

STRATEGIES TO PREVENT CONFLICTS BEFORE THEY OCCUR

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Background

Although, literature has it that armed conflicts have reduced globally, their persistence remains the most difficult challenge the world has to deal with in modern times. While wars were never intended to be friendly leading the international community to devise measures of protecting the civilians, including children, the type of the armed conflicts that emerged post the World War II are of unique nature , where it is not the states that turn against each other, but groups within a state turn against each other. Under such a situation, it is obvious that international instruments and even developed tools to be used during the conflicts to protect children, may not be effective.

The so called intrastate armed conflicts have also generated situations that have turned lethal, where the discontented groups, using religion or even poverty, have generated violent conflicts and often turned on innocent populations to communicate their discontent. These groups range from Boko Haram, Al Shabaab and now ISIS/ISIL (the conventional militia groups). Thus, currently one gets conventional armed conflicts blended with non-conventional ones, subjecting the people in countries they occur in to simply put, sufferings never seen before as has happened or is happening in countries such as Central African Republic (CAR), Syria, Yemen, Libya, among others. This situation is made worse by the reality that these violent conflicts nowadays take too long as in the Congo, Syria, Somalia and even recur as in South Sudan and Burundi. This scenario is different from the past, where wars were fought and won and countries went into reconstruction. A good example, is the World War II, where after the war ended, United Nations was created in 1945, followed with a Marshall plan in 1948 to deal with the aftermath of the war in Western Europe.^{1 2}

However, with conflicts within states themselves, the situation is rather complex as effective intervention to deal with the devastating effects, as well as, their prevention becomes a real challenge, since the states themselves are also protected by international conventions, where states are not supposed to be interfered with, as they are considered to be sovereign. A good case is Burundi, where the state has refused

¹ <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-united-nations-is-born>.

² Michael J. Hogan (1997): Blueprint for Recovery, P 1 – 15.

external intervention to send peace keeping soldiers in the country, forcing the AU to rescind their earlier decision.³

The Current Situation of Armed Conflicts and the Responses

Although, the number of states involved in internal conflicts has reduced, according to the International Institute for Security Studies (IISS) study, the numbers of deaths have increased. According to London based ISSS (IISS), the situation of armed conflict is reflected in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Situation of Armed Conflict (2008 – 2014)

Year	No. of Armed Conflicts	Deaths
2008	63	56,000
2010	55	49,000
2012	51	110,000
2014	42	180,000

Source: IISS Armed Conflict Survey, 2015

Thus, although by 2014 only 42 conflicts were recorded, deaths emanating from conflicts have actually more than tripled since 2008. Between 1990 and 1999 there were 118 armed conflicts worldwide, involving some 80 states, which led to some 6 million deaths. Ten (10) of them were inter-state conflicts, while 100 were internal conflicts and the remaining were wars of independence.

In 2013, the number of displaced persons exceeded 50 million and civilians continue to pay the price of conflicts. This is much more considering that within the intra-state conflicts, one gets non-state conflicts, ranging from extremist factions, urban gangs, drug traffickers to vigilante groups. Efforts to stifle these groups have yielded minimal results as reflected in literature yet they are described as deadly and outnumber state based conflicts (Human Security Report, 2013).

The impact of armed conflict and other forms of violence are, overwhelmingly wanting, to say the least. The destruction of human beings, which are reflected in deaths, injuries and displacements, as well as, the destruction of infrastructure, denying people services and subjecting children and families to hunger and emotional trauma are

³ www.ft.com>World: African Union pulls back from Burundi peace keeping mission. January 31, 2016.

occurrences that can be prevented before conflicts occur. Children get separated from their families exposing them to abductions to join armed conflicts as soldiers and sexual exploitation.

