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# Towards Global Peace and Sustainability: Role of Education in Peace-Building in the Great Lakes Region of Sub-Saharan Africa

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## Abstract

The Great Lakes Region of sub-Saharan Africa is well known for being volatile and turbulent in terms of peace and stability. For over 60 years, almost all countries in the region have experienced some kind of political and social turmoil such as civil war, coup de tat, and genocides. In 1960, the first democratically elected Congolese prime minister was assassinated. There were unprecedented social and political havoc in a nearby “other Congo” characterized by power struggle between various political and ethnic factions in the post-independence Congo Brazzaville. In Burundi and Rwanda, ethnic tensions between the Tutsi and Hutu engulfed the developmental dreams of nationalist freedom fighters until 2015. Though arguably stable, Tanzania has experienced its own share of socio-political mess including the 1998 Mwembechai and 2001 Pemba massacres. Efforts to build a sense of sustainable peace and development based on mutual understanding and socio-political harmony has brought limited success. In all these countries, the missing link in building sustainable peace and security has been a lack of education. The chapter intends to fill this gap by critically analyzing the potential role of basic education, especially pre-primary and early grades education, in sustainable peace-building in the sub-Saharan context.

**Keywords:** Great Lake region, Burundi, D.R. Congo, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, education, peace-building

## 1. Introduction

Great Lake Region (GLR) constituted of United Republic of Tanzania (URT), Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Burundi [1] have made different and remarkable developments in the improvement of services it offers to her citizens. Education is among such development that has been recorded to contribute into several dividends to the GLR citizens. The available economic data [1] indicates its member states have been impacted by the civil wars that have lowered their progress. For instance, before the eruption of the civil war in Burundi in 1965, the gross domestic product (GDP) was United States Dollar (USD) 286 and

after the war it dropped to an estimation of USD170. Similar trend of the impact of the war is vivid in the DRC as its 71% of people live in extreme poverty and nearly two thirds of the active populations (especially young people) are unemployed. Rwanda is the most densely populated country in Africa with over 11 million habitants, and it abolished school fees in 2003/2004 as from primary (which takes 6 years) to lower secondary (offered for 3 years). In Tanzania basic education (pre-primary to lower secondary) has been compulsory and fee free since 2001. Uganda is one of the pioneers in Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of setting the goal to achieve universal access to basic education and it introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE) since 1997.

2. Education objectives of basic education systems in Great Lake Regions

GLR countries (Figure 1) have at different times taken basic education (from pre-primary to lower secondary) as a basic need to their citizens, hence made it fee-free. Basic education (comprising of primary 1 to primary 6 and an additional of senior 3; and the secondary education) in Rwanda was made compulsory and fee-free since the 2010 election campaign of President Paul Kagame re-election and it is now guaranteed in the Rwanda Constitution. Therefore, it has been the duty of the State to take measures to ensure it is inclusive [2]. The objectives of the education in Rwanda are to improve and increase: (1) access to education for all, (2) quality education at all levels, (3) equity in education at all levels, (4) effective and efficient education system, (5) science and technology and ICT in education, and (6) promotion of positive values, critical thinking, Rwandan culture, peace,



Figure 1.  
Africa Great Lake Regions. Source: <https://reliefweb.int/map/cameroon/africa-great-lakes-region-refugees-and-displaced-populations-8-dec-1997>.

unity and reconciliation. In the DRC [3] the education provision is structured by three strategic objectives: (1) developing access and ensuring equity aiming to ensure the free primary education policy is effectively put in place for all children and implemented by increasing and rationalizing school constructions, and registration and payment of all teachers by 2020, (2) improving the quality of learning by improving quality assurance and monitoring as well as the learning environment across the system, and (3) improving governance and oversight of the system by strengthening the education system through implementing transparent norms and mechanisms for managing resources, and improving management at all levels.

### **3. Enrollment trends and literacy rate in basic education**

Enrolment trends of pupils particularly in primary schools in the GLR are varied. Importantly, the region sadly contributes high in number of children who are out of schooling. For instance; while it is estimated that 54.6 million African children in Sub-Saharan Africa-SSA of primary- and lower secondary school age (averaging 24% of this age group) were out of school in 2015, accounting for 45% of the global out-of-school population, 3.2 million of the out of school children in the region were from the DRC [4]. Burundi is among the six countries in sub-Saharan region countries with success in increasing number of children enrolled in primary school for the period between 1999 and 2008 [5]. On literacy and numeracy performances, Burundi is ahead of other Francophone African countries as its performance internationally indicates to have lowest proportion of non-readers among African countries (A maximum of 20.4% of non-readers in grade 2 cannot read a word aloud) [6]. In addition, it has been reported that early grade children in Burundi show good learning outcome as in their assessment they observed that over 60% of second-grade pupils could read more than 20 letters per minute with only 3% of them failing to read even a word, hence scored zero [4]. On numeracy, pupils in Burundi had during the assessment attained sufficiency competency in mathematics as 63% of assessed children in the country demonstrated good skills in oral counting and like children in DRC, 60% of them could solve a one-digit addition problem.

