



Youths as Agent of Peacebuilding for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

****Waziri Musa; **Idris Yakubu Haliru; & **Bashir Adeyemi Dere**

**Department Of Public Administration, Kaduna Plytechnic-Kaduna State. **Department Of Local Government Studies, Kaduna Plytechnic-Kaduna State*

Abstract

*Youths plays a vital role in peace-building and sustainable development of every country in the world. The development of all nations lies on the shoulder of how productive and creative the youthful populations are; they refer as the engine of growth and development. This paper examines the role of youths in peace-building for sustainable development in Nigeria. Literature indicated that successive governments in Nigeria had introduced several youth development programmes as a mechanism to enhance peace-building and national development capable of reducing crime in the society, yet not much has been achieved, due to poor political-will, a systemic failure such as impunity, persistent corruption and inability to achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. The study recommends for empowering the youth by exposing them into different vocational skills programmes which may help them to engage into sustainable-income and self-empowerment for national development which will lead to sustained peace-building, and the transformation of the judicial institution with severe punishment on all corrupt individuals who divert public funds meant for developmental and empowerment programmes. This study is conceptual in nature **and it employed secondary data like journals, internet resource, government documents, textbooks, and several others to analyze the role of***

the youth on peace-building for sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper may be found beneficial to the policymakers in Nigeria on the necessary measures and the strategic direction needed towards effective implementation of people oriented policy and programmes of government capable of promoting productivity and creativity among youth for peace-building and sustainable national development in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Youth, National Development, Peace Building, Security, Empowerment*

Introduction

Youths are the greatest assets that any nation can have. They are legitimately regarded as future leaders and the greatest investment for a country's development. This is because the youths constitute the crust of the future generation and are perceived as a vital instrument in repositioning the nation's economy (Ude, 2013). If youths are properly channeled and fully exploited, the innate potentials of the youths can be transformed as a means of national development of all countries across the globe. Even though the patriotic commitment to nation-building is the responsibility of all citizens, the youths who are more energetic and purpose-driven always stand at the center stage (Salihu, 2013).

Also, any nation that denies its youth the necessary enabling environment to participate in the nation-building

process does so at its own risk. This is because youth are the foundation of any society. Without a doubt, the youth represents the most vibrant and adventurous group in any society. According to late Dr. NnamdiAzikiwe "If you want to know the future of any nation, take a look at what the youths are doing presently".

CONCEPTUAL VIEW ON YOUTH

Youth, as a concept varies from culture to culture and from society to society. In most societies in Nigeria, the progression from childhood to youth involves some systematic rites of passage. These rites have symbolic significance in that, simply by participating in them, an individual achieves a new status and position (Roshen, 2011). Therefore, defining youth globally according to some

exact age range can be a very difficult task. The age range 15-24 is often used by the United Nations and others for statistical purposes, but in many cases, this distinction is too narrow for countries like Nigeria. Apart from the statistical definition of the term “youth”, the meaning of the term “youth” has continued to change in response to fluctuating political, economic, and socio-cultural circumstances.

The National Youths Policy recognizes that the youths are a key resource that can be tapped for the benefit of the whole country. Thus, the policy endeavours to address issues affecting young people by including broad-based strategies that would provide the youth meaningful opportunities to realize their potential. The policy provides a broad framework within which all stakeholders, including the private and civil society, will contribute to youth development. An implementation mechanism is inbuilt in the policy (World Bank, 2008).

According to United Nations (2007) defines youths as individuals between the age bracket of 15 and 24. Youths do not constitute a homogeneous group; their socio-economic, demographic, and geographical situations vary widely both within and between regions. Notwithstanding these differences, the regional-level analysis provides a general understanding of their development profile. Some 87 percent live in developing countries and face challenges deriving from limited access to resources, education, training, employment, and broader economic development opportunities (UN, 2007).

