically is a where one person or group dominating another. Dominance can come in many forms and usually involves conflict at some point. Differences between the “haves” and “have not” has often created conflict on individual and in society at large.

Economic advantages can create greed in the party that has it and jealousy in the party that does not. From the hoarding of grain in Neolithic times to modern nations warring over oil, desire and envy have been at the center of conflicts from the very beginning of the human story. For example in Kenya, poverty and the lack of education remain the biggest threats to political and social stability, economic prosperity, and environmental safety.

iii) Resources scarcity

Sometimes resource scarcity, relating to high population growth, the legacies of land distribution, uneven food distribution, and lack of

access to fresh water are all potential source of conflict. Conversely, a plethora of national resources can also increase the probability and duration of violent conflicts as some actors, like it is the case in the Kenyan society, seek to enrich themselves through illicit means, e.g. those engaged in massive looting of the treasury through business deals, embezzlement of public funds, and wanton destruction of natural resources like cutting down trees for timber and charcoal.

This tells us that conflicts can manifest themselves in many ways, but whichever shape they take, they remain conflicts.

Impacts and potential consequences of the conflict

People need to know what it takes to get involved in a conflict. With available information, people will weigh the outcome before getting involved. People need to know the consequences prior to engaging in a conflict, thinking about anticipated consequences from engaging in the conflict is wise. For example, there may be a risk for peoples' safety, a risk for life and loss, with information on potential consequences, people can then determine whether they are prepared for consequences of engaging in the conflict. It's healthy to think through consequences.

What consequences if you avoid conflict? To avoid losing a sense of self, there are times when you must engage in conflict. Most people have core values, beliefs, ideas or morals. Productively engaging in a conflict is always valuable. Most people are willing and interested in resolving their conflicts; they just need the right information, appropriate skills set and opportunities. Without proper information or lack of any, people want to avoid conflict, hoping it will go away or not wanting to make a "big deal out of nothing". Research and personal experiences show us that, when we avoid conflict, the conflict actually escalates and our thoughts and feelings become more negative.

Use of reliable and right information creates conflict self-awareness, hence being able to effectively resolve and manage the conflicts and therefore social interactive ness. Furthermore by discussing issues that are seemed to be a threat, societies/people can establish an expected protocol to be followed by team members, opinion leaders or stakeholders when in conflict.

Physiologically people respond to conflict in two ways- “setting a way from the conflict” or “taking in anyone who comes our way”, the later seems to be the options to most African communities when faced with a conflict.

Typically, response to conflict takes the following five modes.

i. Competing:

It involves high assertiveness and low cooperation.

ii. Avoiding:

Involves low assertive & low cooperation. Many a time’s people will avoid conflicts out of fear of engaging in a conflict because they do not have confidence in their conflict management skills, no right information or any knowledge.

iii. Accommodating:

This mode is low assertiveness and high cooperation. This mode can be problematic though.

iv. Compromising:

Its moderate assertiveness, a moderate cooperation. Compromise involves “Saving up more than you want”, others see compromise as both parties winning.

v. Collaborating:

Involves high assertiveness and high cooperation. This solution is defined as a creative solution to the conflict that would not have been generated by a single individual. With such a positive outcome for collaboration, save people will profess that the collaboration mode is always the best conflict mode to use. Although it takes a great deal of time and energy.

Sources of information use in conflict resolution

People always seek for information to make the right decision in purchase of a product or service. . Information helps to make right decision and choices and communicate more effectively. This notwithstanding, there is a lot of information out there, not all of which is trustworthy because of information overload.

The quantity of information available is so enormous that people cannot know everything about a subject or an issue. Information can come from

virtually anywhere - personal experiences, books, articles, expert opinions, encyclopedias, the web, depending on the information need of the user. You may be overwhelmed with too much information or too little. When information comes from politicians who often are good in “selling” propaganda, then the society gets confused on what or who to believe.

Evaluating sources of information is therefore an important skill the society needs at all the time. People have to decide where to look, what clues to search for, and what to accept. People should weigh especially what politicians say. Like the popular phrase in Kenyan politics “our tribe is being finished” when a politician is caught at the wrong side of the law or “it is our time to eat the national cake” when your man has been appointed into public office. In short, society and individuals have to sift and make right decisions at all times accurate, timely, pieces of information are essential.

The society needs to be educated and enlighten that not all information is good for them. The Following 5 W questions are important to ponder about (Jacobson and Cohen, Lesley University):

Who is responsible for publishing the information provided by the source? What are the credentials and affiliation or sponsorship of any named individuals or organizations? How objective, reliable, and authoritative are they? Is the author or contact people listed with addresses, politicians are not known to give rhetoric information.

What can be said about the content, context, style, structure, completeness and accuracy of the information provided by the source? Are any conclusions offered? If so, based on what evidence and supported by what primary and secondary documentation? What is implied by the content? Are diverse perspectives represented? Is the content relevant to your information needs?

When was the information provided by the source published? If current it can be used to make a decision, but if outdated, one needs to be careful before consuming the information. Is the information provided by the source in its original form or has it been revised? Politicians are known to twist the information to fit the political moments. Is this information timely and is it updated regularly?

Where else can the information provided by the source be found? Is this information authentic? Is this information unique or has it been copied?

Why was the information provided by the source published? What are the perspectives, opinions, assumptions and biases of whoever is responsible for this information? Is anything being sold? Who is the intended audience?

Systems and channels that provide information

Good communication channels between opposing parties, demobilization process, reform programmes, civil society commitment to peace, anti-discrimination policies, are some of the factors that can contribute to peace. When information is packaged or used for understanding or doing something, it is known as knowledge. Once information has been captured, sifted and packaged then knowledge is said to be created.

Using information in conflict resolution

The desire to eradicate conflict, the hope for harmony and universal cooperation, is the wish for a frozen, unchanging world with all relationships. Therefore having obtained the right information and managed the knowledge, it is now possible to try and resolve a conflict.

The main approaches to conflict resolution include:

- i) Coercion or forcing parties in conflict to a particular conclusion
- ii) Negotiation, mediation and bargaining, or involving the parties in a process of discussion that seeks to bring them into voluntary agreement
- iii) Adjudication, or using the power of state and its legal system to provide an authoritative conclusion\Mediation or using a third party to help in conflict come to a mutually satisfactory agreement
- iv) Arbitration or using a third party to decide through prior to mutual consent, the issues in dispute.

Lederach (1997) uses the term “conflict transformation” to describe his approach to peace building. This approach focuses on the dialectic nature of conflict. It sees conflict as caused by as well as causing changes in relationships. In order to build peace, negative or destructive interaction

patterns need to be transformed into positive or constructive relationships and interactions. This of course needs right information to allow create a conducive environment, this also occurs through personal and systemic change that encourages and allows the parties to pursue truth, justice, and mercy simultaneously with peace, Lederach also explains that development of empowerment and mutual recognition, should be interdependence with, justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

This requires concerted effort by all the actors need the right information to allow them engage in constructive discourse. For instance in Kenyan politics, politicians have perfected the ability to manipulate the population through the instrumental use of ethnicity, religion, history and imaginary myths to support their goals and selfish interests, this, in most cases builds suspicion among the different groups and hence, ingredient for chaos and conflicts. It therefore means that, if the communities have access to the right information, no conflicts will erupt.

Managing or resolving a conflict is no easy task, even when one has access to massive information. Being a good neighbor is not always easy. People within society are sometimes difficult to deal with. The needs and wants within society are constantly changing. These are among the many challenges human beings face each day as they struggle to survive. But instead of just surviving, what if the actors could turn those challenges into opportunities. This is not always possible when faced with conflicting pieces of information. In Kenya, societies are known to instill fear on each other, for example by circulating negative leaflets and engaging in rumor mongering. It is only well intended information that will help society understand the underlying issues and knows how to avoid and, deal with them or even manage them.

Knowledge management in a conflict resolution

Management strategies in conflict resolution are important in any forward thinking society. When there is a conflict in the society, the leaders will have to devise several strategies in order to resolve them. When there is no more money in the treasury of any government, for instance, the Finance Minister will try to raise cash by selling and/or privatizing some government parastatals or selling shares in government owned corporations like was

the case in Kenya, sale of the Safaricom shares in May 2008. The Minister may also decide to borrow money from the domestic market, banks or look for investors and attract them to invest in the county.

In the business world, when sales are beginning to plummet, then the sales manager must do something about it. Negative cash means one is about to go out of business. Sales strategies will be implemented to resolve the conflict in the sales figures. As a sales manager, one will have to come up with sales strategies such as increasing promotions or increasing the discounts on the products. (Executive Coach Program).

Indeed, no society, or business can blossom without being able to use any knowledge gained to resolve any conflict. Use of knowledge in conflict resolution, is a daily occurrence, for instance, during the recent mediation and conflict resolution in Kenya by the former Secretary of the United Nations, Koffi Annan, a lot of information was generated, exchanged, processed analyzed and used. This, as a matter of fact did generate a lot of working knowledge that can be used later to aid in similar a conflicts. But more importantly, it needs a well laid down strategy to manage this knowledge so that it will be available later for conflict resolution.

Conclusion

It is without doubt that our societies are largely affected by conflict. Therefore, the first approach to ethnic conflict should be *preventative diplomacy*, as described by David Carment and Frank Harvey as, “Conflict prevention [that] consists of governmental or non-governmental actions, policies and institutions that are taken deliberately to keep particular states or organized groups within them from threatening or using organized violence...”³

This paper has illustrated the nature of ethnic conflict and sited few examples in some few countries and in particular Kenya. It needs not to over emphasize the importance of a stable Kenya to balance other war

³ David Carment and Frank Harvey, “Deterrence Strategies and Conflict Prevention: States versus Institutions,”(Ch. 16) in *Early Warning and Early Response* by Susanne Schmeidl and Howard Adelman (eds.)

torn areas in Central and East Africa. Although the scale of conflicts in Kenya have been small when compared to surrounding countries, the recent ethnic violence that escalated after the general elections of 29th December 2007, is still a real threat to Kenya's security and her neighbors. The paper also looked briefly on how conflicts are manifested and how information and knowledge can be used to resolve conflicts. It is clear from this discussion that conflicts are indeed universal, and it affects any society.

It is recommended that:

- Governments should bring together all communities to consolidate power
- Kenyans need to experience the benefits of a functioning true democracy by letting the masses freely allowed to disagree and show dissatisfaction when true democracy is compromised.
- Establish real power-sharing through vote-pooling or consociationalism⁴
- Improve the economy, thus creating more jobs and stability
- Economic insecurity forces people to turn to their ethnic groups for support and this exacerbates ethnic differences.
- Eradicate corruption, the Kenya Anti-corruption Commission (KACC) should do more than it is doing now.
- Settle the land dispute in the Rift Valley. The agenda number two in the National and Reconciliation Accord was to resettle the internally displaced people, the government of the grand-coalition should move swiftly to have this agenda implemented to book.

Kenya's traditional prosperity has eroded away over the last 15 years due to "ethnic cleansing," failed economic policies, and the difficulties of democratizing a multiethnic state.

According to Osamba (1991), these factors have led to building antagonism between Kenya's ethnic communities, which is exacerbated by elections. The large-scale conflicts in Sudan, Somalia, Rwanda, and the DRC overshadow the ethnic clashes in Kenya, but this should not lull the world into thinking that Kenya is exempt from the possibilities of large-

⁴ Donald A. Lake and David Rothchild, p. 149.

scale conflict, including war and genocide. Kenya currently shows all the symptoms of a volatile state on the verge of ethnic violence, so the international community should continue to closely monitor events and use preventative diplomacy.

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“The Ugly face of Society”: The role of the Library

ESTHER K. OBACHI

Abstract

The struggle to maximize one’s benefits comes almost naturally to humanity. This makes it a major source of the inherent conflicts among groups and individuals in society. Social conflicts are known to be both beneficial and harmful to humanity. Conflict theorists who were unable to stay away from the structural-functionalists argue that human beings cannot stay without both conflicts and consensus and that there cannot be conflict without having prior consensus. This dialectical concept, which Dahrendorf calls “the ugly face of society” cannot be avoided but can be reduced to a non-injurious level.

Conflicts between different ethnic groups may not necessarily be as a result of resource sharing but as a means of assertion and recognition. Information is a good means of understanding each other’s behavior. Well stocked and managed libraries and information centers in multi-ethnic environments can be used to suppress conflicts by disseminating information and knowledge on cultural, political, religious and social beliefs of their users, thereby eliminating stigma and stereotyping of other ethnic communities. The paper outlines the causes of human conflicts, benefits, damages and how libraries and information centers can dissolve tension that may result to violent conflicts and how they can cushion damages caused by conflicts. It concludes that violent conflicts can be avoided through the use of information availed by means of properly stocked and managed multicultural libraries and information centers

Introduction

In any social structure conflicts will always prevail. It is conflicts that produce social change and help society to come up with innovations. Conflicts mainly occur due to the struggle for resources. A continual struggle

exists between all different aspects of any particular society. These struggles may not necessarily be of physical violence but may underlie struggle for each group or individual within a society to maximize its own benefits (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conflict_theory (21/05/2008)).

Theorists such as the Marxists are best known for their class conflict theory. To them, society is divided into two groups of people: the have and the have-nots. Marxists believe that there are continuous conflicts between these two groups as the have-nots strive to get what the haves have while those who have continue to protect what they have. For that reason, they see “whatever order there is in society as stemming from the coercion of some members by those at the top” (Ritzer, 1992: 263). It is often assumed that the people in subordinate positions often start conflicts while the dominant group always seeks to maintain the status quo.

Too, criminologists argue that the fundamental causes of crime are the social and economic forces operating within society. The criminal justice system and criminal law are thought to be operating on behalf of the rich and powerful social elites, whose policies are aimed at controlling the poor. The focus is on separating the powerful from the have-nots who would steal from others and protecting themselves from physical attacks. In the process, the legal rights of the poor folks are likely to be ignored. The middle class is also co-opted. They side with the elites rather than the poor, thinking they might themselves rise to the top by supporting the status quo.

On the other hand, the structural functionalists argue that society is held together by social values and norms. Norms are the rules of behavior that reflect or embody a culture’s values (Giddens, 2001: 22). According to them, society is held together at all times by voluntary cooperation (cohesion) brought by the two concepts. Both the structural functionalist and conflict theorists are right in their arguments, as society cannot exist without both conflict and consensus. Neither can we have conflict without having prior consensus (Ritzer, 1992: 263). Nonetheless, looking at society realistically, it can be seen that conflict and consensus are dialectical and can never be divorced from each other.

Causes of conflicts

There are numerous sources of the inherent social conflicts in society;

the main one being the struggle for resources. The others are egocentrism, xenocentrism, ethnocentrism, bigotry, assertion, and struggle for recognition, ignorance and pride. Social conflicts can also be caused by fear, which is a domino effect of ignorance, prejudice, and stereotype. It is argued that “any factor that creates dissatisfaction can increase conflict among people” (Donelson, 1999: 238).

The question is: do ethnic conflicts occur between different ethnic groups just because they are different or because they are fighting for something? Could it be that each one of them fears the other for their differences? Or could it be that they are ignorant of each other’s potential and would just need to size themselves up?

An analysis of the above causes of social conflicts point out that serious conflict can only occur when the protagonists are not culturally politically, socially and economically compatible. These conflicts can only be solved through either coercion or cohesion. Cohesion often loses out especially in a diverse populace due to the heterogeneity of the community. This leaves room for coercion, which is often power relation supremacy. The end result of this supremacy is assimilation and implicit conflict, which may erupt at any time.

The Kenyan Scenario

Kenya has a population of (35,112, 181) thirty five million, one hundred and twelve thousand, and one hundred and eighty one (KNBS, 2008). It has over 40 ethnic communities¹ with the same number of languages. Each community occupies its own specific geographical boundary, which was the basis of drawing political and administrative boundaries since independence. Each community has its own language, socialization process and cultural identity unique to itself. Therefore, the over 40 different languages define the different ethnic communities. The Swahili language, which is the National language is appreciated by all and used throughout

¹ *An ethnic community is a human population whose members identify with each other, usually on the basis of a presumed common genealogy or ancestry. Recognition by others as a separate ethnic group, and a specific name for the group, also help define it. Ethnic groups are also usually united by certain common cultural, behavioral, linguistic and ritualistic or religious traits*

the country together with the other individual mother tongues. However, the elite of the society who mainly live in urban centers speak English, which is the official language.

Due to the increase in population and other economic factors, some ethnic communities have been forced to migrate from their indigenous dwellings to seek for new farming space for sustainability. Others have moved to cities and urban centers to look for jobs. This has led to the blending of different communities in some areas.

Immigration

Immigration is a natural activity for both animals and human beings. Human beings immigrate mainly because of the search for resources. Kenyans migrate from their original homes in search for jobs and new settlement places. This is mainly due to overpopulation in some areas. Most of those who immigrate are often the proactive ones. This means that they are visionary and more industrious than the ones who remain behind. At their destination, the immigrants tend to outshine the host community in development activities. Consequently, they economically prosper faster than their indigenous host counterparts. This raises tension and animosity among the indigenous community members who end up feeling jealousy. Because of their economic power, the immigrants then start to entrench and assert themselves within the community to the disappointment of the locals. This leads to competition which in turn leads to social conflicts.

It is assumed that as a matter of courtesy, the immigrants should adapt to the new community's culture as soon as possible. Adapting their culture entails learning the host community's language and accepting their norms and values. This takes some time as they try to socialize with them. If they fully accept to adapt the hosts' culture, then it is likely that they will get assimilated. If this does not happen, then they are not fully accepted by the indigenous community members (Thompson & Priestley, 1996). This will lead to some conflicts and alienation by the hosts.

Integration

Integration is a mutual understanding between the hosts and the immigrants. It involves the immigrant group accepting that they are differently

socialized but they are willing to try and fit into the hosts’ system. In this case the hosts will not be hostile to them.

Both assimilation and integration are a social structuralism view of society which naturally leads to consensus. However, the conflict theorists argue that the rich will always have their way by migrating to new places and coercing the hosts into accepting their way of living. This leads to tension and animosity between the hosts and the immigrants. The disorganization theory portrays immigration as a social process that has negative implications for the structural composition of the neighborhoods into which immigrants settle. It argues that immigration undermines a community’s ability to exercise effective social control over its residents, which leads to higher levels of crime (Jacob, 2005). This can be attributed to none adherence to the values and norms of the community by the immigrant due to ignorance of the hosts’ culture. For example, “a Maasai milkman would not adulterate his milk before selling it because he believes that his cows will die if he did it”. They believe that this kind of offensive behavior will in turn bring ruin and destruction to their livestock, which is their source of livelihood and economic power. Yet, non-pastoralists would do that without feeling guilty. So if these non-pastoralists migrated to Maasai land, then they would be committing a crime which the Maasai would not be able to control.

Therefore, immigrants have an obligation to learn the norms and values of their host communities for ease of integration. This is where libraries come in, as they are a source of information and knowledge that everyone needs to foster peace and harmony in the world. “Libraries should become a driving force towards peace” (Kim, 2006)

The Library in a multi-ethnic environment

A library is “a building in which collections of books, tapes, newspapers, etc. are kept for people to read, study or borrow” (Oxford Dictionary, 2000). Libraries can be private or public. Public libraries are meant to serve the general public by providing all kinds of information materials for free while private libraries are meant to serve a specific group of people.

Libraries are tailored to suit the users. For example, children’s libraries are often decorated and stocked with children’s literature. They have

furniture that is suitable for children. The shelves are short and too, to the children's seats and tables. The management of children's libraries knows that the library catalogue may not be of great benefit to the children but to the library managers. Likewise, libraries that serve multi-ethnic communities should try to cater for all users by stocking information that is relevant to all ethnic communities within that particular environment. Even the library furniture ought to reflect the multi-ethnicity of the community.

A successful multi-ethnic library would need to stock information materials from each and every ethnic group within the environs that it serves. It is advisable for the librarian to authenticate the information materials, which reflect on the cultures of the different communities. This is because some authors may give distorted information about some ethnic groups which will lead to misinformation.

Some library users may be illiterate or low education and may possibly only be comfortable in using audio visual materials. Therefore, the librarian is advised to stock information materials in all formats so as to gratify all users.

Marginalized communities have a propensity to have very few published information materials in their languages. Even their cultures are threatened with extinction as they get assimilated by the bigger and more powerful communities. Therefore, it is wise for the librarian to go out of his/her way to source for these information materials or encourage the few people from these communities who use the library to create content in the same.

Creating information that befits different ethnic communities can be done in an orderly and less stressful way if the librarian organizes activities that target these communities. Educative cultural talks can be captured in audiovisual formats for later utilization. The librarian can also liaise with publishers for publications in these languages. The librarian can liaise with other interested partners like UNESCO² to organize for cultural content creation programs that can assist the marginalized groups publish literature in their languages. This can include the different farming systems by each ethnic group and the diverse indigenous knowledge from all the communities that use the library.

² United Nations Educational , Scientific and Cultural Organization

Managing a multi-ethnic library

A multi-ethnic library is like any other public library. The only difference is that it takes into account and appreciates the diverse users’ cultures and stocks more literature in the users’ languages. It also gives a personal touch to the different library clientele making them feel useful to the library. A multi-ethnic library integrates every user into its system. It caters for everyone culturally, socially and politically. The library usually has something for everyone regardless of gender, age, literacy level, political affiliation or culture. The management of the library is in such a way that users would feel so attached to it due to the complementing roles they play.

A multi-ethnic library’s opening hours should cater for the working and non working class, the school going children, the housewives and the farmers. This means that their opening hours should stretch into late in the evening and weekends. The librarian can organize talk shows from each ethnic community. The talk shows should focus on educating the others about their cultures. Knowing other people’s cultures does not necessarily mean that one will appreciate them. It is only after one has understood, analyzed, synthesized and evaluated them that he/she can appreciate them. This way, one can comprehensively explain why a certain ethnic group behaves the way it does.

Availing literature for all the ethnic communities in a specific social setting helps the library users to understand each other, which in turn clears the fears and bigotry that is created by ignorance. Cultural literature may need to be authenticated, synthesized and evaluated by the user before it can be of any value to him. Reading about other people’s cultures is not enough to make one adapt it. One needs to practice it and live in it. The literature must also be accompanied by activities in the concerned culture. This may be in a form of drama, life experience and talk shows. The library can organize for this.

The literature that is found in libraries contains information. Information must evolve into knowledge before it can benefit the user. “Knowledge is a pool of human experience, which can only be known through communicating and applying it in whatever form. ...It is a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, expert insight and grounded intuition that provides an environment and framework for

evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information” (Ikoja-Odongo, 2006: 196).

Marketing of a multi-ethnic library

It would be of no use if a multi-ethnic library stocked information by, for and from all ethnic communities within its users if it was not accessed. Therefore, the availability of these information materials must be communicated to the users and the entire community. This can be done through advertizing by using flyers, radio announcements, one on one messages and Barazas³. In Kenya, the FM Radio stations can do a great job in advertising these services. The librarian liaise with them for marketing of the library services

The librarian can organize for a Library Week in the community. The aim is to publicize the library stock and services to the community members. The librarian should make sure that the all community leaders participate in this activity. This can be followed by radio interviews in all radio stations and languages. Opinion leaders from each community can be used to do this. Authors of recent publications in each language can be invited to talk about their books and what inspired them to write them.

A Library Week can be sponsored by a market product brand name. In Kenya, there are many products that can sponsor this kind of activity. Popular brands like Safaricom, Celtel and Coca Cola can be more than willing to partner with the library to carry out the activities of the Library Week. Publishers may also be approached to sponsor the Library Week.

Challenges

A multi-ethnic library can be a great asset in a community especially in a developing country. The library can foster peace through the dissemination of information and knowledge in spite of many challenges. For instance, in Kenya, there is low literacy level and poor reading habits. Reading and libraries are associated with studies, schools and the elite in society. This is despite the introduction of free education at all levels except the University. Therefore, it would take a lot of work and patience by the librarian to change people’s perspectives on libraries and their services. There are

³ Community gathering

also very few publications especially from the minority and marginalized communities. This is due to low education associated with these communities. Therefore, the multi-ethnic library manager has to look for ways of creating content for these communities. This is the only way there can be equity in information resource dissemination.

Security and the fear of the dark by many female library users may limit them from accessing the library in the late evenings. The gender roles can also hinder female library users from fully utilizing the library facilities. Also, the Physical infrastructure like poor road networks and unreliable electric power supply can be a great hindrance to the success of a multi-ethnic library. Some ethnic conflicts are a social cultural construct form “cultural entertainment” for the groups concerned. It would be difficult for the library to deconstruct this cultural belief without talking to the groups themselves. This would take an unconventional library program to achieve.

Conclusion

Conflicts subside either through engaging in conflict resolution management strategies or the culprits just get fatigued. Conflicts that subside due to negotiations are often the best as both sides agree on how to deal with the offenders. At the end of the conflicts, the parties concerned agree to make changes to suit both parties. It is argued that the people who take a tit-for tat strategy are often tough but fair and cooperative since it is a reciprocity stand. When group members confront their problems and work toward a solution, conflicts become a valued resource rather than a problem that must be eliminated. (Forsyth, 1999: 257).

Libraries in multi-ethnic environments can foster peace by organizing multi-ethnic gatherings and talk shows that can shade light on cultural differences among the community members. A properly managed and well-stocked multi-ethnic library can bring unity in diversity through information materials that it disseminates to the users. The feeling of recognition and appreciation by the librarian because of the roles the different users play may make them feel important enough in the community. This boosts their self-worth and has become true among the marginalized communities.

Precisely, community that is enlightened about the others' culture can be accommodative and adaptive. Multi-ethnic libraries have the capacity to promote peace and cohesion through equitable knowledge dissemination amongst its diverse users.

