

Committed Literature as Instrument for Youth Mobilization and Peacebuilding in Tivland, Nigeria

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Abstract

Committed literature was popularized in the immediate post World War II era when JP Sartre revived the idea that the artist has a serious responsibility to society. It is any form of literature (written, visual or oral) intended to awaken social sensitivity towards a social menace. It demystifies societal myth and helps promote social consciousness towards what was ignored or made unknown. It unveils a menace intentionally covered from the sight of the community by politicians or the elite or tradition. Lack of peace in our society, especially in Benue state, has become a social menace hindering development and threatening food insecurity in the state. This menace has to be addressed and one of the ways to build peace in the state is to mobilize the youth through the propagation of the importance of peace. In this paper we have discussed the lack of peace and its triggers, disadvantages of lack of peace and how building peace through mobilization of the youth can be achieved with committed literature as an instrument. Using the Sartre's notion of literature of engagement, we came to the conclusion that literature used in all its forms and encouraging youth to also write their stories in fiction or non-fiction forms to present to their communities will indeed curb disputes and encourage sustainable peace building in Benue state.

Keywords: Committed Literature, Mobilization, Peace Building, Economic Growth.

Introduction

The sole function of literature is to delight and inform. This core function is accompanied by various roles literature performs in the society. Literature teaches people on existing social, political and economic systems. When we talk of committed literature, we are referring to literature in any form, whether written, oral or virtual, it can be in a form of graffiti, short poems, drama, Puppet Theater, short stories, films, choreography etc. It is any work of art that intends to pass a message to the society to sensitize them of unfavorable conditions of life or bad treatments in the society, to fight injustice or to expose a misconception, to remove a mystery from a society's concept of a particular thing. It is any form of literature intended to defend or assert an ethical, political, social, ideological or religious view. A literature that equips the vulnerable communities with means of building a critical consciousness in them. It is a literature that prompts the people's action. Committed literature stirs the people to build up new forms of expression that must challenge the old, new and emerging realities.

Literature can be socially or politically engaging. Socially engaged literature compels partakers to examine their own prejudices. It may solicit the necessity for economic and

social justice for a particular ethnic or social group. Or, it may advocate the preservation of nature by describing and defining accountable relationships between people and their environment. It is the description of an injustice, or of the personal predicament of an exploited person, with clear position of social analysis. Socially engaged literature invokes moral obligation of individuals to engage with their communities in ways that promote a more respectful coexistence.

Politically engaged literature on the other hand, has influenced readers and social currents of every age, politics of development in Africa have always been central concerns of the continent's literature from the colonial to the contemporary times. African artists take up themes of colonialism, liberation, nationalism, tradition, displacement and rootlessness which characterize their social and political engagement, using literature to make change. African writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o etc represent the dehumanizing plights of the working class. Influenced by their colonial, post-colonial and neo-colonial socio-political and economic experiences, they use art as an avenue to express their ideology and vision about the multifaceted problems of their society. As a conscientious artist, the committed artist thrives to challenge and change the political and social status quo of their country. They do anything artistically possible to bring about social change. They can go as far as leading a revolution that would usher in a government that is sensitive to the feelings of the people. Ebong expresses this view better by asserting that: "The writer as a revolutionary thinker strives always to change the world, to redirect and channel the minds and conscience of his people towards a new set of values, a higher awareness or reality." (Cited in Amala, 2013 P. 42)

According to Bie and Ignatius, in Africa without commitment literature, art would lose its second value – that of educating the masses about the state of affairs and presenting modalities on putting things right. In Africa, the phrase "art for art's sake" may not be our watchword because Africa as a continent is still developing and literature would continue to serve its purpose of interfering positively with social issues that affect the masses (Bie & Ignatius, 2017, p.13).

Bie and Ignatius have spelt out clearly, the role of Committed Literature and have agreed with the view of Sartre on literature. They have reiterated the importance of Committed Literature to development of Africa. With this view this paper also agrees to the ability of committed literature as a tool for bringing sustainable peace in our society through the mobilization of the youth.

