



- Rwanda -

# Peace Insight

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# FROM CRISIS TO OPPORTUNITY



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## About Never Again Rwanda

A peacebuilding and social justice non-governmental organization that arose in response to the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsis. Guided by a vision of a society that enjoys sustainable peace and social justice

## About "PeaceInsight"

A multidisciplinary and intercultural peacebuilding journal, with articles that have ideas that will illuminate our joint path towards positive and lasting peace in our communities.

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# PEACE AND CHANGE

## *Reflections of 2020 and 2021*

**Dr. Nkurunziza Joseph Ryarasa.**

Executive Director at Never Again Rwanda & CSO Expert

2020 and 2021 will forever be unforgettable years. The world has not only faced a global health crisis, but also imminent issues like climate change, racism, economic recessions, insidious systems of oppression and indelible inequalities.

Various people have made vast life decisions during these immensely chaotic and disturbing years<sup>1</sup>. You must have heard of someone who has changed careers, moved to a new place or a new job, or even decided to switch their life around. Something about the unending strangeness of these two years seems to have paved the way for more change than usual.

### **Changes caused by COVID19**

With the COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions, people were forced into months of uninterrupted solitude, others stuck with estranged spouses or teenagers they had no relationship with. Families were unable to grieve and memorialize their loss, mental health disorders reached the highest record, many lost their jobs and school years were disrupted.

<sup>1</sup> <https://time.com/5925218/covid-19-pandemic-life-decisions/>



The pandemic upended life as we knew it in a short amount of time, from how we interact, to how we work, how we move around, how we learn and how we plan our future.

Today, the world is still grappling with the pandemic, with little or no certainty of what the years to come will bring. However, the dominant trend seems to be change itself and it is important to take a moment to reflect on those changes, the continued gaps and failings of our efforts and the opportunities available to secure a more peaceful world.

### **Reflection on the changes and the opportunities presented**

Almost every day, the unprecedented restrictions due to the crisis not only affected people's lives but their livelihoods too.

The pandemic quickly spread, beyond just the health sector, plunging millions into poverty due to job and income losses. Global growth plummeted, poverty levels increased and inequality accelerated<sup>2</sup>. Some families could barely survive through the lockdowns and over 1.4 billion students globally were shut out of their pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools, with learning in some countries to greater or lesser extent taking place online<sup>3</sup>, a luxury that many families couldn't afford. Such a surging inequality or even the lack of sustainable livelihood for vulnerable households has knock-on effects on crime, which hinders the success of peacebuilding efforts. COVID-19 has offered an opportunity for governments and leaders to review social protection programs and safety nets at the national and international levels. The policies and their implementation plans ought to be hinged on inclusiveness and local contexts.

It is imperative to note that for the last two decades and more, governments, civil society organizations and various practitioners have worked tirelessly to promote and localize peacebuilding efforts. Although it is clear that we have not yet gotten to where we want to be, and the two years seemed to have robbed us of the little success, it is commendable that there are policy commitments and deliberate strategies to sustain cease-fires and include youth and women in peacebuilding efforts. At Never Again Rwanda, we are dedicated to supporting and strengthening capacities of communities especially young people and women to build peace by learning to tolerate each other's differences and managing and preventing conflicts.

2 <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/covid-19-is-increasing-multiple-kinds-of-inequality-here-s-what-we-can-do-about-it/>

3 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/05/17/years-dont-wait-them/increased-inequalities-childrens-right-education-due-covid>

As the pandemic took the world by storm, many youth took center stage to mobilize resources and support those who were severely affected by the crisis and introduced various interventions to promote unity and peace in their communities. Such inclusive approaches to analyze the root causes and structural drivers of conflict, while prioritizing people-centered responses not only benefits our society today but also future generations.

Research suggests that individuals affected by crises or major loss are less likely to engage in peacebuilding, especially when mental health challenges have not been addressed. The losses that the world endured left social, economic, political and psychological ramifications, causing detrimental effects on the well-being of and the relationships among human beings. As the saying goes, a chain is as strong as its weakest link. Therefore, addressing the psychosocial needs of the individuals and communities as a whole ought to be regarded as the starting point for the recovery and rebuilding a more resilient society.

