PROMOTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE THROUGH DIALOGUE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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INTRODUCTION

Mwanatari is a community located between Lafiya and Lamurde in Lamurde LGA of Adamawa State. It lies on Latitude 9.56^0N and Longitude 11.7^0E, 164.00m/538.06ft ASL. The community shares boundary with Bwatiye (Bachama and Bata) communities. The ethnic groups found within the area are Mwana, Chobbo, Kwah, Waja, Lunguda, Dadiya, Jenjo, Hausa, and Fulani. The people of Mwanatari are predominantly agrarian. Lamurde is the administrative headquarters of the local government area and it is about 100 kilometers from Yola, the State capital.

Like any other people Lamurde local government is noted for its unique cultural heritage. The Bachama people are noted warriors as is easily depicted in their popular dance "Wuro Kaduwe" closely related are the Homtu Gbatakaito at Gyawana which has to do with hunting, and the "Badan" at Nghakawo. They have the "kwete" wrestling festival in the town of Lamurde which comes up once in a year. It is a wrestling between the people of Gyawana and Lamurde. It is during the festival that His Royal Highness the Hama Bachama discloses his plans and vision to his subjects. Apart from Kwete wrestling festival, there is the "Poto" at Waduku, "Vayato" at Gyawana and Opalo. The Kwah " Gikan" festival is celebrated yearly. The Waja celebrates "Saulawe" Chobbo " Cito" and "Dikulem" "kreth" among the Lunguda and Dadiya respectively. Lamurde itself is a historical town where western civilization and tradition exist side by side.

The Mwana people, according to history migrated from Cham in present day Balanga Local Government Area of Gombe State. The people of Cham migrated from Yamel in the East with some tribes like Lunguda, Tula, and Dadiya at about 1777. They came to Africa through Egypt and settled at Wanda. As a result of unproductive agricultural land, bad climate and weather, the people of Cham being good agriculturalists decided to move from Wanda to a free and fertile land at Fitilai (Kuntur) in 1797. At Fitilai, Baba Dan Bulo, an informant said, "The people of Cham settled in groups according to their clans. In these small clans, there is a type of disperse, cross or integrated relationship which is shown by ties of reputed kingship, chieftaincy and religious complexities. The major clans among these settlements were Fitilai to Bwelimi, and Fitilai to Dijimi, out of which the following small clans emerged: Jabe, Bwelimi, Kwasim, Lebe, Dungurang and Tiksir. These clans believed in peace and have special

love and care for one another and therefore regard themselves as brothers (Shete) plural of Chum, brother".

According to another informant, Nurudin A.A., what precipitated the movement from Fitilai to Bwelimi and from Fitilai to Dijimi was conflict. He stated, "the movements marked the beginning of dialectal variation: one had settled at Mwana that is Bwelimi and the other at Tiksir which is Kindiyo. These two have extended their territory to Bachama land in Adamawa State known as Green Village in Numan Local Government and Mwanatari in Lamurde Local Government Area.

Statement Of the Problem

Mwanatari derived its name from "Mwana", a tribe believed to have been the first settler in Mwanatari. History has it that Mwana people migrated from Kindiyo in 1857, which is present day Cham in Balanga LGA of Gombe State. They settled at the hills between Cham and Lafiya called Kodun. From 1900 – 1905, they came down from the hills and settled at the plain between Lafiya and Lamurde. They are bordered by Bachama and Chobbo communities. Over time, the Hausa, Waja, Jenjo and other tribes moved in to settle amongst the Mwana people. The Mwana tribes are majorly farmers, however today, they are found in virtually every sphere of public and private businesses. Traditionally, they are animists and ancestralogists, but in recent times, majority of them have embraced Christianity, whereas the Wajas has fair representation of both Muslims and Christians, while the Hausas and Fulanis are majorly Muslims.

These people have been living in harmony with one another over the years. However, perceived injustice, population explosion which left the people struggling for space, bad leadership from national down to local level, economic hardship and unguarded/inciting speeches from political and religious leaders has threatened the peaceful coexistence of the various ethnic and religious groups within this community. A stitch in time, they say, saves nine. Recognizing the mounting tension amongst the settlers of Mwantari community, which if not resolved could lead to insurrection, has informed the decision to embark on my project on *"Conflict Resolution through Dialogue to Promote Peaceful Coexistence"*.