Peace building has been conceptualized by various scholars. According to Galtung, once a conflict is manifest, its resolution usually proceeds through stages identified as peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace building. This is Galtung's tripartite approaches to peace. He goes ahead to define the terms thus:

Peacekeeping refers to the stage where the goal is to reduce the manifest violence through military intervention if necessary, while peacemaking refers to the process 'directed at reconciling political and strategic attitudes through mediation, negotiation, arbitration and conciliation' mainly at the top-level leadership (Galtung, 1975, p.282).

Galtung defines peace building as addressing 'the practical implementation of peaceful social change through socio-economic reconstruction and development' (Galtung, 1975, p.304). With these definitions and differentiations, it is clearer on what we consider here as peace building

Benue state is an agrarian community in the north central geopolitical zone. The richness of the soil due to the Benue River and its tributaries has made the Benue River basin the home of agriculture. The greenness of the grass in the region has rather made the state vulnerable to farmer/herders, farmer/farmer aggression. Generally, over the years we have experienced lack of peace on the increase everywhere in our societies and we will agree that there is a need to mobilize the youth for sustainable peace building in our nation. Why the youth? Because they are the leaders of tomorrow we say, they are the grassroots of our nation. The youth have a role to renew and refresh the current status of our society including leadership, innovations, skills etc. They are expected to advance the current technology, education, politics, and peace of the country. The youth are the backbone of any nation because they have more energy. They have an important role to play in peace building in the society.

This paper therefore, discusses how literature can be used as an activity for youth mobilization for peace building in Benue State. We look at how lack of peace has impaired economic development in the state, the need for peace building and involvement of the youth, causes of lack of peace and the challenges facing the mobilization of youth for sustainable peace building. Adapting the Sartrean Existentialism theory, we have come to the conclusion that involving the youth in the peace building process is a fertile way of attaining sustainable peace in Benue State and indeed in the whole nation. And that literature is an important and viable tool for the mobilization of youth for the purpose of peace building.

Methodology

As methodology, this study adopts the descriptive design. This particular design paves the way for the researcher to critically use committed literature texts in order to render our views and opinions on literature of commitment, social vision, peace building and youth mobilization. The researcher carried out a critical analysis of peace situation in Benue state and the Tiv literary art to analyze the extent to which literature can help in mobilizing the youth towards peace building in the society. Primary data was collected from enquiries on the subject matter from people of Tivland while the secondary data was gotten from various critical texts. All these sources of information were critically read and analyzed with particular interest paid to those relevant to the study.

Theoretical Underpinning–Sartrean Existentialism

This paper adopts the theoretical framework of Sartrean Existentialism. According to Crowley (2018), since the mid-20th century, Committed Literature has been historically tied to Sartrean Existentialism especially his work "What is Literature?" (1948). Sartre projects

his theory of committed literature as his contribution to the field of philosophy of art on phenomenological ontology and humanist atheist existentialism. In keeping with his early existentialist philosophy that man is ultimately free, Sartre argues that committed literature communicates the ideal of a free society where literature must aim to play a role in fundamental social change.

According to Reynolds, Jack and Pierre-Jean Renaudie, "Like many of his generation, Sartre lived through a series of major cultural and historical events that his existential philosophy responded to and attempted to shape". According to Gasiorek & James (2012, p.614), in the aftermath of World War II, Jean-Paul Sartre worked to define the role, purpose and overall concept of Committed Literature when he analyzed what the role of the contemporary writer should be, stating that it was their goal to compose "literature of praxis". Sartre perceives that using words as tools of action, the author should make history. Sartre links artistic literary commitment to ethics and politics. He believes that Committed Literature portrays a presentation of the world where human freedom is demanded. Sartre argues that committed literature is an art meant to reach the masses and an agent for social change. And as such, any novel that does not look out to instruct the readers on life is sheer literature of escapism, running away from reality. Sartre in his theory of committed literature sees art as a tool for applying corrective measures to solve current social change and political problems. Every member of the society should be concerned about the great social and political questions of their time. Sartre opines that we cannot afford to ignore such problems but find solutions to them in whatever way we can. It is the duty of the author to instruct on life, to make everyone aware of the social and political concerns through committed literature.