Various reasons are associated with Burundi doing well in literacy and numeracy than other countries in the GLR. It is almost linguistically homogeneous with 98% of the population speaking a single language [4]. Kirundi has been the language of instruction from first through fourth grade since 1973 and it is phonetically coded using the Latin script and has stronger written traditions than many African languages. Consistent use of the education policy that has favored a “structured pedagogy” approach is another factor for Burundi doing better in literacy and numeracy than other countries in the region. The structured approach has caused that:

- Teaching-learning is facilitated using aids produced in Kirundi that makes it easy to transfer of knowledge and skills of children in reading and mathematics concepts. Introduction of oral French in grade one builds a foundation for performance in reading and mathematics in later grades.
- Ensured government support in school infrastructure by concentrating on financing teachers and teaching-learning materials, also in the schools that are run by religious organizations.
- Pre-service and in-service training of urban and rural teachers in all contexts to undertake teaching and learning activities efficiently.



- Use of appropriate pedagogical practices and resources in the classroom with participative approach to teach reading and writing in first and second grades. Accommodates use of the whole-word method, posters and play for learning and teaching reading and writing in an active manner, and
- Continued coaching from district supervisors, use of radio programs and distance-learning interventions and substitute teachers to support effective learning to children.

Comparatively, educational management of the GLR countries observes and recognizes contribution and participation of non-state organs including parents and community members, and civil society organizations (CSOs) [3]. The difference exists on the extent of the non-state organs in managing the education provision. For example, in DRC, though parents and community participate in school management and CSOs in education issues, they lack voice and the latter seldom meaningfully represent parents' interests. Administratively, fee-free education policy is common in almost all GLR countries. However, in DRC parents contribute some 2000 CFs (equivalent to United States Dollar-USD 2.05) and other illegal and informal fees are collected at the school for support the implementation of the fee-free education policy. Obviously, some collected funds disappear into someone's pocket leaving primary education inadequately financed [3]. Further, the GLR countries have recorded doubling of the net enrolment of the primary school students from 5.5 million in 2001/2002 to about 13.5 million in 2013/14 which is an increase of the gross enrollment ratio (GER) from 62% in the respective years to 107% [3].

DRC has recorded good completion rate of the primary school pupils despite decline of the same with lower secondary students and worse for advanced secondary school students [7]. The DRC education system for primary and secondary schools can be classified into two: (i) public schools consisting of schools directly managed by the government and the schools managed by religious institutions, and (ii) private recognized schools which receive no government funding [8]. The privately organized schools receive funds from different funders and from different sources and they continue to expand at all levels, albeit slowly and with major oscillations. However, due to prevalence of nearly a decade of conflict, there is no sustained progress towards the goal of universal primary completion as large proportion of young children are not attending the primary school compared to 15 years ago.

Regardless of the different schools in the DRC education system, there has been some improvement in enrollment and completion rates [9]. However, learning achievements by students have remained weak as indicated by various indicators. It has been reported that up to 2018:

- More years (appropriately 9 years) of schooling are needed for students to be sufficiently literate. It has been described by authors that at 15 years of age the number of literate youths raises only to 47.3% placing the DRC lower than other countries in GLR.
- That initial grades from pre-primary to grade one, children are inadequately prepared for formal learning (primary schooling) as 26% of students have difficulties with their learning in grade 2 (PASEC scores)
- The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tests showed that 52% of pupils in fourth grade were incapable of reading a single word. In addition, there are variations within the country regarding mathematics and reading.

For example, half of grade 2 pupils in Katanga have learning difficulties and 65% of children in grade 5 while in Bandundu only 18% have learning difficulties in grade 2, and 42% in grade 5.

Uganda is one of the pioneers in Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of setting the goal to achieve universal access to basic education and it introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE) since 1997 characterized of abolishment of primary school tuition, Parents and Teachers Association fees, and the textbook fees for up to four children per family [10]. Following the abolishment of fees, primary school enrolment increased from 2.5 million pupils in 1996 to 8.3 million in 2015 and the primary GER increased to 118% in 2011 before it stabilized at 111% in 2017. Uganda has progressive GDP growth from 6% in the financial year 2017/2018 to 6.4% in 2018/2019.

However, Uganda invests less in the future productivity of its citizens mainly children and has had low levels of learning achievement compared to Burundi as measured through the Human Capital Index-HCI [10]. The low levels of learning achievement of children in Uganda were also revealed by the measure of the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) assessment administered in 2013 with 70% of grade 6 students achieved the minimum competence level in reading, and only 40% of those tested reached that same competence level in Mathematics. In addition, EGRA evidenced that only 28% of children were able to read 20 words per minute in the third grade of primary (P3).

Rwanda has its Vision of 2020 and Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy aiming at moving from an agriculture-based economy to 'a knowledge-based hub for business and information technology' by 2020 [11]. As education has been used by countries as an instrument in attaining its development goals, the government of Rwanda abolished school fees in 2003/2004 as from primary (which takes 6 years) to lower secondary (which is offered for 3 years) hence ensuring equitable access to education and high-quality education enabling its citizen with the skills and knowledge required for the socioeconomic development of the country [12]. In addition, abolishment of school fees was used to increase enrolment, retention and completion rates for basic education, especially for vulnerable children [13]. Consequently, the GER for primary education improved steadily as in 2013 it reached 97% (98% of the enrolled were girls) though primary education completion rate was still down at 69% (64% for boys and 74% for girls) [12, 14]. The Ministry of Education achieved enrolment targets due to abolishment of school fees, hence managing to make preprimary, primary and secondary levels with gender parity [15].