According to World Bank estimates, some 1.2 billion people of the world's population are affected by some form of violence or insecurity and some 60 million people displaced globally.⁴ This once more demonstrates the magnitude of the problem. Their consequences are as devastating as their magnitude, where recorded deaths of children are into millions and the displacement populations are into hundreds of millions. The impact of these violent conflicts is not contained in the affected countries only, but the spill over to other states is well documented. When they occur other parties have to come in to deal with the damage in terms of sending the military to stop the violence or the warring parties, keep peace, provide services, such as shelter, food, education, health to the affected populations, whether within or outside the affected states.

It is well accepted that responding and dealing with armed conflicts, including terrorism is an expensive affair. According to reports, the international community in 1990s spent US\$200 billion on 7 major interventions to contain conflicts in Bosnia Herzegovina, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, Persia, Gulf, Cambodia and El Salvador. The Gross domestic product (GDP) of these countries remained at 30% in 1997, the lowest before the conflicts started in 1974. In countries, such as Burundi food production dropped to 17% when their first conflict occurred (Carnegie Commission, 1998). Burundi is almost having a second round of conflicts after the costly interventions, mainly spearheaded by the international community.

Somalia has been without a stable government since 1991. However, efforts, to bring peace and strengthen the establishment of a stable government has depended on European Union African Peace Facility to fund AMISOM since 2007 to 2015, where some €1.1 billion has been provided. From 2016, the EU has reduced the funding by 20% asking the African Union (AU) to source for funding from other groups. AMISOM requires US\$300 million a month to keep the peace mission composed of 22,000 soldiers in Somalia. This is colossal amount of money that can be used to enable children have access to education and health services if different approaches are used to keep peace in Somalia. This is but one country, where huge sums of money are being used to keep military groups who either kill or get killed in the name of peace keeping (Sunday Nation February 21, 2016).

⁴ www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragility-conflict-violence/overview

Impact of Violent Conflicts on Populations, including Children

This is well documented, ranging from human destruction through death or injuries and trauma that destabilize the survivors long beyond the conflicts. In fact, one can argue that these violent conflicts, that nowadays take too long, are responsible for some of the so called non-state conflicts, where groups such as, Al Shabaab, Boko Haram and others, including' ISIS/L can be considered products of armed conflicts. These groups are emerging, where there have been some brutal conflicts in history of armed conflicts. This is much so, because, the nature of armed conflict have been changing, where civilians have become the targets and with the intention to eliminate certain groups. The social and psychological impact of conflicts, the affected communities undergo, is hardly addressed after the conflicts, assuming that all will be well. The statement by the Chairperson of ANPPCAN Somalia illustrates the point, "What the world does not know is that all of us in Somalia need healing. We are emotionally finished." When asked further what he meant, the answer was, "we need psychological support through counseling than immunizations." The Chairperson, with public health background went on narrating the problems he had seen in many communities where neighbours turning against each other and many cases of sexual abuse of children, a thing he never saw before the conflict.

The destruction of the infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, shelters, transportation among others, is evident and well documented and is a huge loss to affected countries. In fact, the destruction simply undermines development, in terms of human resource, socio-economic and political development. To repair the damage of post conflicts, is very costly and once more, the burden often becomes that of the international community. The destruction becomes even more challenging in states from low income groups, according to World Bank and UNDP, considering that these states, by and large, depend on donations from international communities to begin with.

Armed conflicts have been observed to increase risk behavior and risk networks that get involved in illicit activities, such as, smuggling of goods, human trafficking, as well as, trafficking of drugs, sexual abuse, and exploitation. They subject children to worst forms of child labour and force youth into committing atrocities, which they would not have done in normal circumstances. We should not be surprised if non-state violent conflicts emerge without any clear purpose or camouflaged as religion, as well as, neighbours turning against each other.

