

# HORN OF AFRICA BULLETIN

March-April 2016 Volume 28 Issue 2

## Reconciling the Irreconcilable? Peace-building, Humanitarianism & Development

### Contents

1. Editor's Note
2. The nexus of peace building, development and humanitarianism in conflict affected contexts: A respect for boundaries
3. The evolution of NGO peacebuilding in complex emergencies: A theoretical analysis
4. Intersectionality, sexual and gender-based violence and humanitarian intervention
5. Hitting two birds with one stone? Role of humanitarian response in peace-building processes
6. The recent attack in Gambela and its implications for humanitarian operations



The Horn of Africa Bulletin is a publication of the  
Life & Peace Institute

**Editorial information**

This publication is produced by the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) with support from the Bread for the World, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and Church of Sweden International Department. The donors are not involved in the production and are not responsible for the contents of the publication.

**Editorial principles**

The Horn of Africa Bulletin is a regional policy periodical, monitoring and analysing key peace and security issues in the Horn with a view to inform and provide alternative analysis on on-going debates and generate policy dialogue around matters of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. The material published in HAB represents a variety of sources and does not necessarily express the views of the LPI.

**Comment policy**

All comments posted are moderated before publication.

**Feedback and subscriptions**

For subscription matters, feedback and suggestions contact LPI's regional programme on [HAB@life-peace.org](mailto:HAB@life-peace.org)

For more LPI publications and resources, please visit: [www.life-peace.org/resources/](http://www.life-peace.org/resources/)

ISSN 2002-1666

## About Life & Peace Institute

Since its formation, LPI has carried out programmes for conflict transformation in a variety of countries, conducted research, and produced numerous publications on nonviolent conflict transformation and the role of religion in conflict and peacebuilding. The main focus of our work has been on Africa, with the Horn of Africa Programme being established and well-known in the 1990s, not least our work in Somalia. Other initiatives have been carried out in Congo-Brazzaville, Croatia, Sri Lanka and East Timor. We have strengthened the capacity of our civil society partners to address the conflicts in their own context, in some of the most difficult and war-torn countries.

Currently, we run conflict transformation programmes in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes regions in partnership with local civil society organisations and universities in Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and the DRC. There is also a common programme including publications, policy work and methodology design based in Sweden.

The upcoming World Humanitarian Summit scheduled to be held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of May, 2016 in Istanbul Turkey, and the deliberations leading up to it, encompass one theme, 'serving the needs of people in conflict' which in theory engages with the nexus of peace-building and humanitarianism. However the theme and the issues raised by it, are framed in very general terms and do not explore the multiple complexities and challenges inherent in the marriage of the two notions.

The recent announcement by Médecins Sans Frontière (MSF) states that it is withdrawing from participation in the World Humanitarian Summit due to concerns at the continued violation of international humanitarian law in relation to refugees and conflict situations by state actors, and its fears the Summit will do little in holding states to commitments that are made during the Summit.<sup>[1]</sup>

The decision by the MSF is symptomatic of the complexities and contradictions engendered by the growing fusion of humanitarianism, developmental interventions and peace-building. The desire by certain actors (states, multilateral actors and humanitarian organizations) for a more expanded and robust mandate in relation to conflict induced humanitarian emergencies is understandable but at the same time overlooks the problems inherent with an expanded mandate.

The desire for an expanded and robust fusion of peace-building, humanitarianism and development interventions ignores the growing politicization and militarization of humanitarian interventions especially in the Global South. It also plays into the growing tendency to challenge the norm of state sovereignty. The publication of the 1992 United Nations Report *An Agenda For Peace* is a landmark event in questioning, and in hindsight, in eroding the notion of state sovereignty. The principle of Humanitarian Intervention and the reformulation of sovereignty in terms of the 'Responsibility to Protect' have expanded the space for humanitarian action for a whole range of humanitarian actors: from states to civil society organizations to businesses.

On a more prosaic level, integrating peace-building and humanitarianism is easier said than done. Efforts to reconcile humanitarian action and peace-building on the ground especially during conflict-induced humanitarian crises are fraught with tensions and challenges. These are compounded by definitional problems and operational paradoxes, including the sheer ambiguity of the humanitarian agenda, the nature of humanitarian space, and competing agendas.

The issues and questions that arise are of more than theoretical interest. They have profound practical significance for peace-builders and humanitarian actors in the field. The issues and questions are even more critical for the Horn of Africa, the site of many conflict induced humanitarian emergencies. The 2015 Global Humanitarian Overview (UN 2015), says that five out of the 12 'countries in focus' in terms of their humanitarian need are in Africa and all of them are crises induced or exacerbated by conflict. Of these five African countries (Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Central African Republic), three are in the Horn of Africa.

The articles submitted for this issue of the Horn of Africa Bulletin interrogate and explore many of the contradictions alluded to earlier in the fusion of peace-building, humanitarianism and developmental interventions.

The article by Jens Pedersen is an incisive and critical theoretical engagement and interrogation of the tendency to fuse peace-building, humanitarian and developmental interventions. He cautions against the tendency in favour of an expanded humanitarian mandate and urges for the usefulness and practicality of respecting 'boundaries'. Elias Opongo's article offers a critical theoretical overview of CSOs engagement in conflict induced emergencies and peace-building and offers recommendations regarding peace-building initiatives. Both authors are critical of and caution against the fusion of developmental interventions, peace-building and humanitarian mandates. The article by Lailatul Fitriyah offers a convincing argument for the incorporation of an intersectional gendered perspective in humanitarian emergencies in response to Gender and Sexual Based Violence (GSBV). Martha Bedane's article on the other hand takes a different position on the fusion of peace-building and humanitarian interventions. Her article argues that in spite of the problems that might arise, there are inherent synergies between peace-building and humanitarian interventions and that they are not mutually exclusive. She rounds off her article by elaborating on how one form of humanitarian intervention in conflict induced humanitarian interventions can actually lead to dividends in the peace-building sphere. The last article by Eyob Asfaw explores the inter-linkages between peace-building and humanitarian interventions by focusing on the recent attack in Gambela.[2] The article argues that the attack should be understood as emerging from the chaos of a stalled peace-building process that did not encompass local level political and security issues.

Demessie Fantaye

Editor

[demessie.fantaye@life-peace.org](mailto:demessie.fantaye@life-peace.org)

[1] <http://www.msf.org/en/article/msf-pull-out-world-humanitarian-summit>

[2] The NewYorkTimes. 2016. 'Deadly Ethnic Strife Convulses Ethiopia-South Sudan Border'. 25APRIL 2016 in [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/26/world/africa/ethiopia-south-sudan-nuer-highlander.html?smid=tw-share&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/26/world/africa/ethiopia-south-sudan-nuer-highlander.html?smid=tw-share&_r=0)

## The nexus of peace building, development and humanitarianism in conflict affected contexts: A respect for boundaries

By Jens Pedersen

The post-Cold War era has seen an increase in peace keeping missions, and so called multilateral peace building initiatives. The same period has witnessed a significant increase in the number and size of humanitarian operations in conflict affected areas, as well as the number of organisations that deem themselves as humanitarian. However, this growth has not been accompanied by improvements or the necessary changes in approaches.

Peace-building, and peace keeping which often precedes it and forms a component of it, in the past focused on the role of a neutral and often multilateral force made up of soldiers from countries with no discernible stake in the outcome. This force would be tasked with observing and monitoring an existing ceasefire, with limited military means that could be applied in self-defence. Yet recently, peace keeping and peace building have taken on a more partisan role and functioned specially in conflicts characterised as 'asymmetrical' or in conflicts characterised as counterinsurgency or civil conflicts. In addition, the mandates have been extended to include strong focus on protection of civilians, as part of contemporary peacekeeping and peace-building.<sup>[1]</sup>

There are several instances in Africa that reflect this evolving role from merely monitoring and self-defence, to taking part, either in conflict or in more subtle ways placing the peace keeping and peace building firmly on one side of an internal conflict. In the DRC, the UN force MONUSCO are also mandated with undertaking military operations to neutralise armed groups, while in South Sudan the changing mandates of UNMISS and peace building UN bodies e.g. UNDP have included support for the State in areas of Security Sector Reform, establishing the rule of law and to a varying degree an emphasis on the role for protection of civilians (i.e. significantly expanding the self-defence aspect). In Somalia the process of peace building in areas under the control of the federal government, goes hand in hand with expanding that territory, through military means that are paid for and carried out by the same actors that support the peace building<sup>[2]</sup>.

