

# Youth at the Heart of Peace Work

Edited by Christiane Kayser and Flaubert Djateng



## Building Peace

Civil Peace Service (CPS) / BfdW –  
Mano River Region, Great Lakes of Africa  
and Cameroon



# Building Peace

**Brot für die Welt – Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (BfdW)**

Bread for the World – Protestant Development Service

**Financed by the BMZ** (Bundesministerium

für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit – German Federal  
Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)

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# Introduction

Building peace means contemplating a peaceful future, thinking about better ways for the peoples of a community to live together, initiating processes to address the sources of conflict, analysing past grievances and implementing actions for more stability and justice. Can we build the future without youth? This brochure addresses the role of African youth in peace work, the hurdles and sources of potential.

Young people very often find themselves in the centre of conflicts, either as desperate perpetrators of violence, as the pawns of power-hungry manipulators, or as members of an armed group as a means to make a living. We live in a context that promotes violence. The inequalities in society, the discriminations, tribalism, racism, fear and hostility towards certain groups are factors that threaten peace.

The CPS networks in Africa place particular emphasis on working with young people. You may already have read articles about peace work by and with young people in other publications in the “Building Peace” series.

What has impressed us most in the contributions to this publication are the courageous and creative initiatives and the central role played by artistic expression and culture, or, to be more precise, the multiplicity of cultures. The strengths and challenges of the multi-cultural aspect of the Civil Peace Service’s work are richly illustrated in the wide range of articles.

We are finishing this brochure at a time when the great Madiba, Nelson Mandela, has just left us, and Flaubert Djateng traces the path of this icon of constructive rebellion to (re)build a course for African youth. We have taken excerpts from a lecture by Dapo Oyewole on the challenges of peace and development work with and by young Africans. Christiane Kayser reflects on the hurdles, but also on the opportunities young people encounter when seeking their place in the globalised world of the 21st century. Excerpts from an interview with Cameroo-

nian academic Achille Mbembe on the future of Africa complete this part.

As always, we have concentrated on the concrete work experiences of the Civil Peace Service in the various African countries. This time we have contributions from DR Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Sierra Leone and Cameroon, from authors working within the scope of the programmes supported by Bread for the world, AGEH and Eirene. Desiree Lwambo, Jackson Batumike, Florian Nickel and Bela Bison present two fascinating cross-border experiences that facilitate the expression of young people and combat prejudice in the countries of the Great Lakes racked by hatred and exclusion. Silvia Stroh and Claus Schrowange share their adventures with the theatre as a tool in Cameroon and in the Great Lakes: they were able to thematise societal problems and undertake long-term awareness raising work. Experiences of cultural work with and for youth in Sierra Leone are at the core of Malick Sy Konaré's and Julia Krojer's articles on the Freetong Players youth clubs and the Konkoroma radio drama. Maurizio Guerazzi gives us a glimpse of the intertribal peace work of a group of young people in the region of Douala, while young Cameroonian Salif Mforain ponders forms of youth organisation and association such as school clubs as instruments of socialisation. Lastly, Agnes Sander, who remains involved in peace work in Germany after working for three years in Cameroon, shows how a film about young Cameroonians can change the perception of young Germans.

We would like to sincerely thank all the authors who agreed to share the lessons they have learnt and the knowledge they have gained through their work. We hope it may inspire the reader and that we will be able to continue the conversation between young and old, women and men, Africans of different countries and Europeans and Africans.

Much courage and energy for the future!

*Flaubert Djateng  
Christiane Kayser*

*Bafoussam, Berlin, December 2013*

# **Nelson Mandela, icon of constructive rebellion. What path can African youth follow today?**

*By Flaubert Djabateng\**

2013 came to an end with the departure of the hero of the struggle for the rights of all citizens, whether black, yellow or white, irrespective of their ethnic group, ... Madiba, the freedom fighter, has left us, the whole world pays tribute to him. He deserves it not just for his courage, the justice of the cause he defended, but also for the high esteem in which he held others, which was always typical of his course. He was not the only one to join the fight for the cause of Black citizens, unjustly bullied, savagely brutalised and very often relegated to a rank lower than human. Martin Luther King, James Baldwin, Malcom X, Rosa Parks, Miriam Makeba and many other heroes are known for their relentless combat against the human folly of racism. An analysis of Madiba's atypical path could show 21st century African youth the way.

Today, we are living in a world that is becoming increasingly global with each day that passes. On the one hand, the logic of trade and finance uses geopolitical and geostrategic positions to achieve its goals. There is a vast world market; the stakes are so high it gives the impression that the world's population and its leaders are mere instruments at the service of the powerful financial and economic lobbies that run the planet. When we observe the international stage a singularity emerges; apart from South Africa, the African nations, and more particularly those below the Sahara, are silent and are only visible when there is a

\* CSP mobile team for Africa, BfdW

disaster or barbaric acts which end in the deaths or displacement of thousands of people. Then there is African youth, the most numerous on the planet after China. This youth lives with a desperation that pushes it to migrate to Europe and a lethargy regarding opportunities and decision-making for its social integration and self-fulfilment. African youth has the privilege of being born on a continent where the land and soil are full of riches coveted by the rest of the world, a place where others, assisted by our own leaders, come and steal and no strategy is beneath them for achieving their ends. As a result, the black continent is also the one where poverty is clearly visible, and the young people, girls and boys, are its first victims.

The political processes underway in the sub-Saharan countries, the social climate, the visible and promoted values are not geared towards helping African youth to achieve its full potential. Rather, it is often stuck between serving politicians through fan clubs or making up the crowd at political meetings, or leaving the country and running the risk of dying in the desert or at sea. The various programmes directed at young people do not always benefit from the conditions of governance and political support necessary for conducting real change. The young people who try to fight their way out of the stalemate or rut are not given support, but on the contrary are often combated or cheated by crooked civil servants. Apart from emigration, nepotism and favouritism stand out as the only possible ways of emerging. A certain amount of apathy arises, a national frustration which plants the seeds of tribalism, with the risk of fostering fundamentalisms. Then we hear people exclaiming “how will we manage?”; they are overwhelmed and don’t know how to cope.

Nelson Mandela experienced a similar, or even worse situation. From a family of chiefs, he was a prince who received a first-rate education, he lived through a period of non liberty with no end in sight. In his time, both inside and outside his country, everything was implemented to separate what people called “races”, to make sure Black had no rights, like footstools to be used whenever and however needed. At a time when

some White people could burn down the house of a Black person, kill the head of the family, rape the wife and children, assassinate them, and have the law, justice, the police and the decision-makers on their side. But as soon as a Black person picked up a revolver to defend himself or organised a march to express his suffering, he was hunted down and punished.

Madiba lived through this unbearable situation, but he went beyond divisions and prejudice, he allied himself with other people committed to fight this injustice, Black people and White people together; he was hunted, beaten, banished, imprisoned many times and finally sentenced to life imprisonment. Then he came out of prison to run his country as the first Black Head of State of South Africa. Nelson Mandela's situation was worse than that of African youth today, but he had a different state of mind, drawing incredible courage and tenacity from his roots and the movement he belonged to. He never gave up, he drew inspiration from a variety of cultural and political sources, he remained "captain of his soul" in order to achieve his goals.

An examination of the path of Mandela's rebellion could serve African youth as the basis of an analysis to address its own situation.

Mandela understood the importance of his leadership very early on. He took his place and put his talents to use. He believed in his abilities and maintained them at a high level. Even in prison he was never untrue to himself, he remained the leader of the struggle for the cause of the Black people throughout his 27 years in prison. Africa is one of the richest continents in the world in terms of natural resources, be they minerals, oil or uranium. Even coffee and cocoa, which occupy a central place in the daily lives of people all over the world, are products available on our continent.

Nelson Mandela did not give up, he organised the struggle every time, taking advantage of every occasion and opportunity available to him. He joined a movement in which Blacks and Whites were activists and had the same vision — the dignity of Black people, living together in justice and peace. He had a sense of organisation and defence of

his principles which, even after he left office, and following his recent death, still arouse the admiration of the world. His speeches and political stances were unanimously recognised for their pertinence. The attitude of young people facing adversity today is often different: they soon give up, want to leave or experience something else, they don't hesitate to take dangerous or risky paths, and when the reality of the situation catches up with them they are willing to scrounge in dustbins for food, accept degrading jobs to survive, accept humiliation and degradation. Far from the gaze of their own people, young Africans are capable of accepting the loss of their dignity once more as consenting victims. Nelson Mandela, who was the first to admit that he had made mistakes, never behaved in this way.

Faced with the brutality of the methods of apartheid, Madiba and his comrades unflinchingly proclaimed the armed struggle. The context and methods used by the racists, the refusal of all forms of dialogue, the savage killings did not seem to leave any other option than a strong response in order to advance, maintain the morale of the freedom troops and offer a way to those who wished to put an end to this system founded on stupidity. Nowadays, when young people rebel they are often full of blind rage and despair, rather than a vision of a better future. They simply want to break everything and burn everything. They don't hesitate to burn down useful institutions such as the municipalities. They are hurting themselves because these same municipalities are at the centre of the system for issuing passports, a document much sought after by young people who want to abandon everything and leave. There is no analysis of the context to try to seek ways and alternatives to improve their disastrous situation.

Madiba did not work in isolation, he joined a movement and never hesitated to mobilise other people, black or white, to strengthen his cause. His high esteem for others made him a person with no bitterness, a person who knew how to forgive, in the sense of forging the strongest possible alliances, negotiating and working even with yesterday's enemy, his jailers, with the racists, in order to progress towards the final goal.

Even in prison the combat continued for he was not working alone, his leadership had always fostered the emergence of other leaders able to lead the combat. An attitude he applied even to his ideas, he always shared his ideas in order to enrich them. His great generosity and profound humanity related to a sense of justice and sound, immutable basic principles made of him an exceptional leader who overcame personal grievances in order to move forward with others.

Can we say that the work of Nelson Mandela fundamentally changed things in his country? Empirical observation shows that inequalities coupled with poverty are still prevalent, and that there is still racial inequality particularly in the fields of employment, housing and business. It should be noted that behaviour patterns were not magically transformed, there are rich white people who are afraid and resist, they do everything they can to keep their privileges. Madiba started a job which must be continued. The presidents who followed him, first Beki and now Zuma, must be able to seize the undeniable opportunity that exists to start the real integration of Black citizens in every sector of the economy and the life of society in South Africa.

It is clear today that Madiba's combat could not have changed his country, Africa and the world without the existence of a movement such as the ANC; on the other hand, the ANC could not have triumphed without leadership of his calibre. On what basis could such a movement emerge today without being undermined by tribalism and religious fundamentalism? Such is the question that should guide the analysis of Madiba's path and help young people to overcome their feelings of resignation, their desire to go and risk death in the desert or off the coast of Lampedusa in Italian waters. Young people constitute the future of African societies. They should be aware of this and assume their responsibilities.

*Bafoussam, January 2014*

*Excerpts from:*

### **Participation of Youth As Partners in Peace & Development in Africa: An Overview of Issues and Challenges**

**Dapo Oyewole**, Executive Director, Centre for African Policy & Peace Strategy (CAPPS) & Lead Consultant, EGM on Youth in Africa, 2006  
[http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/namibia\\_overview.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/namibia_overview.pdf)

(...) As Alex de Waal puts it: 'Children and youth represent the possibility of either an exit from Africa's current predicament or an intensification of that predicament' (De Waal 2002: 9). In other words, whilst common social parlance and policy debates often tend to refer to the youth as 'the problem', in actuality history, contemporary reality and policy rationality indicate that they are, to a greater degree, more central to the solution of the multifaceted crises that have engulfed Africa's economies, politics and societies, than the key causes of the continent's problems.

...the mere recognition of the role of youth as key actors or victims of conflict is not enough. Nor is the initiation of ad hoc programmes that tick the right donor-funding boxes, but exclude the youth from the conceptualisation, design and implementation process. Nor are 'one-size fits all' approaches which are externally developed and are inapplicable or have limited impact due to cultural, economic or social incongruence. What is mostly needed are:

- 1) a better appreciation and more profound understanding of the root causes of their involvement in conflict;
- 2) the environment that makes it possible;
- 3) the impact conflict has on their lives/livelihoods as well as on society; and
- 4) the key steps that need to be taken to prevent youth from being involved in conflict in the first instance.

In all the above, youth must be at the centre of informing, devising and operationalising remedial policy responses, processes and mechanisms. Evidently, it is about going back to the basics: dealing with the root causes and not just the symptoms with the youth playing a central role in not only addressing the traumatic aspects of Africa's conflictive history but also in shaping their own futures and thereby, the future of the continent.

