

### 5.3 Ghana: Developing an institutional framework for sustainable peace – UN, government and civil society collaboration for conflict prevention

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**The reason for Ghana's current stability can be found in the initiatives for responding to violent conflicts and sustaining peace. Recently the UN has put effort to support intra communal peacebuilding initiatives and more significantly, found the need to partner with civil society organisations who have been active in peacebuilding. The implementation of a peace architecture has many challenges in its implementation within the context of the tripartite partnership and the political will to complete the architecture and render it fully operational and functional.**

In October 2007, Oxfam International together with the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) and Saferworld published a report on the cost of conflicts in Africa. With a caption Africa's Missing Billions<sup>40</sup>, the report underscores the enormity of the cost of armed violence and the associated human tragedy estimated at 18 billion dollars per year.

Among the countries cited in the report is Ghana. Apart from the direct cost in monetary terms, the Oxfam report is so relevant to the context of Ghana. There are about 300 conflicts dotted across the country with a concentration of these conflicts in the three northern regions of the country. Between 1980 and October 2002, not less than 23 violent conflicts took place in the northern part of Ghana. The consequence of these conflicts was considerable loss to life and property. It is estimated that up to 5,000 people died as a result of the Konkomba-Nanumba conflict in 1994 and in 1994. Fourteen out of the 23 conflicts occurred between 1990 and 2002. Of the 23 conflicts that took place between 1980 and 2002, twenty of them were inter-ethnic in nature often involving different coalitions or alliances.<sup>41</sup> Five of the seventeen ethnic groups in the northern region, namely the Dagomba, Gonja, Konkomba, Nanumba and Nawuri have been primary active combatant groups in the different permutations of the

fourteen out of the seventeen conflicts that have occurred in the region. These regions and the areas of high conflict volatility are also the poorest in Ghana as intra communal armed violence has been devastating, impeding development and creating a deep sense of resentment and hatred amongst contending ethnic groups and communities. The sustained presence of mutual suspicion and distrust impacts negatively on social and political activity. In an environment of competitive multi-party politics, polarisation as a result of communal violent conflicts is often exacerbated by political competition. Either politicians exploit the social fissures and fault lines of the conflicts to gain political advantage over their opponents or it is the communities who form coalitions along political lines and perceive political power in the hands of an opposing political party which has the support of their adversaries to be a threat to their interests and well being. Such a volatile environment often produces violent escalation of conflicts with little warning<sup>42</sup>.

There are growing concerns about the impacts of these conflicts on both sub-regional and regional stability as well as security, the implications of which are adverse on economic growth, environment and development. The impacts of these conflicts have been severest on the vulnerable groups such as the aged, women and children reversing many development efforts in the conflict zones. These conflicts have also resulted in a profound reduction in foreign investor confidence and regional

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40 Read Briefing Paper number 107, published 11th October 2007.

41 To understand inter-ethnic alliances in the Northern region, read *Conflicts, Civil Society Organizations and Community Peacebuilding Practices in Northern Ghana* by Emmanuel Bombande in *Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana* edited by Steve Tonah- Woeli Publishing Services, Accra. 2007

42 In November 1994, an argument over the price of a guinea fowl between two young men from the Nanumba and Konkomba ethnic groups in the village of Nakpayili led to the worst ever internal conflict in Ghana involving seven ethnic groups.

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productive labour leading to the intensification of poverty and under-development.

The structural or underlying causes of these conflicts have often been left unaddressed in responding to violent conflicts in Ghana. Each violent escalation in the past left behind a historical legacy and the burden of the vanquished against the victors. With little effort at intra and inter communal reconciliation, the wounds of armed violence lingers on only to recur with the least provocation between the groups in conflict. Since the beginning of Ghana's post independence years, the use of military and coercive strategies to enforce peace often increased the suspicion of communities against governments. The leverage of governments overtime became eroded making it impossible to be seen as intermediaries in communal violent conflicts. Political leaders often operated under the assumption that once violence was suppressed, the conflict was dealt with or that at least it will gradually fizzle out and a return to peace will ensue. In many instances, a committee of inquiry was formed<sup>43</sup> to investigate the circumstances that perpetuated violence and make recommendations to the government for appropriate intervention.