Whatever the author's motive, he must choose to change his environment or to go along with the consequences of accepting the environment as it is. As an artist, his commitment is to reveal the world as it is. He expresses his freedom in addressing himself to the freedom of another and finds himself in a social situation. Sartre then describes a writer thus: "the writer is a speaker, he designates, demonstrates, orders, refuses, interpolates, begs, insults, pervades, insinuates". Committed art must possess all these qualities to efficiently effect social change.

This theory is very relevant in our study because it helps us understand the role of committed literature better, it helps us to take a decision on which line of action to take in order to analyze the situation and come to a conclusion and to proffer some workable solutions. Committed literature with all these attributes serves as a good tool for youth mobilization for sustainable peace building.

A brief look at Benue state

Benue State is one of the North Central states in Nigeria with a population of about 4,253,641 according to the 2006 census. The state was created in 1976 among the 7 states created at that time. According to the *I am Benue* website, the state derives its name from the Benue River which is the second largest river in Nigeria. The name Benue is coined from

a Bantu word "Beer Nor" meaning the waters of Hippopotamus, The state borders Nasarawa State to the North; Taraba State to the East; Kogi State to the West; Enugu State to the South-West; Ebonyi and Cross-Rivers States to the South; and has an international border with Cameroon to the South-East. It is inhabited predominantly by the Tiv, Idoma, Igede and Etulo tribes. Benue State is an agriculturally rich region; crops like oranges, mangoes, sweet potatoes, cassava, soya bean, guinea corn, flax, yams, sesame, rice, groundnuts, and palm trees are popularly grown in the region.

As we have seen, Benue State is comprised of many communities of traditions and cultures. Taking all the communities will be too cumbersome so we limit our study within Tivland and Tiv culture.

Lack of peace and its effect on economic growth in Tivland, Benue state

By lack of peace here we mean inter and intra conflicts, clashes and unrest in communities. From experience, lack of peace prevents communities from developing; it stops children from going to school thus causing backwardness in education, birthing illiteracy; it also makes it harder for people to access healthcare and increases poverty and backwardness which in turn ushers more conflict. Aule Oravee in his study "Causes and Effects of Communal and Ethnic Conflicts in Tiv-Land" concluded that communal and ethnic conflicts have been endemic in Tiv-land and these have underdeveloped the area. Expatriating on this point, Oravee opines that Conflict is characterized by a suspension of communication between opposing parties and is a disjunctive process which results in the disruption or destruction of the bounds of unity that may previously have existed between disputants. He has expressed this view by saying:

In another dimension, conflict leads to the break-up of societies socio-politically and economically. This can manifest in the abandonment of markets or places of social gathering by a disgruntled party to the dispute and the establishment of new ones. The Abinsi market in Guma LGA, for instance was abandoned by the Tiv People of the area in favour of Tyough-Tyu market in Tarka LGA as a result of protracted conflicts between the Jukuns and the Tiv people in Abinsi. This has far reaching effect on the social and economic base of Guma LGA. Human lives and properties are also destroyed as a result of conflicts; just as development structures (e.g. markets, clinics, boreholes etc.) are vandalized and destroyed. These entail serious setback and hence the underdevelopment of Tiv-land. (Oravee, 2022, pp.15)

In most cases of conflict in Tivland, there is always the burning of properties and loss of lives. These facts have caused the displacement of many people. This can be seen in the number of IDP camps in the state at present. Displacement of people from their homes and communities has disrupted education greatly in the state. The result of this is going to be backwardness and illiteracy. In the nearest future this will affect the community greatly as all young people from those areas will no paper qualifications to take up their quarter in the policy making in the state and in the country at large.