In the same vein, the face and practice of humanitarian operations and humanitarianism have also changed. Humanitarianism and humanitarian aid, have grown into a massive system made up of a myriad of different international, national and local organisations. In 2015 the monetary value of humanitarian response amounted to \$24.5B<sup>[3]</sup>. The changes in the scope of humanitarian operations have occurred in parallel with shifts in practices and a much more broadened interpretation of the core principles and functions of humanitarian aid<sup>[4]</sup>. As donors started to fund humanitarian aid in combination with development aid, the landscape, conduct and actions of humanitarian aid, has become entangled with inherently political intentions and agenda, euphemistically referred to as

'State building', 'peace building', 'resilience', 'bridging the gap', and 'addressing root causes of conflict'. There are three problems with these changes in humanitarian aid and how these have unfolded. Firstly, the intentions that inform the notion and desire of building peace and the State, stems from a narrative of liberal democracy, sponsored by Western donors with a clear ideological and political objective. When humanitarian organisations finds themselves as part of a process whose ultimate aim and objective is an ideological endeavour and end point, pure humanitarian objectives cannot possibly take centre stage. Secondly, regardless of the ideological background that informs the agenda, when humanitarian action and agencies become the proponents of a process that aims to support a process favouring one particular party to a conflict, be that a State, community or individual in the name of building peace, a side has been chosen. Third is the trajectory that humanitarianism will now take, or in some cases has taken already. This trajectory diluting the principles by expanding the role and scope, seems increasingly irreversible.

The imperative of humanitarian action is to save lives and alleviate suffering, and the principles informing this action are those of impartiality, independence and neutrality. Impartiality is instantly undermined when humanitarian aid is given as part of a larger political process and no longer according to needs. The principle of independence is rendered null and void, when 'he who pays the piper, picks the tune', i.e. those in command of the funds in fact have the control to determine where means are allocated, or as more often seen, where they are not allocated. It is when humanitarian aid is given in the name of peace building, and no longer based on needs, that the aid becomes political and no longer strictly humanitarian. In other words, the very essence of humanitarianism is hijacked. Neutrality becomes pertinent, especially as the majority of conflicts in Africa today are increasingly intra-state conflicts, as opposed to international conflicts of state on state<sup>[5]</sup>. So when humanitarian aid and international donors firmly positions themselves on the side of the State, the final principle of neutrality, is well lost in the process of well-meaning objectives. All of which will do more to damage principled humanitarian aid, than actually building peace.

A recent report from the Overseas Development Institute<sup>[6]</sup>, a proponent of many of the above mergers of humanitarian action and political processes, has in the same vein suggested that humanitarian organisations should in fact work closer with development partners; and that purely principled humanitarian action would be better left to a limited number of contexts and organisations.

While development practitioners and scholars are imploring the notion of 'we can't do one without the other' on humanitarian aid, peace building encroaches on the realm of humanitarian aid, thus blurring the lines between all three distinct concepts under the hubris of collaboration, coordination, remaking humanitarian actions and peace building. Ultimately, this simply dilutes humanitarian action into everything and essentially nothing. Consequently, this undermines what humanitarianism seeks to achieve: the rights of the individual to receive assistance, medical care or food, purely based on the needs of the individual or the specific group.

The notion of the humanitarian imperative and the good intentions of saving lives, is an alluring one. Hence we have seen a high demand for the humanitarian 'service' and the obvious need for co-option of the term humanitarian operation. In the past, this have been illustrated both in the aim of political, military and developmental objectives. 'Humanitarian interventions' have been carried out, in the name of humanitarian imperatives of saving lives, yet with aim of regime change in Libya, Iraq and Yugoslavia'; 'humanitarian operations' have been part of the strategy of winning hearts and minds of civilian populations within an area seized through military operations and deemed safe and eligible of humanitarian aid in Afghanistan, DRC and Mali.

There is nothing wrong per se, with either peace or State building. It is with the underlying intentions and motives in mind that the nexus of peace building and humanitarianism, must be closely examined.

Scrutiny is needed of the particular context or conflict environment in which humanitarian agencies operate and what motivates donors, international agencies, peace-making actors and militaries, when they invoke humanitarian imperatives and operations. The growing call for humanitarian agencies to be conflict sensitive, and take into account local, communal, national and regional dynamics, requires a deeper interrogation of what lies behind the services that are provided, as part of peace building, and what interests inform such actions. Most often these are not strictly related to the core objectives of humanitarianism, nor to the basic principles that such operations should require.

Nonetheless, the two phenomena are not mutually exclusive. However, it can only be a coexistence based on a thorough understanding of the roles, responsibilities and limitations of each in a given conflict environment. In fact, a respect of the boundaries will be what is best that everyone can contribute to one another and to those that they strive to assist. Humanitarian aid cannot build peace and peace building cannot save lives in an impartial manner during moments of emergency and conflict.

In his report ahead of the World Humanitarian Summit to be held in Istanbul this year, the Secretary General of the UN indicates that the practices of donors in terms of funding for development and humanitarian aid, may lead to fragmentation and develop incentives for these to work in isolation. In the words of the Secretary General, it requires different ways of working, in order to meet the need of 120 million people who are experiencing insufficient dividends of development and peace-building. Greater investments are needed to ensure that growing humanitarian needs are addressed and the vulnerability of people in the medium and long term are reduced, including greater attention to early warning, conflict prevention and peace-building<sup>[7]</sup>. Yet as we have witnessed in South Sudan when the country broke into conflict in late 2013, the results of merging and lumping everything and everyone into a nexus of shared responsibility, comes at the detriment of the people who suffer the consequences of lack of development and poor peace-building<sup>[8] [9]</sup>. It is possible to invest in the future, which would entail development and peace-building, looking forward hoping for a return; but it is not permissible to ignore responding acutely when people's lives are at stake, which is

what humanitarian aid is about. It is deplorable to plan ahead for people in need, when not being able to assist them when their needs may be greatest.

**Jens Pedersen** is a Humanitarian Policy Advisor and holds an MsC in Humanitarian Studies from the Liverpool School of Medicine, having worked in Liberia as hospital manager during the Ebola outbreak, Sudan, South Sudan, India, South Africa and Sierra Leone. He may be reached at: [Jenswp@gmail.com](mailto:Jenswp@gmail.com)

## References

- [1] Haysom and Pedersen, 2015: *Robust Peacekeeping in Africa: The Challenge for Humanitarians*. Humanitarian Practice Network, October 2015.  
<http://odihpn.org/magazine/robust-peacekeeping-in-africa-the-challenge-for-humanitarians/>, 2015
- [2] AMISOM, 2016: *AMISOM Mandate*: <http://amisom-au.org/amisom-mandate/>, 2016
- [3] Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2015: *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2015*. [http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/GHA-Report-2015\\_-Interactive\\_Online\\_Online.pdf](http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/GHA-Report-2015_-Interactive_Online_Online.pdf), 2015
- [4] Whittall, 2015: *Is Humanitarian Action Independent From Political Interests?* International Journal on Human Rights, Issue 21, August 2015
- [5] Ferreira, R, 2010: *Irregular war in African Conflicts*; Scientia Militaria, South African Journal of Military Studies, vol. 38, no. 1
- [6] Overseas Development Institute, 2016: *Time to Let Go: A Three Point Proposal to Change the Humanitarian System*. <https://www.odi.org/hpg/remake-aid/>
- [7] *One humanity, shared responsibility: Report of the United Nations Secretary General for the World Humanitarian Summit*. 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2016.  
<http://sgreport.worldhumanitariansummit.org/>
- [8] MSF, 2015: *South Sudan marks two years of conflict since fighting broke out in Juba*. 15<sup>th</sup> December 2015: <https://www.msf.org.za/msf-publications/south-sudan-marks-two-years-conflict-fighting-broke-out-juba>
- [9] Cornish, S, 2014: *Was South Sudan a Preventable Crisis?* In Huffington Post, 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2014.  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/stephen-cornish/south-sudan-crisis\\_b\\_5600189.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/stephen-cornish/south-sudan-crisis_b_5600189.html)