These approaches have been fundamentally flawed both in their assumptions and practice. First of all, most commissions of inquiry will determine perpetrators in the conflicts and try to recommend the set of sanctions the government should implement to deter the particular group from repeating their actions in the future. Within the context of the protracted issues underlying violence, it was always difficult for any group to concede that they were perpetrators in violence. Governments also could not have a political will to impose any recommended sanctions as that will mean losing votes in the next elections on which the sanctions will be imposed. The work of the commissions of inquiry for these reasons was often never implemented nor was any step taken beyond peace enforcement through the military to build and sustain peace.

### **Redefining peacebuilding through civil society initiatives**

Following the outbreak of armed violence in 1994 and

1995 involving the Konkomba with their allies the Bassare, Nchumuru, and Nawuri against the Nanumba with their ally ethnic groups, the Dagombas and Gonja, a different approach initiated by Civil Society through Non-Governmental Organisations re-defined the approach to peacebuilding in Ghana. During the 1994 war, much of the development infrastructure that had been put in place prior to the conflict was damaged or destroyed. Continuous conflict made new development work impossible and many organizations abandoned their development programs. In Bimbilla for example, the German Development Organisation GTZ pulled out of the district abandoning ongoing projects. NGOs were turning into relief rather than development organisations, while some of them were caught in the 'rumour mill' suggesting they were sympathetic to some ethnic groups over others.

The entry into peacebuilding work was as a result of a re-thinking and an appreciation that peacebuilding and development work ought to be integrated. This would ensure that once communities owned the process of finding mutually acceptable solutions to problems that divide them, development programs could become sustainable without continuous outside help. In addition, the nature of protracted conflicts in Ghana required peacebuilding interventions that went beyond the search for short-term solutions to immediate crisis. Peacebuilding must be designed to challenge values and attitudes as well as beliefs to ensure conflict transformation at personal, relational, cultural, and structural levels.

NGOs formed a working group called the Inter-NGO Consortium. They organised and facilitated a series of peace and reconciliation consultations and workshops among the warring ethnic groups. Follow-up and planning committees were formed from the different ethnic groups in the region to work with the

<sup>43</sup> The most recent Commission of Inquiry was appointed on 25th April 2002 by His Excellency President John Agyekum Kufour, through Constitutional Instrument, 2002 (C.I.36). The President appointed this Commission of Inquiry chaired by Justice I.N.K. Wuaku, to investigate the Yendi disturbance of 25th to 27th March, 2002, identify the perpetrators, and make appropriate recommendations to the President.

Consortium. Between May 1995 and April 1996 five meetings and consultations were organized in Kumasi as well as numerous others in Bimbilla, Gushegu/Karaga, Saboba, Salaga, Yendi, and Zabzugu/Tatale aimed at creating consensus on the need for peace and reconciliation, building confidence among the warring ethnic communities, as well as searching for solutions to the outstanding issues of conflict underlying the wars.

At the fourth Kumasi meeting, 48 delegates from seven ethnic groups constituting chiefs, members of a government mediation team, opinion and youth leaders were invited to work towards the search for durable resolution to the conflicts. The Consortium facilitated a series of bilateral and multilateral negotiations aimed at identifying the issues clearly and finding solutions that are acceptable to all the parties involved. On February 29, 1996, the delegates severally and jointly agreed to a draft document which outlined the agreements reached on the contentious issues presented in the negotiations. The draft agreement was then taken by the delegates to their respective communities for extensive consultation, discussion and feed-back with all segments of their community. After four weeks, the delegates returned to Kumasi to report on the outcome of their consultation processes, to incorporate into the draft agreement the feed-back and amendments generated by the consultations, as well as, when necessary, to renegotiate the draft agreement. After these processes, on March 28th, 1996, the delegates signed a document which was called the Kumasi Accord on Peace and Reconciliation between the Various Ethnic Groups in the Northern Region of Ghana.

