

Youth Leadership

In Conflict Resolution, Peace Building and Governance

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The prevention of violent conflict is very essential for the development of a country; especially one like Liberia which is trying to preserve a young democracy after nearly two decades of a violent civil conflict.

It is a proven fact that youth are often a targeted group during conflict either as victims whom violence was committed against or as active participants in armed hostilities. Young people have been deceptively used by the older generation in executing its evil agenda at the peril of the youth population. The older generation of Liberia has failed the younger general (youth) and the young people can no longer continue watching while their future is being mortgaged. Youth, however, must fully participate and assume leadership roles in conflict resolution, peace building, and governance in Liberia. It is about time that youth begin to prepare themselves to receive the mantle by actively getting involved in activities that will ensure a peaceful, conflict free and stable future for Liberia to be inherited by the younger generation.

Youth organizations like the Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY) and the Youth Parliament, etc. must now begin to constructively engage Government and other stakeholders in recognizing and addressing factors that contribute to violent conflict such as insecurity, corruption, injustice, marginalization, etc. and their impact on youth. It is the future of the youth that is at stake; they must advance suggestions and ways forward in order to counter the underlying root causes of conflict-economic, political, and social inequalities; and the denial of basic human needs- in order to secure a future that the young people can proudly inherit. The youth who are the most affected in conflict have taken on active roles in creating youth networks aimed at peace building and prevents outbreaks of violence.

In response to the numerous violent conflicts, the international community has developed its peace-building agenda to identify and address the risk of conflict. Importantly, the role of youth is very critical in conflict resolution, peace building, and governance. Youth involvement will create long-term stability within communities, thus offering protection from future conflicts.



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Normally conflict involves two or more parties with different interest, and if not handled properly, conflict has the potential to worsen and erupt into violence. In order to prevent conflicts, there must be a solid foundation for peace building; conflict prevention works in conjunction with conflict resolution.



The young people today face much greater challenges than ever before. They are the most vulnerable group in conflict situations: they are being abducted, raped and killed. They are the “victims” (misused and abused) who can realize the brutality of violent conflicts (as perpetrators and sufferers) better than anybody. They young people must be encouraged to participate in the development efforts in terms of conflict resolution, peace-building and governance of the country.



After an almost two decades of a violent bloody civil conflict, Liberia’s fledgling democracy relies on the involvement of the youth population which holds the future. Entrusted with more responsibilities in peace-building and conflict resolution, the youth can create relationship across dividing lines and raise their voices for peace against war. The youth were the most exposed to danger in the Liberian conflict, either as perpetrators propelling the agenda of adults or victims. We all do agree that the youth are the future and that today’s youth are tomorrow’s leaders. They must be motivated towards peace because youth can easily break barriers and not be made to feel that they have little say or no future. A case study could be the Liberian situation. Most of the crimes committed in postwar Liberia are carried out by youth, of which majority were child soldiers. A program was established to demobilize, rehabilitate, and reintegrate these young people into the society, but was not successful because the program saw young people as the problem and not as right-bearers and stakeholders in rebuilding a just society. The youth leadership did not play a significant role in the Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) process. The challenges confronting young people of Liberia are huge; none-the-less, they can be overcome by the full participation and involvement of the youth of Liberia.



Today’s youth will tomorrow lead Liberia in various capacities; they will have to build the economy, and make decisions that will have impact on the lives of future generations. They can best recognize/identify early warning signals that may give rise to future conflict(s) and can play key roles in conflict resolution and prevention, peace-building and good governance.

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Peace-building is a vital part of nation building. Youth and adults must work together in positions of authority to make decisions and take action to strengthen organizations, communities and this young democratic society of Liberia. As youth become stakeholders and agents of positive change in communities and organizations, they bring a broad view of knowledge and relationship that lead to better decisions and more productive action among the youth population. The youth must lead the cause of protecting other youth, especially the less fortunate, as war-affected children from all forms of abuses. They must be able to speak out loud against corruption which is the principal cause of conflict and bad governance. Anti-corruption clubs must be established in school to fight against the offering and receiving of bribes. This will greatly help in the minimizing of the ugly practice in the greater society in the future.

Youth are the future leaders of tomorrow's Liberia. They can now begin to take central stage in policy/decision making especially in areas of conflict resolution and peace-building in situations where they find themselves because it is them who can better pave a brighter future for themselves and the generation to follow. Youth leadership must take the initiative to restore Liberia's lost dignity and return value to the youth.

The youth leadership in its effort to engage in conflict resolution, peace-building, and governance can start to picture in their minds the kind of future they wish to inherit better than adults can. This makes it very important for youth to take up leadership responsibilities in the areas of conflict resolution, peace-building and governance in order to carve a future in which stability reigns.