Despite the achievement made by the Republic of Rwanda observes some pupils failing to attain the curricular expectations (for example through the measure of quality standards and assurance program of education, the Learning Achievement in Rwandan Schools-LARS) as 37% failed in literacy and 46% in numeracy compared to 55% of students who managed to meet the expectations in literacy and 27% in numeracy [13]. Geographical positioning affected numeracy results as results indicated significant difference between provinces and between districts. That implied that being in rural areas is a disadvantage as pupils in rural areas largely failed to meet curricular standards compared with their peers in urban areas with achievement distribution in both literacy and numeracy being relatively equal for girls and boys [13].

While the number of primary and the above levels of education are well recorded in Rwanda, pre-primary education (nursery education as they call it) started to be documented only in 2016 [16]. The number of nursery schools

increased from 2757 in 2016 to 3186 in 2017; and students from 185,666 in 2016 to 220,435 in 2017 indicating a Gross and Net Enrolment Rate increase from 23.8% (in 2016) to 24.1% and 17.5% (in 2016) to 20.6%, but the rates are still very low compared to the SDG target of 100% by 2030 [16].

In Tanzania, just as it has been in other GLR countries, basic education (pre-primary to lower secondary) has been compulsory and fee-free since 2001 when the Primary Education Development Program (PEDP) was introduced and it has continued to be fully State-funded through the Tanzania Education and Training Policy of 2014 [17]. Regarding the objectives of the education, the government tells that the general objective of the education is *Kuwa na Watanzania walioelimika na wenye maarifa na ujuzi kuweza kuchangia kwa haraka katika maendeleo ya Taifa na kuhimili ushindani* translated as “to have Tanzanians who are educated with knowledge and skills for contributing effectively and timely for national development that can sustain competition” [18]. On enrolment, the net enrolment for pre-primary education is among the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa as it reached 44.6% in 2017 while primary education gross enrolment rate has almost become universal with net enrolment of 84% and more than 70% of the primary school leavers transit to secondary education [19]. Another report indicates that pupils’ completion rate in Tanzania was 80% while in Rwanda it was close to 55% [7].

The gross enrolment rate in Tanzania is close to universal in primary education, but the government reports that a large number (close to one in every four pupils in primary and more than two in every five lower secondary students) were found be out of school [20]. Such report on Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children, Tanzania Country Report summarizes that about 2 million primary-school-age children and 1.5 million lower-secondary-school-age children were out of school in Tanzania by the time of the profiling. This number is huge and gives a lesson to the achievements of the SDG 4 and global vision of no one should be left behind.

#### 4. The concept of peace-building and its relationship with education

The word ‘peace-building’ was first coined and famously used by Galtung [21] in his publication ‘Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peace-building’. He developed the most of the popular core concepts that continue to be used in defining peace-building today, including negative peace, positive peace, structural violence, root causes of conflict, and sustainable peace [21]. Accordingly, peace-building involves addressing and removing the root causes of violence. These may include the structural and the cultural violence which is considered to feeds into and enables direct violence. The primary goal of peace-building is to establish positive, sustainable peace in societies once beleaguered by any form of violence. In Galtung’s words:

*“... structures must be found that remove causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where wars might occur” (1976: 297).*

To build and achieve peace and tranquility, there is a need to emphasize the importance of local knowledge, ownership and participation in whole process of peace-building. For example, the work of John Paul Lederach has systematically documented the gradual evolvement of the definitions of peace-building. Accordingly, peace-building are processes which are dynamic and social and involve transforming relationships of various groups and powerful individuals in the communities.



## **5. The role of education in peace-building in the great lakes region of sub-Saharan Africa**

Available education and economic evidences indicates that violence and conflicts are some of the biggest barriers and challenges to development in most of the world's poorest countries [22]. Of the 40 poorest countries in the world, 24 are either in the midst of armed conflict or have only recently emerged from it [23]. Empirical evidences and life experiences have consistently indicated that education is the most important tool for improving human development and to eradicate poverty. For generations, it has been used as a means by which to develop the values, knowledge and skills for the personal health, safety, and for future economic and social development. Perhaps, this may help to explain why the MDGs and SDGs places so much emphasis through Education for All (EFA) on achieving universal, free and compulsory basic education.

However, in the sub-Saharan region, there are many impediments to the achievement of EFA. In the Great Lakes Region, these impediments are said to include lack of priority to education on the part of national governments. In this context, lack of priority include misallocation and insufficient spending as a percentage of GNP, inequitable distribution of funding and resources across and within provinces or regions and districts within the countries, and sometimes limited or totally no commitment and/or effective action in the use of development assistance on the part of the international community. Even within individual countries in the GLR, barriers to the enrolment of children in school include the existence of armed conflicts and displacement, child-labor, poverty, distance from school, gender biases, and cultural factors.

Evidence from empirical and gray sources indicates that the number of out-of-school primary-age children in the world has fallen in recent years, and the situation in conflict-affected countries has seen very little improvement. While conflict-affected countries are home to only 13% of the world's population, yet half of all the children out of school (37 million out of 72 million children) live there. More disturbing fact is that these countries receive less than one-fifth of education aid from the international community [24].