### **UN support for peace architecture in Ghana**

For the first time, adversary communities in Ghana were successfully brought together to jointly search for mutual solutions to underlying issues that erupted into violence. The Ghana example was appreciated within the peacebuilding community and by many governments. When in 2002 another eruption of violence within the Dagombas led to the slaying of the King of Dagbon and many of his elders and close advisors, the precedent from the response to the Konkomba-Nanumba conflict informed a new approach.

The UN for the first time was involved through the Resident Coordinator at the invitation of Civil Society. In March 2003, the Government of Ghana declared a state of emergency in the Dagbon Traditional Area. This was due to the escalation of armed violence as result of a long and simmering intra-Dagbon conflict which degenerated into deeper crisis. The issues of contention revolve around the kingship of Dagbon in which the two royal families,<sup>44</sup> the Abudu and Andani claim legitimacy to the throne. Following the eruption in violence, high level government delegations including Ministers of State, a Parliamentary delegation and heads of security agencies visited the conflict area. A UN team from New York visited as well on an assessment mission.

The Government also set up the Wuaku Commission of inquiry to determine the facts leading to the escalation in violence and to identify the perpetrators. After the Commission completed its work, the Government accepted its report and issued a white paper relating to its implementation. The President also set up a Committee of three eminent chiefs under the chairmanship of the Asantehene, to look primarily at the traditional issues relating to the conflict. The committee of eminent chiefs have worked with the two royal families to produce a road map that will lead to the restoration of peace. Its implementation has been challenging revealing further the protracted nature of such intra-communal conflict.

### **First Round Table Consultations at Akosombo**

Against the background of the declaration of a state of emergency in March 2003, the Government of Ghana reviewed the security situation in the region and reported to parliament in order for the state of emergency to be maintained. The challenge to Government was that it could not continue such emergency security management arrangements through parliament without tangible progress report on the state of building peace in the region. The presence of the

<sup>44</sup> The Abudu and Andani are families are known more as ‘gates’ resulting from the rotational system of ascending the throne. The concept of gate resonates with the conduit through which an Abudu or Andani can become King.

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Ghana Armed Forces on the ground was not enough except to ensure that lives and property was protected while law and order was maintained. In this regard, the acting Minister of the Interior who was also the Minister for Defence Dr. Addo Kuffour, sought support from Civil Society to provide facilitated dialogue amongst the key stakeholders in the conflict. The Minister contacted directly the Konrad Adenauer Foundation office in Accra to coordinate and support such effort.

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation, a German Development Organisation in turn sought the expertise of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) to facilitate the dialogue process. At the time of the request, WANEP was following-up on important mediation work between the Mamprusis and Kusasis in the Bawku municipality which produced tangible results for inter communal reconciliation and peace.<sup>45</sup> The preliminary assessment to bring together the Abudus and Andanis, the main stakeholders in the conflict suggested that the Andanis from which clan the King came from were unwilling to participate in such dialogue. WANEP then redesigned a strategy in which Akosombo will take the form of a general consultation with various actors including members of Government. Once the Abudus were represented in this meeting, a second meeting could then be organised in Tamale separately for Andanis. In the planning, WANEP and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation further sought the moderating role of the UN resident coordinator. Such a role will increase the leverage of the dialogue and provide more confidence amongst the participants about a transparent and professional facilitation process in

<sup>45</sup> Following general elections in 2000, Bawku an important town in the Upper East Region imploded in violence with a recurrence of armed violence between the Mamprusis and Kusasis. WANEP led a civil society mediation effort that culminated in a mutual agreement for co-existence and peace. Peace in Bawku has since been sustained and provides a good example of the role of CSO in mediation efforts.

<sup>46</sup> The committee included members of parliament from both the Abudu and Andani factions of the Dagbon conflict. All political parties had a representative each. The Security Agencies were represented by their top commanders. The author of this paper Emmanuel Bombande was a member of the committee and provided technical expertise. He submitted a working paper entitled *A Discussion paper on the Effective and Collaborative Management of the Dagbon Crisis* to the Minister for internal discussion at cabinet level.

which the international community through the resident coordinator was a witness.

