

# Peace work and human rights

Editors: Christiane Kayser and Flaubert Djateng



## Building Peace



Civil Peace Service (CPS) /  
BfdW – Mano River Region, DR Congo  
and Cameroon

# Building Peace

**Brot für die Welt (BfdW)**

Bread for the World

**Financed by the BMZ** (Bundesministerium  
für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit – German Federal  
Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)

# **Peace work and human rights**

# **Brot** für die Welt

**Brot für die Welt (BfdW)** (Bread for the World)

**Financed by the BMZ** (German Federal Ministry  
for Economic Cooperation and Development, Bundesministerium  
für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung)



All rights reserved in all countries

English edition, January 2020  
Copyright © 2020 by CPS/BfdW,  
Bafoussam, Berlin

Edited by Christiane Kayser and Flaubert Djateng  
Translation from the French: Linda Herbertson and Susan Norton  
Cover photo: Jonas Knauerhase  
Production and design: Eberhard Delius, Berlin  
Layout: Reih's Satzstudio, Lohmar

**Contact:**  
**Flaubert Djateng:** [fdjateng9@gmail.com](mailto:fdjateng9@gmail.com)  
[www.peaceworkafrica.net](http://www.peaceworkafrica.net)

## Table of contents

<b>Introduction</b> . . . . .	7
<i>by Christiane Kayser and Flaubert Djateng</i>	
<b>Peace work and human rights: an essential but stormy alliance</b> . . . . .	10
<i>by Christiane Kayser</i>	
<b>Human rights and sustaining peace</b> . . . . .	14
<i>IPI – International Peace Institute</i>	
<b>Reflections on the peace process and the role of psychosocial counselling</b> . . . . .	30
<i>by Antoine Denkhaus</i>	
<b>Who protects civil society organizations committed to human rights?</b> . . . . .	36
<i>by Flaubert Djateng</i>	
<b>Moses “the African”: A human rights defender model for positive peace in Cameroon and Africa</b> . . . . .	39
<i>by Alain Cyrille Abena and Rev. Ebaï Gustav Tabi</i>	
<b>Challenges and risks of the work of local human rights defenders in the context of their activities to promote and defend human rights and peace</b> . . . . .	50
<i>by Rostin Manketa Nkwahata</i>	
<b>The promotion of the rights of indigenous Pygmy peoples for peaceful cohabitation between communities in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo</b> . . . . .	57
<i>by Me Christian K. Sondirya, Me Jacques N. Birikunzira, Me Donald K. Kasyenene</i>	
<b>Social networks as vectors of a new democratic movement: the limits of a new space for protest in Africa</b> . . . . .	69
<i>by Wassy Kambale</i>	

<b>Carefully chosen words</b> . . . . .	79
Community media <i>by Geraldine Fobang, Rosaline Akah Obah, Alexander Vojvoda</i>	
<b>A country in a tail-spin</b> . . . . .	83
Training in journalism in Cameroon at the start of a civil war <i>by Aya Bach</i>	
<b>“You have to rely on people”</b> . . . . .	91
Bread for the World’s support system for the CPS (Civil Peace Service) programme in Africa <i>by Christiane Kayser and Flaubert Djateng</i>	
<b>Land grabbing for mining in the Katanga region</b> . . . . .	97
<i>by Audace Manirahinyuza</i>	
<b>Land and conflict prevention, achieving SDG 16</b> . . . . .	107
<i>by Santigie Sesay</i>	
<b>A chance for change</b> . . . . .	119
<i>by Claudia Christine Wolf</i>	

# Introduction

For some years now, whenever we have asked Bread for the World's partners and peace workers in Africa about the topics to be covered in this series of booklets, they have suggested “peace work and human rights” among other things. We therefore took a closer look at the topic and the following questions seemed relevant:

- ◆ Peacebuilding: what are the specificities of human rights work? What complementarities? How can the two approaches be mutually reinforcing?
- ◆ Are we aiming at a “**negative peace**” (the absence of direct violence and armed conflicts) or a “**positive peace**” (a structural transformation towards a socio-political and economic system capable of giving rise to justice and sustaining peace)?
- ◆ Linking the promotion of human rights and sustaining peace provides a single strategic entry point to facilitate the transition from a culture of crisis management to a culture of prevention.
- ◆ Human rights, the struggle for justice, societal conflicts and peace work: how to prioritize the essential?
- ◆ Challenges and risks for local human rights defenders.
- ◆ The place of Northern partners in human rights work, what are the common objectives with Southern actors, what are the differences in interests?
- ◆ Decisive factors and principles for effective human rights work.

On this basis we received a number of articles from CPS actors and others involved in the field.

We have also seen that there is a need to define more precisely the notions of “human rights” and—once again—“peace”.

In this publication, after an introduction to the concepts and questions, you will find various experiences on the subject.

Christiane Kayser briefly outlines the definitions of the concepts, the latest trends and challenges. The IPI (International Peace Institute) summarizes the issues surrounding human rights and sustaining peace.

Then Antoine Denkhaus, a peace worker in the West of DR Congo, shares his experiences with the potential of psycho-social counselling in redefining the notion of peace in this context.

Flaubert Djateng discusses risks and possible protections for human rights defenders in the context of Cameroon and other African countries. He also touches on the responsibilities of the northern partners.

Alain Cyrille Abena and Rev. Ebaï Gustav Tabi tell us about Moses the African, whom they see as a model of human rights advocacy for positive peace in Africa and Cameroon.

Rostin Manketa Nkwahata of the *Voix des Sans Voix* in Kinshasa talks about the risks and challenges faced by a human rights defenders' organisation in the context of the DRC.

The lawyers Sondirya, Birikunzira and Kasyenene from Goma and Katwa share their experiences in defending the rights of Pygmies in the DRC.

Wassy Kambale explains to us what the use of social networks as vectors of new democratic movements can bring but also what the limits are in the African and more specifically Congolese context.

The second part of the publication includes articles recently published in other contexts that we find interesting and important.

Geraldine Fobang, Rosaline Akah Obah and Alexander Vojvoda describe the delicate and essential work of community radio in Cameroon in a situation of crisis and open conflict. This text was published in English in *Development and Cooperation* (website : <https://www.dandc.eu/en>). This magazine can be downloaded for free in English and German.

Aya Bach shares her experiences as a teacher of a journalism course in Cameroon and the challenges faced by her students.

We also share a brief exchange on the lessons learnt from the experiences of *Christiane Kayser and Flaubert Djateng* in support of the work of the Civil Peace Service in several African countries.

These two contributions have originally been published in German in a *Weltsichten* dossier together with CPS/Bread for the World and can be downloaded under: <https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/sites/ziviler-friedensdienst.org/files/anhang/publikation/zfd-dossier-suche-frieden-und-jage-ihm-nach-91862.pdf>.

Audace Manirahinyuza describes efforts to build bridges in the conflicts surrounding land grabbing for mining in the Katanga region of DRC.

Sanitigie Sesay shares his organization's experience around land conflicts in Sierra Leone.

Claudia Christine Wolf sees an opportunity for change through the landslide disaster at Mount Sugarloaf in the Western Peninsula of Sierra Leone.

These three texts have been published in English by *FriEnt* in July 2019 in the study "Land and Conflict Prevention" and can be downloaded under: <https://www.frient.de/publikationen/dokument/land-and-conflict-prevention>.

We hope that these texts will be useful for your work and encourage you to move forward. As always, any critical remarks, reactions or discussion will be welcome.

*Christiane Kayser  
Flaubert Djateng  
January 2020*

# Peace work and human rights: an essential but stormy alliance

By *Christiane Kayser\**

**“Sustaining peace” should be understood as “a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account”<sup>1</sup>.**

The peacebuilding work of Bread for the World (Brot für die Welt, BfdW) is based on the necessity of the link between peace and justice. Justice is understood here as a category of a social practice of solidarity that supports the weak and disadvantaged. Peace is seen as the result of a societal process of conflict transformation; a “graveyard peace” based on the oppression of one group by another is never sustainable. It takes a minimum of human rights guaranteed by a legitimate body such as a state that is subject to the rule of law to achieve peace. Human rights encompass not only civil and political rights, but also social, economic and cultural rights (i.e. those relating to the workplace, social security, family life, participation in cultural life and access to water, food, housing, health care and education, among others). Today we must also ask ourselves whether ecological and climate change issues are not closely linked to human rights.

<sup>1</sup> Security Council resolution 2282 (27 April 2016), S/RES/2282; General Assembly resolution 70/262 (27 April 2016), A/RES/70/262.

\* Christiane Kayser co-edits the “Peacebuilding” series of publications with Flaubert Djateng. She is an independent consultant and has been actively involved in various development projects in West and Central Africa since 1984.

Peace work is therefore eminently political.<sup>2</sup> We are not necessarily talking about political action linked to parties or aimed at taking power. It is simply a matter of analysing the causes of existing injustices and working to overcome them. This work is linked to values of solidarity and non-violent defence of each other's vital interests and rights.

But alas, it is more than ever a long and arduous task in a world increasingly torn apart by violence and the rationales of power and material gain.

A second condition for sustainable peace is partnership with those most concerned, the local actors, because peace must “grow from within” and is not established on the basis of military interventions or diplomatic dialogues dominated by the outside world. Local actors for peace must play an essential role within a society.

Yet in many situations around the world and increasingly so, non-violent actors run great risks if they commit themselves to peace and justice. This is true for many African countries, but it is unfortunately true to varying degrees for all the countries in the world. To mention but one example: in Germany, a state governed by the rule of law in the middle of Europe, in recent years a far-right populist movement has developed - it even sits in parliament - and at the same time there is growing intimidation by far-right elements of mayors and elected representatives of small municipalities who defend the human rights of refugees living there. This goes as far as death threats and physical assaults and has led to a wave of resignations of local elected officials. This shocking and dangerous situation threatens democratic institutions and cannot be overcome without the decisive support of a significant part of local

<sup>2</sup> See for example the publication edited by Dr Martina Fischer on the links between justice and peace: <https://info.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/blog/ekd-synode-lesebuch-gerechtigkeit-frieden>, as well as the publication “Together for Justice” under [https://info.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/sites/default/files/blog-downloads/profil\\_24\\_gerechtigkeit.pdf](https://info.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/sites/default/files/blog-downloads/profil_24_gerechtigkeit.pdf). Notably the article: “Peace and Justice” by Andreas Dieterich and Caroline Kruckow.

communities. What then of countries where the social fabric is even more torn apart and where the state does not guarantee the rights of citizens in any way?

In a December 2017 publication “Human Rights and Sustaining Peace”, the International Peace Institute (IPI) notes that:

“Widespread human rights abuses can be an indicator of future instability or a harbinger of the imminent risk of violent conflict. Respect for human rights can thus serve as a preventive tool for sustaining peace.”<sup>3</sup>

This idea seems very interesting to me, but it still faces many challenges. Analysts and researchers often contrast peace with justice by pointing to the choice between pragmatism and principles; the political process and norms or values.<sup>4</sup> This places “maximalist” human rights defenders in opposition to pragmatic conflict managers seeking compromises. However, it seems to me that these analyses put foreign players at the centre of the system on both sides again and again and do not consider the processes necessary within a society. Compromises are and always will be necessary, but the central issue is who comes out stronger from an agreement or action. If local actors are more capable of knowing and defending their rights in a non-violent way, a step forward has been made. But if, as in many cases, society as a whole comes out weakened and dependent, peace and justice remain a distant dream.

On more than one occasion, human rights abuses (real or alleged) have been used as a pretext to invade or occupy a country, as in the cases of Irak and Libya. However, the results of these interventions leave no room for doubt: both countries and the people living there are worse off than before. It is understandable that in situations of terrorist aggression, as in the Sahel countries at present, recourse is made to

3 See full text page 14 of this publication

4 An interesting publication on this subject: *Human Rights and Conflict Transformation The Challenges of Just Peace*, by Véronique Dudouet and Beatrix Schmelzle (eds.), Berghof Handbook Dialogue series no. 9, © 2010 Berghof Conflict Research/ Berghof Forschungszentrum für konstruktive Konfliktbearbeitung

military support from outside. But it also becomes increasingly obvious that, without strengthening the social fabric and local capacities for peace, the fragmentation of societies prevents any lasting solution and makes the situation worse.

On the other hand, human rights are of little value when it comes to economic interests in trade with countries such as China, for example. There is also a growing impression that human rights are not the same for everyone: the inhuman and violent reaction of a number of governments and part of the European population to the arrival of refugees from countries at war or in difficult economic situations is not to the credit of the old continent and its humanist values.

All the more reason to strengthen movements and initiatives that are committed at all levels and on all continents to peace, justice and human rights. In view of the world situation this job may seem inadequate and tiny. But without the involvement and empowerment of local actors, there will be no lasting change. The Civil Peace Service makes it possible to enhance the value of actions, however small and hesitant they may be, undertaken by local actors. It also creates a platform to link these different actions and actors, allowing them to learn from each other and to see the impacts of their struggles more easily.

# Human rights and sustaining peace

*IPI – International Peace Institute\**

## Introduction

In the dual resolutions passed by the UN General Assembly and Security Council in April 2016, “sustaining peace” is understood as a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account.<sup>1</sup> Sustaining peace can be seen as “an explicit and deliberate policy objective for all states, regardless of whether or not they are affected by conflict.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, all societies possess features that contribute to sustaining peace, whether through their institutions, culture, policies, or other norms of interaction among individuals and between people and their states. Sustaining peace thus requires identifying the attributes and assets that have “sustained social cohesion, inclusive development, the rule of law and human security.”<sup>3</sup>

1 Security Council Resolution 2282 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. S/RES/2282; General Assembly Resolution 70/262 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. A/RES/70/262.

2 Youssef Mahmoud and Anupah Makoond, “Sustaining Peace: What Does It Mean in Practice?,” International Peace Institute, April 8, 2017, p. 2, available at [www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/1704\\_Sustaining-Peace-final.pdf](http://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/1704_Sustaining-Peace-final.pdf).

3 Ibid.

\* The INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE (IPI) is an independent, international not-for-profit think tank dedicated to managing risk and building resilience to promote peace, security, and sustainable development. To achieve its purpose, IPI employs a mix of policy research, strategic analysis, publishing, and convening. With staff from around the world and a broad range of academic fields, IPI has offices facing United Nations headquarters in New York and offices in Vienna and Manama.

Sustaining peace further promotes a holistic approach integrating all three pillars of the UN's engagement—human rights, peace and security, and development—so as not only to contain the immediate consequences of conflict but also to prevent the outbreak of violence by addressing the root causes of conflict.<sup>4</sup> Human rights violations and lack of accountability and prosecution for such violations are often drivers of conflict.<sup>5</sup> Monitoring human rights, therefore, could provide early warning of and help prevent destabilization of societies. Secretary-General António Guterres alluded to this in his April 2017 address to the Security Council, where he observed that “upholding human rights is a crucial element of prevention,” and “human rights are intrinsically linked to sustaining peace.”<sup>6</sup>

This paper seeks to demonstrate the role of human rights as a tool for prevention for sustaining peace. It reflects on three countries that, in part through their commitment to uphold and safeguard the rule of law and human rights, have managed to remain relatively peaceful, despite internal vulnerabilities and external pressures: Mauritius, Senegal, and Tunisia. Unlike previous issue briefs published as part of this series, where the primary focus was on conflict-affected contexts, this paper focuses on what relatively peaceful societies can teach us about sustaining peace.<sup>7</sup>

4 Ibid.

5 Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Combating Impunity and Strengthening Accountability and the Rule of Law,” available at [www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/Combatingimpunityandstrengtheningaccountability.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/Combatingimpunityandstrengtheningaccountability.aspx).

6 UN Secretary-General, “Remarks at Security Council meeting on ‘Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Human Rights and the Prevention of Armed Conflict,’” April 18, 2017, available at [www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2017-04-18/secretary-generals-remarks-security-council-meeting-maintenance](http://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2017-04-18/secretary-generals-remarks-security-council-meeting-maintenance).

7 Douglas P. Fry, “Conclusion: Learning from Peaceful Societies,” in *Keeping the Peace: Conflict Resolution and Peaceful Societies around the World*, Graham Kemp and Douglas P. Fry, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2004).

## Human Rights as Tools for Prevention for Sustaining Peace

As stated by Secretary-General Guterres in his address to the Human Rights Council in February 2017, “Perhaps the best prevention tool we have is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—and the treaties that derive from it. The rights set out in it identify many of the root causes of conflict; but equally they provide real world solutions through real change on the ground.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, human rights monitoring and analysis can provide early warning of grievances that, if left unaddressed, may lead to violence. Widespread human rights abuses can be an indicator of future instability or a harbinger of the imminent risk of violent conflict. Human rights can thus serve as a preventive tool for sustaining peace.

When looking at human rights as a prevention tool, it is necessary to consider the full spectrum of rights—not just political and civil rights but also economic, social, and cultural rights (i.e., rights related to the workplace, social security, family life, participation in cultural life, and access to housing, food, water, healthcare, and education, among others).<sup>9</sup> Discrimination and inequalities—particularly horizontal inequalities between ethnic, religious, and other population groups, whether in the form of differential access to public goods and services, limitations on freedom of expression, or denial of economic participation—can be powerful drivers of human rights violations, which pose a direct threat to peace.<sup>10</sup>

8 UN Secretary-General, “Remarks to the Human Rights Council,” February 27, 2017, available at [www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2017-02-27/secretary-generals-human-rights-council-remarks](http://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2017-02-27/secretary-generals-human-rights-council-remarks).

9 OHCHR, “Frequently Asked Questions on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,” 2008, p. 2, available at [www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ESCR/FAQ%20on%20ESCR-en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ESCR/FAQ%20on%20ESCR-en.pdf).

10 OHCHR, “Early Warning and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,” 2016, available at [www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ESCR/EarlyWarning\\_ESCR\\_2016\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ESCR/EarlyWarning_ESCR_2016_en.pdf).

## Human rights and positive peace

Human rights cement the bond between individuals and promote peaceful coexistence, thereby making societies more resilient. Research from the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) has shown that there is a strong connection between respect for human rights and peacefulness, or “positive peace.”<sup>11</sup> IEP defines positive peace as the attitudes, institutions, and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies.<sup>12</sup> This is further enshrined in Johan Galtung’s “positive peace” framework, according to which peace is not merely the absence of violence but also the presence of factors associated with peaceful societies.<sup>13</sup> Positive peace thus represents the capacity of a society to meet the needs of its citizens, reduce the number of grievances that arise, and resolve remaining disagreements without the use of violence.<sup>14</sup> As such, a state that respects and upholds human rights and the rule of law to prevent and address grievances is more likely to witness peace and stability.

One of the “pillars” IEP uses to measure positive peace is composed of human rights indicators: the “Acceptance of the Rights of Others” pillar (or the “rights pillar”).<sup>15</sup> According to IEP, “Formal laws guaranteeing basic human rights and freedoms and the informal social and cultural norms that relate to behaviors of citizens serve as proxies for the level of tolerance between different ethnic, linguistic, religious, and socio-economic groups within a country.”<sup>16</sup> IEP found that “the level

11 Institute for Economics and Peace, “Human Rights and Sustaining Peace,” background note, October 2017.

12 Institute for Economics and Peace, “Global Peace Index 2017,” p. 78, available at <http://vision-ofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/06/GPI17-Report.pdf>.

13 Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969).

14 Mahmoud and Makoond, “Sustaining Peace.”

15 Institute for Economics and Peace, “Pillars of Peace: Understanding the Key Attitudes and Institutions That Underpin Peaceful Societies,” September 2013, available at [www.gppplatform.ch/sites/default/files/Pillars%20of%20Peace%20Report%20%20IEP.pdf](http://www.gppplatform.ch/sites/default/files/Pillars%20of%20Peace%20Report%20%20IEP.pdf).

16 Institute for Economics and Peace, “Positive Peace Report 2016,” available at <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/02/Positive-Peace-Report-2016.pdf>.

of acceptance of the rights of others heavily impacts how individuals and groups will respond when a conflict arises” and that there is a relationship between the acceptance of the rights of others and peacefulness.<sup>17</sup> When expressing their grievances in functional democracies, individuals are less likely to resort to violence because they know that their rights are guaranteed by robust, inclusive, permanent, and independent institutions. Such grievances will most likely be handled through relatively peaceful and constitutional means.<sup>18</sup>

Often hailed as an example of stable democracy in West Africa,<sup>19</sup> Senegal is an example of a country that has remained peaceful in part through its commitment to pluralism and acceptance of the rights of others (see Box 1).

### **Box 1. Senegal**

In a region where political violence and instability are recurrent, Senegal has managed to remain relatively stable and peaceful, despite being home to one of sub-Saharan Africa's longest-standing insurgency movements in its Casamance region. According to IEP's 2017 Global Peace Index, Senegal is the sixtieth most peaceful country out of 163. Several factors account for this notable score. Senegal enjoys strong and independent institutions that control the ways power is acquired and exercised in accordance with the constitution, as well as a strong civil society capable of holding the government accountable. This was demonstrated in practice when, prior to the 2012 presidential elections, Abdoulaye Wade attempted to run for

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 64.