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Information and Knowledge Management in Fostering Ethnic Cohesiveness

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Abstract

Knowledge management has in recent times become crucial in managing resources in the 21st century. With the introduction of new technologies and methods of governance, information and knowledge management is now considered as one of the key methods used in nurturing ethnic cohesiveness. In the twenty first century, information is viewed as a factor of production and profitability. Many communities in Kenya have used various methods to foster ethnic cohesiveness.

The government is usually called to solve various forms of divergence among ethnic groupings. Unfortunately and regrettably, the government and the communities in question have hardly considered information and knowledge as key factors in fostering ethnic cohesiveness. Before Kenya was industrialized there was barter trade in which many communities exchanged goods and services. This clearly shows that there were factors of production, both tangible and intangible that enabled these communities to live on regardless of their language barrier. In this regard there are many aspects of culture that can never be erased by new technology or the passage of time. This paper underscores the significance of information and knowledge management in fostering ethnic cohesiveness. It highlights the crucial role of information and knowledge management in enhancing inter-ethnic cooperation. However, information and knowledge management to be effective in this regards, goodwill and good governance from the established authority will be invaluable. Thus the paper enumerates ways in which communities can enhance information and knowledge management. The role of information professionals in capturing, organizing and disseminating information and knowledge is also discussed.

Territory is also the basis of the economic and political structures which are the essential units in the lives of different ethnic groups. It is said that majority of the thousands of ethnic groups in the world are identified with some territory which is not only their vital environment, but also their real or mythical land of origin, sometimes imbued with mythical meaning. Furthermore, social organization is the technical social term which refers to the complex web of institutions and social relations that provide consistency to an ethnic group over and beyond the personal identity.

Conflict resolution

Wikipedia (2005) defines conflict resolution as the process of attempting to resolve a dispute or a conflict. Successful conflict resolution occurs by listening to and providing opportunities to meet the needs of all parties, and to adequately address interests so that each party is satisfied with the outcome. Conflict Practitioners talk about finding the win-win outcome for parties involved, vs. the win-lose dynamic found in most conflicts. While ‘conflict resolution’ engages conflict once it has already started, ‘conflict prevention’ aims to end conflicts before they start or before they lead to verbal, physical, or legal fighting or violence.

Conflict itself has both positive and negative outcomes. Practitioners in the field of Conflict Resolution aim to find ways to promote the positive outcomes and minimize the negative outcomes among communities. Community, unlike society, is a consciously willed phenomenon. It is the outcome of a free commitment of a limited number of individuals to one another and to the group itself, because of a factor common to all. A common field of experience is potential community. Community building requires mutual trust, mutual self-revelation, mutual listening, mutual help, equality, personal freedom and creativity.

Ethnic conflict Management: A Kenya Experience

Mohamud (2006) observed that conflict in Kenya has caused tremendous harm to civilians particularly women and children and increased the numbers of internally displaced persons in the country. In areas where the conflicts prevail, development programmes have been disrupted or obstructed and resources redirected to less productive uses. There has been deterioration

in the quality of life, the weakening of political and economic institutions and the discouragement of investment. Mohamud further observes that not only have the prevailing conflicts occurred within Kenya's borders but some have spilled over borders lowering regional stability and the growth and prosperity of the region generally. In view of emerging trends globally on the need to make concerted and coordinated efforts to address peace and security issues such as terrorism for example, Kenya has established initiatives that seek to address conflict both domestically and regionally. In the past, the approach to conflict management and resolution was reactive and crisis driven which included the use of state security to quell violent uprisings. More recently, proactive measures are being undertaken by civil society to assist in ethnic conflict management.

An overview of existing processes, institutions and programmes that seek to manage and resolve conflict provides a useful platform from which to form an effective and efficient policy formulation and implementation process that is currently taking place in Kenya. The overview of existing conflict management practices in Kenya sheds light on the nation's ability or inability to manage instability generally and highlights the fact that existing policies, strategies and the institutions that implement them are inadequate to prevent, mitigate and manage conflict and build sustainable peace. Some existing interventions include;

The Formal Justice System

Adjudication and arbitration are currently the most predominant methods of conflict resolution in Kenya. Countries like Kenya, which was ruled by the British, had the English common law imposed on them. Little was done to retain certain African customs and, even then, under very stringent conditions.

To ensure that the law performs its role of conflict resolution, the western legal system laid great emphasis on courts. Courts were seen as the arbiters of disputes either between the citizen and the state and/or between citizens themselves. Courts are deciders of disputes authorized to involve socially –endorsed force to carry out officially recognized conflict resolution. Courts are very central to dispute resolution in the modern state. A glance at Kenya and the dispute resolution mechanisms that exist will clearly reveal

that the primary state sponsored institution for dispute resolution is courts. Courts by their very nature are highly formal.

Unfortunately, citizens are poorly informed about the requirements of the existing judicial system in Kenya. Perhaps even more important, the judicial structure-inherited from the British, does not accurately and adequately reflect Kenya's demographic dynamics, social values, and socio-political organization. These circumstances add to the burden of legal complications in the ever-increasing land and resource conflicts.

The common citizen's perception of the court is a highly technical and sophisticated place that one should avoid as much as possible. Indeed, most citizens would rather let their disputes go unresolved than resort to courts. It is partly due to this and also due to the disadvantages associated with courts, ranging from expense, technicalities, to delays, that there is now a discernible shift to alternative methods of dispute resolution. Such alternative methods include arbitration, negotiation and mediation. A court usually listens to both sides in the disputes and resolves the issue by delivering a judgment, which is then to be enforced. It usually declares a winner and a loser in the dispute before it. Disobeying a court's judgment leads to punishment. The rigid procedural structure of adjudication and its adversarial nature are viewed as unsatisfactory for the resolution of certain disputes. In traditional communities, there was not much benefit in the declaration of winners and losers. On the contrary, what was preferred was the amicable settlement of the dispute. In instances of conflicts involving communities, the formal justice system may have some deterrent impact through the criminal justice system but they are not always successful for a number of reasons relating to the nature of the conflict and the relationships between the parties involved civil courts offer some flexibility on solutions but remedies such as compensation have yet to be tailored to particular conflict situations and the social and cultural environments that they are embedded in.

The formal justice institutions have proved to be inadequate in responding not only to the outbreak of violence but in addressing the underlying causes and facilitating peace building and reconciliation of communities. The result has been in the growth of mistrust by communities of these structures and their rejection of their application, which further escalates instability in conflict situations.

Legislative Framework

Kenya is obligated under the international law regime to ensure the security of its citizens and protect and promote their human rights that ensure they achieve their full potential for human development. Regionally the African Union, NEPAD, IGAD and the EAC have established Peace and Security Initiatives whose mandates are to enhance the capacity of member states to address the scourge of conflicts by promoting collective security, durable peace and stability on the continent. The key characteristic of the initiatives has been an emphasis on early warning and coordinated response such as the in-state Conflict Early Warning Response Units (CEWERUs) and the National Focal Points on Small Arms and Light Weapons. Kenya has established two such institutions and hosts the secretariat of Regional Centre for Small Arms (RECSA). The challenge lies in ensuring coordination of the activities of the different agencies, the harmonization of national legislation with those of neighboring states to give effect to the collaborative and cooperative nature of the international agreements and the enactment of laws and development of related policies that implement these international treaties and agreements.

The regulatory regime at a national level for conflict management comprises of laws that establish formal adjudicatory processes that seek to administer justice in all civil and criminal matters, empower security forces and other administrative agencies to respond to crisis caused by conflicts. The relevant laws are contained in the Constitution through the Bill of rights and provisions relating to the administration of justice. Related provisions that impact on conflict situations and their impact are to be found in the Penal Code, Civil and Criminal Procedure codes, the Evidence Act, the Commission of Inquiry Act, the Magistrate Court Act and the Kadhi's Court Act. Sect oral laws such as the Agriculture Act, Forests Act, Water Act, Environmental Management and Coordination Act, the Wildlife (Conservation and Management) Act, laws relating to land, labor laws, the Local Authorities Act, the Chiefs Act, the Preservation of Public Security Act among others contain provisions that address conflict to the extent that conflict affects those sectors.

Traditional Justice Mechanisms

Conflict resolution and ethnic cohesion would be incomplete without making reference to the Gacaca Courts in Rwanda. The Gacaca courts were resorted to as an indigenous form of restorative justice. The principles and process of these courts was to mitigate the imperfections of the ICTR and the national courts and sought to punish and/or reintegrate the genocide suspects. Its restorative foundations required that suspects be tried and judged by neighbors in their community. Importantly, resorting to Gacaca as a necessary conflict resolution strategy was because it was locally driven, people-centered and people-owned, evoking the pre-colonial *Ubumwe bw' Abanyarwanda* (the unity of Rwandans).

Gacaca as the truth and reconciliation strategy: a case for traditional justice

Gacaca, as observed, is a people-driven authority in their search for truth, justice and social reconstruction, making the process a Rwandan people-driven renaissance in the aftermath of colonialism and the genocide. Consequently, there is a six step approach in the Gacaca's overall strategy. These steps constitute:

- the coming out with the truth among the stakeholders;
- the administration of justice;
- dispelling any perceptions of impunity;
- the collective ownership of the tragedy;
- reconciliation through the concept of intra-community
- Conflict mediation; and
- socio-economic and political development

In Kenya, there is increasing reliance on informal conflict management mechanisms, in part due to the society's inability to seek legal redress in Kenya's institutions of justice. An example of the infusion of traditional mechanisms in modern conflict management is the system of elders under the Land Disputes Tribunals Act, 1990. Under this Act, there is a requirement that all disputes relating to land be referred to appointed elders at the local level, whose decisions, on matters of fact is final. Although the system has its own imperfections, stemming from weaknesses in the statute in question, it has served to ease the pressure on courts of law and to provide disputants

with a cheap point of redress. Kenyan communities have varied traditional methods for conflict handling. The methods have complemented the government efforts in dealing with protracted violence in some parts of the country. In some situations, institutional structures built on these processes have had their declarations and resolutions enforced by the government for example the Modogashe Declaration in North Eastern Province. The methods vary from one conflict environment to the other. Some examples include the following:

Council of elders

The primary indigenous conflict resolution institution is the council of elders. Mburugu & Hussein (2002) conducted a study amongst the Turkana, Borana and Somali communities and established that the institution of the elders is very much in use even today but somewhat weakened as the elders are unable to enforce the punishment meted out. Ruto, Mohamud and Masinde (2004) in their study of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms amongst the pastoralists Pokot, Turkana, Marakwet and Samburu, obtained the same information. Most traditional societies had a council of elders, which was the premier institution charged with the responsibility of managing and resolving conflicts. The institution of elders was greatly respected. Elders were seen as trustworthy and knowledgeable people in the community affairs thus enabling them to make informed and rational decisions.

Role of information and knowledge in conflict resolution

While the two terms information and knowledge tend to be used interchangeably, slight but significant difference remains. There have been several discussions concerning conceptual distinctions among data, information, intelligence and knowledge. This simplified model shows that knowledge is a part of information but not all information can be knowledge.

The success of knowledge management in fostering ethnic cohesiveness depends on a network of institutions in the public and private sectors whose activities and actions motivate, create, access, assimilate, diffuse and use knowledge for productive activity and promotion of public welfare.

Several actors play major role in the creation, capturing, organizing and

dissemination of knowledge and information for conflict resolution. This may include research organizations that exist with mandate to facilitate research. Research in conflict resolution can be fostered by organizations such as the KNCHR. These institutions have the capability and machinery of getting an in-depth analysis of the socio-cultural background of the societies at conflict in order to get a better understanding for their peace building capacities.

Information professionals networking and partnerships

Networking in ethnic and conflict resolution involves identifying the persons and sources of information that are key to building databanks on knowledge in conflict resolutions. Information professionals can help in bringing together the key players in peace building to network, by providing the relevant information to the stakeholders. Using appropriate technologies such as ICTs can do the networking. This building of community networks will foster the flow of information and bring closer the stakeholders.

The stakeholders should be encouraged to bring people together to share and exchange ideas and information especially tacit knowledge that can become handy in conflict resolution.

The stakeholders in conflict resolution should build capacity through training. This will enable new ideas to be implemented with the sole purpose of enhancing conflict resolution. It equips the leaders of all the cadres with knowledge on how to handle intricate details on how to avert ethnic adversities. In order to have a free flow of information for social cohesiveness, information producing agencies, and community collaborations should be enabled in such a way that a free flow of information will be enhanced.

Information agencies have to network and put necessary structures in place to facilitate the aforementioned free flow of information. Todaro (2005) has suggested several methods through which partnerships can be forged.

Need for Collaborations

Collaborations are formed when there appears to be no one person or group responsible for the issue. Secondly collaborations are formed when

it doesn't seem possible to solve the problem or address the situation by just one group to the magnitude, lack of knowledge or amorphous nature of the issue.

Collaborations are also created when there is a high cost of solving the problem or addressing the issue and/or it is important to have a large number of people involved to educate and have a good buy-in to the process.

In this regard there are several key information generating agencies that can assist in developing an infrastructure through which information and knowledge management practices can be enhanced. This can be enhanced through information and knowledge management partnerships with various organizations as listed below.

Local information content on websites

Access to the Internet on the Internet is continuously increasing. This is being done by academic and research institutions, international organizations, the civil society, large and small business institutions, news agencies and media organizations. These groups should make a deliberate effort to generate more information on conflict resolution and avail it on the Internet.

Libraries Museums and Archives

These institutions are charged with the responsibility of acquiring, storing and disseminating information in various formats. These institutions should be better placed to generate information that covers ethnicity and conflict resolution. The tacit knowledge that exists in the institutions can be created and placed on institutional repositories for more access.

Non-Governmental Organizations

Both local and international non-governmental organizations operating in Africa produce quite a lot of information materials with large local content for public consumption. These organizations conduct research and work on projects whose end result is to disseminate information. The use of civil society in dissemination of information can greatly assist in developing content for ethnic cohesiveness. A good example of such is the INCORE database on the internet whose sole responsibility is to disseminate information that is geared towards conflict resolution.

Universities and research Institutions

Africa and in particular Kenya has a number of universities both private and public. The universities should provide funding to enhance development of information sources related to ethnic cohesiveness. African governments play a key role in generating information for ethnic cohesiveness. They have the ability of harnessing the growth of information in conflict resolution. Information generated by the government includes policies on conflict and other related statutes. The government is also better placed as it has the ability to influence decision making in all the cadres of the society.

News and Media Agencies

News agencies are currently one of the greatest sources of information related to ethnicity and ethnic cohesiveness. So far, Kenya has enjoyed a lot of freedom of press. This in turn has led to generation of information from various sectors of the society that has been vital in enhancing ethnic cohesion. For example, Kenya at the moment has a flourishing media industry; other print and electronic. There are many FM stations which provide variety of information for listeners from all walks of life. These are also vital instruments of generating local content relevant to information needs of communities.

Civil Society as Possible knowledge centre partners for ethnic cohesiveness

Information centers can work alongside civil society in generating, storing and disseminating information. There are a number of agencies that deal with conflict resolution as part and parcel of their daily activities. Key among these is the National Council of churches of Kenya (NCCCK) and the Kenya Human Rights Commission.

National council of churches of Kenya (NCCCK)

This organization was set up in 1918 and is an umbrella organization for the Kenya churches. This organization has investigated inter-communal violence, provided relief to victims of ethnic clashes and other programs associated with fostering ethnic cohesiveness. The organization runs a multifaceted NCCCK peace and rehabilitation project whose main is to assist in communal violence prevention through dialogue, and other intercultural activities.

Kenya Human Rights Commission

Kenya Human Rights Commission is a non-governmental organization that has provided legal hosting to various human rights groups. Some include the release political prisoners' pressure group RPP, the Legal Resources Foundation, Kenya Pastoralists program and other related bodies. Kenya Human rights was formed by United States of America in 1991 by Kenyan exiles and activists to specifically lobby for the respect of human rights and promotion of democratization, accountability and good governance in Kenya.

Process of applying information and knowledge management

The first step will be to map out the information flows for the process of processing and disseminating conflict management related information.

Clusters of responsibility in ethnic conflict resolution

Conflict resolution requires a lot of goodwill from the leaders from all levels. This requires the information they solicit for problem solving has to be useful and should have the capability of adding value in terms of building ethnic cohesiveness. A number of key people have to play their role in resolving ethnic conflicts through sharing of information and knowledge among communities. These include top, middle range and grassroots leadership.

The top leadership in the community comprises of persons with high visibility. They comprise of religious leaders, political and military leaders. Their approach to peace building and ethnic cohesiveness may focus on high-level negotiations-which emphasize on cease-fire and led by higher-powered mediators. This requires adequate information on issues leading to conflicts in order to arrive at the right decision.

The second group comprises of middle range leadership respected in sectors, Ethnic religious leaders/academics and intellectuals and humanitarian leaders. Their approaches to ethnic cohesion will be problem-solving workshops, training in conflict resolutions. Peace keeping commissions and insider partial teams is also a preserve of this group. This entails forums to disseminate information to bring warring communities together again.

Thirdly, are grassroots leadership, which may include local leaders, leaders of indigenous NGOs, community developers, local health officials and refugee camp officials. Their approaches to peace building may include local peace commissions, grassroots training, prejudice reduction and psychosocial work in postwar trauma.

Key Issues to be addressed by Information and knowledge management

Mohamud et al(2006) Have highlighted several policy related issues of conflict management. Information professionals can use these policy related issues and customize them in a way that they can benefit the indigenous people.

A. Economic Issues

1. *Limited marketing systems/opportunities*

The knowledge and information structures have to address the issues related to limited marketing systems and opportunities. At a global level, macro-economic reforms particularly since the advent of trade liberalization and opening up of markets in the late 1980 which saw the withdrawal of price controls and removal of subsidies on agricultural inputs has resulted in further marginalization of pastoralists and rural farming communities in Kenya. Instead competitive responses allowing market forces of supply and demand to flourish prevailed. This eliminated those institutions, regulations, subsidies, and taxes that acted as a wedge between producers, consumers and market signals. The end results of this phenomenon have been the widening of the gap between the haves and have not, with the resultant structural imbalances midwifing conflicts between different communities and individuals, reminiscence of Karl Max's stratified society.

2. *Gender inequalities in land ownership and access*

Gender factors influence resource ownership, stewardship, and access. This is complicated by socio-cultural factors, which raise gender concerns where disempowered groups such as women and youths are discriminated against in favour of men. This is true with regard to rights and access to land and land based resources. The consequence is the creation of inefficiencies in;



- (i) land and other resources allocation and
- (ii) in promoting rights to livelihoods, production and Social justice.
Thus information- centres have to address issues affecting gender within the community.

3. *Community-Driven Development*

In pursuing a community driven development approach the government would enhance communities' capacity for self-reliance. Initially, projects to be funded should be those directed towards poverty reduction, food security, conflict resolution and any other locally identified high priority needs. In all projects, part of the funds will be set aside for targeting the vulnerable and voiceless communities, particularly those in arid and semi-arid areas, the urban poor and the handicapped who, in the past, have been ignored and denied support because they lacked political muscle. Therefore community driven development information is vital in bringing different communities together for a common cause.

4. *Poverty Alleviation*

The most daunting challenges for Kenya today are poverty alleviation and job creation. Although economic growth is crucial, it does not always lead to sustainable development and poverty alleviation and in a society with gross inequality and tribal conflicts as in our case, growth alone is unlikely to benefit the marginalized section of our society. Mainstreaming of conflict management into development programmes will contribute to alleviating poverty in a way that is relevant to specific conflict situations.

Therefore in partnership with donor agencies and civil society, information-processing agencies have to endeavor to empower the community through different educative programs that will improve the society's well-being and increase the literacy levels.

5 *Inequitable Distribution of Resources*

Widening economic disparities based on regional or ethnic divisions have led to ethnic conflicts. The information provider society should play a crucial role in educating the communities about other sources of wealth.

6. *Increased Competition over Shared Resources*

Natural resource degradation and competition has resulted in deadly conflict particularly in Northern Kenya. Environmental scarcity leads to factors that fuel conflict such as population transfers, heightened sense of marginalization and ethnic tensions, deepening of poverty and the decline in agricultural production. Attendant to these factors is the lack of capacity of state institutions to respond to environmental scarcity, which results in focus being on survival rather than on innovative technologies that will respond to environmental crisis.

Through knowledge creation, libraries and related agencies can create awareness among different ethnic groups, about other existing sources of revenue. This can be made possible through enhancement of indigenous knowledge among the communities.

B. *Social Factors*

1. *Provision of Education to all*

Provision of universal primary education has been recognized as an important milestone to economic and social development. In particular it has been established that by providing primary education to women, a society is able to hasten its development. Despite its formal commitment, Kenya has not achieved any of the education goals it committed itself to achieve. The gains made in the past are getting eroded through high school dropouts' rates, with less than a half of those entering standard one completing standard eight. Adult education has long collapsed and many Kenyans have reverted to illiteracy. In conflict prone areas, increased enrollment rates will translate to more youth in schools, and by extension reduced conflict situations since the main perpetrators will be at schools. Information centres can definitely play a key role in fostering education for all.

2. *Failure of Existing Dispute Resolution Mechanisms*

Existing mechanisms of dispute resolution such as the courts have failed to provide effective administration of justice with respect to certain conflicts such as those that occur in ASALs. The non-recognition of traditional justice processes under law has resulted in there being no clear and comprehensive system of justice to resolve conflicts. This has resulted in

disputing parties relying on self-help mechanisms that lead to violence and degeneration of relations between parties and their communities.

It is high time that information professionals take advantage of this situation to promote information as a method of dispute resolution.

3. *Diminishing role of traditional institutions*

Closely related to the above issue is the fact that traditional institutions of resolving conflicts among many communities in Kenya and across the borders is fast fading as a result of marginalization by formal dispute resolution mechanisms and civilization. As such, elders are increasingly finding it difficult to prevent and manage conflicts partly because their actions are not anchored in any legal framework and also because they lack a mechanism to enforce their resolutions. However, the institution of elders' poses a potential in preventing and managing conflicts especially among pastoral communities provided it's strengthened and backed by legal and policy foundations. Information professionals should start disseminating more information on the role of traditional institutions as a key method for fostering ethnic cohesiveness.

C. Security Issues

1 *Cross Border Conflicts*

Kenya's porous borders have created an environment conducive to the outbreak of violence because of the ease of movement across borders. The lack of security personnel along the border has led to feelings of insecurity among local populations forcing them to take up arms to defend themselves against attacks. The available security personnel are ill equipped to deal with large-scale attacks and receive little back up support from military and other security personnel. The Kenya Police Reservists (KPRs) have little or no training yet is relied upon by government to provide state security. The situation has exacerbated the occurrence of cross border conflicts between neighboring communities. Competition over limited and dwindling natural resources is a further factor that triggers conflict across borders. Adequate security needs to be provided at the borders. Partnerships between Kenyan security forces as well as communities and those of neighboring states should be strengthened.

2. *Unstable Regional Context*

Neighboring States such as Somalia and Ethiopia and Uganda continue to experience conflicts that in turn affect security in Kenya. It is important that the government takes a proactive role in engaging regional and international actors in finding long term and sustainable solution to conflicts through collaboration and coordination of efforts between affected states. Initiatives such as CEWARN should be supported and strengthened through national policy. Thus if top leadership can acquire such data, then cohesive policies in informing communities will be realized.

D. Political Issues

1. *Weakly Developed Systems of Conflict Management*

Knowledge management and information professionals can take advantage of the weakly established systems of conflict management to develop new methods of conflict resolutions using information and communication theories.

2. *Lack of Popular Participation and Gender balance*

Information and knowledge centres should create a platform that popular participation and gender balance can be enhanced. This will lead to the whole community embracing ethnic cohesiveness.

3. *Political Exploitation of Ethnic Differences*

There is no official policy that addresses the problem of ethnicity in Kenya as a separate issue on its own rather than as causal factor to all manner of social wrongs such as corruption and conflict. Because of this glaring omission in state intervention, ethnic differences have been exploited by political leaders and other ‘elites’ to further their own political and economic interests. A largely unprepared population and uncoordinated civil and media society have provided a ripe environment for ethnic animosity to thrive unresolved or mitigated against. A holistic and comprehensive policy must of necessity address this political factor that underpins the very foundation of democracy and governance in Kenya. This is another key area that the information can play a crucial role by informing the public through media and their various institutions.

Role of Indigenous knowledge in fostering ethnic cohesiveness in the society

African countries are characterized by fragmentation of various aspects of their political economy, including their institutions of governance. Large segments of the rural populations, the overwhelming majority in most African countries, continue to adhere principally to traditional institutions. The post-colonial State, on the other hand, essentially emulates western institutions of governance, which are often at odds with traditional African cultural values and the region's contemporary socio-economic realities. Fragmentation of the institutions of governance, along with economic and social fragmentation, has contributed to Africa's crisis of state-building, governance, and economic development.

Knowledge exists among social beings, which interact in meaningful, purposeful and social ways with each other and with the environment. Knowledge is a basis for this interaction between a social being and another social being and between a social being and the biophysical environment.

Indigenous knowledge systems refer to the complex set of knowledge and technologies existing and developed around specific conditions of populations and communities indigenous to particular geographic area (Botha 2007). An indigenous knowledge system is a collection of societal systems embodied by the totality of products, skills technologies and processes that were developed and adapted by cohesive traditional societies and which they produced, applied, practiced and preserved over generations to ensure their long term persistence, sanity and progress within their natural, social and economic environment.

For ethnic cohesion to be realized through indigenous knowledge systems, indigenous knowledge should be identified social capital in the form living skills possessed by a community. For instance the Kamba community was known for long distance trade, the Kalenjin community is famous for their athletic prowess while Luo community is well known for fishing.

As information professionals implement knowledge management for conflict resolution, communities should be seen both a source of and owners of indigenous knowledge. The advantage that accrues when communities use indigenous knowledge is its ability to continuously generate new knowledge.