One of the available the most recent estimates by the EFA Global Monitoring Report [5, 25] is that 28 million children live in conflict-affected countries (42% of the world total of children out of school). A huge segment of them (46%) live in the sub-Saharan region especially in the GLR of the African continent [26]. This section provides a brief summary of three ways in which the international community and aids agencies may think about the role of education in conflict-affected situations. Broadly, the noted agencies represent areas that have gained greater attention in the last three decades in international development discourses. It is important to note that background and scope this discourse can be traced back to the Second World War (1939–1945). Although each discourse seems to represent a slightly different perspective arising from a common concern, however, all are about the way that conflict affects the lives of school children, their families and their right to access quality education.

The first discourse is concerned with protection of children and a better way to respond to the negative impacts of violent conflicts on their education and psychological wellbeing. To some extent, this approach is primarily of humanitarian motivation. The second discourse focuses on the fact that education is provided in a way that 'does no harm' to anybody including children. Some scholars have termed it as a conflict-sensitive education. That is, it is sensitive to sources of conflict in the society in which it is situated, and is provided in a way that does not worsen



the existing antagonisms or animosities. In other words, in this discourse education can 'do some good' to individuals and societies. The most cited argument is by contributing to transformations within conflict-affected societies and individuals that might make peace possible and more likely to sustain and endure. In other words, the focus is on education that contributes to peace-building efforts. It is important to note that overlapping elements of these discourses have emerged and sometimes, co-existed throughout a considerable period of time. However, at times one perspective may have gained more prominence than another. Although in most cases the discourses do interact, separate development has been more common than their integration. This has been reflected in the emergence of distinct communities of practices across academia and conflict-affected contexts.

## **6. Education as a humanitarian response**

Globally, experiences indicate that education systems face various exceptional challenges before, during and after times of violent conflict. While during conflict international humanitarian laws have particular importance, there are no laws to guide education systems before and during violent conflicts. However, the Geneva Conventions make specific references to protections related to education at times of war or violent conflicts. These include that:

- Involved parties to ensure that children under 15, orphaned or separated from their families, have access to quality and appropriate education;
- Occupying parts and/or powers should facilitate the maintenance of education;
- Education should be provided for incarcerated children and young people including those who were once child-soldiers;
- And education should be provided throughout non-international conflicts.

A noticeable limitation of the above provisions which has received some critiques from both academia and practitioners, is that the Geneva Conventions were developed and adjusted after the Second World War when state and ultimatums of wars had been declared among nations and alliances. It was recently that UN declarations, resolutions and protocols have tried to update and accept rules of engagements during conflicts and wars to accommodate the increasingly more complex nature of modern conflicts. Close observations of this matter seem to suggest that it is challenging to implement the Geneva Convention resolutions in the current situation in which armed-conflicts are often waged by groups within countries. In most cases these within countries armed groups have no sense of accountability to international authority. This results into more complex problem of disregarding the values and norms represented by the Geneva Conventions [27].

## **7. Impacts of conflicts and wars on education**

Scholars began to pay serious attention on the impact of violent conflicts and wars on children during the 1990s. It was first comprehensively documented in a study commissioned by the UN Secretary-General [28]. The report identified a number of important implications for the education sector, including arrangements for the education of refugees and displaced persons [29], strategies to prevent the

use of child soldiers, protection for girls against sex crimes, landmine education and trauma counseling. This report provided the basis for a number of initiatives and interventions which shaped later aid policies and practices. Most of the issues identified by the report have become specialized areas of international development. It was from this report that arguments had been developed and made that education should be an integral part of humanitarian responses to any calamity including wars and violent conflicts [29, 30]. This argument is rooted on the fact that education is a fundamental right as articulated in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1981).

A well-established fact is that children should not lose this fundamental right to education simply because they are caught in the midst of a conflict or war-torn areas. Further, during violent conflict or after the war, education is regarded as an integral part in the physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection of children. Some of the benefits of education include provision of a sense of normalcy and stability, lessening the psycho-social impact of violent conflict or traumatic experiences of war. Experiences has consistently shown that a safe learning environment may shield children from the everyday physical violence of a conflict, protect them from being recruited as child-soldiers. Further, education is an important channel in conveying life-saving information on how to protect oneself from danger. In the GLR, these dangers include sexual attack, child recruitment as combatants, and child-labor in landmines. It further provides cognitive protection by supporting intellectual development through the teaching of literacy and numeracy and, in some cases, conflict resolution and peace-building skills. However, given the severity and notoriety of the warring factions in the GLR, there remains considerable and of course very fierce debate among educational stakeholders about the necessity to include education in frontline humanitarian aid responses in war-torn areas.

A significant and notable danger is related to a fragmented and highly uncoordinated immediate responses and efforts from longer-term development plans for the education sector in the GLR. In most cases, the international agencies involved in immediate responses are different from those involved in longer-term planning of the development aid for education. Further, the disturbing fact is that sometimes education sector personnel and experts with experiences and understanding of the local education setting and authorities are not involved in the early stages. However, it is worth noting the a significant developments made since the World Education Forum in 2000 and its resulting Dakar Framework for Action which focuses on including an explicit call for donor support to the field, commonly known as 'education in emergencies' [31].

While this field is not defined exclusively in terms of conflict, the disruption of education due to conflict is certainly one set of circumstances that come within the definition of an emergency [32]. The most important initiative so far which has been made is the formation of the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE). The network includes Norwegian Refugee Council, CARE International, Save the Children Alliance, UNESCO, UNHCR and UNICEF. The primary role and responsibility of the INEE is to define minimum standards for education in emergencies which until recently is being used in all GLR countries. While in the GLR the INEE does not implement nor coordinate responses during crises, it is known to have enabled members to share information and encourage collaboration [33].