<sup>18</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace, “Human Rights and Sustaining Peace.”

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Dan Robinson, “Obama Praises Senegal, Calls Mandela ‘Hero for World,’” Voice of America, June 27, 2013, available at [www.voanews.com/a/obama-pays-tribute-to-mandela/1690242.html](http://www.voanews.com/a/obama-pays-tribute-to-mandela/1690242.html).

a third term (despite the constitutional two-term limit); protests led by the “Y’en a marre” citizen movement (“we are fed up”) succeeded in mobilizing popular opposition against this move, and Wade eventually relented.<sup>20</sup>

Another key element of Senegal’s stability is its attachment to inclusion, diversity, and pluralism.<sup>21</sup> Senegal’s political leaders have cultivated the idea that pluralism is a core part of the country’s national identity, and it has been common for political leadership to emphasize that Senegal is “a diverse but unified nation.”<sup>22</sup> Despite 95 percent of its population being Muslim, Senegal is a secular state, and freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution. The fact that this predominantly Muslim country’s first president, Léopold Sédar Senghor, was Christian hints at the nation’s commitment to these values. The constitution also recognizes six official languages in addition to French, and national legislation prohibits the formation of political parties based on religion or ethnicity.<sup>23</sup>

Although its society is diverse and plural, Senegal has faced challenges to its territorial integrity from the Casamance region’s independence movement. However, rather than seeking to marginalize the separatist movement (through military force or coercion), the choice was made to include moderate members of the movement in the political sphere at the national level.<sup>24</sup> The language of the region’s Joola ethnic group was also enshrined in the constitution as one of the country’s official languages.

20 Tanguy Berthemet, “Au Sénégal, la voix montante des ‘Y’en a marre,’” *Le Figaro*, February 23, 2012, available at [www.lefigaro.fr/international/2012/02/23/01003-20120223ARTFIG00638-au-senegal-la-voix-montante-des-y-en-a-marre.php](http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2012/02/23/01003-20120223ARTFIG00638-au-senegal-la-voix-montante-des-y-en-a-marre.php).

21 Scott Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership and Genocide in Modern Africa* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), p. 226.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 207.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 229–230.

24 *Ibid.*

## Human rights and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the sustaining peace agenda share common principles related to “national ownership, universality, inclusivity, people-centered approaches, long-term perspectives, and a call for coherent implementation across the three UN pillars.”<sup>25</sup> The value of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is that, like human rights and sustaining peace, they are universal and applicable to all countries regardless of their level of development (unlike the Millennium Development Goals, which only applied to “developing countries”).<sup>26</sup> The link between development and the upholding of human rights could thus be an entry point for dialogue and engagement with states.

Both the sustainable development and sustaining peace agendas promote a focus on prevention to identify and address the factors that put countries at risk of crisis or violence.<sup>27</sup> The rationale of the 2030 Agenda is that fulfilling the SDGs will “foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence.”<sup>28</sup> This provides a connection between peacefulness and human rights, as the 2030 Agenda seeks to “achieve and protect the human rights of all,” with 156 of its 169 “integrated and indivisible” targets having either a direct or an indirect link to human rights.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the seventeen SDGs address various human rights standards, including access to food, water, sanitation, quality education, healthcare, and housing.<sup>30</sup>

25 Delphine Mechoulan, Youssef Mahmoud, Andrea Ó Súilleabháin, and Jimena Leiva Roesch, “The SDGs and Prevention for Sustaining Peace: Exploring the Transformative Potential of the Goal on Gender Equality,” November 2016, p. 1, available at [www.ipinst.org/2016/11/sdgs-goal-gender-equality](http://www.ipinst.org/2016/11/sdgs-goal-gender-equality).

26 OHCHR, “Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/MDG/Pages/The2030Agenda.aspx>.

27 Ibid.

28 UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1 (September 25, 2015), Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN Doc. A/RES/70/1.

29 Institute for Economics and Peace, “Human Rights and Sustaining Peace.”

30 UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1.

The 2030 Agenda also strives to “leave no one behind” and commits to equality and nondiscrimination, two fundamental principles of human rights.<sup>31</sup>

Mauritius, which has stood out as a socioeconomic and democratic success story in Africa, is an interesting case for analyzing the correlation and interdependence between social and economic rights and sustaining peace (see Box 2).

## Box 2. Mauritius

Since obtaining independence in 1968, successive Mauritian governments have committed to investing in human capital and the creation of a favorable business environment, both of which are key positive peace pillars, according to IEP.<sup>32</sup>

A “high level of human capital” refers to “a country’s stock of skills, knowledge and behaviors” and includes education, access to healthcare, and the provision of essential services such as water.<sup>33</sup> IEP notes that a greater level of human capital tends to increase “social cohesion, economic development and peace.”<sup>34</sup>

For example, Mauritius’s provision of free education up to the university level has contributed to the creation of a productive and reliable workforce, and in 2016 the literacy rate was 90.6 percent—the highest in Africa.<sup>35</sup> Further, the Mauritian state guarantees free and accessible healthcare to all and has made it a priority to provide all

31 OHCHR, “Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

32 Jeffrey Frankel, “Mauritius: African Success Story,” Harvard Kennedy School Faculty Research Working Paper Series, September 2010, p. 25, available at [https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/4450110/Frankel\\_MauritiusAfrican.pdf?sequence=1](https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/4450110/Frankel_MauritiusAfrican.pdf?sequence=1).

33 Institute for Economics and Peace, “Pillars of Peace,” p. 40.

34 Ibid.

35 UN Development Programme (UNDP), “Mauritius: Human Development Indicators,” available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/MUS>.

of the population access to safe drinking water (99 percent of the population currently has access).<sup>36</sup>

In 2016 Mauritius ranked second in Africa (after the Seychelles) on the UN Development Programme's (UNDP's) Human Development Index (and sixty-fourth globally), and life expectancy at birth in Mauritius is 74.6 years compared to the African average of 60 years.<sup>37</sup>

Another of IEP's pillars of positive peace is the presence of a "sound business environment," referring to the ability to conduct business in a fair and open marketplace.<sup>38</sup> In Mauritius, this is illustrated by policies that aim to encourage and facilitate foreign and domestic investment, including the country's low corporate tax rate, training opportunities, simplified administrative procedures, and access to financing.<sup>39</sup>

IEP highlights the interdependent nature of its pillars of peace; strengthening one will strengthen the others.<sup>40</sup> In Mauritius, investment in human capital and an open and favorable business environment, combined with strong rule of law and good governance, can thus be credited as contributing to this success story.<sup>41</sup>

Mauritius has faced internal vulnerabilities and external pressures such as ethnic tensions, trade shocks, and the impact of climate change on the agricultural sector (notably the sugar cane industry)

36 Ibid; Joseph Stiglitz, "The Mauritius Miracle, or How to Make a Big Success of a Small Economy," *The Guardian*, March 7, 2011, available at [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/mar/07/mauritius-healthcare-education](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/mar/07/mauritius-healthcare-education); Jeffrey Frankel, "The Little Economy That Could," *Foreign Policy*, February 2, 2012, available at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/02/02/the-little-economy-that-could/>.

37 UNDP, "Mauritius: Human Development Indicators."

38 Institute for Economics and Peace, "Pillars of Peace," p. 17.

39 Frankel, "The Little Economy That Could."

40 Institute for Economics and Peace, "Pillars of Peace," p. 2.

41 Frankel, "The Little Economy That Could."

and the livelihoods of farmers.<sup>42</sup> But despite these pressures, according to the Global Peace Index, Mauritius is the twentysecond most peaceful country in the world.<sup>43</sup>

## Effective and independent institutions to guarantee human rights

States are obligated to respect, protect, and fulfill the fundamental human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As such, they need to ensure access to effective mechanisms and institutions to address grievances and put an end to cycles of discrimination and marginalization. Whether judicial or non-judicial, these mechanisms and institutions must seek to provide redress to victims and ensure accountability for perpetrators of violations. As noted by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), “Justice delivery involves the ability of the State to ensure the peaceful resolution of disputes, the prosecution and punishment of crimes, and effective remedies for violations of rights.”<sup>44</sup> Solid, independent institutions able to address grievances in a manner that respects human rights reduce the likelihood that individuals or groups will resort to violence when disputes arise. The state must also guarantee equal access to these institutions for all (women, youth, minorities, etc.).

National human rights institutions can play an important role in promoting and monitoring the implementation of international human rights standards at the national level. These can take different forms, including ombudspersons, human rights commissions, hybrid

42 Jean-Michel Jauze, “Maurice, petit pays, grandes ambitions,” *European Journal of Geography* (2012).

43 Institute for Economics and Peace, “Global Peace Index 2017.”

44 OHCHR, “Early Warning and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,” p. 18.

institutions with multiple mandates, or consultative and advisory bodies.<sup>45</sup>

Civil society organizations can also help to create space for debate and dialogue. They play a key role in driving local reform processes and promoting tolerance, justice, and human rights, all of which are essential to sustaining peace. As described by OHCHR, “An active and functioning civil society is the foundation for ensuring the accountability of the Government and its law and policies.”<sup>46</sup> Indeed, as stated by former UN Secretary-General Ban Kimoon, “If leaders do not listen to their people, they will hear from them—in the streets, the squares, or, as we see far too often, on the battlefield. There is a better way: more participation; more democracy; more engagement and openness. That means maximum space for civil society.”<sup>47</sup>

Tunisia, the epicenter of the 2011 “Arab Spring,” has a history of a robust and vigilant civil society. Many observers credit this robust civil society for fostering the country’s progress toward democratization and “facilitating dialogue and compromise across political divides” at times of national stress or when the formal political institutions hit an impasse (see Box 3).<sup>48</sup>

45 OHCHR, “Principles Relating to the Status of National Institutions (The Paris Principles),” December 20, 1993, available at [www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/StatusOfNationalInstitutions.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/StatusOfNationalInstitutions.aspx).

46 OHCHR, “Early Warning and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,” p. 18.

47 United Nations, “At High-Level Event in Support of Civil Society, Secretary-General Says ‘They Protect Our Rights: They Deserve Their Rights,’” September 23, 2013, available at [www.un.org/press/en/2013/sgsm15314.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/press/en/2013/sgsm15314.doc.htm).

48 Eva Bellin, “Drivers of Democracy: Lessons from Tunisia,” Crown Center for Middle East Studies, August 2013, p. 4.

### Box 3. Tunisia

In the Middle East and North Africa region, Tunisia is transitioning to a nascent democracy despite economic, security, and governance challenges, as well as regional and global pressures. Tunisia has maintained its commitment to uphold human rights and create an environment where citizens can express their needs and aspirations freely and peacefully. This is exemplified by the space given to civil society organizations and the government's practice of consulting these groups in decision making, as was done during the drafting of the 2014 constitution.<sup>49</sup> Civil society's involvement in the transition process, in particular the role of the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet in easing political crises, has been credited for helping keep the process on track.<sup>50</sup>

The 2011 revolution, which was deeply rooted in socioeconomic grievances, enabled civil society groups to expand their advocacy and activism to economic, social, and cultural rights, which have often been neglected in favor of political and civil rights.<sup>51</sup> Civil society groups successfully advocated for the 2014 constitution to enshrine the right to work and to a decent salary and to consolidate women's rights.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, Tunisia's constitution devotes a full chapter to universal freedoms and rights, including women's rights inscribed in

49 Asma Noura, "Origins, Evolution and Challenges to the Human Rights Movement in Tunisia," Arab Reform Initiative, September 2017, pp. 14–16.

50 Margaret Williams and Youssef Mahmoud, "The New Tunisian Constitution: Triumphs and Potential Pitfalls," IPI Global Observatory, February 27, 2014, available at <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2014/02/the-new-tunisian-constitution-triumphs-and-potential-pitfalls/>; Council of Europe, "La transition politique en Tunisie," April 26, 2017, p. 9, available at <http://website-pace.net/documents/18848/3421624/20170426-La-transition-politique-Tunisie-FR.pdf/384874b9-b421-4399-9db7-72a3da857040>.

51 Noura, "Origins, Evolution and Challenges to the Human Rights Movement in Tunisia."

52 Constitution of Tunisia, 2014, Art. 40, available at [www.constitutionnet.org/vl/item/tunisia-constitution-2014](http://www.constitutionnet.org/vl/item/tunisia-constitution-2014).

the 1956 Personal Status Code. It also goes beyond the 1959 constitution's freedom of belief to recognize the freedom of worship and emphasizes the concept of citizenship.<sup>53</sup> The constitution decrees the creation of a Constitutional Court as a guarantor of these rights with the power to invalidate laws deemed not in conformity with the human rights standards affirmed in the constitution.

To further consolidate women's rights, in July 2017 the Tunisian parliament adopted a landmark law criminalizing all forms of violence against women.<sup>54</sup> The following month the president established a committee to look into individual freedoms and gender equality issues not addressed by the new law, such as possibly reforming the inheritance law, which only entitled female heirs to half as much property as their male family counterparts.<sup>55</sup>

On the economic and security fronts, however, Tunisia continues to however face challenges. With an unemployment rate of 15 percent (32 percent for young people) and the presence of violent extremist groups in the region, the situation remains of concern.<sup>56</sup>

53 José Vericat, "Women's Struggle for Citizenship: Civil Society and Constitution Making after the Arab Uprisings," October 2017, available at [www.ipinst.org/2017/10/womens-struggle-for-citizenship-after-the-arab-uprisings](http://www.ipinst.org/2017/10/womens-struggle-for-citizenship-after-the-arab-uprisings).

54 Youssef Mahmoud, "Tunisia's New Protections for Women: A Legislative Revolution and Missed Opportunity," IPI Global Observatory, August 9, 2017, available at <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/08/tunisia-violence-against-women-law/>.

55 Antonia Blumberg, "Tunisia Just Took a Big Step forward on Muslim Women's Rights," Huffington Post, September 15, 2017, available at [www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/tunisia-muslim-women-marriage\\_us\\_59bc42ffe4bo2da0e142181f](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/tunisia-muslim-women-marriage_us_59bc42ffe4bo2da0e142181f); Youssef Mahmoud, "In Tunisia's March Toward Women's Rights, Finish Line Is in Sight," IPI Global Observatory, August 17, 2017, available at <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/08/tunisia-women-rights-islam/>.

56 Council of Europe, "La transition politique en Europe."

## Addressing Concerns and Challenges

Some states have raised concerns about linking human rights to sustaining peace. One of these concerns is that discussions on human rights, particularly within the UN, are often perceived as a selective “naming and shaming” exercise primarily targeting developing countries.

A second core concern is that human rights violations (perceived or otherwise) have, in some cases, been used to justify politically motivated foreign interventions and regime change.<sup>57</sup> For instance, the 2011 intervention in Libya, which was first presented as a “humanitarian intervention” aimed at protecting civilians from violations, subsequently revealed ulterior political motives, including regime change.<sup>58</sup> Linking human rights to sustaining peace could be challenging if states feel that they are being selectively targeted or that there are hidden political motives.

A third challenge to human rights in general relates to the lack of enforcement and states’ use of the principle of sovereignty to justify their refusal or reluctance to engage on human rights. Human rights tools and mechanisms are treaty-based; they derive from legal commitments voluntarily made by member states in accordance with this principle of sovereignty. However, some human rights, such as the right to life, freedom of conscience and religion, and prohibition of torture, are nonderogable at any time under any circumstances, meaning they are applicable even to states that have not ratified the conventions around them.<sup>59</sup> Yet none of the core human rights treaties provide for solid mechanisms to ensure accountability for their non-fulfillment or violation.

57 Eric A. Heinze, “Waging War for Human Rights: Toward a Moral-Legal Theory of Humanitarian Intervention,” *Human Rights & Human Welfare* 3 (2003).

58 Michah Zenko, “The Big Lie about the Libyan War,” *Foreign Policy*, March 22, 2016, available at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/22/libya-and-the-myth-of-humanitarian-intervention/>.

59 OHCHR, “Core Human Rights in the Two Covenants,” September 2013, available at <https://nhri.ohchr.org/EN/IHRS/TreatyBodies/Page%20Documents/Core%20Human%20Rights.pdf>.

Further, existing monitoring mechanisms within the UN have had little impact. For example, the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review, by which all member states periodically undergo an assessment of their human rights records, basically consists of states reviewing their own track record, with little space given to other stakeholders such as civil society organizations.<sup>60</sup>

Despite these challenges, it remains in a state's best interest to uphold the rule of law and human rights. Indeed, according to IEP's 2017 Global Peace Index, the most peaceful countries are those with the most solid human rights records. While this is not to suggest a simple or linear relationship between upholding human rights and peace, the data indicates that violating or failing to uphold human rights does not sustain peace or make societies peaceful.

## Conclusion

Connecting the human rights and sustaining peace agendas offers a unique, strategic entry point to help shift from a culture of crisis management to one of prevention, especially in a global context where human rights tend to be restricted or attacked in the name of security.<sup>61</sup> The UN's Human Rights Up Front Initiative, which requires the entire "UN system to be alert to deteriorating human rights situations," is a step in the right direction and should be strengthened across all UN pillars.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated, meaning they are rules that can be referred to and claimed by any individual (regardless of his or her nationality) at any time. The legitimacy of human rights as a result of their universality makes them a solid foundation for building and fostering selfsus-

60 OHCHR, "Universal Periodic Review", available at [www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/UPRMain.aspx).

61 OHCHR, "Human Rights, Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism," available at [www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Factsheet32EN.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Factsheet32EN.pdf).

62 OHCHR, "Early Warning and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights."

taining peace. This is further demonstrated through the strong and positive correlation found by IEP between the “acceptance of the rights of others” and states’ levels of peacefulness.<sup>63</sup>

The cases of Mauritius, Senegal, and Tunisia demonstrate that, despite internal vulnerabilities and external pressures, countries can sustain peace, in part because of a strong commitment to upholding human rights. Their resilience to political, economic, and social shocks is an important factor accounting for their relative peacefulness. As human rights often spark suspicion and distrust, these positive examples can demonstrate how human rights can be used as a tool for prevention and could facilitate engagement and dialogue with skeptical states. Emphasizing what works rather than what does not is at the core of the sustaining peace concept, and all three countries offer valuable lessons as the international community struggles with the practical meaning of sustaining peace.

*December 2017*

63 Institute for Economics and Peace, “Human Rights and Sustaining Peace.”

# Reflections on the peace process and the role of psychosocial counselling

*By Antoine Denkhaus\**

Are we aiming for a “negative peace” (the absence of direct violence and armed conflict) or a “positive peace” (a structural transformation towards a socio-political and economic system capable of generating justice and ensuring sustainable peace)?

Peace is a shorthand word that has no meaning if it is not brimming with life and vision. In my opinion, it is not a question of creating positive or negative peace, but of developing a common vision of the context that allows people to lead a happy and self-determined life together. The same applies to human rights, which represent a vision, a dream, a desire to live together in a global society. They should liberate individuals without limiting the dignity of their fellow men.

The physical and mental movement towards the vision of peace and human rights is a sustainable process in which there is no end. This movement towards a vision supported by many people provides a space for meetings and exchanges and allows us to develop conflict resolution strategies adapted to the context. The two visions (Peace and Human Rights) are the guidelines to be followed to face our social challenges and conflicts.

\* Antoine Denkhaus is a CPS peace worker in DR Congo with Dynamique Femme et Famille.

These challenges and conflicts take place in different dimensions of our lives. In my opinion, they can be divided into three parts.

- ◆ A person's personal peace with self, their past and their potential future (vision).
- ◆ Social peace, which allows the individual or group to develop without restricting the dignity of others.
- ◆ World peace, which allows individual nations to develop without exploiting others.