One of the Kenyan soldiers sent to keep peace or contain the situation in Somalia recently said, "We were sent to Somalia to fight." This is when many Kenyan soldiers were killed in Somalia, meaning that soldiers are also at high risk of losing their lives. Many get killed and although considered heroes by the states, their families face huge losses, since they are also the bread winners of their families. These soldiers are also

separated from their families or partners and are more likely to be involved in risky behavior, such as, sexual exploitation leading risks of getting STIs and rapes that have been reported in some countries. Similarly, children are left without fathers for a long period and this may have long term effect on them. All this simply points to the fact that armed conflict, or violent conflicts are truly costly from family to social and economic levels.

Underlying Factors Associated with Violent Conflicts

There is agreement in the literature that violent conflicts do not just happen. Often there have been early warnings of pending conflicts, especially in the intrastate conflicts. Unfortunately, these factors seem to be multifaceted, ranging from structural, socio-economic, environmental to exclusion, repressive political systems and leadership. The many factors may explain why preventing conflicts remain a challenge, as economics of doing so remains colossal and, at times, the parties involved also hold others at ransom, claiming that those are internal matters.

Literature on conflicts in Africa tend to associate conflicts with factors, such as, high levels of poverty, failed political institutions, low levels of education, economic dependence on scarce natural resources, strong ethnic affiliations, which can be used positively to prevent conflicts or negatively to generate them.

However, there is strong agreement in literature that there are often warning signs, before conflicts occur, as well illustrated by Human Development Reports produced yearly by UNDP. All these reports are available Online and we selected the UNDP report of 2015, which indicated Human Development Index (HDI) of some countries. For example, the HDI value of Central African Republic (CAR) for 2014 was at 0.350, putting this country in the low Human Development Index and a ranking of 187 out of 188 countries. Between 1980 and 2014 the CAR HDI value increased from 0.302 – 0.350, an increase of 15.9% or average annual increase of 0.44%. Table 2 illustrates the point of under-development of Central African Republic and Burundi, a demonstration that shows what might have led to violent conflicts that have been witnessed in both countries. (See page 6).

The authors of this article looked at the UNDP reports on Human Development from 2002 to 2015 and it is apparent that conflicts of whatever form is very much related to how countries are performing and many of the countries ranked low on HDI have experienced or are going through violent conflicts.⁵

⁵ UNDP Human Development Reports 2002 - 2015

Table 2: Human Development Index Trends in Central African Republic (CAR) and Burundi from 1980 to 2014

Year	Life Expectancy at Birth		Expected Year of Schooling		Mean Years of Schooling		GNI Per capita		HDI Value	
	CAR	BURUNDI	CAR	BURUNDI	CAR	BURUNDI	CAR	BURUNDI	CAR	BURUNDI
1980	48.9	47.3	5.1	1.8	1.0	1.1	1024	922	0.302	0.230
1985	49.9	48.8	5.7	3.3	1.5	1.3	944	993	0.320	0.270
1990	49.0	48.0	5.2	4.4	2.1	1.4	856	997	0.314	0.295
1995	46.9	48.9	4.6	4.6	2.1	1.6	835	814	0.303	0.295
2000	44.6	51.5	5.4	4.5	2.9	1.8	836	735	0.310	0.301
2005	44.8	52.7	6.1	6.0	3.3	2.3	847	681	0.325	0.328
2010	47.7	54.8	7.0	10.1	9.2	2.7	905	721	0.362	0.390
2011	48.4	55.3	7.2	10.1	4.2	2.7	917	726	0.368	0.392
2012	49.1	55.8	7.2	10.1	4.2	2.7	937	731	0.373	0.395
2013	49.9	56.3	7.2	10.1	4.2	2.7	586	747	0.348	0.397
2014	50.7	56.7	7.2	10.1	4.2	2.7	581	758	0.350	0.400

Source: hdr.undp.org/sites or UNDP Human Development Report 2015.