Despite these achievements, available evidence suggests that those working within other sector still need to be convinced about the inclusion of education in frontline humanitarian responses. This is indicated by the fact that despite a decade of advocacy, education still receives only 2% of humanitarian aid. Further, compared with food, health, shelter, water and sanitation, it receives the lowest

response to funds requested [3]. This is perhaps because education is still perceived as part of longer-term development, rather than as an immediate humanitarian response. Part of the problem may be based on the fact most of the field workers use to justify more funding for education during the humanitarian phase are more about the need for earlier engagement instead of longer-term issues. These issues may include collection of accurate data, assessing whether and how to reform education, and developing better capacity. In most cases, concerns of the funders are that rebuilding the education system during the emergency response period may reproduce old problems. And the most cited problems include unequal access that may leave legacies that are more difficult to redress in later development phases.

It is important to note that the inclusion of conflict-affected contexts within the broader concept of 'education and emergencies' has not been helpful from a peace-building perspective in the GLR. This is because while it's understandable that conflicts undoubtedly create crises and situations similar to other emergencies, it is conceptually confusing to suggest that understanding the role of an education system during or after conflict is the same as responding to humanitarian or natural disasters. This necessitates and suggests that any analysis needs to be context- and conflict-specific.

## **8. Conflict-sensitive education in the GLR**

For several past decades, various studies have increasingly highlighted aspects of education that have implications for violent conflict and peace-building [34–36]. These studies suggest a number of reasons why we should be cautious about how education is provided [35]. Firstly, education may be perceived politically as a powerful tool for ideological development as it has been in some countries which have experienced coup de tat and genocides [36]. This can take many forms, ranging from the use of education in the development of liberal ideas, to nation building and, in extreme cases, political indoctrination as it was witnessed before and during the 1994 Rwanda genocide. Secondly, education may be perceived as an instrument for providing the knowledge and skills necessary for economic development and societal mobility [37]. However, this may or may not include equity concerns, thus further excluding certain groups from economic and social benefits that education can provide. The exclusion of some groups in accessing quality education may further divide the society and bring it closer to escalation of violent conflicts as it has been the case in post-independence Burundi. Thirdly, education can be used as a means by which social and cultural values are transmitted from generation to generation. This may depend on the values concerned for it may convey negative stereotypes or encourage attitudes that explicitly or implicitly condone violence or generate conflict as it is the case in South Sudan [38, 39].

This necessitates the need to thorough analyses of education systems from a conflict perspective for it is one of the underdeveloped areas in education research. This is extremely relevant to educational practitioners such as policymakers, education administrators, teachers, parents, and other development workers. There are many entry points to the various levels of an education system in developing conflict-sensitive education systems. It may include critical analyses of the political ideology driving a system, and sometimes it may require legislative, structural and administrative features. The efforts may have significant implications for the development of non-discrimination and equal access to education policies and practices. However, the most contentious challenge for the international development agencies is to find a way of raising critical questions about the form and content of education and its implications for relations between peoples, groups and



nations. The difficulty will be in finding ways for this to be accepted internationally as a legitimate concern and as part of improving the quality of education in emergencies.

In the GLR, the extent to which education can be regarded and used as a tool for political and/or ideological tool can be evidenced by political and ideological involvements in daily operational issues, such as appointments of educational officers, deployment and allocation of teachers and the determination of the content of the curriculum. In many circumstances, political and social elites have consistently indicated their desire to see and use education for their own ends and purposes. Although evidences and experiences had shown that decentralization of education systems carry the potential to increase participation and ownership, however, it may also leave education open to manipulation as part of local politics. This has been observed in Kenya after the 2007 violence and the 2010 constitution. This highlights the need for critical and broad analyses that identifies the political and economic influences operating on and within the education system in post-conflict environments. The starting point could be the capacity building and training for those in public service. This may therefore be a necessary prerequisite for the success of the overall education sector plan which targets to take into account the concept of conflict and peace-building education. At all levels of the education system, governance is a crucial issue [40]. The arrangements that are in place for representation and participation in consultation [34, 41], decision-making and governance may be potential sources of conflict, or they may be opportunities for inclusion and the resolution of grievances [42]. This necessitates the arrangements for accountability and transparency to be reflected in an education system's capacity to accept and address inequalities that might otherwise become sources of future conflict.

Broadly, the way in which education provision is implemented may compound inequalities and erode confidence in government's capacity to provide basic services [43]. In such a situation, grievances are likely to become increasingly politicized, making it easier to mobilize support for violent conflict [44]. For example, education may become a source of conflict depending on whether it promotes conformity to a single set of dominant values (assimilation) [22], permits the development of identity-based institutions (separate development) or encourages shared institutions (integration) [45]. The extent to which any of these approaches make conflict more or less likely will be highly context-dependent. This is what happened in the pre-genocide Rwanda whereby the Hutu ruling elites and their government sidelined the Tutsi minorities.