(...) Thus, while the "youth problem" tends to gain more attention as the main issue, it is actually the inability of many countries in South Saharan Africa (SSA) to harness and translate the productive potentials of their youth population into opportunities which is the major problem that merits greater attention. It could thus be argued, that youth across Africa actually deserve special recognition for their resilience and innovative coping strategies in harsh socio-economic, political and insecure environments. The stifling rise in unemployment (and unemployable youths), the marginalisation of youth from socio-political and economic processes, and their constant depiction as anti-social elements are some of the key factors that sit at the root of the key issues that lead to the so-called 'youth problem' in the first instance. These are the primary issues that require urgent policy attention.

(...) One of the enduring failures of the post-colonial nation-building project across Africa has been the shrinking of the public space, limited opportunities for civic engagement and the increased marginalisation of a majority of Africa's vulnerable populations, particularly youth, from participating effectively in governance and political processes. This is ironic considering the euphoria of the collective fight against colonisation and the subsequent victory of independence, which led to the ascendance of a majority of Africa's post-independence ruling elites to the heights of political leadership in their youthful years. The irony itself lies in the reality that though

it was youth who spearheaded and fought for decolonisation and against repression in several African countries, some of these same youth leaders—who became political leaders of their countries and societies—were often the same ones who suppressed and excluded youth from mainstream participation in the political arena.

(...) By the 1980s, youth had epitomised powerlessness across much of Africa, i.e. powerless in terms of exclusion and inability to participate and influence formal processes and institutions (Bourdieu, 1993). The structural marginalisation of youth across Africa has also been reinforced and conditioned by the procedural dynamics of politics in which money, ideational variables (religion and ethnicity) and violence have become the ultima ratio. Thus, the youth wings of several political parties have become male dominated, a pool of and for potential political thugs, party enforcers and violent youth who are mobilised during electioneering periods to rig elections, attack political opponents, and intimidate voters. This, to a large extent, contributed to a stereotyping image of youth in Africa as unruly, threats to security, agents of political disruption, delinquency and criminality (Durham 2000, De Waal, 2002: 15). In this context, another form of “negative employment” which emerged was the selling of violence to political actors which ironically steadily became a form and channel of ‘negative political participation’ for youth in parts of Africa in the 1980s. Clearly the preferred scenario would be for ‘positive participation’ (cited in Twum-Danso 2005:9) which the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines as: A situation where children think for themselves, express their views effectively and interact in a positive way with other people. It means involving children in the decisions that affect their lives, the lives of their community and the larger society in which they live.

(...) However, the challenge of effective and mainstream participation of youth in Africa must go beyond political rhetoric, election-

eeing, donor pacification and superficial inclusion to address the more fundamental issues which relate to the nature, notion and architecture of governance in Africa as well as the social norms and values that underpin it. For example, while much emphasis has been rightly paid to the political dimensions of the problem, more attention is equally needed on the social front, as there is also the added challenge of transforming unelected and often anti-youth elements of traditional forms of political representation and social decision-making. (...)

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# African youth: between destructive despair and creative solidarity

By Christiane Kayser\*

Perhaps it is time we reviewed the image we have of Africa and its youth. Cameroonian writer Achille Mbembe summarises the situation:

*“Change is underway in Africa: a population of 1.5 billion, a middle class of approximately 400 million people in ten years, representing a potential market of 1,750 billion dollars, that is to say greater than the Chinese urban middle class; the constitution of a solid Diaspora, all over the world, growth rates of 5–6% over the past ten years: there are signs that another possible narrative is germinating. But problems persist: mass unemployment, especially among the young, whose only choices are often armed rebellion or exile; the militarisation of politics; the transformation of entire stretches of the continent into hostile zones of chaos, Somalia, Northern Nigeria, the Sahel. This is a critical time. Which direction will prevail over the coming years? We would like to be able to accompany this movement in which the possibility of another continental reality seems to be emerging, if only hesitantly.”*<sup>1</sup>

This is a critical time precisely because it is a turning point and much will depend on the attitude and actions of young Africans. Will they continue to abandon the continent under often unbearable conditions to follow their dreams and forge opportunities elsewhere? Will they

<sup>1</sup> Achille Mbembe “Le temps de l’Afrique viendra. J’essaie d’en précipiter l’avènement”, Interview in Les Inrockuptibles, 23/10/2103 – <http://www.lesinrocks.com/2013/10/23/livres/temps-lafrique-viendra-jessaie-den-precipiter-lavenement-11438111/#.UtfEOSKDVoU.email>

\* CSP mobile team for Africa, BfdW

remain as ticking time bombs that any manipulator could blow up at any time? Will they increasingly become the puppets of unscrupulous fundamentalists or power-hungry politicians? Or will they find a way of developing their potential and creating dignified living conditions and avenues of prosperity for themselves and their descendents?

It all depends on them but also on us, the adults who are supposed to guide them along their way.

The fundamental stakes in the years to come are not the conflicts between religious or ethnic groups as we may imagine, but the combat of young Africans to gain confidence in themselves and in others, to find ways of influencing change in Africa, create their own “Afropolitanist”<sup>2</sup> cultures, develop actions of solidarity and at last take their place in the global world.

## Multiple obstacles

The place of young people, who are the absolute majority of the population in Africa, is not assured in the political and economic spheres or in the traditional domain.

*“Many countries are governed by old people. Cameroon is a typical example. Around a hundred old men imposing their law on a population of social juniors caught in the labyrinth of connivance. They don’t represent the future, but the past. To open up the African future, we will have to imagine other forms of transition from one generation to another.”*<sup>3</sup>

On the one hand, in many countries, young people seem to be disappointed or even disgusted with the political arena and they enter it only generally as supporters of such and such a politician who mobilised

2 According to an expression coined by A. Mbembe (L’Afropolitanisme, Le Messager, 2005)

3 Interview of A. Mbembe in Jeune Afrique special edition no. 35 on the state of Africa, 12/2013

them as blind followers with no sense of the contents of the electoral campaign. On the other hand, the adults often do not seem to understand the necessity of taking the dreams and energies of the young generation seriously and making space for them in politics.

Added to this is the fact that the political is commonly seen as a means of grabbing power, showing one's influence, putting other people down. And so the notions of public interest or community service, which are nonetheless deeply rooted in many African cultures, become devoid of meaning or even distorted. We can therefore understand that this concept of the political is met with disdain or indifference among young people.

Economically, youth unemployment and even the pauperisation of the well educated contrasts with the lightning ascension of a few young African entrepreneurs. Alas, if they are not from rich families in power such as the daughter of the Angolan President, they often have to leave the continent to realise their potential.

In the spiritual and cultural domain the loss of values, the influence of ill-digested models of a violent, superficial, globalised youth portrayed by the low-brow media, the siren calls of religious fundamentalists of all persuasions who at last promise to take them seriously and give them a place, block the development of solid bases for young people to find their bearings in this very complex 21st century.

*“Here again we are witnessing the emergence of an instrumentalisation of the religious, with the development of extremism. Is this inevitable?”*

*It is partly the result of the fact that our contemporary world no longer has ready made answers to the basic questions that touch on our reasons for living together, the social bond. Today, the notions of community, democracy, citizenship are no longer self-evident at all. They have to be reworked to give them new substance. But clearly, instead of doing this work, it is easier to multiply the scarecrows and redistribute the fears.”<sup>4</sup>*

4 idem

These fears are often instrumentalised to create a cliché of the other as the hereditary enemy, to favour withdrawal into isolationism whether ethnic, religious or regional. These isolationisms are hurdles against any real openness towards the other and the world and enclose young people in a “provincialism”, “clanism”, “sectarism” that prevents them from assuming their responsibilities.

Whether in a Mali besieged by religious fundamentalisms, drug trafficking, the militarisation of society in the North and suffocation by external actors, in DRC where young people who have known nothing but wars, suffering and humiliation for the past twenty years are manipulated by false patriots who propagate hatred of everything that is “other” and at the same time perpetuate the infantilisation of the Congolese with respect to the Europeans and Americans, in Cameroon, where the resignation of never again seeing a political change alternates with the raging desire to live one's life somewhere else, even at the price of a new type of slavery, young Africans are far from being able to valorise their assets and play the constructive and innovative role that is theirs by right. They do not see themselves as citizens of their country or as citizens of the world on an equal footing with others.

## Enormous potential

And yet... Working with the young people in these different countries shows us how much cultural, spiritual, economic and citizen wealth and energy there is. In our publications you can find many examples where young people have developed courageous and surprising initiatives, whether in terms of cross-border work between the DRC and Rwanda which withstands even the worst flux of hatred and exclusion, the media work in Sierra Leone, theatre in Cameroon, in the Great Lakes Region that deal with fundamental questions with the participation of various groups in a spirit of seeking solutions and not always looking for a culprit.

It also becomes apparent that tradition — alongside elements that are retrograde and oppressive to young people and women — is full of elements favouring the development of a culture of solidarity, empowerment, accountability and citizenship. Young Africans could renew their ties with their roots, discover the collective and individual histories of their ancestors, become proud of their identities, and at the same time open up towards the globalised world of the 21st century without becoming lost or diluted in it.

## Europe also needs African youth to step up to the plate

What is at stake with regard to the role African youth will play in the future goes way beyond the countries of this continent. We witness every day how “fortress Europe” is misguided in rejecting Africans who risk their lives to immigrate. And yet it has always been a land of migration, has need of these energies, talents, contributions from the outside. We realise also that Europe has already lost its dominant role in the world. In his new book *“Critique de la raison nègre”*<sup>5</sup> Achille Mbembe talks about what he calls the “negrification” of the world. As he puts it, “the word Negro no longer refers only to the condition people of African origin were put into at the beginning of capitalism”. It now designates any subordinate humanity which the global financial system scarcely needs at a time when it defines itself more than ever on the model of an animist religion, neoliberalism. We are all Negroes today whatever the colour of our skin. It is an illusion to think that outside of Africa and without Africa we could escape this new form of slavery.

“Europe is no longer the centre of gravity of the world and this demotion opens up new possibilities- but also represents a danger — for critical thought”.<sup>6</sup> It would therefore be a question of preserving the ele-

5 Achille Mbembe, *Critique de la raison nègre*, Paris, 2013

6 idem, p.21

ments and mechanisms of European-style critical thinking, along with the ideas of citizen culture to be found in African cultures.

To do this we need capacities to analyse contexts, interests and levers of power as well as an apprenticeship of the political in the sense of participation and citizen solidarity. Young people could draw from collective history and the individual histories and experiences of certain elders. They could draw inspiration, for example, from the dignity, clairvoyance, courage and humanity of leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Amílcar Cabral and Samora Machel. Youths should also take into account the fact that change is not brought about by individuals but by citizen movements whose leaders are aware of the necessity of alliances.

We are all obliged to work together for change. To build a globalised culture of ramparts against all forms of fundamentalism, hatred, exclusion, ignorance and violence.

If we want to succeed then young people, Africans and Europeans, have a vital role to play in this endeavour. Let us therefore stop judging them on the basis of preconceived ideas and help them to get to know and like themselves better, and act out of solidarity. All of our futures depend on it.

*Les Barthes, December 2013*

*We share with you some excerpts from an interview the Cameroonian sociologist Achille Mbembe gave in 2013 about Africa's future as he sees it, about violence, challenges and the rise of a new role for Africa in a changing world.*

Thomas M Blaser, November 20th, 2013

### **Africa and the Future: An Interview with Achille Mbembe**

<http://africasacountry.com/africa-and-the-future-an-interview-with-achille-mbembe/>

**Africa is known for violent conflict that holds the continent back – do you think there is the possibility that Africans will be able to overcome this kind of violent politics?**

... So, if you look from a historical point of view, there will never be a moment when we are at peace with ourselves and our neighbours, and that the kind of social, economic and political formations that are emerging in the continent and elsewhere too, will always be a mixture of civil peace and violence. But having said this, it seems to me that one of the main challenges in the continent has to do with the demilitarization of politics. The project of the demilitarization of politics is a precondition for a regime of economic growth that might benefit the biggest number of people. For the time being, the combination of militarism and mercantilism in places such as the Congo, even in plutocratic regimes, such as Nigeria – that combination of mercantilism and militarism is only benefitting predatory elites and multinationals.

(...)

The ultimate challenge, however, is for Africa to become its own centre. In order for Africa to become its own centre, it will need, as I said earlier, to demilitarize its politics as a precondition for the democratization of its economy. The continent will have to become a vast regional space of circulation which means that it will have to dismantle its own internal boundaries, open itself up to the new

forms of migration, internal as well as external, as we see happening, to a certain extent in Mozambique, and Angola where some Portuguese are coming back. As Europe closes its borders, Africa will have to open its borders. So it seems to me that only in becoming that vast space of circulation Africa might benefit positively from the current geopolitical reconfiguration of the world that is going on.