From Table 2 one can see that CAR was actually sitting on a time bomb! The situation is not different about Burundi, where her HDI value between 1980 and 2012 increased from 0.217 to 0.355, an increase of 64%, an annual average increase of 1.6% and was ranked 177 out of 187 countries in the same year. In the UNDP HDI Report of 2011 Burundi was ranked 185 out of 187. However, these HDI values changed when data on Burundi was calculated between 1980 to 2014 as indicated in Table 2. Thus, the information on these HDI values can be used much earlier to prevent conflicts. In fact, if countries pay attention to reports emanating from UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO, UNDP, World Bank and WHO, countries could be directed to areas of concern and prioritize those areas with their development efforts.

The problem here is, when one of those areas has been identified, who becomes the driver and the reasons for doing so to effectively deal with the situation before eruption? Often, states where conflicts occur, have the tendency to ignore the signs and wait for the international community, such as, the UN to come up with development goals. Often this process uses consultants and is supposed to be participatory. However, the goals become global goals, which are supposed to be implemented by governments of UN member states. It is difficult for countries which are already performing poorly according to Human Development Indicators to pick up these international goals and domesticate them.

The coordination between these great UN agencies and the Security Council, especially its departments is not apparent in the literature. One gets UNICEF providing information on armed conflict and children, as well as, actively involved in emergency situations. But the other UN organs that produce credible data on how countries are performing on ground are not clear. The information these agencies provide is truly vital to prevent conflicts before they happen.

Can Conflicts of Whatever Form Be Prevented?

There are efforts being directed to conflict prevention, spearheaded by the UN, through its agencies created mainly to deal with conflicts as they occur or prevent them. The UN Security Council that was created after World War II is still actively addressing violent conflicts to ensure that they are contained and prevented. Thus, one gets peacemaking, peace building and peace keeping groups. In fact under the UN arrangement, the UN agencies bear the burden of all the violent conflicts in the world, according to what is available in the literature. The UN Security Council gets all the reports on yearly basis regarding armed conflict and how populations are affected through envoys appointed by the UN Secretary General. It sends special missions to negotiate with parties in the countries with conflicts and organizes to send military to intervene or to simply bring and keep peace in the affected states. The UN organizes

most groups responding to conflicts and mobilizes resources through member states to deal with conflicts globally. Major studies are undertaken by UN agencies and there is huge data on violent conflicts globally.

There are also regional and national arrangements to work closely with the UN Headquarters, such as, Peace and Security Council at the African Union and similar councils in Asia and other places. Together with these groups, one gets civil society organizations, such as, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. There are also institutes both in Europe, America, Asia and Africa undertaking studies and actually monitoring conflicts of all sorts and their publications are impressive, providing both historical and current data on trends of conflicts globally. These efforts are providing vital information to inform the public on the efforts many institutions and organizations are making to deal with conflicts or prevent them. Similarly, there are also awareness raising efforts targeting affected communities to make them cope with conflicts, as well as, prevent them, spearheaded by groups such as Global Partnership for Prevention of Armed Conflicts. Thus, the efforts have contributed to the decline of armed conflicts tremendously (IISS 2015).

While, a lot is being done to respond to armed conflict when they occur, the same is not true with prevention, a situation that has been acknowledged by UN agencies dealing with conflicts. This is attributed to key factors, such as, lack of resources since prevention itself is costly, as the majority of states likely to experience conflicts are actually underdeveloped mainly, due to many years of neglect of human development and more money is required. Above all, many countries with risk factors for conflicts, consider external interventions as an interference with internal matters, bringing issues such as sovereignty of states. Hence, there are actually little efforts towards dealing with early warning factors. These difficulties were identified by Carnegie Commission in 1997, leading to their publication of Preventing Deadly Conflicts in 1998, a book worth reading.