At the practical level, there are many aspects of curriculum that have a bearing on conflict or can be used to promote future escalation of conflict [46]. When a narrow view of curriculum aims as the transmission of knowledge, attitudes and skills from one generation to the next, it may be used as an extremely powerful tool to promote particular political, cultural ideologies or religious practices as it happened in Tanzania where the quota system in accessing secondary education was used to promote and forge a sense of national-hood. The contemporary trend in many countries in the GLR is to 'modernize' the curriculum so that it is defined in terms of 'learning outcomes'. In their contexts, learning outcomes refer to skills, attitudes and values as well as factual knowledge. This may include the development of 'generic skills' such as communication skills, the ability to crosscheck facts from multiple sources of information, evaluate conflicting evidence, the development of media literacy, critical thinking and moral development [25]. In the GLR settings, there is a particular emphasis on 'life skills' as a means of providing child protections, social and health education (id21, 2004). The rationale for this argument is that, these are the type of skills that are essential in peace-building efforts [47].



Additionally, in terms of ‘content’, every area of the curriculum carries values with the potential to communicate implicit and explicit political messages. However, close observations of curriculums in the GLR will show that many of these involve specialized areas of study in a form of subject contents. For example, the UNESCO position paper on language of instruction highlights the importance of sensitivity to majority and minority languages. It further distinguishes between ‘national’ and ‘official’ languages by saying that:

*The choice of language in the educational system confers a power and prestige through its use in formal instruction. Not only is there a symbolic aspect, referring to status and visibility, but also a conceptual aspect referring to shared values and worldview expressed through and in that language [25].*

The question of what should be official and national language has been a center of controversy and “educational politics” in the GLR than anything else in the curriculum. While Tanzania successfully used Kiswahili language as a national-unifying factor and medium of instruction, D.R. Congo is until now much divided along various ethnic groups and against or for French. Though Burundi and Rwanda almost everyone speak, write and communicate in Kirundi and Kinyarwanda respectively, having common languages have not helped these countries achieve national unity and build sustainable peace and tranquility. Recently, Rwanda has shifted from Kinyarwanda-French to Kinyarwanda-English with Kiswahili as an alternative language.

Another area of curriculum controversy is the teaching of history and the extent to which history education may become a vehicle for promoting particular versions of history, revising historical events or confronting the past in a critical way. Given the political turmoil experienced by all countries—with the exception of Tanzania, in the GLR, history taught in schools are too fluid and twisted depending on who is in power by then. For example, in Rwanda the official history taught seems to ignore the critical role played by previous Hutu governments before the current regime. Political dimensions in the way that geography is taught and the lexicon it uses for disputed territories can be problematic and the content of teaching material for areas such as culture, art, music and religious education often get drawn into controversy [27, 48]. Such areas are sometimes referred to as ‘national subjects’, in many instances tightly controlled by governments and regarded as essential tools for nation building as it is the case in Tanzania and Rwanda.

In the GLR, another area of curriculum controversy which requires specialized concerns is the values represented in official textbooks and other learning resources. For example, the operation of a single textbook policy in Tanzania offered a Ministry of Education a way of guaranteeing a ‘minimum entitlement’ for all pupils to basic learning resources. This is particularly important and very effective approach in low-income GLR countries where equal access to education needs to be clearly demonstrated. However, questions arise about who controls and benefits from the production of textbooks; who decides their contents, and under which circumstances. In contested and highly diverse societies as it is the case in D.R. Congo, arguments related to content of textbooks has been a source of cultural and ideological battlegrounds. In the GLR textbooks review processes have a long history. For example, there were joint initiatives on French-Kinyarwanda textbooks during the 1990s; French-Kirundi cooperation following the end of the 1990s wars; and a Congo-Brazzaville - D.R. Congo textbook project in the 1980s [9]. They raise sensitive issues about what might be considered offensive and by/to whom. Examples include concerns raised by Rwanda about the treatment of the 1994 genocide in the textbooks and a critique of international assistance for the replacement of textbooks [49].

An interesting observation has been a concern that an emphasis on conflict analyses, conflict resolution skills and peace-building strategies potentially highlights negative aspects of provision of education. Practically, some international aid organizations and workers seem to suggest that this makes it more difficult to persuade donors to provide fund to invest in education in conflict-affected GLR countries. Some go as far as to claim that this makes it difficult to maintain a positive and practical relationship with local education authorities and officials hence, underplaying the important contribution that education can make to 'peace-building' efforts in this region.

## **9. Education for reconstruction, reconciliation and peace-building**

A report on 'Education for Reconstruction' [45] distinguishes between 'physical' reconstruction of school buildings (including emergency repair strategies, the needs of refugee education and landmine safety issues); 'ideological' reconstruction that refers, for example, to democratization of an education system or retraining of teachers; and 'psychological' reconstruction that responds to issues of demoralization, loss of confidence and health-related issues of stress and depression. This contrasts significantly with a report on the World Bank's experience with post-conflict reconstruction, which suggests that the main priority during the 1990s was on the reconstruction of physical infrastructure [50].

The main recommendations of the report illustrate how the World Bank's position was to maintain a watching brief, but stop short of providing development assistance while conflict is underway. However, a later publication from the World Bank Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit acknowledges the need for a shift in position from an emphasis on post-conflict reconstruction to 'a sensitivity to conflict' [51]. This is also reflected in a study undertaken by the World Bank on Education and Post-conflict Reconstruction [38]. The main objective of the noted study was to review experience of education system reconstruction in post-conflict countries and identify lessons that may assist in the achievement of EFA goals. These reports reflect a move away from the notion of thinking about conflict in discrete stages, to an appreciation that the analysis of conflict and 'conflict sensitivity' needs to be built into routine thinking as part of mainstream operations. Further, there is also a growing appreciation that reconstruction is not simply about replacing the physical infrastructure of schools, but needs to include opportunities for rebuilding human relations and inclusive education systems.