**What is then the African contribution to a future world? Especially with the idea in mind that we move away from a world in which Africa is dependent on others. What different ways of doing things, you mentioned earlier the existing modes of circulation can Africa offer to the world? What role would indigenous conceptions of humanity, such as Ubuntu, play in this movement?**

From a theoretical perspective, there are a number of possibilities. When we look at the cultural history of the continent, it seems to me it is characterized by at least three attributes that can be conceptually deemed creative. The first one is the idea of multiplicity. Look at any single thing on the continent, it always comes under the sign of the multiple: the idea of one God is totally foreign to the continent, there have always been many Gods; the forms of marriage; the forms of currencies; the social forms themselves always come under the sign of multiplicity. One of the tragedies of colonialism has been to erase that element of multiplicity which was a resource for social development in pre-colonial Africa and which was replaced by the paradigm of 'the one', the kind of monotheistic paradigm. So how do we recapture the idea of multiplicity as precisely a resource for the making of the continent, its remaking, but also for the making of the world? Another important concept that we haven't explored much, but which comes from the African historical cultural experience is the modes of circulation and of mobility, of movement.

Almost everything was on the move. ... Africa was ... always a continent that was on the move. So that concept of circulation is something that can also be mobilized to show what it is that can come from this experience. I spoke first about multiplicity, second about circulation, and the third concept is composition. Everything is compositional—in the way the economy is lived on an everyday basis. You mentioned Ubuntu: meaning the process of becoming a person, a certain proposition, not about identity as a metaphysical or ontological category as in the Western tradition, but as a process of becoming as a relation; a relation in which the 'I', meaning the subject, is understood as being made and remade through the ethical interaction with what or who is not him. In fact, the idea that other is another me, the other is the other only to the extent that he or she is another me. That the other is not outside of myself, I am my own other to a certain extent. So there are a whole set of areas where Africa's contribution to the world of ideas and praxis can be highlighted for the benefit for the world with implications for all sorts of things: theories of exchange, theories of democracy, theories of human rights, and the rights of other species, including natural species, in this age of ecological crisis. It is work that has not been done, but it is time that we are doing it.

# Peace without borders? Young Rwandans and Congolese reach out to each other

## The Cross-border Peace Week between Rwanda and DR Congo

*By Desiree Lwambo\* and Jackson Batumike\*\**

After more than a decade of mostly violent conflicts the African Great Lakes Region is today engaged in a long process of peace building through the reconciliation of the peoples of the countries it comprises. There are multiple mechanisms at work to ensure peaceful relations among the States of the Region and bring together groups of people long ravaged by the hostilities.

However, suspicion, prejudice and stereotypes have a negative impact on the effective normalisation of the relations of trust in the region, especially among the communities living in cross-border areas. This is why an involvement of the population, in particular the young generation, in the peace building process is necessary to consolidate peace in the region.

More than half the region's population is under 25 and their level of involvement in this process will determine the future; undertaking peace education in a young environment should guarantee more peaceful relations among the different population groups in the Great Lakes Region.

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This is why, for the first time in 2010, the non governmental organisations *Vision Jeunesse Nouvelle* from Gisenyi and the *Club des Jeunes pour la Vie* from Goma initiated a cross-border peace week for and with young people, with the support of the *Civil Peace Service (CPS)/giz*. The young people got to know each other through games and sports and discussed subjects related to peace. At the end of the activity, the youths organised a march across the border between Gisenyi and Goma. They were accompanied by the Mayors of the two cities, who gave speeches on peace.

For subsequent editions of the Peace Week, the organisers were joined by other organisations, in particular *HEAL Africa*, *CAREPD (African centre for research and education on peace and democracy)* and the *Organisational Innovation Network (RIO)*, all of the Congolese partners in the *CPS/Bread for the world network* (formerly *EED*); and on the Rwandan side, the *Giramahoro Forum of young people*, *Never Again* (partners of CPS/giz) and the *Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission* of Nyundo (partner of CPS/AGEH).

Through this action, the partners succeeded in bringing together young people in the cross-border area between Rwanda and DRC to initiate a continuous conversation. Carrying out joint activities through the Peace Week encourages young people to be open towards mutual understanding, trust and tolerance of difference, which are prerequisites for the peaceful cohabitation of the peoples of the region (see the box with one teenager's testimony). To date, more than 250 young men and women have committed to achieving these aims.

During three annual editions of the event, young people have been able to communicate and share experience in good conditions for dialogue. By working in groups, their teamwork skills were boosted. The contents of the different workshops, discussions and lecture-debates were devised to raise awareness and inform the participants of the methods for non violent conflict management within their respective communities; and to prevent young people being instrumentalised for violent ends, xenophobia and exclusion.

The programme promotes freedom of opinion and expression above all. The participants learn constructive techniques for advocacy (media, song, theatre, sport and citizenship) towards members of their communities and political decision-makers to have their aspirations taken into consideration. In fact, the programme itself serves as a basis for awareness raising on peace, through cross-border marches, media coverage and the broadcasting of songs and plays produced by young people, for instance.

## Prejudice at the origin of conflicts

People on both sides of the border often remember a funny saying: “The Rwandans and the Congolese are like a pair of buttocks in the same trousers, they may rub each other up the wrong way but they can’t get away from each other...”. So although there is friction, one cannot exist without the other! The two countries are joined through historical and economic ties. Each day, many Rwandans go to the Congo to trade, work or study, and many Congolese live in Rwanda to take advantage of the security and good amenities.

However, all over the DRC, society has continued to fragment along ethnic and regional lines. The situation in the eastern provinces has long been dominated by this phenomenon. Unfortunately, the DRC is also not the only country in Africa, or even in the world, to be experiencing such problems of fragmentation.

In the meantime, people feed their daily prejudices. The Congolese think Rwanda is a country where there is no personal freedom and they are suspicious of the extreme order that reigns there. The Rwandans, on the other hand, are not comfortable with the apparent chaos that reigns in DRC.

A Congolese mother told me recently that “*it is so quiet in Gisenyi we are even afraid to speak*”, which reminded me of a conversation with a Rwandan mother in December 2012, who said: “*When you arrive from*

*the other side of the border (in Goma), you feel as if you have fallen into a hole. It is frightening.”*

It is precisely because of these “mental barriers” that the Cross-Border Peace Week is more necessary than ever at the moment: we must prevent the population groups on the two sides of the border from drifting ever further apart.

This period is not marked by a war of words only, but there is also real, palpable violence. Goma is generally calm, but the security situation can deteriorate rapidly. First of all, there are frontlines very close by and sometimes the war spills over into the town. In addition, there are spontaneous demonstrations and people often direct their anger against so-called “outsiders”, such as the blue berets and the humanitarians, but also and especially the “Rwandans”.

These realities pose important difficulties to all those who wish to accomplish real cross-border work, which should necessarily take place physically on both sides of the border. But how can we ensure the safety of the participants, and how can we respond to their fears and concerns? The organisers of the Cross-Border Peace Week have frequently given such questions a lot of attention.

## 2011: Insecurity prevents our giz colleagues from coming to Goma

Most of the activities of the 2011 Peace Week took place in Gisenyi. The subject of this second edition was youth participation in the peaceful life of society. Under the theme “My Way/Voice for Peace”, youngsters took part in 4 workshops to approach active participation in their society in several different ways. Thus different methodologies were combined according to various perspectives: where to participate and how to participate, how to invest oneself in concrete terms, the use of the media and the importance of respect between different nationalities, ethnic groups and genders.

The closing event was held in Goma with more than 200 guests. The German peace workers from giz (bilateral German technical cooperation) in Rwanda were not able to take part in this festive, much publicised event because they were obliged to submit to the security regulations applicable to German state institutions.

The players in bilateral cooperation between Germany and other countries have to work with specific constraints. Decisions about the security and evacuation systems are taken centrally rather than locally and safety factors are therefore determined in the capital of the corresponding country. As the 2011 Peace Week fell just before the national elections in the DRC, there was periodic insecurity, especially in the capital, Kinshasa, and a warning was issued to travellers that prevented our German colleagues from Rwanda from crossing over. This restriction was difficult for our local Congolese partners to accept. Fortunately, the good cooperation, as part of the CPS, between German State-related organisations and civil society organisations meant that it was possible for the CPS to be represented at the closing event, which avoided discouragement for the participants.

This incident is a good illustration of the tensions between local and international structures that the partners on the ground, especially CPS agents, must be able to respect and manage. Communication with the grassroots players seems to be the key to enabling such work, whereas the communication channels often pass through levels that are higher up.

## 2012: The war upsets the best of plans

In 2012, the danger was more palpable in North Kivu due to the appearance of the M23 (23 March) rebel movement composed of deserters from the Congolese army, who were dissatisfied with the implementation of previous peace agreements. This group, which was dominated by Congolese Tutsi, were advancing quickly in the direction of Goma

and would soon occupy a vast territory in North Kivu. The M23 was perceived as a serious threat for the government of the DRC and many observers accused Rwanda of supporting these rebels.

In 2012, the theme of the Peace Week was “Sustainable peace for a sustainable future. Goma-Gisenyi: we are together”. The agenda of this third edition involved 100 young participants from Gisenyi and Goma during a period of one week, with a march at the end, but insecurity and tensions between the two neighbouring countries upset these plans. Any Congolese institution or person undertaking cross-border work risked being accused of “infiltration” or “cooperating with the enemy”. Young Rwandans visiting Goma ran the risk of being taken for M23 rebels.

While the *Club de Jeunes pour la Vie* were involved in trying to procure the official letters of protection from the authorities in Goma, such as the Mayor of the town and the Head of the National Police, the coordinators of the giz and Bread for the world came to an agreement and took the decision to cancel the activity. They decided that the risks were too great, given that any security incidents would have been their responsibility.

It was difficult to predict whether the situation would improve, which forced the organisers to be flexible and devise contingency plans. Plan A was to meet in the neutral zone of the “Grande Barrière” border post, or even give the speech there; plan B was not to meet but to pass a string between the DRC and Rwanda with peace messages on postcards and raise the awareness of the passers by on both sides. Plan C was to group together young Rwandans and Congolese in places far from the border but send delegations with messages of peace.

In the end, Plan C prevailed, because the immigration authorities and customs would not accept any other action. The activity took place during only two days in parallel: the Rwandans met in Gisenyi and the Congolese met in Goma. This format included a day of awareness-raising with the young people and an event with lots of presentations and discussions during International Peace Day, on 21 September.

The organisers proposed dance, theatre, painting and poetry workshops to the young people with mixed Rwandan-Congolese teams of trainers. During the one day event at ULPGL in Goma, the young people presented the results and took part in a televised “Great Lakes generation” debate.

The Rwandan team with its peace messages was given a warm welcome from the Congolese. In Gisenyi, the young people went on a march in the town and held a public demonstration with singing and speeches. They were also able to host a small team of young Congolese who were delighted with the friendship they were shown.

Unfortunately, such a march would not have been possible in Goma. Tensions were high in the city, imposing prudence on any public action. We should remember that on this same day, 21 September 2012, there was a demonstration by young students protesting about the war. Their protest was ended by force with the brutal means employed by the Congolese police.

Nonetheless, on both sides of the border, young people were able to express themselves and exchange messages of peace, hand in hand. Even though they were separated by physical and political barriers, they were united in spirit towards a sole aim: peace between the two neighbouring countries, a peace that the new generations are dreaming of.

### 2013: Tujenge Amani – *Let us build peace with new approaches*

When the organisers met once more in 2013, they immediately committed to pursuing their efforts to bring young people together on a cross-border basis. Everyone was tired of the negative aspects of this work, such as the stress of having to respond to a large number of people by telephone and the disappointment of having to change the main lines of the actions at the last minute. The question was how to make Peace Week less vulnerable to the volatile transformations of the situation?

And so a new format was devised. We worked with a limited group of young people: 15 Congolese and 15 Rwandans, who were accompanied by 15 facilitators and supervisors, most of whom were also young. This small number provided greater flexibility in organisation and communication—if a venue or a date was changed, we no longer had to make about a hundred phone calls! To balance this reduction in quantity with the impact in terms of quality, the call for candidates was primarily aimed at young people already actively involved in organisations, and so well-placed to act as multipliers. The choice of having the workshops run by other youths already experienced in peace work followed the concept of peer education.

Instead of concentrating all the actions on a short duration (“Peace Week” format) we organised three workshops—arts, film and sport for peace—which took place over two months on both sides of the border (“Peace Academy” format). This enabled a more flexible response: when insecurity increased, it was possible to relocate or cancel certain meetings one week without risking the failure of the entire programme.

For major events such as the opening and closing, we kept the system of contingency plans (Plan A/B). For example, just before the scheduled opening in Goma on 20 July 2013, there were violent demonstrations in the town centre and the organisers considered it preferable to hold the activity in Gisenyi. The price of such flexibility was to cancel the major public and festive event planned with a number of guests. The essential was preserved, though: the young people met in Gisenyi, they got to know one another, they had discussions about peace education and together they drew up plans for future workshops.

## Constructive debate to address violence and bombing

Not long after the start of “Tujenge Amani”, a new problem emerged: some of the Rwandan participants refused to come to Goma for a workshop session following a radio broadcast by the Mayor of Giseni. He



advised all Rwandan citizens, and particularly young men, not to cross the border to avoid being mistaken for M23 rebels. According to him, there had been verbal and physical attacks by the population and kidnappings by the Congolese police and intelligence services.

