

Ownership at Grassroots Level to Support Regional Commitments: The Case of IGAD and the South Sudan Conflict

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Abstract

The idea of local ownership is regarded as an important pillar for the advancement of African solutions to the continent's development challenges. While there is consensus as to its importance and demand among practitioners in the peacebuilding field and development in general; the concept still raises a number of questions related to its definition, scope, and feasibility. The paper seeks to analyse the notion of local ownership using the South Sudan conflict that broke out in late December 2013. IGAD's swift involvement to resolve the conflict gave a sense of hope and commitment by regional leaders towards taking primary responsibility instead of waiting on external help to solve Africa's peace and security challenges. Whereas external actors were engaged in the peace processes in Addis Ababa, IGAD took the lead as a mediator between the main protagonists. The repeated violations of cessation of hostilities agreements coupled with boycotting of peace talks were reflections of the 'non-dialogue' approach taken by the warring parties. In addition, IGAD's warnings against these violations did not translate into punitive measures against the parties. During the peace process, the belligerent parties were reluctant to allow non-armed stakeholders to participate meaningfully; this revealed the disadvantaged position of civil society and grassroots organisations in relation to peace efforts undertaken at the regional level. Thus the paper recommends the establishment of a framework of guiding principles that would compel actors in peace processes to involve non-armed stakeholders as critical partners. These principles would contribute to concerted efforts that ensure the participation of the African citizenry in order to promote local ownership; a crucial aspect for supporting the commitment of regional leaders in resolving Africa's peace and security challenges. Without enhancing the capacity of the African citizenry to contribute to and own solutions at the local level, the sustainability of such solutions might be undermined, however afro-centric they might be.

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Introduction

A number of African countries have experienced violent conflicts over the last five decades, and these conflicts have had enormous impact on the continent's economic, political and socio-cultural life. The nature of these conflicts has changed over time, especially with the end of the cold war; civilians now account for 80% of the victims in contemporary conflicts; and most of these conflicts are intra-state in nature (Kaldor, 2002; Melander et al., 2006). This makes their resolution a challenging task for actors involved both at the local and regional levels. The African Union (AU) and other regional bodies like East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and Southern African Development Community (SADC) have all been involved in conflict resolution efforts, some of which have been successful while others have failed to achieve the desired goals. In spite of the existing challenges, regional bodies continue to play an important role in conflict resolution on the continent, and their intervention in conflict situations cannot be underestimated. It is in light of this, that the paper discusses the South Sudan conflict and IGAD's efforts to mitigate the conflict through diplomatic means.

The paper argues that IGAD's intervention in the South Sudan conflict, which broke out in December 2013, demonstrated a commitment towards the aspiration for African solutions to Africa's problems; with African leaders taking primary responsibility for solving the continent's peace and security challenges. The work also discusses the importance of involving grassroots organisations and institutions in peacebuilding processes as a way of promoting local ownership of solutions to ensure sustainable peace. It then concludes that grassroots organisations play a significant role in post-conflict or transitional societies as far as peacebuilding processes are concerned, and should therefore be acknowledged and regarded as important partners in efforts undertaken by regional actors. The commitment of regional leaders to African solutions ought to be supported by local actors as innovators because they are either affected by or directly involved in the conflicts, and they have knowledge concerning the root causes of violence. This paper hopes to contribute to the on-going discourse on African-Centred Solutions by advocating for more visibility and legitimacy for grassroots movements or local civil society

organisations in peacebuilding processes undertaken by regional bodies.

IGAD and the South Sudan Conflict

IGAD's involvement in Sudan dates back to its role in the negotiations to end the civil war between the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement/ Army (SPLM/ A) and the Government of Sudan (GoS) in which it played a mediation role that contributed to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. The CPA provided for a referendum, which later paved way for the independence of South Sudan (Kammel, 2013; Young, 2007). South Sudan gained independence in July 2011, and this road to self-determination marked a new dawn for the people of South Sudan who had endured the cruelty of a protracted conflict spanning over two decades. The honeymoon for the newest state was, however, short-lived as political wrangles between President Salva Kiir and his former Vice President Riek Machar emerged, thrusting the country into violent conflict.