For the first time, the UNDP in Ghana was engaged directly through a resident coordinator in an intra-communal conflict. The UN hitherto had limited itself to research and assessment reports of flash points of conflicts in Ghana. With particular reference to the conflict amongst the Abudus and Andanis, a UN team visited the Northern Region on an assessment mission. This was however misunderstood amongst the communities as a UN intervention in the conflict. The role of the UNDP after this initial engagement was to change with the appointment of a Peace and Governance Advisor.

Coming from a Civil Society peacebuilding background, the UNDP Peace and Conflict Advisor in Ghana immediately engaged with Civil Society organisations through various meetings and consultations to develop a framework for peace architecture in Ghana. In the meantime, the Ministry of the Interior gave prominence to peacebuilding as a strategic focus of the ministry considering the difficulties on hand in the Dagbon traditional area. The Minister for the Interior set up a Peacebuilding Support Unit in the Ministry. The substantive Minister Hon. Hackman Owusu Agyeman also set up an Advisory Committee on the Dagbon crisis which he chaired personally.<sup>46</sup> The circumstances in Ghana around the Dagbon protracted conflict created the conditions to rethink the responses to armed conflicts at community level in Ghana. All the efforts including the work of a committee of inquiry, the efforts of the committee of eminent chiefs and peacekeeping by the armed forces pointed clearly to the daunting challenges of managing intra communal violence in Ghana. The concept of a peace architecture was therefore timely as it was welcomed by Government and Civil Society.

### **The peace architecture**

Peacebuilding efforts must be understood as a collective effort in which government and civil society work collaboratively to enhance human security. The peace architecture in Ghana was a product of such consultation with government and civil society

coordinated by the UNDP. In its opening paragraph, the framework recognises the collaborative approach to building peace. It states, *“The national architecture for peace brings civil society groups, community organisations, professional bodies and faith based organisations together with governance structures and security agencies, into a national framework for anticipating and responding to signs of conflict”*. The framework elaborates on the importance of establishing architecture with the capacity to respond to the signs of conflicts, acknowledging that whereas Ghana is a stable country, it experiences myriads of conflicts at community levels. The background to the development of the architecture for peace draws on the UN support for peace in the Northern Region as discussed in the preceding pages of this paper. Whereas not much emphasis was put on the role of civil society peacebuilding practice in informing the development of the architecture, it is instructive that there is a strong partnership between Government, the UNDP and Civil Society in the implementation of the architecture. Apart from inputting into the draft of the framework, WANEP has always been available in providing expertise and technical support in the implementation of the architecture. WANEP co-facilitated the training for members of the National Peace Council (NPC).

The National Peace Council (NPC) was constituted following consultations with all stakeholders including political associations. Considering that at the political level, many issues are often polarised along the political divide, it was important that members of the NPC carry leverage and high moral standing and respect amongst the citizenry. The membership is currently made up of very renowned and respected Ghanaians of distinction including Roman Catholic Cardinal Peter Turkson; Maulvi Wahab Adam, Ameer of the Ahmadiyya Movement; the National Chief Imam, Sheik Sharabutu; Bishop Francis Lodonu of the Catholic Diocese of Ho; Pastor Mensah Otabil; Professor Irene Odotei, among others. The calibre of these individuals and the integrity they bring both individually and collectively to the NPC makes it a non-partisan body providing a national platform for consensus building on potentially divisive issues, as well as promoting national reconciliation.

Below the NPC is the Regional Peace Council (RPC). In consultation with the UNDP and the Ministry of the Interior, WANEP designed the content and outline of training for members of the RPCs. Each of the training sessions was preceded by the official launch of the RPC in each region. Government ministers at the regional level often presided and launched the RPC after which WANEP staff conducted intensive training for members of the council. In some regions, the Regional Ministers sat through the trainings and contributed impressively to discussions in regards sustaining peace and responding to violent conflicts in their region. Out of the ten regions, RPC trainings have taken place in six regions.

