

HYBRID PEACEBUILDING APPROACHES IN AFRICA: HARNESSING COMPLEMENTARY PARALLELS

This fact sheet presents findings from the RESOLVE Network Policy Note "[*Hybrid Peacebuilding Approaches in Africa: Harnessing Complementary Parallels*](#)" by MaryAnne Iwara. By definition, local, grassroots peacebuilding knowledge and approaches are not a good basis for developing new, one-size-fits all "hybrid" peacebuilding models. The notion and orientation of peacebuilding as a stop-gap approach, mostly externally deployed once conflict—i.e., major, large-scale violence—has ended, can be adversarial to building on and supporting progressive, indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution. Therefore, peacebuilding must be viewed as a continuous practice that indigenous approaches of social solidarity and relationship-building can integrate into.

Key complementarities exist between local/indigenous and contemporary peacebuilding approaches and peacebuilders working in both traditions should prioritize identifying and building "hybrid" approaches that integrate local and indigenous knowledge and perspectives into existing best practices. The policy note seeks to foster public discussion on these complementarities and identifies parallels between the approaches that could be harnessed, improved upon, and applied to present-day hybrid conflict resolution and transformation approaches in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, it highlights several innovative and adaptive strategies that integrate traditional and western peacebuilding practices into hybrid models that emphasize the interfaces, interchanges, and fluidity between different peacebuilding practices, structures, values, identities, and actors.

For more, see: Iwara, MaryAnne. [*Hybrid Peacebuilding Approaches in Africa: Harnessing Complementary Parallels*](#). RESOLVE Network, 2021.

KEY QUESTIONS & DEBATES

All conflict situations are unique but have common cross-cutting factors relating to their emergence, dynamics, and end. Therefore, identified innovative and adaptive strategies can be used in assessing risks, estimating conflict probabilities, and predicting future conflict dynamics using scientific models and trends. Many times, these strategies are not present in traditional resolution practices.



"Liberal peace" is often built on external and short-term quick fixes deployed to restore sovereignty or normalcy rather than a long-term, sustainable outcome capable of transforming local structures into liberal democracies. Furthermore, advocates of liberal peace are sometimes perceived as foisting colonial and western dominance through imposition of counterproductive western values and social and political norms.



Traditional practices, on the other hand, have been applauded for combining the use of certain non-conventional mediums such as psycho-social and spiritual healing to resolve and transform violent conflicts. These spiritual and psycho-social practices are underestimated by Eurocentric perspectives that emphasize institutional over community-centered transformations.



Although the existence of traditional and local mechanisms and institutions has been threatened or partly replaced by liberal peacebuilding, an outright return to traditional approaches to conflict resolution is impracticable given the complex characteristics of contemporary conflict environments.

LESSONS LEARNED & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

While both approaches have mixed records of strengths and weaknesses, the commonalities between local and contemporary peacebuilding approaches offer opportunities and complementary prospects for enabling sustained peace processes.



Harness structures of African conflict prevention to engender justice, inclusiveness, & women's rights.

Serving as both classrooms and incubators, certain African conflict management mechanisms possess attributes and structures that are relevant for solving complex, localized, and contemporary conflicts. There is also the need for empowered learning, development, design, and adaptation of community building initiatives that respect human and gender rights and the rule of law, while allowing for local interrogation of the notion and conditions of peace and rights.



Provide capacity for a hybrid security governance architecture.

Historically, traditional community-based armed groups concerned with minimizing and eliminating conflicts have existed across most African societies. Given the advantage of these community-based armed groups in their embeddedness within the society, knowledge of local norms and culture, and legitimization by the state, they are well equipped to protect their communities and mobilize against terror or rebel groups. While concerns about community-based armed groups remain valid, plural security provision, if well-postulated, presents governments the opportunity to lay the foundation to transform community provisions while responding to changing threats.



Develop peace pedagogy through educational policies.

Educational policy stakeholders must ensure that peace and civic education curricula are reflective of deep, informed, and systematic theories that address structural violence and militarism and are driven by participatory learning and reflection. Reorientation towards locally rooted cultures of peace can foster individual, interpersonal, and intergroup transformation.

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