The fighting between government forces and forces loyal to Riek Machar along political and ethnic lines has left thousands of civilians displaced, hundreds dead, infrastructure destroyed, and people's livelihoods ruined; the violence which started in Juba, later spread to Unity, Upper Nile and Jonglei states (Blanchard, 2014; International Crisis Group, 2014). The 23rd extra-ordinary session stressed IGAD's commitment to find an immediate solution to the crisis; and special envoys were appointed to lead the mediation process. The regional body called for peace talks, and a number of cessation of hostilities agreements were signed between 23rd January and 25th August 2014; however repeated violations of these agreements by both parties slowed down the peace process (ICRtoP, 2014; Sudan Tribune, 2015a). During the 27th extra-ordinary session, IGAD condemned the parties' wilful violation of the agreements, and pointed out that their actions had aggravated the humanitarian crisis in the country.

Throughout the peace process, the warring parties exhibited a level of inflexibility, they repeatedly boycotted the Addis Ababa peace talks over a number of issues, some noteworthy others negligible (AFP, 2014; ICRtoP, 2014; Odera and Maasho, 2014). This reflected the non-dialogue environment in South Sudan that was incentivising the use of force as a means to address grievances (Wilson, 2014). Despite these challenges, IGAD pressed the belligerent parties to halt hostilities and return to the negotiation table amidst threats of imposing sanctions and other

punitive action against the parties hindering the peace process; and they complied.

The final peace agreement was signed on 26th August 2015 by the representatives of the SPLM-IO, former detainees, civil society organisations, regional bodies, and international organisations. The Government of South Sudan (GoSS) had reservations and was reluctant to sign the peace agreement; however President Salva Kiir later signed the agreement to avoid sanctions against his government (Sudan Tribune, 2015b). IGAD's mediation role signalled a shift towards African leaders taking primary responsibility to tackle the continent's peace and security challenges; a step in the direction of 'ownership' at the regional level. Accordingly the role played by IGAD ought be commended and supported from the grassroots to the national level.

Broad participatory approach in peace process is crucial for supporting reconciliation and attaining durable peace beyond the transition period. IGAD's communiqué of the 26th extraordinary session stressed the issue of inclusivity whereby a multi-stakeholder approach would be employed during the negotiations, to accommodate the views of different sections of South Sudanese society. This position was initially agreed to by the warring parties, but they later abandoned it in pursuit of their narrow political interests and ambitions (Mabor, 2014). In spite of their differences, the government and SPLM-IO developed a unified position as far as blocking the participation of other non-armed actors was concerned, a reflection of the domestic environment in which civil society is stifled (International Crisis Group, 2014).

The South Sudanese civilian stakeholders were undermined during the negotiations, and also manipulated by the main warring parties (International Crisis Group, 2014; Tubiana, 2014), yet civilians are the first to bear the brunt of civil war; as empirical evidence shows that contemporary conflicts are increasingly becoming atrocious with over 80% of civil war victims being civilians (Kaldor, 2002, 2013; Mani, 2002; Melander and Oberg, 2004; Moore and Shellman, 2004). It should be noted that these non-armed stakeholders were reluctantly involved in the Addis Ababa peace talks, accordingly the quality of their participation was compromised; yet they sought to play a meaningful role in the peace process (Neha, 2014; Tubiana, 2014b). These stakeholders contribute to the generation of home-grown solutions crucial for reconciliation and sustainable peace; and are better positioned to implement the decisions of the peace process.