## The evolution of NGO peacebuilding in complex emergencies: A theoretical analysis

By Elias Omondi Opongo

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have emerged in the post-Cold War era as active players in efforts to mitigate and end conflicts. There are several factors that have led to the increased participation of the NGOs in peace-building activities. The post cold war period, to some extent, ended the ideological partisan approach to international relations and aid delivery coupled with the promotion of the principles of liberal democracy and global peace. The post-Cold War era has also witnessed the expanding developmental role of NGOs as well as active engagement in advocacy and peacebuilding. NGOs have also increasingly been viewed and have assumed the stance of being a source of countervailing power to local and global structures of power.

### NGO involvement in complex emergencies

The NGO involvement in conflict zones has primarily been through humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies. These conflict settings have put the lives of NGO staff at risk, as well compromising the NGO mandate. Complex emergencies can be defined as “humanitarian crises that are linked with large-scale violent conflict – civil war, ethnic cleansing and genocide”.<sup>[1]</sup> Keen emphasizes here that ‘complex emergencies’ should refer to emergencies that are conflict-induced as opposed to those that are caused by natural disasters.

The involvement of NGOs in complex emergencies has raised a number of issues, mainly around the extent to which NGOs can perform humanitarian assistance in a manner that is perceived to be neutral or impartial. This has prompted a moral discourse on humanitarian intervention in situations of conflict. NGOs have found themselves in compromising situations leading to critical reflection on the extent to which humanitarian assistance may exacerbate conflict or create favourable situations for peace.

The idealization of NGOs as neutral and impartial, focused on doing good and saving lives, has led to high expectation of NGOs<sup>[2]</sup> At the same time these situations have given rise to discussions on vigilance against doing harm.<sup>[3]</sup> These discussions have propelled calls for accountability on the part of the NGOs while questioning the manner in which they have conducted their humanitarian assistance. Respect of local cultures and balancing this with the NGO principles of operation has sometimes posed serious dilemmas especially where these cultures condone or tolerate human rights violations.

NGOs have faced numerous challenges such as reconstruction of schools and hospital, job creation, lack of security and unresolved issues in post conflict settings.<sup>[4]</sup> NGOs are further limited in their activities by the fact that “major donors have substituted humanitarian aid for political action”, hence compromising the impartiality principles.<sup>[5]</sup> Politicisation of aid has dragged humanitarian assistance and NGO activities into

tensions with different parties in conflict.

Anderson asserts that while aid is crucial in mitigating conflicts through humanitarian assistance, NGOs ought to pay attention to activities that exacerbate conflict rather than mitigate its impact.[6] She describes these situations as “implicit ethical messages” such as hiring armed guards to protect the aid materials; unhealthy competition and distrust among agencies; acting with implicit impunity without being sensitive to the local cultures and values, apparent discriminatory treatment between international staff and local people.[7] In a similar perspective Reimann posits that there are five ways in which NGOs can exacerbate conflict: providing resources to warring parties; contributing to market distortions; reinforcing societal divisions and conflict; freeing up internal resources for use in conflict; and legitimizing warring sides.[8]

NGOs appear to create “shadow networks of governance” that can undermine the local authorities.[9] In displaced camps NGOs are seen to be running “surrogate states”[10] independent from the host countries. NGOs can also affect “the emotional economy of conflict” by supporting, through aid and ideology, one community against another.[11] Humanitarianism also has been critiqued as playing the role of the *right hand of the empire*. [12] Algier argues that in humanitarianism: “There is a hand that strikes and a hand that heals”. [13] The *hand that strikes refers to the hegemonic powers in the international system*. Algier makes reference to wars in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 where the “aerial distribution of supplies and medicines accompanied the dropping of bombs.” [14] Thus humanitarianism emerges as the *hand that heals*, repairing the damages of the super-powers.

The above situations have had negative impact on the achievement of the objectives of humanitarian assistance. These situations politicize aid and render NGOs vulnerable to partisan politics at the local level, while at the same time creating unfavourable economic and social environment.[15] Prendergast describes which he refers to as the “seven sins” that subject humanitarian NGOs to competing imperatives such as: limiting the success of aid delivery to quantified numbers of people that have been reached, and unaccountability for the funds that have been raised in response to humanitarian crises.[16]

Caution is imperative on the part of NGOs in dealing with these dilemmas, as conflict and post-conflict settings are often highly complex. Some situations call for immediate decisions that may be contextually evidence-based yet in the long run could turn out to be inappropriate. Keen argues that it is impossible to understand the inadequacy of humanitarian interventions “without understanding the complicated functions of ‘humanitarianism’ for donor governments and the extent to which these are consistent with not *providing relief to needy groups*.” [17] Humanitarian situations often bring in many players, raising concern about coordination and prioritization of activities. These situations tend to make humanitarian work more complex.

### **NGOs in peace-building**

NGOs have been active in the peace-building arena. This has been attributed, in some

cases, to the failure of the states in resolving conflicts and creating sustainable environment for security, development and harmonious co-existence.[18] Besides “conflict prevention, humanitarian interventions and post conflict peace-building” became part of international policy of global management in the post Cold War period (Tschirgi, 2004:4).[19] Minear holds that although “humanitarian action has always had an uncomfortable association with the trajectory of conflicts, only in the 1990s have the specific linkages become a policy issue of ongoing debate.”[20] The transition from relief-development trajectory to peace-building has been intertwined and not necessarily chronological in nature. This means that there are a number of NGOs that have been providing relief and development assistance while still engaged in peace-building activities.

In the 1994 UN report on *Agenda for Development* three areas were identified as key to NGO peacebuilding: preventive diplomacy; humanitarian assistance and post-conflict peacebuilding. In the UN *Agenda for Peace*, peacebuilding was seen as multidimensional linking grassroots, middle level diplomacy and top level leadership. Boutros Ghali defined peacebuilding as “sustained, co-operative work to deal with underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems ...”<sup>2</sup> Peacebuilding also entails “action to identify and support structures which tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid relapse into conflict.”[21] Thus NGO activities can contribute to the peacebuilding discourse and influence international conflict resolution efforts.

Goodhand argues that there have been two different interpretations of the NGO engagement in peace-building within the human security paradigm.[22] One interpretation holds that NGOs can contribute to peace-building activities by virtue of their grassroots involvement in humanitarian activities. The other interpretation argues that western interventionism has mainly been geared towards the rogue states that have failed the democracy test. These are seen as attempts to quarantine war while promoting the liberal peace agenda.[23] In this sense NGOs are viewed in the same continuum as subjects of liberal peace because it is difficult to separate their humanitarian and development activities from the new security regime of the western nations.[24]

This mix-bowl approach to humanitarianism has posed definitional problems of what is actually entailed by humanitarian assistance. For example, the inclusion of ‘protection’[25] as part of the humanitarianism has come into conflict with the work of human rights organizations which have normally undertaken the task of ‘protection’.[26] Likewise the incorporation of advocacy as part of humanitarian operation could potentially compromise the security and safety of aid workers on the ground.[27] Thus, NGO peace-building ought to be understood within the complexities of humanitarianism.