However, given the multiple factors that cause conflicts, there is no one approach to prevent conflicts. Thus, leading to the recommendation by some authors that ,in order to prevent conflicts proper diagnosis is needed to develop appropriate tools to deal with the identified problems. These groups recommend targeted studies and developing indicators that form priority for action. This includes, identifying the type of environment, schools, health facilities, houses people live in, population structure, whether made of more youth, as is the case in sub-Saharan Africa, the non-formal nature of business in these countries, the state of roads or general infrastructure. All these should be collated and form part of actions to be taken in order to prevent conflicts when the information has been compiled and critical issues to be addressed identified. Thus, proper diagnosis has to be made to respond appropriately and expect results. Here strategies, such as awareness raising, advocacy, peace building, among others, become appropriate. But given the magnitude of the problem, one is inclined to

recommend the creation of the second Marshall Plan to deal with intra state violent conflicts.⁶

The creation of the second Marshall Plan becomes necessary if one looks at the types of conflicts, where one gets the conventional armed conflicts, which are actually civil wars. Often with two or several opposing factions, that is the regime running the government and the opposition. But without this scenario, one gets other groups better known as terrorist groups. All these groups fight for causes within a country and may go further and invite outside groups to come and join them. This is a mouthful for a country to handle and the sufferers end up to be the civilians, where many children and youth get killed and those left alive, traumatized for life. This situation calls for a well coordinated effort with a system that is convinced that armed conflicts can be prevented and can be contained immediately they happened and prepare for this.

The situation in Syria, South Sudan, DRC and others calls for such a set up whose goal is simply to deal with intrastate conflicts of modern times and whose causes are well documented.

There are those who advocate that once some conflicts have been experienced, force should be used like sending armed forces. But this is noted by a number of authors that it may not be effective, as it is not, only costly, but the majority of them are also internal struggles and states affected refuse to cooperate, for example, Burundi recently refused to welcome armed forces from the AU to keep peace. The use of diplomacy, which is often applied to prevent conflicts, also has limitations, as one needs co-operation of warring parties. However, what is important to note is that by the time diplomacy is being initiated, different factions are already charged to fight on ground and often there have been deaths. Sending armed forces to calm the situation may not work as the same groups send different messages as is the situation with AMISOM Forces in Somalia, where the Kenya Defence Force (KDF) seems to tell the public that they went to Somalia to fight and are vocal of the number of Al Shabaab members they have killed than how they are keeping peace. Thus, one gets blurred mandates or objectives of the armed forces sent to keep peace or to fight the terrorists.

It has also been observed that the multilateral setting and multidisciplinary nature of the efforts to respond to conflicts also create problems of coordination of roles, as many groups are involved. At times there is competition between international, regional and national groups, all aiming at containing or preventing conflicts. The case of Somalia gives a good example. AMISOM Forces went into Somalia to keep peace. The Kenyan Defence Forces is saying they went to fight the terrorists yet KDF is part of AMISOM. On 15 January, 2016 a big number of soldiers in KDF were killed at El Adde by Al-Shabaab. The numbers of soldiers who died or kidnapped have not been revealed

⁶ Blue Print for Recovery by Michael J. Hogan, 1997.

either by the AU or by the Government of Kenya (GOK). In February, 2010 some 53 members of Al-Shabaab were killed, and KDF, not AMISOM claimed responsibility, KDF is purportedly supposed to be part of AMISOM.⁷ The obvious lack of coordination mars the good intention of sending armed forces as the goals are not clear. It simply confirms that military intervention seems to increase deaths among the civilians and the armed forces themselves. The deaths also include Humanitarian workers, the Media and other groups.⁸

However, there is glaring evidence that armed conflict and other forms of conflicts do not just happen as there are often early warnings. The identified factors include; structural, socio-economic, cultural, environmental, exclusion, repressive political systems and leadership. In Africa, in particular, conflicts are associated with high levels of poverty, failed political institutions, low levels of education, widespread insecurity, economic deterioration and dependence on scarce natural resources and ethnic affiliations. The reality is that these are factors that do not have any affinity with peace building or peace keeping.⁹ These are factors that need to be aggressively addressed from UN to regional and national groupings, set to deal with violent conflict. These should make key components of Magna Charter or UN Charter to prevent violent conflicts globally.