This put the key question we were forced to consider every year back on the agenda: how can we accomplish real cross-border work in a context of fear and aggression? The partner organisations sought the opinions of the young people themselves: on the occasion of a three day training course on non-violent conflict management with the participants, facilitators and supervisors implemented by partner organisation CPS/*giz Ibuka*, the organisers discussed the question of insecurity and cross-border work with the young people.

As the discussions aroused strong emotions, the *Ibuka* facilitators skilfully seized the opportunity to turn them into a real exercise in non-violent communication! Thanks to their experienced moderation, the young people listened to what others had to say, even when difficult subjects were being discussed.

The Rwandans mainly talked about their fear of being attacked in the Congo and they were able to quote from personal experience and the stories of their brothers, neighbours and friends who had already been verbally or physically attacked when visiting Goma. As for the Congolese, they did not seem to accept that the Rwandans' fears could be based on actual events evidencing xenophobia. They believed the Rwandans were afraid of the general insecurity. They stressed that they lived in Goma every day and invited their Rwandan friends to share this experience and familiarise themselves with their surroundings, to be able to see the positive aspects as well.

Other Congolese said there were hundreds of Rwandans crossing the border every day for work, to sell things, to study, and even to party in Goma. They reminded the Rwandan participants of the commitments they made when they applied, for one of the questions the applicants were asked was whether or not they were willing to do cross-border work. They called upon the Rwandans to show the courage of real



peace activists. Furthermore, the Congolese sincerely and convincingly expressed how deeply they were hurt by their friends' refusal to come and see them in their country.

The Rwandans took the opportunity to reassert their determination to come daily to Goma, which delighted the Congolese. However, several Rwandans insisted that risks should not be taken blindly. First of all, we have to have a clear understanding of what is at stake and “proceed slowly”. They suggested that they always maintain daily communication: that they keep in touch by telephone to analyse and assess the situation on a daily basis.

It should also be noted that the Congolese, too, had fears about travelling to Rwanda; whether they were founded or not, they are real fears. The discussion showed that fear is not always rational. Do the Rwandans or the Congolese need to justify their fears? Whether they are based on fact or rumours, they remain an important factor that determines young people's actions. The aim of peace work should be to initiate dialogue about this fear and hopefully try to create an environment in which one day, it will no longer be founded, there will be no more need for fear, for the violence and the manipulations will have been overcome.

At the end of the discussion, the organisers invited the young people to suggest solutions. Here is what emerged from this activity:

## The security plan

1. The young Congolese are responsible for their Rwandans friends; they will remain at their side constantly while they are staying in Goma. The Rwandans are strictly forbidden from moving away from the group;
2. The Congolese will pick the Rwandans up at the Grande Barriere — if the workshop session is to take place near the border, they will take a motorcycle-taxi together, if it is farther away, a car will be organised;



3. The parents of the young people will receive a letter from the organisers, reassuring them about the safety measures taken by the organisers, with a description of Goma showing them exactly where their children will be staying and with the telephone numbers of the people in charge
4. A letter will be requested from the Mayor of Goma, guaranteeing the proper safety of the young people involved in “Tujenge Amani”
5. The organisers and workshop supervisors will check the current situation regarding security in Goma before each session.

Subsequently, armed combat resumed between the M23 rebels and the Congolese government, this time with the military action of a new force of intervention from the United Nations. Bombs were dropped on and around Goma and all along the border, and on Rwandan soil. Some people were wounded, killed, and there were bloody demonstrations. Rwanda and the DRC threatened each other. Few Rwandans crossed the border and there was an escalation of aggressions and ethnic attacks in Goma. In this situation, it was impossible to continue the activities and they were postponed till a later date, which has not yet been fixed.

The organisers carried out separate sessions with the young people in Goma and Gisenyi to analyse the context and discuss the situation. We were astonished and delighted to discover that the youngsters had maintained their solidarity: Rwandans and Congolese sent each other comforting messages on facebook and by sms and the Congolese actively informed the people around them who had a tendency to condemn “Rwanda” in general. In sessions facilitated by Judith Raupp, journalist and peace worker from Bread for the world, the young people conferred on how to address the manipulation and war speeches that were taking on alarming proportions.

On the basis of these meetings, the young people brought out a peace release (see box). The partners and the youths persevered in the work for peace, even though at that precise moment, it seemed to them like a tiny drop in the ocean.

Soon afterwards, the youth workshops resumed. With the advance of the Congolese FARDC army and the United Nations forces against the M23 and the official announcement of the end of the rebellion at the end of October 2013, the organisers were at last able to hold the closing event of the 2013 edition in Goma. A cross-border march was planned, but following rumours that there would be a pro-FARDC demonstration in the town, the mayor of Goma advised against it. In the Jubilee Hall of HEAL Africa in Goma, all the partners, young people and other players got together to exchange greetings and follow the presentations of the young people's productions: in film, theatre, poetry, sport and music. The day was a great success, with the launch of a publication on the programme ("Goma-Gisenyi: We are together"), a short film about the closing event which was broadcast on local television and a visit from Martin Kobler, the Head of the United Nations Mission in the Congo, who had learnt of the existence of this initiative from the @TujengeAmani Twitter account. But beyond all the speeches, the services rendered and the publicity, the most precious result of all the activity consists in the friendships that have blossomed among the young—hand in hand, arm in arm, laughing, sharing, they are the ones who give an image of perfect, enduring peace between two peoples.

## Summary

This article is intended to share with other peace builders the evolution of a pilot programme that seeks to reinforce cohabitation between two divided peoples, starting with the young generation. The work requires flexibility, the ability to communicate and respond quickly, to put up with vagueness and uncertainty and to properly assess risk. Careful consideration has to be given to priorities and alternatives. In addition, consideration must be given to the directives issued by the distant hierarchies on all sides, while at the same time communicating and insisting on the local prospects and realities. Local norms should be

respected and there should be effective communication with the local authorities (municipality, customs, youth councils and the town hall). But above all, it is important to be committed, not to become discouraged, and to persevere in the search for creative solutions.

### **Declaration of the young Congolese and Rwandans**

We, young people living in the Goma-Gisenyi cross-border zone, have committed to the process of peace building in our region through the project called Tujenge Amani.

Through creative workshops held alternately in Goma and Gisenyi, we express our ideas in relation to peace and have thus initiated a conversation with our peers to establish enduring peace for a future without war, without discrimination, and without being manipulated by people who want to divide our peoples instead of uniting them.

Despite this renewed commitment to work for friendship and peace in the region, we are outraged by the security situation: our two cities of Goma and Gisenyi were both bombed in the last month and innocent people lost their lives in Goma and in Gisenyi. The over-militarisation of the cross-border zones are of concern to us today.

We have greatly suffered and are still grieving for countless victims of the violence in the region over the past decades. We would also point out that the peaceful cohabitation of the civil population is handicapped by this state of affairs, which is responsible for the decline in the circulation of goods and people across the border zones, with negative consequences on the cost of living. This situation is scandalous and constitutes an affront to the population living in the area and is a perpetual source of anxiety, trauma and suspicion among the civilian population.

We have suffered so much and now we would like it all to cease; for the activities between our two countries to continue normally and for all people to be first to build love in society instead of creating antagonism between us.

We, young people living in the Goma-Gisenyi cross-border zone, committed to the process of building peace in our region through the project called Tujenge Amani, ask the political decision-makers to re-establish regional peace through a sincere and continuous dialogue to boost the peace education programme for young people, in particular by promoting cross-border meetings. We also invite the current authorities to make sure human rights are protected, and to work sincerely to guarantee the population a better life in a peaceful environment.

*Signed in Gisenyi, 21 September 2013*  
*The signatories*

**Speech delivered by a young Rwandan woman  
at an event day as part of the  
Peace Week on 21 September 2012**

We are all here to celebrate international peace day. As you know, our country has experienced a lot of problems. I am speaking of the genocide, the endless wars, disasters, insecurity and conflicts which have marked our history.

As a young Rwandan, this Peace Week has been very important, especially today, when everyone wants to live a peaceful life. This week helped us to improve our knowledge about peace and how to achieve it. It requires many things, such as tolerating our differences, be they social, religious, cultural, ethnic or racial. We have taken the

initiative of tackling the problem of conflict because we want a better future, sunny and enlightened by a peace that is not temporary but which will last for ever. So that centuries and centuries later, our descendants can savour the incomparable heritage we shall leave them. But to accomplish this, we must use all our strength and courage and stand united for there is strength in numbers.

We, young people of the region, agree that with peace we will certainly face a better life, that our elders have much to teach us to guide us on the right path, the foundation of our societies. We are delighted to host our Congolese friends because peace should cross the border. We would like to thank their delegation and the other young people who have stayed in their region to celebrate peace day. It is we, the young generation, who should repair the fabric torn apart by our predecessors and politicians.

As a Congolese poet called Chicco said: *"Peace should not just be a greeting, but also a solution to our problems"*.

Thank you. Enjoy this peace day and may peace reign in our hearts and everywhere we go.

# Forum theatre against violence

Goma, Gisenyi, 25 November – 01 December 2013

By Claus Schrowange

*Scene 1: “Water is life” says Del’or and opens a plastic bottle with “Life” written on it. Water slowly spills out and splashes on the ground. Del’or’s face darkens with anger and tears well up in her eyes. “In any case, who cares whether a Congolese is dead or alive?” She crushes the bottle with rage and throws it down. Later, Del’or sings a song about the orphans of the war. At the end of the song, she stays silent, tears running down her cheeks.*

Complete silence in the CBCA church in the Virunga district of Goma. Only the breathing of the 200 people sharing this moment can be heard. Del’or is 16. One of the bombs that dropped in Goma in August 2013 destroyed the house of her friend’s neighbour.

20 minutes later, Del’or is back on stage, dancing with her Rwandan and Congolese friends to a choreography on a drum beat.

*Scene 2: After Kenge’s friends have attacked a Rwandan tomato seller, he shouts: “The sun always rises in Rwanda and the rain comes from Rwanda; just like the war!”. “Kenge, you’re a coward, a heartless man!”, Nadine challenges him and they begin to argue. “We have to stop thinking Rwanda is the sole reason for our problems. Our own house is not exactly in order.”*

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The audience are invited to join in. Arguments and counter-arguments fill the air. An old Congolese woman courageously challenges one of the characters on stage: *“Kenge, what has this poor tomato seller done to you? She just wants to feed her kids, too.”*

**Scene 3:** *“I could have had a good, peaceful life, spared these atrocities I’ve witnessed. I don’t want to see all this anymore.”* Thérèse gently approaches David, who is doing a war painting. The young Rwandan woman lights a candle and sets fire to the painting. In the background, we hear a classic song from a war film.

The audience have time to discuss their impressions, share real life experiences and emotions. Provoked by the touching, thought-provoking play many take the opportunity to speak out their mind about the situation in the Great Lakes region.

At the end of the 2½ hour session, all the participants and the actors are on stage singing *“We say no to war because it destroys our countries... Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi...”*

The Congolese and Rwandan participants say good-bye to each other, some in tears. We have to be quick. The Rwandan border closes at 18:00.

18 young people from *“Vision Jeunesse Nouvelle”*, a youth centre in Gisenyi and *“Jeunesse en Action”* of the CBCA in Goma had an intensive 5 day-theatre workshop at Gisenyi in Rwanda. They produced the play *“Rotten Tomatoes”*, and did 3 forum theatre performances, two in Gisenyi and the final one in Goma.

The production was developed using the experimental theatre-pedagogical methods developed by *“Rafiki Theatre”*, a theatre troupe from Uganda. It was inspired by individual experiences of the participants and research done by *International Alert* titled: *“Words that kill”*. The research examines prejudices, myths and rumours circulating in the Great Lakes region and how they promote violence rather than peace.

This is an example of the work of *“APRED-RGL”*, an initiative for peace and reconciliation in the Great Lakes region, established by the



Baptist Church in the Centre of Africa (CBCA, DRC), as well as the Presbyterian Church and the Anglican Church of Rwanda, in partnership with the United Evangelical Mission (UEM).

The project is also a best practice of harmonisation of the peace work of churches and development agencies. APRED-RGL receives funding from “Brot für die Welt/EED”. “*Vision Jeunesse Nouvelle*” is supported by the “GIZ” within the framework of the German programme “ZFD – Civil Peace Service”, as well as by MISEREOR.

*Say no to war*

We say no to war  
For it destroys our countries  
Let us stand up without fear  
And chase out the war that is amongst us,  
Congo, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi  
Hand in hand, let us cultivate peace  
In our region.