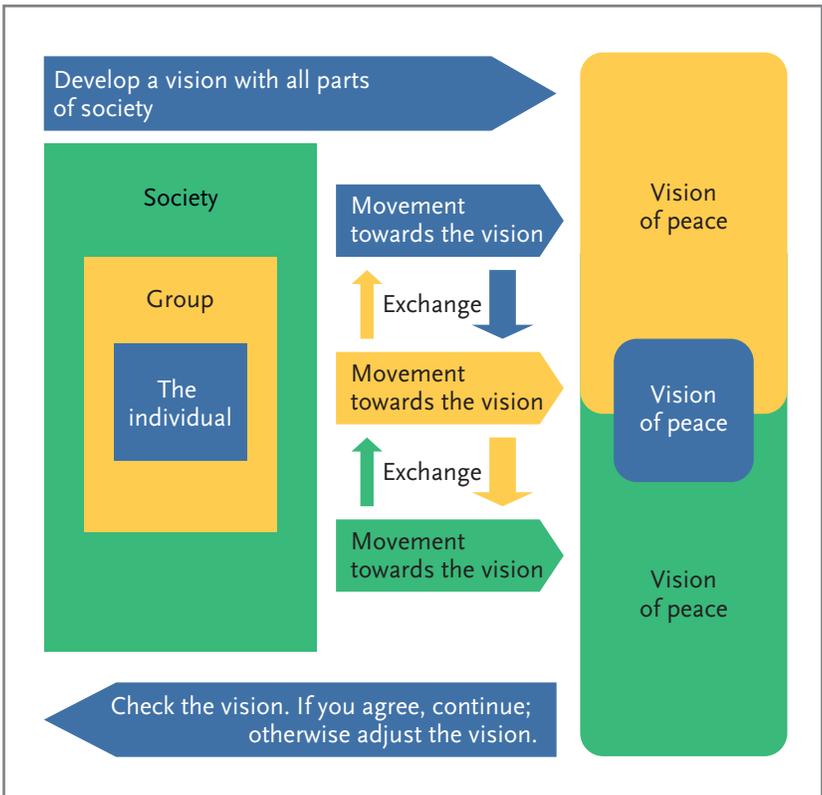


Figure created by Antoine Denkhau

As I can see from this figure, I find it more honest to speak of a vision of peace than of peace itself, otherwise we risk defining peace as something dogmatic and immovable, which is practically impossible to achieve. Peace, if we take this term seriously, also has a different spiritual dimension in the different religions of the world. Talking about a vision has the advantage that a dialogue on peace and how it appears may be possible.

The more the vision of peace emerges from the individual and the society, the more sustainable it will be. While government or government officials or external parties can provide impetus, if it is not based on local people the chances of this vision becoming entrenched over the long term are low. Because in this case one may assume there are counter-flows from the society that do not carry it.

As with human rights, the peace process requires institutionalization in society. It is not enough to form informal and formal groups committed to the cause of peace. In a functioning state, institutions and laws are necessary for peace and human rights. However, particularly in this case, care must be taken over implementation, because a law only makes a difference if it is enforced.

## What contribution can psychosocial support and counselling make to the peace process?

In our work with young people at the training centre of the *Dynamique Femme et Famille asbl*, I noticed something at the beginning, which at first glance is of little importance. When I asked the teenagers about their future, I learned that most of them only thought as far as tomorrow. From this first impression, I developed the idea of running a project with the young people in which they could create their own vision of life.

This is how we started the project with the young people. Draw your future in order to strengthen their self-esteem and visualize their ideas. One challenge was that most of the teenagers had never painted with



*Exhibition of images and visions*

a brush and paint on canvas. But the far more important task was to develop a vision of their future that could be transferred to the screen in the form of symbols. As a result, we placed a lot of emphasis on theoretical input, which allowed us to think about our own future.

I find this breakdown in thought processes very important; otherwise, all the problems that surround young people every day may seem impossible to solve. By creating an abstract goal of the future, new or overlapping thought processes were set in motion, which should facilitate further counselling activity. The project was well received by the young people and was a lot of fun for most of them. In order to show the painting of their future to advantage and promote their work, we created a large exhibition in which everyone was allowed to explain their image and vision to the visitors.

In counselling, I take a resource-based approach that focuses on the events in a teenager's life that helped them overcome their problems. The narrative approach, i.e., exploration based on the spoken CV (curricu-

lum vitae), helps to uncover these resources and allows adolescents to better understand the conversation. In addition, I use a method I developed, based on the system of visualization and contextualization of situations. In most cases, it is a question of visualizing difficult situations with the help of a set of wooden figures placed on a table. In calling for active intervention in the situation, one should anchor one's own problem-solving strategies.

In this picture (below), we see the client standing in front of a wall of problems. With the question: "Imagine you are this little wooden figure and these are your problems, what do you see?" we end up with clients actively participating in the event.

Normally, the client will only be able to see the problems. The aim (to be happy, for example) is not visible because of the problems encountered. With this method, it is possible to show that behind the problems, lie different scenarios for solutions. Often it is enough to move the wooden figure (person) in one direction to be able to see the aim again (be happy).

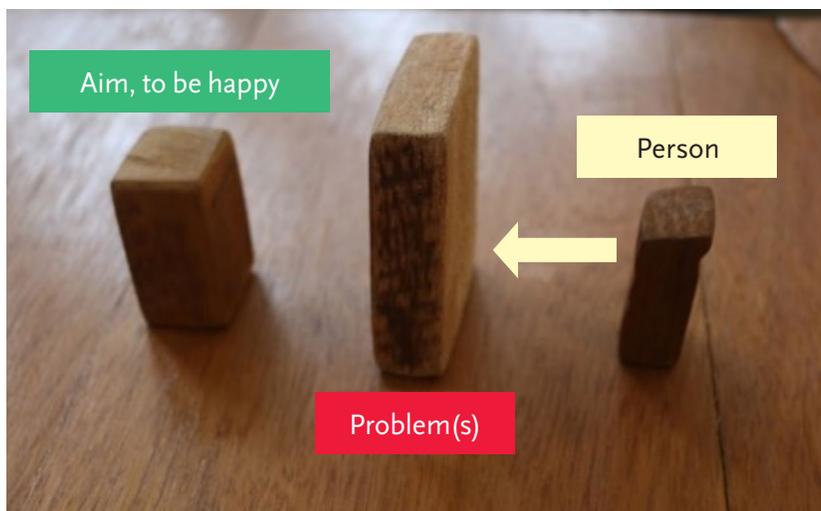


Figure created by Antoine Denkhau

At this stage, different strategies for overcoming problems can be developed together and symbolized with other wooden figures.

Abstracting problems helps a person to better understand their situation and to react in a less emotional and clearer way. This exercise encourages creativity in dealing with problems and helps to approach them from an outside perspective. Of course, this placing of wooden parts can be supplemented by many other factors as required.

The underlying theory or idea is the assumption that the more a person is at peace with themselves, the more capable they are of accepting others and showing consideration for their respective aspirations. In addition, a person who is able to reflect on their actions and integrate them in the context of social value makes a valuable contribution to their subsequent development.

Psychosocial counselling, in my opinion, is very well suited for use in different situations. It can be adapted to the context with intervention methods from psychology and social work. In my view, counselling can be used as a prevention method, to be an individual and social outlet in post-conflict and moderate times. Especially in accompaniment over a longer period of time, this work will pay off, as it promotes a human image that has a healthy self-awareness and carefully considered actions.

# Who protects civil society organizations committed to human rights?

*By Flaubert Djateng\**

Peace-building work very often has a strong human rights component and in this respect it faces specific risks and challenges.

Working to promote the observance of human rights is not a job you choose for the purpose of earning a living. It is out of commitment that people take up this job and from there they develop skills and become professional. Human rights defenders risk their lives and those of their families, sometimes sacrificing their well-being for a cause. It is thanks to their work that the “human” and the common good are placed before selfish, political and commercial interests.

Human rights defenders have overloaded work schedules, hours of stress due to the context, and most of the time they work with fear in their hearts. Their lives are often in danger. In-depth knowledge of the context, the rationale behind the power struggle at play and the interests at stake enables human rights defenders to develop their security strategy. The notions of risk, vulnerability and threat take on a different resonance for them. It is therefore essential that they prepare accordingly and do not make light of the specific challenges they face.

In general, in Africa human rights defenders are obliged to resort to financial partnerships with other organisations to find the necessary resources. This is done through project proposals and/or responses to calls for proposals where organisations are put in competition with one another. This competition is similar to a contest where the best are cho-

\*Zenü Network coordinator and independent consultant/CPS Bread for the World mobile team

sen and “awarded”. It should be noted that competition between organizations working on such sensitive issues and taking great risks can become unhealthy. In fact, they should be encouraged to work in synergy and collaboration, because the theme of human rights calls for a multiple strategy, as one organization alone cannot shift the lines.

In most cases, the cooperation programmes with the centre for the defence of human rights recommend presenting the activities to be carried out according to a development project rationale. The appraisal of a project related to human rights should not follow this logic. Organizations that do not differentiate between a development project and a human rights project are irresponsible. The defence of human rights has a particular characteristic, that of working on the security of people. A failed development infrastructure can be rebuilt, a food production programme can be revised if deficiencies are observed. On the other hand, human lives when broken or lost remain so forever. Particular emphasis should therefore be placed on performance indicators relating to the protection of human lives when analysing a human rights defenders’ project.

Working with human rights organisations is a responsibility that we take on and which requires a different kind of functioning and a different way of organising ourselves. Specific procedures must be defined for the appraisal of projects; the staff in charge of cooperation must be trained on “security” management processes. Next, predefined strategies must be available internally to be activated in the event of danger threatening a defender.

In some cases, organisations working with human rights defenders have been completely helpless when the lives of staff working with them were placed at risk. They did not know exactly what to do, who to contact, what security measures to implement or with whom. How can we collaborate with partners without taking ownership of their challenges and without being prepared to be at their side in the event of danger?

The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders states that governments are responsible for the protection of human rights defenders.

This implies that the organizations in charge of these cases must have connections with their governments and those of their partners. These connections make it possible to know the different levers that need to be operated if necessary. For it is important to know that in some countries, while it is legal to work to promote the observance of human rights, the legislation fails to punish those who attack human rights defenders. Those who work with organizations working to defend human rights must provide resources to facilitate the design of security plans and individual and collective protection mechanisms for the staff of partner organizations.

The following questions may be of use in developing a security plan:

- ◆ how can the risks be assessed?
- ◆ how can we prevent aggressions and take action if necessary?
- ◆ how can we develop a safety plan at work and at home, for ourselves and our families?
- ◆ what communication strategy and with what tool?
- ◆ who to contact and why?
- ◆ what are the prerequisites to avoid being taken by surprise?

The security and protection of human rights defenders is sometimes complex, but the time and resources deployed for the purpose is never wasted.

*Yaoundé, December 2019*

# Moses “the African”: A human rights defender model for positive peace in Cameroon and Africa

*By Alain Cyrille Abena\* and Rev. Ebai Gustav Tabi\*\**

## Introduction

The book of Exodus provides a shining and edifying example of activism for human rights. This is the story of the oppression of the Hebrews on African soil by the Egyptians in the Pharaonic era. For almost four hundred years, the Hebrews saw their rights violated by the Egyptians who meted humiliation and suffering on them through this historical slavery. The character of Moses in this story of the Hebrews as stated in the book of Exodus exemplifies a possible solution that can protect human rights and ensure lasting peace in contemporary communities, especially in Africa and in Cameroon.

This article proposes to take a new look at the journey of the person of Moses, in order to identify a model for human rights, peace and social justice. We shall therefore examine how the character of Moses in the Book of Exodus can contribute to a theorization of a model of human rights protection and peace in Africa. In this report, we will present the context in which Moses was born in Egypt, his human pro-

\*Alain Cyrille Abena is the founder of the international cultural-christian laboratory of educational sciences and is the chaplain and educator of chaplains for the secondary schools of the Council of Protestant Churches in Cameroon (CEPCA).

\*\* Rev. Ebai Gustav Tabi is a Pastor, Journalist and Peace worker. He is currently the Executive Secretary for Communication at the Council of Protestant Churches of Cameroon CEPCA and a National Coordinator of BfdW Civil Peace Service Cameroon. He is the Protestant representative in the Inter religious commission for peace in Cameroon.

file, his role in the history of the Hebrews and the implications of this role for present-day Africa in terms of human rights for positive peace.

## The Birth of a Human Rights Defender

Arriving in Egypt in successive waves, the children of Israel, 70 in all, were welcomed by Pharaoh himself as distinguished guests and were settled in the land of Goshen, “the best part of the land, in the land of Ramses” (Gen. 47:11). This heroic welcome was granted to them for the sole reason that one of their own, Joseph, sold to the Ishmaelite merchants by his brothers out of jealousy, arrived in Egypt as a Hebrew slave but, through his great wisdom and divine inspiration, became the second most important figure in Egypt after Pharaoh in a rather special context. At his enthronement, Pharaoh said to him: “*You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you [...]. Without your word, no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt*”. (Gen. 41:40, 44). Therefore, to belong to Joseph’s family meant to belong to the second most powerful family in Egypt. It was in this context that Joseph brought his family into Egypt. The first years of the Hebrews in Egypt were thus years of opulence and privilege despite the famine that raged in the region. There they multiplied and became a great people among the Egyptians.

Sadly, decades later, a Pharaoh who had not known Joseph came to the throne. He subjected the Hebrew people to harsh labour because the Egyptians “reduced the children of Israel to hard bondage. They made their lives bitter with harsh labour in brick and mortar, and by all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labour the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly. (Ex. 1:1–14). The Pharaoh of that time even decided to kill all the male new births and ordered all these children to be thrown into the river. The Hebrews were in the midst of genocidal abuse. It was in this context of violation of human rights that Moses was born to Yocheved and Amram of the tribe of Levi.

## Hebrew slave but Egyptian prince

Moses' story in the history of the Hebrew people is atypical. Destined to die by drowning at birth on the instruction of the Pharaoh against the Hebrew people, he was saved from the waters<sup>1</sup> by the providential hand of the daughter of the Pharaoh for whom he became an adopted son (Ex. 2:10). Raised in the house of Pharaoh, he had the grace of being "instructed in all the knowledge of the Egyptians, and was mighty in word and deed". (Act. 7:22). Exegesis posits that Moses was trained to the same level of education as the son of the Pharaoh who succeeded his father. On the intellectual side, then, Moses was highly educated and his level, if it must be compared to contemporary intellectuals, was at least that of a doctor, since his knowledge of "all the science of the Egyptians" as the text quoted specifies, made him a savant. Beyond this intellectual strength, Moses enjoyed a rather special spiritual comfort. His intimacy with God was proven as he spoke to God, listened to him and transmitted divine messages to the people of Israel. Better still, he was divine in nature, for God made him a God, as we read in this excerpt: "*You shall put the words in his [Aaron] mouth ... He shall speak to the people for you, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall take his place as God.*" (Ex. 4:15–16). Here, it is tempting to say that Moses was a God made flesh because of those qualities that set him apart from the other Hebrews.

Morally, Moses stood out by at least two distinguishing qualities. He was very humble and he recognized his limitations. By way of illustration, when God gave him instructions to speak to the Pharaoh who was oppressing the Hebrew people, he admitted, for example, before God that he was slow of speech and slow of tongue, and that he did not feel he was eloquent enough to convince the people of Israel that God had sent him. Another moral quality in Moses was his sense of defending the oppressed. One day, while visiting the Hebrews in slavery, he witnessed a scene in which an Egyptian was beating a Hebrew. In an

<sup>1</sup> This is what his name means: drawn from the waters.

instinct to defend the oppressed, he killed the Egyptian who was striking the Hebrew. Even though he may be accused of taking revenge, it should be recognized that he was making a mistake with good intentions: to bring justice to the oppressed. This is certainly the quality he showed when he asked God to blot his name from the Book of Life rather than destroy the people of Israel in the desert. Also, it should be noted that Moses, from a social point of view, was a rich man, for as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he had access to his mother's fortune. The Pharaonic family at that time was one of the most powerful and wealthiest families on the planet. And even while he was in the desert, he took possession of many goods from his father-in-law Jethro. He was a handsome (Ex. 2:2) and strong (Ex. 2:11–12) man.

These characteristics of Moses make him a Hamonian hero<sup>2</sup> because he meets the criteria of “differential qualification; differential distribution; differential designation; differential autonomy and differential functionality<sup>3</sup>”. Indeed, the qualities that we have just recognized in him and the functions that he plays in the story of the Exodus and that we will present below, make him a Hebrew who was very different from the others.

This means that before conferring upon him his status as a defender of human rights and before sending him on his mission to free the enslaved Hebrews from their Egyptian oppressors, God had first trained Moses. Although he was born a Hebrew slave, he was raised as an Egyptian prince.

## The oppressed as oppressor

The differential distribution and functionality of Moses is structured in the Exodus narrative on three main pillars: call, renunciation, action. These three moments in the life of Moses are typical of biblical heroes.

2 P. Hamon, “Pour un statut sémiologique du personnage”. In *Littérature*, No. 6, 1972. *Littérature*. May 1972. pp. 86–110.

3 *Ibid.* pp. 90–94.

The word “call” appears in *The New Bible Dictionary*<sup>4</sup> to designate an invitation or a vocation to service. It is in the theological sense of the term the reason for a man’s existence on earth, which defines his priestly ministry. In the story of the Exodus, Moses is called by two entities: the cries of distress of the Hebrews and the voice of God.

The cries of distress of the Hebrews represent the situation of the suffering of the Hebrews. As noted above, the Egyptians subjected the Hebrews to inhumane treatment that resulted in the supreme sacrifice: death. The words used to describe these sufferings include: *harsh labour, chores, bitter life, hard work, burdens, etc.*<sup>5</sup> This suffering is the first catalyst of Moses’ vocation to defend the rights of the oppressed and to render justice to minorities because, although living in the palace as the adopted son of the daughter of Pharaoh, Moses had witnessed the sufferings of his people and this prompted him to kill an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew in order to restore a certain social balance. Even though this crime should be condemned in every respect, it must be recognized that it reveals in Moses a sense of revolt and a concern to bring justice to the oppressed. It was this “crime” that led him to flee into the desert in the land of Midian.

His first act in Midian was as a defender of women’s rights. The book of Exodus explains that Moses

withdrew to the land of Midian, where he stopped by a well. The priest of Midian had seven daughters. And they came and drew water, and filled their troughs to water their father’s flock. The shepherds came and drove them out. So Moses stood up for them, and made their flock drink. (Ex. 2:15–17)

As a result of this act, he was invited into Jethro’s home in Midian. And after settling in the land of Midian under the priest Jethro, who became his principal counsellor and father-in-law, he founded a family and

4 New Bible Dictionary, Emmaus, 1992.

5 See Exodus 1: 9–14.

acquired many possessions. God called him from a burning bush to make clear to him his order of mission on earth; to deliver the people of Israel from Egyptian bondage or oppression. That was his second call. Nevertheless, it must quickly be said that to answer this call, Moses would have to pay the heavy price of giving up his fortune.

The renunciation of fortune twice for the sake of his mission. He was the grandson of Pharaoh. This implies that he lived in an opulence and glory that the majority of Egyptians had never known. His destiny was therefore not linked to that of his Hebrew brothers, for the latter unlike Moses were doomed to suffering. To help his brothers out of their slavery, to restore justice, he would have to renounce all the privileges that the status of son of Pharaoh's daughter conferred on him. To free the people of Israel of their suffering meant opposing Pharaoh. Moses chose to turn his back on wealth (material goods, honour, money, etc.) to suffer along with his own and deliver them from the hand of Pharaoh. Perhaps it should be said that it took faith to renounce all these fortunes, as we can read in the text of Hebrews: "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin." (Hebrews 11:24–25). And when he felt insecure after killing an Egyptian, he sought refuge in Midian where he built up a new fortune. When God called him once again from the burning bush, in order to answer God's call, he had to leave his comfort and safety zone and return to Egypt to face Pharaoh. Which he did. It is one thing to agree to give up one's fortune; it is quite another to take action to do so.

Action is the accomplishment of the mission. This is the operative phase. After renouncing his fortune, Moses did indeed proceed to act according to the order of the mission dictated to him by God in the desert and precisely in the bush. He went to face Pharaoh, led the people out of Egypt, transcended the trials of the Red Sea, the golden calf and others, and led the people to the gates of the promised land. When he died, he was buried by God Himself.

Let us say, moreover, that for Moses in fulfilling his mission oppressed Pharaoh and all the people of Egypt. The Exodus text states, the people of Israel leaving Egypt was achieved through plagues inflicted on Pharaoh and the Egyptians. It is a kind of oppression that Moses inflicted on the Egyptians to free the Hebrews. However, this oppression hurt Moses more than any other person because Moses' adoptive mother lived in the palace and Pharaoh was his adoptive brother. So to inflict plagues and suffering on the family of Pharaoh meant for Moses to oppress his own family. Moses suffered, but that was the price he had to pay to play his role as an effective human rights defender.

This itinerary of Moses, which runs from the call to action through renunciation, can rightly be called a *process of demystification of fortune or deconstruction of the myth of fortune*. For if fortune was paramount to Moses, something to which one had to remain attached, something that cannot be thrown away, he would not have left Pharaoh's palace, where he lived in glory, to go down among the Hebrew people to deliver them from slavery. It is at this level that the Exodus story becomes interesting for contemporary Africa in terms of human rights, because you can only set someone free if you have been set free yourself.

## The Moses model for Africa and Cameroon today

Indeed, the violation of human rights is first and foremost an affair of the human heart. And it is in the heart that the problem must be tackled. Generally speaking, it is because people, those who are supposed to defend or watch over human rights in Africa, are attached to wealth that they abuse the rights of others with impunity, thereby thwarting peace.