The importance of the RPC in conflict prevention has to be understood in the context of the national security arrangements for Ghana. At the national level, the National Security Council is chaired by the President while at the regional level; the Regional Security Councils are chaired by the Regional Ministers. This security apparatus is primarily concerned with the security of the state and disturbances that disrupt law and order. They have been reactive to violent conflicts rather than responding to signs of the conflicts. The Security Councils make the decisions regarding most the enforcement of peace through measures such as imposing state of emergencies and deploying the police and military to suppress violence. With the establishment of the RPC, it is anticipated that there will be a good compliment that acts proactively to prevent violence by creating spaces for dialogue and more importantly, engage on addressing deep rooted issues that have often been left unaddressed for decades providing ground for inter and intra communal feuding and bloodletting.

Under the Regional Peace Councils should be the District Peace Councils (DPCs). This level of the architecture has not yet been implemented. The establishment of the DPC will complete the decentralisation of the mechanism for conflict prevention which Ghana needs urgently to sustain its image as a peaceful and stable country. Here again, the role of civil society in advocating for a full implementation of the peace architecture becomes

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important although recognition has to be made that in Ghana, the first steps have been taken to put in place a sustainable mechanism for peacebuilding. The role of civil society should also be understood in how they complement one another at various levels from national to regional and international. The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is the worldwide civil society organisation making meaningful linkages and engagement with Governments, the UN and Regional Organisations. GPPAC is structured in fifteen regions with WANEP being the regional secretariat for West Africa. Each of these regions produced a regional action agenda that fed into a Global Action Agenda. This agenda was launched and presented to the UN Secretary General at the GPPAC global conference at UN headquarters in July 2005. The impact of GPPAC as a global network has provided leverage for civil society partnerships on peace and human security at national levels with the UN and Governments.

Although the peace architecture in Ghana is yet to reach its optimum potential, it has attracted a lot of interest from many countries. Earlier in the year a Team of Provincial Commissioners<sup>47</sup> from Kenya came to Ghana on a working visit to understudy the Ghanaian initiative of establishing peace architecture. During their tour of Ghana, they held meetings with various stakeholders involved in the implementation of the peace architecture. At WANEP, there was an interesting conversation regarding the inter-exchange of African experiences and lessons from peacebuilding efforts. Kenya presents an interesting comparative analysis for managing inter-communal violence. Just as the northern region of Ghana experiences frequent outbreaks of inter and intra communal violence, the Rift Valley of Kenya is riddled with similar conflicts. The peace architecture in Ghana should be an interesting framework that should inform similar work in Kenya and elsewhere.

### Challenges and lessons learned

Normally when we think of peacebuilding we tend to think of a localized activity that primarily relies, and is dependent upon, the efforts of local communities with selective outsider assistance to facilitate peace

processes. It is critical that outsider agency roles and support is limited to providing the framework for good facilitated processes. It is the communities and the people directly and indirectly afflicted by the conflict who should find the enabling space in the good facilitated processes provided to mutually engage one another in the substantive issues and the underlying assumptions and perceptions around inter and intra communal relationships.<sup>48</sup> In this regard, the peace architecture should be decentralised so that ownership of peacebuilding processes is in the hands of communities while outsider assistance could facilitate processes. The weakness of the peace architecture in Ghana is the absence of a political will to fully enable the peace architecture to function fully from the District Peace Councils to the Regional and the National Peace Council. The DPCs have not been formed. Not all the regions have RPCs. Budgetary support is absent making the councils ineffective as relevant infrastructure for peace.

Another observation discusses the question of mandate. In order to sustain the architecture through various governments and ensure that it operates always above partisan political divide, it is important that there is statutory legislation passed in parliament to provide a legal mandate to the National Peace Council as well as the Regional and yet to be established District Peace Councils. A good argument for such a legal backing is that the work of the various councils in the peace architecture will have the necessary leverage that makes it visible in all communities as a state institution. In this regard, it will facilitate the work of the councils whenever they invited various stakeholders to participate in peacebuilding activities. Whereas the credentials and good standing of members of the Peace Council provides the type of leverage required to build sustainable peace in Ghana, there is another dimension in which one of the lingering legacies from the colonial

47 Provincial Commissioners in Kenya is equivalent to Regional Ministers in Ghana.

48 Emmanuel Bombande makes the argument about distinguishing substance from process in an unpublished paper: Visions and Experiences of Southern Civil Society Organisations: Perceived and Expected roles of donors. October 2007.

era is the overwhelming presence and authority of the state in social organisation and the lives of people. All peacebuilding initiatives and third party mediation that make progress often require from the communities, an endorsement or sort of blessing from the state and the Government in power before it is complete.<sup>49</sup> It is therefore to inspire confidence in communities to respond to the invitation of the National Peace Council that makes a legal instrument necessary.