# Theatre, music and dance for peace and reconciliation.

## Festival International des Jeunes pour la Paix

*By Béla Bisom and Florian Nickel\**

A theatre scene in Cyangugu, Rwanda: A young Rwandan woman brings home her Congolese fiancé whom she has met while studying in Bukavu, a close town just across the border. Her father is furious and refuses him because “the Congolese aren’t interested in anything but food, music and women” (the audience laughs). She has to leave him. A year later she presents her Burundian fiancé whom she has met during several stays in Bujumbura, less than four hours away by bus. But her father also rejects this young man, because the Burundians are boring and uneducated (the audience laughs even louder). “Why don’t you choose a good Rwandan man, who is reliable, intelligent and a good worker?” he asks.

The same theatre scene in Bujumbura, Burundi: A young Burundian woman presents her Congolese boyfriend to her family. Her father dismisses him because “the Congolese are lazy and care only about dancing and fufufu<sup>1</sup>” (the audience laughs loudly). When she presents a Rwandan man her father rejects him because “the Rwandans are too stiff and boring, they don’t know how to live [the audience cheers]. Why

<sup>1</sup> A cassava pastry

\* Florian Nickel is a literature and music events manager, currently training as an educator. Béla Bisom is a manager and producer of performing arts ([www.transmissions.de](http://www.transmissions.de)).



doesn't she get a Burundian husband who is reliable, a good worker and has his heart in the right place?" (acclamation).

The scene works the same way in Uvira, DR Congo, about the men from Burundi and Rwanda. The audience is enthusiastic. Everyone knows these prejudices but no one is talking about them publicly. Yet, most people believe them. Many of these prejudices have developed in decades and centuries and are transmitted by the families and society. Young people nowadays study in other cities, they get international news from television, they are connected via Facebook but they have a lack of experience with people from abroad. That is why they adopt the myths and prejudices of their parents. They don't know that they have a similar past just like other adolescents across the border.

The EIRENE-Project "Festival International des Jeunes pour la Paix" (International Youth Festival for Peace)—realized in Burundi, Rwanda and DR Congo in 2010—brought together young people from all three countries to work together for one week and to create theatre plays with music, theatre and dance. We—two German culture managers—devised and mentored the project but it was implemented by local NGOs from all three countries in cooperation with GIZ Uvira, DR Congo.

The people in the region of Burundi, Rwanda and North and South Kivu (DR Congo) are imprinted by decades of ethnic conflicts, civil war, escape and expulsion which result in mistrust and disfavour against others. Although living very close to each other spatially, (with merchants being one exception) even people from the border area between Bujumbura, Cyangugu, Bukavu and Uvira do not interact much. Often they don't have enough money to travel or no official identification.

Since prejudices are transferred from parents to children it is important to create a positive experience before marriage and having children. The objective of the project was to establish connections between young people and to overcome barriers of prejudices. To work together culturally and to exchange about their own problems and experiences is a way to get to know each other and to transport the message back home that they are not that bad at all.

The local partner organisations were Catholic and Protestant NGOs with experience in street theatre and other cultural activities. One of our objectives was to empower the partner organisations with a new method for cultural peace work.

We invited the Belgian director and drama advisor Frédérique Lecomte with her company “théâtre et réconciliation” to come to Uvira, DRC, and to train the instructors of the partner organisations in her participative conflict theatre method. Lecomte successfully uses this method for projects in different places in the region as well as in post conflict countries all over Africa. It is based on the mutual development of theatre scenes by the participants about their own experiences. After the training the instructors independently realized three workshops with the young project participants.

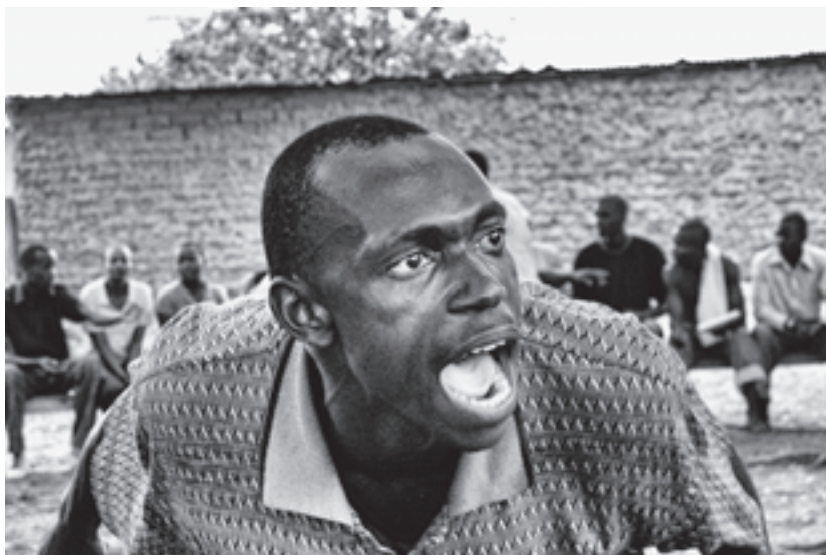
The participants, 30 young people between 16 and 27 from Burundi, Rwanda, and DRC — 10 from each country — came together in theatre workshops for one week to develop and perform a theatre play. For the first two days they collected subjects from their personal life, their history, experience, and social environment to develop first scenes, dances and songs. For another two days they worked on the scenes and put them together to a big play the last two days. The seventh day it was represented in front of an open public. Interesting: the workshops took place three times with different participants (90 altogether) and they came up with very similar subjects such as: education, corruption, nepotism, violence, war, discrimination based on ethnic differences and gender, sexual violence, poverty, personal identity, prejudices and conflicts about land.

But not all subjects could be treated publicly everywhere. The most difficult subjects were corruption and ethnic discrimination. One main concern of the partner organisations was that the authorities would get them in trouble, so they acted very carefully as to how far they could go and which subjects could be treated. But theatre, music and dance are great media to talk about subjects in a fictive setting which would not work in other media, where repression could be a matter. The expe-



rience we had was that the young participants were open minded but concerned about what to say and show.

A scene of dancing, the last sequence of the public play in Cyangugu: Three groups of four dancers each, boys and girls, are on stage. Alternately they show the others their national way of dancing accompanied by music of different national styles. The Rwandan way of dancing is strutting, dignified with stretched arms, the Congolese style is compact, a kind of twisting near the ground. The scene of the play is not a battle, it is rather a respectful presentation. In the end the groups invite each other to dance together first in pairs then all together. That last scene, which works in all three countries, is simple but also a good image of tolerance and how to appreciate differences.



# Theatre as an instrument of expression and a tool for peace

## My first experiences in Cameroon

*By Silvia Stroh\**

More than 50% of the population of Cameroon is under 18. There are approximately 8 million children and teenagers seeking food, education and employment in a country marked by growing poverty. A large proportion of well-educated youths try to leave the country to find jobs in Europe or the United States. This situation represents a real threat for Cameroon, for the country needs these young people, who could drive development. The peace is made even more fragile with the breach of confidence between parents and children.

Thus a crucial problem is posed regarding training and equipping the young generation to become actors in social change, to build a society of justice and peace by rehabilitating the system of confidence in order to take advantage of the ruling class as relay. It is in this sense that, with the support of Bread for the world, through the CPS that provides professional peace workers, in 2011 the CIPCRE initiated a programme called “Theatre for peace”. This was in response not only to the CIPCRE’s internal needs in terms of cross-wise tools for facilitating and de-partitioning the work units, but also to the reality of the local intervention context which is dominated by oral tradition. Theatre is a tool that will allow people to express themselves better, overcome their limits and optimise their capacities in terms of communication, assurance, self-discovery and the discovery of others. It is a universal lan-

\* Silvia Stroh is a professional actress and a CPS-BfdW peace worker with CIPCRE in Bafoussam, Cameroon

guage which, by combining the verbal expression of singing and the corporal expression of dance, brings collective and individual histories alive and at the same time provokes change.

Developing and implementing such a concept imposed itself on CIPCRE as an unavoidable strategy for the awareness, education, personal development and participation of the beneficiaries it accompanies, all the more so in the light of the following statement by the UN Secretary General; *“It is not enough to teach children to read, write and count. Education has to cultivate mutual respect for others and the world in which we live, and help people forge more just, inclusive and peaceful societies.”* (Opening of the international day of peace 2013)

I began my work with the “theatre for peace” in 2012.

Yes, the Cameroonians do love theatre. Everywhere I go, people want to act. In Dschang, after a 4-day workshop with members of the Movement of Protestant Students of Cameroon representing students from 9 Universities, a play based on scenes improvised by the participants was put on for the public. The main theme related to social conflicts and the search for peace. The young students staged the life of an ordinary family with all its conflicts, against a backdrop of the dreams of a peaceful life of its members.

All the themes, even the most sensitive, were perceived by the public as comic — sexual harassment, tribalism, the place of women in traditional society, wars of religion. All the themes staged had the audience in stitches. At times it was difficult to hear the actors, the audience was laughing so loud, and the message was almost lost. Even the small scenes of hope and dreams had little chance of being understood — the audience were making too much noise and the actors were trying to hammer the message home.

Laughter as a survival strategy. What we can't change, can't ignore, can no longer cope with, we handle with laughter.

What is the outlook? How do young people see their future? According to my observations, many love to dance, play, celebrate and only a few are used to discussing their situation, showing their real feelings.



Why express a refusal if there is no possibility of changing anything? Why vote if there is no alternative? These young people are capable of expressing themselves, they have a good grasp of the problems and their causes. But they do not see an opportunity for change nor a constructive role they could play.

If we look at the authoritarian system in the schools, in families and even in the administration, we begin to understand their attitude. The only thing that counts is discipline. And this discipline is based on submission, violence, fear and humiliation.

This is where we, as adults, must start to support the young. Theatre is a perfect way of doing this. We start with exercises in trust, in themselves and in others, we take the time to analyse problems, examine them, develop alternatives by acting. In this work, we have the possibility of discovering our needs and capacities. We learn to respond to others, insist on small details, small changes and act in a team. We foster solidarity.

We founded a youth theatre troupe in October 2012 in Bafoussam, called TIM (*Troupe d'intervention mobile*). 16 young people between 16 and 26 meet every Monday afternoon for rehearsals. Six (6) plays



have been staged by this troupe and all are on the rights of children, particularly on the topics of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and gender discrimination, violence in schools and the peaceful management of conflicts between crop farmers and livestock breeders. These stage shows, produced for the awareness, education and information of the general public and the partners of the CIPCRE in the rural community and in schools, are well underway. For the young people, the TIM is a means of changing things, that is to say their future in their country. They have found a family, support, mutual love, a space where they have the latitude to discover their authentic selves.

SMS from Benoît (26), member of the TIM: “The TIM has already been around for a year now and I’m taking advantage of this ordinary moment in my day to express my immense joy at having you with us. With you and the others, I share intense moments that are enriching, entertaining and instructive. Thanks to you I have another vision of myself and of the community. Thank you... May the Lord accompany you in your work which is obviously not easy. Have courage and infinite thanks.”

We see a change in attitudes is possible. Let us begin with laughter!



# **Freetong Pikinino Players Peace Clubs: giving Sierra Leonean youths hope and capacitating them in peace-building**

*By Dr. El Hadj Malick Sy Konaré\**

As the West-African region and particularly the Mano River sub region is actually more than ever confronted with escalating violence, increasing fears and threats, the Freetong Players International, (an organization born out of the need to revolutionize the Sierra Leonean theatre by expanding its traditional role of entertainment and rituals to become an effective tool to inform, communicate, educate and mobilize communities), finds it essential to nurture the values of empathy, compassion, good will, tolerance and non-violence in the lives of our children who symbolize the hope of the nation. Based on our fundamental belief that those conflicts affecting the sub region which unfortunately continue to be often portrayed as ethnic and tribal fights often express negative regional destabilizing effects, and therefore require profound structural solutions, we are more than ever determined to address the deficient structures and the root causes of those conflicts through capacity building and empowerment activities. We are also aware that the restrictive interpretation of the conflicts as ethnic conflicts excludes many factors which significantly contribute to their outbreak and are therefore convinced that sensitive issues which easily generate frustrations and hate are indeed intrinsically related to unequal distribution of resources and consequently are certainly at the core of many conflicts plaguing the

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Manu River sub region. In such situations ethnicity and/or the affiliation to clan-like constellations engender a culture of political patronage which generates perceptions of inequality among the different social and ethnic groups of the country. These factors added to the context of endemic corruption, economic inequality and situation of absolute lawlessness can certainly generate violent scenes which are usually manifested along ethnic and regional lines. Whenever people are disadvantaged by political, legal, economic or cultural traditions and are victim of an unequal access to resources, to political power, to education, to health care, or to legal standing, then “structural violence” occurs. These structures of social inequality are indeed explosive phenomena. They cause frustrations and feelings of discrimination which are open manipulated by immoral and corrupt political leaders so that social conflicts can easily turn to interethnic conflicts. For that reason it is important to point out and recognize that ethnic differences or identities are not the causes but the result of the instrumentalization or politicization of ethnicity for other purposes, which must be identified the genuine causes of and driving forces behind such conflicts.