In Africa and Cameroon, for example, human rights are supposed to be safeguarded by magistrates and other civil society actors and occupations. The prevailing atmosphere of corruption and the pathological attachment to material goods, for example, sometimes leads mag-

istrates to give verdicts that run counter to human rights. So it could be said that the human rights advocates in such cases have turned into oppressors.

This is why the journey of Moses in the Exodus story can teach us so much, and can inspire an approach to reducing the violation of human rights in Africa and particularly in Cameroon.

It could be said that there has always been a negative peace in Cameroon because, since the time of colonization and the time of independence, there have always been protest movements and the repression against these protests have generally been in violation of human rights. These ongoing protests have led to instability today in at least four regions of the country; in the North-West and South-West, in the East and in the far North. In these unstable regions, there are human rights violations which, according to the reports of certain NGOs and the press, call for the attention of the international community. An accusing finger is pointed at government actors, military power, private actors, secessionists etc. The model of Moses thus takes on importance.

The *call* referred to in the case of Moses is expressed in contemporary society as *knowledge of oneself and of one's mission*. Many of the people who are supposed to protect human rights do not have the calling to do so. They become involved for material gain (money, honour, social privileges, etc.). Many associations and non-governmental human rights organizations are set up in Cameroon just to receive funding and line their pockets without ever trying to defend the oppressed. Many people study law for these material reasons and not out of a desire for justice. Once enrolled in law school or other institution, they are not always preoccupied with learning about their mission. Some students in law schools do not always seek to understand their mission or examine themselves to know their capacities and limits. It was the suffering of the Hebrews that was the first call of Moses. And later, when God calls him to return to Egypt to deliver this people, Moses has a long conversation with God not only to know his mission, but also to know his strengths and weaknesses.

The *renunciation of wealth* is obviously *liberation of self*. You can only set others free if you set yourself free. Indeed, just as Moses freed himself from the wealth (privileges, money, honour, etc.) he enjoyed in the royal palace and with Jethro, so too must those who defend human rights for peace free themselves from wealth and consider material goods, honours and social privileges “as garbage<sup>6</sup>”. For attachment to wealth is a trap for the observance of human rights.

*Action* is the release of others, the application of the principles or mission statement. Just as Moses applied God’s instructions, so should everyone involved in the defence or application of human rights apply the principles of protection of human rights. In Africa and Cameroon, human rights texts are often well drafted and well known, but their application remains a thorn in the side of these societies.

Let us also say that during the liberation process of the Hebrews, Moses was confronted with a challenge, that of the antipathy of some of his brothers. Indeed, some Hebrews, faced with certain obstacles in the desert, reproached Moses for having brought them out of Egypt because, they said, they were better off there than in the desert. Even at certain times in this process of liberation, one could hear murmurs against Moses from those he was fighting for. This shows how difficult the mission of a human rights defender is, because the oppressed person being defended does not always understand the role of the defender, and very often the person being defended stands as an adversary against their own defender, as was the case with Moses. Fortunately, the exemplary patience of Moses enabled him to overcome this challenge and lead the Hebrews to a safe haven. Hence the need for defenders or future defenders of human rights to enter the School of Moses.

6 Philippians 3: 8.

## The School of Moses: to recapitulate

The school of Moses can be summed up in five points. First of all, human rights defenders or future defenders should learn that defending human rights is a vocation or a calling to look after the well-being and development of others without expecting anything in return, because it is an altruistic task. Secondly, the defender of human rights should learn from the school of Moses that to defend the oppressed implies being ready to renounce one's own privileges, family, honour and property; this is what is called here renunciation of wealth. They must therefore accept to suffer for the well-being of the oppressed. Third, the human rights defender should be prepared to confront the oppressor whoever they may be, for Moses was not afraid to confront the giant Pharaoh and even his adoptive mother. They should also be prepared to face the adversity of the very people they are defending. Fourthly, the human rights defender at the school of Moses should learn to work together in a network, just as Moses learned to work sometimes under the guidance of the priest Jethro. Finally, the human rights defender, at the school of Moses, should learn how to delegate and pass the baton. During the process of freeing the Hebrews, Moses delegated responsibilities to some of his brothers and, at the end of his days, handed over the baton to one of them, namely Joshua. This is what a human rights defender must learn and assimilate at the school of Moses.

## Conclusion

In the end, for human rights to be observed in Cameroon, it would certainly be useful to teach the main protagonists to detach themselves from wealth. For this reason, a pedagogy of the deconstruction of the myth of fortune is urgently needed in law schools and universities, as well as in primary and secondary schools. Such a teaching method should incorporate the sacred into education systems. In traditional Africa, education focused on the sacred and conflicts were less pronounced. Today,

it is important to put the sacred back at the heart of education systems. Therefore, until this system is implemented, we need synergy between the various actors who defend human rights. Let magistrates render fair verdicts; let lawyers defend the oppressed not for financial reasons but for the needs of the case; and let other actors work for genuine defence and not to make money. In other words, all these actors should enrol at the school of Moses.

### *Selected Bibliography*

- United Bible Societies, *The Bible. Old and New Testament*, translated from Hebrew and Greek into French, new revised edition 1997.
- United Bible Societies, *The Bible. Word of Life*. 2003.
- United Bible Societies, *The Holy Bible. New revised Segond version*, with notes, references, glossary and Bible index.
- Kuen, Alfred, *The New Biblical Dictionary*, revised and expanded, Emmaus edition, Geneva, 1992.
- Abena, Alain Cyrille, "Effet de vie" et démythification de la fortune in *La Croix du Sud* by Joseph Ngoué and *The Holy Bible. For a rereading of the Münchner aesthetics*.
- Gilbert, Pierre, *Bible, mythe et récits des commencements*, Paris, Seuil, 1986.
- Ohouo, Nathanaël (Dir. God and man. *Elements of Anthropology for Christian and Church in Africa*, Yaoundé, CLE, 2007.
- Ouamba, Fabien, *Le Chrétien et la mort en Afrique*, Yaoundé, published by CLE, 2007.
- Césaire, Aimé, *Discourse on Colonialism*, African Presence, [1955], 2004.
- Sheikh Anta Diop, *Negro Nations and Culture. From Egyptian Negro Antiquity to the Cultural Problems of Black Africa Today*, Volume I, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1979.
- Éla, Jean-Marc, *La plume et la pioche*, Yaoundé, published by CLE, [1971], 2011.
- Grimal, Pierre, *La Mythologie grecque*, Collection "Que sais-je ?" Paris, PUF, 1986, first edition 1953.
- Kangue Éwane, François, *Semence et moisson coloniale. Un regard africain sur l'histoire de la colonisation*, Yaoundé, published by CLE, 1985.
- Maingueneau, Dominique, *Pragmatique pour le discours littéraire*, Paris, Bordas, 1990.
- Mbock, Charly Gabriel, *Decolonizing France*, Montreal, Kiyikaat, 2010.
- Messina, Jean-Paul, *Christianity and the Quest for Identity in Africa*, Yaoundé, published by CLE, 1999.
- Tsafack, Gilbert, *Ethics and Deontology of Education*, Yaoundé, Presse universitaire d'Afrique, 1998.

# Challenges and risks of the work of local human rights defenders in the context of their activities to promote and defend human rights and peace

*By Rostin Manketa Nkwahata\**

Since it was founded in 1983, La Voix des Sans Voix pour les Droits de l'Homme (VSV) has been working to promote and defend human rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It has been a partner of Bread for the World since 2002 and a member of the Civil Peace Service Network since 2016. Through the activities carried out and the meetings attended within the framework of the said Network, VSV has become more aware of the essential value of peace to which all the peoples of the world aspire.

Indeed, there is a perfect overlap between the promotion of human rights and the promotion of peace, which is itself a fundamental human right. It is clear that working to promote human rights also means working for peace. For there is a close relationship between the work of promoting the rights of individuals and peace work. In a State governed by the rule of law, where justice in all its forms prevails and where the dignity of each person is respected, including individual and collective rights and freedoms, there is generally peace.

The cause of peace and the cause of respect for human rights are the two causes to which the United Nations attaches the greatest importance. "With the exception of the search for peace, there is no cause

\* Executive Director of La Voix des Sans Voix pour les Droits de l'Homme (VSV)

with which the United Nations identifies more than that of human rights”.<sup>1</sup>

But human rights work needs committed workers and artisans, determined to strive, sometimes putting their lives at risk, to defend values that are often trampled upon in their respective communities by those with political and economic power.

These workers and shapers are the men and women, young girls and boys who defend the rights and dignity of the human person. These human rights defenders, acting alone or in association with others, work for the promotion and defence of universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. Through promotion, they organize human rights training, raise the awareness of the population to enhance their knowledge and make them more conscious of their rights in order to defend them and claim them from the authorities, where the majority of human rights violators are recruited.

In terms of the defence of human rights, the work of local defenders includes actions to denounce human rights violations. They raise their voices on behalf of the victims, sometimes at the cost of their lives, to ensure respect for human dignity when it is violated.

But what are the challenges and risks facing local human rights defenders in carrying out their work?

## Challenges

Among the challenges faced by local human rights defenders is the misperception and difficulty in accepting their work by some authorities. In the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where VSV has been working for more than three decades, it is not uncommon to hear the authorities accuse human rights defenders of everything and anything. Such accusations are sometimes made on the airwaves of certain

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, “Human Rights. Questions and Answers”, New York 1987. P.4.

media in the most official manner, which does not seem to offend the hosts of public institutions.

Human rights defenders are often wrongly accused by some authorities of being in the pay of foreign powers or of being opponents in disguise, enemies of the Republic or unpatriotic people, with no love for their country because they are the voice of victims, of the oppressed, of people unfairly deprived of justice and freedom by their rulers.

Within their respective communities, there are also security challenges in the absence of an internal legal framework that protects local human rights defenders. The efforts invested by human rights defenders in the DR Congo and supported by the National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH) for the adoption of a law on the protection of human rights defenders remain unsuccessful so far. Some parliamentarians close to the government think that it is not necessary to adopt a specific law on the protection of human rights defenders, whom they consider to be already protected by the laws of the DR Congo like any other Congolese citizens.

It is true that human rights instruments provide that all people enjoy equal protection of the law. Therefore, no discrimination in the protection of individuals under the domestic laws of States and human rights instruments can be tolerated or accepted. However, it should be stressed that the definition of human rights defenders is based on Article 1 of the operative part of the *“United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”*, which states that *“everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels.”* Based on this definition, it is clear that anyone can be a human rights defender and that this quality is not reserved only for those working in civil society organisations. Human rights defenders are recognised by the acts they perform in favour of the promotion and protection of universally recognised human rights and fundamen-

tal freedoms. However, the actions of human rights defenders can lead to threats, attacks against them or even targeted assassinations, arrests or imprisonment or other immediate or serious risks aimed at making them disappear or silencing them and thus preventing them from continuing to do their work. For these reasons and given the particular nature of their work, a specific legal framework for the protection of human rights defenders is indispensable. In some countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, laws protecting human rights defenders have been adopted by their respective parliaments and are operational.

Another challenge is the lack of understanding of the work of local defenders by the population in some settings. A large part of the population does not have a clear comprehension of the work of local human rights defenders. Indeed, in the absence of an independent and fair justice system in the DR Congo, where bribes are sometimes accepted for the release of criminals instead of punishing them in accordance with the law and making reparation for the harm suffered by the victims, the population sometimes tends to take justice into its own hands by killing the criminals, sometimes in an atrocious manner by burning them alive. These cases of mob justice have been recorded often in Kinshasa and in several provinces of the DR Congo. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of June 1993 at the end of the World Conference on Human Rights rightly stated that 'States should strive to eradicate illiteracy and direct education towards the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms'<sup>2</sup>.

In the face of such behaviour, local human rights defenders who are courageous enough to remind the population that the right to life is guaranteed to everyone by human rights instruments and that no one may inflict cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment on another person

<sup>2</sup> World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, June 1993, P. 71

for any reason whatsoever, are sometimes frowned upon by the population who accuse them of taking sides or protecting criminals.

In Kinshasa, the capital of the DR Congo, in 2013 the Congolese national police carried out a brutal operation called “Likofi”, which consisted of the summary and public execution of criminals who terrorized and committed abuses against the population. Many human rights defenders who have denounced these summary executions, which seriously undermine human dignity and especially the right to life, have been stigmatized by the population supporting the police in its operation.

The misunderstandings and differences in perception between human rights advocates and the general public are so profound that they give the impression that there are those, on the one hand, who control everything and are wise and on the other hand there are the others who are ignorant and incapable of thinking about human rights. But perhaps the most important problem lies in the fact that members of a community who see their own people suffering human rights violations and abuses are frustrated, shocked and would like the damage suffered to be equal to the damage caused (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth) as if we were in a state of primitive lawlessness.

Human rights defenders, for their part, while condemning human rights violations and abuses, send a message to people that human dignity must be respected at all times and in all places and that one cannot solve a question of human rights violations by committing further human rights violations. There are other ways of punishing the perpetrators of human rights violations and to combat impunity. Misunderstandings and differences in perception between the two parties can be resolved by addressing the issue of human rights education for democracy, non-violence and peace.

## Risks

The very nature of the work of a human rights defender exposes them to enormous risks. In reality, a human rights defender is a person who lives with death as their constant companion, since anything can happen to them, especially when they are effective in their work of defending the rights of victims of human rights violations, victims of oppressive regimes, of dictatorship, of blatant injustice, of discrimination of all kinds and, above all, of denouncing bad government policies aimed at trivialising human dignity and the fundamental freedoms granted to all persons, etc.

The work of the human rights defender therefore requires a firm commitment and a belief in an ideal for a just society in which all people, whoever they may be, can lead a dignified life.

The many risks to which human rights defenders are exposed include persecution, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, assassinations, etc.

*La Voix des Sans Voix pour les Droits de l'Homme* (VSV) has known and experienced these risks, which reached a climax with the 2010 murder, in very atrocious conditions, of two of its members, Floribert Chebeya Bahizire and Fidèle Bazana Edadi, respectively former Executive Director and former dispatching driver.

The late Floribert had been tortured and his neck broken by his executioners who were none other than Congolese policemen. This macabre scene took place in the very facilities of the General Inspectorate of the Congolese National Police. Before and after the assassination of the two illustrious individuals mentioned above, there have been other human rights defenders, including journalists who were murdered in the DR Congo. This is the case of Pascal Kabungulu in 2005, Serge Maheshe, Franck Ngyke and his wife, Didace Namujimbo (non-exhaustive list).

However, despite these risks, it should be emphasised that the work of promoting and defending human rights is a very noble task since it

places the respect for human dignity, rights and fundamental freedoms at the centre of everything.

Ultimately, it should be stressed that both the challenges and the risks involved should not constitute obstacles to the commitment of women and men to promote and defend the fundamental rights and freedoms recognised and guaranteed to all persons for a life in dignity for all. It is important to address the many challenges mentioned above, even if the list is not exhaustive, and endeavour to provide the necessary solutions. Among these solutions are awareness raising, human rights training, and the popularization of human rights instruments, especially among the population, to enable them to take ownership of issues related to the promotion and defence of human rights.

Risks should not be a reason for discouragement or a pretext for giving in to the wrongdoing that threatens human rights or peace. Defending human rights is a noble occupation, but one that may require the supreme sacrifice for those who engage in it.

# The promotion of the rights of indigenous Pygmy peoples for peaceful cohabitation between communities in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo

*By Christian K. Sondirya\*, Jacques N. Birikunzira\*\*, Donald K. Kasyenene\*\*\**

## I. Presentation

Apart from the conclusion, there are three main points in this article: Pygmies and their living conditions (I), the involvement of the JPSC in the protection of Pygmies (II) and the impact of JPSC special support for peace (III). Attached are a table of current conflict files and those resolved by the Pygmies with the assistance of the JPSC, as well as photos of the activities and the Bibliography.

\* Coordinator of the “Commission Justice, Paix et Sauvegarde de la Création” in Goma since 2012, and from 2017 community secretary of the CBCA. He is active in advocacy for the rights of vulnerable groups like raped women, pygmies, children, prisoners and human rights defenders. He also works in environmental protection.

\*\* Programme officer at the “Commission Justice, Paix et Sauvegarde de la Création” of the baptist congregation CBCA in Goma since 2014. Works in programmes on violence against women, community reconciliation, capacity building for human rights defenders.

\*\*\* Based in Katwa; supervises the project for the socio-juridical integration of the pygmy people. Facilitates conferences on the promotion of the right of pygmies and information on basic rights for village people.

## II. Who are the Pygmies? What are their major challenges and living conditions?

### II.1. About the Pygmies

Pygmies are one of the minority peoples in the DRC. They are considered the first inhabitants of the Democratic Republic of Congo. In the past, this nomadic people lived only by hunting, fishing and gathering. Currently, social changes coupled with their socio-economic corollaries have had repercussions on the daily life of this people, forcing them against their will to lead a sedentary life, engage in agriculture, and thus to cohabit with the other peoples living in their environments. This cohabitation is not always smooth.

Since the year 2012, the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission of the CBCA (JPSC), thanks to financial support from the United Evangelical Mission (UEM), has been focusing more on the Pygmy peoples of the TANDANDALE, FUNGULAMACHO and KATANGA camps, in the BASWAGHA chiefdom, Lubero territory, about 120 km west of the city of Butembo, in the province of North Kivu, in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo. A total of 34 families made up of 204 persons, including 17 families in TANDANDALE, 4 families in KATANGA, 7 in SUPA and 4 in FUNGULAMACHO.

### II.2. Major Challenges Facing Pygmy Indigenous Peoples Targeted by the JPSC

An immense country in the heart of Central Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) has remarkable development potential in terms of land area, population and natural resources. Unfortunately, indigenous peoples, particularly those targeted by JPSC, are the first victims of the country's development and of insecurity in rural areas.

Indeed, **urbanisation** in the territories occupied by Pygmies constitutes a considerable threat. Day after day, the land formerly reserved for

these indigenous peoples is being subdivided in defiance of Congolese legislation on land occupied by indigenous peoples. This urbanisation leads quite naturally to the gradual destruction of the Pygmies' living space. We cannot fail to mention **deforestation** in the territory of Beni which has made the Pygmies' main source of food—game and fruits—more scarce. This deforestation has also contributed to other environmental problems such as: climate change, urban air pollution, erosion and landslides. Some companies or individuals have plundered Pygmy lands for **cocoa cultivation and mining**. It should also be pointed out that the **insecurity** caused by the militias, of which indigenous peoples are victims, does not help them to thrive, much less favour their integration into the community, since they are forced to flee further into the forest and are therefore abandoned to their sad fate.

Also, it must be noted that the Congolese State has not put in place a **policy for the supervision of Pygmies**, let alone the basic structures for their benefit. This situation is having adverse consequences on the very existence of this people, including the very high infant and maternal mortality rate, rampant poverty and the very high illiteracy rate.

Furthermore, Pygmy women are often victims of **sexual violence**. In fact, a survey we conducted in Senga camp among Pygmy girls found that more than 78% of girls between the ages of 13 and 16 already have at least one child, and more than 60% of these children do not know their fathers. Some Bantu men use trickery to seduce the Pygmy girls with false promises of marriage.

### 11.3. Socio-economic conditions of Pygmies

The Millennium Goals enshrine the integral development of every individual and every people, placing greater emphasis on access to decent living conditions. A decent life involves access to housing, education, food, health, etc. However, this ideal still remains mythical for many people around the world. Pygmies are on the endangered list. These Pygmy peoples are still subjected to subhuman living conditions.

They live in huts, not too different from primate dwellings. They are exposed to a variety of aggressions: cold, disease, illiteracy, undernourishment, ... all these miserable conditions are part of their daily lot and make life difficult for people, who, like all human beings, are entitled to certain rights. In short, for these people, access to valuable goods is only a pipe dream.

On the other hand, what attracts attention when one looks at the life of this community is that the people are landless, even though history describes them as the first inhabitants of the Congo, as we mentioned earlier. Today they may be lucky enough to find a small space to erect their huts, but we do not know what their lives will be like tomorrow. The forests, which constitute their natural environment, fuel the greed of the wealthy who covet arable land for the benefit of their industrial crops (cinchona, cocoa, etc.), thus depriving the indigenous peoples of their spaces. This situation is likely to open the door to outright or latent land conflicts among Pygmies and between Pygmies and other ethnic communities.

### III. Involvement of JPSC in the protection of Pygmies

This programme has been implemented since 2014 for the benefit of the indigenous Pygmy peoples. Indeed, the programme for the socio-legal integration of Pygmies aims to popularize land ownership laws among the people in order to encourage them to claim their violated rights in a peaceful and non-violent manner. In order to achieve this, JPSC has proceeded to train Pygmies on their fundamental rights, legal and judicial assistance, capacity building in advocacy and peaceful conflict resolution.