NGO involvement in post-conflict development has been influenced by studies demonstrating that increased development can counter the effects of war.

Carey outlines the various dilemmas faced by NGOs in peace-building.[28] These include, the challenge of maintaining neutrality in the face of evil; prolonging war by

providing aid both to those in need, and the militias who might use it to foster a war agenda; engaging in short-term peace-building activities that could exacerbate conflict; co-opting NGOs into the liberal peace agenda which may not ensure a sustainable peace; compromising the NGO identity by the diverse nature of the NGO category, which has included illiberal organizations that have been known to promote violence. These situations imply that NGOs have to adapt their methods of peace-building in order to accommodate the complex and diverse contextual conditions.[\[29\]](#)

### **Policy Recommendations**

1. Peace-building interventions ought to be tailored to contextual imperatives. Linking up peace-building initiatives at different levels (grassroots and policy levels) ensures that there are no duplications and that the intervention weaves into existing initiatives.
2. Interventions should be based on a clear understanding of the change processes that the activities aim to produce. The conceptualization of this understanding ought to be in consultation with the local people so that the change desired by the people becomes the target rather than *prescribed*
3. Communities in conflict are often characterized by mistrust, violence and divisions as a means of survival. It is important to engage in trust building process as part of the conflict intervention mechanism.
4. Interventions have to pay attention to the changing phenomenon and manifestations of conflict. Prescribed solutions could fall prey to ignoring the dynamics of conflict and changing roles of the actors.

**Elias Omondi Opongo** is the Director of Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations (HIPSIR), Hekima University College, Nairobi, Kenya. He holds a PhD in Peace Studies from University of Bradford, UK and MA degree in International Peace Studies from University of Notre Dame, USA. He has published books, articles and book chapters on NGO field diplomacy, transitional justice, methodologies of peacebuilding, among others.

### **References**

- [\[1\]](#) Keen, D. (2008) *Complex Emergencies*, Cambridge, UK, Polity. Pg: 1
- [\[2\]](#) Fisher, W. F. (1997) 'Doing good? The politics and antipolitics of NGO practices' in *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.*, 26, 439.
- [\[3\]](#) Anderson, M. (1999) *Do no Harm. How Aid can Support Peace or War*, London, Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- [\[4\]](#) Lewis, D., Rodgers D & M., W. (2005) 'The fiction of development: knowledge, authority and representation' in *Development Studies Institute (Destin), Working Paper*. London, London School of Economics.
- [\[5\]](#) Shearer, D. (2000) 'Aiding or Abetting? Humanitarian Aid and Its Economic Role in Civil War' in MATS BERDAL, D. M. M. (Ed.) *Greed and grievance: economic agendas in civil wars* London, Lynne Rienner Publishers: 198.

- [6] Anderson, M. (1999) *Do no Harm. How Aid can Support Peace or War*, London, Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- [7] Ibid: 58.
- [8] Reimann, K. D. (2005) 'Upto No Good? Recent Critics and Critiques of NGOs' in RICHMOND, O. P. & CAREY, H. F. (Eds.) *Subcontracting Peace: The challenges of NGO Peacebuilding*. Burlington, Ashgate.
- [9] Goodhand, J. (2006) *Aiding Peace? The Role of NGOs in Armed Conflict*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers. Pg:111.
- [10] Slaughter, A. & Crisp, J. (2008) 'A Surrogate State? The Role of UNHCR in Protracted Refugee Situations' in LOESCHER, G., MILNER, J., NEWMAN, E. & TROELLER, G. (Eds.) *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications*. New York, UN University Press.
- [11] Goodhand, J. (2006) *Aiding Peace? The Role of NGOs in Armed Conflict*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers. Pg: 115.
- [12] Agier, M. (2010) *Managing the undesirables: refugee camps and humanitarian government*, Cambridge, Polity.
- [13] Ibid: 200.
- [14] Ibid.
- [15] Smillie, I. & Minear, L. (2004) *The Charity of Nations: Humanitarian Action in A Calculating World*, Bloomfield, Kumarian Press. pg: 81.
- [16] Prendergast, J. (1996) *Frontline Diplomacy. Humanitarian Aid and Conflict in Africa*, Boulder, Lynne and Reinner Publishers.pg: 1-15.
- [17] Keen, D. (2008) *Complex Emergencies*, Cambridge, UK, Polity.pg: 116.
- [18] Richmond, O. P. (2010a) 'A Genealogy of Peace and Conflict' in RICHMOND, O. P. (Ed.) *Palgrave advances in peacebuilding*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. London, Palgrave Macmillan. pg: 25.
- [19] Tschirgi, Neclâ Yonagoğlu. (2004). *Peacebuilding as the link between security and development: is the window of opportunity closing?* New York: International Peace Academy, Studies in Security and Development. pg: 5.
- [20] Minear, L. (2002). *The humanitarian enterprise: Dilemmas and discoveries*. Bloomfield, Conn: Kumarian Press, p. 156.
- [21] Ghali, B. B. (1992) 'An agenda for peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping'. *Report of the Secretary-General, United Nations GA and SC, A/47/277, S/24111, 17 June 1992*. . United Nations (UN).

- [22] Goodhand, J. (2006) *Aiding Peace? The Role of NGOs in Armed Conflict*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers. pg: 78-79.
- [23] Richards, P. (Ed.) (2005) *No War No Peace. Anthropology of contemporary armed conflicts*, Oxford, James Currey. pg: 3.
- [24] Duffield, M. (2001) *Global Governance and the New Wars: the merging of development and security*, London, Zed Books. pg: 16.
- [25] 'Protection' refers to initiatives that aim at protecting and defending the rights of people affected by conflict or humanitarian disaster. Such could include speaking against different forms of physical or emotional abuse; supporting initiatives that ensure the security of affected persons; negotiating with the local government to accord appropriate rights and care to the affected population, etc.
- [26] Slim, H. & Bonwick, A. (2005) *Protection: An ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies* London Overseas Development Institute.
- [27] Borton, J., (2009) *Future of the Humanitarian System: Impacts of Internal Changes*. Berkhamsted: John Borton Consulting.
- [28] Carey, H. F. (2010a) NGO dilemmas in peacebuilding. IN OLIVER, P. R. (Ed.) *Palgrave advances in peacebuilding*. London, Palgrave MacMillan. pgs 240-256.
- [29] Ibid: 247.



## Intersectionality, sexual and gender-based violence and humanitarian intervention

By Lailatul Fitriyah

On March 11, 2016, Al-Jazeera reported on the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan that has been unraveling at least since December 2013[1]. The report was quite shocking, even amidst all the horrific events that have been taking place in the country. It mentioned that both militias, who are loyal to President Salva Kiir and those who are loyal to the former vice president Riek Machar, have been using rape, torture and killing as the 'currencies' of war. Their victims ranged from children to people with disability. The report, which was released by the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights[2], details the systematic rapes and other gender-based violence in the country. Previously, on February 2014, Human Rights Watch released a report on the prevalence of rape in Mogadishu, Somalia[3]. The rapes mostly took place at the camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Wadajir. Some perpetrators were wearing police uniforms in the act. Women who were brave enough to report the crime to police stations, such as the 37-years old Maryam, experienced victim-blaming and justifiably developed a distrust towards security officials and institutions. In Nigeria, women and girls, freed from Boko Haram's abduction are rejected by their communities. The rejection stems from the stigmatisation following Boko Haram's latest twist to exploit the girls and women to carry their attacks as suicide bombers since 2013[4].

Based on those examples, this article argues that the gender mainstreaming into humanitarian responses is not enough to eliminate the problem of horrendous (mostly) gender-based crimes against women, men, non-cis gendered groups and children in these countries. The pervasive occurrence of rapes is a culmination, instead of symptoms, of sexual and gender-based violence within those countries. Drawing upon interviews and case studies in two Human Rights Watch's reports and one report by the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, the article proposes immersion of the perspective of intersectionality into policies and measures taken to address the sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crisis settings.