The concept of reconciliation has received attention across a range of international contexts, but each conflict is quantitatively different in terms of the level of violence and number of casualties, and qualitatively different in terms of the social context and the nature of atrocities that may have taken place. These factors mean that those affected by conflict have different perspectives on what is reasonable or realistic in terms of reconciliation attempts. This makes it extremely difficult to consider reconciliation as a generic concept with the same implications for different conflicts. For example, the concept of reconciliation in Rwanda means a fresh start and forgetting the atrocities committed. The gravest part of the assertion is that in Rwanda, the official version of the genocide indicates that only Tutsis were killed by the Hutu extremists. It is against the law to question this official claim.

The concept of 'reconciliation' is also problematic in terms of the difficult and controversial issues it raises. The term embodies positive connotations about healing past conflicts [52]. Despite research into the role of education in relation to truth and reconciliation processes in contexts such as Burundi and Rwanda [31, 46, 53] deeper understanding of the role of education in contributing to reconciliation

processes has yet to be developed. Reconciliation may be necessary at many levels (between individuals, between groups in conflict, between peoples or nations at war). There are implications for education in terms of facilitating reconciliation by addressing the legacies of conflict. These include the impact on the bereaved and injured, remembrance and commemoration; debates about forgiveness, expressions of regret, apology and symbolic events; understanding the role of amnesties, prisoner releases, alongside concepts of restorative and transitional justice. These are challenging, long-term tasks that link reconstruction programs into the mainstream education sector and the longer-term goal of conflict prevention. Education for reconciliation may therefore be seen as a contribution to peace-building, concerned with conflict transformation within societies. In Rwanda, the *gacaca* courts as efforts for reconciliation created more hatred and rage than peace and tranquility. This necessitated the government to use force and specific educational policies to suppress anger in the communities.

While it has got its own share of socio-political violence, Tanzania adopted a rather pragmatic approach to building sustainable peace and harmony by instilling to children a sense of tolerance and understanding. In 1998 following the Muslim assault of a Catholic parish priest of Mburahati - Dar es Salaam, and the “question of pork eating” violence, the government of Tanzania ordered its police force to storm and quash the Muslims rebellion at Mwembechai area killing at least four people. To build sustainable peace and tranquility, one of the strategies adopted by the Ministry of Education was to include in the existing curriculum the question of patriotism and social understanding and civic education. In 2001 the police shoot 22 Civic United Front—*Chama cha Wananchi* (CUF) members in Pemba, Zanzibar—Tanzania [54]. CUF, the opposition party in Tanzania was predominant in Pemba. It establishes itself there due to some genuine social, political and economic grievances among common people—*wananchi wanyonge*. Apart from union grievances, one of the main and very serious concern was sidelining of Pembras in accessing quality education in a larger Zanzibar context. To restore order and harmony in Pemba, after signing of the peace and harmony agreement commonly known as *Mwafaka II*, the existing regime in Zanzibar devised a quota system across five regions of Zanzibar and introduced peace-building education in the curriculum. However, concerns remains with the current political willingness to implement the curriculum.

The concept of ‘peace-building’ received renewed attention following the UN Secretary General’s call for the establishment of the Peace-building Commission (PBC), the Peace-building Support Office (PBSO) and the Peace-building Fund (PBF) in 2006. So far, all these structures emerged as a result of concerns to prevent relapses in the aftermath of conflict. The initiatives provide support to immediate post-conflict countries through funding of political, governance, security and macroeconomic reforms. However, some scholars recommend that:

*“focusing on social policies such as education and healthcare, as opposed to macroeconomic reforms, is especially important for preserving peace in countries that have emerged from civil conflict” [23, 55].*

Also others highlight the limitations and sometimes negative effects of peace-building that focuses exclusively on electoral and economic reforms [55]. The PBF has funds of US\$360 million and is supporting more than 150 projects in 18 countries, but social programming, such as education, has received less than 14% of its funds (PBF status as of November, 2017).

Renewed interest in peace building may also be due to the greater priority that is being given to security as a consequence of global events during the past decades.



This is evidenced by the focus of the most recent World Development Report (2018) [56] on Conflict, Security and Development. It is also reflected in the EFA Global Monitoring Report [57] in two main ways. Firstly, the GMR reports on an increasing number of attacks on education that use political and military violence against education staff, students, teachers' unions, government officials and institutions. UNESCO has also produced a report on 'Protecting Education from Attack' that explores possible motives, responses and prevention strategies including armed protection, community defense, and strengthening international monitoring systems and humanitarian law [58]. Secondly, the report highlights concerns about links between aid and security. It identifies 21 developing countries (all countries in the GLR included) that are spending more on arms and the military than on primary schools, and presents evidence that the amount of aid to certain countries may be driven more by global security concerns rather than poverty. The merging of national security concerns and international development policies is a significant challenge for those in both the development and peace building fields. It highlights the use of education to 'win hearts and minds' as part of counter-insurgency strategy in D.R. Congo, Congo-Brazaville and Burundi. This raises concerns about the confusion of roles between military and aid personnel [34, 58].