### III.1. Various forms of training

A series of training courses have been set up for Pygmies to enable them to master their rights so that they are truly capable of defending them. These courses were carried out by a team of 3 lawyers, one of whom was a woman.

With regard to this first axis, it should be noted that several training sessions were organized for this indigenous people. These include:

- ◆ The land ownership issue which consisted in popularizing land ownership law while placing special emphasis on the acquisition, conservation and loss of land under local law and custom. This proved to be an urgent need for this people who are currently surviving by cultivating the fields and gradually abandoning hunting and gathering.
- ◆ In addition, the concepts of the fundamental rights of Pygmies were covered, particularly those relating to the right to life, schooling, property, health, access to public service, food, etc.
- ◆ The rights of Pygmy women and girls were highlighted. Focusing on the Congolese law against sexual violence.

### III.2. Legal and judicial support for Pygmies

It should be pointed out that, in addition to these courses, JPSC has embarked on a legal support programme for Pygmies. In 2017, the JPSC accompanied three Pygmies before the local chief VUYINGA in the Baswagha chiefdom in Lubero territory in a case concerning the non-respect of land lease contracts between these three Pygmies and land chiefs, members of other local communities. Another legal dispute was between a certain P. (Pygmy) and R. of the (Nande community) over a customary land dispute in the NSENGA village in Tandandale. Thanks to the legal assistance of a lawyer that the JPSC made



*View of the SENG A Village with its inhabitants*

*Welcome ceremony by the Pygmy women of SENG A village in Tandandandale*





*Family photo after a training session on the fundamental rights of Pygmies in Tandandale*



*Mrs. T. cooking, with her two children by her side...*

*Picture taken during a conciliation session*



available to the Pygmy P., he won the trial and his rights were restored. Also, the SENGA camp in Tandandale (25 hectares) was almost plundered by a trader who wanted to exploit it for the cultivation of cocoa, thanks to the intervention of the JPSC, a lawsuit was initiated and won in favour of the Pygmies.

### III.3. Capacity-building for peaceful conflict resolution

First, Pygmy leaders were trained in advocacy techniques and peaceful conflict resolution. Emphasis was placed on drawing up a specifications document and the competent authorities for one or another case on the one hand and on the other hand on peaceful methods of conflict resolution such as: conciliation, mediation, judicial recourse. The aim here was to make participants aware of the need to wage a common struggle, through their leaders, in order to claim their socio-economic and cultural rights in a non-violent manner.

## IV. Impact of JPSC support for peace in Tandandale

It goes without saying that peace remains a long-term process. The experience of assisting the Pygmies has enabled JPSC to get to know this wonderful people and their aspiration to live in peace with other peoples. Since Pygmies have been trained in peace, they are increasingly making peaceful demands and seeking to resolve their problems in a non-violent manner. Thus, a hut has been erected in their camp where the Pygmies deal with their problems and solve them through their leaders, the village elders. Cases of private vengeance have greatly diminished since this event. The fact that the Pygmies won a legal trial improved their self-esteem on the one hand and on the other hand reduced tensions with all the people who approached their living environment that they regarded as outsiders. Capacity building in advocacy has led to the creation of an advocacy committee that works on the

challenges faced by Pygmies and effectively engages with local authorities to claim the rights of this people. JPSC has already capitalized on some of the data from the reports produced by the Pygmy Advocacy Committee by forwarding them to provincial and national authorities in order to draw their attention to the plight of this people.

## V. Conclusion

As the DRC, like other Central African states, has embarked on the path of stabilisation, all efforts should now converge towards pacification. Thus, all the actions taken by the various parties must be in line with the logic aimed at strengthening harmony, solidarity and living together. The plight of indigenous peoples must further mobilise the attention of the entire national and international community with regard to the needs felt as well as to promote sustainable peace.

While nomadic life was not a problem for the ancestors of the Pygmies in the past, today the situation is changing. This people has begun to open up to new horizons, in view of the realities of social life, which is constantly evolving and is marked by socio-economic changes. Here are the regrets of a young Pygmy boy met by the JPSC in Senga camp, speaking in local Kiswahili: *“History has never contradicted itself that we Pygmies were the first occupants; today we have become a landless people. If this is the case, we sharpen our spears and arrows to kill the invaders”*.

The call is therefore made to all peace activists to address this situation for a peaceful claiming of the rights recognized to the Pygmy people so that a lasting peace between communities living in this part of the DRC can prevail. This is not just a simple regret; at the same time it reflects a sense of revolt among this people who not only feel marginalized but also deprived of their land. JPSC activities have thus enabled the Pygmy community to understand their rights as an indigenous people, and thus mitigate the destructive violence that could result from this ignorance.

**Below is a summary table of ongoing conflicts and those resolved by Pygmies with the special support of JPSC**

<b>No. 1.</b>	
SUBJECT OF THE DISPUTE	Land conflict in Tandandale/ Senga
PARTIES CONCERNED	Mr. R. (pygmy) versus M.K.
AUTHORITIES HAVING HEARD THE LITIGATION	Chief of VUYINGA locality
OUTCOME	Plot has been returned to the Pygmy R.
<i>File already closed</i>	
<b>No. 2.</b>	
SUBJECT OF THE DISPUTE	Non-payment of full amount in a sale of the plot in Tandandandale/Senga
PARTIES CONCERNED	M.M. (pygmy) against an inhabitant of the area
AUTHORITIES HAVING HEARD THE LITIGATION	Capita of the village
OUTCOME	The final instalment on the purchase of the plot was paid in favour of the Pygmy M.M.
<i>File already closed</i>	
<b>No. 3.</b>	
SUBJECT OF THE DISPUTE	Encroachment of the plot belonging to the Pygmy Sh. to Mu.
PARTIES CONCERNED	Pygmy Sh. versus Mu Nande.
AUTHORITIES HAVING HEARD THE LITIGATION	Chief of the Baswagha chiefdom, Nz.and the captain of Mukondo village, Mr. M.K.
OUTCOME	The chief of the chiefdom demanded that the limits be respected by Mr M. in favour of the plot of land occupied by the Pygmy S.
<i>File half closed because Mr. M. has already removed the boundary signs without authorization. File in progress</i>	
<b>No. 4.</b>	
SUBJECT OF THE DISPUTE	Land ownership conflict on a field in Tandandale
PARTIES CONCERNED	R. P. (Nande) against R.S.& M.S. Pygmies.
AUTHORITIES HAVING HEARD THE LITIGATION	Community leader Mr. T.
OUTCOME	The two Pygmies were allowed to continue farming activities in the disputed field and to maintain the production of planks.
<i>File already closed</i>	

Some of the beneficiaries of these actions found the right words to express their opinions. This is the case of Pastor Melissa M.'s wife (both Pygmies) who said: *“Through these training sessions I have just learned that we must avoid hatred and live together with the other communities with whom we live here in Senga”*. And her husband, who is one of the CBCA pastors in the area, added: *“Land conflicts have caused us a lot of harm. Thanks to these training sessions we have just learned the process of peaceful management of our lands according to Congolese law”*.

Finally, becoming aware of his rights and the need to live peacefully with members of other communities, Romain S., another Pygmy, declared: *“We were very much threatened by the other communities and were at the point of taking up our spears for revenge. However, through this training and advocacy work, we understand that there are mechanisms for claiming our rights as Pygmies and as citizens without violence.”*

Beyond the experience of JPSC, it is clear that the challenges of consolidating and sustaining peaceful relationships between Pygmies and other communities must be taken seriously. This refers to the responsibility of each and every one of us to be fully involved on behalf of this people who are threatened from all sides, because their peace depends on the peace of all.

### *Bibliography*

Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December 10, 1948

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 13 September 2017

African Charter on Human and People's Rights, June 1981

Constitution of the DRC of 18 February 2016

Law No. 73-021 of 20 July 1973 on the general property regime, land and real estate regime and security regime as amended and supplemented by Law No. 80-008 of 18 July 1980

<https://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/default/files/publication/2013/05/toolkit-sida-rdc.pdf>

[https://www.rainforestfoundationuk.org/media.ashx/ocdhcongodroitsautochtones\\_summaryrepublicofcongojuin2006.pdf](https://www.rainforestfoundationuk.org/media.ashx/ocdhcongodroitsautochtones_summaryrepublicofcongojuin2006.pdf)

Report Tandandale and Fungulamacho Pygmy Legal Assistance Project Report 2012–2013, JPSC 2013

Report on the Project for Judicial Assistance to Tandandandale and Fungulamacho Pygmies 2014–2015, JPSC 2015

Report on Tandandale and Fungulamacho Pygmy Legal Assistance Project Report 2016, JPSC 2013

Report of the Project to Promote the Fundamental Rights of the Tandandale Pygmies 2017, JPSC 2017

JPSC Annual Report 2018.

# Social networks as vectors of a new democratic movement: the limits of a new space for protest in Africa

By Wassy Kambale\*

## Introduction

“The people always win.” In February 2018, this slogan emerged on social networks in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). A pro-democracy activist had just been killed during demonstrations organized by the Catholic Church, which suspected President Joseph Kabila of wanting to remain in power (*Jeune Afrique*, 2018). Youth movements militating for democracy put forward this slogan attributed to the young activist, as a tribute to him and to denounce the brutal repression of the demonstrations. (TV5MONDE, May 2018). A blogger denounced the recurrent shutdowns of social networks and a strategy of denial by the Congolese authorities in these terms: “*This regime is accused of turning a deaf ear, in the face of doubts about a fatigued and uncertain democratic process...*” (Habari DRC, 2018). An article published on the website of the newspaper *Courrier International* on authoritarianism in Africa denounced the tendency of several African heads of state to hold onto power. The article stated that “*Since 2000, no fewer than 30 African heads of state have tried to extend their mandate, and 18 have succeeded.*” (*Courrier International*, February 2019).

\* Wassy Kambale lives in Eastern DR Congo. He is the communication manager of the Amani Festival in Goma working to unite the different local communities in Eastern DR Congo through cultural activities. This young social entrepreneur is particularly interested in the role communication can play for the development of African societies.

Since 2011, major protest movements have been observed in Africa. Whether we are referring to the Arab spring in the Maghreb countries, or the emergence of citizen movements in sub-Saharan Africa, the use of social networks by civilian populations is now an integral part of the political debate. Population groups, including those in rural areas, are joining social networks on a massive scale. This enthusiasm is fuelled by a significant increase in Internet access rates on the continent. According to Dahmani, "between 2005 and 2015, the number of households able to access the Internet has increased more than sixfold, while the world total has increased more than twofold." (Dahmani, 2018, p.4)

In addition, the regimes in power in several African countries that are struggling towards democracy are becoming increasingly wary. Between the demands expressed by the protest movements, particularly for the organisation of elections and the desire to hold onto power at all costs, these regimes must now find reasons to censor the Internet, and in some cases use it to monitor the population.

To what extent can social networks, which have become tools for political mobilization by raising democratic hopes, transform authoritarian African regimes?

In this study, social networks are considered as platforms that offer users the possibility of interacting with each other in a system connected to the Internet (Dagnogo, 2018). In this particular case, social networks refer to WhatsApp, Facebook and twitter platforms.

To analyse the issue, the first part of this article will study the effectiveness of social networks as tools for political mobilization and democratic protest, while the second part will study the limits of this type of movement for changing authoritarian regimes in Africa.

# 1. Social networks have become a tool for political mobilization and democratic protest.

## A. Citizens find a space for expression through social networks

For some years now, citizens in a number of African countries have been struggling to regain a space of expression within the traditional media, whether public or private. In an analysis of restrictions on information in French-speaking African countries, Frère notes that the opening up of the media space that took place simultaneously with the wind of democratization of the continent in the 1990s was not enough to end media control by the regimes in place and ensure freedom of expression for citizens. Indeed, states that have adopted democracy as a way of managing power nonetheless persist in imposing silence on citizens in the media around subjects they felt could weaken the power of the authorities. (Frère, 2016). A recent report by the NGO Reporters Sans Frontière (2019) indicates that authoritarian regimes continue to consolidate their control over the media in Africa. In the DRC, for example, the organization called *Journaliste en Danger* (JED) identified 121 cases of press freedom violations in 2018 (Radio Okapi, 2018). These violations include the arrest of journalists, the shutting down of media close to the opposition, and accusations of defamation against journalists or people interviewed by the media.

In this environment, the use of social networks effectively offers citizens the opportunity to express themselves on a number of topics of general interest in a more accessible space. According to a study by Clarke, social networks encourage a diversity of political opinions, and highlight the fact that traditional media are no longer the only guarantors of current events (2010, p.4). For in fact, in several African countries, political discussions are emerging from social networks. Political conversations are now no longer animated only by those invited to participate. Rather, the debates now take themselves to the citizens, including those who were not previously concerned and those who do

not have access to them. This is what authors Valeriani and Vaccari (2016, cited in Mansour, 2017, p.9) and Strandberg (2013, cited in Mansour, 2017, p.9) call “accidental exposure to political messages on social media.” Social networks offer users the opportunity to share their points of view and mobilize more quickly around the issues that interest them, thus creating what the French public agency for the development of Southern media (CFI) has called digital citizenship (CFI, 2016). The latter has fostered the emergence of a new generation of civil society, in the form of the protest movements in Africa, whose influence began to evolve around and sometimes beyond the Internet.

## B. Social networks boost the capacity of civil society in Africa

The concept of “Civil Society”, which owed its survival to external support only, showed its limits as a concrete influence on the policies of the new African democracies of the 1990s. According to an analysis by Quantin, who looks at the period between 1988 and 2008 in Africa, “civil society did not establish itself as a mechanism for internal regulation and the effects of “bad civil society” have disrupted the consolidation of new democratic regimes.” (Quantin, 2008, p.11). Despite the involvement of civil society in the democratization processes on the continent, notably through the sovereign national conferences in Benin, Gabon, Congo, Niger, Mali, Togo, Zaire and Chad (Blanchard, 2019), the regimes in place have remained resistant to the effective implementation of democracy.

In addition, social networks have fostered the emergence of a new generation of civil society in Africa. As users of social networks, especially young Africans, realized that they could converge on common initiatives, by moving from virtual conversations to more concrete actions on the ground, they forged links to mobilize communities around topics of general interest to bring about change. In a study on the spaces of protest in Africa, Richaud explains that these protest movements were created in various contexts in the continent, but that

their influence was always buoyed by the social networks through vigilance and denunciation activities (2017). In West Africa, the protest movements “*Y'en a marre*” in Senegal and “*Balai citoyen*” in Burkina Faso have played an important role since 2013 in mobilizing around the issues of “citizenship, consolidation of democracy and institutional reform” (Touré, 2017). In the DRC, the citizen movement “Lucha”, which was created in 2012 around issues related to social justice (drinking water, jobs for young graduates), quickly migrated to political demands, and actively participated in demonstrations against changes to the constitution in the country. (lucha, s.d.). In the Maghreb countries, youth protest movements calling for improved living conditions in Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco and Algeria have been provoking a reaction from the regimes in place in one way or another since 2010 (Camau, 2012). But have these different movements really succeeded in changing the authoritarian regimes in place?

## II. The social networks have failed to transform authoritarian regimes

### A. Civil society supported by social networks faces coordination problems.

The use of social networks by civil society in Africa has led to coordination problems within the protest movements themselves. In a study on the case of Egypt, De Angelis finds that social networks have become spaces where minorities are excluded. Those who do not have access to an audience do not have the power to make their voices heard. Influencers are trying to build a new class. The opportunities for expression in the public space are no longer the same, which sometimes leads to frustration or fear of manipulation. In this sense, influencers who seek to maintain their influence through social networks gradually lose their credibility. (p. 202-205). In reality, there is a problem with the reasons for the creation of the different protest movements, each of which

has its own agenda and projects. Mobilizations intended to confront authoritarian regimes are thus fragmented, and now depend on the resources available to the initiators.

In addition, the protest movements no longer have a monopoly on representing the people. According to De Angelis, the enthusiasm for social networks has led to the emergence of new players in online communities. Debates have become more virulent between those who are pro-regime, and those in favour of change. (p.213-214). State institutions and representatives of the state have also made use of social networks to provide their version of the facts. At the moment, the political debate on social media is becoming more and more emotional. It thus offers a corridor for manipulation through “fake news”. Exchanges on social networks thus lose a lot of credibility. (p.214-216). In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, online confrontations between citizen movements and militants of the ruling party have begun to take place. These divisions have continued on the ground, raising fears of a real risk of violence. (Isango, 2018). This has been exploited by the authorities on the continent to justify monitoring and censoring the Internet in the name of preserving social peace or national security (Frère, 2016).

B. Authoritarian regimes have adopted new forms of surveillance and censorship of social networks.

In Africa, authoritarian regimes are increasingly opting to cut off the Internet to counter online mobilization. In a new report on the limitations of the Internet in Africa, the NGO CIPESA (*The Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa*) noted that: “Of the 22 African countries that have ordered Internet cuts over the past five years, 77% are dictatorial regimes and the rest are classified as hybrid or semi-authoritarian” (2019). One study suggests that the authoritarian trend of regimes in Africa can be explained by the authorities’ concern to maintain power by changing their countries’

laws (Magnani and Vircoulon, 2019, p 13). Whether in Chad, DRC, Benin, Gabon, or Mali, the current regimes have not hesitated to cut off the Internet, or have restricted the use of social networks in the run-up to major events such as presidential and legislative elections or the passing of laws in connection with constitutional changes (*Internet sans frontières*, 2018). According to a BBC article, “In 2018, there were 21 cases of partial or total Internet cuts, compared to 13 in 2017 and 4 in 2016” in the DRC (2019).

In addition to Internet censorship, authoritarian African regimes are now attracted to the use of the Internet itself to monitor the population. The newspaper *Le Monde* (2018), revealed that the governments of Zambia, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe have bought technologies from China to control Internet users. According to Arifon, in 2009 China had 40,000 agents to monitor discussions over the Internet, particularly on the social networks. In addition, the Chinese government pays young Internet users to participate in online debates, and to promote the government’s views (Arifon, 2009). In November 2018, Radio France Internationale (RFI) suspected the DRC authorities of creating fake Facebook accounts to monitor opponents of the current regime. Earlier in May 2017 (*digitalbusiness*), the Togolese government announced the establishment of a cyber police force in the country.

## Conclusion

Social networks have effectively revolutionized the field of political communication, and brought new hopes of democratization of African spaces. The emergence of protest movements driven by social networks and mobilizing around social, political and economic issues has been a positive sign. Yet the failure of these movements to change authoritarian regimes in Africa is clear. It should be noted that this failure draws part of its justification from the very use of social networks. The latter have reproduced in the virtual world exactly the same models of fragmentation as in the real world, including inequalities or violence.

Authoritarian regimes in Africa have quickly grasped this. They now use these reasons as a basis for their decisions to censor the Internet in general and social networks in particular. Under these conditions, will it be possible to preserve the meagre achievements of the protest movements in Africa?

### *Bibliography*

#### Primary sources

- Cipesa. (2019). Dictateurs et restrictions d'Internet en Afrique: Cinq Dimensions des Coupures, URL: [https://cipesa.org/?wpfb\\_dl=284](https://cipesa.org/?wpfb_dl=284).
- Digitalbusiness. (2017), Cybercriminalité: Togo is planning to set up a cyber police force, <https://www.digitalbusiness.africa/cybercriminalite-togo-envisage-de-se-doter-dune-cyberpolice/>; accessed on 05 August 2019.
- Eddy Isango. (February 24, 2018), Tensions at Kinshasa Cathedral on the eve of an anti-Kabila March, URL: <https://www.voaafrique.com/a/la-cathedrale-de-kinshasa-envahie-par-des-militants-du-parti-presidetiel/4269050.html>.
- Fifafrica 2018: Social network taxes and internet cuts at the heart of discussions, <https://internetwithoutborders.org/fifafrica-2018-taxes-sur-les-reseaux-sociaux-et-coupures-internet-au-coeur-des-discussions/>, accessed 28 July 2019.
- Habarirdc. (27 February 2018). Rossy Mukendi, Kabila's nightmare? <https://habarirdc.net/rossy-mukendi-mort-sang-police-cauchemar-kabila/>, accessed 28 July 2018.
- <http://www.luchacongo.org/naissance/>, accessed July 28, 2019.
- Internet in Africa: How do governments close it? <https://www.bbc.com/afrique/region-47765394>, accessed July 28, 2019.
- Kalonji, Couve and Le Bot. (2016). Digital citizenship: what Africa is preparing. URL <https://www.cfi.fr/fr/actualites/citoyennete-numerique-ce-que-lafrique-prepare>.
- Authoritarianism is regaining ground in Africa, <https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/analyse-lautoritarisme-regagne-du-terrain-en-afrique> , accessed 28 July 2019.
- DR Congo: Last tribute for Rossy Mukendi disturbed, <https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/rd-congo-dernier-hommage-perturbe-pour-rossy-mukendi-238504>, accessed on 28 July 2019.
- Reporters Without Borders. (2019). Classement mondial de la liberté de la presse 2019: la mécanique de la peur, Repéré à URL: <https://rsf.org/fr/classement-mondial-de-la-liberte-de-la-presse-2019-la-mecanique-de-la-peur>, accessed 1 August 2019.
- Repression in the DRC: a review of the tragic death of Rossy Mukendi <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/537335/societe/repression-en-rdc-retour-sur-la-mort-tragique-de-rossy-mukendi/>, accessed on 28 July 2019.
- Sandrine Blanchard. (February 14, 2019), Pathways to Democracy: Sovereign National Conferences in Africa, Retrieved from URL: <https://www.dw.com/fr/les-chemins-de-la-d%C3%A9mocratie-les-conf%C3%A9rences-nationales-souveraines-en-afrique/a-47522644> , accessed August 1, 2019.