The broad policy objective for the framework of the peace architecture is to enable and facilitate the development of mechanisms for cooperation among all the relevant stakeholders in peacebuilding in Ghana. The policy direction also outlines promoting cooperative problem solving to conflicts to produce outcomes that lead to conflict transformation, social, political and religious reconciliation and transformative dialogues. The specific objectives under the broad policy objective have to be translated into an effective mechanism that is practical and concrete within the context of existing security arrangements available for management of security. It is not clear what type of coordination and relationship will exist between the Regional Peace Council and the Regional Security Committees (RESEC).

It has been the case in several violent escalations of conflicts in Ghana that the early warning signs and analysis of conflicts pointed to the threat to security or imminent escalation of violence. From the district to regional security committees, the preoccupation was often to rely on intelligence gathering and try to apprehend would be ‘trouble makers’. Considering the protracted nature of conflicts, arrests of would be perpetrators of violence often increased tensions and accelerated the outbreak of the violence. The community from which people are arrested interpreted events in which they considered themselves as victims and the Government was therefore only using the security apparatus to help their adversaries in the dispute. In the framework of the Peace Architecture, it is anticipated that the Regional Peace Council will act differently by engaging the adversary communities and helping them talk about the problems on hand and

working together to arrive at a mutual satisfaction on how to resolve the differences between the communities. It should not be difficult to understand that should the Regional Security Committee act under the understanding of security threat and proceed to arrest people in these communities experiencing conflict; they will make the work of the Regional Peace Council difficult in bringing the communities to talk. A challenge therefore in the framework is the gap in clarifying how the Security Committees and Peace Councils will compliment one another’s work rather than create an impediment in the work of the other. It also means that the framework might be good on paper but a lot more needs to be done in making a shift on how to manage intra and inter communal conflicts.

From the preceding discussion, security agencies react to the symptoms of conflicts and apprehend actors found breaking or violating the law but they do not consider in most instances; what were unaddressed and underlying issues that led in the first place to an outbreak of violence. In the training provided to the members of the peace councils, much attention is focused on the root causes of conflicts in order to work to transform them. To what extent will security agencies compliment this type of work requires that coordination issues, the roles of RISEC and the Peace Councils, how they should work together is elaborated to facilitate efficient collaboration.

The efforts at consolidating and sustaining peace in Ghana are better placed in a bottom-up approach to

49 Following the Konkomba-Nanumba war in Northern Ghana in 1994 and 1995, the intermediary role of Civil Society Organisations aware of the central role of Government worked diligently to partner with Government and ensure the process had the endorsement. The President participated in a reconciliation ceremony at the end of the peace process providing state approval and also assuring the communities of Government. Read more on *Conflicts, Civil Society Organisations and Community Peacebuilding Practices in Northern Ghana* by Emmanuel Bombande in *Ethnicity, Conflicts and Consensus in Ghana*. Woeli Publishing Services. Accra. 2007. Edited by Steve Tonah.

50 Lederach is an eminent reflective peacebuilding practitioner. He discusses bottom-up approaches in peacebuilding from concrete experiences from the Horn of Africa in *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. United States Institute of Peace Press. Washington D.C.1997.

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building peace<sup>50</sup>. Because the deep rooted issues and the historical antecedents of conflicts are found in communities, peacebuilding efforts must emphasise that the ownership of the processes that can lead to peace are placed in the communities. In other words, when peace initiatives are designed from the centre of authority in capital cities and implemented in communities, they are not sustainable. In some cases, such initiatives lead to bad peacebuilding practice with the consequence that communities will no longer be willing to trust outsider actors or want to engage with their adversaries with whom they are in conflict.