The youth policy defines the youths as all young persons of the ages 18-35 years. The youth population according to 2006 is almost a hundred million. This means that they constitute more than two-thirds of the country’s population of 140 million. They are the backbone of the development of the country. Indeed, if Nigeria is to be sustained as a viable entity there must be a very good plan to tap the energy and resourcefulness of the youth population to fast track economic development (Amada, 2003).

CONCEPTUAL LITERATURE ON NATION-BUILDING

According to Deutsch (1966: 3), the process of nation-building could be seen as an architectural design or a mechanical model that could be built based on the authority, needs, and plan of the designer. To achieve unity, Emerson (1967: 91-98) believes that at this stage, nation-building involves the citizens’ loyalty towards their country of residence, and reduces their prioritizing towards their own ethnic. Some researchers refer to them as a community that is formed

historically through the sharing of similar territories, economies, and traditional elements that embody language, culture, and name. Most countries involved in the process of nation-building are former colonies.

According to Weiner (1971) refers Nation-building is a process of constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the state. This process aims at the unification of the people within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run. Nation-building can involve the use of propaganda or major infrastructure development to foster social harmony and economic growth. It is also the development of behaviors, values, language, institutions, and physical structures that elucidate history and culture, concretize and protect the present, and ensure the future identity and independence of a nation. For this paper the following definition of nation-building is provided: Nation-building is the intervention in the affairs of a nation-state to change the state's method of government. Nation-building also includes efforts to promote institutions that will provide for economic well-being and social equity.

WHAT IS PEACEBUILDING?

Since the emergence of human civilization people of different communities across the world have been experiencing conflicts of different types among which some are protracted and destructive which has resulted in widespread violence and gross human rights violation. It is also equally true that nations have been striving to manage or resolve these conflicts. Today, four mechanisms are widely being applied to de-escalate conflicts and to establish peace; preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace-keeping, and peacebuilding (Odeneye, 2011). Both preventive diplomacy and peace-making are applied before the conflict escalates, peacekeeping during the conflict; and peacebuilding starts after the conflict come to an end. A peaceful society is a secure society that has a strong regard for the rule of law.

A peaceful society is a secure society that has a strong regard for the rule of law. It has good leadership. It is just and not one that arrests people without reason. A lack of violence is not sufficient for a peaceful society; scholars consistently stated good governance, justice, and the rule of law as being necessary preconditions for peace. A peaceful society has a rule of law, justice, and good governance.

YOUTHS INVOLVEMENT IN PEACE-BUILDING

According to Okorocho, (2008) opined that youths have become more conscious of their roles and responsibilities in peace-building. The involvement of youths in the post-conflict reconstruction process in many countries around the world; for example, Rwanda, Mozambique, Guinea, South Africa, etc. is noteworthy. There are now a good number of youth organizations that are dedicated to establishing peace and security in the world. Similarly, such youth organizations are taking the responsibility of establishing peace and security campaigns in their respective countries as well as thus contributing to global peace.

ROLE OF THE YOUTHS IN PEACE-BUILDING

Youth play a vital role in fostering peace in any nation around the world. It is widely and universally acknowledged that real peace cannot be established until democracy and good governance, human rights, and dignity, as well as a sound economic system, are ensured (Lavindra, 2008). The roles the youths can play in peace-building are as follows;

- To make public opinion regarding the essence of peace and humanity in society.
- To create as well as lead peace movement against racism, and militarism
- To spread the idea of peace and non-violence for greater development
- To work for democracy, human rights, and gender justice among people.
- To establish networks among the youths organizations that are dedicated to peace and prosperity
- To strengthen the fight against discrimination, poverty, malnutrition, and hunger
- To participate in public policymaking decisions for political participation and development
- To make a network of multi-cultural co-operation in economic, social, and cultural areas, etc.

THE ROLES OF THE YOUTHS IN NATION-BUILDING

Odeneye, (2011) stated that the youth have been playing prominent roles in nation-building from time immemorial, the followings are the roles and responsibilities of the youth towards nation building these include:

- **Shun Unhealthy Practices:** the youth must have a change in character and value; they must purge and cleanse themselves of all qualities

inimical to national development. For a man who wants equity must come with a clean hand, so goes the saying.