The first part of the article identifies weaknesses in current gender mainstreaming in humanitarian context which are mostly focused on the prevention and countermeasures for major sexual and gender-based violence, such as rape. While the second part of the article argues for an intersectional approach to widen the debate on humanitarian focus so that it incorporates the structural, socio-political, cultural, historical and religious dimensions.

### **Gender Mainstreaming in Humanitarian Intervention**

Humanitarian crises are a very delicate and complicated topic to start with. Debates over proper sources of morality in international justice, the universality or particularity of human rights and the right or duty to intervene have never ceased from the context of humanitarian intervention. It is only recently that those debates are expanded to include

the question of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)[5]. Scholars and practitioners such as, Chris Dolan and Fionnuala Ni Aolain, have greatly contributed to the discussion of sexual and gender-based violence by conceptualizing languages to speak about SGBV within the realm of international regimes and by breaking the gender binary in the conduct of humanitarian emergency policies.

On the one hand, Chris Dolan makes the case of the importance of acknowledging the vulnerabilities of men, transgender and non-cis gendered groups in humanitarian settings. He problematizes the sole focus on women in the discussion of sexual and gender-based violence while men, transgender and non-cis gendered groups are targeted by the same horrendous actions. He warns scholars and practitioners alike against being trapped in the gender binary and to incorporate all gender and non-cis gendered groups into consideration within the context of humanitarian crisis[6].

Ni Aolain, on the other hand, points toward the inherent masculinities of the global humanitarian regime for the failure of dealing with sexual and gender-based violence during a humanitarian crises. She suggests that the highly unpredictable nature of humanitarian crises contributes to the lack of reflexive capacities on the part of states and international organizations as responders to humanitarian emergencies. Furthermore, she argues that we need to start to see vulnerability as inevitable rather than as a consequence of such episodic catastrophe like humanitarian crises[7].

These two approaches to the problem of sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian context (represented by Dolan's and Ni Aolain's articles) are indeed very useful in identifying gaps in our perceptions on the dialectic between vulnerability and the masculine world of humanitarian responses, as well as to break down the gender binary that renders humanitarian responses ineffective for (other than female) gender and non-cis gendered groups. However, insights into the nature of vulnerability and humanitarian responses and the suggestion to look beyond the gender binary in humanitarian context are not enough to answer the problem.

The sexual and gender-based violence in Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan (as depicted in the reports) result from several different contexts of oppression that intertwine with each other and have been present long before the humanitarian crises take place. Boko Haram has been stirring up inter-religious tensions in Nigeria since its establishment in 2002; stigmatization of female headed households in addition to their identity as minority clan members render women and girls in Somalia vulnerable to rape[8]; and, women in South Sudan find themselves as targets of attacks due to a combination of failing legal, socio-political institutions and inter-ethnic conflict[9]. Though comprehensive documentation is unavailable, the systematic sexual and gender-based violence against other gender and non-cis gendered groups might also correlate with sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women and girls[10].

Therefore, future humanitarian responses need to deal not only with the exclusion of other gender and non-cis gendered groups in relation to SGBV, but also with the amalgam of oppression and violence that permeate the experiences of all victims from all



gender and non-cis gendered spectrums of identity. This means that the measures against sexual and gender-based violence must address the contextual, historical, sociological, political, economy and religious dimensions of violent experience. The following part of the article suggests the intersectionality approach, as promoted by the intersectional feminism, to serve as a new lens from which we can understand the multi-layered facets of sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian emergency settings.

### **Intersectionality and Humanitarian Emergencies**

Intersectionality within the feminist discourses is understood as an approach that views an individual's experience of sexual and gender-based violence as resulting from multi-layered facets of socio-political, economy, cultural and religious oppressions, in addition to sexual and gendered violence[11]. The approach holds that categories such as, race, gender, class, ability and ethnicity make up the experience of violence that each individual has. Thus, SGBV as experienced by women of color (WOC) is not the same SGBV experienced by White, middle-class women. Furthermore, the experiences of able-bodied, heterosexual women of color are not comparable to the experiences of homosexual women of color with disability.

There are three points that the intersectionality perspective can contribute to the provision of measures to overcome SGBV in humanitarian emergency settings. First, it widens the discourse of sexual and gender-based violence to include all gender and non-cis gendered groups. This was the concern brought up by Chris Dolan when he talked about breaking the gender-binary. According to this perspective, the focus should shift from the targets of SGBV, to the motivations behind the violent action. Second, it acknowledges the multi-faceted and multi-layered experiences of violence. It not only allows us to transcend reactive responses to SGBV that occur humanitarian crises, but also begin addressing the factors that enabled the SGBV to occur in the first place. Ni Aolain's call to see vulnerability as something that is inevitable is a call to take into account these SGBV-enabling circumstances within the context of humanitarian emergencies.

Lastly, the intersectionality approach encourages us to listen to the experiences of the victims, rather than to impose our own readings on what their experiences and needs are. It is clear from some testimonies in the reports, for example, that some of the victims of rapes and attacks - with their position as the providers for the families - were more worried about their dwindling physical strength and capacities to provide for their families after the tragedies, rather than their own psychological trauma[12]. Seen from the intersectionality point of view, these statements from the victims must inform the way humanitarian crises responders provide care, services and protections to the victims.

Within the dimension of policy recommendations, it means that international responders to humanitarian emergencies need to consider taking three steps. First, to give more focus on the socio-cultural, political and religious dynamics in the region in addition to measures directed at legal reform and law enforcement. Second, to give room for

survivors of SGBV to voice their own opinions, particularly regarding their future. We need to see them for what they are, as survivors, and not as victims. Third, to emphasize on subtle aspects that play a role in the backdrop of humanitarian emergency in question. This being said, there must be a holistic approach that links first responses (IDPs protection, shelter provision, injuries treatment, trauma counselings, etc) with activities specifically designed to prevent double-victimization on SGBV survivors (provision of resources for those who want to start small businesses, security infrastructures in places like traditional markets and schools, engagement to elders and religious leaders on the importance of women empowerment, interreligious dialogue initiatives, etc). At the very core of this proposal is that humanitarian emergencies need to be dealt with comprehensive, instead of partial, measures against all interconnected web of oppressions.

Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate intersectionality in humanitarian emergency settings. Not only because we need to widen the scope of humanitarian cares and protections to also include other gender and non-cis gendered groups, but also because listening to the victims comprises the core of every humanitarian responses. It might be hard to imagine genuine listening and reflective processes within the emergency nature of humanitarian responses. However, if we are really serious in protecting those who are most vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies, we really need to start listening to them.

**Lailatul Fitriyah** is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA and currently a Nostra Aetate Fellow at the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican City. She may be reached at: [lailyfitry@gmail.com](mailto:lailyfitry@gmail.com), Academia page: <https://istoreo.academia.edu/LailatulFitriyah>.

## References

- [1] Al-Jazeera and agencies, "South Sudan: UN Reports Campaign of Killing and Rape," *Al-Jazeera*, March 11, 2016, accessed April 25, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/south-sudan-campaign-killing-rape-united-nations-report-160311073450910.html>.
- [2] "Assessment Mission by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to Improve Human Rights, Accountability, Reconciliation and Capacity in South Sudan: Detailed Findings," Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, March 10, 2016, accessed April 25, 2016, [www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17207&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17207&LangID=E).
- [3] "Here, Rape is Normal: A Five-Point Plan to Curtail Sexual Violence in Somalia," Human Rights Watch Report, February 13, 2014, accessed April 25, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/02/13/here-rape-normal/five-point-plan-curtail-sexual-violence-somalia>.