Sébastien Le Belzic. (2018), the Chinese Big Brother settles in African streets and homes, located at URL: [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2018/07/09/le-big-brother-chinois-s-installe-dans-les-rues-et-les-foyers-africains\\_5328467\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2018/07/09/le-big-brother-chinois-s-installe-dans-les-rues-et-les-foyers-africains_5328467_3212.html), accessed August 02, 2019.

Sonia Rolley. (29 November 2018), “Congo Files”: fake Facebook accounts that confuse investigators. <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20181129-congo-files-faux-comptes-facebook-rdc-kasai-enqueteurs-deroutent-onu>, accessed 05 August 2019.

## Secondary sources

Ahmed Dahmani, “Les technologies numériques dans les pays en développement. Quel paradigme?”, *Communication, technologies et développement* [On line], 6 | 2018, published online on 18 December 2018, accessed 23 July 2019. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/ctd/437>; DOI: 10.4000/ctd.437.

Amanda Clarke. (2010). *Médias sociaux : Utilisation politique et conséquences pour la démocratie participative*, Bibliothèque du parlement, Volume F, No. 10. URL : <https://lop.parl.ca/content/lop/TeachersInstitute/LesMediasSociaux4.pdf>.

Bader Ben Mansour. (2017). Le rôle des médias sociaux en politique : une revue de la littérature. *Regards politiques*, Volume 1 (Number 1), pages 3–17. Retrieved from URL <https://corpus.ulaval.ca/jspui/handle/20.500.11794/13930>.

Coralie Richaud. (2017). Les réseaux sociaux: Nouveaux espaces de contestation et de reconstruction de la politique? *Les Nouveaux Cahiers du Conseil constitutionnel*, volume 4 (number 57), pages 29–44.

Gnéré Blama Dagnogo, “Du réseau social traditionnel au réseau social numérique: pistes de réflexion pour une éducation aux médias sociaux numériques en Côte d’Ivoire”, *Revue française des sciences de l’information et de la communication* [On line], 12 | 2018, published online on 05 February 2018, accessed 23 July 2019. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/rfsic/3495>; DOI: 10.4000/rfsic.3495.

Ibrahima Touré. (2016) *Jeunesse, mobilisations sociales et citoyenneté en Afrique de l’Ouest : étude comparée des mouvements de contestation « Y’en a marre » au Sénégal et « Balai citoyen » au Burkina Faso*, *Afrique et développement*, Volume XLII, No. 2, 2017, pp. 57-82. URL: [https://www.jstor.org/stable/90018191?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/90018191?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents).

Marie-Soleil Frère. (2016). *Censure de l’information en Afrique subsaharienne francophone : la censure dans les régimes semi-autoritaires. Dans les censures dans les régimes autoritaires et totalitaires xxe-xxie siècles.* (Laurent Martin), *les censures dans le monde* (Presses universitaires de Rennes, volume 3, p. 341–356). Retrieved from URL: <https://books.openedition.org/pur/45141>.

Michel Camau, « Un printemps arabe ? L’émulation protestataire et ses limites », *L’Année du Maghreb*, VIII | 2012, pp. 27–47. URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/anneemaghreb/1383>.

Olivier Arifon. (2009). Les diverses facettes du contrôle d’internet en Chine. *Hermès, La Revue*, Volume 3 (Number 55), pages 155–158, located at URL: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-hermes-la-revue-2009-3-page-155.htm>.

- Patrick Quantin.( 2008). Le rôle politique des sociétés civiles en Afrique : vers un rééquilibrage, *Revue internationale et stratégique*, Volume 4 (no. 72), pages 29–38. Retrieved from URL: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-internationale-et-strategique-2008-4-page-29.htm>.
- Victor Magnani and Thierry Vircoulon. (2019). Vers un retour de l'autoritarisme en Afrique ? politique étrangère, volume (2), pages 11–23. URL: <https://www.ifri.org/fr/publications/politique-etrangere/articles-de-politique-etrangere/vers-un-retour-de-lautoritarisme>.

# Carefully chosen words

## Community media<sup>1</sup>

*By Geraldine Fobang\*, Rosaline Akah Obah\*\*,  
Alexander Vojvoda\*\*\**

Cameroon is battled by several conflicts, so sensitive reporting is important to avoid escalation and foster peace. The Presbyterian Church has set up a network of community media outlets with this end, supported by Germany's Civil Peace Service. Present results are promising.

The Anglophone regions of Cameroon are drifting into an open armed conflict. The strikes called for by the Anglophone teachers' and lawyers' unions in 2016 (see comment by Jonathan Bashi in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2017/04, Debate) have triggered a larger movement that fights for the rights of the English-speaking minority to have a say in political, economic, social, cultural, educational and legislative processes. Cameroon's government reacts with harsh repressions against the unions and civil-society leaders. Since 2017, the protests have resulted in violent confrontations between Anglophone pro-independence fighters and security forces, followed by indiscriminate mass arrests, burning of vil-

<sup>1</sup> Source: Development and Cooperation (website: <https://www.dandc.eu/en>). This magazine can be downloaded for free in English and German.

\* Rev Geraldine Fobang is station manager of the community radio CBS Radio 95.3 MHz in Buea in the South-West region and president of the Cameroon Community Media Network (CCMN) in the South-West and Littoral regions.

\*\* Rosaline Akah Obah is station manager of the community radio CBS Radio 101.0 MHz in Bamenda in the North-West region and president of the CCMN in the North-West and West regions.

\*\*\* Alexander Vojvoda is sociologist and community media activist. From 2014 to 2019 he worked as a consultant for the CCMN on behalf of the Civil Peace Service.

lages and human-rights abuses on both sides. Many civilians have died in the conflict.

The ongoing crisis is the best proof that conflict-sensitive journalism is needed in Cameroon. The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) has seen this need already before the conflict broke out and initiated its own community radio in 2014 in Buea, the capital of one of the two Anglophone regions of the country. CBS Radio 95.3 MHz, as it is called, works together with other community broadcasters to foster conflict-sensitive reporting, peace and civil-society focused programmes and a permanent exchange between community media organisations.

Bread for the World, an aid agency of the Protestant regional and free churches in Germany, supports the radio station through the Civil Peace Service (CPS). A 2014 survey and situational analysis revealed that people in the local communities highly preferred community media to the government-owned radio. However, most of the journalists at CBS Radio and other community media outlets lacked basic journalistic skills, and the competition amongst them was not healthy. Sensational journalism was on the rise, and the risk of media inducing conflicts was high.

Thus, the idea of creating a permanent network came up. In 2016, the PCC invited media practitioners from 24 media, including print, audio, visual and online, in the South-West region to a meeting at CBS Radio. The goal was to come together and work in synergy for the common good of the community. After several meetings, the Cameroon Community Media Network (CCMN) was officially founded and legally registered in May 2017. It is a non-partisan, non-profit-making and non-religious association. Its members have benefited from a series of workshops, capacity-building seminars and in-house trainings. Today, the CCMN has more than 70 members and operates in four out of Cameroon's ten regions. It is divided into two chapters: one for South West and Littoral Cameroon and one for North West and West Cameroon.

The network's expansion is owed to the conflicts in Cameroon. Besides the Anglophone crisis, there is the Boko Haram insurgency in

the North and Far North regions and armed banditry and a refugee crisis in the East. The dispute of the results of the 2018 presidential election caused pockets of resistance in the Littoral, West and Central regions. All in all, there is a dire need for peace journalism in all ten regions of Cameroon.

### Terrorism law used to silence journalists

Atia Tilarious Azohnwi, editor with The Sun Newspaper in Buea, says: “The CCMN with its notion of peace journalism has offered me a more balanced perspective of war and conflict reporting. If I had known this before, I wouldn’t have been detained for almost one year.” The journalist was incarcerated for his critical coverage of the crisis in the Anglophone areas. He was one of eight journalists who were arrested at the beginning of 2017 in the context of the failed negotiations between the Anglophone activists and the Cameroonian government and charged before a military tribunal under the new anti-terrorism law.

The law came into force in 2014 as part of the fight against Boko Haram. However, it quickly became apparent that the law was also being used to silence critical journalists. In July 2015, a correspondent for Radio France International was arrested for supporting Boko Haram activities in the north and sentenced to ten years imprisonment. In addition, critical radio and television stations were closed, broadcasting licenses were temporarily withdrawn and new applications for broadcasting licenses not processed. The measures were accompanied by a three-month internet blackout in the two English-speaking regions and mass arrests of civilians. The journalists and most of the detained people are set free again—but the uncertainty as to how the government will react to critical reporting and demonstrations is increasing.

With the escalation of the crisis, journalists experience intense pressure, not only by the military or the government: pro-independence fighters threaten journalists who do not collaborate with the separatists. Ambe Macmillian Awa is a journalist and blogger for the community-

based online news platform The Statesman and president of the Cameroon Association of English-Speaking Journalists in the North West region. He was abducted in February this year by separatist fighters and only released after intense pressure by the CCMN, journalism unions and other media houses. He says: "Since my stories are now void of hate language, of escalating angling and provocative pictures, they help in deescalating the crisis we find ourselves in."

The CCMN notes a big difference concerning the choice of words and writing style of its members, as they endeavour to eliminate hate speech and use language that fosters peace. It is the only network in Cameroon that promotes peace journalism as an alternative to conventional journalism and that builds capacities in peace- and conflict-sensitive journalism. Thanks to this work, CCMN members have completely transformed the media landscape by giving voice to the voiceless in times of violence and implanting the notion of community media, that is media for the community, from the community and owned by the community. This concept enhances ordinary people's participation and provides a platform for coordinated exchange of ideas—thereby enhancing social cohesion and contributing to a peaceful society.

The CCMN has produced radio spots, jingles, sweepers and micro programmes with the watchword "We stand for peace" which are played on all member media organs. In a next step, the network is collaborating with Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to create an archiving platform for the exchange and storage of radio programmes, making it relevant not only to the Cameroonian media landscape, but also in Central Africa.

Link

Cameroon Community Media Network:

<http://www.communitymedia.cm>

## A country in a tail-spin

Training in journalism in Cameroon at the start of a civil war<sup>1</sup>

By *Aya Bach*\*

Aya Bach, an editor at Deutsche Welle, went to Cameroon in March 2016 as a specialist in order to establish a training course in conflict—sensitive journalism in the capital city, Yaoundé. This exercise turned out to be more sensitive than expected. At the time, the country seemed stable, but currently, separatists and the army are embroiled in a brutal conflict. And the government uses the term “media freedom” with abandon. This is the chronicle of an escalating conflict—from the viewpoint of a peace worker on the ground.

Anyone who reads the paper in Cameroon usually does it standing up. The kiosks are always surrounded by groups of men who want to know if there is anything new going on. Several dozen newspapers are pinned to the outside of the kiosks, each competing for attention. Strident headlines jostle one another as much as do the bright colours; red, purple, pink and orange. However, circulation figures are poor. The majority of the kiosk crowd does not come to buy a paper, but to read the headlines on the front page. This is a problem for the newspaper publishers, who are often fighting for survival. It is only one small aspect of the plight of the Cameroon press.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Weltsichten dossier together with CPS/Bread for the World. Can be downloaded under: <https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/sites/ziviler-friedensdienst.org/files/anhang/publikation/zfd-dossier-suche-frieden-und-jage-ihm-nach-91862.pdf>.

\*Aya Bach has been a journalist since 1985 and has worked at Deutsche Welle since 1994. She was a tutor for journalism in Cameroon from 2016 to 2019.



*Dailies stapled to the outside of kiosks; Aya Bach (right) in front of a newspaper kiosk in Yaoundé, Cameroon*

Given the precarious situation of many newspapers, journalists are extremely badly paid, or even not at all. This in turn means that there are often very unprofessional contributors at work. Even worse, journalists and media people are largely dependent on what is known here as ‘Gombo’, financial bribery. Politicians have a tendency to buy journalists for their own ends. The result; attacks in the media levelled at political adversaries and rabble-rousing against certain ethnic groups. This is dangerously explosive in a post-colonial and ethnically diverse state.

We can see from the history of Rwanda (where the notorious ‘Radio Mille Collines’ incited genocide), just how quickly hatred fuelled by the media can become deadly. The CPS (Civil Peace Service) programme of Bread for the World support organisations which serve to counter-act similar dangers in Cameroon. The idea is to sensitise all young journalists to the fact that they carry responsibility with respect to conflict.

This was the intention behind the opening of a new study course which communicates professional journalistic skills on the one hand, and on the other, know-how in covering conflict. The *Université Prot-*

*estante d'Afrique Centrale* (UPAC), a private university in Yaoundé, has partnered the project. It began in March 2016.

After only a few weeks the course had become much more popular than expected. A conflict flared up and began to spread uncontrollably. There were growing protests against the centralised government of Yaoundé in English-speaking areas of the country; the north and the southwest. At first, it was the solicitors and teachers who took to the streets as they saw themselves at a disadvantage compared to the French-speaking majority. Yaoundé reacted with mass arrests. This provoked resistance and the movement was taken up by significant numbers of the population. General strikes brought public life to a standstill as schools closed under pressure from the protest movement.

## The Anglophone crisis

The Anglophone crisis quickly split the nation and students at UPAC were no exception. The conflict was a journalistic challenge for them; how to report fairly and without bias? How should one manage one's own opinion? How could reliable information be found? How could informants be protected?

***The conflict;*** since 2016 there has been significant violence and oppression in the context of the so called 'Anglophone crisis'; these events relate only apparently to discrimination against English language and culture by the francophone central government. In fact, they are about far-reaching discontent relating to the 37 year long government presided over by Paul Biya.

***The CPS mission: Bread for the World*** cooperates with the CPS in Cameroon through 15 partners in eight locations. Currently there are seven CPS professionals operating.

Much of the media in Cameroon paid little heed to such questions. State media demonised the demonstrators as terrorists, the English-speaking press encouraged protests, and a well-known television journalist in Yaoundé referred to the demonstrators as “rats” who should be destroyed.

It can hardly be clearer as to why the new course of study is so important in Cameroon. Maintaining professional standards in crisis situations, not allowing oneself to become manipulated, explaining conflict with an eye on resolution rather than promulgating hate speak—these are all related to the training of journalists. And to convictions.

Right at the beginning of their training, students at UPAC work through a topic booklet on conflict and explore the historical background which has its roots in the colonial past. They study the phenomenon of escalation and look for solutions. However, there is clearly no student publication on earth which has the solution to end this crisis.



*Students on the conflict-sensitive journalism course during a radio broadcast in Yaoundé in June*

Over the following two years, the situation deteriorated and a war has developed from the crisis in the north and southwest, between militant separatists and government troops. The armed militia perpetrate kidnapping, torture and murder. Government troops set fire to entire villages. Hundreds of thousands of people are fleeing, hiding in forests or seeking shelter with relatives in the French-speaking areas. A female student at UPAC makes room in her modest flat given to her by the university, for an aged aunt and nine children from her family. 'I am fine' she says when asked how she is.

At the time of the presidential elections in 2018, a new student cohort has begun the course of study at UPAC. In office since 1982, it is Biya who wins with an official figure of 71.25% of the votes. The challenger, Maurice Kamto, claims massive electoral fraud. Another dispute breaks out between the government and the opposition. This fans the flames of a longstanding ethnic conflict; Biya belongs to the Bulu from the south and Kamto to the Bamileke, a population group from the west, which has long felt disadvantaged. Cameroon finds itself in a second whirlwind of political protest, tribal attacks and state crackdowns. Repression that is also and especially aimed at journalists.

**November 2018:** A US missionary loses his life in the clashes resulting from the 'Anglophone Crisis'. A well-known journalist states on her agency website that he was shot by government troops. Shortly afterwards she publishes the opposing account given by the government. She is nonetheless arrested and brought before a military tribunal. She is released after several days. A little while later, others are less fortunate.

**December 2018:** My students work on a print magazine covering the various trouble spots in Cameroon. They strive for sincerity—a journalistic virtue. They criticise the government in what can, at best, be referred to as homeopathic doses. Ought I, or can I encourage them to dare to say more? I will be leaving this country, but they have to stay and be able to feed their children. Those who wish to exercise textbook

independent journalism have to be very courageous. Despite its careful wording, it takes significant powers of persuasion to convince the university management to give the green light to the distribution of ‘UPAC Peace News’ on campus.

One night, an Anglophone student called Geraldine leaves the conference room in a hurry and does not return. News arrives a few days later; she suddenly had to travel home to the North West, where her younger brother had been kidnapped and tortured. She releases shocking pictures of his back torn open from a whipping. This is the second abduction for her family who have already had to pay a ransom. It is usually the separatists who extort money in this way. However, Geraldine feels no hatred. She only wants a return to freedom and to contribute to this through her journalism. She manages to retain a professional distance in her articles.

**28 January 2019:** There are demonstrations in favour of Kamto, the out-matched presidential candidate. Several hundred people are arrested including reporters who were to cover the demos.

**28 January:** Maurice Kamto is arrested.



*Paul Biya casting a vote with his wife Chantal in Yaoundé in October 2018. Since his re-election as president, conflict between government and opposition has reignited*

**3 February:** In a TV interview, one state minister hides behind an outrageous historical comparison: the Bamileke are like the Jews in Germany who were very rich and arrogant. This is why the Germans were ‘frustrated’ and the reason why Hitler sent them to the gas chambers.

There are no critical questions from the television journalist.

A new round of media confrontations concerning tribalism begins and the climate between Bulu and Bamileke heats up to the point of threatening murder.

**12 February:** Maurice Kamto is transferred at night to the notorious Kondengui prison. 145 party members go with him.

**22 February:** The ‘Le Jour’ newspaper runs the headline; ‘Bienvenue diktature’ or ‘Welcome to the dictatorship’. Its head, Haman Mana, is one of our tutors. In his leading article he bemoans the end of civil rights in Cameroon. Peace journalism does not mean silence in the face of injustice. It means choosing one’s words responsibly.

**14 March:** Geraldine, my student, is arrested. She organised a small peace demo among journalists in the southwest. ‘Yes to Justice and Peace’ was written on her banner. This is now enough to get you arrested. The official comment was that the demo deviated from the approved route. Geraldine is released that evening.

A few weeks later, my students plan a radio programme for public broadcast. They avoid the hottest political potatoes and devote themselves to another highly sensitive topic—the state of public hospitals. However, it remains difficult to take a position in the strained atmosphere. I am impressed at how creatively and with what degree of determination, the youngest student conducts her research when she is stonewalled by staff and patients. The planned studio guest cries off. This is a country frozen by fear.

My time in Cameroon is nearly at an end. After three and a half years, the record is mixed. The students (both men and women) whom we have

trained so far are unlikely to be able to really change the current media landscape. Presumably, only very few will have the courage to criticise the current regime which further erodes civil rights. I am, however, sure that no one will publish incitement to hatred, that they will further spread responsible journalism and that they will empower others to report fairly and without bias. They will not be able to get rid of the 'Gombo system' of paid reporting. There is no foreseeable freedom of the press. It remains certain though, that they will experience the end of Biya's time in office. No-one knows what will follow.

*This article was written at the end of June 2019. At the end of October, 333 people who had been arrested in the course of the 'Anglophone Crisis', were released and later this included 102 loyalists and members of the MRC, including Kamto himself. Numerous people who were arrested in the name of the 'Anglophone crisis' however, remain in prison and this includes opponents from the CRM sphere. Several journalists are also still in prison.*

# “You have to rely on people”

Bread for the World’s support system  
for the CPS (Civil Peace Service) programme in Africa<sup>1</sup>

*By Christiane Kayser\* and Flaubert Djateng\*\**

Bread for the World has systematically built up its support of the CPS since 2007 and this represents a significant proportion of the history of the CPS. Two independent experts, Christiane Kayser and Flaubert Djateng, both played a significant role in this. The following article explores the most important questions and answers from two experienced protagonists within the peace keeping services in the field of conflict prevention, in one of the most unstable regions of the world.