Societies affected by conflict should be reasonably involved in the search for solutions to address their humanitarian challenges and development needs. Practice demonstrates that grassroots entities in communities undergoing or emerging from violent conflict have always been sidelined, and their innovative potential undermined when they are simply regarded as 'beneficiaries' whose only role is to receive what is offered (Tubiana, 2014b). The commitment that leaders make at the regional level should create room for grassroots movements or organisations to participate and promote ownership at the local level. In the case of South Sudan, the citizens had a say during the referendum when they voted for independence, and it is in the same spirit that they should be consulted on matters concerning peacebuilding processes, their voices should be heard by the South Sudan leadership (Neha, 2014) and echoed at the regional level.

IGAD pursued an exclusionary process for the CPA (Young, 2007); this time round it sought a multi-stakeholder approach in South Sudan's peace process; however, the primary parties opposed the notion of inclusivity. SPLM-IO claimed that the Civil Society Organisation (CSO) representatives from Juba were pro-government, and decried the absence of CSOs from the diaspora (Mabor, 2014; Sudan Tribune, 2014) viewed as sympathetic to their cause. SPLM-IO also opposed the participation of 'former SPLM detainees' because after their release (one of SPLM-IO's demands), they insisted on participating independently in the peace talks instead of backing SPLM-IO. The government blocked the travel of opposition leader, Dr. Lam Akol, to Addis Ababa for the peace talks (Sudan Tribune, 2015d). The non-armed stakeholders did not participate as equal partners in the peace talks, the primary parties allowed them to participate in a consultative manner, and later reduced them to observers (International Crisis Group, 2015). The Addis Ababa talks demonstrated that CSOs can only be accommodated during negotiations if they can be co-opted or manipulated to do the bidding of the protagonists; this kind of inequity suppresses the capacity of CSOs to promote sustainable peace.

IGAD's swift intervention in the South Sudan conflict and its persistence during the peace talks is commendable. The influence of external actors in the peace process cannot be underestimated; they provided financial resources and technical expertise to support the mediation process. These actors included China, Troika, AU, EU, and members of the IGAD Partner's Forum (IPF); with the increased involvement of these actors, the IGAD-led process was transformed into the IGAD-PLUS mediation. Despite their individual interests, collectively, these actors had

the weight IGAD needed to compel the parties to sign an agreement (International Crisis Group, 2015); for instance, President Kiir signed the agreement to avoid UN sanctions against his government (Sudan Tribune, 2015b). While this kind of involvement by external actors is inescapable (in the short-term) and asymmetrical in nature (Reich, 2006; Schumann, 2014), it should not stop local actors and regional bodies from articulating the kind of cooperation that would best serve the interests of communities emerging from or experiencing violent conflict. The role of regional bodies in the pursuit of African solutions to the continent's peace and security challenges is hindered by inconsistent leadership, shortage of financial resources, poor institutional framework and political cleavages among African countries (Khamis, 2008).

A Case for Local Ownership of Peacebuilding Processes

Literature on the concept of local ownership of peace processes and solutions continues to stir up varied reactions among several actors in the field of peace, security, and development in general. There is limited consensus on what really this concept entails; much as different stakeholders are endorsing it. While a lot is said about local ownership, practice demonstrates quite the opposite (Sending, 2010). Thus interventions in conflict and post conflict states ought to boost the idea of local ownership. Some scholars view the concept of local ownership as emancipatory participation, which supports indigenous and local custodianship of peace processes in post conflict societies (Richmond, 2009; Wilen, 2009; Wilen and Chaupax, 2011). Van Brabant (2010) asserts that the processes of creating a realisation for local ownership are expensive and complex thus the analysis of a conflict or its termination cannot be based on simple narratives or simple solutions. The pursuit of simple solutions partially explains the attempts in peacebuilding processes that are usually prescriptive, restricted to political elites, with limited reference to socio-cultural background of the conflict. This tends to leave limited or no room for local communities to meaningfully engage in conflict resolution efforts.