We, the Freetong Players, profoundly believe that it is in fact easy to teach children about war, but it is much more challenging to teach them how to create peace. It is fundamentally for that reason that, in March 2013, in the framework of our cooperation with Bread for the World – The Protestant Development Service (a partnership underlining our innovative actions in the field of peacebuilding towards a non-violent and peaceful nation in Sierra Leone) we decided to create the “Freetong Pikinino Players Peace Clubs” in the metropolitan city of Freetown and the three other major regional districts of Bo, Kenema and Makeni. In Freetown alone we created ten (10) different peace clubs; eight (8) in schools and two (2) in two different street children organizations and capacitated more than 80 Children in Peacebuilding mechanisms.

As their name suggests the “Freetong Pikinino Players Peace Clubs”, as a central aspect of the peacebuilding activities of the Freetong Play-

ers, target children and youths empowering them through capacity building sessions combined with artistic expressions focusing on essential values of dialogue, open-mindedness, tolerance and acceptance of differences. The combination of knowledge transfer through trainings sessions and artistic workshops focusing on the use of drama, music and dance to dramatize and make the content of the trainings more accessible for the youths (since illiteracy is also a big challenge in this country) is indeed an inclusive and holistic approach involving both the understanding, internalizing and mastering of the methods and tools for conflict resolution and/or transformation and psycho-social and relational well-being, to lay the foundations for a non-violent, peaceful and prosperous Sierra Leone. Our disposition to teach our children some fundamental values for a pacific life including attitudes that promote forgiveness and compassion, but also the need to break the cycle of violence in our cities and replace it with new ways of dealing with conflict and developing peace initiatives, are the driving reasons for our engagement. If the African continent, which was once regarded as the cradle of civilization, is supposed to become alive again to her past glories, we should join other voices to cry for peace, love and justice.

Many people indeed think children are the future, but we, the Freetong Players International are profoundly convinced that they really are the present. And since children are the present and it appears obvious that future belongs to children, we seek to place children as advocates for our grassroots proactive peace work and consequently for harmony in this country. We are convinced that reaching and capacitating children means impacting for peace. We proactively work for peace at grassroots level so that those greedy “violence-lords” and immoral politicians who maliciously used to manipulate the youths in our sub region and control the conflicting parties in most settings would not have free recourse to the children and thus to grassroots to incite them to violence. Our strong resolution to capacitate children, who are the most vulnerable and at the same time the hope of the nation is basically grounded in our fundamental belief that it is easier to promote peace

when children are talking to children. Freetong Players International is indeed deeply convinced that cultivating a spirit of non-violence in the minds of the youth of our nation will help to foster an atmosphere of positive peace and at the same time stimulate attitudinal change towards a modern and emerging nation.

We are also dedicated to building effective school climates by focusing on two major efforts within a school: teaching children the skills of conflict resolution and civic engagement; and providing educators with the critical skills and knowledge to integrate the methods and instruments of peaceful conflict transformation into the school's curriculum and culture. Combined, these efforts will strengthen schools' social and academic environments, creating stronger schools and more successful students. The idea for building the "Freetong Pikinino Players Peace Clubs" in primary and secondary schools is certainly intrinsically rooted in the determination of our organization to animate teachers, students, parents and school communities to perceive peace not only as significant and imperative for the stability and the socioeconomic development of the country, but also as a precious asset fundamentally related to behaviours, mindsets and inter-relational concerns such as how to peacefully interact to each other at home, in communities, at school and within other social groups or organizations. In this framework, the Freetong Players International also emphasizes domestic violence and its impact on children's attitudes outside of their homes. Based on our 28 years of expertise in the field of youth work, we are profoundly persuaded that children in homes where there is domestic violence are not only more likely to be abused and/or neglected but also to become perpetrators of violent acts.

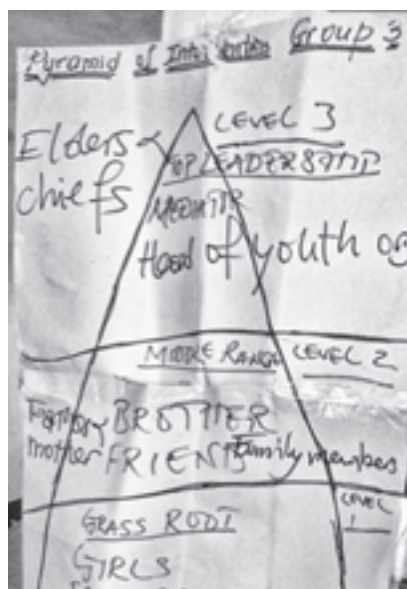
In order to enable, within our peace clubs, an environment propitious for bringing about a change in awareness and patterns of thought which will lead to change in the behavior of the club members, we planned a range of activities meant to help foster the interaction and build bridges between young people from a variety of socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. These activities include:

- ◆ Sport events: Soccer games among peace clubs are randomly organized under the motto “Play Soccer, make peace”. These sport activities help our young club members to internalize and adopt the values, and develop the skills and attitudes to become role models for their playmates, their families and communities. We emphasize effectiveness, competitiveness and the zeal to win, but we also cultivate the spirit of fair play and team work among fellow soccer players who share and practice the universal values taught through our peace club program. Our young women and men thus learn to attach these values to specific attitudes and behaviors, which can then be transferred to life off the playing field.
- ◆ “Cultural evenings” (once a month) during which documentary films dealing with issues related to conflicts but also to peacebuilding initiatives will be projected and discussed.
- ◆ “Book Paddi” sessions: (Paddi means friend in Krio). The main idea here is to distribute every month copies of a chapter of a book relevant to peace and conflict such as: “A long way gone. Memoires of a Boy Soldier”, written by the Sierra Leonean Ishmael Beah, to the kids who are encouraged to read the chapter and once a month we gather to discuss the content.

Club meetings are held at least twice a month. Every club appoints a “coordinating committee” composed of 3–4 students: A General Coordinator, his/her substitute or delegate, and 1 or 2 other members. They are responsible for the activities in the club and the logistics needed for the implementation of those activities. They coordinate the various events and programs conducted by the club and also serve as focal persons during fund-raising activities. They are also the ones who interact with local authorities to gain their support (administrative, financial or logistical) for the implementation of scheduled activities.

In addition to the coordinating committees, we also have our “Peace Animator committees”. The idea underlining these committees is simple: Every peace club elects a committee of 3 students called peace ani-





mators. It is important to have 3 students from 3 different grades so that whatever is discussed or decided among the “peace animators” will be reported among each class group and thus throughout the entire school. The role of the peace animators is to raise peacebuilding issues in their schools and communities: They initiate discussions (in class as well as at home and in their neighborhood) about the concept and methods of non-violent conflict resolution. They also, after having consulted the members of their peace clubs, identify and invite speakers among those community members fully engaged in peaceful resolution of conflicts (can be a member of a civil society organization, a traditional or religious leader, an ordinary person in the community, a government official or other administrative stakeholder) to address the students in their school. In such occasions “peace animators” and members of peace clubs from other schools are also invited.

Another pillar of the peace clubs is the concept of “School Mediators”. Our “School Mediators” are not elected but unanimously designated by

their fellow students. They are mostly chosen based on their enthusiasm, their engagement in the work of the peace clubs and their interest in mediation. They are energetic and enthusiastic girls and boys whose leadership qualities are—in everyone’s opinion—recognized and accepted by their colleagues. After their nomination the School Mediators go through a specific and more profound training on Mediation. For the Freetonian “School Mediators”, the trainings are held at our headquarters at 10 Pump Line, Off Wilkinson Road, Cole Farm in Freetown. The “School Mediators” are supposed to mediate in conflict situations between students. Every “Teacher in charge” also goes through the same specific training on mediation. They mediate in conflict cases between teachers and students or parents/students and school administration.

The “school mediators” also serve as connectors between students, teachers and school administration. They speak on behalf of their fellow students in meetings with teachers and principals to sensitize school authorities on students’ concerns and suggestions on how to create and strengthen a peaceful atmosphere in schools.

We also celebrate the International Peace Day on which occasion every peace club chooses a theme which is relevant to the school and develops peace messages which they also paint on banners, flip charts, and the walls of the school (if authorized by the principal). They also conceive a drama and a song related to the selected theme and perform it in their school.

We furthermore plan from the beginning of 2014 to include these activities in the International Day of Peace program of the Civil Peace Network in the Mano River Region. The Peace clubs will then have the opportunity to perform (drama, music and dance) at the Final Peace Concert in Freetown and Awards will be given to the 3 winners in all categories: Drama, Music and Dance. Consolidation awards will be given to all participants.

We are confident that this will help our peace club members to develop problem solving skills and cross-cultural expertise which they can use to promote non-violence, social cohesion and harmony.

The overall objective of the creation of the “Freetong Pikinino Players Peace Clubs” is hence to motivate and empower the youth to take responsibility for the impact, positive as well as negative, of their conducts, their actions and decisions, and be aware of the fundamental fact that however small they might seem to be, they can profoundly impact their schools, homes and communities. We furthermore hope, through our actions, to challenge teachers, school boards, communities and youths to link learning, responsibility and action as one whole, aimed at promoting peace. This will surely acquaint the youths with the complexities involved in peace and peacebuilding. They will be challenged to explore issues of peace and conflict, and to expand their thinking about who they are in the midst of those issues, and how they can respond. Our aim is to help build a society that regards peace as a state of mind, a chosen value, a norm and a way of life.

# Konkoroma: Radio drama raises peace awareness for Sierra Leonean Youth

*By Julia Krojer\* and Eustace U. Vin-Bah\*\**

Which topics are interesting for young people in Sierra Leone? What is the best way to catch their attention on peace? Since the end of the civil war in Sierra Leone the organisation Sierra Leone Adult Education Association (SLADEA), with its headquarters in Freetown and 13 branches all over the country, added Peace Building to its curriculum. In this field of work young people are a particular target group; youth is seen as a catalyst for social change. The case of Sierra Leone's civil war shows that youth play an important part to make, strengthen or break a system.<sup>1</sup>

The young population in Sierra Leone have an strong impact in terms of peace building and peace keeping. A way to catch the youth's interest is entertainment education. Radio is the most popular medium in this West African country; one reason is the high illiteracy rate. In order to reach the masses the local NGO's SLADEA, Freetong Players International and Culture Radio decided to produce a radio drama which both educates and entertains its listeners.

The above mentioned NGOs made a contribution to peaceful election in the country. Violence and riots during election periods are sensitive issues mainly in post-war countries like Sierra Leone. The partner NGO's of the German organisation Bread for the World-Protestant

<sup>1</sup> Kingsley Ighobor (2013): A seat at the table. African youth demand a say in decision making. In: Africa Renewal, May 2013, page 30.

\* CPS peace worker with SLADEA

\*\* Public Relation Officer, Freetown branch, SLADEA; studies Mass Communication



Development Service were active in attempting to ensure a peaceful political transition by means of a radio drama which was broadcast before and during the country's General Elections in 2012: Konkoroma is the title of the collective entertainment education product which is roughly translated as "confusion".

The elections are over but the population of Sierra Leone is still facing different challenges. For this reason the NGOs are insisting on continuing the radio programme to tackle the problems utilizing the tool of peace education with the help of entertainment. According to Singhal and Rogers<sup>2</sup>, "the general purpose of entertainment education interventions is to contribute to the process of directed social change, which can occur at the level of an individual, community or society". These interventions contribute to social change in two different ways: "First, they can influence members' awareness, attitudes, and behaviour

<sup>2</sup> Singhal, Arvind/Rogers, Everett M. (2004): The Status of Entertainment-Education Worldwide. In: Singhal, Arvind [ed.] (2004): Entertainment-education and social change: history, research, and practice. Mahwah, N.J. [u.a.]: Lawrence Erlbaum.



toward a socially desirable end. Here the anticipated effects are located in the individual audience members. [...] Second, they can influence the audience's external environment to help create the necessary conditions for social change at the system level. Here the major effects are located in the interpersonal and social-political sphere of the audience's external environment.”<sup>3</sup>

In a country like Sierra Leone with extreme poverty, limited electricity and a very high illiteracy rate of far above 50 percent, radio is the most acclaimed and accessible medium for the public to receive information throughout the country. Freetown, the country's capital is home to 35 percent of the radio stations and there are some community and independent radio stations in the provinces.<sup>4</sup> According to the report

3 Singhal, Arvind/Rogers, Everett M. (2004): The Status of Entertainment-Education Worldwide. In: Singhal, Arvind [ed.] (2004): Entertainment-education and social change: history, research, and practice. Mahwah, N.J. [u.a.]: Lawrence Erlbaum.

4 Oatley, Nick/Thapa, Tashim (2012): Media, Youth and Conflict Prevention in Sierra Leone, IFP-EW, funded by the European Union. [www.ifp-ew.eu](http://www.ifp-ew.eu), last accessed: 06.12.2013.