## **What is the basis of the support system with respect to CPS partner organisations in Africa?**

The system relies on the co-operation of national coordinators from the respective civil societies who have a long-term approach, the “intermediaries” from the multicultural mobile team endowed with a differentiated strategic view, and lastly, the Bread for the World team in Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Ein Dossier von Brot für die Welt in Zusammenarbeit mit der Redaktion von “Weltsichten”. “Suche Frieden und jage ihm nach” – 20 Jahre Ziviler Friedensdienst von Brot für die Welt 11/2019. Can be downloaded under: <https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/sites/ziviler-friedensdienst.org/files/anhang/publikation/zfd-dossier-suche-frieden-und-jage-ihm-nach-91862.pdf>.

\* Christiane Kayser has been active in various development projects in west and central Africa since 1984. These have strengthened local structures and have linked communities, regions and countries.

\*\* Flaubert Djateng was born in Cameroon and works not only as an activist within his own country’s civil society, but also with numerous aid agencies in west and central Africa.



*CPS meeting in the DRC: partners and peace workers during a break*

The system can only work if these three groups work towards shared goals in close collaboration based on trust.

### **What sort of conflicts do the projects come across?**

In all four countries where the work takes place—Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Cameroon, Sierra Leone and Liberia—there is increasing violence and fragmentation within the various societies. In the DRC, there are many armed groups at large and people live in extreme insecurity. In the last few years, conflict has increased in both North, North-Eastern, and South-Western Cameroon. Hatred and suspicion have grown in various population groups in both countries as a result of fear and mistrust. On the other hand, Sierra Leone and Liberia have in turn been able to overcome war, although the Ebola epidemic has brought more uncertainty, which has hampered peaceful coexistence.

### **What state framework is in place for such efforts in these countries?**

Within francophone countries, the so-called democratisation process has stalled and this has only widened the gap between the state and its people. At least in Sierra Leone and Liberia, there has been a peaceful

handing over of power. Overall, however, the apparatus of the state and administration remains corrupt.

### **What is the international framework for this project?**

Admittedly, peace work is in itself increasingly recognised on an international level. However, the stabilisation of war-torn societies from within remains the exception and is barely encouraged, compared to diplomatic and military interventions from the outside. This is probably linked to the necessity for lengthy commitment within complex social situations. Consequently, local initiatives and groups have to take on ever greater risks while experiencing very little overall support.

### **What special approaches has the CPS adopted in Africa while you have been working there?**

From the outset, we have developed a shared basic vision of peace and peace work with local partner organisations in all four countries. Previously there were only individually supported projects. With this new approach, partner organisations were able to see their role more clearly within the wider context of the promotion of peace. It has also become much easier to recognise the importance of external peace workers working towards peace. The national CPS coordinators from the respective countries have been able to achieve a more sustainable multicultural approach, thereby contradicting the cliché that ‘Whites know and are able to do more’. Co-operation between Africans and Europeans, as well as between men and women, has been placed on a healthier footing. Work has also focussed on the management of expertise through a shared website and publications. (Building peace; [www.peaceworkafrica.net](http://www.peaceworkafrica.net)). Everyone was able to learn more about the work undertaken by others and also to take stock of their own efforts. Lastly, the support system strengthened relations between all peace activists in the various African countries.

### **Who are the players in civil society who have a special role?**

Local journalists and community radios undertake valuable, but risky work. Civil society networks, in both education and women's affairs, are important partners who are often overlooked. Co-operation within civil society is continuously growing and represents a significant counterweight to corrupt and sometimes criminal states and authorities.

### **How successful has the work been in the eleven years in which you have been active?**

There are numerous examples of where our work has borne fruit. Within all the countries, we have developed and applied shared principles and behaviours during conflict-ridden elections. In addition, many local partner organisations have conducted situational and conflict-related analysis. Together with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation our partners were able to carry out research on the participation of young people in armed groups in Cameroon ([www.peaceworkafrica.net](http://www.peaceworkafrica.net)) and to make use of this in youth work. A community radio network was also established in Cameroon with the help of peace workers and currently performs important work given the tense atmosphere. In the DRC and Rwanda, cooperation with the CPS programme of the GIZ (German Society for International Cooperation) has for many years been able to support and promote cross-border youth work in the border towns of Goma and Gisenyi. In the DRC, a peace worker is making a significant contribution to nationwide and cross-border training in journalism. Action against land-grabbing in Sierra Leone has been supported successfully. All of these represent a range of examples of the positive results which can be achieved through peace work.

### **And where were the greatest difficulties?**

The main challenge is in many cases the corruption of state systems, for instance the privatisation of public services by individuals. Moreover, it is increasingly risky for local protagonists among others in the DRC to speak plainly about conflicts of interest between various social

groups and the decision makers or elites. The inadequacy of local measures which are necessary to move forward presents a further problem. Other actors must be included, in addition to the CPS partners. Such action alliances are increasingly difficult in societies which are fragmenting. Cameroon is a good example of how it has become harder because of escalating conflict to create platforms for exchange and dialogue at the level of civil society, locally, regionally or nationally. Mistrust between communities is growing. Finally, we should not underestimate the extent to which the increasing bureaucratisation of donor organisations is making the job of working locally in complex situations based on mutual trust, harder if not impossible.

### **What is the outlook for the countries in question?**

Strong youth movements have developed in certain countries in the last ten years despite rising intimidation and oppression. There is an opportunity here but also some risk. Movements like these can descend into violence if there is no monitoring or support. The so called ‘local capacities for peace’ desperately need support and visibility.

### **What needs to be improved in the future?**

The actors from the South are still not heard or seen enough. The CPS can and should offer them a platform. There is a great deal of room to test and strengthen the co-operation between civil society, the church and the mechanisms of state. This is not yet possible everywhere but remains an essential precondition for lasting stability.

### **To conclude: why is this work still worthwhile given all the difficulties?**

After more than thirty years of cooperation with African activists in more than ten countries, it should be emphasised that despite all the setbacks and the often discouraging international situation, there is one thing which still provides renewed energy and optimism—the impressive building of skills, engagement, creativity and perseverance especially in young people and women, as soon as they can benefit from

training and professional support. There is still a long way to go, but if you are involved in strengthening the non-violent engagement and capacities of people to defend their interests non-violently based on shared, peace-related goals, you are learning a lot whilst enjoying the luxury of doing meaningful work.

# Land grabbing for mining in the Katanga region<sup>1</sup>

By *Audace Manirahinyuza\**

## Issues:

- ◆ Land acquisition and compensation
- ◆ Extractive industries
- ◆ Corruption
- ◆ World Bank principles

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is known as a country rich in natural resources. Therefore, extractive industry is preserved as core sector of the economy. However, the challenge is the trade-off between economic versus sustainable development under the search for natural resources. This being true especially in Katanga region, the survival of the local communities and respect of their socio-economic basic rights remain the main question.

After the End of Mobutu regime, Congo has known a boom in mining since 2003, one year after the publication of Code minier de 2002.

<sup>1</sup> Source: The following three texts have been published in English by FriEnt in July 2019 in the study “Land and Conflict Prevention” and can be downloaded under: <https://www.frient.de/publikationen/dokument/land-and-conflict-prevention>.

\*Audace Manirahinyuza is an integrated Consultant in Katanga Region and works with a church based nongovernmental organisation, the “Service d’Appui au Développement Régional Intégré” (SADRI), seconded through Bread for the World’s Civil Peace Service Programme, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. He supports his partner organisation in implantation of different tools to improve communication for development work, knowledge management, organisational development, governance in mining and local participation.



*Bridging the gap in the Democratic Republic of Congo*

DRC being known worldwide due to its tremendous natural reserves of cobalt, diamond, uranium, coltan, copper ... where Katanga region has major reserves of those minerals especially copper and cobalt. However, the exploitation of natural resources has an important impact on socio-economic development of the country and for local communities. The meaning of that economic sector for the country and the population, because of the earnings from taxes, leasing and concession or the interlinked economic spill over effects, has led to different legislation in the spirit to improve the legal framework of extractive industry in DRC. It has to be said, that the long process of institutional and legislative reforms on mining with the core aim of liberalizing the mining sector

leading to a public-private partnership (PPP) explains the increase of the number of mining companies in DRC.

But the main issue remains how this remarkable growth of mining activities has had an impact on living conditions of Congolese People and on local communities particularly. Then, for some NGOs, the phenomenon of growing PPP in extractive industry correlates with environmental deterioration, increase of poverty and vulnerability of local communities because of the direct effects on their productive activities, habitat, pollution, land grabbing of arable land, lack of compensation for the displaced people ... etc.

In Katanga, also called “Copper Region” because extractive activities are intense, the land grabbing or spoliation of arable land for peasantry is a real phenomenon that limits or deprives total access of communities to the substantial revenues and therefore creates a climate of rumours, frustrations and social tensions between the local communities, customary chiefs, local authorities and extracting companies. The question is how those people who believe to have the natural and cultural rights to use their land for agriculture, water ..., are being refused those rights in the name of the law with the complicity of their state-agents which have the obligation to protect them?

And in such circumstances the main challenge is how to put in place and enforce a legal framework to protect the interests of local communities, to enhance a fair transaction system in which a win-win situation is possible with real sustainable opportunities for all stakeholders and considering sustainable issues like ensuring resources for next generations and the protection of environment.

Therefore, it can be said that in DRC the progress on SDG 16 is very poor and many multi-layered actions have to be taken for improvement.

## Phases from conflict to peace

The extractive activities and the challenges related to law arrangements have led to a context where three stereotypes of the main stakeholders emerge: the local communities see mining companies as their predators which seek only the benefits and plunder their resources, whereas the state is seen as corrupt and totally absent. Mining companies perceive local communities of being unthankful, disconcerting and unable to recognize their efforts to improve their social problems.

In such conflictual context SADRI has adopted a “Do No Harm” approach based on the promotion of human rights/dignity and bringing closer the three main stakeholders in considering the role of each actor for sustainable extraction of natural resources on local level. As the actors have divergent interests and motivation the taken actions are more focused on specific context and problems related in a tripartite framework where the challenge is to create/rebuild trust between the stakeholders. SADRI acts in various phases.

### Key message

The protection of local communities from mining investors requires stronger laws and the observance of international principles

### **Phase 1: Capacity building**

Reflection and context analysis workshops and production of tools, capacity building, and advocacy for local communities

### **Phase 2: Dialogue and reflection**

Promotion of dialogue and reflection after mining activities cease; on mechanisms of conflict prevention and conflict management, sustainable management of extractive industries, environmental protection

### **Phase 3: Support to the Sustainable Development Plan (PDD)**

Support to the elaboration of “Sustainable Development Plan” (PDD) which is obligation of the mining companies in order to share benefits with local communities. SADRI supports the interests of local communities, inclusivity and consultation in the elaboration of that plan (in 90% of the cases, communities are not involved in the making and therefore are indifferent)

### **Phase 4: Community needs in the local plan (PDL)**

Adaptation of PDD to communities’ needs in the so called Local Development Plan (PDL) which is elaborated by local communities, but also other stake holders such as state, local administration, civil society ... (companies at least are willing to do so for social appeasement, to avoid open violence and to promote their image as public relations strategy)

## Cross-sectoral approach: Land, environment, peace and justice

Extractive industries in Katanga may present opportunities, but the state is considered as completely absent and has left its responsibilities towards its citizens. In compensation for displaced people for instance, the law arrangement obliges the companies to deal with the communities. Although extractive activities lead to the restriction or total destruction of means of subsistence or livelihood of the displaced communities, the state sees no obligation to support them. The companies must compensate them, but no company since 2005 in Katanga has observed procedures of compensation.

There is a permanent violation of rights of local communities, violation of rights of information, consultation, participation, clean environment, rights of access to resources, right of compensation and repair, rights of restauration of means of livelihood of communities etc. The World Bank principles (World Bank, 2010) of respect of rights of local communities, real bargaining power of local communities, transparency in transaction, participation in decision making process, social advantages for local population are perpetually violated.

Some companies originating from OECD-countries like Kamoia Copper SA or Tenke Fungurume Mining tend to abide to those principles, but non-OECD companies like Chinese ones do not respect this at all. In that situation, if nothing is done, the danger for explosion of the society in Katanga is real with unforeseeable consequences for security, agriculture, housing, environment etc. Thus, 72% of 495,865 km<sup>2</sup> of the Katanga territory, which means 356,220 km<sup>2</sup>, are given for extractive activities and only 142,814 km<sup>2</sup> (with 17,870 km<sup>2</sup> for national parks and 26,899 km<sup>2</sup> for water) remain for other uses like agriculture, settlements etc.

In that context the claims are huge: access to land and means of subsistence agriculture (the companies have property rights but population not), reduction of environmental degradation or pollution (there are no

any activities or measures of attenuation) and as main question compensation. According to the regulations for compensation this can only be discussed between the communities and the new owner of the land.

The approach of SADRI therefore considers the complexity of these issues, especially the right to land and housing, risks of conflicts in the society and environmental degradation.

## Success factors and limitations

Although SADRI has gained experience with some useful instruments, limitations to success are manifold. The rights on land in DRC have a colonial legacy. This can be explained through the state's permanent and eminent sovereignty on land, subsoil, waters and forests over local communities. In the law, the needs, participation and free choice of Congolese people are vague. But state authorities, holding the power over natural resources, have unlimited rights on those assets and over the people and this is very clearly stated.

It means that the state is the owner of the land and the population can enjoy user rights or is simply called "occupants". The state can without any other restriction rent or concede land as a private property. It can also grant land to a person when needed and the new occupant receives only the right to use the land, but can lose that right at any time, causing insecurity of tenure. Thus, customary rights on land are for social appeasement, but do not give the ownership to communities. They can leave it at any time when the state sees the reason to do so.

Moreover, the state does not give any guarantee for the right to compensation for communities, because there is no abiding contract between the two parties which obliges the state to do so. The Congolese legislation on land rights obliges the State and the communities' representatives/ customary chiefs to realize consultations in form of investigations where the customary chiefs play a crucial role, especially at the beginning of extractive activities which is frequently the case in Katanga.

### **Success factors contributing to conflict prevention**

- ◆ Capacity building in local communities
- ◆ Promotion of dialogue
- ◆ Involvement in private and public planning processes
- ◆ Access to justice
- ◆ Observance of the existing legal framework by some (OECD) companies

Customary chiefs are seen as intermediate between the ancestors and the living people and bless the earth so that it may produce more. But the same state does not conduct broader consultations with the concerned people and pays attention more to the chiefs which have limited information. These consultations aim normally to give opportunities to communities to express their needs and interests, but state and companies limit the consultations or the social actions to customary chiefs and local administrations.

This leads to confusion and conflicts between the communities and their customary chiefs and representatives but also with the local authorities. Being weak and not informed enough, the customary chiefs are often manipulated and corrupted to the detriment of the entire communities. Such behaviour is violating the principles of sustainable development, because communities are uninformed on relevant information relative to mining and extractive activities, so this is at the same time a violation of the right of information.

When people are informed to leave their land at the beginning of cadastral activities, this leads often to tension and even physical violence may erupt between local communities, extractive companies and local state authorities. Of the 45 companies engaged in extractive industries in Katanga, 90% did not observe this weak arrangement of consultation.

## Favourable conditions for conflict prevention

There is a huge gap between national/international legislation on land use, rights on land and social development for concerned local populations. Although there are positive aspects of the DRC's legislation especially on Social Responsibility of Companies and the involvement of local communities on consultations for compensation, the main challenge is the inability of the Congolese State and foreign mining companies involved in extractive activities of natural resources to abide on laws and obligations which protect the Congolese citizens for their access on land and ensure that they enjoy freely their socioeconomic rights.

Favourable conditions could be created by overcoming the weakness of the state as main stakeholder in law enforcement. The legislation in matter of land adjudication, land use and social economic development of local communities living in the resource-rich Katanga region would lead to positive outcomes respected by international companies and the state.

## Perspectives of expansion and replicability

At present, the state is not engaged in the elaboration of local development plans (PDL) and is passive in relation to local communities. On the other hand, the mining sector is the most important source of income for the region. In 2018 45 companies in Katanga have paid 348,000,000 USD to the state and according to the law, 15% was to be given to improve the livelihood of communities. This situation creates an opportunity for SADRI to improve the bargaining power of local communities in elaboration, implantation and monitoring of compensation measures. Communities can gain if the 15% share is useful for communities, supporting their development.

This approach can be successfully expanded by sensitizing communities on their rights and on the law governing mining, on rights to land,

environment, and agriculture. The other element is to build the institutional capacity of communities to increase their bargaining power in PLD, supporting them to identify and analyse the development problematic, defining and validating that PLD are based on their basic needs as communities and make a document which will serve as basic tool in consultation with mining companies.

The role of SADRI in this process will also be to monitor and support communities during the consultation and use monitoring sheets to guarantee the accountability in the period of implementation. Sustainability may be achieved if communities are strengthened to do advocacy themselves, putting in place a local monitoring committee and significantly participating in monitoring the implementation of compensation measures.

### *References and further reading*

- World Bank, 2016: Integrating Social Accountability Approaches into Extractive Industries Projects. [<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/24771>].
- World Bank, 2010: Human Rights: Indicators in Development AN INTRODUCTION: Siobhán McInerney-Lankford Hans-Otto Sano [[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTLAWJUSTICE/Resources/Human-RightsWP10\\_Final.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTLAWJUSTICE/Resources/Human-RightsWP10_Final.pdf)]
- Neil Renwick, Jing Gu and Song Hong, 2018; China and African Governance in the Extractive Industries [<https://journals.openedition.org/poldev/2547#tocto1n3>].
- Carter Centre, 2017: Improving Governance of Revenues from the Mining Industry. Cross-cutting lessons from fiscal and parafiscal analyses of five mining projects in the D.R. Congo, February 2017 and Carter Center Releases Comprehensive Report on the DRC's State-Owned Mining Company and Investment Partners, November 03, 2017 [<https://www.cartercenter.org/index.html>].
- GECAMINES, 2018: The truth about the lies of NGOs in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Or how under cover of morality one would like to deprive the country of its sovereignty over its raw materials, November 2018 [[http://www.gecamines.cd/rapport\\_en.pdf](http://www.gecamines.cd/rapport_en.pdf)].

# Land and conflict prevention, achieving SDG 16

By *Santigie Sesay\**

## Issues:

- ◆ Land acquisition by investors
- ◆ Women's land rights and access to justice
- ◆ National land laws and policies
- ◆ Dialogue and advocacy

Tension over land, alongside the highly unequal distribution of other natural resources, was a key reason responsible for the ten years civil war in Sierra Leone. As such, systemic land issues continue to be an underlying source of social conflict and political instability in the country, which, according to Moyo and Forray, 2009, could precipitate more intensive violence in the future.

In the past, Sierra Leone's land laws were causing problems and conflicts. Some of the laws include the Concessions Act, Cap 121 and Protectorate Lands Ordinance (now Provinces Land Act, Cap 122) which were enacted in 1927 and they are still in use. These laws do not address the emerging land challenges in the country, but rather are further aggravating the problems. It became obvious that these obnoxious laws should be repealed and replaced if sanity is to be restored within the land sector of Sierra Leone.

\* Santigie Sesay is a human rights activists and a media practitioner in Sierra Leone. Presently, he is the Communications Officer of SiLNoRF. Santigie holds a Bachelors Degree in Mass Communications from the Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone. SiLNoRF is a partner organisation of Bread for the World, the development and relief agency of the Protestant Churches in Germany.

Thus, civil society organisations, based on the insight that policy change is necessary, began to pile pressure on the government to come up with a policy that will guide the process of land acquisition and the effective and efficient land management in the country. Fortunately, this call was heard loud and clear and with support from the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP), the government set up five Technical Working Groups guided by a Steering Committee comprising of technocrats, policy makers and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). The Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food (SiLNoRF) is included in this structure as member of the Steering Committee.

After several years of sustained lobby and advocacy of various local civil society actors, groups and networks like SiLNoRF, a National Land Policy (NLP) was drafted and subsequently launched in 2015.

*Fish ponds near Makeni, Sierra Leone*



Coming to the community level, land has become a tool used to discriminate against women especially in the northern region of Sierra Leone. Here in the North, women are not entitled to owning land just because customs and traditions do not permit them to. The Draft National Land Policy (NLP) of 2015 described this situation as “Women are not only at a disadvantaged position as far as inheritance to land is concerned. Due to the prevalence of customary rules of succession based on the patrilineal system in Sierra Leone, they are also unable to access land due to the fact that they are, invariably, not economically or otherwise adequately endowed to acquire land rights in the open market.”

Moreover, in an article published on April 8, 2015, the Director of Namati, Mr. Sonkita Conteh argues that the application of rules of customary law in ordinary life has tended to affect women more adversely than men. He maintained that at least 95% of its land in Sierra Leone is governed by customary law. This means that for the majority of citizens, the unwritten traditional rules and practices of tribes or communities determine who is able to hold, use or transfer land. In many ways, on important issues, women are often treated as minors—needing the agency of a man to act. In worse case scenarios, they are regarded as chattels.