Local ownership of peacebuilding processes can be perceived as efforts that are locally conceived and led; this emphasises the need to listen to the voices of people in the conflict region (Edomwonyi, 2003); the appreciation of solutions or benefits by local actors irrespective of who invented them (Boughton and Mourmouras, 2002); and the legitimate participation of 'locals' at different levels (Van Brabant,

2010). Local ownership is also viewed as a call for the withdrawal of external actors' control of peacebuilding processes; however, this has implications as far as the issue of managing international assistance is concerned since external actors usually finance these efforts (Reich, 2006). Local ownership ought to be viewed as a comprehensive involvement of local actors in a wide range of activities that contribute to the prevention of violence and resolution of conflict.

Transformation at any level in society cannot rely on prescriptive solutions; the affected people must be involved in all processes. Olson et al. (2003) assert that:

No one can make anyone else's peace. People and societies must create conditions and processes for achieving and sustaining their own peace. Practitioners can support, and work along people as colleagues, offer different perspectives, ideas and discuss options. But they cannot make peace in another person's context. If the solutions do not come from the communities that are affected, they can mount to manipulation or attempted social engineering.

Accordingly for peace processes to be manageable and sustainable within the resource capacity of the community, local people have to be actively involved with limited external involvement that is context specific.

While the involvement of external actors in the early stages of post-conflict environment can be justified to a certain extent, the interventions, which are usually based on liberal democratic reforms tend to suffocate local participation in the long-run (Donais, 2009a; Schumann, 2014). Formal institutions collapse or are weakened by violent conflicts, yet they are the focus of these interventions. Informal or traditional institutions are resilient, they represent continuity and community stability; and play an important role in conflict resolution and local governance. Accordingly, a hybrid approach that engages these institutions would support local solutions that promote reconciliation (Donais, 2009b). Okach (2013) argues that policies which do not take into account or reinforce indigenous knowledge ignore informal institutionalism in peacebuilding processes and undermine local ownership. The capacity building efforts extended to certain local actors also undermine local ownership through the transfer of external norms and practices which ignore the context of specific conflicts (Sending, 2009; Van Brabant, 2010). Thus the practical problem of embracing and applying the concept of local ownership lies partially with the failure of external actors to appreciate that viable solutions can be and should be taken from the societies in which they intervene.

Cilliers (2004) asserts that, “[...] individuals and communities are not only bystanders and collateral victims of conflicts, but core participants in protection strategies and post-conflict peacebuilding”. In the same vein, Okach (2013) argues for the tapping of local communities’ potential to promote ownership and sustainable peace. However local actors are usually marginalised because of undue interference and control exhibited through financing externally-generated processes (Boughton and Mourmouras, 2002; Interpeace, 2010) and sometimes altering policies designed by local actors. This not only compromises local actors’ legitimacy to participate and own the peacebuilding processes, but also undermines their commitment to these efforts.

Some scholars assert that the concept of local ownership in peace and security is still unclear and as such viewed as a premature rhetoric which poses a lot of difficult questions (Bendix and Stanley, 2008; Diamond, 1999; Reich, 2006; Scheye et al, 2005; Shinoda, 2008; Saxby, 2003). However, these challenges should not be viewed as something insurmountable. Local ownership, if well managed, is important in the (re)building of social infrastructure (Edmwonyi, 2003), an aspect that has been given little attention over (re)construction of physical infrastructure and formal institutions. Logan (2013) argues that traditional institutions are important to communities. They are viewed as the custodians of invaluable knowledge, heritage, identity, and norms, which are important in the restoration of a community’s social fabric wasted by violent conflict. Thus efforts have to be put in place for local communities to explore what their cultures and heritage have to offer towards peacebuilding processes. Without their meaningful participation, externally generated solutions cannot be sustainable or they can have perverse effects. Furthermore, any external assistance rendered should be compatible with the communal ideals although some might not necessarily echo liberal-leaning views that most external actors advance at the expense of sustainable resolution of conflicts.