“Media, Youth and conflict prevention in Sierra Leone” almost all households can receive an FM radio signal and a large number can also receive MW and SW bands, which are more commonly used by regional and community radio stations.<sup>5</sup> SLADEA broadcasts the radio play in Freetown as well as in the provinces. It is mainly the organisation’s young membership which is in charge of Konkoroma. Being themselves the target group as well as the writers, actors and actresses, they know best what Sierra Leonean youth is interested in. The first thirty episodes of the radio drama ended in November 2012. Konkoroma became famous and is well appreciated. Therefore, another creative workshop to produce new episodes of Konkoroma was held in October 2013. The studio of Freetong Players International in Freetown was the right place to give free rein to their ingenuity and creativity and express in words their vision of a peaceful country. Charlie Haffner, founder of Freetong Players International, helps the young people to reshape their ideas and experiences into dramatic form so that the listeners can identify with the stories.

Music mingling with the buzz of voices, this is how it sounds from the studio. But before the actors and actresses from the radio drama Konkoroma were able to record the new episodes, they had to work very hard. In a group work the storylines of Bruno and Thugs, the nurse, Tutti; the student, Lovetta; the lecturer, Kabbia and some more interesting characters arose. Eustace, Kofi, Samuel, Rugiatu, Lamina, Gladys, Emil and Abass, SLADEA members travelled from all over the country to the capital to make the stories more educating and more entertaining.

Charlie Haffner, the director, with 30 participants from the three collaboration partners sat in an open parlour adjacent to the recording studio to discuss the thematic synopsis of Konkoroma. The music from the studio was typical traditional style, the drums, rhythm and lyrics would resonate with the listeners. This was superb and splendid as many of the participants smiled enthusiastically, to continue their characteriza-

5 Oatley, Nick/Thapa, Tashim (2012): Media, Youth and Conflict Prevention in Sierra Leone, IFP-EW, funded by the European Union. [www.ifp-ew.eu](http://www.ifp-ew.eu), last accessed: 06.12.2013.

tions. They openly brainstormed the everyday happenings in their different locations. Interestingly, most of the resulting stories were related to sexual harassment, domestic violence, land grabbing and several other issues. Participants embarked on dramatizing those stories for two days before recording them. Through these periods, they unfolded the causes, the reasons and solutions to the above mentioned topics. “We are gathering our stories from the daily happenings in our different communities and by doing so, we know that we will address issues that are of interest to the people of Sierra Leone”, says Eustace, actor and Public Relations Officer, SLADEA Freetown branch.

Konkoroma means confusion in their local languages so they believed by dramatizing these burning issues in Sierra Leone, particularly, the provincial areas would enhance awareness raising, development and peace building.

The interpretation of Konkoroma in the Sierra Leonean communities uses all possible means to achieve peace at all spheres in the country. Peace is needed for sustainable development. Through the broadcasting of this popular radio drama—Konkoroma contributes to social change of the youth and their mindsets. The feedback helps the actors and the actresses understand how their characterizations were explored. Take for instance—Bruno, Man Na Yai, they are thugs—people who are manipulated to unleash violent activities. They mirror violence and are always seen perpetrating violent activities. These actions are typical of some youths in Sierra Leone who use violence at all costs. Their characterizations will teach some people a lesson on peace building.

Of course, while there are characters who mastermind vile actions or words, there are also people who suffer when the thugs unleash their deceitful activities. Lovetta, a hardworking and upright student who firmly adheres to straight deeds and words is an obvious example of people who suffer. One of the last episodes shows us how she is upright and strong in actions and deeds. Lecturer Kabia is a notorious womaniser who threatens to ruin any female student who refuses to have sex with him. Lovetta exhibits her uprightness and awareness by acting



against his sexual harassment and involving a human rights activist who reports the case to the University administration. This episode teaches people that violence against women hampers sustainable peace.

All in all, the above characterizations are examples of the possible impacts of the radio drama and panel discussions. These lessons promote constructive change to the youth.

Like most countries Sierra Leone relies on the youth's energy and work. They are a decisive partner to joins hands with the government working for a better country that provides a vibrant economy, a united people and decent living conditions. In other words youth are the hope of the future. Youth in Sierra Leone need a sound peace education initiative that helps to develop their potential. Without a question Konkorama promotes peaceful coexistence and capacity building for youth. Through educating, informing and entertaining them it supports non-violence.

The causes of violence are essentially structural and cultural. They need to be identified and worked upon in order to foster positive change. By identifying sexual harassment, domestic violence, rape, the recent — land grabbing etc. we contribute to creating a peaceful environment, peaceful people and peaceful means of settling disputes.

Participants (actors and actresses), organisers, writers and the director believe that Konkoroma will contribute to transforming the youth from violence to non-violence. “I believe that Konkoroma shapes the perceptions of the youth and the people of our country. We as actresses and actors not only dramatize the burning issues of violence but also unearth the issues that the Sierra Leonean audience will then see and take proactive action to change”, concludes Rugiatu, one of the actresses of Konkoroma and a SLADEA member.

# **An opportunity to create peace through a model of community development and intertribal communication**

## **Meeting with the Association of Active Young People of Nkol Mbong (AJAN)**

*By Maurizio Guerrazzi\**

I had the opportunity to meet the members of AJAN one afternoon in May. They were waiting for me in their neighbourhood, on the eastern edge of Douala, sitting on a veranda. They were eager to tell me their story. After the conventional greetings, they began their testimony. What they tell me is a success story in the domain of inter tribal social skills and the prevention of conflicts.

In 2007, the young people arriving in the new neighbourhood of NKOL BONG spontaneously began to assemble: their neighbourhood, a relocation area, was trying to establish itself, but was stifled by all the difficulties of the case, such as the lack of infrastructure and security. Relocating several different families to this area brought into contact different people, ethnic groups, habits and customs, in a country like Cameroon, which is already highly diversified.

The young people become painfully aware of their difficult situation: there were no social or cultural reference points and no places where people could meet; no place to sit down and chat, the families didn't know each other, they had come from the four corners of the country and there was no infrastructure. Most of the time, the different families looked at each other with suspicion.

\* Peacemaker CPS-AGEH with CDJP Douala, Cameroon

Instead of losing themselves in the idleness and torpor of easy money through means often a far cry from legal, the response of this group of young people was commitment: together they were capable of synergies which triggered powerful cooperation between them, making them a model for the inhabitants of the new neighbourhood, even for their parents.

**Cleaning up the neighbourhood:** the new neighbourhood had to contend with a public hygiene situation that was sadly lacking. The rubbish produced was not collected and piled up at the collection points. This not only produced bad smells, but also became a place that attracts animals, which are often carriers of disease. The young people applied themselves and began to take care of rubbish collection themselves, taking the rubbish to a specific place, enabling a clear improvement in the living conditions of the population.

**Clearing of vegetation and roads:** the roads in the new neighbourhood were created temporarily to start with, but the municipal administration had not arranged them since. Nature was beginning to fight back and invade. It was becoming difficult to drive a car or motorcycle or even to walk on them. The young people endeavoured to take the situation in hand. With their own elbow grease only, they succeeded in keeping the streets free of grass and bushes. Circulation improved considerably and the population's living environment improved.

**Neighbourhood night watch:** all beginnings are difficult. The neighbourhood is situated on the edge of the city. The people of Nkol Mbong work mainly in the centre of town. This means commuting which takes a long time, and getting back home at night. The inhabitants of the neighbourhood became prey to petty thieves who took advantage of the absence of street lighting and the presence of lots of bushes to hide in to attack people coming home from work late at night. The young people of AJAN then formed small organised groups to watch and patrol the

streets of the neighbourhood, allowing the people who work in town to come home without being attacked and robbed.

**Inauguration of the football pitch:** interaction and consequently communication are the key to combating all kinds of stereotypes and misunderstandings. The young people realised that the only way the people in the new neighbourhood could grow together and learn to know one another, or even respect each other, would be to have appropriate places to meet. Then they saw an opportunity to seize a large area to make a football pitch. Sport allows informal meetings, allows people to get to know one another, and to relax from the stress of the week.

In this way, AJAN's activities solve a multitude of problems for the families. The population's social life and communication have improved, driven by ethnic inclusion and the social involvement of the group of Active Young People of Nkol Mbong. The parents then decide to support the young people working as part of AJAN. The work begun is of quality and built on social integration and the peaceful building of a neighbourhood. The parents of different ethnic groups then agreed to provide moral and financial support to the work of their young people and they set up an organisation called CERAN, (the Circle of reflection and action for the development of Nkol Mbong), which pays the young people for the work they do, and takes up their work to continue it at a higher level. The spontaneous cleaning of the public areas became advocacy towards the urban community and Hysacam, the refuse collection company; the combat against petty crime and night watch on the streets became advocacy vis-a-vis the electricity company and the urban community, to connect the neighbourhood to the grid and provide street lights. The community of Nkol Mbong, united and committed around AJAN and CERAN, are winning several combats that led to the establishing of a neighbourhood with better facilities.

A success story that is based on the commitment of the young people. Success that is based on communication and the breaking down of



the barriers and stereotypes between tribes. Success on a social level, on a political level, on the level of personal enrichment, on a human level, and on the level of intercultural communication and peace.

The group was able to grow and flourish in its cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity. Some of the young people had already had a similar experience, when they came from families who raised their children in a region other than their home region. In this way, a “Beti” who grew up in the South-west region, or a “Tupuri” who grew up in the Centre region was already—per se—an example of integration for the other members.

The group was able to gradually integrate new members, young people who came to the neighbourhood with no family ties to the existing inhabitants and who were able to find in this group a social reference point and a model of life.

The group is today a beacon for the youngest, helping them with their schoolwork (repetition) and raising their awareness of activities of social commitment.

AJAN is the vision of the Cameroon of tomorrow, where ethnic and tribal differences could be a source of enrichment for the population and no longer a factor that divides and creates conflict. The day will come when we shall be capable of growing together. We will be able to remove the boundaries that divide ethnic groups and tribes, and we will be able to feel we are members of a greater group. United in diversity, the new Cameroonians, from different corners of the country, from Nkol Mbong, for example, will be capable of building a great country in peace.

# The role of school clubs and youth organisations in promoting a culture of peace

By Salif Mforain Mouassie\*

If someone were to ask me what the best legacy is a Nation can leave to its youth, without hesitation I would say peace. Note that I said peace and not fear. The distinction is worth making, for the two notions are not based on the same foundations. With peace, we associate a certain joy and desire to live together in mutual respect and understanding, because we find in this an ideal of shared well-being and the prosperity of all. Over fear, peace has the advantage of originating from a shared feeling of the benefits of maintaining cordial relations of solidarity. This is a question of the values and inner convictions that inspire the individuals sharing a given living space, whether a club, organisation or even a country. These individuals develop such values because they find them well-founded, not because they fear some kind of repression. This is what is commonly called a culture of peace. When we say a culture of peace among young people, we mean a global, participatory approach that allows them to develop and interiorise objective and practical arguments about the values and attitudes that fuel community life and the desire to live together. These are the values of tolerance, mutual comprehension, respect and civility which, according to Irène Drolet, must be based on *“universal principles, while at the same time drawing on the traditions and customs specific to each society”*<sup>1</sup>. Stability — rooted in

<sup>1</sup> Irène Drolet, in “Education à la citoyenneté en Afrique subsaharienne”, collective work

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convictions and values developed by individuals who share the same daily reality—is sustainable, even enduring. Whereas when based on fear, worry about repression, stability is merely the apparent calm before the storm, for instead of looking at the situation straight on, greasing the cogs to facilitate the peaceful and harmonious cohabitation of the mechanism, we use a hammer to force the world to believe that everything is stable and rigid. As a result, sooner or later, depending on the weight of the roller, the joints end up giving way under the weight of the friction and with a scrunch, everything is lost. This is not the peace we are talking about as a legacy for our descendents, but a deep and sincere peace founded on solid bases. This explains the importance of a culture of peace among young people using all the channels available, including clubs and organisation that nowadays are undeniable instruments of socialisation. They bring together, at school and in the neighbourhood, large or small numbers of young people not necessarily from the same milieu, and therefore with different realities. One thing unites them: the vision of the movement.

This contribution hopes to address the following three vital concerns: what is the contribution of youth clubs and organisation as a milieu for socialisation in promoting a culture of peace? Do these organisations meet the necessary conditions for playing this role? And, lastly, what type of guidance do they require to better accomplish their mission?

## Youth clubs and organisations...

For young people to contribute to promoting sustainable peace requires work of inventory, but especially of organising. Fortunately, this task is made clear thanks to the development and even institutionalisation of school clubs specifically, and organisations generally. Before we tackle the role of these contemporary socialisation instruments head-on, it is important to harmonise our understanding of the concepts. Apart from the home environment, we wanted to look at two spaces young

people share with people from different backgrounds, that is to say school and society in general. At school, there are clubs where pupils get together for after-school activities which contribute to the overall education of the citizen, alongside book knowledge. These clubs bring together pupils curious about topics of interest to the community, the nation or humanity as a whole and are placed under the supervision of the school. Generally, there is a newspaper club, a health club, a human rights club, environment club, etc. Whatever the configuration, these clubs bring together individuals who come from different backgrounds and who therefore necessarily have different ways of seeing things.