Indigenous knowledge is stored in people's memories and activities mostly tacitly and is expressed in stories, songs folklore, proverbs dances, myths, cultural values, beliefs, rituals, community laws local language and taxonomy. The importance of indigenous knowledge manifested by the following:

- Indigenous knowledge provides problem-solving strategies for communities, especially for the poor.
- Indigenous knowledge represents an important contribution to global development knowledge.
- Indigenous knowledge is at a risk of becoming extinct.
- Indigenous knowledge is relevant for the development process.
- Indigenous knowledge is an under-utilized resource in the development process.

Constraints in developing information sources and knowledge management strategies for ethnic cohesiveness

1. Networking will require adequate technological infrastructure to be in place. Kenya still lags behind in accessing the internet and other communication facilities.
2. There is the need to enhance training in ethic and conflict resolution, especially for professionals in the information processing and disseminating agencies. This will lead to ease in generating information that is vital for ethnic cohesiveness.
3. Development of these sources requires a lot of goodwill from both the government and the civil society. This can lead to the support of all the ventures that can lead to the generation of the vital information resources required for social cohesiveness.
4. There will also be the challenge of the information trickling down to the grassroots level. It all relies on the existence of a literate society, without which so many communication breakdowns can be experienced.
5. Information professionals require effective training in new trends in information handling and knowledge management practices. This will in turn lead to effective handling indigenous knowledge for communities.
6. Information training in institutions should consider new paradigm shifts. Conflict management is now a new area of study that should be accorded the necessary attention.

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Libraries as Agents of Good Governance: The Role of The University Library in promoting Democracy in Africa

FIDELIS KATONGA

Prologue

“It has been said that the struggle for democracy provides the best training in democracy. I would like to conclude by saying that, in my opinion, the continuing struggle for library values is the best way to keep libraries and democracy alive (Belfrage, 2000).”

“Promoting democracy and working with democracies is the challenge of our time. Whether in the global struggle against extremist ideologies, or any aspect of conflict resolution or efficacious economic development (Lagon, 2005).”

Abstract

Worldwide, democracy has come to be accepted as the best way to promoting human rights and dignity, citizen participation, freedom, justice and equality. For most of post independence Africa, democracy has come at a great price.

Amongst the university fraternity, the part that was actively involved in the clamour for democracy and good governance, and which sacrificed many of its members in jails, detention, torture chambers and for many, death itself, were students and teaching staff. Librarians were not heard of in this bloody struggle. African university libraries and librarianship in general have so far remained removed from the social, economic and political struggles of the local communities.

For most university libraries, their mission is invariably to provide information services to enable the university to achieve its missions of teaching/learning, and research. Few university libraries in Africa, if any, venture outside this mandate. But the university library cannot

remain silent and withdrawn from the social and political issues of the societies in which they operate. Libraries are amongst the institutions that embody and best symbolise democratic ideals, especially in the defence of intellectual freedoms, culture and free and open access to information for all.

Former US president, Franklin D. Roosevelt captured the role of the library in a democratic society when he said that libraries are directly involved in the conflict which divides our world because they are essential to the functioning of a democratic society, and second because the contemporary conflict touches upon the integrity of scholarship, freedom of the mind and the survival of culture. Libraries are the great tools of scholarship, the great repositories of culture and the great symbols of the freedom.

Libraries should be open to the whole society and be in a position to provide open and unbiased access to information. Unlike journalists, scholars, writers, and publishers, libraries are in a position to provide, balanced, open and unbiased access to society's achievements, dreams, ideas, aspirations, experiences, sufferings, challenges. Viewed from this angle, vibrant libraries are vital to the success of democratic societies.

University libraries can play an important role in democratisation and social cohesion by the promotion of a reading culture, promotion of freedom of expression, freedom of information, intellectual freedom, freedom of access to information, sensitization, and promotion of technological use and change. In order to achieve positive social cohesiveness, university librarians have a deep-rooted responsibility to work with university managers, community leaders and decision makers to achieve genuine democracy.

This paper therefore discusses the role of African university libraries as the cornerstones of democratic ideals and good governance, and calls for university libraries to be activists in information as well as the democratic, social and political struggles of the people.

Politics and Information

Politics is the art of governance. Good politics and governance require a positive engagement between the governors and the governed. This engagement requires that both parties be fully informed and able to understand their duties, responsibilities, powers, rights and limits. Without this there can be no positive participation in politics. One side will always have the upper hand, leaving the other, which will be swimming in ignorance, vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation. People need to be well informed about many issues such as government policy, the tax system, government expenditure, the constitution, justice system, the law of the land, the court system, among others.

Currently due to ignorance, ethnicity is a key consideration in voting in most African Countries. Many will vote in a candidate solely on the basis of common ethnic ties. They will defend and tolerate a corrupt leader simply because he comes from their region. Others are motivated by the fact that it is time for their tribe to “eat” and that if one of their own ascends to high office, it will be party time. Some elect anyone who gives them handouts (vote buying). This negates the principles of merit, equitable distribution of resources and good leadership. Others do not know the judicial system and end up on the wrong side of the law or being denied justice. Still, many are not aware of the government’s policy and direction on health, agriculture, environment etc. Due to ignorance, leaders get away with many misdeeds that would have serious consequences if committed in a more informed society.

Citizens need to be informed to such a level that they can effectively play their roles in attaining the common good. Equipping people with relevant information is the only way that democracy can truly survive and ensure democratic, social and economic development. A better-informed citizenry has seen political, social and economic development flourish in the west while ignorance has hampered many people in developing countries.

A citizenry that is well informed, aware and understands public policies is critical in attaining good governance in democratic societies. Such a citizenry is able to grasp the issues surrounding public decisions and is able to give input, get and process feedback and monitor progress through all

processes in order to hold leaders accountable. Governance can only be effective when information flows smoothly between the citizens (the governed) and the governors. As has been seen in developed societies, information and knowledge are the catalysts that will empower nations in their quest for development. The rationale here is that by giving information due attention, societal renaissance can be attained, the vision of a prosperous and peaceful human race (Fortuin, 2004).

What is Democracy?

According to the US Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs, the pillars of democracy are:

- a) Sovereignty of the people
- b) Government based upon consent of the governed
- c) Majority rule
- d) Minority rights
- e) Guarantee of basic human rights
- f) Free and fair elections
- g) Equality before the law
- h) Due process of law
- i) Constitutional limits on government
- j) Social, economic and political pluralism
- k) Values of tolerance, pragmatism, cooperation and compromise.

A state is defined as a democracy when it is built on the principles of universal and equal suffrage (Belfrage, 2000). It is the very aspects of democracy cited most frequently by its critics that give it resiliency. The processes of debate, dissent, and compromise that some point to as weaknesses are, in fact, democracy's underlying strength (U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs). Democratic practice has developed a system of checks and balances to ensure that political power is dispersed and decentralized. It is based on the belief that government's potential for abuse should be curbed. It is tolerance to ideas and beliefs different from ours (Rodriguez, 2002). In most developing countries, Kenya included, interest and the participation in political matters and political parties have declined drastically, which makes democracy weaker (Belfrage, 2000). There is a gap between the citizens and the elected representatives. The confidence in politicians has declined and a

survey made in 1997 by the Swedish government to test the credibility of different public institutions showed that the Parliament, the unions, the municipal council, and the political parties were extremely low (Government Commission on Swedish Democracy, 1997). This can be said of Kenya and most newly emerging democracies.

Democracy is flexible; it is influenced by free public access to information. It stands for equality and allows a relationship with public access to information to be strengthened, not only nationally but also internationally (Link, 2004).

Worldwide, democracy has come to be accepted as the best way of promoting human rights and dignity, citizen participation in their governance, freedom, justice and equality. It has been a growing and vital ethic of the modern world. For most of post independence Africa, democracy has come at a great price. In order to perpetuate themselves, most governments that took over from the colonial powers stifled democracy right from the start. Many independence leaders suspended the constitution; banned political parties and some declared themselves presidents for life. Despite sitting on many natural resources, corruption, poverty, ignorance, underdevelopment, poor governance, nepotism, diseases, tribalism etc took root. This has been the cause of bloody conflicts on the continent.

In the 1980s the clamour for democracy and social change was gathering steam in Africa. This came to a climax with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. The following 9 years witnessed bloody political convulsions in Africa that led to nascent multiparty democracy and competitive elections in a number of countries. People poured into the streets and demonstrated, demanding for democracy, transparency, accountability and free and fair elections. Independence came for some countries such as South Africa, Namibia, and Eritrea. Dictators such as Mobutu, Siad Barre, Mengistu Mariam, were routed.

In Benin, Ethiopia, Liberia and Mali tyrannies had either been ousted and or were under threat. In Francophone Africa, opposition activists organised national conferences during which leaders were held to account on claims of poor governance, corruption and repression. In Ghana and Nigeria, pro-democracy activists took their campaigns a notch higher.

Proponents of single -party rule like Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda Ivory Coast's Félix Houphouët-Boigny, and Kenya's Daniel arap Moi were on their way out or had already been replaced. Amongst the university fraternity, the part that was, and still remains actively involved in the clamour for democracy, and which sacrificed many of its members in jails, detention, torture chambers and for many, death itself, were students and teaching staff. Many times in Kenya, elite police units have clashed with students over political agitations, sometimes with fatalities. Librarians were not heard of in this bloody struggle. To this day, African university libraries and librarianship in general remain far removed from the social, economic and political struggles of the local communities. Thus, they remain alienated from the very people they seek to serve.

University Libraries

In the words of the Steadman Upham, President of University of Tullsa (University of Tulsa 2006), the library is the “literal and symbolic heart and soul of the university”. It is a combination of information collections, people, and facilities with a goal of assisting users in the process of transforming information into knowledge. As such its goal is to provide support to the educational endeavours of their respective institutions. For most university libraries, their mission is invariably to provide information services to enable the university to achieve its missions of teaching, learning, research and community endeavours.

University Libraries provide the information necessary for the extension and preservation of knowledge. Most universities achieve this by integrating the library and instruction on the use of the information resources in their curricula. Few university libraries in Africa, if any, venture outside this mandate. Due to scarcity of finances, most African university libraries operate on shoe string budgets. Some have even stopped buying information materials and are only allocated funds for staff salaries.

But the university library cannot remain silent and withdrawn from the social and political issues of the societies in which they operate. Libraries are amongst the institutions that embody and best symbolise democratic ideals, especially in the defence of intellectual freedoms, culture and free and open access to information for all. The main goals of university libraries are to support education and research, but they cannot abdicate their role

as a place where different social policies, theories and ideologies meet (Rodriguez, 2002).

Former US president, Franklin D. Roosevelt captured the role of the library in a democratic society when he said that libraries are directly involved in the conflict that divides our world because they are essential to the functioning of a democratic society. Furthermore, the contemporary conflict touches upon the integrity of scholarship, freedom of the mind and the survival of culture. Libraries are the great tools of scholarship, the great repositories of culture and the great symbols of the freedom of the mind.

According to link (2004) descriptions of libraries include:

- depository of knowledge
- repository of research and invention
- armoury of opinion,
- a vault for fact-finders
- treasure of theory and doctrine
- a place where different schools of thinking can meet each other
- reservoir of history
- safety-deposit box of ideas, thoughts and beliefs
- Stakeholder for a reasoned, moral mind.
- cornerstones of democracy

It is on the precept of a reasoned, moral mind that the principle of freedom is based. There is no common moral code agreeable to all. The information management structured in the library system brings along freedom of information. The library does not guarantee freedom of information that is impartial and unbiased, but the library is more diverse, open and flexible than the subtle undertones found in the free press or assembly of government (Link 2004).

Libraries have a large diversity of materials in their collections. In addition, the main values of librarians are intellectual freedom, free access to information, equity in access, among others. Because of these factors, libraries in general find themselves in a good position to promote democracy (Rodriguez, 2002).

Libraries should be open to the whole society and be in a position to

provide open and unbiased access to information. Unlike journalists, scholars, writers, and publishers, libraries are in a position to provide, balanced, open and unbiased access to society's achievements, dreams, ideas, aspirations, experiences, sufferings, challenges. Viewed from this angle, vibrant libraries are vital to the success of democratic societies. Without them the society is vulnerable to forces that may kill its culture, and history and manipulate the future.

It is important, therefore to develop and strengthen libraries in order to gain democratic space. University libraries can play an important role in democratisation and social transformation by the promotion of a reading culture, promotion of freedom of expression, freedom of information, intellectual freedom, freedom of access to information, sensitisation, and promotion of technological use and change.

In order to achieve positive social transformation, university librarians have a deep-rooted responsibility to work with university managers, community leaders and decision makers to achieve genuine democracy and to ensure that libraries play a major role in the process as they have done in Europe and Asia in recent history.

In Africa, most citizens have no understanding of the relationship between libraries and democracy. Little if any has been written about libraries as cornerstones of democracy (Kranich, 2003).

Historical role of the African University

Most African universities are modelled on the western style where the role of university library is derived from that of the parent organisation. The vision and mission and objectives of the university provide the basis on which the role of the university library is based.

The early post-colonial universities in Africa were national (public). They were set up with a clear mission to produce rapid resource development to replace the outgoing colonial manpower and to meet the national aspirations (Ajayi *et al*, 1996). Besides meeting national aspirations, they were also required to interpret international norms for local applications. Most governments generously supported these universities such that university education was not only free, but also well funded in most countries.

According to Wolpert (1998), the role of the African university library is modelled on the Western model of “*academic libraries as a cost-effective information service and provider of knowledge products to a resident community of scholars.*”

African Universities have collected and developed the most brilliant minds and the great intellectual leaders in Africa. They have advanced professional careers that guided African countries through early independence. It is to be noted that most post independence leaders were not products of African universities, but were educated or influenced by external powers. Examples are Jomo Kenyatta (British educated), Mobutu Sese Seko (Belgian educated), Kwame Nkrumah (USA), Houphuet Boigny (French), Jean Bedel Bokassa (French), and Mengistu Mariam (USSR). These first post-independence leaders are responsible for the undemocratic and totalitarian dictatorships that brought so much suffering to the continent. A big majority of current and future African leaders have gone or will go through African universities. This underlines the importance of these universities and their libraries in instilling democratic values and tendencies in these leaders.

Like elsewhere, African universities have developed and shaped social mobilization. They have educated the most talented students from different ethnicities and social strata. These have gone on to occupy the highest public and private positions. For most students, entering the national university enabled them to fulfil their social aspirations and dreams. Most African societies are communal, without the existence of social strata. However, the African universities provide the society with new titles, based on academic recognitions, which allowed a new kind of social mobilization stratification. New classes were born; a middle class and an upper class emerged. An overwhelming majority of the current leaders and key players in public, private and corporate sector were educated in these universities after independence. Knowledge acquired in college has therefore an impact on the politics of these countries. Some have acted in a way to promote democracy but others have gone on to create cruel dictatorships.

Despite recent proliferation of private universities, some professions, such as law, political science, medicine and engineering, are still largely offered by national/public universities.

How Libraries Foster Democracy

Strong democracies enhance world safety and peace. Libraries have a role in strengthening democracies. As such libraries can be said to be more important than other social institutions. This is because they do support literacy and reading in all its forms and ensure access to information (Lidman, 1998). They are a guarantee of free and general public access to information. As such, libraries have a key role in strengthening the cultural will of the society towards democratisation in today's global information and knowledge society. Higher education, through suitable library resources, is in a very favourable position to imbue students, as well as faculty and administrators, with democratic values. Library resources have the potential to expand one's ideas of citizenship not only locally but also globally.

Libraries have been a key part of the global resurgence of democracy, which has been gathering steam since the 1970s and gathered momentum after the fall of the Soviet Union (Laura, 1996). Through them, citizens have been able to participate more fully and effectively in the democratisation of their countries and to make informed choices about government.

Libraries in the Western world have for long promoted and cultivated democratic environments. Library systems are built on the precinct that access to information should be free and open to all. Libraries are a vital component in all democratic systems (Hafner and Sterling-Folker, 1993), which points to just how inextricably linked libraries and democracy really are. Every established democracy has well heeled library systems. In Kenya, besides university libraries there are public library network, the Kenya National Library Services (KNLS).

According to Kranich (2003) Libraries can reinforce their role in democratisation of their communities and governments in the following ways:

- 1) Libraries should practice democracy toward their human resource, i.e. the persons they serve and their staff. Managers and seniors should respect the rights of their staff and treat them with dignity. They should allow and create opportunities for development such as higher education, conferences etc. Harassment and exploitation should be avoided. Similarly, clients should be accorded their full

rights and dignity while all efforts are made to fulfil their information needs.

- 2) Library philosophy and practice requires that libraries provide materials representing all points of view on a given topic, freedom of expression, and freedom of access. Libraries are therefore small cogs of democracy, in the big wheel that is democracy, and are therefore an integral part of a truly democratic society. They therefore serve the most fundamental ideals of our society as uniquely democratic institutions (Kranich, 2003).

Rodriguez (2002), caution that:

It is essential that libraries have a broad collection of texts, that such texts represent all possible political and ideological trends, and also that libraries are a place where different schools of thinking can meet each other, where humanities, social sciences, technology and natural sciences find the support necessary for their strengthening and culture.

According to ACRL, 2002;

If we look at the institutions that embody and best symbolize our democratic ideals, libraries are at the forefront, especially in their defence of free and open access to information for all people.

Libraries provide access to a wide range of information and ideas. These assist citizens in enhancing opportunities for self-improvement and empowerment. Empowerment is a foundation of democracy.

- 3) Democracy is openness and transparency. Libraries should continuously inform their clients about the contents and services and what they can offer. For example, through strengthening CAS, SDI, postcards, and media.
- 4) It is obvious that what has been the core of democracy; discussion, dialogue and open meetings have disappeared (Belfrage, 2000). Democracy was founded on regular meetings and consultations, public debates etc, as used to happen during the times of Aristotle. A report by the Swedish government showed that young people are no longer interested in clubs and associations and that the confidence in different democratic institutions has declined. But what the citizens do and say is important to a lively and functional democracy. Freedom

- of speech is a key cornerstone of democracy. While *silence in the library* is important, librarians should encourage the free expression of opinion. They should seek and create opportunities and arenas in their libraries and in the larger society (Government Commission on Swedish Democracy, 1997). Conference rooms, lounge areas and public lectures are a good start. University Libraries must provide forums where staff, students and even the larger public can meet, debate, and discuss democratic issues in society. Issues currently on the national agenda such as the post election violence, the food crisis, militias etc can form the topics of debate. Changing lifestyles has made this disappear. People now interact through communication gadgets such as phones, email, Internet etc.
- 5) Striving to meet local community activity and information needs by providing meeting facilities such as conference and seminar rooms, exhibition rooms, halls etc, for community organizations. They should also refer citizens to such organizations and services.
 - 6) In accordance with the guidelines of *IFLA Internet Manifesto*, approved by IFLA's Governing Board on March 27, 2002, libraries should provide free access to information through the Internet. The manifesto states "free access to information is essential for freedom, equality, world understanding and peace."

It goes on to state that,

"Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual, both to hold and express opinions and to seek and receive information; it is the basis of democracy; and it is at the core of library service. Freedom of access to information, regardless of medium and frontiers, is a central responsibility of the library and information profession.

The global Internet enables individuals and communities throughout the world, whether in the smallest and most remote villages or the largest cities, to have equality of access to information for personal development, education, stimulation, cultural enrichment, economic activity and informed participation in democracy. In common with other core services, access to the Internet in libraries and information services should be without charge."

This means that libraries should not censor or block useful information through the Internet. University libraries are the best place to develop these principles. With the rapid expansion of the use of information resources through the Internet, it is important to promote free access to information in African university libraries.

- 7) The Kenya Library Association should set up a committee to look into how libraries can enhance democratic state. KLA members should then send their opinions and recommendations about democracy in Kenya to this committee. The committee should have discussions with the stakeholders in charge of democracy, including the minister and permanent secretary in charge of democracy. They should also organise for workshops and seminars and invite stakeholders e.g. politicians, academicians and scholars. The results of the study should be presented at the KLA meeting, discussed and fine-tuned, then send to the responsible government ministry. The Swedish Library Association did exactly that in 1998 (Belfrage, 2000).
- 8) The Commission for Higher Education should make it mandatory for university libraries to have democracy programmes as part of their activities, just as they are required to do with information literacy programmes.
- 9) Members studying or intending to study for Masters and PhD degrees should be encouraged to focus on this area for their theses.
- 10) An informed mind helps in determining what the powers that be are doing right or wrong. Libraries provide this information and knowledge. Through them one can tell whether what the government does is right and in agreement with the societal norms, beliefs and expectations or whether it is immoral, unjust and unacceptable. (Zink, 2004).
- 11) Young democracies have to stretch their scarce financial resources to meet just basic need. Similarly, a library's cost-benefit ratio is even higher. By purchasing new library materials, libraries allow access for many citizens to a wealth of information at relatively little cost. By doing so, libraries will help to strengthen new democracies to mature
- 12) Politicians must be made to remain constantly aware of the importance of libraries. The library and its potential must remain on the agenda.

- Libraries must campaign for this relentlessly.
- 13) Lobby the Government to set up an official commission to discuss and report on the challenges, problems and potential for democracy in the twenty-first century.
 - 14) Hire specialised librarians e.g. lawyers, educationists, political scientists, sociologists, etc to help in collection development, user and community education.
 - 15) Taking part in staff exchange programs with libraries in developing and developed democracies. This way, ideas and experiences on democracy can be shared.
 - 16) Encouraging and supporting library and information science organizations such as professional association and to lobby governments for assistance in library democracy programmes.
 - 17) Using modern ICTs to share experiences and resources with librarians in other nations to develop better library digital and electronic services. For example the US Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs has a wealth of information on democracy in electronic form.
 - 18) Libraries should support all education initiatives, scholarly research, and lifelong learning. An educated person is open to democratic ideas. An illiterate buffoon is the complete opposite. Africa's worst dictators have been illiterates or semi-literates, for example Iddi Amin, Samuel Doe and Marcias Nguema.
 - 19) Libraries should provide to their users such works like books on racial and ethnic harmony, justice, citizenship, current affairs, constitutional law, human rights, history, government, politics, and public policy issues.
 - 20) Developing a reading culture amongst the public and young children is important. There is need to promote a reading culture among Kenyans right from an early age and encourage through old age. This would make information dissemination, searching, and utilisation much easier. The country is more of an oral society. Publishers have observed a tendency to read for exams, then after graduation, many Kenyans stop reading thus becoming functionally illiterate. There have been efforts by National Book Council and the Kenya Publishers Association for an annual book reading week in various part of the country. The relevant ministries need to translate these

efforts into policy so that they can attract government and donor funding.

- 21) Promotion of literacy for democracy. Illiteracy has been a great impediment to access to the common good and democracy. Literacy rates were recently given a boost through the free primary education program in Kenya. However, there is still a large number of the Kenyan that cannot read or write. The government has to make more efforts by setting aside budgets to combat this situation. Governments elsewhere are doing so. A good place to start is to revive the once popular *Masomo ya Ngumbaru, (Adult Education)* where illiterate adults would enroll in classes that enabled them to read and write. Attention should be given to *functional literacy*, which addresses the issue of whether a person's educational level is sufficient to function in a modern society. Previously educated and literate people turn out to be functionally illiterate just few years after graduation because they stop reading.
- 22) Ignorance: Not many people make the deliberate efforts to look for information. If they did there would have been a big cry by now agitating for reforms in the information infrastructure. It is this attitude that has partly perpetuated corruption over the years. The ignorant citizens end up siding with these corrupt characters hiding behind "The community", not knowing that it is them who suffer in the end. The same ignorance will make them susceptible to manipulation for example through relief food while they should be demanding answers as to why there was no elaborate planning for such a disaster. This phenomenon was observed by Ondeng (2005) when he noted that;
It is almost half time and the players have begun to realize the need to get the crowds worked up. Those gullible masses of humanity on the sidelines need to be kept entertained. They are too stupid to be taken seriously. Their only worth is almighty vote. Don't explain to them the issues. Keep them confused. They are dumb. Keep the discussions at a high emotional level. Kenyans love politics. Give it to them.

To combat ignorance, it is important to make a commitment to invest in our human resources, in order to free and tap the potential inherent in them. Empowering people through the provision and accessibility of

information is central to this process. This is where libraries come in. There is need to propagate and embody a culture of information and knowledge creation, processing, seeking, learning and service with an eye on the common good (Fortuin: 2005). To combat ignorance, it is important to make a commitment to invest in our human resources, in order to free and tap the potential inherent in them. Empowering people through the provision and accessibility of information is central to this process. This is where libraries come in. There is need to propagate and embody a culture of information and knowledge creation, processing, seeking, learning and service with an eye on the common good (Fortuin: 2005).

Challenges

In the battle of democracy a number of challenges exist for libraries. Individual libraries will have to develop policies to deal with them. Bodies such as KLA, CHE, KNLS, and Ministry of information can help come up with some solutions. These include:

- Balancing between traditional roles of support to the university programmes and expanded democracy programmes to the wider community
- University community vs wider public
- Hate literature
- Religious proscriptions and prescriptions
- Pornography
- Budgets (library and government)
- Dissatisfied groups
- Internal authoritarianism amongst librarians

Conclusion

What happened between December 2007 and February 2008 in Kenya should not be allowed to happen again. The bungled election and the resultant loss of life and property should be frowned and prevented from repeating itself. It was literally a failure of two things; information and democracy. University Libraries have a key role in stopping its recurrence.

The university library should strive to collect information resources and services and make them readily accessible, so as to encourage learning, research and improvement throughout life, while spreading a culture of

solidarity and democracy which will uphold the dignity of the human person and family values, and assist in preparing its users to become competent citizens who can enrich society with their knowledge, initiative and personal responsibility.