It is clear that unfavourable customs and traditions also accounts for some of the violence and conflicts being manifested in the country. Research has shown that unequal treatment of women who are denied their property rights could also be a potential source for conflict though it is normally at a very low key.

A bigger type of conflict according to Anthony B. Conteh presently manifesting in the country is land grabbing. Credible sources say that between 2009 and 2014, foreign investors had taken out long leases (50 years with possible extensions) on at least 1,154,777 ha, about 21.4% of the country’s total arable land for large scale industrial agriculture (Bernard Koroma, 2019). The following case demonstrates how conflicts related to these land acquisitions have been handled by SiLNORF.

## Key message

Investors are strong actors in land conflicts – this requires strong civil society organisations, multi-faceted strategies and a good policy framework

## Phases from conflict to peace

### Phase 1: **Large-scale land acquisition for bioenergy**

The coming in and operations of the multinational companies in the country have either directly or indirectly fuelled conflict. The conflict is either between landowners or local communities against the company or amongst local community as a result of the divide and rule tactics companies use in their operational areas. One of such companies in Sierra Leone is Addax/Sunbird Bioenergy (ABSL). Addax/Sunbird Bioenergy started a Swiss based subsidiary of the Addax and Oryx Group (AOG). From September 2016 onwards a 75.1% share was sold to Sunbird Bioenergy, an investor with Chinese-British background that took over the management of ABSL. AOG kept a 24.9% minority share of ABSL.

The project in Sierra Leone, near Makeni, was initiated in 2008 and commissioned in 2014. A total land area of 54,000 ha was originally leased for the project development but final designs eventually ended up with a land use of 24,600 ha. In 2014, the company leased 35,000 ha land as the total project area. At the moment, the total project area is 14,300 ha. 10,000 ha are sugarcane plantation, 4,300 are used for ecological compensation areas and rice production as well as the factory.

## Phase 2: **Water scarcity in Tonka community**

Tonka community is one of the 53 communities within the Addax/Sunbird Bioenergy operational areas. This community continues to face numerous challenges as a result of the operation of the company. Though some efforts were made by the company to address some of these challenges, after been subjected to high profile pressure from SiL-NoRF and its legal partner Namati, an NGO focussing on legal support to communities, yet the community is not economically okay and surrounded by risks posed by the activities of the company. Almost all of the communities affected by the Addax/Sunbird project are facing serious challenges to access water. According to WaterLex, an NGO working on the right to water and sanitation, access to safe drinking water after the company depleted traditional drinking water sources, water has become a nightmare in the communities. WaterLex confirmed that the ground water pollution by Nitrates and Phosphates which occur through the project and the lack of purification systems are unavailable to the local population.

## Phase 3: **Community sensitization**

As part of its community engagement and dialogue, SiLNoRF held a meeting with the people of Tonka in March, 2017. At the height of the meeting, a youth representative (whose name is concealed for safety purposes) rose up and openly stated that he will mobilize his colleagues to storm the premises of the company and disrupt their operations until their water problem is solved. The community people were mobilized into what we called the Affected Land Owners/Users and Association (AfLOUAs). This group comprises of people from all ages, sexes and backgrounds. They were given basic human rights trainings and thoroughly sensitized on their rights and responsibilities as a community and how they could take a lead in getting the company to do what they want. So this group became the advocate of and for the commu-

nity. In all of the communities SiLNoRF works, the AfLOUAs are the contact persons and the channel through which grievances and issues of concern are communicated with SiLNoRF and vice versa. After the AfLOUAs of Tonka got the required training and knowledge, they approached the company and put forward a proposal that will get them a lasting solution to the challenges they were experiencing.

#### **Phase 4: Pressure on the company**

Instead of using militant approach, the AfLOUAs group was advised to write an official letter of complaint to the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) drawing their attention to their predicament. Adhering to the advice given by SiLNoRF, Tonka community in July 2017 filed a formal complaint against Addax/Sunbird Bioenergy to EPA copying the Office of National Security (ONS) and other MDAs about a number of environmental problems.

Immediately after the complaint was received, the Regional Officer of EPA, Bintu Keifala and Office of National Security together with SiLNoRF visited the community, but after that meeting nothing tangible was done.

So the community together with SiLNoRF continued to pile pressure on the company and finally the company succumbed to the demands of the community. This is a common approach SiLNoRF is using in all of its operational areas to prevent conflict and records could prove, from North, East and South, no conflict has been reported in the primary communities SiLNoRF operates.

#### **Phase 5: Threat of immediate relocation**

Another burning issue that is disturbing the people was when on December 25, 2018 their Paramount Chief, Bai Bairoh Ansenni II gave them 3 days to accept their relocation to already identified communities in cooperation with the company. This notice infuriated the peo-

ple of Tonka describing such ultimatum as an insult and unfortunate. Since this relocation issue came up, about five meetings have already been held with relevant stakeholders with the aim of preventing conflict.

#### Phase 6: **Community meetings**

The National Coordinator of SiLNoRF, Mr. Mohamed S. Conteh, who attended one of the meetings told his audience of stakeholders about the working principles of SiLNoRF. The organisation is aiming at promoting food and land rights and this has been demonstrated in the interest of the people and therefore the National Coordinator urged the people to be cooperative with the organisation.

He noted that paramount chiefs are charged with the responsibility of protecting the interest of their people against others but the prevailing circumstance is a total opposite. He declared SiLNoRF's interest in the relocation issue of Tonka since the organisation has been responding to Tonka in more than one ways, referencing the water issue. He cautioned the people not to result into any violent reaction to the company officials since SiLNoRF is there to promote and to protect their human rights. He explained that Tonka relocation should send positive signals to other areas and attract international attention if the right procedures are not followed.

#### Phase 7: **Multiple strategies for conflict settlement**

In addition, Hassan Sesay working with Namati noted that SiLNoRF and Namati only play the role of the devil's advocate as a mediation mechanism and therefore would have to make several engagements with the people, the chiefdom authorities, and the company before the relocation.

At the moment, SiLNoRF has adopted the following action points and recommendation:

- ◆ SiLNoRF to carry out an extensive sensitization in Tonka on relocation processes, and possible effects/ consequences on their livelihood.
- ◆ SiLNoRF to organize a cross cutting visit to other communities severely affected by relocation, this will ensure that Tonka community members themselves interact with other relocated communities in the country to share their experiences.
- ◆ SiLNoRF to carry out a quick research/survey (demographic) to ascertain the number of households and people living in Tonka who are likely to be evicted.
- ◆ SiLNoRF together with Namati to map out community resources including plantations.
- ◆ Hire a lawyer to support the community

### Cross-sectoral approach: Land, gender, peace and justice

SiLNoRF believes in mediation and dialogue when approaching issues surrounding land and contentions between dispossessed landowners and displaced landowners and land users. Beside land being a source for conflict, it is also a very sensitive gender issue that is persistently used to discriminate against women in Sierra Leone. That is why at the National Secretariat of SiLNoRF, we used to have a Women's land rights department that was charged with the responsibility of accelerating the campaign for women to not just be land users but to be landowners. Successes made from that department, each member of the SiLNoRF was encouraged to mainstream women's land right campaign. One thing we have learnt in our work is that, working on land issues requires a multifaceted approach.

## Success factors

SiLNoRF has been monitoring the Addax/Sunbird Bioenergy Project since its inception and until today, no major conflict had taken place as is prevalent in other parts of the country. According to the Deputy National Coordinator of SiLNoRF, Abass J. Kamara, SiLNoRF is succeeding in its peacebuilding approach because of the following common strategies the organisation is using in its advocacy drive:

**Multi-stakeholder dialogue:** In this context, many people who are directly connected to a case SiLNoRF is working on are referred to as stakeholders. Community people who are dispossessed of their lands by companies could hardly be granted the opportunity to meet with core managers of such companies. SiLNoRF created a platform to bring together these stakeholders to a roundtable so that the community people will have the opportunity to talk directly to those stakeholders and ask them critical questions. At the end, the Multi-stakeholder's forum was adopted and the University of Makeni was nominated and endorsed by SiLNoRF and the company to convene the forum on a quarterly basis.

**Community Mediation:** We mediate between communities and companies and others stakeholders and serve as independent arbitrators.

### **Success factors contributing to conflict prevention**

- ◆ Multi-stakeholder dialogue
- ◆ Community mediation
- ◆ Grievance redress and referral pathway
- ◆ Media engagement and media advocacy
- ◆ Awareness raising and sensitization
- ◆ Do-no-harm concept

**Grievance Redress and referral pathway:** It is clear that lots of grievances exist in communities affected by multinational corporations. In our outreach, whenever we come across certain issues that cannot be handled by us, and since we don't want to leave such issue unaddressed, we will refer the matter to the appropriate authorities. This is a way of averting conflict and promoting peace and tranquillity in the country.

**Media engagement and media advocacy:** As a media strategy, we have a memorandum of understanding with major community radio stations in regions we operate and through this; we have been able to reach out to a wider audience with messages of peace, the Right to Food and land rights issues in the country. We also bring in community people to the radio and allow them to professionally tell their stories so that those responsible for taking action will do so.

**Awareness raising and sensitization:** Our entry strategy into a community is to engage them in massive sensitization and awareness raising campaigns. This has yielded lots of dividend for us as after empowering them, community people could peacefully challenge some companies whenever they have a feeling that their rights have been trampled upon.

**Do-No-Harm Concept:** This is a very important concept that SiLNoRF has always adopted as part of its day to day activities.

## Favourable conditions for conflict prevention

Sierra Leone adopted a new Land Policy in 2015, with the vision to, among other things, have an effective land tenure and management system that will provide for clearly defined ownership forms and rights, tenure security, effective and transparent land administration, and to ensure equitable access to land for all citizens and stimulate responsible investment for the nation's continued development.

In Sierra Leone, we have a consortium of peacebuilders called Civil Peace Service (CPS) Network. Members of this network are grantees of the German Donor, Bread for the World (BftW). Through this network, partners have subscribed their activities to upholding SDG 16, which urges partners to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”. The Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food (SiLNoRF) is a key member of the CPS Network in Sierra Leone.

## Perspectives of expansion and replicability

The approach, which has worked well in the ADDAX/ Sunbird Bioenergy case, does not necessarily work well in other regions, depending on the openness of investors. In Pujehun, there has been a sustained conflict between the community people who belong to an association known as the Malen Affected Land Owners and Users Association (MALOA) and the SOCFIN Agricultural Company (SAC).

On January 21st, 2019, another bloody skirmish ensued between community people and state security personnel acting to protect the assets of SOCFIN. Unfortunately, two people were shot dead allegedly by the military while communities were raided by the police and soldiers. Because of the experience and success stories SiLNoRF had recorded in its primary operational areas, we were selected by a host of human rights defenders to lead a fact-finding team to Sahn Malen. Some of the key human rights issues directly related to the incidents of January 2019 were the death of two civilians, the protection and security of persons, unlawful arrest and detention, the right to property and the Right to Food.

However, the strategies elaborated and experienced by SiLNoRF have the potential to work in other environments and countries if conditions are favourable and actors are willing to engage in the process.

## *References and further reading*

- Bernard Koroma, 2019: Rapid Expansion of Large Scale Land Deals in Sierra Leone: The Contentions amidst Weak Land Tenure Systems. In: Standard Times Press Newspaper [<http://standardtimespress.org/?p=6326>]
- WaterLex, 2011; Addax Bioenergy – Sugarcane-to-Ethanol Project compliance with the Human Right to water. Geneva, published by Bread for all (2011), available at: [www.breadforall.ch/english](http://www.breadforall.ch/english).
- Bread for All/Bread for the World, 2016: The Weakest should not Bear the Risk
- Swedwatch, 2017: No business, No rights (human rights impact when land investment fail to include responsible exit strategies. The case of Addax Bioenergy in Sierra Leone)
- European Coalition for Corporate Justice, 2016: 18 villagers jailed after opposing Bollore Socfin's palm oil plantations in Sierra Leone [<http://corporatejustice.org/case-album/18-villagers-jailed-after-opposing-bollore-socfin-s-palm-oil-plantations-in-sierra-leone>]
- Sonkita Conteh, 2015: Protecting women's land rights in Sierra Leone's draft National Land Policy [<http://slconcordtimes.com/protecting-womens-land-rights-in-sierra-leones-draft-national-land-policy/>]
- GRAIN, 2019: Stop land grabbing by Socfin in Sierra Leone – stop the criminalisation of land right defenders [<https://www.grain.org/entries/6140-stop-landgrabbing-by-socfin-in-sierra-leone-stop-the-criminalisation-of-land-rights-defenders>]

# A chance for change

by *Claudia Christine Wolf*\*

## Issues:

- ◆ Conservation area
- ◆ Disaster risks
- ◆ Ecotourism
- ◆ Trust building

The tragic landslide in Sierra Leone's Western Area Peninsula Forest opened people's eyes to the importance of land use planning and conservation. If nature and wildlife are protected, the country can develop into an attractive tourist destination.

The trekking trail through the Western Area Peninsula Forest ends close to Sierra Leone's popular River Number Two Beach. Behind us, in the heart of the rainforest, lies the majestic Guma dam, which provides water for the growing population of Sierra Leone's capital Freetown. Before us the earth is smoking. Hot ashes and burnt remains of trees cover the ground. "People continue to encroach the forest and build houses in the National Park," says Environmentalist Momoh Bai-Sesay. "There is logging, mining, and hunting. But the country is at a turning point. People are sensitized. They have learned from the landslide in 2017."

\* Claudia Christine Wolf is Communication and Advocacy Advisor at Conservation Society of Sierra Leone since 2017. She is seconded by the development and relief agency of the Protestant Churches in Germany "Bread for the World" and works in the areas of nature conservation, sustainable livelihoods, and ecotourism. Prior to her current position she worked as a Science Journalist and Editor in Germany.



*The landslide at Sugarloaf Mountain in the Western Peninsula of Sierra Leone*

Now, as we cross the National Park's boundary, heavy drops of rain start falling from the sky. They mark the beginning of the rainy season – a season that is awaited with fear by many since the year the rain washed away hundreds of lives at Sugar Loaf Mountain.

## Phases from conflict to peace

### Phase 1: **2017 A landslide kills more than 1000 people**

In 2017, in the early morning of August 14, a hillside of Sugar Loaf Mountain close to Freetown collapsed after heavy rains and killed over 1000 people. The landslide was mainly due to heavy deforestation: people had cut down trees within the boundaries of the Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park in order to expand their settlements. After the tragic event such illegal activities were banned in the area the landslide had occurred, but they continue in other regions.

### Phase 2: **People wake up: protection of the environment is useful**

Changes do not come fast. Changes usually come, when it already seems too late. The landslide was a wake-up call for Sierra Leoneans. People finally began to listen to the voices of environmentalists and organisations like Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), an NGO that had advocated for the protection of the environment and the wise use of natural resources since over three decades. “We need the Western Area Peninsula Forest,” says Charles Showers, Board President of CSSL. “It serves as a water catchment area, and it is inhabited by endangered species, such as chimpanzees and birds. The park is safe, which makes it a great destination for tourists.”

### Phase 3: **Fear remains in the rainy season**

But heavy rains—possibly at least partly due to climate change—continue to threaten the Freetown Peninsula. They can trigger further landslides. There are many deforested hills with settlements on the Freetown Peninsula, some of them even steeper than the hillside that collapsed at Sugar Loaf Mountain. In a survey CSSL conducted in disaster-prone communities of Freetown one year after the landslide, 50% of ques-

tioned women and men said that rainfalls affect their community negatively. In each area, 70 women and men had been interviewed. The majority of people in each community reported that they observed an increase in the frequency or amount of rain when thinking back over the past ten years. On average, 93% reported this change. People also said they are afraid of the rain, and that they do not easily sleep during rainy nights.

#### Phase 4: **Insufficient compensation after landslide**

Many victims of the landslide of August 2017 complain that they never received the full financial compensation of five million Leones (less than 600 US-Dollar) the government had promised. The international media reported about the government's inability to fulfil its promises, and the disappointment of the victims of the landslide who had hoped for help. This was also reflected in CSSL's humanitarian aid project: out of 14 women and men, which CSSL supported with basic support and seed capital for businesses, only one man had received the full compensation. All others had received nothing, or just a part amount. None of them has access to the housing the government promised a few days after the disaster.

#### Phase 5: **Trust building by CSSL**

To build trust, CSSL made sure not to raise expectations that could not be fulfilled when supporting the victims of the mudslide. A trusting atmosphere was built by continuous conversations, by providing individual support, and by explaining to the women and men which amount of financial support they would receive. The people were also informed that the project would end after providing seed capital for businesses.

CSSL used the same approach during the community survey

in disaster-prone areas of Freetown: at the beginning of each questioning, the interviewers stated clearly that the purpose of the sur-

## Key message

The prevention of conflicts, ecotourism and environmental protection can be elements which go together.

vey was to create awareness and influence stakeholders, and that CSSL would neither pay interviewees nor help reconstruct structures that had been destroyed by the rain. Providing explanations and communicating on eye-level may sound obvious, but is the exception rather than the rule in Sierra Leone.

### Phase 6: 2018 stakeholder dialogue

“We want to make sure that such a disaster never happens again,” says Edward Sesay, Program Manager at CSSL. “We held a stakeholder symposium for land use management on the Freetown Peninsula by the end of 2018, and together with the government we organized a conference on land use early this year.” The absence of urban planning is the main reason for the encroachment of the Western Area Peninsula Forest, and conflicts about land ownership are common. Until this day, people get building permits for areas that are not safe or lie in the National Park.

### Phase 7: 2019 Ecotourism as new economic perspective

In February 2019, Jane Goodall returns to Sierra Leone. The renowned primatologist and anthropologist had been instrumental in founding Sierra Leone’s flagship ecotourism resort, Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary 27 years ago. “I am impressed by Tacugama’s achievements”, Goodall said at Sierra Leone State House. Ecotourism is seen as a way to escape from poverty while conserving precious natural resources.

Indeed it seems like Sierra Leone's new government, elected in March 2018, recognizes tourism and specifically tourism as a powerful means to boost economic growth. The government facilitates and promotes tourism in the country. Others move in the same direction: Tacugama is working on an ecotourism resort in Gola Rainforest National Park. CSSL has launched an extensive ecotourism project to develop its project areas in Gola Forest, the Western Area Peninsula Forest, Kambui Hills and at Lake Sonfon into attractive destinations for travellers.

## Cross-sectoral approach: Land, natural resources, economic development, peace and justice

According to a report published by the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), tourism is a driver of sustainable development, and it can improve quality of life, diverse cultural heritage and world peace. In Sierra Leone, the development of tourism and the protection of the environment must go hand in hand: the country's beauties are its beaches, wildlife and rainforests. Importantly, as shown in a study by Tourism Watch and Bread for the World, stakeholder groups within the tourism sector must be sensitized to the need of avoiding risks of tourism-related land grabs and involuntary relocation.

The prevention of deforestation and the conservation of biodiversity and wildlife needs to be combined with sustainable concepts for the rural and urban population, income generation and food and housing. Applying this approach, the promotion of ecotourism can contribute to conflict prevention and the reduction of inequalities, avoiding always the risks mentioned above which may trigger new conflicts if not properly addressed at early stages of planning ecotourism.

### **Success factors contributing to conflict prevention**

- ◆ Sensitization through disaster
- ◆ Trust building by transparent communication
- ◆ Economic perspectives by ecotourism and seed money for businesses
- ◆ Inclusive governance and dialogue between actors

## Success factors and limitations

Civil society organisations, the government and Freetown's communities need to collaborate in order to protect the Western Area Peninsula Forest, secure its biodiversity and Freetown's water supply. CSSL's activities mark milestones on the way. But collaborations need trust, and trust takes time to build in Sierra Leone. This is not surprising: a decade-long civil war, massive corruption and fraud, misuse of Ebola funds—but also unfulfilled promises—created a culture of distrust.

## Favourable conditions for conflict prevention

Peaceful dialogue and collaboration requires trust which has to be built up in a long lasting process, especially in the case of post-conflict countries and corruption. Anti-corruptions measures have to secure that the new economic dimension leads to reduction of inequalities and bears perspectives for life on land that leaves no one behind. Land use plans have to be elaborated together with the affected communities in a gender- and conflict sensitive manner.

Inclusive governance at local and national level has to guarantee environmental protection and simultaneously generate decent work and income for all, creating chances also for marginalized and poor people. Land grabbing and forced displacement have to be prevented,

sustainable housing and income generating have to be secured, economic benefits have to be shared equally and food security has to be secured.

*References and further reading*

Brot für die Welt, 2019: Tourism, Land Grabs and Displacement – A Study with Particular Focus on the Global South [<https://www.tourism-watch.de/de/newsletter/95/nr-95-tourismus-und-landraub-022019>]