- [4] Zenn, Jacob and Pearson, Elizabeth, "Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics of Boko Haram," *Journal of Terrorism Research* 5(1)(2014): 46.
- [5] Ni Aolain, Fionnuala "Women, Vulnerability, and Humanitarian Emergencies," *Michigan Journal of Gender and Law* 18(1)(2011): 1.
- [6] Dolan, Chris, "Letting Go of the Gender Binary: Charting New Pathways for Humanitarian Interventions on Gender-Based Violence," *International Review of the Red Cross* 96(894)(2014): 486.
- [7] Ni Aolain, "Women, Vulnerability," 4.
- [8] "Here, Rape is Normal," Human Rights Watch Report.
- [9] "Assessment Mission," Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
- [10] Dolan, "Letting Go," 491.
- [11] Crenshaw, Kimberle, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43(1241)(1991): 1243-1244.
- [12] "Here, Rape is Normal," Human Rights Watch Report.



## Hitting two birds with one stone? Role of humanitarian response in peace-building processes

By Martha Bedane Guraro

Over the years we have seen several humanitarian crises emanating from both man-made and natural causes. Humanitarian crises take different forms and specifically in sub-Saharan Africa, they are multidimensional and complex. Humanitarian crises could arise as a result of sudden natural disasters such as earthquake, on-going natural catastrophes like drought or man intentionally provoked situations like conflicts and wars.<sup>[1]</sup> We are also noticing a new trend of violent extremism and terrorism especially in the Horn of Africa countries requiring humanitarian response.

It is evident that there is a great deal that humanitarian actors can contribute towards curbing several factors that can result in a great loss of people and communities. Historical experience reveals the positive impact that immediate and timely support by humanitarian actors has towards conflict induced humanitarian needs and their impact in revitalizing societies affected.

Humanitarian actors responding to crises such as drought, flood and natural disasters tend to be more hands on and a bit freer as the political and other dimensions tend to be less salient. On the other hand, different actors adopt a more careful and at time 'remote' approach their responses to conflict driven humanitarian crisis. There are a number of situations in the Horn of Africa where humanitarian actions are being managed through remote mechanisms because of threats to the lives of expatriate staffs. This paper, therefore, focuses on humanitarian crisis resulting from conflicts and the role of humanitarian response towards peace-building.

### **Humanitarian crisis, assistance and peacebuilding**

Humanitarian crises can be defined as a disastrous upheaval from a previous situation as a result of a single or a series of events causing threats to the wellbeing of a given society. It has different characteristics, amongst which are creating a number of victims and number of people whose lives are in danger and great distress coupled with institutionalised mechanisms of crisis management undergoing great difficulty or incapable of managing the situation.<sup>[2]</sup> Humanitarian assistance, broadly defined, seeks to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity in response to need and it is guided by the core principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence endorsed by the General Assembly.<sup>[3]</sup>

According to the University of Colorado Conflict Information Consortium, peace-building is a process that facilitates the establishment of durable peace and tries to prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing root causes and effects of conflict through reconciliation, institution building, and political as well as economic transformation.<sup>[4]</sup> However, the question remains which humanitarian interventions are adding value to the peace-building processes of a given country undergoing conflict/war. Unfortunately,

this question becomes even more critical in the case of conflicts in the Horn of Africa, which exhibit a tendency to stretch on for years with horrendous loss in lives.

Traditional humanitarian response looks at different sector based support depending on the situation in the country and its needs. These include; providing food, shelter, water, healthcare services, education and so on. There are several United Nations agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations which are making an excellent contribution in delivering their humanitarian support and interventions to countries which are under humanitarian crisis as a result of conflict.

### **The impact of humanitarian action towards peacebuilding**

Peace-building encompasses a non-linear blend of conflict prevention, political, security, humanitarian and development activities, tailored to the particular context.<sup>[5]</sup> The role of the international community in peace-building is to support the restoration or renewal of a social contract, and the return of stability, through supporting national capacities in different areas such as, safety and security, political processes, basic services, core government functions and economic revitalization<sup>[6]</sup>

The Principles of Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes outlines humanitarian aid “priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone” and “will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint”.<sup>[7]</sup> Any assistance that contravenes these principles cannot be said to be humanitarian.

Peace-building and humanitarian assistance are different in terms of their program design, time required to implement their programs and generally their flexibility. Humanitarian assistance has more flexibility than peace-building activities and processes. It is then up to the humanitarian actors to make use of this flexibility in developing a convergence with activities that can also contribute to peace-building. This is of course at the backdrop of maintaining their impartiality, and neutrality as humanitarian actors. Given these rules, there are opportunities where more effective humanitarian action can contribute to a more sustainable peace without compromising core principles of humanitarianism.

While trying to address questions relating to the value adds and/or nexus of humanitarian response towards peace building processes, it is important to note that often peace-building activities concentrate on local or structural efforts that foster or support those social, political and institutional structures and processes which strengthen the prospects for peaceful coexistence and decrease the likelihood of the outbreak, reoccurrence or continuation of violence.<sup>[8]</sup> Indirectly, it can be said that humanitarian assistance do support institutional structures and processes.

There are some organisations which do not leave the country in conflict in the aftermath of the conclusion of hostilities, but rather keep their programmatic operations going through focusing on creating resilience and favourable conditions for the society to rebuild itself. This will greatly benefit the peace-building process in the long run. It

follows therefore that humanitarian assistance can create the space and build resilience that can be a starting point for peace-building operations and programs by taking into consideration conflict sensitive program design and ensuring that humanitarian activities do not impact the future longstanding peace of the community negatively. At the same time, it is imperative to point out that it would be impractical to think of building peace while people are still suffering from the direct impact of conflict.

Below is one specific sector based humanitarian response that child focused humanitarian agencies advocate and deliver during conflict that can ultimately make a positive impact on peace-building.

### **Education in emergencies as a catalyst for building peace**

Education is a fundamental and instrumental right for all children in the realization of other basic rights for all children. This right has been argued by humanitarian actors to be a right that need to be protected and full filled in all situations including both normal/peaceful time and conflict situations. At the moment there are millions of children denied access to primary education because of armed conflicts.[9] Schools are being attacked in different African countries as a normal part of war. In spite of several different laws and international instruments[10] that expressly prohibits the targeting and use of education facilities by belligerents in conflict, the principle is honoured more in the breach. Due to these kinds of worrying reasons, it can be safely said that humanitarian crises and particularly armed conflicts are posing a huge humanitarian, development and social challenge demanding urgent actions and interventions for the protection of education facilities from attack. Over the long term it is obvious that keeping children and youth in school contributes to peace process and the reduction of conflicts in a given country. Most importantly, education is a critical means to rehabilitate children and young people who have experienced war in their lives. It is only when we have rehabilitated society that we can safely say that we are achieving peace and prospect for a sustainable reconstruction of a given country.

Different humanitarian organisations are trying to contribute through their relief and development programs in conflict affected zones towards peace building processes. For example World Vision International has been responding to some of the dire needs of children affected by the conflict in South Sudan. Specifically, the organisation reached the most vulnerable children affected by armed conflict in the past years with psychosocial support services in different program areas. United Nations has also been keen in making sure that schools are reopened within the possible period of time after the outbreak of an armed conflict. UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund, formerly United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) has adopted a rapid education response to the initial phase of emergencies that focuses on getting schools or learning environments reopened, getting children back to school, and revitalizing the collapsing infrastructure of the educational system.[11] In addition to these organisations, there is an International Network for Education in Emergencies with sole purpose of securing education from attacks and ensure that children are kept in school despite conflicts as a lifesaving intervention. [12] These organisations and networks have

been successfully advocating to keep children in school in the middle of conflict as a means to ensure children are protected from massive violations to their life and to their physical abuse. A closer examination of these kinds of humanitarian response's and their short run and long run effects can make a great contribution towards peace-building in South Sudan and other conflict affected countries.