Some library groups involved in working to strengthen the role of libraries in democracy on the global front are;

- a) International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
- b) American Library Association
- c) American Society for Information Science (ASIS)
- d) The Library Association

African university libraries should take advantage of their strategic position as promoters of democracy. It will be necessary that, in fully exercising democracy and diversity, those professionals working in these libraries review their positions, mental attitudes and experiences from a professional perspective, so as to better understand their users, benefactors and themselves in order to offer better services for the democratization of knowledge and of society.

University libraries are the ideal place to imbue, practice and promote democracy, to strengthen one's convictions, to objectively analyze those of others, and to make decisions about any issue on the basis of informed reasoning.

Libraries in emerging democracies face many problems. These include, financial, technological challenges, attitude problems, among others. Despite these difficulties, there is hope and a bright future for university libraries in new African democracies. They stand to attract even more users and visitors. Libraries stock rare collections hardly found anywhere else. The prices of everything have sharply risen further eroding the ability of most Africans to buy anything else outside of the basic needs. The publishing industry now prefers to produce mass-market books at the expense of such important books like classics, scientific and technical research and encyclopedias. These factors will form a great attraction for users (Kuzmin, 1993).

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Freedom of information and good governance

EMUKULE EMOJONG

Introduction

Whereas the Constitution of Kenya in Section 79 embraces protection of freedom of expression, it does not however expressly enshrine the freedom of information. Freedom of expression which includes among other things “freedom to receive ideas and information, freedom to communicate ideas and information without interference (whether the communication be to the public generally or to any person or class of person)”.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights (UDHR) of 1948 and where Kenya is a signatory provides that everyone has the liberty to hold opinion without undue interference and to seek, receive and disseminate information and ideas via any media and regardless of extreme limit of an area of knowledge, either in print, or orally, in the form of art, or via any other media he or she pleases.

Kenya is a State Party not only to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights but also the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. Similarly, the American convention on Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights also provide general protection to the freedom of expression.

The International Convention of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), guarantee the right to information in similar terms and reads as follows:

Every one shall have the right to hold opinions without interference. Every one shall have the right to freedom of expression, this right shall includes freedom to seek, receive and impart ideas and information of all kinds regardless of the frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

This self-evident truth has also acquired of place in Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights that provides that every person shall have the right to receive information and to express and disseminate opinions within the law. The right to freedom of information as an aspect of the freedom of expression has repeatedly been recognized by the United Nations (UN). The first session of the UN General Assembly in 1946, adopted resolution 59(I), which states:

Freedom of information is a fundamental human right and...the touchstone of all the freedoms in which the UN is consecrated

The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression has provided extensive commentary on this right in his annual Reports to the UN Commission on Human Rights. In 1997, the report stated: "The Special Rapporteur, therefore, underscores once again that the tendency of many governments to withhold information from the people at large...is to be strongly checked." His commentary on the subject was embraced by the UN Commission on Human Rights, which called on the Special Rapporteur to "develop further his commentary on the right to seek and receive information and to expand on his observations and recommendations arising from communication." In his 1998 annual Report, the special Rapporteur declared that freedom of information includes the right to access information held by the state:

The right to seek, receive and impart information imposes a positive obligation on states to ensure access to information, particularly with regard to information held by the government in all types of storage and retrieval systems....

Freedom of information involves the right of citizens of a country to access official information held or in the custody of their government. It necessitates the government to facilitate easy access to information under its docket and quite significantly publish important information to the entire public on a regular basis.

It can therefore be reasonably inferred from the Constitution that the right to receive ideas and information without interference awards the citizens of Kenya the right to access information including government information. Similarly Kenya having ratified and adopted the UDHR and the ICCPR,

the government of Kenya is under an obligation to promote and preserve the right to information. One end of achieving such means is by putting in place the necessary policies to promote the right and the enactment of a Freedom of Information law to guarantee the said right to its citizenry.

Freedom of Information law is an essential building block towards creating an open, free and accountability culture in Kenya the foundation of a successful democratic state.

Freedom of information entails the right of citizens of a country to access official information held or in the custody of their government. It invokes an obligation on the government to facilitate easy access to information under its docket and quite significantly publish important information proactively to the general public regularly.

Good governance is doubtlessly an essential component of any thriving democratic state as is premised on a system of openness, trust and accountability of the government. This can only be achieved if the public is involved in the process of governance. If the general public knows the functions, policies and decisions made by government they can question the government on the basis of the information obtained and most importantly legally demand for the reasons for the actions taken by the government. It is thus necessary that the government develops a clear policy on the freedom of information in a bid to ensuring that subsequent legislation - Freedom of Information (FOI) laws are implemented effectively and based on accepted international principles and best practices.

Information and Governance

Internationally, it is universally acknowledged that freedom of information is an indispensable ingredient in the recipe of democracy. In Kenya there is a greater need to promote a culture of transparency and accountability which are the cornerstone of democracy and good governance. There is a thirst to foster one society in which the people have effective access to information that can make them fully exercise their rights and actively participate in the governance of their country, make democratic decisions from a point of knowledge and hold public agencies and officials accountable and devoid of corruption.

“Freedom of information” according to MacBride report (for UNESCO, 1980), “is in the first place the right to information; i.e. the right of all members of the community to be kept informed of events likely to affect their existence, to influence their thinking, to modify their choices...From this information there follows freedom for the informer to have access to knowledge of facts and documents, against the secrecy behind which public affairs take refuge, and the freedom to disseminate that of which has had knowledge.”

Democracy has a positive correlation with freedom of information. Dictatorial governments world over have been known to inhibit the free flow information, keep the public in information darkness or gate keep and filter all information for public consumption. Some governments have been accused of muzzling the press freedom, control airwaves, ban publications and censor literature books for schools. State owned media organizations that are fully funded by the public have been used by governments of the day as their propaganda mouth piece. This is setting a wrong precedent to good governance and democracy. Democracy demands that the public is fed with not only accurate information but the truth that is balanced.

Although the importance of press freedom cannot be denied, it is generally asserted that media can promote visions of common purpose and at the same time can promote visions of discord and disunity. Although it is acceptable that objectivity be the guiding spirit, instances of press partisanship have been common globally – sensationalism, owner interference, pursuit of profits, self-interest, ‘brown envelopes’ where journalists are bought, are hindrance to this objectively

Decision making form the core of governance by both the governed and the governor at all levels. To make a decision an individual needs information to lead him or her. During elections people need to be educated in order to make the cherished decision on why, when and how to cast their votes. This calls for balanced information covering to all competing parties or forces. In some countries the governments take full control over state owned media and optimally use them to their absolute advantage by giving the opposition a black out.

In a democracy the opposition plays an important role as it is the government in waiting, keeps the government on check and has alternative

policies to float to the public. If such information is censored from reaching the public then the people may not make informed decisions for their own benefit. This explains why governments especially those who feel threatened will not hesitate to go an extra mile to control information in public domain and apply propaganda to entrench itself to the masses while demonizing the opposition.

Freedom of Information in Kenya

Freedom of information is still a mirage in Kenya. Kenya is today grappling with draconian legislations that hinder this fundamental human right. The media is a key stakeholder when it comes to freedom of information and good governance. It has never been disputed that the press plays a critical role in informing, educating and highlighting vital matters of public interest.

While discharging its role the press in Kenya is sometimes taken to be intrusive and viewed suspiciously. Thus, the levels of freedom of press have been fluctuating depending on how much freedom is tolerated. Governments all over the world more often than not develop cold feet to criticism, even on matters of public interest.

We cannot bury our heads in the sand and talk about freedom of information or expression when we have got in place laws that undermine access to information. For example, the Official Secret Act enshrined in the Kenyan Constitution is one of the draconian laws that prohibit access to official information which the government deems subversive and touching on the national security.

Truly this law may hold some justifications but can badly be abused by some 'smart' and opportunist public officials who can hide and classify shady contracts as secrets as a leeway to facilitate corruption. Although the media and Kenyans have all the good reasons to celebrate the declaration by the government of the long awaited plans to review the Official secret Act, caution must be taken at the possibility for many contracts and information which could be classified in the name of national security.

Although the Kenya Constitution guarantees the freedom to hold information and disseminate it, public officers have placed obstacles by

categorizing as “confidential,” “Defense-Confidential” or “Top Secret,” which adversely restrict the amount of official information available to the public. The Kenya Official Secret Act (Cap 187) inhibits civil servants from releasing any government information whatsoever, unless such authority is granted by the Office of the President. The Act covers a wide range of materials such as speeches, models, lectures, plans, sketches, and even notes. This scope compels a civil servant not to virtually divulge any information. Even upon retiring the Act forbids the individual from releasing information.

Security has taken a central place on global issues and no country can afford to enact laws that compromise on its national security. However there is a justified cry to juggle or balance national security with corruption. Every government when put on task applies such justification whenever issues of public interest are raised. The law should accommodate security factor but must try as much as possible to seal off all loop holes of corruption.

The Kenyan government in itself has occasionally displayed some actions that obstruct freedom of information and expression. Kenyans still reflect with total dismay the unwarranted raid on the Standard group’s premises in year 2006 by a democratically elected government. The heavy-handed police raid on the Kenya’s second largest media group saw its printing press damaged, held employees at gunpoint, destroyed computers, thousands of newspapers burnt and its television station taken off the air for several hours. The media literally came under siege by the government and thus cast doubt on the importance of a free and independent press in a democratic society.

Kenya has a vibrant media environment, despite a constitution that does not explicitly guarantee press freedom as well as a number of laws that specifically limit independent media. The Official Secrets Act, the penal code, and criminal libel legislation have all on occasion been broadly interpreted to curb freedom of the press. Additionally, a law passed in 2002 requires publishers to submit an expensive insurance bond in order to operate, something many small, private newspapers cannot afford.

Journalists are afraid of covering some stories for fear of attracting legal suits that sometimes amount to millions of shillings. Breaking some of

these laws is regarded as treasonably especially the official Secret Act. Libel and defamation laws is also a hinder and to press freedom

Freedom of Information in East Africa

Freedom of information and expression is crucial for the development of a democracy. Tanzania is widely believed to be the only country in the region that the media enjoys relative freedom. This has made the media in this country play its watchful role fundamental role in setting regional agenda. In Uganda the media continues to suffer through state oppression. Victims lack the required social networks to protect them from the overzealous government officials.

Kenya has a good lesson to learn from Uganda. Uganda has enacted the Access to Information Act. It came into force in the year 2005 while Kenya today is strangled by the outdated Official Secret Act. The pace has been set by a neighbor who should be taken as a challenge to Kenya.

Information, Peace, Justice and Reconciliation

Kenya is a good example of a country where the freedom of information law has been abused to escalate ethnic animosity and post elections violence. People need information to promote their cultural diversity and at the same time boost ethnic harmony. There can never be true and everlasting peace without justice. Historical injustices experienced in Kenya from colonial days to today have been cited to have triggered the post elections violence, ethnic tension, arming of illegal militia and formation of organized gangs such as *mungiki*, *sungusungu* and *Saboot Land Defense Force* that rain terror on innocent people.

For peace to prevail we need to correct the historical injustices and the call for Peace, Justice and Reconciliation Commission can be the panacea. For this commission to realize its objectives then it has to seek information from all stakeholders and this will demand for release some of the information that have been kept as secret. The public is expected come forward with sensitive information need to be protected or assured of some protection. We need to expose all the wounds without fear or favor and this is the way to go.

The Kenyan media and politicians have been accused of perpetuating ethnic animosity and violence. The media took sides with some politicians and their communities and condoned hate speeches that pitted a community against the other. Politicians used hate speech to portray other communities negatively. This is absolute abuse of the freedom of expression by both the media and politicians.

During political campaigns people rely on the media for information that is balanced so that to enable them make their decisions. The Kenyan media have been accused for taking side especially the vernacular radio stations crystallized with their communities. The elections took the ethnic dimension and this can partly be blamed for the elections aftermath.

To promote reconciliation information is needed as the driving force to answer the following questions:

- What do we experience ethnic violence in some parts of the country whenever we have got elections?
- Why do we have organized gangs terrorizing innocent people?
- What triggered the post elections violence?
- Why do we have the militia in Mt. Elgon?
- Is land a contentious issue and the only one?

Freedom of Information and Law

Often the freedom of the press is viewed through the lens of the freedom to express oneself, and all too seldom as the public right to know. Laws need to be put in place to protect individuals and institutions from abusing freedom of information. Freedom has the potential to undermine other values that must also be respected. To evade this, certain limits on this freedom can be regarded as legitimate.

Practically all countries have or should have official Secret Acts as part of their legislations. This is expected. However the application of the acts can be very restrictive and sometimes ludicrous. Zambia is a quotable case where six journalists of the post Newspaper were arrested and detained on charges of reporting that Zambian army was only a fraction of the Angolan army. The journalists were accused of espionage. The big irony of the case was that the story could be accessed from the World Wide Web.

Every state has a political interest in controlling the activities of the media within its boundaries. This interest is legitimate one based on the idea of sovereignty. When we accept sovereignty is supreme, the following questions become important:

1. Who defines the role of the media?
2. How much control should the state exercise?
3. What acceptable methods and instrument of control should the state adopt?

These questions lack easy answers. It is acceptable to suggest that the press should define its role while the state can participate in the process by determining how the role of the press is to be played or becoming part of the press and thereby participating in defining its role. It is worth noting that all states in Africa for example choose to become part of the media through state owned stations such as KBC in Kenya.

On the second question, the control should be geared towards ensuring that there is accurate and balanced information, clean entertainment and patriotism. Such controls should be as are necessary in the interests of fair government, ideals of democracy and constitutionalism.

To answer the last question, the law is the only legitimate, recognized and acceptable method of control. The law does the following to define the legal environment of the media:

- Creates rights and duties of the citizens, the press and the state;
- Limits boundaries for the exercise of these freedoms;
- Creates a framework for control and regulation of the press and its activities In this context, the idea of control implies:
- A qualification of right of access to information, especially from government sources
- Placing a limit on the freedom to disseminate information
- Privileged and prior access to information by state or its agencies



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The Contained Community's Role in the Larger Society: A Scrutiny of the Role of Professionals in Societal Crises.

FRED W. KACHERO

Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between the contained communities of professional association and the larger society in suppressing societal crises, with reference to Kenya. The larger society has given considerable discretion and power to the professions holding them to be nobler to give counsel and guidance. Indeed professionals have critical skills that give them power to build or destroy..

Introduction

Crises such as witnessed in Kenya after the last general elections underscore economic, social and political injustices in a society of competing communities for common resources. Generally the oppressive, corrupt and materialistic elite are the source of the inequalities resulting in the discontent. The picture of the society as perceived by *mwananchi*¹ is one of: a minority and predatory ruling elite; endemic corruption; a culturally aloof elite; mass poverty; vast scale income inequality; alliances between the local elite and multinationals; enlistment of professionals and religious aristocracy, state institutions and instruments – police, judiciary, taxation, prisons - against the citizens.

The dominant ideology attributes to professionals and experts special prestige as well as moral and intellectual superiority. They are often defined on the basis of the service ethic – the professional is there to serve others. This has led to confusion at times. Whom do they serve? The organization and its values, or the people in the organization and their needs (Armstrong, 2003), or the larger society?

¹*Mwananchi is Kiswahili word for citizen but is commonly used to denote a commoner*

range and challenge of job activities, and greater autonomy in meeting the demands of their positions (Korman and Korman, 1980).

The professions are also defined by the power to exclude and control admission to the profession, as well as by the development of a particular vocabulary specific to the occupation, and at least somewhat incomprehensible to outsiders (Weber, 1964). Professionals have greater societal prestige, greater

Work done by a professional is usually distinguished by its reference to a framework of fundamental concepts linked with experience rather than impromptu reaction to events or the application of laid down procedures. Such a high level of competence reflects the skillful application of a specialized education, training and experience (Armstrong, 2003).

Professionals are at least to a degree self-regulating, in that they control the training and evaluation processes that admit new persons to the field, and in judging whether the work done by their members is up to standard. This differs from other kinds of work where regulation (if considered necessary) is imposed by the state, or where official quality standards are often lacking. Typically, a professional provides a service (in exchange for payment or salary), in accordance with established protocols for licensing, ethics, procedures, standards of service and training/certification.

Therefore it would be appropriate to state that a 'true' professional must be proficient in all criteria for the field of work they are practising professionally. Criteria include: the highest academic qualifications - i.e., university college/institute; expert and specialised knowledge in the field of practice; excellent manual/practical & literary skills in relation to the profession; high quality work; a high standard of professional ethics, behaviour and work activities. Other qualities include a civilized code of conduct and etiquette, self-restraint, courteousness, proper decorum, compliance, and honorable behavior.

In sports, a professional is someone who participates for money. The opposite is amateur, meaning a person that does not play for money. The distinction simply refers to how the athlete is funded, not necessarily to what competitions he engages in or what results he achieves.

In this article I intend to (1) show that professionals are highly regarded

in society; (2) argue that professionals are advantaged members in society; (3) show that professionals' role in society has not always been for the public good; (4) emphasize the challenges of relevancy in a turbulent and rapidly changing environment that professionals face and; (5) propose measures that can be used to sustain professionals in the larger society.

Professionals and Professionals Associations

Professionals are highly valued in society as they usually exercise leadership in charting the forward paths of a society as an integral part of their responsibility with respect to their areas of expertise. Moreover, their decisions are founded on trained expertise and selection by merit, which judgment can be replicated by similarly educated experts. Modern society is dependent, almost totally dependent in many fields on the competence of professionals.

A professional body or professional organization, also known as a professional association or professional society, is an organization, usually non-profit, that exists to further a particular profession, to protect both the public interest and the interests of professionals. The balance between these two may be a matter of opinion. On the one hand, professional bodies may act to protect the public by maintaining and enforcing standards of training and ethics in their profession. On the other, they may also act like a cartel or a trade union for the members of the profession, though this description is commonly rejected by the body concerned.

Many professional bodies perform professional certification to indicate a person possesses qualifications in the subject area, and sometimes membership in a professional body is synonymous with certification (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

Professionals form associations to advance their cause and to protect their integrity. The associations are notable for their attention to documentation, careful preparation and retention of reports and statistics, and extensive minutes of meetings taken.

Gephart, (1993) observed that associations are important to the profession because of two crucial considerations. First, individual professional

practitioners recognize the value of being accredited to a professional association. Second, individual professionals and professional firms find the associations helpful in presenting their case to external constituencies, such as the state.

A tension between the professions' pursuit of autonomy and the public's demand for accountability has led to the development of codes of ethics as both a foundation and guide for professional conduct in the face of morally ambiguous situations. The profession as an institution serves as a normative reference group for individual practitioners and through a code of ethics clarifies, for both its members and outsiders, the norms that ought to govern professional behaviour.

According to Greenwood *etal* (2002) professional associations play three important roles. First, they are arenas through which organizations interact and collectively represent themselves to themselves. They allow organizations within the same community to interact, and it is from these interactions that understandings of reasonable conduct and the behavioural dues of membership emerge. Specifically, associations enable the construction of accounts delineating the domain of a profession—that is, the portfolios of activities and services over which members claim jurisdictional exclusivity—and of accounts specifying conditions of membership: that is, who can practice authoritatively within that jurisdiction, and how. Professions are not necessarily homogeneous communities. Decision-making within a profession can thus be a political process in which the competing interests of sub-communities are reconciled and subjugated on an ongoing basis. An important role of the professional association is thus the construction and maintenance of intra-professional agreement over boundaries, membership, and behaviour.

Second, shared typifications develop not solely as a result of interaction within a community, but also as a product of interactions with other communities. Professional associations act as negotiating or representative agencies, shaping and redefining appropriate practices of interaction for their respective memberships. They act as the means whereby communities represent themselves to others in the field.

Third, professional associations can play an important role in monitoring compliance with normatively and coercively sanctioned expectations. This

third role describes the monitoring of prevailing institutional norms which is essentially a conservative one, in which coded prescriptions are reproduced through an association's ongoing day-to-day routines. This third role is the one usually assumed, albeit implicitly, within institutional accounts—hence, their portrayal of associations as mechanisms of conformity and reproduction. Abel, for example, speaking of legal associations, wrote:

They have tended to be reactionary forces rather than progressive, dedicated to preserving traditional entitlements and characteristics². Other writers have cited associations as critical agencies within the professions, which are in turn reported as mechanisms of reproduction rather than change (e.g., D'Aunno *et al.*, 1991). Professional associations serve as arenas within which social construction occurs.

Associations use committees and task forces that host intra-professional discourses; official publications easily and comprehensively transmit ideas and scripts; and celebratory and developmental programs gather professionals and provide for interaction and discussion. In this sense, the professional institute is an available arena where definitions of membership and conduct can be socially constructed. Such a situation contrasts with other, non-professionalized settings, where interactions are less frequent and where official accounts are less evident or authoritative (Greenwood *et al.*, 2002).

Exclusivity and Alienation

The lack of connection of professionals to social and political movements, the gap between rhetoric and practice, the historical imperative making professions the vocation of recipients of higher education, and the failure to advocate particular values or political positions make professionals exclusive and alienated from reality. An example of this obstinacy by professions against the larger society may be summed in the newly enacted labour laws (Kenya) that have been opposed by certain professional associations that have gone to court to block their implementation. From the worker's point of view, the laws are meant to improve the quality of

²Abel, R. L. (1989) 'Comparative sociology of legal professions' in R. L. Abel & P. C. Lewis (Eds.), *Lawyer in Society, Vol. 3: Comparative Theories*, Berkeley: University of California Pr. p. 131

the labour force in the long run, remove oppressive stipulations and insure workers against evasive acts of the employers from meeting their obligations. They were seen as proletarian rights assertion in the workplace. Wright (1989) observes that professionals use their hierarchical position of power to secure advantages for themselves in relation to their subordinates within the same organization. Hence, professionals' organizational relationship to other workers within the lower ranks of the division of labor (such as typists, messengers, guards, custodians, the working class in general), can be viewed as objectively exploitative and as examples of where they are opposed to workers in general.

The very basis of professional societies is exclusivist and therefore socially alienating. The society's view of professionals is a bunch of learned people who can, but do not help the society out of existing crises. Professionals are perceived as a people divorced from the many ills that afflict their communities because their standing in society cushions them from these predicaments. Durrani (2006) observes that social exclusion by definition infringes human rights and leads to greater social inequalities and conflict.

Perkin (1989) observes that professions live by persuasion and propaganda by claiming that their particular service is indispensable to the client or the employer and to the society and the state. By this means they hope to raise their value and through it, their income, authority and psychic rewards (deference and self-respect). With luck and persistence, they may turn the human capital they acquire into wealth.

Associations for professionals are commonly understood as agents of reproduction rather than of change. Through the routines of licensing, training, and professional development and the monitoring and disciplining of behaviour, associations supposedly act to underpin existing conventions and values. This is consistent with the observations of Scott...et al (2000) that changes in governance structures (such as professional regulatory arrangements) tend to lag the development of new ideas and build up of political will. A tendency to nullify any emergent reluctance or opposition is usually strong.

Professionals are usually seen as refusing to take responsibility for social policy and action because it may justify complicity. In general, professionals are usually confined in abstract literary terms refusing to let those who employ them (the dominant class) to recognize the structural relations of power in which they are complicit. Collins (1999) points out that even the critiques of dominant paradigms are often *academic* ones, i.e. they reposition viewpoints and figures from within the context of professional politics inside the Academy.

Wright (1989) has observed that there are two types of exploitation: one based on ownership of organizational assets, and the other exploitation based on ownership of monopolized skills especially those that are certified through credentials. Credentials in this case are viewed as a socially institutionalized mechanism of artificially creating talent. This author managers' and professionals' class interests are so linked to those of the bourgeoisie that they are complicit in this exploitation of the masses. Note that the exploitative element in this is in as far as it reflects monopoly of control of supply of the skill.

Misuse by professionals of their skills has been a harbinger of war and social crises. Examples come readily from Nazi Germany when professionals invented weapons that decimated people. Professionals (scientists) have been intimately involved in preparing any historical war efforts. In this country, professionals were divided along their ethnicity in line with their tribal leaders rather than by objective analysis.

Regarding information science, it is now generally accepted that libraries were established to give service to the dominating class and still do so. Durrani and Smallwood (2006) give an interesting illustration on how a library staff could not explain to peasants in his locality why, despite their coffee fetching huge profits in Europe, the peasants never really benefited from it. This is because the libraries, even with adequate resources, do not operate in tandem with the social needs of their localities. Librarians are divorced from the social and political factors in their communities. A large number of professional libraries remain unconnected to the social and political reality around them as librarians take pride in being 'neutral' having been uplifted to higher positions by their 'professional' training which isolates

them from the struggles of working people. As such, the libraries ignore the basic information needs of workers and peasants. They raise further concerns about librarians as professionals:

If librarians are involved in the world of information, then surely they have social responsibility to ensure that people get correct information. It is a matter of ethics that they challenge misinformation, particularly when this is used by a small, powerful clique to wage wars and kill people on false pretexts.

They propose that libraries should redefine their roles to assist in the establishment of a truly equitable society rather than colluding with forces that perpetuate disadvantage and cite the Audit Commission report (2002) which noted that while libraries have a place in people's hearts, they 'are losing their place in people's lives'. Professional librarians should respond to the needs within local communities and to be well placed to respond to changing needs, where libraries are community, rather than management driven. This would entail recruitment of people with types of skills not traditionally found in libraries. What Durrani and Smallwood discuss is true with regard to many other professions.

Challenges to the Professions

Professions find it difficult at time to develop more effective working relations with the public owing to obstacles to efficient communication and collaboration between them. These problems can be classified as (Cottrell & Sheldon, 1963) those occasioned by sub-cultural differences in values, goals, ideologies, language, and technology characterizing the different professions and disciplines; those deriving from the nature of the setting from which the professional is placed and his position and status in that setting; those of role ambiguity and incongruence in mutual expectations. Shiraz Durrani & Elizabeth Smallwood 'The Professional is Political: Redefining the Social Role of Public Libraries' **Progressive Librarian**, Summer 2006, No. 27 p.7.