Causes of peace disruption

Oludayo Tade in his discussion on "What's triggered new conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria" notes three causes of conflict in Benue and Nasarawa "We found three new main triggers of conflict: politics, the livestock guard and rumors." Iyorwuese Hagher in his *Kwagh-hir Theater A Weapon for Social Action* is of the opinion that the main causes of conflicts are the availability of water and pasture from the Benue river basin.

Many other studies have identified other causes of lack of peace in the state as politics, weather, climate, land, etc. whatever other causes of inter/intra-ethnic conflicts are, we have identified politics, farmland, and intolerance of coexistence caused by incessant hate speech and propaganda.

Politics

Party Politics have been a major cause of peace disruption in Benue state especially in Tivland, right from the onset of democracy in Nigeria. Hagher (2014, pg.150) has expressed that there were conflicts between the NPC and the UMBC members in Tivland that led to the killing of many NPC members by the UMBC during the first Republic. The second republic did not go without conflicts even though Tiv politics in the Second Republic witnessed less violence especially during the first tenure of late Aper Aku of National Party of Nigeria (NPN). His struggle for the second term, however, witnessed some level of political bitterness between NPN and NPP.

The politics of the Third Republic, however, witnessed relative peace in Tiv land despite the annulment of MKO Abiola's election in June 1993.

Between 1999-2007 politics-based violence was re-introduced fully into Tiv politics. According to (Zaiyol, 2009), Georges Akume during his second term bid allowed a lot of violence against opposition parties.

2015 did not go without crisis. In Gbajimba, headquarters of Guma Local Council of the state, the PDP gubernatorial rally was alleged disrupted by APC members. The party accused supporters of Samuel Ortom of masterminding the attack where one of the PDP youths was hit on the head.

It was also gathered that at a church service organized in honor of Rt. Honorable Orker Jev in Buruku local government area of the state, PDP youths allegedly invaded the church, destroying not less than 10 vehicles belonging to the ex-member of the National Assembly. Similarly, in Makurdi the campaign headquarters of Samuel Ortom and across the state were allegedly attack and vandalized by youths suspected to be loyal to the PDP. In Adikpo, the headquarters of Kwande Local Government Area, three convoy vehicles belonging to the APC guber candidate, Dr. Samuel Ortom were vandalized, when he was delivering his funeral oration at the burial of Dr. Samson Sambe.

Political conflicts erupt from different factors such as, Lack of internal democracy; Increased; dependence on money and muscle power; and failure to provide a meaningful choice to the voters. Over the years, the absence of party ideology has impacted on the pre- and post-election outcomes with its attendant consequences on democratization and

peace building in Benue. A healthy intra and inter party relations and partial attitudes of election management body and mobilization of the youth will undergird post-election peace building and democracy will follow automatically once peace has been achieved.

Farmland

The fertility of land in Benue State inevitably attract grazing. Herdsmen move from one place to another in search of pasture. In this process, they frequently trespass farmlands owned by locals in their host communities, destroying crops and valuables. The wanton ravaging of their lands and destruction of their source of livelihood cause farmers to fight back causing lots of burning of properties and loss of lives and also displacement of persons or a whole community. This brings about the disruption of peace which lingers from season to season. Another factor is population explosion. When the population of a people grow beyond the capacity of their community, there is shortage of farmland and conflict over land begins. Communal clashes are very rampant during planting seasons in places like Katsina Ala, Ukum, Logo, Konshisha, Ushongo where Tiv communities fight each other. In places like Makurdi, Vandeikya, Katsina Ala, Konshisha, Kwande clashes are between Tiv communities and other communities from other states. It is common knowledge that the Tiv communities in Guma clash over land with communities in Nassarawa, in Katsina Ala it's with communities in Taraba, in Vandeikya with communities in Cross River state. In konshisha and Gwer most of the times the clashes are between the tiv communities and other neighboring ethnic communities in the state.

