LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES INITIATIVES FOR PROMOTION AND SUSTENANCE OF PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE AND DEVELOMENT IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The revisited the essence of peaceful co-existence and development, the dimensions of conflict and peace. International efforts and programmes for promotion and sustenance of peaceas well as the place of library and information services for promotion and sustenance of peaceful co-existence and development were discussed. The paper concluded that,judging from the global trends being over shadowed unlimitedly by varieties of endemic economic, cultural, racial and socio-political conflicts and crisis including natural deserters which consequences have continued to have adversely impact on any meaningful developmental initiatives and programmes, the Nigerian nation has no option other than to accept, embrace promote and sustain all genuine, realistic, implementable, manageable and accountable efforts, initiatives and programmes aimed domiciling peace, harmony, justice and development in the country

Introduction

It is a natural phenomenon and a basic fact that there exists some cultural, ethical, social, political, economic, educational, knowledge anddevelopmental differences within, in between and among people, communities, societies, organisations, institutions and nations. Such differences could be mild, moderate, critical or extreme. What is critical especially as it relates to thestability, development and advancement of a people, community, society or nation is the extent of the negativity or positivity of the deviations and consequences on the stakeholders?

Generally, a mild or moderate socio- economic, political, cultural and educational expositions and predispositions are considered fair and positive as the stakeholders are likely to meet up to expectations sooner than much later when given the required opportunities and other relevant enabling resources and environment to do so.The by-product of such opportunities could lead to steadily stable, progressive, productive, developed and advanced people, community, society, and nation where all the stakeholders have equal rights, leverages and opportunities to partake in the schemes for the upliftment of a people, community, society nation and the world at large.

On the contrary, a continued and progressive widening of unwanted gaps created by suchsocietal differences occasioned by socio- economic, political, cultural and educational expositions and predispositions of a people, community, society and nation could be said to be critical, extreme and negative to their development, progress and advancement. More often than not, the by-products of such inequalities are usually translated into negatively skewed socio-economic, political, cultural and educational development, progress and advancement of the

stakeholders. The direct consequences of developmentalgaps and shortcomings, which are mostly man-made rather than natural, on the stakeholders are usually manifested inform of:

- *socio- economic andpolitical instability;*
- socio-political inequality and injustice;
- Social upheavals and poverty;
- administrative and management inconsistences and indecisions;
- poor policy framework and implementation;
- gross human violations;
- Malnutrition and variety of health diseases;
- Ignorance and illiteracy;
- discriminations, oppression, favouritism, exclusion, nepotism; and
- other general human, societal and nationalunderdevelopment.

The concomitant effect of unrealistic attempts to overturn the impact of the fore goings on the society so as to overcome such societal development shortcomings may lead to possible perpetual:

- internal and/or external socio- economic and political inequalities and subjugation;
- neo-colonialism, neo-slavery andracism;
- over dependency rather than interdependency on other societies;
- conflicts, crisis and wars.

Dimensions of Conflict

Essentially by its nature and depending on the prevailing circumstances, conflict can be complex and dynamic. Though conflict isoften seen as the precursor to crisis and war especially if it's violent,itcan positively serve as means of communication to civilly express self without causing injury to the respondent(s). It has been observed that conflict is intrinsic in human relationships especially when it not violent.In another dimension, there can be internal (personal) conflict of self, resulting to:

- ✓ Indecision;
- ✓ confusion and sometimes embarrassment of self especially when decision has to be taken in situations/cases of choice of available viable options to satisfy an individual's personal predicaments,aspirations, interests and gains.

Such conflicts can be considered positive as they are directly inconsequential to the needs, interests and expectations of the generality of the citizenry, community or society.

On the other hand, there can be conflict of interests, usually subjective, arising not necessarily from poor communication, but due to interpersonal disagreements, incompatibility ordifferences of:

- o interests;
- o perceptions and misconceptions;
- o ideas and ideals;
- o philosophy andideology;
- o religion and culture;
- o race and tribal lineage/ pedigree;
- o *procedures and methodologies;*
- o processes and practices;
- o opinions and expectations;
- o understanding and faith;
- o love and passion;
- o confidence and trust; and
- o goals, vision and aspirations;etc.

