

# **A Globalising World: Roles for Volunteers ?**

## **Discussion paper: *Preventive/curative Development***

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The international community has developed since the end of the cold war various instruments of preventive diplomacy and conflict management. The principal efforts seem to have been concentrated on conflict resolution but the capabilities of preventing conflicts in vulnerable countries or regions have not been adequately explored. There is now a general consensus, that conflict prevention is much cheaper than conflict management, and that the promotion of capabilities dealing with this prevention should be a priority in international cooperation. Strengthening international efforts in this direction will significantly improve the development efficiency of international cooperation.

Let me further explain this perspective. I will go beyond diplomatic discourses and focus on the sources of the failure of curative development. I will limit my analysis to African countries where a larger scale of actual conflicts in the world occurs. This is a global analysis, a global guideline that should be reexamined for every specific African country.

### **Fundamental questions**

First of all, there are fundamental questions that we have to answer:

- what is wrong with African societies right now ?
- why are so many things not going well there ?
- what happened with the fundamental values of these African societies ?
- why do so many conflicts explode into violent confrontations ?
- who can provide the right answers to these questions ?
- from where may credible solutions emerge?

These questions should be asked and answered by the African societies themselves first, then by the international community. In the 1950s and early 1960s, certain fundamental questions were asked by the African population and elite, and the resulting concerted action led to independence. The trauma of being excluded from taking decisions on ones destiny imposed since slavery and colonialism seemed to have come to an end. But in most cases, the struggle for independence failed to throw up leaders with vision and independent from foreign powers. In many countries, puppets of former colonial metropolises seized power. This crop of elite in most African countries chose the way of manipulating the population in one party systems or other structures, instead of educating it by allowing debates forbidden since slavery and colonialism. The postcolonial period dominated by the cold war antagonism stopped the emergence of debate on fundamental questions on African societies, and the African elite was more interested in the manipulation of the population for the purpose of capturing or maintaining power. There was no real place for civic education and for participation of the civil society in charting the destiny of the nation.

Many African governments even today are still not interested in the participation of the people in their own affairs. Even when debates are officially allowed, they remain largely

superficial. They are often meant to serve as a façade, to present a pseudo democratic face of the regime, but without enthroning a genuine democratic process. The main objective of the African elite since independence remains clear: capturing or maintaining the monopoly of political power. For this purpose, it manipulates the population within national structures. Many of the highly Europe - or North America - centred African elite with external oriented thinking are the counterparts of international institutions. They know how to obtain support even through the channel of NGOs and capacity building programmes and they perpetuate their main aim of monopolising power through this structures. When a conflict arising from the struggle for power by the elite occurs, the rest of the population is manipulated or hoodwinked into these elite battles. Only in rare cases is the population able to contain the conflict of opposing factions of the country's elite. If this structure of relations is maintained, it will be very difficult to prevent conflicts, because the civil society does not really exist or is not powerful enough to arbitrate the power match between the battling factions. The only possible outcome is the imposition of the will of one faction over the other, with hundred of thousands of deaths, or a long and highly expensive process of conflict management by the international community.

### **Suggestion for Guidelines**

If we admit to discuss this general background of the African situation, then we should go beyond it and search for the principal issues of volunteers work targeting preventive and curative development. In other terms: what should be the framework of UN volunteers activities enabling the promotion of development efficiency of this cooperation with African countries in the actual crisis atmosphere ? Allow me to suggest some guidelines :

#### ***Guideline 1:***

Empower structures for debates at various levels to reconcile the citizens with their own past and present and enable the civil society to take active part in the main decisions of the state and have the capability to control efficiently governmental affairs. Particular attention should be paid to the traditional society and to the contribution of the old wise men and women in conflict prevention and peace management. A fruitful dialogue should be installed between this old wise and the national and international UNV.

#### ***Guideline 2***

Encourage the governments of the region to promote independent institutions supporting this vital debate for building up of modern nations and enabling their citizens to ask loudly fundamental questions in the framework of private and state institutions. This should be regarded too as a fundamental right of the people.

In this context, the international community should develop new mechanisms of empowering structures of the civil society.

#### ***Guideline 3***

Promote education for peace and conflict prevention in both public and private schools and universities, but also through critical foundations, such as independent religious institutions and NGOs working on this field.

#### ***Guideline 4:***

Promote media capabilities and modern information technologies in building up main infrastructures and in educating journalists working in both the state and private sectors, as well as various groups within the civil society. The debate on fundamental questions

concerning the nation, peace and human rights issues should be the basic reference of this guideline.

***Guideline 5:***

Promote regional integration and cooperation not only at governmental levels or through state institutions, but also by empowering regional private businesses and common actions of the civil societies and MPs in the region as a main measure of conflict prevention.

***Guideline 6:***

Promote the education of the armed forces and the police as the main body for the protection of the nation and citizens, as opposed to their main role since independence which has consisted in the repression of their own population. The human rights aspect should play a key role in this education. Particular attention should be paid to the demobilisation of soldiers after the civil war, particularly young men and children and to their reintegration into the civil society.

***Guideline 7***

Incorporate mechanisms of conflict prevention and peace building within all the projects of international cooperation in the region

Mixed teams of national UNVs and International UNV Specialists, UN International Short Term Advisory Resources (UNISTAR) and Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN), with the support of the local government and particularly of the organised civil society should combine efforts for the main goals of this guidelines. By doing this, we should be aware of some resistances within a given country. This resistances could emerge from old habits of just obeying the orders coming from the top, not participating in the general efforts for development because a lack of interest or involvement, or because repressive institutions are not willing to involve the population in development affairs. But we also should be aware of the fact that without involving the population in conflict prevention, in preventive development issues, without involving the population in the decision making process for their survival, it will be very difficult in the actual context, especially in Africa, to achieve the goal of curative development.

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**\* Professeur Kum' a Ndumbe III founded AfricAvenir, Fondation pour le Développement, la coopération internationale et la paix in Douala, Cameroon and is actually running the research unit „Development Efficiency of International Cooperation with African countries“ at the Free University of Berlin.**

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