The importance of local ownership in post-conflict situations is generally related to the sustainability of peacebuilding activities by way of communities devising appropriate interventions with minimal opposition (Mateos, 2011; Van Brabant, 2010). In addition, locally conceived ideas, especially those that are derived from communal practices of societies experiencing conflicts tend to be culturally relevant (Donais, 2009a; Reich, 2006) and can be implemented with modest human and financial resources. When people are involved in peacebuilding processes, they

are empowered to hold their leaders accountable, thus establishing a mechanism of 'downward answerability' of leaders to the community, an aspect that was eliminated by colonialism (Logan, 2011).

Violent conflicts are usually characterised by a breakdown of formal institutions, and it is usually the informal establishments that keep the fragile social fabric together; these traditional entities are very enduring, and traditional leaders have popular support among citizens for they are an embodiment of a community's identity and intransience (Logan, 2011). Therefore, contentions that emphasise the incapacity of indigenous grassroots institutions to manage and much so participate in peacemaking processes are quite disconcerting. External intervention can choke local capacity when actors insist on analysing conflict situations from biased, contemptuous and sometimes uninformed perspective regarding local realities. Reich (2006) argues that local ownership should involve a power shift that transcends current practices, and local actors should have the ultimate say at the different decision making levels. The input of local actors should be reflected in regional peace processes; IGAD, for instance, made efforts to involve non-armed stakeholders in the Addis Ababa peace process but was challenged by the principal parties; and civil society delegates were relegated to lobbying and observer status (Tubiana, 2014a). These delegates were excluded because SPLM-IO claimed that they were pro-government (Mabor, 2014).

Limited or lack of local ownership actually exacerbates 'institutional dependency syndrome', by undermining Africa's capacity to improve its own institutions (both formal and informal) that take into account local realities; and this is worsened by the presence of conflict entrepreneurs (Allen and Schomerus, 2010). While some scholars have questioned the practicability of the concept of local ownership in development practice, the concept is very relevant especially in conflict and post-conflict societies. Local ownership is achievable when local problems are addressed using local solutions that use indigenous resources. When citizens are quick to respond to the peace and security challenges (Bendix and Stanley, 2008), then they can provide home-grown solutions with external actors playing a supportive role. Local ownership can be viewed as 'acquired' when local communities are only involved in the final stages of the processes; external actors conceive, design and fund programmes which are later handed over to local actors to manage (Donais, 2009a; Mateos, 2011; Reich, 2006). This, however, overlooks the political and socio-cultural complexities of local communities and weakens the commitment of local

actors in sustaining such programmes.

According to Curtis (2013), peacebuilding processes are characterised by an interaction between the ideas and interests of external and local actors. As a result, local actors are in a position to alter the externally conceived ideas and fit into the indigenous post-conflict environment in which they operate. The alteration demonstrates the local actors' aspiration to own the processes of peacebuilding in ways that can be best sustained, even in the midst of differing interpretations amongst themselves. Thus international actors' involvement must be flexible in order to leave room for 'repackaging' of ideas to suit local environments. It is important to note that the crafting of African solutions takes a multi-dimensional and multi-actor course of action; for these solutions to be sustainable, the concerned communities should be at the forefront of these processes. Unlike the external actors, the communities of people referred to as 'cultural neighbours,' according to Gabbert (2014), will always be there to facilitate reconciliation after hostility, and create mutually beneficial platforms that promote complementarity and interdependency that transcend the transitional period. Sustainability should thus be based on genuine local participation and ownership rather than the durability of external interventions (Kasaija, 2012).

Sustainability of home-grown initiatives hinges on local communities' ownership of strategies, resources and ideas, and their ability to alter solutions to adapt to changing environments. Sustainability also relates to local communities' capacity to carry on with projects when external support is rolled-back because peace processes go beyond short-term crisis management.