These are commonly observed and expressed within, between and among people, community, society and nations. They can be satisfactorily resolved immediately or much later without necessarily having to take arms or cause any form of injury to the internally and/ or externally interested parties involved.

In fact in some instances, some conflicts of interest may never be successfully resolved leaving the parties involved to hold on to their respective positions while allowing the contentious issues to eventually and steadily fissile out,but still taking note of the prevailing differences whenever and wherever necessary, without having tocause no harm to the other interested parties in any way.

Seemingly close are role and value conflicts which are usually resolved mutually at round table talks, compromises, dialogue, agreements, resolutions and declarations under a cup of tea/ coffee, at a luncheon or dinner specificallypre-arranged for such purposes to take advantage of the serene environment they are to take place leaving no chance for the fifth columnists, intruders or hijackers.Also associated with conflict of interest is the goal conflict where interested individuals, teams or groupsare competing or scrambling for the only available scarce item, position, title, office, etc. at the same time. The differences in their levels of competence, capacity, ability and experience may come to play in who may eventually be the lucky one to be the winner.

Intra and inter communal, societal, national and international conflicts may be said to be negative and consequential when their outcome could lead tounimaginable crisis;indiscriminate use and application of socio- political, economic and managerial powers and instruments resulting to:

- unjust treatments and decisions,
- marginalisation and exclusion; political bigotry;managerial arbitrariness and irrationality;
- Subordination and degradation; and
- other forms of inhuman treatment of the weaker stakeholders.

The concomitant effect of these is usually manifested in form of:

- endangering of lives and properties;
- corruption and maladministration;
- indiscipline and socio- political recklessness;
- local, professional, nationallabour industrial dispute/action/ uprising;
- labour disorder and uncooperativeness;
- youth unemployment and restiveness;
- terrorism and insecurity;
- socio-political injustice and oppression;
- socio- economic and political crisis;
- intra and inter communal, societal and national crisis;
- economic sabotage and vandalism;
- trans-bordermisdemeanours;
- communal and civil wars; etc.

These often result to communal, societal and national disorder, mismanagement, underdevelopment and squandering of the riches leading to rocking the boat and eventual' falling of the house'.

Dimensions of Peace

Ironically, it is mostly assumed that the concept and presence of peace in wherever simply implies absence of war, conflict and crisis. Ideally, peace is better understood from the perspectives of societal/ national:

- stability and steady progress of the environment in focus, and
- the valued development and advancement of a people, community, society and nation devoid of negative encumbrances such as unwanted and unwarranted conflicts, crisis and upheavals.

According to Spinoza (2006), peace is not an absence of war; it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition of benevolence, trust and justice. Similarly, Howard (1971) remarked that, peace is more than the absence of war. It is also the maintenance of an orderly and just society, orderly in being defended against the violence or extortion of aggressors and just in being defended against

exploitation by the more powerful. In another context, Norma n (1947) is of the opinion that peace can be slavery, freedom, subjugation or liberation. He concluded that genuine peace means progress toward a free and more just world. Galtung (1969) associates negative peace with structural violence and unjust consequences. According to him, violence is everything which prevents the full realisation of innate somatic and mental human potentials.

These suggest that peace can be said to be negative when it's conceived within the perspective of absence of war and violent conflict or dispute, unjust consequences of decisions and actions, and structural violence. However, positive peace is said to exist when viewed within the context of non-violence, mutually collected and cooperated power and will as well as maintenance of justice and fair play. Viewed within the framework of dynamic processes rather than on an absolute endpoint, the challenge to peace existence and sustenance squarely lays on the development of effective ways and means of resolving disputes and conflicts devoid of physical violence as well as identification and transformation of the genesis of war and violent conflict or dispute