Professionals also encounter problems in inter-professionals work. For example a lawyer is not trained like a scientist. The lawyer is preoccupied with the specific case – not so much to understand it in any scientific sense but to reach a decision with respect to the issues the case presents. As

such, the validity of generalizations arrived at from analysis of mass data by the scientist are dubious to the lawyer (Cottrel & Sheldon, 1963).

The actions and activities of each individual professional is seen by the community as the actions of the profession in total. The pervasive nature of modern communications media ensures that those actions are widely publicised, particularly if they represent a failure to meet the community's expectations. Further, with the explosive growth in knowledge within their own field of practice, the community at large is faced by an overwhelming avalanche of the sum total of all professions, and has increasingly to trust those specialists to use their knowledge in the interests of the community rather than in the self-interest of the profession itself.

There are diversities and conflicts within a profession that emerge with time: the existence of a number of groups within the profession which take on the character of social movements. They develop distinctive identities and a sense of the past and goals for the future, and they organize activities which will secure an institutional position and implement their distinctive missions: According to Bucher & Strauss (1961), there are many values and identities within the professions that are not merely differentiation but patterned and shared coalitions that develop and flourish - and in opposition to some others.

An Approach

In the prevailing circumstances where the direction and speed of change are indeterminable, professionals have to position themselves strategically if they have to continue to operate within the larger society that has given them the charter to function. A strategic approach to the role of professional's vis-à-vis the larger society is necessary if the professionals have to remain relevant. A paradigm shift is obligatory among and within professions. Re-professionalizing and other options of engagement and dialogue are essential during these times if crises such as the post election one in Kenya have to be averted.

With respect to Kenya, and indeed many African countries, the problems that persist include ethnic animosity, mass poverty, unemployment, huge disparities in income, corruption, disease (including the AIDS pandemic), illiteracy, to name a few.

A number of professionals have been complicit in acts that have negated the proper co-existence in society. Towards the last general election in Kenya, many professionals including the clergy and the media took positions that were outright ethnic in support of the various divides rather than objective analyses for the benefit of the country. Most of the problems resulting from that flawed election are founded on ignorance and lack of information which information scientists can provide to counter misinformation and objectify truth. Other professions have taken choices that go against the good of the society to save their professions. This does not imply that the professions have all but negated the needs of the larger society. The Law Society of Kenya (LSK) has worked for the larger society in the past (such as during the campaign for multi-party in Kenya in the early 90s and lately for constitutional reform). So have the media (on ethnic harmony), librarians (mobile public libraries and Children Reading Tents), the medics (alleviation of disease) and many others.

It has been pointed out that changes in governance structures (such as professional regulatory arrangements) in professional associations tend to lag the development of new ideas and they strongly oppose change. Apart from this conservative role, of reinforcing existing prescriptions for appropriate conduct, professional associations can be instrumental at moments of deinstitutionalization and change. At those moments, associations can legitimate change by hosting a process of discourse through which change is debated and endorsed. This discourse enables professional identities to be reconstituted (Greenwood *et al*, 2002).

Professional associations can serve as arenas within which social construction occurs. This is because they are highly organized communities with highly developed formal interaction. The very occurrence of highly articulated arenas of social construction (such as professional associations) may make change easier to achieve despite the highly institutionalized setting (Greenwood *et al*, 2002). Through these arenas and official publications, the associations can be movers of change within them and in the larger society. The approach would be to target the likely sources of acrimony in society such as ethnic stereotypes and permit an avenue that bridges these types of hostilities. Professionals can use social research to inform specific initiatives that can combat social exclusion (Durrani, 2002). Problems that encumber societies are within the reach of research by professionals who are better

placed to offer informed choices. However, this is only tenable when the society is involved. Poverty alleviation programmes, for example, founded on research within their proper context and grass root involvement are likely to be sustained.

There is need for professionals to continuously re-examine themselves regarding their roles in society and what it means in terms of engagement with social movements and politics. Professionals have operationalized policies of diversity when referring to other professions but fail to take on hard ethical decisions that will produce more equitable results and social justice. Diversity dilutes recognition of structural inequalities and sidelines critical analyses of the relations of power, class, gender and ethnicity that operate among societies. There is a lot of caution on type of membership and sensitivity to diversity that disarms professionals of the possibilities of any action at all.

Collaboration with the public is of paramount importance in surmounting existing barriers. The barriers earlier referred to that affect effective working relations can be tackled by: developing optimal initial orientation and level of expectation between the professional and community members; maximizing mutual assimilation of professional sub-cultural values, ideologies, technologies and language within the community; securing an appropriate structural position for the profession in the society (Cottrell & Sheldon, 1963).

There is a critical need for professionals to integrate their activities with that of other professions, and to communicate, perhaps justify those activities to the community. Communication skills and broad knowledge are therefore critical competencies. The foundation of our economy in this century will be founded on the development and production of sophisticated technology based products and systems, and the synergy between science, information technology and engineering will be of paramount importance to our success as a nation.

Conclusion

The risk to the integrity of professional purpose is significant. Moral reiteration of professionalism and related analyses of accountability are essential. The need to engage in discerning types of desirable and

undesirable relationships under conditions of today's new challenges, engage in discussions with other sectors on matters of ethics is of utmost value. This can facilitate each in maximising the chance of preserving the integrity of all and keep the balance society needs, and engage in active, practical partnerships that allow the power and speed that is needed to meet the challenges in society.

A strategic relation between the professionals as networked communities of practice with the public is desirable. The notion of praxis, where theory-practice is not merely dialectic but a way of thinking and doing that also deals with the various professional concerns for specificity, context, and diversity ought to be engendered.

Professionals can engage with the world outside the professions proactively, not just reactively (Barnett, 1997). Blackmore (2001) observes, that this can be achieved by producing critical professionals, not just technical experts; theoretically, by developing more complex and powerful explanatory theories within different paradigms of change and reform where social justice is the substantive issue; and practically, by developing and promoting different and strategic modes of critical action and not just 'doing critique'.

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The role of Records Centre in Conflict Resolution - Nakuru records

MUGALAVAI, NYAMBOGA, CWEYA & OTENYA

Abstract

Organizations and government rarely see the connection between records and archives and conflict resolution. The focus of this paper is to examine the role of public records and the records managers in Conflict Resolution. The article further covers pertinent issues such as the role of The Kenya National Archives and Documentation Centre, meaning of records, the Nakuru Records Centre and how records can assist in solving conflicts. The authors conclude that for effective communication during conflict resolution there must be a direct relationship between the record keepers, administrators of justice and even the consumers of information, as they should be ready to use all documented literature and make juxtaposition.

Introduction

The 1980s witnessed radical transformations in the governing systems of many countries. With emergence of new democracies, whole political systems were replaced, most often with hybrids that combined local visions of governance and models from other countries. Among many factors for change, these events reflect the long evolution of the concept of the citizen's right to know which, aided by technological advances that have broken down communication barriers, and thus has redefined principles of governance. Too, governments are now expected to accept responsibility for their actions and for their interventions in the lives of citizens, and to be able to demonstrate, by recourse to accurate records, that they have fulfilled in their legislated and legal obligation. This principle has two major philosophical underpinnings:

- Decision - making has to be marked by clear trail of evidence.

Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service (KN&DS)

Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service (KNA&DS) was established by an act of Parliament, “**The Public Archives Act Cap.19 of 1965**” amended in 1990. The Department is charged with the responsibility of care, preservation and advice on the management of public records and archives, custody of all archival records and any other materials deemed to be of archival value in the country. According to the **Public Archives Act Cap.19 of 1965**” amended in 1990 categorizes the core functions of the National Archives and Documentation Services as follows:

- To advise the public offices on records management best practices and related policy matters.
- To collect and preserve important public records and archives.
- To provide access to the records and archives by promoting their use by public offices, members of the public and researchers.

As a national institution, Kenya National Archives & Documentation Service is empowered by the Act establishing the service to accept and preserve private documents of national interest. Precisely, the KNA&Ds is divided into two major divisions of Archives and Records Management. However, the author’s interest focuses on records role during a conflict of resolution.

The Kenya National Archives and Documentation Service is divided into four divisions, namely:

General Administration:

This Division is responsible for providing support services to the Department.

Records Management Service:

The Division collects records for permanent preservation (archives) from all public offices in the Republic of Kenya and also advises all public offices on proper records management practices. The following records centres provide this service:

- **Nairobi Records Centre:** caters for Ministry Headquarters; Nairobi, Central, Eastern and North Eastern Provinces
- **Nakuru Records Centre:** caters for the Rift Valley Province
- **Kisumu Records Centre:** caters for Nyanza Province

- **Kakamega Records Centre:** caters for Western Province
- **Mombasa Records Centre:** caters for the Coast Province

National Documentation and Information Retrieval Service:

This Division is charged with the responsibility of collecting and preserving all Government publications, reports and research works. The service forms part of the archives reference library.

Archives Administration:

This Division is responsible for storage, conservation and use of public archives. It is subdivided into five sections namely:

Repository, Microfilming, Audio-visual, Conservation, Information Technology, Search room and Education Service.

The mandate and objective of the Archives Administration Division is to ensure the control, care and preservation of the Department's holdings. Creation of an enabling environment for **access** to the archival materials for **research, reference and enjoyment** is a priority of this Division. The Division is also charged with the responsibility of promoting publicity of all the archival collections in our custody.

Records Management

The development of Records Management and Archives Service in Kenya started on a very slow pace and can be traced back to **1895** when the **Sub – Commissioner Kismayu** issued **Circular No. 95 of November 20, 1895** on rules to be followed with regard to despatch of official correspondence. In 1910 then Governor Sir Percy Giround issued a memorandum on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London, emphasising the importance of preserving archives. Other circulars were issued thereafter but still most of them became ineffective. After attainment of independence in 1963, immediate steps were taken to revitalize archival services in the country. A technical expert from Britain a Mr. Derek Charman was seconded to Kenya as the Government Archivist in 1963. Mr. Charman's contract ended in 1965 during the same year the Public Archives Act Cap.19 was enacted which formally established the Department of the Kenya National Archives.

Up to 1974 the Department remained a relatively small department. However, towards the end of 1974 the staffing levels rose sharply from

approximately 22 to nearly 200 personnel within a period of five years. Between 1975 and 1981 the Department's activities were expanded to include the collection of oral history and oral traditions, sites and monuments. For several years, much of the Department's financial and personnel resources were directed to these non-core functions while the normal archival and records management functions were somewhat neglected.

From 1982, the Department underwent a major reorganisation with the implementation of the recommendations made by two UNESCO consultants, Ian MacLean and John Walford in 1978 and 1982 respectively. The reorganization was implemented as follows:

- (a) Concerted efforts were made to adopt a more systematic and planned approach in the implementation of archival and records management programmes.
- (b) The Department's main functions were restructured into three main divisions namely:
 - Records Management
 - Archives Administration
 - General Administration

As a result of the reorganisation, the records management division assumed overall responsibility for the coordination of the records management programmes in the public service as a whole. This was done by the implementation of Section 4 (1) (a) and (b) of the Public Archives Act which empowers the Director and any officer of the service authorised by him to:

- *Examine any public records and advise on the care, preservation, custody and control thereof,*
- *Require the transfer to his custody of any records, which he considers should be housed in the National Archives.*

What is Records Management and Public Service Reform?

Records management is defined as the field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposal of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records.

A reform is defined as a change for the better or improve by alteration or correction of errors or defects and put it into a better condition. Public service reform therefore is about transforming the public service to be more transparent, open and accountable to the public.

The public service reform in Kenya can be traced back to 1991 when the 1st phase of the reform was launched. The aim of this reform was to overcome the problems that led to poor performance of the public service. The overall purpose of the reform was to provide support to the attainment of high rate of economic growth and ensure that delivery of quality public services within priority sectors confirms to public expectations for value and satisfaction and equal distribution of resources and opportunities. In order to achieve this purpose, the reform set an objective to improve accountability, transparency and resources management in the delivery of public goods and services.

Nakuru Records Centre

The center was established in 1983. Prior to its birth, record centers such as Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kakamega had been established between years 1980 and 1981.

In terms of operations and functions, this centre is under the control of the records management division, at the Headquarters. The centers main duty among others was to develop effective records management practices and advice records creators on the implementation of these procedures. Like other record centers in the country and elsewhere, the Nakuru records centre renders services such as:

- Interpretation of the Public Archives and Documentation service Act Cap. 18 of 1965 (amended in 1990).
- Survey and appraisal of non-current records in all public offices in the country.
- Conducting sensitization seminars and workshops on records management for heads of department and officers in charge of records units in the public sector.
- Processing new records accessions
- Facilitating disposition of non-current records.
- Advising records creating agencies on proper records management best practices, etc.

Precisely, other issues that are highlights, of the center include:

- i. Archives and National Stability
- ii. Access to information by citizens and government
- iii. Archives and history of our communities
- iv. Archives as National and International resource
- v. Promoting Access and use of Archives in research and education.

Records and Conflicts Resolution

Kenya is a vast territory with diverse resources and opportunities. The country is endowed with a variety of resources such as tourist attraction, rich agricultural land and a large educated and talent population. All this makes Kenya to be a potential country of becoming an economic tiger in Africa. Despite these resources and opportunities, Kenya has remained a relatively poor nation, with resources and opportunities unequally distributed amongst the citizens and even in regions. This has resulted to unsatisfied citizenry.

There are a number of factors that have led to conflict in Kenya. Mnjama (2007) argues that despite gains that were achieved in the five years of NARC government, corruption has continued to emerge as one of the challenges facing the nation. All conflicts in Kenya political, social and even ethnical are connected with corruption. There is no universally accepted definition of corruption; however, different authors have defined corruption differently.

Transparency international (2006) defines corruption as “an abuse of entrusted power for personal gain” The anti-corruption and economic crimes act; no. 3 of 2003 defines corruption as:

- Bribery
- Fraud
- Embezzlement or misappropriation of public funds
- Abuse of office
- An offence involving dishonesty
- Secret inducement for bribing agents
- Deceiving the principal through false material
- Failure to disclose a conflict of interest to ones principal
- Receiving or soliciting benefits to trustees fro appointments
- Bid rigging

- Dealing with suspect property

Cases such as Goldenberg scandal and Anglo –leasing scandal, and those involving use of national social security funds have been laid before the attorney general, but prosecutions for many of them have not taken place due to lack of sufficient documented evidence. Records which could have assisted in the determination of these cases have either not been available or in some cases destroyed to conceal the evidence.

When the known perpetrators of corruption go unpunished has led to hatred amongst Kenyan communities as the corrupt are not seen as individuals but as representatives of their community. The Kenya section of the international commission of jurists (2004) argues that “corruption has not only been cited as a serious societal problem, but it has also contributed to a greater extent to the crippling of justice in Kenya and it is the breeding ground of injustice.”

Wainaina (2007) observes that corruption drains vital resources meant for socio-economic development. Corruption is at the heart of human rights violations, torture, weakening of democratic institutions, impunity and undermining the rule of law. In addition, corruption undermines public confidence in governance institutions and governments, leading to conflicts and propagates inequality, thus disenfranchising the largest section of the society by denying it access to justice and human dignity.

Inadequate recordkeeping practices are going to be a major obstacle for any meaningful socio – economical reforms in Kenya more especially land reforms. Land allocation and acquisition has been a sensitive issue in the country. Besides the courts, Land cases are also handled by land dispute tribunals. In the process of determining these cases, vast quantities of records are created these records needs to be managed well for future evidence or any other legal purposes. In the absence of the records to show how land was acquired and allocated people result to violence. This has been the case in the Rift Valley Province and the Mt Elgon region.

Role of the Records Officer in Conflict Resolution

Based on the past experience, whenever electioneering years were closer, the officer in charge, Rift valley Records center had a rich collection of documented literature on conflicts. This kind of literature is both in

electronic (microfilm) and print sources (press cutting clips) the officer in charge did assemble the provincial administration and the stakeholders and educated them on merits and demerits of conflicts and how best they could be resolved. It was expected that the two parties were to disseminate the same to the wider society.

Conclusion

Suffice to state that both Archival and non-Archival records are good practical evidence that may be used during turmoil's between communities hence averting crisis. The larger community can embrace both bad and good practices of an event that may lead to a nation's conflict. It is the duty of a records centre to ensure that it documents all types of literature on a subject for comparison purposes such as that of Rwanda Massacre, Kenya after December 2007 elections, etc.

There is a direct relationship between good recordkeeping, administration of justice and good governance, all which leads to a peaceful and cohesive nation. Poor recordkeeping causes serious inefficiency, delayed or poor decisions which results to a frustrated part of the civilians.

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The use of ICT in Conflict Resolution

LILIAN GISESA

Abstract

The paper evaluates the use of information and communication technologies in conflict resolution. It further identifies how information professionals can make use of the available technologies being the information drivers that would – help the world remains a ‘haven’ of peace.

An information provider is a peacemaker. However, conflicts are all around us at all times – right from the home, to the workplace and generally to the communities within the environs and beyond. Information professionals are expected to respond to the conflicts and restore peace, and order. This is by providing information especially that is geared towards the peace process. This information can best be handled by the use of ICTs. The ICTs range from the handsets -which most of the population have – through document making by use of personal computer, radio and television communication to the use of internet commonly referred to as the World Wide Web. The advantages and disadvantages of use of ICT are also discussed.. The paper ends with recommendations on the best practices for making effective use of these ICTs to promote a world of peace.

Introduction

Conflict refers to a process of social interaction involving a struggle over claims to resources, power and status, beliefs and other preferences and desires. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines conflict as a serious disagreement or a serious difference of opinions, wishes etc. Many at times humans have been unable to understand conflict because they relate it to destructiveness, antagonism, uncomfortable relationships, violence and war. This idea about conflict has led to avoiding trying to confront a conflict in its early stages, thus leading to the escalation of the situation.

Worthy to note is that every nation plans for development in areas such as agriculture, manufacturing, commerce, education, health, transport and communication, social and community services. Information and communication is part and parcel of this whole process. A nation with a properly structured communication system will keep its people in touch with times - just like it is unrealistic at this particular time in history to attack neighbours that they are not members of your community when the world is viewed as a global village- and will make the people feel the pulse of the nation right where they are as events unfold.

Modern communication is increasingly dependent on sophisticated technology. Thus there is a direct and growing correlation between national development and the country's ability to support its communication technology infrastructure. In addition, there is need to use technology in ways that are appropriate to the country's requirements taking into consideration the effects of technology on social, cultural and traditional values as well as the environment. Its strong points like ease of access should be exploited especially in the areas of conflict management.

The Use of ICTs

Use of ICTs embraces the application of several sciences and engineering to the enhancement of human performance in a wide range of activities by facilitating the acquisition, transfer, processing, assimilation and utilisation of information. The information technology environment includes: people, computing, hardware, systems software, electronic communications systems (like voice, data, and video), documentation, user support, information resources (like library management systems and management information systems), typesetting and publishing systems, audio-visual facilities, and technology training resources. An important aspect of information technology is the integration of these components into people's working, learning and leisure activities to create more useful, effective and satisfying systems.

ICT defined:

It has been defined by different bodies as:

- A bridge between developed and developing countries
- A tool for economic and social development

- An engine for growth
- The central pillar for the construction of a global knowledge based economy.
- An opportunity for countries to free themselves from the tyranny of geography

Precisely, Information and Communication Technology reflects the growing convergence between the Internet, telephone and wireless technologies. Modern communication technologies provide easy access to information as gadgets are becoming increasingly user friendly and easy to manage and so are their programmes. The following are some of the equipment that makes ICT a success:

- Radio and Television
- Telephones
- Telefax
- Film and Cinema
- Mobile Telephony
- Internet

ICT components likely to be used in complicit resolution include:

Radio and Television Broadcasting

The broadcasting media recognises the need for people of a given republic to be informed of political, economic, cultural and scientific developments in that given country, as well as developments and events around the world. Public opinion is shaped by the mass media. The duo are very effective means of communicating to the masses. This could be 'positive' or 'negative' communication. Negative in the sense that individuals especially politicians have used these media for personal gain in spreading hate messages. Examples include the Rwanda Genocide of 1994 where, the broadcast media especially the radio was used to quell the hate campaign. Secondly, is the Kenyan example where it is claimed that some vernacular FM stations were used to incite people. Coincidentally, the same media can be used positively to spread a message of peace. Drawing from the Kenyan example once more, during that post election violence time all TV stations in the country dedicated one hour daily in the evenings to pass that message of peace. Basically 'all' radio stations had peace slogans.

Television is a good example of audio-visual media, which involve the use of images and sound messages communicated simultaneously. It is worth noting that the impact and retention of the visual medium is most dominant as it is a proven fact that people will retain three quarters of what they see and a quarter of what they hear. Hence the audio-visual medium is very successful in communication.

It is worthy to recognise that journalists, broadcasters, editors, publishers, producers and engineers are professionals in the communication industry. These professionals confirm to recognised ethics and professional practice and do their utmost to promote and maintain their dignity and profession. Key among them, being agents of peace and co-existence in any society. Broadcasting services that can be offered by radio and television with a few details on the first three are

- Subscription broadcasting services
- Subscription narrowcasting services
- Open narrowcasting services
- Cable Television
- Satellite Broadcasting

Subscription broadcasting services

This provides programmes that when considered in the context service being provided, must be intended to appeal to the public. The service is made available to the public but only on payment of subscription fee (whether periodical or otherwise). For instance, a Non-Governmental Organisation that dedicates itself to the peace initiative can pay the broadcasting services in the country to air peace building programmes. For instance, in the Kenyan scenario the popular ‘makutano’ *Junction* aired through Kenya Broadcasting Corporation on a weekly basis. Apart from educating the public on the ravages of HIV/AIDS, it also tackles day-to-day societal issues on simple conflict resolution channels at the local community level.

Subscription narrowcasting services

These services meant for special interest groups or being provided during a limited period to cover a special event. The service is made available only on payment of subscription fees. These scenario best fits individual organisational set-ups. Another scenario is the use of the vernacular radio

stations- which target to particular communities – where a volunteer sponsors peace programmes to be aired. There is the example of the recurrent ¹Mt Elgon clashes involving the SLDF – Sabaot Land Defence Force and the locals. Special peace programmes can be developed for the warring groups to show them the benefits of living in harmony. This has to go hand in hand with trying to establish the root problems that are leading to the constant fights.

Open narrowcasting services

Open narrowcasting services are those whose reception is targeted to special interest groups; or intended for only limited locations, for example, the mining groups in remote areas or under privileged groups such as those living in informal settlements. Typical example includes the radio services that were started in the slums to inform the public of their rights apart from general news as in the case of ²*Koch FM*. Even academic institutions do have such kind of arrangements, quoting Kenyatta University in Kenya as an example. Such forums are good channels for passing the conflict resolution messages.

Audio-Visual Medium

This medium of communication include films, photos, drama, dances, and songs, story telling, sound slides, and puppetry and so on. ICT comes in as there is the use of electronics to capture these events. This in the end is used to produce documentaries that directly deal with issues on violence and possible ways of mitigating the same. There is an example of *The Kibera Kid* a short documentary done on the violence in one of the biggest slums in Africa found in Kenya. The dramas and dances conducted in the Music festivals, story telling competitions and such as those organised by the Kenya National Library services, The Kenya National Library Services are captured using the same equipment which are later disseminated to a larger audience. Especially for the Kenya national drama festivals, Kenya Institute of Education documents and stores the tapes for reference.

¹ Mt. Elgon is a region to the western part of Kenya that borders Uganda.

² For more information access the sites <http://kochfm.blogspot.com/>. Title; *The First Ghetto-Station in Nairobi* and <http://www.misskoch.org/> for general information on the Miss Koch initiative. *Korogocho Slums* is one of the informal settlements in Kenya

Take the Kenyan situation after the elections of 2007 and the post – election violence; most of the themes in the Drama and Music Festivals for the year 2008 had the theme of violence and possible ways of dealing with it. This was captured and will be stored for ‘future’ generations to access.

Messages can be changed dynamically to meet the particular audience’s demographics by having messages in different languages. Digital signs are also interactive and offer a versatile solution to communicate messages with their audiences.

Telephones

Telephones are used in conflict resolution as helpline points. In the event that there is an aggressive situation that is likely to erupt, the authorities will be notified before it gets out of hand. Secondly, helplines provides civil court users with information and advice on mediation. Helplines are also used to take calls in the cases of violence. For instance, in the Kenyan scenario, one dials 116 to report any cases of child abuse toll free. A good example is in England and Wales where the internet in conjunction with the Civil Mediation Helpline, HMCS set up a telephone helpline (<http://www.nationalmediationhelpline.com>), which provides civil court users with information and advice on mediation. If requested, the Helpline can put callers in contact with a Civil Mediation Council accredited mediation provider who in turn can provide low cost mediations.

Mobile telephony is taking the world places. In most of the rural areas where most of the world’s population live, Internet connectivity is still a pipe dream. Nevertheless, modern communication technology offers the rural populace the opportunity to get in touch with the rest of the world. Gadgets are becoming increasingly user friendly and easy to manage, and so are the relevant programmes. Moreover, mobile telephony is reaching more and more villages. Thanks to the handset, it is no longer necessary to literally be “on line” via the fixed line network. The consequences to the rural communities are huge as they get up-to-date information. In the same vein, due to the general appreciation of the same, these gadgets are useful to spread the message of peace. During the 2007 post- election violence era in Kenya, there were messages like **One Nation, One People; Choose Peace** each

and every time one could top up airtime or check his/her airtime credit. Such messages on a routine basis inculcate an element of peace in the minds of people. Though useful, these gadgets can also be used in harmful way like spreading hate messages.