## Conclusion

Humanitarian crisis by its nature requires a fast and timely response and hence humanitarian actors do not have the luxury to examine the causes of conflict nor their larger political ramifications. The timeliness of such responses often result in a quick and not really well thought response by humanitarian actors that would sometimes result in adverse effects on peace-building. Similarly, some argue that humanitarian assistance is at risk of becoming an instrument of war - at the local level through the manipulation of aid resources by warlords, at the global level through its instrumentalisation for partisan political interests.<sup>[13]</sup>

Humanitarian actors have a critical role in peace-building, just how critical depending on the local capacity for recovery and the local legacy of war-related hostility: the lower the local capacity and the higher the residual war-related hostility, the greater the commitment required from the international community.<sup>[14]</sup> What matters most is that outside peacebuilders recognise not only what they can do but what they cannot; looking at the strategies and mechanisms of delivering programs and humanitarian responses during and after war is critical.

The lives lost due to war/conflict and through terrorist attacks are the people who could contribute positively to the development of a given country. Hence, it is imperative to have a system in place which could rebuild societies in distress from the on-going war or its recurring effects with a view of achieving long lasting peace. Without humanitarian response to the dire situation of the people in a given conflict affected country, the cause of conflict/war cannot be addressed. It is time to abandon the notion that peace-building and humanitarianism cannot collaborate and deliver a better result for African societies.

**Martha Bedane Guraro** is a passionate advocate for children rights with an LLB from Haramaya University and LLM on Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa from University of Pretoria Center for Human Rights. Martha has been working as a Child Rights Advocacy Advisor with Save the Children International Africa Union Liaison Office for three years and half and assumed the role of Africa Union Policy Advisor for World Vision International starting from 2016. She may be reached at [Mariliz771@gmail.com](mailto:Mariliz771@gmail.com)

## References

[1] *The psychosocial impact of humanitarian crises: a better understanding for better interventions*: Action contre la Faim.

(

[http://www.actionagainsthunger.org/sites/default/files/publications/ACF\\_Psychosocial\\_Im](http://www.actionagainsthunger.org/sites/default/files/publications/ACF_Psychosocial_Im)

[pact.pdf](#) ) p. 8

[2] Josse, E., Dubois, V. 2009. *Interventions humanitaires en santé mentale dans les violences de*

*masse* (1st edition) Bruxelles : Groupe De Boeck.

[3] A/RES/46/182 and A/RES/58/114

[4]

<http://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2013/08/selected-definitions-of-peacebuilding/>

[5] OCHA Occasional Policy Briefing Series, Brief No 7: *Peacebuilding and Linkages with Humanitarian Action : Key emerging trends and challenges*

<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Occasional%20paper%20Peacebuilding.pdf>

[6] Report of the Secretary-General on *Peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict*: (11 June 2009) General Assembly 63<sup>rd</sup> Session (A/63/881-S/2009/304), para. 17.

<http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/s2009304.pdf>

[7] *The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief* <http://www.ifrc.org/Docs/idrl/I259EN.pdf>

[8] Jonathan, Goodhand, 2002. *Aiding violence or building peace? The role of international aid in Afghanistan* Third World Quarterly, Vol 23, No 5, pp 837-859, 2002 : Carfax publishing Taylor & Francis Group

[9] UNESCO & Education for All. Policy Paper 22/factsheet 31. 2015. *A growing number of children and adolescents are out of school as aid fails to meet the mark.*

<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/fs-31-out-of-school-children-en.pdf>

[10] Oslo Declaration on Safe Schools and the 2010 UNGA Resolution A65L.58 "*The right to education in emergency situations*".

[11] UNICEF (2006) Education in emergencies toolkit: *Emergency Policy and Rationale doe education in Emergencies* p 24 :

[http://www.unicef.org/rosa/Rosa-Education\\_in\\_Emergencies\\_ToolKit.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/rosa/Rosa-Education_in_Emergencies_ToolKit.pdf)

[12] <http://www.ineesite.org/en/education-in-emergencies>

[13] Conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peace building:

tools for peace and conflict impact assessment p.7

[http://toolkit.ineesite.org/toolkit/INEEcms/uploads/1151/1\\_APFO\\_CECORE\\_CHA.pdf](http://toolkit.ineesite.org/toolkit/INEEcms/uploads/1151/1_APFO_CECORE_CHA.pdf)

[14] Lecture by Gareth Evans, President of International Crisis Group and former Australian Foreign Minister, Canadian Institute of International Affairs: *Rebuilding*



*Societies in Crisis: Before and After War*: 8 Oct 2003. 75th Anniversary Lecture Series, Toronto

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/speeches/2003/rebuilding-societies-in-crisis-before-and-after-war.aspx>



ETHIOPIA

## The recent attack in Gambela and its implications for humanitarian operations

By Eyob Asfaw Gemechu

The sudden attack by a group of raiders from South Sudan on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, 2016 which claimed 208 Ethiopian Nuer lives and 108 children abducted, helps one to revisit the recurrent 'conflict induced humanitarian crisis' in the Gambela region of Ethiopia.<sup>[1]</sup> The raiders were widely alleged in media accounts to have been mainly Murle with a few attackers understood to be Dinka.<sup>[2]</sup> The attack is a conclusive reminder that the humanitarian crisis in Gambela is closely intertwined with the peace-building process in South Sudan which was revitalized by the August 2015 agreement political agreement between Salva Kiir and Riek Machar. To be more precise the conflict in South Sudan and the ultimate outcomes of the peace process have close bearing on the protracted humanitarian crisis in Gambela region.

Before April 15, 2016 the Ethiopian government's focus has largely been on the intermittent Nuer vs. Anuak conflict in Gambela. Hence, the government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), has not it seems conceived of the intermittent raids across the border as an 'existential threat'.<sup>[3]</sup> These raids have tended to be interpreted as cattle raids and revenge attacks widespread in pastoralist and agro-pastoralist areas. It is the scale of the current attack and the horrendous losses it inflicted that drew widespread attention and calls for action. Conventional wisdom has always viewed Gambela as conflict prone but never as under threat from cross border attacks. In hindsight, this may seem surprising as Gambela has not been completely unaffected by the conflict dynamics in neighbouring South Sudan. In his historical study, Regassa Bayissa clearly shows the linkages between the decades long trafficking in SALWS (Small Arms and Light Weapons) from South Sudan into Gambela and the internecine local level conflicts in Gambela. Moreover, the refugee camps in Gambela have also functioned as an epicentre for several conflicts in Gambela, whose actors transcend international borders.<sup>[4]</sup>

Interestingly, the Murle constitute an insignificant portion among South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia, barely 0.04 %, which partly explains why the Murle were not a significant issue of concern, needful of Ethiopian policy response, when their numbers and proportion amongst the refugee population compel far less attention than the Dinka (5.87%), Nuer (57%) and Anuak (35.7%) who constitute a bigger proportion of the refugee population.<sup>[5]</sup> The attack also induced its own humanitarian crisis as reportedly an estimated 20,000 people have been internally displaced since the attack.<sup>[6]</sup>

### **Preliminary assessment of the cause and responses to Gambela attack**

The Ethiopian government, South Sudan authorities and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) appeared to be at a loss on how to deal with what occurred. However, it is clear that this inaction could conceivably exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in the region. In his official address in the aftermath of the attack, Prime Minister

Hailemariam Desalegn, denounced the attack, and interpreted the attack as apolitical and mainly driven by 'primitive' cultural customs.<sup>[2]</sup> The response can be problematized in so far as it delves into the stereotyping of certain peoples as 'primitive' which raises uncomfortable historical echoes.<sup>[3]</sup>

The recent attack in Gambela is inseparable from the political dynamics across the border in South Sudan and more recent unravelling of the political settlement arrived at between the SSDM-A (South Sudan Democratic Movement-A Cobra Faction) led by David Yau Yau and the SPLM (Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement) led Government of the Republic of South Sudan, in May, 2014. The agreement led to the creation of the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA), a development that had been at the core of the demands raised by the SSDM-A and the communities that it drew support from (mainly sections of the Murle but not limited to the Murle) during the conflict.<sup>[4]</sup> The agreement was hailed as a success but its drawn out implementation and the issue of the integration of the fighters of the SSDM-A Cobra Faction into the regular army, were clouds on the horizon that observers should have paid closer attention to.