The Nigerian Factors in Peaceful Co-Existence and Development

Going by what is continually being published on the pages of the national and international periodicals, in the national and international cable television networks broadcasts and documentaries, as well as what are being posted on other electronic media such as the Internet and the social media networks, theycan be summed up to a simple and basic fact requiring no further evidences that the Nigerian nation is still increasingly neck deep experiencing the vagaries of:

- socio-political crisis;
- intimidation and harassment;
- administrative recklessness;
- political banditry and bigotry;
- social violence and hatred;
- bribery and corruption;
- terrorism and bloodshed;
- deliberate ethnic cleansing and neo-slavery;
- economiclooting and mismanagement;
- political zealotry and rascality;
- ethno- religious conflictsand crisis;
- armed violence and genocide;
- armed robbery and banditry;
- human abduction and kidnapping;
- human trafficking and baby factory;
- unsteady and dive nosed economic development;
- continued dependence on and mishandling of foreign donations and assistance;
- overdependence on only one major source of financial revenue input for the nation;
- galloping youthunemployment and restiveness index; and
- sectoral over zealousnessand tribal/racial nepotism; etc.

Considering the fore-goings, there no doubt in the fact it is urgent that should be the need for peace to prevail and be sustained in the country to prevent the house from falling and allow the steady rolling of the stone to achieve the desired individual, communal, societal and national interests, goals and aspirations collectively and severally. By and large, peace ultimately serves as the viable avenue and constructive option for promotion and assurance of democratic systems and polity; social justice and freedom as well as socio- political and economic development and advancement of all the stakeholders, the community, society and the nation at large.

Promotion and Sustenance of GlobalPeaceful and Harmorious Co-Existence and Development

Conceived as a state of stability,tranquillity and equilibrium in all human and material dispositions, peace is needed and to be sustained to ensure steady and uninterrupted individual, communal, societal, national and global development, progress and advancement in all spheres and dimensions of human endeavours and co-existence.There hasbeen varietyof peace movements such as the Pacifism in Europe, peace societies, peace workers and advocates and friend of peace whose basic aim has been to prevent war and ensure peace after the First and Second World Wars and during thecold war era between Europe and the Soviet Union.

Some of theother famous peace advocates for harmonious societal co-existence include the LateCarl Marx, Mao Tzekung , Lenin, Angels and their associates; Malcom X, Martin Luther King junior and their associates who fought for the rights of the black race in USA; the Late Mahatma Ghandi who advocated for non- violence while seeking for India's political freedomfrom Britain andpromotion ofequal rights and justice in the country;Later Bob Marley and his associate; and the late Nelson Mandela and his associate who fought for the rights of the black race in South Africa;etc.In the same vain at the International level, the United Nations Organisation (UN) through the declarations and programmes of its various agencies/organs such as the General Assembly, Security Council, UNESCO, UNICEF, etc. is engaged in promoting and sustaining global peace.

Library and Information Services Initiatives for Peaceful Co-Existence and Development

The basic goal of any library and information service, regardless of the type of library and information centre setup and proprietor,is to facilitate and support access and utilisation of information and information resources irrespective of their types, formats,access time and location of the target customers. Within the frame work of the UNESCO Information For All (IFA) programme; the IFLA Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom at its 75th conference anniversary ; the ambit of Inclusive ServicesProvision Environment; and within the context of information profession ethics and principles of impartiality, independence and integrity, library and information services initiatives for promotion and sustenance of peaceful co-existing and development can be provided to facilitate information and knowledge acquisition, enhance understanding of the society and global trends and effectively utilise opportunities and collaborative efforts and initiatives.

Library and information services initiatives should aim at:

- ✓ closing ranks in-between and among identified societal gaps and divisions;
- ✓ disadvantaged and despaired citizenry;
- ✓ promotion of human equality, justice and civil rights;
- ✓ reduction of poverty health diseases;
- ✓ protection of environmental degradation;
- ✓ reduced gender disparity,
- ✓ promotion ofmutual respect among the citizenry;
- ✓ promotion of socio-political and economic emancipation and participation;
- ✓ reduced socio-political and economic risks,
- ✓ ethno- religious and racial violence, crisis, tension and conflict;
- ✓ enhanced quality of life;
- ✓ promoting and enhancing mutual understanding, acceptance and tolerance amongst the citizenry;
- ✓ collaboration and cooperation;
- ✓ promotion and sustenance of all initiatives and programmes in support of patience, tolerance, dialogue, reconciliation, concessions and consensus building in-between/among antagonising stakeholders, etc.