Intolerance of coexistence

Intolerance of coexistence is basically politicization of native/nomad differences through mobilization of clannish, ethnic, religious, or other primordial sentiments. When people are mobilized and brainwashed through hate speech against others, people are prejudiced so much that there is intolerance of the other party, bitterness and hatred cloud their thoughts and block ways of peace. Our society has become so divided along different lines, so as such, any little misunderstanding does not give room for peaceful resolution. In Tivland because of the politicization of the open grazing bill, there is so much bad blood between the Fulani herders and the Tivs whose friendship is dated to historical times, so much that to a Tiv man Fulani is synonymous to conflict and vice versa. Intolerant coexistence is not only with farmer/herders but also clan against clan and ethnics against each other and that is why we talk of inter state and intra state conflicts. For interstate conflicts, you find the Tiv people fighting with the Jukuns, and the cross river people, and with the Idomas and Igedes, all who are their neighboring ethnic groups in the state causing intra state conflicts.

Youth mobilization for peace building through committed literature

Tackling the challenges of peace building requires mobilizing a whole host of energies in whatever way possible. A sustainable peace building can only be achieved by having an informed, strong and organized youth. DappaTamuno-Omi, Nebeife&Onwuanibe (2020)

assert that Peace building has to do with measures of preventing violent conflict and promoting lasting and sustainable peace. It entails providing tools for resolving conflict without resorting to deadly violence. Peace building implies mechanisms for achieving durable peace; reconciling opponents; preventing conflict from restarting and addressing underlying structural and societal issues. It involves efforts aimed at addressing environmental, economic, social and political root causes of violence in order to foster reconciliation and prevent return of violence. For this paper, peace building includes early warning and response efforts, violence prevention, and advocacy work. Peace building seeks to address the underlying causes of conflict, helping people to resolve their differences peacefully and lay the foundations to prevent future violence.

In practical terms, peace building can look like any one of hundreds of different actions. It can be bringing different groups together to discuss the issues, or using film and media to help people understand the viewpoints of others. It might be providing support to formal processes of negotiation between governments and armed groups, or ensuring marginalized groups have a say. Peace is built when different groups work together. But why are the youth involved in all these?

Peace building in most cases is not sustainable because, often it involves multiple international stakeholders that fail to coordinate their efforts. In Nigeria, peace building processes are usually heavily dependent on external sources of funding, and post-conflict countries seeking to conduct a peacebuilding process are confronted with a multitude of global actors and benefactors that seek to shape their peacebuilding process. Because of this reason, it is imperative to mobilize the youth in the process of peacebuilding and as we said, literature as an art can provide many activities that can fecund peacebuilding in Tivland. Community participation helps youth become empathetic citizens who could continue with the work when they become adults. And as they give back to their communities, they develop leadership skills, learn the importance of helping, teamwork and peaceful coexistence.

As it is, we have seen many other forms or styles of peace building are yet to yield sustainable peace-building in Benue state. It is thus worthwhile to turn to art as a tool to build sustainable peace because art possesses a rich cultural base for transition of ethical, social, moral, and intellectual responsibilities just as the role of government, the church and educational system. Hagher (2014, pp. xvi) suggests a return to arts for the mobilization for peace building from the grassroots. He says: "it might be worthwhile to turn to art as a main change agent through which societies might be energized to reclaim their dignity, sense of self-worth and confidence to improve their condition and further strive towards optimization of potential". In Tivland there are already art structures on the ground that can be used to take up the seemingly herculean task to the finish line.