According to Kofi Annan conflict prevention is primarily the role of the governments, as it is one of the primary obligations of the UN member states set forth in the UN Charter. Thus, primary responsibility rests with governments, as well as, other organizations playing major role. The main role of the UN and the international community as reflected by Annan, is to support national efforts and assist in the national capacities. The preventive measures should be geared to address deep rooted socio-economic cultural, environmental, institutional and other structural causes. A comprehensive approach that, includes, short and long term political, diplomatic, humanitarian, human rights, developmental, institutional and other measures are recommended to be undertaken by international, regional and national actors. Also identified as important, is early engagement to enable constructive dialogue to address actual grievances (Kofi Annan). Annan's list is a mouthful to say the least and requires plenty of resources at all the levels.

The strategies that emerge from the literature are:

- ✓ Operational prevention, which is short term. The measures are directed to the identified immediate crisis.

⁷ www.standardmedia.co.ke

⁸ www.stanleyfoundation.org/publication

⁹ www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-number-of-war-inflicted-casualties-in-syria.html.

- ✓ Structural prevention, which is long term to ensure that crises do not arise and if they do, they do not recur.

There is agreement that less should be spent on military, but more expenditure should be on poverty reduction, reducing structural risks, such as disparities – inequalities or practices that enhance discrimination, enforcement and administration of justice, equitable representation in the institutions. The challenge faced by these approaches is that often responding to the crisis seems to be more realistic and practical and hence attracts more resources and also takes long. The responses are always too late to allow anything in terms of prevention.

According, to Human Development Report of 2002, most 20 poorest countries in the world had or continually experience violent conflicts. This is supported by the HDI Reports produced by UNDP on yearly basis up to 2015. These countries perform poorly in the provision of basic services, such as, education, health, shelter, food and security. They generate populations, which are young, unemployed and with low levels of education, many of their populations live in squalor, often in urban slum communities and economic activities remain informal since 1970s to date. Many still live in rural areas, which by and large are still under developed.

Looking at the HDI values of countries that have experienced internal conflicts in Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, South and Central America, there seems to be correlation between conflicts and retarded or stagnant human development. In the majority of countries with armed conflicts or other forms of conflicts, including, terrorism, their HDI have been rated low since 1980 – 2014 (UNDP Trends in Human Development 2015). These countries are not only ranked low under HDI, but both the expected and mean years of schooling are low. Similarly, unemployment is reported to be high. They also have issues of inequality. All this, confirms many of the underlying factors that generate conflicts in the majority of countries experiencing internal violent conflicts.

The UNDP Human Development reports showing trends of Human development indexes in these countries are supported by other reports emanating from UN outfits, such as, UNESCO. According to UNESCO report of 2014, these are countries, where children enrolled in school cannot even read after reaching grade six, leading to recommendation of providing affordable and quality education to children in these countries. According to WHO, these are countries with high infant mortality rates, as well as, deaths of under 5s and mothers, while giving birth. These are countries with diehard cultural practices, such as cattle rustling, where neighbours kill each other, simply because boundaries have been crossed to feed animals or look for water. These are countries, where to reach certain sections of the country, when there is a problem, helicopters have to be hired expensively to reach destinations, because roads do not exist. All this predisposes populations to situations that precipitate violent conflicts, as

there are groups that are totally left behind in efforts of development. According to ILO, most of these countries have many children who are out of school operating as child labourers or roaming the streets begging or engaged in all sorts of illegal activities. These countries also have a lot of youth who are not well engaged and are likely to be negatively used by being radicalized or recruited into gangs or armed conflicts.

The situation seems gloomy if one reads reports emanating from international groups. However, it is a situation that can be effectively prevented, if efforts are coordinated. First, it does not really serve a purpose when reports are produced every year almost repeating the same things with hardly any action. It becomes a ritual. These reports should disturb those involved to change strategies. For example, the pictures portrayed by the media for a long time and reports being produced by different groups about Burundi and even CAR or South Sudan should have made the actors both at international, regional and national levels, understand that development was not taking place as should be and that the politicians as usual, take opportunity of chaos to accomplish their ambitions and in fact turn populations against each other.