As we experience convergence of ICTs, the mobile phone has capabilities other than the voice functionality it was traditionally made to provide. Just like the connected computer, the cell phone has taken away text messaging from the telegraph and the fax. The radio and television and Internet have also found a home in the mobile phone. Consequently if well harnessed, it can serve as a very effective way of spreading a message of peace to avoid unnecessary conflicts.

Telefax

It can send both visual and audio messages unlike the telephone, which can only do, audio. This is basically used to send news to broadcasting houses and long articles as in feature from areas where Internet is still a rumour. However, it is worth noting that the Internet is fast replacing this method.

Film and Cinema

The film is a means of artistic expression, a mass medium and an industrial process. It provides a major role in entertainment and services, apart from being a medium for education, information and reportage. As an art, the film enriches a country's cultural resources and has a relevance to the national policies. For instance, there can be development in a war zone. Thus if film is used to educate the masses of the adverse effects of war and mitigating factors, directly or indirectly a given country is in a position to dwell on important issues like development as opposed to settling Internally Displaced Persons –IDPs because of war, paying security personnel to quell insecurity and so on.

Internet

Perhaps this is the most common among the ICT components that are under discussion in the current information age. Almost everything is going e-... (Trade, learning, publishing, governance, etc). Just to quote one of the public speakers in one of the public forums:



³ “*The world has become a global village, and we cannot continue transacting business as we did in the 60’s and 70’s. Business is now moving to the Internet, and we want to be there also.*”

Although this was spoken in a tea-auctioning event, it very much portrays the trends in the current day world. Every one wants to go global, and conflict resolution is no exception. There are now sites dedicated to the area of conflict resolution where people can post their views on the same as in the case of Online Dispute Resolution, ODR on www.odr.com. ODR involving mediations and arbitration with the help of technology, was emerging as a branch of dispute resolution in India.

In the filed of journalism, the rise of citizen journalism is seriously threatening the mainstream media. There is no denying that the information posted by individuals empowered by technology in blogs like mambogani.com and mzalendo.com is drawing interest for current affairs in Kenya. *Mzalendo’s* “Eye on Parliament” has creatively tried to encourage lively debate online by allowing people to post comments to their members of parliament. This same idea can be adapted in the area of conflict resolution where members can freely contribute on how they feel their conflicts can be resolved. These can then be collated and implemented as a means of building peaceful nations.

Online databases have also been set up that have information on how to handle conflict in a variety of environments – home, school, work, local community etc- at times with real time examples. In addition, there are even audio talks or films that are accessed online that give insights on how to mediate. A good example is one found on <http://www.youtube.com> that has some headings like Workplace Conflict, How to Deal with Difficult People at Work, Mediation conflict Video, Mediation Meeting and so on. They are quite many and offer insightful help.

Stages in Conflict Resolution

According to Gahr, R., Musca, J.B. & Sarsar, S. (2003) the following steps prove to be effective where there is need for conflict resolution.

³ Words Francis Kiragu during one of the Kenya Tea Development Agency’s functions

1. *Conflict Resolution Awareness*

This oftenly, leads to acceptance to whatever means that are to be used. It enhances the general appreciation of the method and thus support when need may arise.

2. *Conflict Resolution Training*

There is need to disseminate conflict resolution concepts and mechanisms throughout the community and strengthen the concept that conflict resolution could become a “a way of life” within the community.

3. *Mediation Training*

The training is done to strengthen the effectiveness of the orientation and training efforts and the conflict resolution programmes. This needs people who can go out on their way to enhance effectiveness of this.

4. *Reinforcement*

These are primarily to gauge the effectiveness of the method that has been / is being used. Some of the questions that will be put across include:

- Has the rate of intolerance gone down?
- How do members perceive the method that is being applied?
- Are they comfortable? If not why? What can be done to enhance a good response?

5. *Institutionalised Programmes*

This has to do with profiling people into groups and choosing a method that one feels can best fit this group. The profiles are determined by age, literacy levels, accessibility to the available technologies, and type of work done. Young people may prefer online interactions as opposed to the elderly. In a group of illiterate or semi-illiterate people, audio-visual communication will serve well. In a group of ‘busy’ people especially in the physical jobs like masonry, laundry, carpentry and soon the audio communication-as in the case of radio - becomes the best means of passing across the message. It is worth noting that these are not a means to an end. Variations could emerge. It may be assumed that a certain group will adapt best to a given medium only to realise that individuals have personal preferences.

The Challenges of Using ICT as a Conflict Resolution Avenue

- I. The perception of cynics who feel that the programme chosen towards conflict resolution will not succeed. Thus if there is no support, then the ICT method chosen becomes less effective. Any ICT component must be controlled by a human being.
- II. Many times change is welcomed with resistance. The change in programme in handling conflict resolution is a threat to established power structures and to existing disciplinary processes. For instance when a chief is used to negative reinforcement – like flogging or arresting offenders- and somebody want to talk to these people to change their behaviour consequently leading to lower crime rates, this administrator may feel threatened.
- III. There is need for financial and moral support for these programmes to succeed. ICT need a lot of financial investment.
- IV. At times people fail to open up regarding professional and interpersonal conflicts due to real or unfounded fears. This may simmer to intolerable levels for it to explode. Yet it could have been something that could have easily been resolved at an earlier stage. To mitigate this, there needs to develop a shared code of ethics regarding confidentiality.
- V. Top managers may at times feel exempted from the process of conflict resolution. For instance, when colleagues decide to communicate a message of peace through their local area network, the strategic managers may not participate. Yet they are also members of staff and conflict is not confined to a certain cadre of staff.

Recommendations

- a) Recognise that cultural change is a long-term process. Expecting it overnight will only lead to unfulfilled expectations and disappointment. Thus even if there has been a high investment in ICTs towards conflict resolution, there should be patience before the results are evident.
- b) Consider it in our own unique institutions / organisations / communities. We need to become aware of the values, recurring patterns and embedded practices, which define the culture of our

own institutions. Transforming these traditions and moving into the future, require us to navigate the difficult and painful space between letting go of old practices and fully embracing new ones.

- c) In planning and delivering the recommended ICT, it is essential to focus not only on “what” but also on the “how” the process of change. How it is done will make the difference in what the outcome will be.
- d) It is a prerequisite to put people first by understanding their experience and inviting them to share their diverse backgrounds and beliefs. Be aware of their interests and if possible, match their needs with initiators of the programme. Living this democratic ethic of putting people first is the key to ensuring successful results.

Conclusion

Central to the conflict resolution process is the concept of “informed” consent. So long as participants understand the nature of the contemplated mediation process and effectively consent to participate in the desired process, virtually any mediation process is possible and appropriate. It takes time to learn and appreciate new tools and ideas of doing things. There will be need for a helping hand, but not as much as when we had less technology around us. The use of teams has become a criterion for success in most organisations. More specifically, how conflict is managed within the group can bring out the best or worst of that particular organisation. However, as an emphasis once more, let the people lead.

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Information applications in resolving Ethnic strife

WEKALAO NAMANDE

Abstract

This paper discusses the value of information in diffusing ethnic strife. It defines the concepts of ethnic group(s), ethnicity, and ethnocentrism and wraps the definitions with the pros and cons of the same. Ethnicity is good if and only if it is not pushed to the extremes; when misused, it leads to far reaching negative consequences to the general good of the whole society for example it perpetuates corruption, nepotism, bloodshed among other social economic evils.

The paper discusses the implications of conflict and, possible causes of conflicts. These include competition for resources, political power, inaccurate and inadequate information dissemination, lack of concern by the state for some communities among other causes. It briefly explain the different types of conflicts, stages of conflicts, reconciliation process and the different ways through which information can be applied as a resource to solve conflicts. To accomplish this, there is need for proper dissemination of the right information to people to empower them in appreciating each other. The conclusion is a wake up call to humanity to respect the sanctity of human life. Only then shall the society be a world devoid of conflicts and repeated prolonged suffering.

Introduction

What is an ethnic group?

It is a group of people with characteristics in common that distinguishes them from other people in society. Members of an ethnic group may have ties of ancestry, culture, language, nationality, religion, or a combination of all these. (World Book Encyclopaedia 2003:372)

Most ethnic groups are minority groups with values or institutions that

differ from those of a larger society. Ethnicity is a result of migrations, wars, slavery, changed political boundaries and other significant movements of people. In some countries, ethnic identification affects both social standing and access to power. In Japan, for example, people of Korean ancestry have suffered discrimination at the hands of the Japanese. The situation has not been different in Kenya where there has been wrong perception that political power should be vested in particular ethnic communities and this has sparked off ethnic confrontation.

Ethnocentrism on the other hand is the belief that one's own culture is the best and most natural. An American sociologist, William Graham (1906), while agreeing with the above assertion, argues, "Ethnocentrism is the tendency to view one's own group as the centre of everything and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it." As a result of growing up within a culture, people come to view their society's reactions as the normal and proper ways of thinking, feeling and acting. This then begets ethnocentrism where people have a sense of belonging and pride, and willingness to sacrifice for the good of their group at the expense of national good.

Ethnocentrism is harmful if carried to extremes. It may cause prejudice and automatic rejection of ideas from other cultures and even the persecution of other groups. The current debate in Kenya between senior political elites attests to this; whereas some are vehemently agitating for amnesty to the people purported to have perpetrated violence against humanity during the post election upheavals, others are saying that perpetrators must face the full force of law. It is determined to have the 'perpetrators' punished for their role in the violence. Ethnocentric motives are the reasons behind these variations. The irony here is that neither side is realistic, people are still in internally displaced persons camps, others lost their property and loved ones, worse still, there are those cases where no arrests have been made despite the gangs committing human atrocities in the glare of security agents. Without a sober and objective consideration of such pertinent issues, the leaders should spare communities with their high sounding emotional harangues. The middle ground should be equal application of the rule of law to all criminals regardless of whose ethnic group they belong to.

Due to the fact that ethnicity is very much in the public eye in Kenya, one may think that ethnicity is a preserve of Kenya or Africa for that matter. Nothing is less true. Ethnicity has been there since time immemorial. Even the Bible reckons ethnicity. The Romans, the Gentiles, the Jews, the Barbarians, name them, they are all ethnic groups. The talks about the hatred between the Jews and Gentiles (Samaritans), remember the story of the Samaritan woman and Jesus at Jacob's well? Exposure to other cultures may lessen such reactions, but they can never be completely overcome.

Background to Ethnicity in Kenya

During the colonial era, the European Nations waged military campaigns to subdue Africans for economic and imperialistic reasons, which however, were not devoid of racial and cultural superiority. The colonialist used the principle of divide and rule to play off one ethnic group against another, resulting in many innumerable conflicts which still haunt many independent African nations, Kenya included. This is because even post independent leaders and politicians have perpetrated the same tactics to cling to power at the expense of the suffering majority.

Rather than address poverty, ignorance and disease that they promised to fight at independence, the ruling elite only swapped positions with colonial masters. Instead of democratising their nations, they developed dictatorial ideologies which are used to silence the masses. After independence, the African states became hybrid monstrosities of multi-ethnicity in which many ethno-nationalism (ethnic nations) exists with an agenda different from that of the nation state. The present Africa is a power keg of multi-ethnic nation states with little collective nationalist sentiments from its many ethnic communities, and in which political power is not only concentrated in the hands of one or two ethnic communities but also rotates and is tilted around their own axis. This then forms the recipe for ethnic conflicts and confrontations.

Value of Ethnicity

Identity and belonging

An individual's social set up comprises the family, neighbours and others

that one interacts with in the call of duty. It has rightly been observed that one may choose a friend, neighbour but not parentage, family and therefore ethnicity. With technology, one can equally choose the sex of the baby but the child does not have a chance to determine parentage. Therefore, one can do little, if nothing, to determine his/her ethnic group. Ethnicity should therefore be accepted as a fact of human existence. However much we may downplay or choose to ignore it, our roots are traced to an ethnic source. Then ethnicity is important since it provides a sense of identity and belonging. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1965:43) uses Muthoni, a character in his novel, *The River Between*, to illustrate that cultural practices are core in giving people a sense of belonging.

She says,

*Father and mother are circumcised...why are they stopping me?
Why do they deny me this...how could I be outside the tribe...I
want to be a woman beautiful in the tribe*

The above citation underscores ethnicity as a sense of identity and part of human development- 'I am because we are.' It is therefore not sinful to be born Luo, Kikuyu, Kalenjin, Mijikenda, Luhya, El-molo or any other Kenyan ethnic group. In the same breathe, nobody should be punished for belonging to a particular ethnic group.

Solidarity

Ethnic groups derive their unity in their languages, traditional rites, and ways of solving problems. In this case, there is a tendency for humanity to turn to the members of one's own ethnic group in times of need (when faced with socio-economic or political problems). In urban setting, for example, people from the same ethnic community cluster around specific areas trying to maintain their links despite the setting being multicultural. Thus being away from their place of origin does not stop them from interacting and helping each other. This is more so pronounced during difficult situations where ethnic solidarity becomes a resource of psychological and material support (Middleton, 1997). Cases in Kenya abound in Kibera, Mathare Kawangware among others where ethnic bonds are the order of the day.

Participatory Democracy

Each ethnic group has a kind of participatory democracy in which its people are traditionally involved in governance. Ethnic groups have well developed unwritten structures of governing and handling public life, solving conflicts, sharing land and properties among other elements in the development of communities and societies. Ethnicity groups people in relatively homogenous and manageable entities, thereby making interaction among varied groups of people more visible in a huge population, otherwise, and the present democratic systems would not have a solid foundation.

Ethnicity and Globalization

Ethnicity is valuable in that it prevents globalization from loading the western culture over others which may lead to impoverishment by way of uniformity. Ethnicity balances or checks the counter cultural effects of globalization which could be damaging to national identity and integrity.

Negative Effects

Ethnicity matures into ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism means to absolutize one's culture and ways of life with a strong sense of superiority. Put differently, this is tribalism through which people adore their tribe without appreciating other people. Ethnocentrism considers their cultures as intrinsically superior and the best way of living forgetting that culture varies from one context to another.

Ethnocentrism degenerates further into racism with terrible consequences such as apartheid, clashes etc. The colonialist used ethnocentrism to divide and rule the hitherto homogeneous African independent states. Ironically, African leaders are doing the same. The politically motivated skirmishes which have become an election ritual (occurs during election time) is an example of how vulnerable ethnicity is and how it can be abused.

Assault to Democracy

Ethnicity that degenerates into ethnocentrism divides political parties along tribal lines. As a result, people neither cares about ideology and plan of action nor the integrity of party leader/candidates but simply subscribe to it because it belongs to their own tribe or ethnic groups. This leads to

fragmentation of nationhood making it impossible to have parties which are genuinely national. These ethnic political parties become a source of competition where appointments are not based on meritocracy but ethnic affiliation. This then lights the very fire that consumes the established democratic fabric.

Threat to Nationalism

Nationhood is standing above tribalism i.e. identification of oneself as a Kenyan as opposed to ethnic tag. Nationalism was highly pronounced during the pre-independent era against colonial masters. The common enemy elicited feelings of or a sense of national unity and identity to the different tribes although not all were directly involved. This brought about spirited campaigns, wars and resistance to force an end to colonialism. The same spirit was replayed in the 1980s and 90s when gallant Kenyans not only united together against but also coerced the hitherto dictatorial KANU regime to allow multiparty democracy to thrive. However, the visions for which our 'liberators' stood for have remained a mirage in our contemporary Kenya where ethnic interests have submerged national interests. It therefore remains a big challenge for the country to shed off ethnic identity to attain real nationhood.

Resistance to Modernity

It is next to impossible to think of development without accepting modernity. Dogmatic ethnicity creates a memorable amount of hostility towards modern transformation. This unilateral hostility and resistance to modernity is rebuttal against development. Constant negative attitude towards modernity may isolate a given group and impede their integration into current world. There is a need therefore, for cross-cultural fertilization to prevent ethnic groups from wrong direction fundamentalism. Inter-ethnic marriages should not be condemned, as was the case during clashes where couples were forced to separate/divorce despite having peacefully stayed together and made families for many years.

Ethnicity and Gender Insensitivity

Many cultural traits are unfair, unjust and discriminative against women and therefore against humanity. It is retrogressive to discriminate against

girl child in accessing their birthrights: access to good education, inheriting, and owning parental property. Such cultural attributes are an affront against development since development is meant for the whole individual and each individual. Gender discrimination can only be phased out when and if women have equal access to facilities such as education, political leadership, property ownership, integrity of their own bodies and other things. This integral human development calls for remarkable transformation as far as gender issues are concerned. There is no possibility of human development if being male means being a person and being female implies being second-rate human being. The male chauvinists must be relegated to the periphery if the human society has to harmoniously progress and develop.

Ethnicity and Corruption

Most of the third world countries reward ethnicity at the expense of merit. Personal qualifications, competence, moral integrity and other qualities are overlooked because of ethnicity. Besides, ethnicity is the basis of distributing the national cake and wealth. In turn this condones corruption. It is then ethnicity with its resultant ethnocentrism that breeds internal turmoil and civil strife like was witnessed in the great nation of Kenya where neighbour turned against neighbour butchering, plundering, and looting property. The culture of eating yields despondency and brews resistance among the marginalized ethnic communities. Ethnocentrism is therefore revengeful and may lead to social decay and the collapse of a country.

Conflicts

According to team building available at <http://www.teambuildinginc.com/tps/03a.htm>, conflict is the struggle to resist or overcome; a contest of opposing forces or power; strife; battle...a painful tension set up by a clash between opposed and contradictory impulses. Starting from the family, work place to larger entities of society simple disagreements within members, if unresolved may escalate into tension inability to reason together, verbal assault, resentment, hostility and even separation or secession . It is therefore important that conflict be resolved as soon as possible.

There are many conflicts experienced variously and individually in the world. Among them are:



No conflict

There is a possibility of conflict arising from a peaceful family, society or even a nation. The advantage here is that the affected are able to nip it in the bud before it escalates.

Surface conflict

This is under developed conflict and often small. It emerges out of misunderstanding of goals which can be addressed by improved communication (information dissemination and the conscious effort of opposing groups to understand each other's needs and opinions.

Latent conflict

This is deeply rooted conflict but not pronounced. It needs to be brought in the open and addressed before it erupts. It might be latent to the individual, couple, family, community, through to the national and international level.

Open conflict

This is visible conflict with deep roots; one that has persisted for several generation e.g. the north rift conflict in Kenya between the various pastoral communities over livestock i.e. cattle rustling among others. Causes and effect of such conflicts needs to be addressed in order to resolve the conflict. Surface and latent conflict often yields open conflicts if unchecked. As a consequent, open conflict causes more physical, social, psychological and environmental damage than any other type.

Causes of conflicts

There are various causes of conflicts that this paper cannot comprehensively address. Others have been discussed elsewhere in the paper. However for the sake of the context of the paper, this section points out four causes of conflicts.

Competition for resources

Conflicts over resources in Kenya began long before independence. In Western Kenya, between 1878 and 1895, there were repeated wars fought

between the Bukusu and Wanga together with the Arab and Swahili Slave traders over cattle and the former refusal to let their people be sold as slaves. In 1878, the Bukusu decimated the slave dealers and snatched 50 guns from them. In a surprise attack the Arab and Swahili together with their Wanga cohorts sent out an expeditionary force of 1500 soldiers who invaded Bukusu land, killing thousands of men and women, ripping open women who were Pregnant, burning children and capturing the youth into slavery (Makila:192)

These atrocities made the Bukusu weary of strangers, especially those who sneaked into their territory from the direction of Mumias. Mumias was a colonial administrative centre of the Eastern province of Uganda. However, the Bukusu remained militant and completely opposed to the activities of the Mumias administration. In 1894, at Kibachenche, the Bukusu resisted and defeated the combined British- Wanga forces under Sapire's command who made an attempt to subdue them. In a punitive retaliation for the defeat, Hobbley who replaced Sapire, mounted an army of 13000 soldiers under the command of Major William Grant which comprised 1100 Baganda and Basoga, 1,000 Elkony warriors, 600 Uasin Gishu Maasai warriors, 200 Sudanese soldiers, 400 Swahili soldiers and Teso warriors, and 2 Europeans. The aftermath of the war was high death tolls on the Bukusu. In this conflict, the Bukusu were fighting to resist forceful cattle acquisition (taxation) by colonialists, to protect their youth from slavery (1878 war against Arab Swahili- wanga forces), and to maintain their independence as opposed to being swallowed by the British authority at Kwa Shiundu or Mumias (the then administrative headquarters of the province of Eastern Uganda which stretched to Naivasha).

The same story replicates itself in Nandiland where Koitalel Arap Samoei sustained a protracted resistance in the 1800s against colonial advance under Meintzerhagen to safeguard their land. In Central Kenya, conflicts dates back to the colonial period when the colonial administration and the settler community alienated Kenyans from their productive lands and herded them into reserves. After the first World War, the war to safeguard and acquire resources began. This was partly due to the experience the African soldiers had in the war and partly due to land shortage and other social grievances affecting Kenyans. As early as the 1920s, the Central Kenya

Political power

The tendency by the post-colonial leaders to cling to power even when constitutionally agreed terms end is a fertile source of conflict in many African Countries. Real and perceived benefits of capturing and maintaining political power are a key source of conflicts in Africa including Kenya. The winner takes it all attitude and subsequent benefits associated with power is a good recipe for conflict.

Misinformation

Lack of adequate and balanced information is bound to cause conflicts. In the run up to 2007 election in Kenya, 'ethnic based media' especially the FM stations played a big role psychologically by portraying negatively those in different political camps as. This was a replica of the situation in 1994 during the genocide in Rwanda. There is therefore need for accurate, professional and balanced relay of information by the media to avoid instigating civil strife.

Stages of conflict

Pre-conflict stage

Intolerant and unhealthy discussion and differences emerges. As a result, tension builds up; views become fixed and people begin to criticize their opponents whom they view as enemies. This situation completely divides the society. This often comes into being during the election period. The current political groupings strategising for post- Kibaki Kenya is a case in point where each group is spoiling for 2012.

Confrontation stage

Disputes escalates, different sides take extreme positions in a more determined manner whatever the repercussions. Threats and counter threats are made but not executed. However, the period is characterized by supporters' engagement in demonstrations or other confrontation behaviour.

Crisis

This is the peak of conflict with open hostilities devoid of communication

between belligerents. People take hard-line stances convinced that their way is right. Violence, force, and destructive approach to the problem at hand are used.

Outcome

The violence continues within the party determined to be the “winner” as it hopes the other surrenders or a cease-fire is reached. Peaceful or forceful intervention by outsiders may suffice in quelling the violence. Anan’s peace initiative in Kenya is a good example. In these four stages, differences develop into tensions where there is unlikely to be a shortcut to an agreement or quick solutions. If there has to be any settlement, then opposing groups must open up channels of communication towards an agreement. The following then is the way forward.

Post Conflict Period

The combatants must agree that they are both accountable to escalation of conflicts. This is whereby no side “wins” in order to lead to positive change. This limits new injustices that are likely to lead to fresh confrontations. This is a cease-fire in essence.

Conflict Resolution

The UN (1992) defined conflict resolution as the training in dispute resolution skills and political conflict resolution process. The widely used negotiation mediation-conciliation approach concentrates on problem solving through consensus building so that the basic interest of all parties could be satisfied. This is a situation in which negotiation skills are critically important in helping to resolve deep rooted ethnic and sectarian conflicts. Conflict resolution is used to support the evolution of democratic pluralism in civil society.

As a process, conflict resolution aims at moving from power base relations and “win-loose” approaches to conflict, towards the facilitation of communication, confidence building, problem-solving, voluntary agreement and “win-win” situations.

Communication Channel Opening

Both sides must recognize that there is a problem; that they must talk to

each other rather than at each other. They must agree that a solution is needed. Outsiders may intervene to help both sides to communicate with the agenda of establishing ways to move forward. This leads to mutual understanding; people learn to appreciate and respect others views. The conflict is mapped i.e. described to help find possible solutions to the problem at hand.

As a result, all efforts should be geared towards finding solutions. The solution to be found is one that everyone agrees with, whether the solution originates from law enforcement, customary method or religious – they have to be agreed and acted upon.

Agreement

Agreement is then reached; everyone agrees. They may agree to keep different views but always accept other people's views. This can only be meaningful if a written and signed agreement for future reference is reached. For instance the political parties in Kenya the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and Party of National Unity (PNU) reached an agreement through the Peace Accord which recommended the establishment of the current coalition cabinet. It should, however, be pointed out that without compromise it may be difficult to get a solution to a dispute. Compromise was necessary since the opposing groups knew that Kenyans on their own could not achieve their goals. They had to negotiate, bargain and promote relationships without costing either side too much. However, this compromise needs commitment from both sides to counter unsatisfactory feelings i.e. the distrust that neither side is committed to a solution.

Reconciliation/ Resolution

There are various ways of resolving conflicts for example, surrendering, out powering your opponent, etc. However, the underlying causes of the conflict should be addressed. For instance, if broken relationships are the root cause of conflict, peace building must include reconciliation as well as resolving the disagreement. This is seen in the family, community, national and international levels. The causes and the symptoms must be dealt with if change or peace is to be sustainable. If relationships are restored, other issues leaching 10 conflicts can be avoided in future since there is better

understanding between opposing groups. It is important to note that organizations or authorities seeking to resolve them cannot do so on their own, their role is to provide an enabling environment and an opportunity for opposing sides to communicate with each other in order to reconcile. For instance, the Kenyan government is only supposed to oversee the settlement process of internally displaced without forcing them back to their land. People should have been given an opportunity to talk to and cry with each other to vent out their long built emotions. It is only by doing so that a lasting solution could be found.