In Tivland just like every other African communities, before they were overrun by foreign religions, there were festivals that brought the youth together. These festivals had distinct features and framework for coordinating virtually all art forms of the community. And through the art forms they were able to fight the ills of the society, educating, correcting

and binding the people. Making them forget their differences and promoting peaceful coexistence among indigenes as well as neighbors. One of such festivals is the *kwagh-hir* festival which Hagher describes as the focal point of Tiv narrative theatre, the main aim of this form of storytelling transformed to theater being the handling down of information, opinions, beliefs, and customs of the people through the oral narrative traditions. According to Hagher (xxi), the Tiv use of theater for this purpose predates all the leaders of theatre who provided guidelines for present and future discuss in theater: "the Tiv use of theater as a weapon predated the pedagogy of Brecht, Friere, Giroux, McLaren, Landy, and Montgomery, all leaders in the field who provided the guideposts for present and future dialogue".

The *kwagh-hir* as literature, has the ability to resonate across cultural barriers and build a true human community that thrives for peace through tolerant co-existence of all people within and around Tivland. The youth can be mobilized to take part in the production and organization of these festival. They will be detailed on themes that promote peace and education on the importance of peace on economic and infrastructural developments of their communities. Themes that will expose the ills of political conflicts. Through *kwagh-hir* festivals they can be educated on policies they did not understand, that rather brought ill fate among them. For instance, the policy of the Ortom government on ranching and anti-open grazing which were supposed to rather curb the crisis between herders and farmers. When acted out well, these policies will be successfully sold to the people. Hagher(2014, pp. xxix) has put this point in a better way when he says: "Tivland is a much-dramatized society, and *kwagh-hir* exists for the layman or woman to rework this drama of everyday existence where partial, physical, and ethical dimensions of everyday reality are apprehended, interpreted, and lived". But *kwagh-hir* is just one of those very powerful works of art that are capable of mobilizing the youth towards sustainable peace building.

In towns where there is electricity, the use of cinemas or projectors can help bring the youth together and as they come together fictional or non-fictional stories depicting the importance of peaceful co-existence will be aired to drive home the fact. Them coming together to watch films in the same arena alone is enough to bind them as one people so in times of disagreement, they will be able to settle amicably. This will enhance the primeval function of art in the society as a corrective mirror that comprehends then breaks down and molds society as it should be.

In these days of social media, with almost all of them possessing smartphones, groups can be encouraged to come together and act short dramas portraying themes of peace and government policies that were not adequately propagated. These dramas will be shared on social media for the youth to watch and share.

Social activities like competitions on drama, storytelling, graffiti drawing, choreography, short story writing etc. organized for the youth will mobilize them and promote peace among them, making them feel like part of each other. As the youth begin to see themselves as brothers and sisters, it will discourage any form of animosity against each other and also build a strong fraternity.

Challenges of youth mobilization in Benue State

There are a number of challenges facing the mobilization of youth in Benue state. Firstly, there is community readiness for new approaches. People find it difficult to adjust to new forms, trying to get people to accept new approaches to use of literature to mobilize the youth might not be easy at the start of the program.

Secondly, there is lack of capable human resources. Community youth development work requires a daunting range of competencies or capacities. This is lacking but funders can help staff gain access to professional development opportunities, including not just formal training but hands-on coaching that helps them think through their day-to-day challenges. Lastly, the enablement of youth as an active agent in peace building cannot be considered without considering such challenges, they tend to face due to the armed conflict such as the loss of education, a lack of employable skills and the destruction of a stable family environment. The wider socio-economic needs of youths are often ignored in post-conflict contexts as they are not seen as a 'vulnerable' group.

Activities for youth mobilization through art

Community mobilization aims to mobilize and engage community members to address a particular cause. Engagement of community mobilizers needs to happen early and individuals need to be involved from the definition of the problem through to the generation of adequate solutions. The level of engagement of individuals may vary depending on their interest and capabilities. They may just listen to some messages on the radio, participate in meetings and events, or they can proactively design, organize and implement activities. Community members can be mobilized through different activities like Puppet shows and participatory theatre where audiences are encouraged to participate by developing alternative scenarios that would lead to better outcomes. Village literacy fairs where information about a predetermined topic is shared. Dance and concerts conveying key messages. The events can be recorded and screened through cinema units or made to go viral on the Internet.