Whereas the NPC provides leadership at national level, its work should place emphasis on how the District to Regional Peace Councils can be efficient in practice to place the responsibility of inter and intra communal peacebuilding on the shoulders of community leaders. Once community leaders have leadership in processes designed to respond to communal violence, they will also carry the burden and responsibility to ensure that outcomes or settlements for peace are kept. More importantly, it is these leaders who undertake the types of activities that can lead to reconciliation in communities.

### Conclusion

As contained in the peace architecture, Ghana has taken the bold step to design the first official national level programme for peace building in Africa. It is in consonance with the Resolution of African leaders at the First Standing Conference on Stability, Security and Development in Africa, in Durban in 2002, for each country to establish a national framework for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. Beyond the setting up of the architecture, it is important that it is operational, functioning efficiently and changing the approach to responding and managing violent conflicts within the country.

For this to happen, the structures of the architecture must continue to be formed and allowed to work in a complete non-partisan political environment. The councils should also be well resourced considering that enormous amounts of money have been used to contain

violence which always left communities embittered and distrustful of one another even after violence was suppressed by the military. There should also be the political will to proceed further and provide a legal mandate through a statutory instrument in parliament to provide legal standing, a high leverage and also ensure the structures of the architecture are above partisan political considerations and will therefore continue to function when governments are changed in elections.

It is also instructive to note that other policy considerations and implementation will facilitate the effectiveness of the national peace architecture. Of particular importance is completing the decentralisation process of governance in Ghana. It is essential to underscore that conflict mitigation also requires structural reforms at national level that have a direct bearing on the dynamics of managing conflicts at the local level. One such structural reform is to develop national consensus and find the political will for full decentralisation of local governance. This will require making the necessary constitutional amendment for the people of Ghana to be able to elect their District, Municipal and Metropolitan Chief Executives directly. Such a policy reform will make practical the spirit of the 1992 constitution for decentralisation to be instituted as much as possible. More importantly, electing DCEs will be a proactive measure of preventing conflicts at community level as people will be able to hold leaders at the district level accountable for their stewardship, bringing governance closer to the people, ensuring equity in the distribution of resources while working for unity and peace from the local to national levels.

The bottom-up approach suggested in this paper will be easier in the operationalisation of the architecture with the decentralisation of state institutions working in complementarity with community leaders and elders for ownership of peacebuilding to be driven at local levels. Decentralisation will also mitigate communal violence in Ghana as it will eliminate or at least minimise the patronage system. In the current system of governance, government leaders at local levels are not accountable to the people in the communities but rather to government leaders at national level. This encourages patronage in



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which once local political leaders can satisfy central authority at national level, they can maintain their positions at local level regardless of their non-performance and failure to deliver basic services to people. This is further exacerbated when corruption breeds at local political leadership level. The patronage system allows impunity but it also breeds high contempt in addition to protracted and deep rooted issues. It is the mix of all these which perpetuate poverty and underdevelopment providing the fodder for continuous tensions, anxiety and mistrust in communities which escalates into violence. All it takes in many instances is a trigger such as an argument in a market place<sup>51</sup> or an event such as registration of voters for an election for violence to break out.

The work of the National Peace Council in one year has demonstrated its potential to mitigate conflicts in Ghana. The major political parties have been engaged in specially designed workshops to strengthen the capacities of political parties in conflict transformation<sup>52</sup>. In some cases, mediation followed the

workshops to resolve internal political conflicts. The peace council also mediated in a dispute over access to University hostels and halls of residence between the leadership of students and the ministry over education as well as university authorities. Ghana could well be the pacesetter in governance initiatives adding the national peace architecture to its recent achievement of being the first country in Africa to be peer-reviewed in the context of the NEPAD Africa Peer Review Mechanism. Much more remains to be done and some of these have been highlighted in this issue paper. It is also important to underscore that the success of the peace architecture will continue to depend on its work and partnership with civil society organisations and other critical stakeholders.

51 The 1994-1995 Konkomba-Nanumba conflict broke out during an argument between two young men from the Konkomba and Nanumba ethnic groups in the village market of Nakpayili over the purchase of a guinea fowl.

52 WANEP provides facilitation and technical support in the work of the National Peace Council.