The development demands from the international community are totally not realistic to poverty stricken countries. For example, the world (thanks to UN) has come up with 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which are global in nature, as demonstrated below.

Table 3: 17 Sustainable Development Goals

No Poverty	Affordable and Clean Energy
Zero Hunger	Decent Work and Economic Development
Good Health and Wellbeing	Industrial Innovation and Infrastructure
Quality Education	Reduced Inequalities
Gender Equality	Sustainable Cities and Communities
Clean Water and Sanitation	Climate Action
Responsible Consumption and Production	Life on Land
Life below Water	Partnerships for the Goals
Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	

Source: www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment

These were adopted on 25th September, 2015 to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years. To achieve these goals everyone needs to do their part; governments, the private sector, civil society organizations and the people alike. It is very difficult to appreciate or relate to these global efforts after reading the UNDP reports on Human Development since 2002. It becomes even more challenging after reading reports

generated by UN agencies, which they ably produce on yearly basis how countries are performing. As such, producing such global goals, where poverty is supposed to disappear within 15 years for UN member states, one truly wonders which states are being targeted. Obviously the many countries of the world are not at the same level and it is not going to be possible for already retarded economies, represented by a large number of countries to meet the UN goals. These countries, most of which, are in sub-Saharan Africa, need targeted type of development based on identified key issues, well illustrated in the reports churned out yearly by UN agencies.

All this is being brought about, because there is enough evidence that violent conflicts tend to favour countries with low human development index values, which actually one needs to deal with, before one goes for sustainable development. Above all, many of the countries with low HDI already have their vision 2030 or 2010 Development plans, etc. As such, why not help these countries to effectively implement their national visions before adding other burdens of development, which also require money.

As one reads the reports of the interventions to contain or prevent conflicts, one fails to identify the real driver of some of these interventions. For example, the authors experience with efforts to eradicate child labour in Kenya, while reaching out to communities, where many children came from, according, to the study done, the real problem that emerged was the issue of development, but not child labour. The same was observed with an intervention in Nairobi slum communities, where the communities were targeted with a child protection project, but protecting children was not the issue of the communities, when the researcher went to the field. The priority issues for these targeted communities ranged from poor sanitation, household economy to security, among others. So it was improving the environment, roads, lights and engagement in economic activities that were issues to the people in the slum communities. Child protection ranked last as an issue for these communities. But the most challenging issue of all was the manner, in which, projects were identified both at national and community level with those that were funding them. These included almost all the donors names, except the government, leading the researchers to ask the government workers who were supposed to implement the project, where were the government projects.

Similarly, good practices were being identified by those supporting the projects year in year out without replicating or upscaling the projects in the targeted countries. The majority of projects being implemented, whether in child labour or primary health care, seemed to be pilot projects implemented by donors themselves, with the expectation that governments should take over after the pilot period.¹⁰ It was almost impossible to identify the role of the government. This also seems to be the case of armed conflicts,

¹⁰ CMI Report 2015: The Role of Advocacy against Child Labour p 19 – 24.

where governments in many conflict prone countries, wait for the intervention of the international community.

There seems to be confusion of the group to provide resources to either contain or prevent conflicts among the member states. Despite the reality that the International community bears the burden of providing resources to deal with crisis when conflicts occur, many member states of the UN, especially, those from developing countries consider this as a right as recently reflected at a meeting discussing the reduction of EU funding to AMISOM. Those participating at this meeting responded as if they were pushing the responsibility to the international community, which they expected to support their efforts of keeping AMISOM in Somalia. In fact, apart from some countries contributing troops, in the key discussions held both by the Ministers and the Heads of State and Government of the counties with troops in Somalia, there was hardly any mention where money to sustain the troops in Somalia will come from.¹¹ Some of the leaders attending were on record as being disappointed by the International community's failure to live up to its obligations and having forgotten that African Union is in Somalia on behalf of UN.¹² The UN Security Council is perceived as having primary mandate of promoting international peace and security. These sentiments simply confirms that the majority of leaders of the UN member states, especially from those countries with low HDI are truly not the drivers of all the efforts of containing or preventing conflict. This should be of concern to the UN Security Council and its agencies to review some of the strategies they are using.