There can be mobile cinema units, set to screen short films addressing the topic of peace building and followed by discussions and questions/answer sessions. Print media such as leaflets and cartoon strips for distribution in the community. Community coalitions made up of people who practice desired behaviors, who have survived conflicts and can act positive roles that will encourage other peers to live a life free of stigmatization.

Storytelling in which a narrator recounts a pertinent story which may be real or fictional, to highlight key messages and the importance of peaceful co-existence. It can even be about the conflict that just happened with some change in the story, some change that would have had the situation different. Also, authentic participation, authentic and productive roles for the youth can be ensured to engage the youth and work towards peacebuilding.

Conclusion

The engagement of youth in peace building in a wider perspective can be ensured through

the arts. The innovativeness and creativeness of young people in this area could be mobilized effectively by connecting them with wider peace building objectives such as building bridges between divided communities and ensuring a viable process of reconciliation through arts. Art regulates the consensus about the goals of life that people set for themselves. Art is a medium for mass mobilization, an opportune instrument for sensitizing people to build peace that will be sustainable. Art reflects a society as it is and also as it should be. Art as a corrective mirror raises consciousness of the people towards goals that redeem the people from conflicts that threaten peaceful co-existence. To maintain sustainable peacebuilding, the youth must be sensitized through arts. It has been in history where Tiv songs, dances, and music, and other art forms had been employed to the service of Tiv social action, as a weapon in the hands of the Tiv people to effect systemic social change. A very good example of this is in the use of *kwagh-hir* (puppet theater) as an art form. *Kwagh-hir* plays mobilize the people towards specific communal goals. According to Hagher (p.174): "all *kwagh-hir* plays mobilize the people by virtue of their signifying the desires and aspirations of the Tiv people within a particular context of historical experience" We have seen in contemporary time how art has been used in Tiv land for development plans and advocacy for pandemic-awareness campaigns, especially in the health awareness programs. Art can in the same way be used as an activity to mobilize the youth towards sustainable peacebuilding through art programs organized by the youth for the youth.

Recommendations

Everything considered, we have come up with the following recommendations:

- a) We are convinced that *kwagh-hir* festivals in Tivland and other traditional festivals in other parts of Benue have been a form of art used in the past as a weapon for social action, but have been overrun by foreign religions, we recommend the revival of such festivals in the state. Instead of relying on foreign bodies to do the task of mobilization of the youth for peace building, the Ministries of Youth and sports, Information and Culture should organize competitions by giving the youth the themes of peace to act out during the competitions. These competitions should be held in the villages in order to take it to the grassroots, overall competitions can be in the state capital so that the information will reach youth of all levels in the state. The youth should be given the opportunity to make their costumes and acquire other materials by themselves.
- b) The essay writing competitions with themes of peace should be organized for literate youth where they will participate at local government levels and conclude with the grand finale in the state capital.
- c) It is also important to prepare communities that are likely to be affected by a policy that threaten peace like the anti-grazing law. Through the help of art, farmers and herders should be informed about the law and the reasons why it has been adopted. A good drama or poem aired on radio or mobile cinemas, graffiti on walls or even trees, can reverse the people's prejudice about ranching and anti-open grazing.

Committed art is indeed a powerful weapon and a change agent for mobilization of the youth for sustainable peace-building. It is capable of preventing any further violent conflict that lead to killings, restriction of people's movement, close down of schools, destruction of property etc.

There is also the need for governments at all levels including community-based organizations, civil society organizations, the International community and well spirited individuals to initiate and implement appropriate peace building strategies that will bring about sustainable peace and protection of lives of the citizens of Benue State. It is then essential to support the youth so that they can build a more just world themselves, by strengthening their expertise in arts, and their ability to voice themselves and influence the national agenda on peace building.

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