- **Capacity Building:** Permit me to use this old saying, “You can’t give what you don’t have. Good education prepares one to impact positively on self and society hence the youths of today should invest in education as bedrock for peace stability and nation-building. It’s quite pathetic that many of our youths today cannot take up initiatives that will better their life and develop society.
- **Participating in Governance and Policy Formulation:** Youths must not just dwell on the sidelines of political commentaries, and analyses alone, but must seek to participate in government, politics, and policy formulation. We mustn’t shelve aside our responsibilities of joining mainstream politics and forming healthy and progressive alliances among ourselves and participating in all issues of national interest. Youth can form local pressure groups to monitor the activities of their elected representatives.
- **Be good ambassadors abroad, and promote international peace and harmony:** the present trend where youth act irresponsibly abroad would not augur well for their nations. Youths living either within their countries or abroad should strive to be good ambassadors of the countries and reposition themselves as agents of positive change. Youths should involve in activities that promote world and inter-ethnic peace.

CHALLENGES OF THE YOUTHS GLOBALLY

- **Unemployment:** Population is on the increase by the day and this has, in turn, led to an increase in a large number of unemployed teeming youths graduating from both secondary and tertiary institutions every year. The job situation could thus, not cope with the graduates turned out from various institutions of higher learning. This poses a great problem for youths hence a lot of young people who should be involved in building the nation are found in criminal activities such as armed robbery, prostitution, political thugs, kidnapping, drug abuse, and fraud among many others. The global unemployment rate among the youth directly affects the fortune of many countries' economies and invariably hinders peace and national development.
- **Poverty:** This is one of the greatest challenges affecting both developing and developed countries in the world, with mass unemployment among

youth, low standard of living, corruption, and the insensitivity of the nations, poverty seems to have a direct negative effect on peace and national development of every nation, and it is a task before all governments and Non-Governmental Organizations. As a result of poverty among youths, the world is currently facing a series of violence and insecurity challenges from different parts of the globe.

- **Illiteracy:** Another major aspect militating against the youth population is illiteracy. The rate of illiteracy amongst youths particularly in the African continent is so alarming. If illiteracy is reduced to the barest minimum, it can go a long way in helping the development of African countries. Human capacity development is a key that enhances the socio-economic development of all nations; therefore every youthful population must be encouraged since education is a catalyst to national development and peace sustainability.
- **Indiscipline:** The youth are the architect of their misfortune because they chose violence instead of peace and mutual coexistence. They chose the comfort of the moment instead of striving for self-sacrifice that will guarantee the freedom of their nations. They avail themselves of all kinds of dirty jobs for their bellies. The youth of today lacks character and morality. The qualities of tomorrow's leaders lie in the characters of today's followers.

METHODOLOGY

This study is conceptual and it employed secondary data from journals, government documents, internet resources, textbooks, and several others to analyze the effect of corruption on the sustainable development of Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATION

The Nigerian youth should therefore imbibe the spirit of discipline and submission to legitimate authority for a stable and progressive society where peace and sustainable development can be sustained. Also, the majority of Nigerians occupying public offices are corrupt because the system made it easy and profitable, where the benefits of corruption outweigh the penalties and the chances of being caught and be arranged before the court of law are very minimal. Therefore, based on the above, the paper recommends that the government at all levels in Nigeria must show sincerity in both action and words towards the total fight against corruption, and policy youth development programmes must be properly monitored towards ensuring its actualization. Lastly, policymakers must equally present well-designed structures and procedures with clear-cut and built-in principles, in accordance with the global standards of transparency and accountability in dealings with related youth's

developmental policy and programmes of the government to enhance productivity and creativity among the youth.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the role of the youth in peace-building for sustainable national development is a crucial matter that needs global attention. They are problem solvers, with a positive influence on nation-building, and if their plights are been attended to, they can grant peace capable of moving every nation forward. However, all these cannot be achieved without the support of the Governments and other International Organizations. So the youths can make the entire world beautiful, flourish, and shine in success.

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