The decision to territorially restructure South Sudan from the previous 10 states to 28 states has led to the replacement of the GPAA with Boma state and the ascendancy of Baba Medan (political figure long aligned with SPLM) at the expense of David Yau Yau. These political shifts have led to clashes and renewed insecurity in the region of South Sudan adjoining the Gambela region of Ethiopia.<sup>[5]</sup> The status of security forces that are in 'limbo' and the possibility that these forces may engage in criminal activity for profit and/or survival also may explain phenomenon such as the recent attack in Gambela.<sup>[6]</sup>

Prior to and in the aftermath of the attack the Ethiopian premier urged the South Sudanese government to securitize the bordering area. Similarly some of the Ethiopian opposition, albeit not all of them, have held the government of South Sudan accountable for the recent attack. The fragility of the state and government in South Sudan coupled with the civil war in South Sudan and the defunct peace agreements, until August 2015, are a clear indication that the South Sudan government is a long way from exercising a reasonable degree of control over its borders with neighbouring states.

The Ethiopian government was a key mediator in trying to devise a peace agreement in the Sudanese civil war driven by the decades spanning Gambela crisis based upon the trans-national ethnic identity of the Nuer population in South Sudan and the Gambela Region of Ethiopia and their political quest for power and representation in in South Sudan and the Gambella region of Ethiopia.<sup>[7]</sup> The efforts of the Ethiopian government to resolve the crisis in South Sudan are also driven by the burden of the humanitarian crisis in Gambela due to the presence of the South Sudanese refugees. Gambela shelters more than 270,000 South Sudanese refugees, 221,000 of whom arrived since the inception of the civil war.<sup>[8]</sup>

### **The fiasco of South Sudan peace-building vis-a vis disarmament& its implication for humanitarian intervention in Gambella**

Apparently, one alleged grievance at the local level in Gambela against the government

centres on the disarmament of civilians in Gambela, which some allege left the victims of the attack unprotected.<sup>[54]</sup> The rationale for disarmament is clear enough since Ethiopia has domesticated the Bamako Protocol since April 2003, which commits the government to disarm civilians and non-state actors. The Weberian principle of state monopoly of the legitimate means of violence is another pressing argument for disarmament of non-state actors which is rendered even more pressing in the current global and regional context defined by civil war, terrorism and violent extremism.<sup>[55]</sup>

The securitization of the border should not jeopardise humanitarian responsibility. In other words, the attack should not create a detrimental environment for the operation of various refugee camps in Gambela, run by the United Nation's Higher Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR). According to one report from a Sudanese newspaper, in the immediate aftermath of the attack, local authorities supposedly carried out a search for perpetrators of the attacks in adjacent refugee camps.<sup>[56]</sup> Historically, refugee camps and refugees in Gambela have on occasion been targeted in revenge attacks by members of local communities. It is also within the realms of possibility that incidents such as the Gambela attack may make conditions difficult for refugees already in refugee camps or those who might seek refuge in the future.

The attack in Gambela demonstrates the correlation between peace-building in adjoining regions of South Sudan and its spill-over effects and potential impact on the humanitarian crisis in the Gambela region of Ethiopia. Humanitarian interventions cannot unfold in isolation from peace-building and a coherent 'disarmament project' in the region. In other words, this article argues that Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) program, peace-building in South Sudan, inclusive local governance and humanitarian intervention throughout the region should be integrated.

### **Policy recommendations**

The on-going political settlement in South Sudan should respond to the local political grievances in regions adjoining Gambela in South Sudan. Regional actors such as the IGAD should not overlook the potential spill-over effects of local level political and security dynamics. Similarly, the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), which was tasked by IGAD to follow up on the implementation of the August 2015 peace agreement, should take note of this matter.

On the other hand the South Sudan's DDR project, as a part and parcel of the on-going peace-building initiative, should be implemented in a concerted manner with the Ethiopian governments program of disarming non-state actors in Gambela. Other humanitarian actors, such as UNHCR, should not shy away from actively involving in the disarmament program of the region.

**Eyob Asfaw Gemechu** is a lecturer, at Addis Ababa University, also serving as community services expert at the office of Vice President for Research & Technology Transfer of the University. His areas of interest includes cultural diversity, identity, governance, advocacy and peace. He may be reached at [eyob.asfaw@aau.edu.et](mailto:eyob.asfaw@aau.edu.et)

## References

- <sup>[1]</sup> The New York Times. 2016. 'Deadly Ethnic Strife Convulses Ethiopia-South Sudan Border'. 25APRIL 2016 in <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/26/world/africa/ethiopia-south-sudan-nuer-highlander.html?smid=tw-share&r=0>
- <sup>[2]</sup> 'Death Toll Rises to 182 in Gambela Attack', Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2016, <http://www.ebc.et/web/ennews/-/death-toll-rises-to-208-in-gambella-attack>, see also, 'East Africa: Gambella Attack Exposes Ethnic Tensions Between Ethiopia, South Sudan', allAfrica.com, 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2016, 'http://allafrica.com/stories/201604221005.html
- <sup>[3]</sup> Imperatively it is a sophisticated policy of national security architecture, that places 'existential threats' across the glossary , policy and action of a state. Notably, the USA's National Security Agency (NSA) is prone to frequent usage of the term 'existential threat' as a premise for military and security strategy of the country .( <http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/obama-isis-theyre-not-existential-threat-us> )
- <sup>[4]</sup> Bayissa , Regassa . 2010. 'War and peace in the Sudan and its Impact on Ethiopia: The Case of Gambella 1955-2008'. Addis Ababa University Press.
- <sup>[5]</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>[6]</sup> Addis Admas Newspaper. 23April 2016 . <http://www.addisadmassnews.com/images/Issue-849.pdf> (Amharic Weekly Newspaper)
- <sup>[7]</sup> <http://www.ebc.et/web/news/-/2-17-20-21>
- <sup>[8]</sup> Kebede, Messay. 2004, ' Africa's Quest for A Philosophy of Decolonization', Value Inquiry Book Series, Vol. 153, New York.
- <sup>[9]</sup> Todisco, Claudio. March 2015. 'Real but Fragile: The Greater Pibor Administrative Area' . Small Arms Survey. Geneva. Pgs 24-32.
- <sup>[10]</sup> 'Baba Medan blamed for looting of Pibor town', 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2016, Radio Tamazuj, <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/article/baba-medan-blamed-looting-pibor-town>, see also, 'South Sudan's Boma state violence displaces hundreds', 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2016, Sudan Tribune, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article58102>
- <sup>[11]</sup> De Waal, Alex. March 2016. 'A Political Marketplace Analysis of South Sudan's Peace', Occasional Paper. World Peace Foundation: Justice and Security Research Foundation. Pgs 6-7.
- <sup>[12]</sup> Mesfin, Berouk. June 2015. The Regionalization of South Sudanese Crisis, in *East African Report Issue 4. Institute of Security Studies*.
- <sup>[13]</sup> Sudan Tribune. 2008. Dozens of S. Sudanese refugees arrested in Ethiopia. 27 April 2008. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article58792>.

<sup>[4]</sup> Addis Admas Newspaper, 23 April 2016 ,  
<http://www.addisadmassnews.com/images/Issue-849.pdf> (Amharic Weekly Newspaper).

<sup>[5]</sup> Freeman, Laura. 2015. 'The African warlord revisited' . in *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 26:5, 790-810, DOI: 10.1080/09592318.2015.1072318.

<sup>[6]</sup> 'Dozens of South Sudanese Refugees arrested in Ethiopia', Sudan Tribune, 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2016, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article58792>