Outside the school walls, are other, much more open groups, who break down barriers in education, ethnic or religious affiliation, gender, etc. and assemble young people from all strata of society. These are youth organisations that are open in nature. It is true that these groups may also be thematic, restricted or even tribal. What we are interested in here is the responsibility of young people in the running of these groups much more than the subject. Thus a difference can be established between the organisations that work in favour of young people and the movements that rally young people.

Whatever the case, the idea is to show how these groups help prepare youth for a sense of collective living and solidarity.

## School clubs and youth organisations as a framework to prepare young people for a culture of peace

In a multicultural country such as Cameroon, while this is not their main purpose, youth clubs and organisations are important instruments for fostering a culture of peace, peaceful cohabitation and tolerance of difference among the teenagers and young people who frequent them. They learn to live together with people they do not know, to respect various cultures and religions which in another context would come into conflict, and eventually interiorise these values unconsciously if not

naturally, breaking through the differences and embracing the common good. This happens most often when the groups are secular and non tribal, even though it must be said that even religious or ethnic groups, due to the somewhat naïve and idealist vision adolescents and young people have of the world, can also contribute to building a world of peace through intercultural dialogue. This is achieved through organised courtesy and friendship visits, mutual invitations to take part in each other's activities, organising friendly competitions between organisations of the same nature but belonging to different spheres (associations of young Baleng people vs. cultural associations of the young Bamoun people, Islamic club vs. Choir club, etc.).

This being said, whatever the topic selected, the most important aspect is sharing experience and wanting to do things together, for this prepares young people for ideal cohesion in the respect of difference, the culture of fair-play and love of transparency. Achieving these ideals requires a democratised space where all the members feel free but also feel that they are the depositories of group cohesion. Which calls for the establishment of rules jointly adopted by all the members, preceded by the organising of open debate in which other people's opinions are respected, you have to ask to speak, argue one's point, etc. and lastly, the organising of regular, transparent elections. It is true that these conditions are not always respected to the letter, but the youths strive to meet them, while at the same time remaining tolerant and jointly/reciprocally critical. It should be noted that most of the conflicts in Africa and the world have two root causes: the refusal of differences and the lack of fair-play. Which leads to political or politicised crises (Central African Republic, Syria, Southern Sudan, etc.), ideological and/or cultural crises (persistent differences between Shiites and Sunnites in the Arab world), the proliferation of terrorist movements (Boko Haram sect in Nigeria or the Al Qaida movement...). We can understand, then, that encouraging young people to open up to each other teaches them to tolerate difference and therefore to cultivate the fair-play that is lacking in the antagonists of world crises, who are guided essentially by their own

economic interests and maintaining or grabbing power instead of creating the bases of a better way to live together.

Beyond mere belonging, the activities run by this particular kind of organisation facilitate dialogue between cultures, the respect of common property, mutual comprehension or even fair-play, thereby promoting the culture of peace among young people. Two examples:

First of all, the spreading of volunteer activities or community action. It must be said that school clubs and related organisations grow up around centres of interest that go beyond the interests of the individual. And precisely, their activities evolve around these centres of interest and benefit the whole community. Illustrations would be a health club raising young people's awareness of HIV/AIDS, a young pro-feminist organisation campaigning in protest of violence against women, a group of young people from an arid village campaigning for the replanting of trees, etc. As we know, the respect of common property is also an important asset for keeping the peace.

Then, we can underline the spreading of sports and cultural activities, which trivialise and transcend differences. We should point out that for sports and cultural-artistic activities constitute not only places where young people can express themselves, but also and especially where they can learn the values of tolerance and collective living. All these values, as we said, are indispensable to a peaceful society.

It should be noted, however, that these organisations (school clubs and youth clubs) can only effectively fulfil this role under certain conditions, which are guidance from adults and the openness of the kids to learn and cooperate with mutual respect.

## Guiding young people through the socialisation process and promoting a culture of peace

If we agree that youth clubs and organisations contribute to promoting a culture of peace, society would generally benefit from encouraging young people to take part. Unfortunately this is not always the case, all the more so since adults often perceive them as places for debauchery, wasting time and idleness. In addition, some who approach these movements use them as powerful propaganda instruments and for manipulation at opportune moments. For the same reasons, the people in charge of the school establishments believe that investing in the clubs is a waste of precious resources, which is a mistake. Investing in school clubs and youth organisations means working towards peaceful cohabitation and sustainable peace in society. Instead of incriminating the amateurism of these movements, the adults would benefit from supporting them and especially encouraging their determination to participate in the development of their communities and country.

We are talking about guidance and not manipulation and definitely not subjugation. Because in the name of a real concern to give young people guidance, many 'angel-faced torturers' have found a fertile new ground for settling scores and self-promotion. Instead of encouraging the participation of young people as major players in development, we divide them and at the same time prepare a generation to be ready for violent conflicts. As an illustration, when a member of the elite wants to become President of the village natives club in town, representative of the chief or President of the development committee, he remembers the village youth club, while demanding that the chief be advised of this support, better watch out if you contact his adversary or accept something from them. The same goes for those who support sports competitions during election campaigns and prevent you from inviting their rival to the final, in order to remain sole master. Otherwise, why do the elites only agree to support youth in highly visible actions, on condition that they are the only promoters in view? Why are donations to young-

sters only handed over in the spotlight? Certainly not to encourage good practices. What adults forget is that young people have their own convictions. And so youth is divided, development undermined and sustainable peace compromised. These are merely a few examples from among so many others. The school clubs that are only supported when a justification is needed for embezzled funds, the youth organisations that are listed and invited as a way of mobilising resources to further personal interests... With this situation, young people seeking their bearings feel lost or fall back into small fanatical groups. Which can lead to violent forms of expression (violent demonstrations, alcohol, drugs, etc.) in the event of disagreement. To be effective, youth guidance requires the respect of their opinions. It is not a question of dictating what they should do, but of supporting their usually innovative initiatives. Young people can only thrive and create if they have freedom of spirit and therefore freedom of thought to favour their expression. Whereas if they are confined and instrumentalised, sooner or later they end up exploding. Youth guidance can be provided in two ways. Through advice and direction, then capacity building. In a climate of mutual respect and confidence, the adults must give practical advice through the sharing of experience to help the younger generation find their way. This sharing of experience can be used to capitalise on acquired knowledge and avoid the mistakes of the past. The other impact of this guidance would be to boost the confidence of these young community activists, to reassure their parents and encourage the hesitant to become socially involved. Beyond ideas and advice, adult guidance can take the form of training on subjects that boost citizenship. Cross-cutting themes such as leadership, communication techniques, life skills, citizenship and volunteering (...), in a word, all the subjects that could contribute to the building of a citizen with integrity can be broached.

Naturally, this guidance requires a little effort from the young themselves in terms of openness, cooperation and mutual respect.



## Conclusion:

As we can see, difference constitutes a problem when we are withdrawn, and a great source of wealth when we are open towards the world. It enriches and completes us. Except that this perception is not quite so easy when one has not been prepared for it from an early age. Although it is not clearly stated, school clubs and youth organisations prepare and familiarise young people with the idea of peaceful cohabitation but also of preserving the common interest to the detriment of difference. By allowing young people to get used to living together around common interests, we facilitate tolerance of difference as a source of enrichment, interiorise fair-play as a life value and promote a culture of peace. Unfortunately, it is increasingly difficult for young people to find their bearings in their community. Instead of finding answers to their concerns, they feel manipulated and used. Beyond school clubs and youth organisations, platforms for youth dialogue and expression should be spread beyond national borders for the same reasons we have just illustrated.



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State Department, United States of America, *What is democracy?*

*The African youth charter*

# **“The desert or the underground” – a film about young Cameroonians that is of interest to German teenagers**

*By Agnes Sander\**

My name is Agnes Sander. I was a peace worker in Cameroon on the Civil Peace Service (CPS) programme between June 2010 and May 2013. My work consisted in supporting the protestant youth movement, which is rallying within the Council of Protestant Churches of Cameroon (CEPCA) for sustainable peace in Cameroon. A goal that is so grandiose it is overwhelming!

One of the essential foundations of the CPS programme in Cameroon was the hunger protests that took place in February 2008. For various social, political and economic reasons, young people took to the streets of the major cities in Cameroon and demonstrated for their rights as human beings, often with violence. These protests did not have the effect that the young people hoped for. Unemployment, the lack of prospects and the hopelessness remain the same. More than 50% of the population of Cameroon is under 18. A young society that does not give voice to or make space for young people!

My work focused on these young people, to help them foster a culture of peace which would enable them to fight for their rights without violence and work on their conflicts in a constructive and sustainable way.

\* In charge of Peace education in the “Zivil statt militärisch” (civilian not military) programme Aktionsgemeinschaft Dienst für den Frieden e.V. (AGDF)

Since July 2013, I have been continuing my work on peace and conflict-related issues in Germany. The Peace Service Action Committee (AGDF) contacted me after I returned to Germany, as they were looking for someone who had worked on the CPS programme and who could incorporate their experience into peace training in Germany. In collaboration with two regional Churches and the Circle for Peace in Halle (Friedenskreis Halle e.V.) they set up the “Civilian not military” project (“Zivil statt militärisch” in German). The idea was that someone who had worked on peace issues with civil methods abroad should talk about their experience in Germany in order to inform German society about the possibilities of working in and on conflict without the use of violent or military means.

The work that I currently do focuses a lot on the experience I gained in Cameroon.

When I worked in Cameroon I had already come across and worked with the film called “The desert or the underground”. It was made by BJ Perlmutter, along with a team of young people under the direction of Flaubert Djateng and Christiane Kayser, in 2009 in Bafoussam, a large town in western Cameroon. The film tells the story of two young people, Claire and Samba, who have great ambitions for their lives and also for their country and who suffer from a system marked by corruption and the exclusion of young people from power. In Cameroon we used this film to facilitate discussions with young people about their own lives, their dreams and the choices they are faced with: using violence as a means to achieve a goal or opting for non-violence; staying or leaving.

In the project I am working on now in Germany I still work with the film “The desert or the underground”, but the focus is—of course—quite different. Up till now I have shown the film in schools to groups of young Germans from 14 to 17 years old. I will describe how the work goes:

The main goal of working with the film is to inform people in Germany about the situation of young people in Cameroon. In the discus-

sions, I also try to create understanding and another perspective on the decision many Africans make to leave their country, risk their lives in the hope of a better life in Europe.

After a small introduction and individual presentations we play a game for which everyone stands up. The participants walk around the room and greet each other in the German fashion. This is followed by Japanese greetings, Nepalese, etc. until we reach the greetings in Cameroon (shake hands and then snap your fingers). The journey to Cameroon begins! After this small game the young people sit down and I give them some information about Cameroon, the situation of the country's youth and the reasons behind the hunger protests in 2008 and how they took place. Afterwards we watch most of the film "The desert or the underground" together. I stop the film before it becomes clear what decisions Samba and Claire are going to make for their lives: will Samba leave Cameroon and try to make the long journey to Europe? Will Claire stay in her country to try to stamp out the fire and preserve Cameroonian traditions?

This is precisely the question I ask after the film: What do you think? What will they decide to do? Stay in Cameroon? Leave the country?

This question opens up a general discussion about the film. The reactions of the young people who have watched the film have been positive up till now. These are young Germans who are seeing pictures of daily life in an African country for the first time and they don't feel too far removed from the Cameroonians. When I ask them what they think they would do in Samba's situation most of them say they understand his decision to leave the country and that they would no doubt make the same decision.

With "The desert or the underground" I show the young Germans that their Cameroonian peers are first and foremost young people who want the same things they do: to enjoy themselves, travel the world, take part in society, be taken seriously, follow their visions and their dreams...

For me, this film is a very precious tool which allows me to easily thematise the challenges facing Cameroonian youth. Up until now, the people who have come to my workshops have enjoyed the film, and appreciated the fact that it doesn't show the stereotype of Africa they've seen in the media, but an African country which is, of course, different from Germany, but where the people take decisions the Germans can understand and suffer from unbearable problems. In a workshop one day a young woman told me she didn't understand why so many foreigners wanted to come to Europe. Why do they have this perfect image of Europe and of life in Europe she wondered? In the same group there were some youths who understood the desperation of young people who leave their home and the family they love, for uncertainty. "Nobody wants to leave their home and family and friends, but imagine a situation so hopeless that you can't see any other way out."

The discussions after the film are very interesting and constructive. I still continue to experiment with the film. If someone gives me more than 90 minutes with a group of young people one day I shall have them do role playing and act the parts of Samba and Claire. What a fine challenge with this excellent film! I thank Flaubert and Christiane and all those who took part in it!



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