PROJECTS

Recognizing the inherent danger looming within and without the Mwanatari community, a project on *"Conflict Resolution through Dialogue to Promote Peaceful Coexistence"* was organised in January, 2020. The program was hosted at Mwanatari Primary School with over 40 participants drawn from the various ethnic and religious groups and was well attended by all, including traditional and religious leaders. The program was tailored towards understanding the meaning of peace. The participants were thoroughly educated on the definition and meaning of peace, the difference between peace building and peace keeping, the meaning and causes of conflict, conflict resolution methods and mechanisms, land use, acquisition, ownership and registration.

The resultant impact of this project was far reaching, as the participants testified that they never had the understanding they now have. They appealed to the convener to, as a matter of necessity reach more audience with this perspective changing project. They promised to do everything possible within their reach to seek peaceful and lawful redress when aggrieved and not resulting into violence.

The project was largely sponsored by the Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP). The photographs of events during the program is as attached below:

Project Banner

Keynote address by the head of Mwanatari community, HRH Chief Manson Boniface Bolo

Participants being enlightened on the meaning and causes of conflict by Mrs. Helen D. James

Participants being enlightened on the definition and meaning of peace/peacebuilding by Mr. Jechonia Gilbert
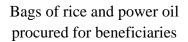
Participants being enlightened on land use, acquisition, ownership and registration by Mr. Haruna

Group photograph of participants

In May, 2020, following the devastating effect of the Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) where nations were on lockdown, economies shutdown, social activities were halted and life became survival of the fittest, another project titled COVID-19 PALLIATIVE was undertaken within Bwaranji Community in Yola North Local Government Area of the State. The project was sponsored by the Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace. The community and the beneficiaries were overwhelmed and wished the government could borrow a leave from the foundation. Below are photographs of events at the program

Bags of rice and power oil procured for beneficiaries

Shared rice and power oil ready for distribution

Sensitization on COVID-19 pandemic by Mrs. Helen D. James

Beneficiaries with received palliatives

Project Sustainability

In projects lexicon, sustainability is described as the capacity of projects to be "weaned". Development sustainability is therefore considered as the process of maintaining the production capacity and keeping the outcomes and impacts that ensue from project interventions. The question of why projects fail has consistently preoccupied scholars and project practitioners over the years. Issues of sustainability in development interventions became very important to donors in the 1980s. Sustainability became a very important criterion for project evaluation and represented the main purpose for donors providing aid in achieving or promoting development. Sustainability implies the ability of a project to continue in operation to achieve its purpose for the longest time possible.

To ensure sustainability, plan is being put in place to partner with Non-Governmental Organizations, international donors, philanthropists and government agencies for sponsorship. Although it is proving a herculean task at the moment, most assuredly it is surmountable.

Needs Assessment

A need is something that is required, it connotes deficiency or an unmet problem. It is a gap between "what currently is" and "what should be" (Altschuld and Watkins, 2014). Needs are value judgments that a target group has problems that can be solved. They are influenced considerably by group interaction and are not fixed, they also change with time (Duvel, 2002). Needs are distinguished from wants in that, in the case of a need, a deficiency causes a clear adverse outcome or and a dysfunction. In contrast, a want is just a desire, wish or aspiration.

Needs assessment involves identifying and appraising the need. It is an instrument for choice or decision making, such as resource allocation, planning, and grant funding. The first step in a needs assessment is to understand the problem (Haselip et al, 2015). This is because, needs

assessment is a process of identifying and evaluating problems, and fashioning away out for a target population. It emphasizes the importance of the problems and the way out. It is a way of asking a group or community members what they see as the most important desire or yearnings of that group or community.

Ongoing armed conflict, inter-communal and farmer-herder clashes, and criminalities, including ransom kidnapping, among others, have triggered disruptions and decline of market functionality and productivity in the state, of which this community is not alienated. These have negatively impacted the food and nutrition security situation of this community and has affected livelihoods and income-generating activities of populations.

After having an open listening session with members of the community, it was revealed that the short term or immediate needs of the community is food security and portable drinking water. The long term needs span across education, shelter, accessibility, sanitation, skill acquisition centers, herbicides and pesticides, modern farming technologies and improved seedlings.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Conflict-sensitivity is closely tied to the essential humanitarian principle of "do no harm." This principle not only recognizes that aid can cause harm but it also assumes it can be used to strengthen local capacities for peace in conflict affected communities. Ideas around conflict sensitivity, therefore, should impact the way humanitarian as well as development and peace building organizations design and deliver their interventions. The following recommendations are therefore made:

- Dedicated food distribution partners needed to support the community and other communities within.

- Scale-up of livelihoods/agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizers, etc.), preferably in the form of cash transfer assistance.

- Advocating for funding support from NGOs, international donors and philanthropists.

- Building the capacity of communities through empowerment

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