The change in security context in the GLR during the past decade also creates new challenges for aid agencies and development organizations. There are two main dimensions to this. Firstly, there is growing awareness among donors that a purely technical approach to programming is insufficient in the political environments present in situations of conflict in the GLR. This has led to more emphasis on the need for political economy analysis of the education sector. There is increasing recognition that blockages for effective reform at the sectoral level (including for delivery, planning and procurement) can be political and that technical solutions alone may not be enough. Governance of a sector and the way in which politics and institutions interact within that sector, will in practice have a critical impact on sector policies and services [59, 60]. A number of donors have developed tools and approaches to political economy analysis [61, 62] and these have been reviewed by various stakeholders. These build on early work by DFID on 'drivers of change' and approaches such as the Government of the Netherlands, Strategic Governance and Corruption Analysis (SCAGA) [63]. However, there are very few examples in the literature of these being applied to the education sector or in post-conflict environments, although the European Commission is currently reviewing how political economy analysis can inform its programming in education.

Secondly, the changing context and increased emphasis on the global security agenda will require aid agencies to make more explicit choices about how they position themselves and their work. Humanitarian interventions suggest time-limited emergency responses to humanitarian crises and natural disasters, some of which will be caused by conflict. Development assistance that adopts a 'conflict-sensitive' approach has been encouraged by both the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the OECD DAC Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States (2007), and suggests only a degree of intervention that 'does no harm'. The noted agencies are the major donors in the GLR, hence key players. However, if agencies accept that 'conflict transformation' is the distinguishing feature of a peace-building approach, then this is likely to require a more interventionist stance. Development informed by political analysis inevitably means making decisions based on judgments about what is best from a peace-building perspective education, and these may not always be consistent with the views of national governments or the Paris principles.

In terms of linkages between education and peace-building, the role of education is often stereotyped as 'peace education', perceived to involve working with children



and youth on peace education programs for personal development, inter-group contact and conflict resolution techniques [64]. However, there have been a number of more recent initiatives that have reviewed research in this area [52, 55, 65].

## **10. Recommended way forward**

**Escalation of conflicts and wars are significant impediment to achievement of Education for All goals.** Currently more than half of all children are out-of-school in conflict-affected and fragile states. Available data indicate that about 39 million children (54.2%) lived in conflict-affected or fragile countries, out of a total of 72 million children who were not in school [66]. The GLR has its fair share of out of school children—about 9 millions. This impedes achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG number 4 which targets to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all including children in conflict affected areas such as those in the GLR.

**For long time, the education in conflict-affected and fragile states is under-funded.** Education for children in conflict-affected and fragile states receives less than one-fifth of education aid despite representing more than half of the world's population of out of school children. Further, children in conflict-affected areas in low-income GLR countries receive less than 5% of all the education aids supplied globally. Particular attention is drawn to the fact that education as a response to emergency or conflicts, receives between little more than 1–4% of funding from humanitarian appeals [67]. Given this fact, it is beyond doubts that funds allocated for pre-primary and early grades as part of emergency response package in conflict-affected countries in the GLR is extremely low. Given its critical role in sustainable peace-building efforts, this level of education cannot be ignored.

**There is deliberate lack of attention to education as an important subsector following signing of peace agreements.** The analyses of the 17 full peace agreements in the GLR signed between 1989 and 2015 that are publicly available, 11 make no mention of education at all. Even in those that do, include education, there is great variation in the way it is perceived and addressed in terms of security, protection, economic development or socio-political issues' [67]. The report highlighted research that documented attacks on education and suggested that investment in education has a potential 'peace dividend' following peace agreements so long as it is developed in ways that are inclusive and accessible; safe and protective; relevant and appropriate; and accountable. Given the critical role of education in peace-building, the subsector should be part and parcel of any future signed peace agreements. This will be critical in the developing GLR states where literacy rates are still low and there are some mushrooming rebel groups.

**Increase educational opportunity for the poorest and most disadvantaged,** particularly through early childhood education, social protection, and flexible and alternative education such as accelerated learning programs. It is important to note ECE has the potential to level the play field between children from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds [47, 67]. Evidence indicates that children from disadvantaged conflict and violent backgrounds benefits much from early childhood interventions [28, 36]. As such, it will be an important move to increase access to education by all children in the GLR region.

**There is an urgent need to focus on teachers and teaching quality,** particularly through clearly stated strategies for recruitment, training and professional development. Further, given geographical and urbanicity variations, educational stakeholders may need to offer sufficient remuneration and incentives to work in the poorest and most remote areas. Very unfortunate, in the humanitarian responses

in conflict-affected areas, humanitarian workers and aid for education accounts to 4.2% only [47]. In the GLR, this should go hand in hand with increasing relevance and purposefulness of education through relevant curricula which are sensitive to diversity and promote values that support sustainable peace-building efforts.

**There is a need to increase the financing of education in conflict-affected and fragile GLR states.** This can be done by ensuring allocation of at least 20% of national budgets to education, broaden access to free education, and allowing involvements of civil-societies in monitoring of educational budgets, increasing international aid to meet the annual financing requirement for basic education needs in the low-income GLR countries. This will allow attainments of pre-set educational goals, especially those related to sustainable peace-building efforts. Finally, success of all of the suggested strategies will solely depend on the level of community involvements, and political willingness of existing governments in the GLR and their development partners.

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