Though conflict resolution methods are several, this paper narrows down to three examples among the many as discussed at <http://www.gdrc.org/n.gov/whatis-conflict-resolution.htm>. They comprise;

Negotiation

Discussion among the warring factions with a goal of reaching an agreement.

Mediation

A voluntary and confidential process which a neutral party facilitates to help people discuss difficult issues and negotiate an agreement. It involves gathering information, framing the issues, developing options, negotiating and formulating agreements. Parties in the conflict create their own agreements since the moderator does not have decision making power over the outcome.

Mediation-Arbitration:

This is a hybrid process of both mediation and arbitration. The disputing parties agree to mediation, and then give the neutral third party the authority to make a decision if Mediation is not successful. Arbitration is where the third party listens to the argument from the warring factions and makes a decision to solve the dispute.

Inter-community Conferencing

This is a structured conversation involving all members of the community (offenders, victims, family, friends, etc) who have been affected by the conflict. People are given an Opportunity to say how they were affected and how they wish to address the effects of the conflicts. Such environment may lead to unconditional forgiveness and the resolve to make a new beginning. In Kenya, the deeply rooted between the

returnees and their ‘adversaries’ are evident and cannot be wished away. Rather than enforcing resettlement, intercommunity dialogue should be encouraged to cultivate mutual trust between the protagonists.

Role of Information in resolving conflicts

Although the approaches highlighted are handy in conflict resolution, information dissemination is an important component in resolving conflicts. Without adequate information and communication among the conflict belligerents and peace makers before and after outbreak of the conflict, the conflict cannot be avoided. Thus, if there is proper access to the right information by all citizens, conflicts can be avoided. In this case, information is the stimulus that reduces uncertainty. It embodies the knowledge communicated concerning particular subjects and events.

Like other needs, information is a basic need. Laloo (2000) as quoted by Echezona (2007:146) states:

Free flow of information is a right of the people which enables them to participate effectively in the process of economic, social and political activities and enhances education, knowledge and learning.

If people are denied the right or fail by default to access right information, the consequences of ignorance can be far reaching and unbearable. In most cases, it leads to prolonged suffering and even death. It is no wonder that while proclaiming God’s wrath (judgement) to the Israelites disobedience to follow the Lord’s ways, Prophet Hosea declared,

*My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.
Because you have rejected Knowledge,
I also reject you as my priests. (Hosea 4:6).*

The Israelites were perishing because they refused to follow God’s directions as spoken to them through the prophets. They were ignorant of the word of God, hence the prolonged sufferings. The same Bible reckons that Jesus Christ used knowledge to defeat the devil during temptation by telling him ‘*man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the Lords mouth*’. Through this rebuke, we underscore the value of knowledge in problem solving. Jesus would not have defeated the devil had he scanty information about the power in the word of God but

because he had knowledge about the word of God he managed to outdo the devil.

For any society to make meaningful impact in conflict resolution, information is paramount. Early warning information is needed to make all and sundry to have knowledge that the situation is volatile and therefore requires urgent remedial measures. Prompt alerts or communication about potential conflicts is relevant, but only relevant if it is complemented by early political action. National intelligence service is supposed to effect early warnings in order for the state to initiate preparedness, prevention and mitigation of conflicts. Early warning information is transmitted via media such as internet, community radio, television, email, print media and reference services. Through this media, society may be forewarned about the serious implications of conflicts and therefore nip it in the bud. Care should be taken on how the ICTs and related mass media should be utilised to disseminate information. This is to avoid appealing to ethnic emotions: Both the Standard and Daily Nation (22nd May 2008) reported a case in which a man was charged in a Nairobi court for having used his cell phone to spread hate messages against members of another community on December 31st 2007.

Utilizing information

Information is needed on the potential shortages, production problems and fiscal policies that affect a larger proportion in a given conflict. A nation about to degenerate into conflict should not only be forewarned by its intelligentsia but also by information specialists. People should be warned that conflict or ethnic strife is bound to affect negatively all the belligerents in the clashes, for instance, death tolls, scarcity of food, blunder of property, disease, among other inevitable negative consequences for those in the conflict. Effective information management should therefore inform any nation about to indulge in conflict that sustained conflict leads to armed struggle which is not only detrimental to humanity but also other living organisms and environment.

Effective dissemination of information on conflict and peace building related issues through libraries, internet, print and other electronic media will put people and leaders alert on facts of potential conflicts, their causes, consequences and solutions.

Idleness on the youth especially unemployment is a powder keg for conflict explosion. It is in the interest of the nation for the youth to be informed about economic situation of the country, availability of jobs, self employment opportunities without which, they will develop bad habits such as crimes, prostitution, social malice among other accompanying problems. The citizens should be informed about the social economic and political situation of the country to demonstrate democratic practice and respect for the rule of law. Without adequate information, people especially the youth are bound to struggle for power and resources.

On the other hand, insecurity as a result of robbery or police related atrocities explodes into conflicts. These may yield frustration, hatred and protest from the citizen who may take the law into their own hands since they doubt the state's ability to protect them or guarantee their safety. This is a situation prudent in circumstances devoid of adequate information.

There is therefore need to gather and disseminate information effectively at grassroot levels to avoid inter and intra ethnic strife, religious conflict and even inter-country conflict. Constant information about all aspects of life should be disseminated to people to maintain tranquillity. Through community information centres such as radios, libraries, telecenters and digital villages' information can be delivered to the rural population about the impending crisis.

A case in point is the semi-arid regions of Kenya which has known no peace for several decades. The main cause of insecurity is scarcity of resources, inadequate social economic investment by state (Mwaniki et al (2007:48)

For several decades, the successive Kenyan political leadership has employed politics of patronage that only the major ethnic groups, with big voting blocs have gained, with smaller communities receiving minimal attention. This has given birth to several conflicts resulting from lack of adequate resources. There is need for society to appreciate the humanity of these people who have antagonised each other for almost a whole generation after independence. Regular kamukunjis at various administrative levels should be held to educate people on the need to respect the rule of law, human live and peaceful coexistence. In case of difficulty of

communication, information can be reformatted into local and sign languages, sports, drama, music or through social events to communicate the effects of indulgence in a conflict. A good example is the annual Tekla Lorupe peace cross country competitions in the North Rift. On the other hand, digital information systems such as email, internet chat, video conferencing, lists serves should be used to discuss conflict and peace building issues. The KLA list serve and websites are good examples where information on pertinent issues can be shared. However, care should be taken that they are not negatively used to spur negative tribal feelings fertile for skirmishes or clashes. All in all, if people are well sensitised and guaranteed state protection, there are high chances that insecurity incidences will reduce, and peace will prevail.

According to Ogunkelu (2001) as cited by Echozona (2007:149) libraries equip researchers with techniques of identifying and preventing conflicts at an early stage. Through libraries and information organisation, workshops or seminars are organized and experts on conflict resolution can be invited as resource persons to discuss or brainstorm the way forward to managing and resolving conflicts. The information generated can be documented for future use, i.e. the users can access such information materials and in the process learn the art of managing and resolving conflicts. According to Echezona (2007) libraries increase the value of human intellectual output by enhancing access to them through information processing, storage and dissemination functions.

Information literacy

Information literacy is the ability to develop skills in order to access, decode and use information. Information literacy requires mental operational abilities to deal successful with highly fluid situations. The American library association (1996) defines literacy as skills of information problem solving. An information literate person recognises when and where information is needed and has the ability to locate access, evaluate and use effectively the needed information. For example, an ICT literate person manipulates computers and other related technologies to process, transport and transfer voice and data. ICT can therefore be used to propagate information and resolve conflicts depending on how well it is applied in information processing and dissemination.

Libraries and NGOs

Many conflicts arising from ethnic differences or differing historical views are best handled by libraries in collaboration with the NGO world. Personnel from these organisations should organise outreach missions where information materials are given, lectures/talks delivered, and discussions stimulated among participants to encourage them to embrace simple steps to promote peace and resolve conflicts.

Providing access to information

Information centres in the world over are reservoirs of information resources of diversified subjects. Such information should not just fill the stacks but be made available for use. Information materials whether in electronic, book, microfilms or audio formats must be conveniently repackaged to reach various users whether by reading, listening, surfing, touching or hearing. In this case, conflict and peace building information resources should be made available to users of various characteristics to understand and benefit from them. Information accessed and knowledge gained from such resources can be of immense value in diluting a tensed situation. Fayose, et al (1995) that:

“essential information in books that deals with peace and security may be repackaged and replayed for the hearing of all those meant to benefit from the content”.

Conclusion

Conflicts, civil hatred and strife are a product of ethnic chauvinism and the resultant ethnocentrism. The ethnic person adores his own ethnic community, overlooks or underestimates the intelligence of other ethnic communities around him or her. This begets resentments from the others and in the long run explodes into skirmishes with far reaching consequences such as high death tolls, plundering of property, stealing, internally displaced persons and other national catastrophic impacts. For over forty years after independence, Kenyans have lived a false life; pretending that Kenya is where peace, love and unity dwell. Yet underlying this pretence are the very embers of ethnic animosity consuming the fabric of our nation. The realisation of this came too late, communities which had co-existed, inter-married turned against each other instead of turning to each other.

In these unfortunate circumstances, the need for information, timely communication, knowledge about the value and sanctity of human life which is crucial was wanting. The society requires fair and open communication of issues but not propaganda in which the ruling elite are portrayed in a perfect manner, yet every time they open their mouth to speak, anger, hatred, incitement ... is the order of the day. There is dire need for leaders to know that Kenya is greater than any one of them, and to embrace cordial relationships. Information begets knowledge and knowledge yields wisdom, it is this wisdom that the Kenyan populace including leaders need in order to have a reconciled and healed Nation, not propaganda. Information should therefore be conveniently repackaged, positively communicated, accessed and utilised for the common good of the beautiful country. Remember the Bible says “my people perish because of lack of knowledge.” Let not Kenya perish because of lack of effective dissemination of positive information to the general citizenry. Let the truth be told about the historical reality and malpractices from the colonial government through the successive post independent regimes in Kenya in order to build a secure Kenya.

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The role of ICT in conflict resolution and peace building in Africa

JANEGRACE KIDEI

Abstract

In many countries today, armed forces, militia units and rebel groups are fighting for power, terrain and natural resources. They rob, rape, torture and kill, and people are being driven from their homes. Over the past ten years, some two million children have been killed and approximately six million have been injured the world over. Millions never recover from the psychological damage they suffer.

At present, and even more so in the future, the importance of Information Communications Technology in conflict resolution cannot be ignored by government, civil societies and NGOs in Africa. What animates it, is a culture in which stakeholders use ICT to buttress and build confidence between communities, engender discussion and help in the dissemination of information regarding state-of-the-art conflict resolution techniques and events. There are no easy solutions for the peaceful settlement of protracted ethnic, but a realization of the power of ICT can help efforts on the ground to bring a negotiable just solution to conflict and war in Africa. This paper discusses the various types of ICTs and conflicts in developing countries. It briefly explains the causes of conflicts in developing countries and explains how ICT use can fuel or reduce conflicts. It expounds on the role of ICT in resolving conflicts and restoring peace. It concludes by giving recommendations on the positive use of ICT.

Introduction

It is important to realize that development and prosperity can only be achieved if the local situation is peaceful and stable. Peace is a necessary prerequisite to social and economic development. Throughout the world, many regions experiencing conflicts are cut off from development opportunities. In recent years, the world has witnessed decades worth of excellent development

work destroyed by conflict in a matter of weeks. It is therefore imperative to seek for solutions to these conflicts. If countries are to achieve mill

Every technology can be used for good or evil, and no technology is a magic remedy for human problems. Understanding the potential and proper use of technologies can allow us to work more effectively and in ways that would not otherwise be possible.

What is conflict?

Conflict can be defined as a form of competitive behavior between people or groups. It occurs when two or more people compete over perceived or actual incompatible goals or limited resources (Boulding 1962).

- Conflict involves people: It is a state of human interaction between two or more parties.
- Conflict is a state of human interaction where there is disharmony.
- It emerges when parties compete over perceived or actual goals, values or interest.
- It occurs when parties confront each other with opposing actions and counter-actions.
- It is an indicator that something is changing, has changed or needs to change.
- It is an interaction that aims at 'beating' an opponent.

Violent conflict is often not the result of a mono-causal event or trigger, but is rather the failure or inability of a society to address the basic human needs and the interests and aspirations of all its constituent peoples, ethnicities and groups. These exclusions, in turn, lead to increasingly belligerent positions of marginalized and alienated groups, who over a period of time may take up arms in the face of constant marginalization, in order to further their aspirations.

What is ICT?

ICT is an acronym that stands for Information Communication Technology. Apart from explaining the acronym, there is not a universally accepted definition of ICT because the concepts, methods and applications involved in ICT are constantly evolving on almost daily basis. It is difficult to keep pace with the changes because they happen so fast. For the

purpose of this paper (Information Communications Technology) ICT is defined as an umbrella term that is commonly and widely used for all technologies for the communication of information. In other words, ICT covers any product that will retrieve, manipulate, transmit or receive information electronically in a digital form.

ICT by itself is an important tool and encompasses any:

- a) Medium to record information (Whether paper, pen, magnetic disk/ tape, optical disks –CD/DVD, flash memory etc.
- b) Technology for broadcasting information e.g. radio, television
- c) Technology for communicating through voice and sound or images e.g. microphone, camera, loudspeaker, telephone and cellular phones.
- d) Technology that can transfer information using satellite systems or intercontinental cables e.g. personal computers networked through the Internet.

ICT can also be said to be:

- A bridge between developed and developing countries
- A tool for economic and social development
- An engine for growth
- The central pillar for the construction of a global knowledge based economy and society
- An opportunity for countries to free themselves from the tyranny of geography

Causes of conflict in Africa

- ***Inequality***

Inequality between groups is probably the foremost cause of conflict in Africa. It is inequality between groups rather than individuals that increases the prospect of violent conflict. It exists on three mutually reinforcing levels: economic, social and political. In countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone and Rwanda, one group monopolized political power and its benefits. Unequal access to power perpetuated a similar lack of access to resources and revenue.

- ***Collapse of state institutions and infrastructure***

The collapse of state institutions has caused internal and regional conflict.

where male educational levels are low face a far higher risk of conflict. Throughout Africa, factional conflict has drawn on a pool of marginalized or socially excluded young men e.g. South Africa, violence against foreigners.

- ***Abuse of ethnicity***

Political leaders and belligerents in Africa have made increasing use of ethnic hatred. Such abuse prolongs conflict, creates long-term divisions that reduce the effectiveness of peace building efforts. The war in the DRC and recent ethnic violence in Kenya provides a ready example of the abuse of ethnicity.

- ***Availability of arms***

The ready availability of small arms in Africa is a major factor in sustaining and fuelling conflict. Caches of arms exist throughout the continent and Africa has active trading networks that move arms between countries. The increasing capacity within Africa to manufacture ammunition has removed yet another constraint on the use of small arms. The ready availability and relatively low cost of small arms has been coupled with the emergence of a network of both local and international dealers who trade arms for minerals or to other resources. We recognize that the use of ICT and media can be both positive and negative in conflicts situations, including post-conflict peace building.

The impact of conflict

This is because the impact of the conflicts in the African region is devastating. This includes human tragedy experienced in some countries.

During the last two decades, sub-Saharan Africa has been the most conflict-affected region in the world. Conflict has been responsible for more death and displacement than famine or floods in Africa. The main elements of this tragedy is the millions of people who lost their homes and live hood, the increasing numbers of civilian casualties and increased level of violence, abuse and mutilation. Africa has the highest level of internal displaced persons in the world. Internally displaced persons (IDP) now outnumber refugees by a ratio of three to one. Almost 1 in 20 of all deaths in Africa is clearly attributed to war. Violence in Africa is now deliberately

targeted at civilians rather than armed groups and at entire groups rather than individuals.

Children have become one of the main targets of violence and in turn are being used to perpetuate it. Children have been deliberately indoctrinated into a culture of violence and used as a specific instrument of war. There are now approximately 350,000-child soldiers worldwide of which 200,000 are in Africa.

Africa's development is threatened by conflict. The effect of war cut across all levels of the economy down to the household level. War has a direct and immediate economic impact through the physical disruption it creates, denying access to land, key resources and markets. In the recent post-election violence in Kenya, people were denied access to their land at critical planting periods. This reduces the total agricultural production of the country.

Conflicts and war damages the infrastructure such as roads, rail, ports, airports, electricity, water supply, sewers, and telecommunications. Poor infrastructure leads to weak fragmented and highly unstable markets, which in turn contribute to hyperinflation and a volatile currency.

For African states to achieve Millennium Development goals the (MDGs), conflicts and wars must be reduced if not stopped completely. The aim of conflict resolution is to move away from despairingly ossified interest and positions of parties, towards constructive outcomes by processes where third parties or impartial outsiders play a catalytic role in helping replace mutual antagonism by new ways of thinking and the creation of new relationships that transcend old stereotypes and barriers. The corpus of conflict resolution literature argues that it is possible to transcend conflict, if parties can be helped to analyze, explore, question and reframe their interests and positions.

The role of ICT in fueling conflict

- ICT can be used as a propaganda tool with the aim of controlling civilian populations. The Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines in promoting the genocide in Rwanda is one of the best-known examples known.

- Some FM radios have been used to spread hate messages.
- TV shows/broadcasts – sometimes they show an old photo of say burning houses but fail to indicate file photo so that anyone watching the TV would imagine clashes have erupted a fresh.
- Violent activities broadcasted and shown live create more tension and hatred, and sparks violence in other regions.
- Wide coverage and broadcast of violence in a certain region may otherwise give perpetrators more idea of how to carry out violent acts.
- There is inadequate space to discuss fully the ways in which technology is being appropriated by societal forces who act as spoilers in a peace process. One recalls the statement of Koffi Anan, who said, “The same internet that has facilitated the spread of human rights and good governance norms has also been a conduit for propagating intolerance and has diffused information necessary for building weapons of terror.”
- Availability and use of mobile phones make it very easy for the perpetrators of violence to plan, communicate and coordinate acts of violence.
- The Internet can also be used to rapidly disseminate false or inflammatory information; offer a global platform for causes that would otherwise not receive so much attention (whether legitimate or not) and act as a recruiting office of extremist groups. The interactivity of the Internet sometimes allows response to rumours.
- The use of media and communications systems to promote hatred and genocide; by military, police, or other security forces, be they governmental or privately owned.

The positive role of ICT in conflict resolution and peace building

While most of these definitions capture the essence and the potential of ICT, they ignore major challenges facing developing nations entering the ‘information society’ and ‘knowledge economy’. Countries in Africa for instance, are racked by internal conflict, border disputes and are economically underdeveloped, socially fragmented and very often, politically



weak. While most of the definitions of ICTs come from countries where the exercise of nation building is complete, ICTs are an intrinsic part of the nation building exercise in Africa, and do not stand apart from it. As such, ICTs are also caught up in the complex web of inequalities and social disparities that continue to be the source of conflict in Africa. ICT has played a positive role in conflict resolution in the following ways:

- ICT can help resources (human, financial and technological) from across the world to address interregional and regional ethno-political conflicts. Stakeholders can continue to engage with the complexities of peace process without having to be in the same region, and organizations can learn from each other's experiences in real time.
- ICTs are also considered an important tool to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the UN. If these goals are achieved, infrastructure will be improved and poverty will be eradicated hence reducing conflict.
- Mobile phones are increasingly a means through which citizens can secure basic human rights, and accordingly need to be seen as devices that service basic human interests and needs. Mobile phones also allow people to communicate in the course of conflicts to obtain information to make right decisions.
- ICTs contribute heavily in promoting peace and help the victims of humanitarian emergencies.
- When disaster does strike, ICTs help in coordinating complex relief Missions.
- ICTs can help address the root causes of violent conflict by promoting access to knowledge, and hence promote mutual understanding, an essential factor in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconciliation.
- ICTs also offer ways to reveal human rights abuses, promote transparent governance, and give people living under repressive regimes access to uncensored information and an outlet to air their grievances and appeal for help.
- ICT can help revitalize stagnant dialogues and help sustain difficult process of conflict transformation by providing the spaces for sustained dialogue.
- ICT, in the context of peace building, are used as enabling

technologies to augment existing stakeholder interventions, enable hitherto marginalized actors to participate more fully in peace building processes, empower grassroots communities and bring cohesion to the incredible range of activities on multiple tiers that are an intrinsic part of full-field peace building and conflict transformation.

- ICT enables information flows that not only radically subvert existing patterns of knowledge flows and power centers, but in empowering organizations, groups and individuals to produce and share information between each other and within sectors, helps bring a greater degree of cohesion, transparency and accountability to processes of conflict transformation that were hitherto unthinkable.
- Use of ICT has vastly increased the amount of accessible information about regional activities, and hence increases the visibility of potential and actual conflicts.
- Use of ICT in media houses e.g. BBC and CNN may increase pressure on the international community to respond to a crisis. Once the crisis ceases to be new, it ceases to require a response hence the phrase “forgotten emergencies” which is commonly used by NGOs.
- The internet has to some extent enabled the democratization of information, allowing individuals to share their own information through tools such as blogs, discuss issues on open or closed forums such as bulletin boards, and alternative, independent news platforms.

Challenges facing use of ICT on conflict resolution in Africa

Providing access to technology is critical for socio-economic development, but it must be about more than just physical access. Recognition of the immense potential of ICT and developing inclusive, participatory long-term plans to expand existing access to ICT interventions can help those who have traditionally been excluded from developmental processes to take part in the exercise of nation building.

However, computers and internet connections are insufficient if the technology is not used effectively because it is not affordable, people are discouraged from using it or if local economies and patterns of access cannot sustain long term application. This is precisely why ICT will play, for the foreseeable future, a role limited to complementing interventions by

other stakeholders working on the ground to resolve conflict. Reading the wealth of literature on ICT, it is easy to forget that it is not a panacea for problems facing developing nations. Some of the major challenges facing use of ICT on conflict resolutions in Africa include:

- (a) Inadequate vernacular content/interface/questions of accessibility
- (b) Lack of internet connectivity, poor infrastructure and low bandwidth
- (c) Lack of in-house or local expertise and inadequate IT knowledge.
Normative assumptions about ICT tend in most cases to outstrip knowledge of how technology is actually used.
- (d) Lack of finances to buy hardware and software
- (e) A pervasive and incipient culture of secrecy, with very low levels of mutual trust that protracted ethno-political conflict leave in their wake
- (f) A lack of willingness to collaborate and share information

Recommendations

Peace building processes could be greatly strengthened if organizations, people and regions are connected in effective multi-sect oral and peace building networks and provided with active and open knowledge bank with instant access to effective peace building approaches and case studies.

By building local, regional and national peace building networks between and within government, local authorities, political stakeholders, civil society and international support and resource institutions, ICT has the potential to shape powerful conflict transformation partnerships.

The risk of a growing 'digital divide', where ICTs could reinforce rather than reduce inequalities, should be acknowledged, and recommendations made in order to turn the digital divide into a digital opportunity for all. ICT can also be used to form early warning and conflict prevention networks. As Koffi Annan urged, prevention is better than cure and we must address causes of conflict and not merely symptoms.

ICT should be utilized to develop and maintain database and related maps that monitors the movement of those who have been displaced within their country by conflicts, and use this information to promote the safe return or resettlement and reintegration of the displaced e.g. the Geneva-based International Documentation Network on the Great African Lakes

Region (<http://www.grandslcs.net/>) is an international interuniversity program that collects, edits and provides access to documents on recent events in Burundi, Rwanda and their regional context (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo). The network's goal is to make the largest possible range of documents available to decision-makers, academics and NGOs in those countries and around the world. In order to develop a trusted resource and to foster a culture of critical reading of information, the Network only accept complete and verified documents (to avoid misquotes or false attributions that often fuel strife in the Great Lakes region).

Conclusion

There are limitations of using ICT in conflict resolution. Used in isolation and without any supporting structures and holistic frameworks necessary for facilitating conflict transformation, the success of ICT interventions will be undermined and might even serve to exacerbate existing conflicts by creating new rifts within and between communities.

At the end of the day, computers and technology do not create justice and lasting peace. ICTs cannot magically liberate people, alleviate poverty, erase the digital divide, and ensure prosperity. One must recognize that ICTs help only if the necessary under-pinning for social reform is present that is the respect for human rights, democracy and equitable distribution of technology. Technology can only augment the human efforts, but communities must make peace between themselves and within themselves.

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Information and Knowledge Management for Conflict Resolution, Peace, Justice and Reconciliation

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Introduction

Information is defined as interpreted data which is relevant to a particular situation because it is processed, interpreted data which is meaningful to the user. It is an input to be acted upon and to stimulate action. Information is facts told or heard or discovered about something or somebody, which is capable of causing a human mind to change its opinion about the current state of the real world. Information is whatever contributes to a reduction in the uncertainty in a situation. Information is life itself. Information transcends every part of life, active and inactive; personal, group, organizational, national or global. Information adds to knowledge as it facilitates decision making. In terms of its characteristics, useful information is Accurate, Timely, Complete and Relevant.

Information enhances human rights, if and when the following are facilitated. Records are generated, secured and accessed for information dissemination to take place. Information enhances protection of human rights when it facilitates efficient and effective development and implementation of tools for monitoring human rights and for publicizing findings to those who need them when they need them. Information is a valuable resource.

Information Systems are interrelated components working together to collect, process, store and disseminate information to support decision making, coordination, control, analysis, visualization and creation of new products in an organization

Knowledge is the correctly interpreted and understood information; knowledge is used in decision making; it is also used in the informed decision

making process. Knowledge can be easy or complex. Knowledge that is **easy** to communicate is called **explicit knowledge**, knowledge that has been or can be articulated, codified, and stored in a certain medium. Knowledge which cannot easily be communicated is termed as complex and tacit. Codification or articulation is the process required to transform the **complex tacit knowledge** into **explicit** knowledge in order for it to be readily transmitted to others. When many individuals hold explicitly valuable knowledge which they do not communicate to others, they fail to facilitate the sharing of that explicit or easy knowledge. When people share knowledge and combine efforts they develop themselves without being too dependent on anyone else. They share knowledge on how to utilize resources for development rather than sharing consumption of resources into depletion.