To this effect, libraries and information centres have to continually assume the role of:

- information service providers and interpreters;
- information watch dog and gatekeepers;

- information service diplomats, managers and policy makers;
- information provision and accessbridge builders;
- information peace promoters and mediators;
- information service entertainers and advertisers;
- information editors and auditors;
- information resource providers and social marketers ; and
- above all, be change ambassadors and transformers for peace building, conflict prevention and societal overall development and advancement.

More often than not, individuals, people, community and indeed the society can change for good due to effects and impacts of:

- real life situations;
- representation of new ideas;
- Additional training, knowledge and experiences;
- research findings and experimentations;
- logic of reasoning;
- availability of requisite resources and commensurate rewards;
- role modelling and resonance; and
- inability and capacity to resistance forces of change.

Thestrategic approach for library and information service initiatives for peaceful societal co-existence, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace building and development should aim at changing and moulding the stakeholder's:

- ✓ Cognition;
- ✓ Orientation;
- ✓ Values;
- ✓ Attitude; and
- ✓ Behaviour

Towards embracing peace, harmony, progress and development willingly by their own volition devoid of any form of threat, manipulation, persuasion, compulsion or a combination of them. Toward this end, the application of library and information service provision doctrine and philosophy anchored on effective information management and translated within the context of strategic information gathering, processing, preservation and dissemination is critical and instructive. National unity, peace and development can be better strengthened , sustained andpromoted through provision of economically, socially, politically, culturally, health and security related information resources and services.

In order to create library and information service initiatives critical mass for effective peace building, conflict prevention and development in the society, all the peace-oriented information services approaches should target:

- ➢ the key role players and policy makers;
- ➢ the generality/ masses;
- ➢ Traditional and Community leaders;
- ➢ Trade Unions and Civil Right Activists;
- ➢ Civil Servants and Technocrats;
- ➢ Heads of Public and Private Establishments;
- ➢ the less privileged including the differently abled;
- ➢ political class;
- ➢ cultural, social and formal groups;
- ➢ academic and professional communities; and
- ➢ Students' Unions and Youth Movements; etc.

Some of the activities libraries and information centres may engage in for promotion and sustenance of peace, prevention of conflict and enhancement of development in the societyshould include:

- awareness raising project,
- provision of conducive environment for round table discussion, dialogue, mediation, negotiation and training;
- mounting of exhibitions on topical conflict and crisis issues and management;
- collaboration with other related print and electronic information service providers for peace promotion , conflict prevention and development;
- provision of variety of current information resources and services to educate and enhance the stake holder's understanding of the implications of conflicts, crisis, peace and development;
- establishment of social media network for meaningful comments and exchange of ideas, opinions on contemporary topical issues among the stakeholders;
- application of the state-of-the-art Information and Communication Technologies(ICTs) for library and information services delivery;
- establishment of viable Internet connectivity;
- creation and hosting of Internet website/page/linkages for easy information transfer, access and utilisation by the relevant customers;
- promotion and support for information and digital literacy;
- promotion and sustenance of collaborative initiatives and programmes on peace, conflict and crisis prevention and national development,etc.

Concluding remarks

Judging from the global trends being over shadowed unlimitedly with varieties of endemic economic, cultural, racial and socio-political conflicts and crisis including natural deserters which consequences have continued to have adversely impact on any meaningful developmental initiatives and programmes, the Nigerian nation has no option other than to accept, embrace promote and sustain all genuine, realistic, implementable, manageable and accountable efforts, initiatives and programmes aimed domiciling peace, harmony, justice and development in the country.

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