Local Ownership in South Sudan Peace Processes

The violence, which broke out in Juba in December 2013, later spread to Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile states with insurgents fighting along ethnic lines (Blanchard, 2014; International Crisis Group, 2014). Local communities have been severely affected by the conflict, and stakeholders at the grassroots level took on the challenge of finding lasting solutions to the conflict.

These local actors' involvement in peace initiatives is of importance not only for the resolution of the conflict but also for ensuring sustainable peace (International Crisis Group, 2014). Innovative ways have been utilised by local civil society

organisations and traditional institutions to establish peace markets, village peace committees, women's peace groups and youth peace initiatives to promote peaceful co-existence among different communities (Wilson, 2014), for purposes of exploring indigenous approaches to peacebuilding. These platforms provide for small but effective dialogue amongst different communities that are caught up in the conflict. At the grassroots level, one is able to collect narratives that citizens have concerning the causes and history of violence; and issues that need to be addressed to promote peaceful co-existence.

Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) have also played an important role in peacebuilding processes at the local level, for instance, the Church Leaders' Mediation Initiative which is an inter-denominational platform was established to mediate and reconcile communities involved in the conflict. AU Commission of Inquiry (CoI) report affirms the critical role of these organisations in peace and reconciliation initiatives. These leaders, for instance, participated in the Jonglei peace talks that led to the signing of a peace agreement between rebel leader David Yau Yau and the government of South Sudan in Addis Ababa (Sudan Tribune, 2014; Yugusk, 2014). The mediation process involved consultations between the local community and the rebel leader; and the community was engaged in monitoring the implementation of the cessation of hostilities agreement. In a way, the local community contributed to and had ownership of the peace process.

This community-based approach created room for other actors to participate, like the UNMISS delegates, church members, traditional leaders and a joint military team from both the rebel and government forces. The focus of the religious leaders' involvement was to promote peaceful co-existence among the Jonglei state's communities caught up in the conflict (Yugusk, 2014). The negotiation processes were upheld as promoting the standard of inclusivity, unlike the Addis Ababa peace-talks that sidelined CSOs. The Addis Ababa peace-talks have been majorly elite-driven, reduced from a multi-stakeholder process to a bilateral negotiation between the principal parties (Tubaina, 2014a); and there has been little connection between the hostile parties and the general population (International Crisis Group, 2014). The warring parties denied South Sudanese CSO representatives the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the Addis Ababa peace process. The behaviour of these actors was self-centred, CSOs had no forum to rectify the injustice because such negotiations do not set inclusiveness as a vital requirement to peace talks, and downplay the importance of civilian participation.

Civil society organisations in South Sudan established a coalition (Citizens for Peace and Justice [CPJ]) to lobby for the participation of civil society during the Addis Ababa peace-talks; the activists asserted that the peace-talks had to be inclusive in order to promote ownership and accountability. Their 'inclusivity victory' was short-lived; unlike the narrow political interests of the armed parties, CSOs demanded for general reforms to address the root causes of the conflict; their concerns were related to ending violence and bringing about reconciliation, justice and accountability (CPJ, 2014). When non-armed stakeholders are included in peacebuilding processes, it promotes 'downward accountability' and more so local ownership is enhanced.

Recommendations

Involving communities ensures that indigenous resources are strategically employed to find solutions for durable peace. These resources are not limited to finances; they include indigenous knowledge of conflict resolution mechanisms and cultural practices. Thus national governments ought to promote multi-stakeholder approaches, and enhance the capacity of local communities to work together with formal and informal institutions to generate innovative solutions. Re-building social infrastructure after conflict involves the participation of all sections of society. This calls for access to information about peacebuilding processes. People have to be availed with information in local languages and there should be media freedom to facilitate the flow of information between government and society. For instance, during the Addis Ababa peace talks, it was difficult for ordinary citizens to get reliable information about the process, and in areas like Lakes state, such information was not available in local languages (Daley, 2015). Having access to information relating to issues like transitional justice, and to resources like land can promote constructive engagement with affected communities and ensure accountability of leaders. Truth and Reconciliation Commission, for instance, depends on access to information on the role played by different conflicting parties and their interpretation.