Management is a set of activities directed at an organization's resources e.g. human, financial, physical and informational, with the aim of achieving organizational goals in an efficient and effective manner. It is the act of conducting, directing, administering, controlling and leading. Management levels include Top, Middle and Lower. They require information on which to base appropriate decisions on Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Coordinating and Controlling practices.

Information and Knowledge Management is defined as a range of practices and activities used by organizations to create, identify, represent and distribute knowledge for use and reuse, for awareness and learning for self, family, community, regional and national development. The discipline of knowledge forms a major part of information technology and human resource management, dominating today and changing in form every second. This is a challenge to information professionals.

Communication is the process of transmitting information from one person to another and cannot be ignored in the conference theme. It is the transmission of facts, ideas, and opinions. The process has the sender and the receiver. The message transmitted must be the same as the message received. The message can be characterized in different ways, e.g. a message can be simple, concrete, complex, abstract, etc. Communication can be effective, ineffective or non-effective. *Effective communication* is the process of sending a message in such a way that the message received is as close in meaning as possible to the message intended. Therefore

effective communication is based on the ideas of meaning and consistency of meaning. *Meaning* is that idea the individual who initiates the communication exchange wishes to convey. In effective communication, the meaning is transmitted in such a way that the receiving person, the receiver, understands it in the same way as the sender intended.

In the age of mobile communication, information professionals as already challenged, need to appreciate that this is a very transformative technology for information dissemination and knowledge management.

Management Information System (MIS) is a system that gathers comprehensive data, organizes and summarizes it in a form valuable to managers and provides those managers with information they need to do their work, to perform their duties. There is focus on the use of information systems in an organization, therefore emphasizing on management.

A basic MIS relies on an integrated database of information that managers in various functional areas can access to utilize the same in order to make informed decisions, e.g. a financial manager can check the human resource files to identify possible conditions for promotion into the finance department.

An integrated database receives, organizes, summarizes and calculates data and information from managers, then communicates them to any manager from any functional area (e.g. marketing, finance, operations, and human resource) that is networked into the system

Conflict is violent clashing, being at odds, differing and disagreeing strongly. Successful conflict resolution occurs by listening to and providing opportunities to meet the needs of all parties, and to adequately address interests so that each party is satisfied with the outcome. Conflict is defined in the Kenya government national policy (2006) on peace building and conflict management as ‘the existence of inharmonious relationships resulting from incompatible interests or behaviour; the inharmonious relations which may be latent or violent’.

Conflict Resolution is the process of analyzing, unraveling and separating components in order to resolve the deeper rooted causes of conflict, unanimously and with firmness for the purpose of clearing causes

of the conflict. It is the process of attempting to resolve a dispute or a conflict. Successful conflict resolution occurs by listening to and providing opportunities to meet the needs of all parties, and to adequately address interests so that each party is satisfied with the outcome.

Truthfulness is moral quality of being honest, conforming to facts, reality and reliability. The meaning of the word **truth** or truthfulness extends from honesty, good faith, and sincerity in general, to agreement with fact or reality in particular.

Peace is freedom from disturbance, war and hostilities. It is quietness of mind. It is harmony.

Justice is just behaviour, a concern for genuine respect and treatment. Justice is a collective name which can be divided into two broad perspectives. It is just behavior; a concern for genuine respect and treatment which is to be regarded as fair and equal. It is merited reward or punishment. It is administration of the law.

Reconciliation is renewal and restoration of friendship after estrangement. It is harmonizing apparently opposed ideas.

Truth and reconciliation processes is aiding community healing through addressing impunity.

A **Truth Commission Or Truth And Reconciliation Commission** is a commission tasked with discovering and revealing past wrongdoing by a government, in the hope of resolving conflict left over from the past.

Human Rights refer to the “basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled. Examples of rights and freedoms which are often thought of as human rights include civil and political rights, such as the right to life and liberty, freedom of expression, and equality before the law; and social, cultural and economic rights, including the right to participate in culture, the right to food, the right to work, and the right to education.

Introduction

Kenya and Africa at large is witnessing abuse of human rights, what everybody is calling ‘xenophobia’ in South Africa. A columnist in recent

local dailies argued that xenophobia is a result of poor intercultural communication where members of one culture do not understand, appreciate and accommodate those from another culture. Such people lack adequate information to deal with the 'strange neighbours', 'colleagues', 'in-laws' and even 'friends', without stress and without feeling threatened by them in a competitive world. Another writer after the 1997 disaster referred to such feelings as 'fear' and not 'hatred', fear due perception of threat, fear of the possible loss of social status and identity, both individual and collective identity. It is fear of domination. This is all about fear of the known and the unknown.

Besides the killings, maiming, the abuse in all forms, the expected and desired unconstitutional redistribution not only of property rightfully owned by another, including residential houses, but also redistribution of businesses. Kenyans call this 'redistribution of wealth'! With total disregard of the rule of law. This is based on the premise that an unfair process has already distributed the wealth to 'them' and left 'us' with nothing, hence the purported redistribution or second distribution aimed at correcting the first 'misdistributions'.

The situation in Kenya is that thousands of displaced people are being made to go back to their destroyed and looted former homes and businesses. The same people and many of those who are struggling to settle elsewhere are still traumatized while others are struggling to forget the traumatic experiences they went through at the end of 2007 and the beginning of 2008.

Politicians and the Government are currently promoting healing and reconciliation as well as resettlement. All are aware that the Kenya Parliament has apparently proposed and even published a bill on the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission. Kenya has also popularized the term 'Healing' and similar terms, all in the context of the recent crimes against humanity and acts of genocide. Many experienced these acts first hand or know people at personal level who experienced these horrific acts. Many including young children who did not know anything about voting or land or ethnicity, leave alone tribalism or savagery, lost their lives.

The bill identifies as crimes against humanity, the offences committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack both verbal and or physical directed against a civilian population to include murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation or forcible transfer of population, torture, rape, illegal imprisonment, state detention leading to disappearance and persecution against any identifiable group on racial, ethnic or religious grounds, among others. The question *information professionals* should ask is this. Is the bill really inclusive of all the crimes against humanity? Are the bill designers or drafters well informed, critically knowledgeable to be inclusive, particularly historically, socially, economically, politically, religiously and culturally? Is it a bill that, when it becomes law, will protect all Kenyans equally, individually and in groups and regions, today, tomorrow and in years to come? Are the designers and the parliamentarians well informed to make the right decisions? Have any of them at any time been supporters of perpetrators of any crimes against humanity? Does the bill truthfully and technically have serious flaws as claimed by the Human Rights Watch based in London? The *information professionals* have a big and critical role to play. Can the professionals who have specialized in the areas directly involved in this bill and the prospective act formulation and application, play their professional roles truthfully, efficiently and effectively? Kenyan Information professionals have to positively face and deal with this challenge squarely, openly all the time.

Healing and reconciliation are not a one day, one week or one year affair. The two are deep and long term processes. Undoubtedly without unearthing the causes of the fear and subsequent genocide and destruction of property, of infrastructure and social amenities, healing and reconciliation may not be successfully implemented to be achieved as expected. If correct statements are not made by the correct people at the right time, healing and reconciliation may not be achieved. There is talk about forgiveness. For forgiveness to be reconciliatory, it requires opening the injury so that the wound may be fully healed, forgiven. Ideally, forgiveness is successful when the offender repents and apologizes to the offended, best when the offender repays for the damage, where this is practical. T quotes the bible (1 John chap. 1 verse 8, 9) 'if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us.'

For a project to be efficiently and effectively implemented, the project must be clearly thought out and planned. There is need to draw the distinction between healing and reconciliation on paper and the implementation of the same on the ground. All decisions at the planning and implementation stages must be informed decisions. And here comes the ***information professional***. The information professionals must identify, collect, organize and provide the right information to the correct decision maker at the right time and in the form the decision maker requires that information.

A Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission was set up in Kenya within the decade. It submitted the report some years back. Not many Kenyans got to know the contents of the report. They did not access the information, and if they did, they did not evaluate it critically to acquire knowledge relevant to the Kenyan situation; the state or situation of recurrence of crimes against humanity – before and after 1963, particularly in 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2007.

How then can ***information professionals*** ensure that people, their current and prospective clients, know about, locate and access the information they need when they need it and in the form they need it and to enable them to acquire and be critical about the knowledge they acquire? The ***information professionals*** are conversant with the fact that the current and prospective clients are not just the old but the young as well, not just the literate, but the illiterate as well, not just the poor, but the well-endowed as well, not just the self employed, but other employees including those in private and public institutions, and many others as the list is long, not just the youth in learning institutions or in gainful employment, but also and especially the frustrated and unemployed youth.

Information professionals' main roles, just to re-emphasize, include identification, collection, organization, and provision of sources of information in order to fully participate in the management and dissemination of the right information to the right people at the right time in the form the information is required, so that the recipient can acquire and appropriately utilize the knowledge gained.

Information professionals are challenged to be ***proactive***. They should not just wait for clients to come to them but should go out and get clients;

be out and about to cultivate new client hood because information professionals know, and should know, who the prospective clients are and the kind of information they require to gain the knowledge they are in need of. The clients include the government – both executive and political - the private sector, the cultural and religious organizations, the civil society; the clientele include all Kenyans, all foreigners.

The revolution in computers and telecommunications networks and the accelerated rate of this change, along with the global explosion in knowledge, are creating unprecedented changes in the flow of information in and among nations. New jobs, and explosion in entrepreneurship, access to education, new modes of community building, ease of access to global markets-all of these, and many more, are dividends of revolution in information technology. Information professionals are further challenged to lead in this revolution in order to efficiently and effectively solve the persistent conflict between and among Kenyan countrymen and women of all ages.

ICT in Conflict Resolution

Since the creation of the World Wide Web in 1993, there has been significant increase in the use of the Internet as a source of communication, information and commerce. Internationally, the size of the on-line community is doubling every year. In the last four years, Kenyans have increasingly taken up use of the Internet, to the point where they are one of the highest user populations in Africa. Kenya compares so favourably with other nations is quite positive given the increasing importance of the Internet and other digital technologies to education, politics, business and socio economic development.

There is optimism in the potential the Internet and ICT has, to enhance people's access to knowledge, work, culture and politics, particularly given its capacity to transcend geography. Their expectation is that, sooner rather than later, the Internet will be as popular as television, with a penetration rate of 95 per cent. Others however, are more reserved in their predictions. New technology in the past has tended to be most utilized by the more educated and affluent. Information professionals have a major role to play in ensuring that the new technology is utilized by those who need it, when they need it and in the form they need it to achieve their goals.

But where is the **truth**? Who tells the truth and how can truth be told? Anyone can publish anything, often to excite readers or malign the perceived enemy. This happened and continues to happen in Kenya through Internet. What about copyright?

Culture, Information and Knowledge Management for change

Culture is the strongest and most dominant human 'religion'. Religion is secondary to the culture of a people. Recent events have clearly shown that different communities may share a common religion without ever sharing cultural beliefs.

'Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained'

Critical thinkers use information to gain knowledge, study the knowledge with critical minds. The critical thinkers who use knowledge gained become risk takers, the risk takers who influence future change and development. Critical thinkers are not led. They are leaders. Critical thinkers are not rulers. They lead; they do not rule. Critical thinkers demonstrate through getting involved, and not through pointing fingers and asking or ruling others to take the risks to the unknown.

The Gypsy Effect

The Gypsies have lived in the Middle East and Europe for over 1000 years. These are people who have refused to change with time or space. They are people who have access to information but do not use new knowledge to change or to be like those around them. Gypsies have refused to undergo 'formal' or 'modern' education. Gypsies have refused to live in modern houses. Gypsies have refused to be influenced by other people from the so-called 'modern' way of life. They live in caravans. They move from one location to another. They adopt and learn the language of the people living in the region they move into but they retain their culture and their itinerant or wondering way of life.

It is said that one European country tried to change the Gypsies living in this part of the world. They isolated the young and bred them into being 'normal citizens'. Years later as groups, when they discovered that their origin was Gypsy and that they had been uprooted from their culture and

isolated from their own, they took that government to court and moved back into the caravan life.

Just reflect on the ***'black box approach'*** e.g. in education that is influenced by culture and vice versa. Different cultures respond to forces of change differently. The Gypsy culture as already seen is in the extreme where change is least accommodated. Others say *'kumagara ni kuhiga'* meaning that if and when one travels, one learns new things, new ways of doing things. These are the people who go out ready to learn from others, to change through learning new things. They are always looking for better ways of doing things. They are always looking for better ways affecting all aspects of life. They study new situations. They ask questions. They change for better ways. They are ready to change. Their culture allows them to change. The Agikuyu of Kabete ask some one who has just visited *'Kwanyu niki mwatukiria?'* What new thing do you have in your place that we do not have? And a traveler returning home from a far off place is asked by his family and neighbours, *'Niki wonire nakuu kingituteithia?'* What useful thing did you learn where you were that can help us improve our lives?

They are ready to learn. They are ready to experiment and change. The leader leads by example, not by word of mouth. For example, by the turn of the 20th century, The Agikuyu was convinced that doing away with female circumcision after proposed by colonialists would lead to prostitution. When female circumcision was challenged by the foreigners, the Agikuyu were resistant. But through extended contact with people from Europe, a few studied the proposal and concluded that the physical female circumcision was not that essential to morality since white female missionaries and their African Christian converts were not prostitutes. They concluded that training in morals as girls grew up was more fundamental than a localized surgical procedure. They accepted to experiment; to experiment with their daughters and sisters, if and where they had enough influence. The percentage of the resistant population chose to critically observe the results of this change, some for over 25 years, after which the majority accepted and advocated for this change.

The Americans are said to change with anything. They experiment. The British are on the other hand said not to be enthusiastic about change.

They do not change easily.

But rules of nature dictate that survival depends on adaptation. Rules of nature allow experimentation. But in some cultures, rules governing change remain the same irrespective of 'modern' qualifications such as masters of sciences, arts, etc, or PhDs of this or that subject or field of study.

Conservative cultures that resist experimentation tend to be left behind by the experimenters. Experimenters are also competitors and competition is an asset for the experimenters. Experimenters do not fear competition but take it as a challenge. The experimenters naturally win through competition. Those who do not experiment, who do not easily change, the conservatives, tend to hate, if not just fear, those who change, those who experiment, and those who compete and win. All down the ages, those who cling to conservative cultures have in the end become extinct through Darwinian forces of survival of the fittest.

But the experimenters, the winners, are often considered to have been favoured. Compare Tanzanians and Kenyans. Compare Kenyans in general and the people near Nairobi capital City of Kenya. The Kenyans who live near Nairobi are said to have been favoured, so the statements always go. Nobody wants to know what these people have suffered and how they have survived the suffering.

At the regional level, Kenyans are said to have been favoured by the colonialists. Tanzania has Dar es Salaam as an old city just as Kenya has Nairobi, both imposed by the colonialists. The Tanzanians around the city of Dar es Salaam have not in comparison, changed much. They have not experimented as aggressively as Kenyans. The majority are unlike the WaHaya who live 1000 km away, to the west of Dar es Salaam. Being so far away and near the lake, they have to use boats and even air, if they dare! to reach their homes. The WaHaya experiment with new things to succeed in life and to ensure survival. The WaHaya as experimenters have moved with the times and adjusted, just as the people near and around Nairobi. And just as people from central Kenya, the WaHaya are also accused of having been favoured!

Western Kenyan is not as far away from the main Kenyan city as the or Bukoba region Mwanza, the nearest urban centre for the WaHaya. For

example, the WaHaya were devastated with AIDS. But with information which they critically converted into knowledge, they changed their ways of life and checked the spread of the disease. With changed behaviour to save themselves, led by the chairman of Kanyigo village where initially, only about 300 people had been wiped out by AIDS. Due to the AIDS infections on the productive labour force, their economy was declining very fast. Traders had brought the disease but the WaHaya decided to control its spread through data collection, tests as they demanded open screening. They were the first community in East Africa to wake up and fight for their survival. They sought and accessed appropriate knowledge which they utilized it to make informed decisions.

Kenyans have refused to critically analyze information and distinguish between the experimenters and the conservatives. They have refused to access historical and cultural information, to critically analyze this information, to convert it into knowledge and to use that knowledge to understand ourselves.

In Kenya, people are free to learn and to become what they want, (especially as products of modern education systems). Yet the learned have no authority to change or even touch cultural norms, because the norms reign supreme over education. The products of 'modern' education have no authority to influence anything cultural. For example, modern education cannot influence the relationships with the environment, between the people, or influence methods of bringing up children, or who you marry and when you marry, among many other cultural factors that must remain sacrosanct. Rules governing any change remain the same to all members of the cultural communities irrespective of 'modern, education and professional qualifications.

Notably, many Kenyan communities with extensive interaction with foreigners have higher levels of insecurity, yet they are the ones who should have 'developed' more. The Gypsy factor is always ignored yet it is the main factor not to be ignored in understanding the character of Kenyan communities. It is the Gypsy factor that results in the degree of behavioural adaptation to ensure survival of the cultural group in the new ever-changing, competitive world.

The Maasai are regarded as rich. One of them was rich a few months ago with 200 heads of cattle worth 20,000 Ksh. each. He was a millionaire with 4 million shillings walking on hooves. He did not sell these cows. Not even 50% of them. Drought came. He now has hardly any living cow head left. He could have sold half of his stock and had 2 million shillings in the bank in anticipation that drought that always comes in the drought cycle will come and negatively affect his walking wealth. He did not sell any of them in order to avoid deaths caused by drought. Drought came and he lost his cows, making him struggle to sell hides and dry bones at give-away prices. He is currently surviving on a few goats. He could not agree to turn his perishable goods into 2 million Kenya shillings each year, which he could. He will not sell at least 100 cows at 20,000. on hooves and deposit the 2 m in a fixed deposit account to tide himself over during difficult times, for example during illness, famine, etc. Each time the disasters occur, the state is expected to step in. Attempts have been made to encourage the Maasai to adopt camels without much success. But one person who is of Maasai and European origin has reared camels for several years in Maasai land.

The Maasai have accepted their predicaments and are at peace with their environment. Their free movement across different climatic regions was curtailed by colonialism, the system that evicted the Maasai from their ancestral land and which further created unnatural boundaries that limited and continue to limit the Maasai's pastoral cultural practices. They were moved south from Uasin Gishu, Nakuru and Laikipia. Unfortunately the Maasai are shrinking slowly towards getting extinct, as many others in various parts of the world have done many years before them. Hollis in 1902 said, 'it is a sad fact that whenever indigenous people come into contact with western civilization, they eventually become extinct unless they adapt and change.' He expressed his hope that the Maasai will learn to adopt so that the western way of life does not drive them to extinction as they have done to other indigenous people. Many other Kenyans were also moved from their ancestral lands. Many have managed to adapt to the changing times.

With information, one has to learn to critically analyze the competition for survival that is reigning in the whole world. Each group is struggling to

survive and to dominate. Footballers are experts in these techniques. They study the techniques and tactics of the opposing teams, particularly the winning teams. They copy the best to improve their own. They send explorers to learn the culture of the winning teams. Livingstone and other explorers of his time visited parts of the world to learn about other human beings. They did. They sported the resources that were valuable for their survival. More recently the Malaysians explored the world and brought back home new knowledge for their own survival as they now attempt to compete in the world at par.

All children are born equal and why the differences which we experience as we grow up? In most cases, the information required to gain appropriate knowledge was not sought. If it was sought, it was not found. If it was sought and found it was not interpreted to be understood. If it was understood it was not critically analyzed. Those born equal ended up growing up unequally.

Fostering Ethnic Cohesiveness

Indigenous knowledge

“One of the often unnoticed tragedies of an era of technological advance and improving communications is the passing of living memory of customs, language and beliefs as small insular pockets of culture are overtaken by the sweep of ‘civilization’ (Leakey, L.S.B. 1977. vol. 1)

Indigenous knowledge is essential in understanding a people in a specific community. Such issues as those relating to health, laws, education, security, social and cultural relationships are paramount in this context. Most communities had ceremonies for the maintenance of truth, peace, justice and reconciliation.

My mother of Nyeri traded in the 19th century with the Maasai without any risks. My father in law of Kabete traded from Ukambani to Nyanza. They were protected by indigenous travelers treaties respected all over this region.

In most cases, the African indigenous knowledge which was customarily passed on from generation to generation is no longer systematically being passed on. Indeed much of it is already lost. It is only in the recent years,

for example, that the world and the African peoples themselves are beginning to appreciate that after all, the African indigenous language was paramount to their survival. It is only now that this knowledge is being recognized and appreciated as of value to human kind.

Indigenous knowledge was mainly unwritten; therefore it was recorded in people's heads and handed down orally. The knowledge which has not been lost is largely held by the older people and the young do not show much interest in receiving it.

There are initiatives on the digital documentation of IK to digitally preserve heritage sites and artifacts. The digital content of IK should be created and made accessible through digital library and multimedia. Several technological challenges such as the accessibility of large data over the Internet, powerful search capabilities that supports national and international library standards to support will allow rapid retrieval of information, using appropriate technology.

Information professionals should capture and organize up this indigenous knowledge and disseminate it in effort to enhance truth peace justice and reconciliation. With information technology they should build digital banks of indigenous knowledge for posterity ensuring copyrights and intellectual property rights are observed.

The role of Government

The recently published Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission Bill after nearly 1200 Kenyans were killed and nearly 500,000 others were uprooted from their homes is due for debate in parliament. Destruction of property and capital of the Micro and Small Business Enterprises is estimated at 90 billion shillings. (NAIC 2008. p. v) The estimated budget to resettle Kenyans in the recovery strategy is 31.47 billion Internally Displaced Persons are unwilling to be settled without guaranteed compensation. They can sense the injustice. The crimes directed at the civilian population are against humanity; they are acts of genocide, are abuses of human rights including killings, abductions, disappearances, detentions, torture, ill-treatment and expropriation of property. The Kenyan bill includes such crimes as murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, or forcible transfer of population, torture, rape, illegal imprisonment, state detention leading to

disappearance and persecution against any identifiable group on racial, ethnic or religious grounds, among others.

But The bill has skipped historical injustices; injustices which have in many aspects led to the situation that keeps repeating itself every five years leaving many dead, many traumatized and many valuable properties destroyed or stolen from the legal owners.

Justification for Law on Ethnic Harmony

Ethnic prejudice in the form of negative tribalism has become a problem whose solution has proved resistant to the usual no-legal approaches. Every so often the problem gives rise to ugly episodes of harassment and in extreme cases to attacks in which Kenyan citizens lose their lives and property because other Kenyans perceive them as coming from another ethnic group and therefore as the “enemy”. Recent so called “ethnic clashes” and other forms of torture and crimes against humanity have indicated that there is need for protection of all ethnic groups in Kenya.

Ethnic Discrimination Is A Crime Against Humanity

Since the horrible events in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, ethnic discrimination has come to be regarded as a crime against humanity. We in Kenya do not have to wait for our own situation to deteriorate before we accept that ethnic discrimination is internationally regarded as a crime against humanity. No Kenyan should ever suffer because of his/her ethnicity. Ethnic discrimination is also covered under the “International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination” which was agreed by the UN General Assembly in resolution 2106 (XX) of December 1965.

‘The adoption of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia is closely related with the problem of creating a workable and manageable state structure, which could be compatible with the complex ethnic diversity of the country. In other words, federalism in its present kind was established in Ethiopia because political forces conceived it as the only viable form of government that would solve the age old problem in the relationship of the country’s diverse ethnic and linguistic groups. Nevertheless, interethnic tensions and conflicts have accompanied federalization process in Ethiopia.’ (Alemneh Moges, 2007)

Perhaps the Ethnic Harmony Bill just published will initiate a dynamic self-propelling process that will in the end mould Kenya into one united though diverse society. This will be a society where different ethnic groups will cherish their own cultural heritage as well as that of others. This will enable Kenyans to learn to respect the need for the maintenance of the ethnic diversity and identity of fellow Kenyans. When this happens, the real or imagined fear that different Kenyan ethnic groups now have regarding domination by other ethnic groups will be eliminated and we shall all find a new true unity in diversity. Should the government effectively utilizing cultural knowledge in diversity manage to bring about this unity, it will have achieved one of greatest feats of participatory and interactive positive social engineering.

Information professionals are challenged to disseminate appropriate information to the suggested Commission to enable it provide Kenya with effective mechanisms for educating its citizens on the need to foster and cherish ethnic peace and harmony and to provide the nation with an efficient system for diagnosing and solving potential ethnic problems before such problems harm anybody in the country. Information professionals will have played a vital role of ensuring peace and harmony for both the present and future generations.

Conclusion

Information professional in Kenya and Africa at large, have a unique responsibility, a responsibility that many professional may not fully appreciate but a responsibility that Kenyans have hardly began to appreciate. Information professions in the 21st century need to:

- Embrace information technology, the technology destined to improve information management and information dissemination for effective utilization.
- Get out there and provide information for knowledge management in all aspects of life, with appropriate specialization, including truth, peace, justice and reconciliation in Kenya, wipe out and discourage the repeat of the unconstitutional phenomenon Kenya has witnessed over the years, over more than a hundred years.
- Play your role as experts in the provision of information for knowledge management to all Kenyan citizens including the young



and the old; the employed and the unemployed; male and female.

- Organize and help disseminate truthful knowledge that will enable Kenyans to appreciate and value each other's diversity, so that in the end, different Kenyan nations of communities will truly tell each other 'while I admit that you are different from me, I will fight to protect your cultural diversity as a fellow citizen of our beloved country.

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