In conclusion, although armed conflicts have reduced globally due to able and consistent efforts of the International community, other forms of non-conventional violent conflicts have emerged, which are difficult to deal with as their causes seem to be rather marred. The impact of these conflicts on populations, especially children and youth is huge and costly. The spill over beyond the affected states is well documented and colossal amount of resources are being drained on conflicts, which nowadays take too long. The situation has been made worse by many refugees that have been leaving in hordes from Syria, Yemen and Iraq heading to Europe.

The issue then is, can these conflicts be prevented before they occur? This is possible given the fact that causes of conflicts have been identified by many studies. These conflicts tend to favour countries, which appear to be retarded in all aspects of human development, whether in terms of education, economic, culture, social and health, as well as, political. These are countries with high rates of unemployment, especially among the youth and young adults and with sectors of populations, which are excluded from the mainstream of national development. This information is in abundance in

¹¹ Geeskafrica.com>Daily Security Brief

¹² www.president.go.ke./djibouti-declaration.

literature and if used to inform development of policies and programmes within states, violent conflicts can be effectively prevented before they occur.

The UNDP Human Development reports produced on yearly basis and other literature being produced by UN agencies such as UNICEF, ILO, WHO, UNESCO, among others should be taken seriously by the states already ranked low since 1980 on Human Development Index and the International community need to facilitate the process without being the actors as often is the case. The governments of these countries should lead the process to deal with the problems identified in these countries, whether related to governance, environment, infrastructure, inequality, education, among others. There is no way conflicts can be avoided with the glaring poor performance well demonstrated by UNDP reports on Human Development, year in year out.

It is also apparent that the burden of preventing conflicts is left to the international community through the UN. The UN has well established mechanisms of addressing violent conflicts globally. The UN Security Council, established after World War II, is still very much leading the process through its other organs, specifically created to deal with conflicts. The member states of the UN may need to determine if this noble body is still relevant to deal with civil wars, which take place within different groups in a state. It is very difficult for an independent observer to appreciate the intervention of Russia in current armed conflict in Syria. Even the intervention of what is going on in Burundi where both UN and the AU are involved and one wonders, who should Burundi listen to or deal with. This type of intervention raises issues of conflict of interest and partisanship leading to many civilian deaths, including children. The conflict in Syria has taken 5 years, yet, all the UNDP Human Development Reports clearly show Syria was not performing well on Human Development Index since 1980. This is a situation where violent conflict would have been prevented if the UN Security Council uses information provided by other organs of the UN.

Given the information presented above, the following are being recommended:

1. Governments, especially, in developing countries should take charge, lead and direct the implementation of policies and programmes that are target development oriented in their own countries. Globalizing development and changing goal posts, simply disrupt and retard developmental efforts.
2. Data generated by the UN agencies and Universities regarding HDI should be used to develop policies and programmes to target countries ranking low in these indicators. Coming up with global solutions, such as SDGs, camouflages the reality and misdirects the scarce resources as well as efforts.

3. Governments in developing states should generate resources to address early warning signs regarding conflicts and put emphasis in education and job creation.
4. Vested interests in the conflict and terrorism industry must be identified and dealt with, since some of the key groups that are at the forefront of the responses to contain conflicts, are also, the suppliers of arms for conflicts. This is an issue, which the UN Security Council should be addressing; and as it reviews itself to ascertain whether its composition is thwarting its noble efforts.

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