In order to promote home-grown peace initiatives that take into account local values, resources of South Sudan, the ownership of ideas, processes, strategies and outcomes should be emphasised by external and local actors. This is important for the sustainability of peacebuilding efforts in communities affected by the conflict. The capacity of CSOs should be enhanced to engage the government during

the national transitional phase. The civil society should be well positioned to monitor the reforms, for instance, in the security sector and hold the government accountable during the transition period.

Responsibility to Involve non-armed stakeholders (R2i)

This concept seeks to address the issue of exclusion, whether competitively or systematically, of non-armed stakeholders in mediation and negotiation peace processes. Current practice reveals that the grassroots organisations and civil society organisations are not empowered to participate meaningfully in peace processes. The IGAD-PLUS-led mediation revealed this injustice, when the warring parties blocked the participation of non-armed stakeholders. Some ended lobbying these parties because they lacked the legitimacy to participate independently. This recommendation seeks to create room at the regional level for the voice of the non-armed stakeholders to be heard without being at the mercy of the belligerents, who at times choose not to invite grassroots organisations to participate. Responsibility to involve embodies the values of ownership, justice, and fair representation, and is a reliable way to promote the participation of local communities in regional initiatives.

Addis Ababa peace process showed that armed parties can manipulate mediators into downplaying the importance of non-armed stakeholders. R2i gives the non-armed stakeholders a legitimate character, this ensures that they are not manipulated or co-opted or pushed about by belligerent parties; or limited to observer status in peace processes that have a great impact on the well-being of local populations in any given conflict situation. R2i would compel mediators and belligerent parties to accommodate non-armed stakeholders as a requirement to establish peace talks; the warring parties would have no influence on which actors are selected to participate; mechanisms would be employed to ensure transparency and accountability.

R2i is proposed as a set of guiding principles (soft law) to address the injustices experienced by non-armed stakeholders during peace processes; with the current status quo, the civil society and grassroots organisations cannot participate meaningfully. R2i would provide a feasible framework that authorises non-armed stakeholders to demand for official participation in peace talks and monitoring the implementation of peace agreements. R2i does not mean that governments

should relinquish their powers to civil society, but rather have the responsibility to create room for other actors at the negotiation table. As an innovative mechanism that would extend legal capacity or personality to non-armed stakeholders in peace negotiations, further research needs to be done into R2i to determine the modalities of its operation. While it may seem quite ambitious an idea, it would go a long way in tackling the issue of systematic exclusion of non-armed grassroots actors in peace processes.

Conclusion

The concept of local ownership in promotion of African solutions is important because it promotes legitimacy of peacebuilding strategies. When people are involved in peace processes, it builds trust in the government and mediation team. Every stage of the peacebuilding process represents an opportunity for local level actors to take the lead in setting the agenda, and implementation of peace agreements. In the case of the IGAD-PLUS-led mediation, non-armed stakeholders were sidelined, and a bilateral agreement was reached at the expense of genuine reconciliation and durable peace; this will affect the state-civil society relations negatively during the transition phase.

External actors played an important role as part of IGAD-PLUS to compel armed parties to sign the peace agreement, however, they will not always be there; accordingly there is a need to empower the grassroots organisations to support the initiatives of regional bodies as partners in Africa's development. The Addis Ababa peace process revealed the disadvantaged position of the civil society, and this calls for a shift from conventional mediation to one that is more accommodative.

Establishing a culture of local ownership and inclusivity in peace processes both at the micro and macro levels is possible. Peace processes would be more complex, but societies would be guaranteed reconciliation and sustainability of peace. South Sudan's grassroots organisations have the potential to contribute meaningfully to peace process; but they lack legal capacity to act independently. Thus R2i should be adopted as a set of guiding principles (soft law) to promote the legitimacy of non-armed stakeholders as equal partners with armed parties in peace talks.

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