## What next?

Most of us were happy to see 2020 come to an end, with hopes that 2021 would be better. However, 2021 seems to have hit harder, with new COVID variants shaking the world, making it difficult for anyone to expect any better for the future. It's hard to predict whether the COVID-19 pandemic will end or the world's climate will get better or racism will be a thing no more, but the hope is to continue building on the partnerships and priorities to ensure that we deal with structural inequalities, incorporate a peacebuilding approach in the post-pandemic response and ensure that all people are included in the efforts of sustainable peace and development.

# FROM CRISIS TO OPPORTUNITY

## *Investing in Integrated Social Protection Systems.*

**Leah Tesfamariam**

Strategic Advisor



In its universal ambition to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure peace and prosperity by 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) feature social protection prominently in five (1,3,5,8 and 10) of its seventeen global goals. Social protection programs are executed to assist poor and vulnerable individuals and families cope during emergencies and shocks, enhance productivity, invest in health and education of children and in protection of the aging populace. When well designed and implemented, these programs can boost human capital and productivity, reduce inequalities, build resilience, promote inclusive economic development and break intergenerational cycles of poverty. The full-potential of social protection programs have been slow in developing countries due to low participation in the formal economy, the nature of risks experienced in these countries and the high costs associated with insuring the poor.

The COVID-19 pandemic has awakened the urgency of social protection programs. In addition to workers falling ill, some worked less hours and others lost their jobs. Those who had no jobs prior to the pandemic faced prolonged hardships. Policy makers were in haste to implement crisis management responses. Those measures imperiled economic sectors risking the widening of social inequality and increasing poverty. As of April 2020, 151 countries had planned, adopted or introduced 684 social protection measures in response to the crisis. Cash and in-kind transfers programs were the most widely used protection measure especially in low-income countries due to their ease of implementation and ability to enhance resilience.

The scope of COVID-19 social assistance programs in terms of spending and a share of population receiving assistance from these programs is unprecedented. In the implementation of COVID-19 Social Protection Programs, countries came up with ways to target vulnerable groups especially those in the non-formal sector and “missing middle” (such as migrant workers).

The pandemic exposed the supreme merit of possessing data (especially real-time data) on individuals and households. Governments trying to provide financial relief to its citizens faced infrastructural bottlenecks and availability of data. Not only does good data permit rapid registration of new beneficiaries, but also facilitates digital payments.

The crisis has delineated how social protection systems are lacking in providing social protection and highlighted the need for comprehensive, coherent and universal systems. There is a need to improve social information systems and social registries to expand coverage levels, tackle errors of inclusion and exclusion, integrate data into a single social information system, increase levels of interoperability, optimize the construction of targeting instruments, incorporating new information and communications technology and developing the institutional framework associated with social protection systems at the different territorial levels. This will require data that is inclusive, current and relevant.

Social Protection has 3 pillars: social assistance, social insurance and labor marketing policies. Integration entails linking programs within the respective pillars and across pillars.

At the administrative level, different protection schemes can share data and monitoring systems, which can be linked to other civil registries. At operational level, social integration schemes can share enrollment and delivery systems. Finally, at the institutional level, a single administrative institution can be mandated to coordinate social protection activities across different sectors and ministries.

### **Social information systems should contain data that:**

- Makes it possible to determine the characteristics of potential beneficiaries and to select applicants (social registries);
- Provides background information on the offering available in the different areas of social protection, which includes data on the number of individuals, families or households receiving social entitlements, their characteristics and the type of entitlement provided (registers of beneficiaries or users);
- Contains geographic and location information on users and potential users for the delivery of entitlements;
- Includes contact and bank data to facilitate the cash transfer payment process;
- Contains administrative data associated with the income and expenditure levels of the population.

**Integrating data and Information management for social protection is an investment at a policy and operational level. At policy level, it:**

- Ensures universal coverage and support implementation of the social protection floor;
- Increases linkage to the complementary institutional framework and wider social and economic policies in place;
- Increases transparency and accountability as program can be more easily shared and compared;
- Improves 'image' of the social protection system and Increases knowledge on issues around poverty and vulnerability.

**At operational level, its merits of integration include:**

- Facilitating oversight of multiple schemes and reporting to policymakers;
- Improving budget planning and ability to model and test policy changes;
- Decreasing burden on staff;

- Decreasing burden on potential applicants and potential to establish a 'common entry point' for social protection;
- Avoiding duplication of effort (and cost saving);
- Establishing common systems across all schemes.

To strengthen socio-economic outputs of social protection policies, Integrated social protection interventions are imperative. Moreover, it offers outstanding opportunities for improvements in gender equality through influence on employment and education, maternal and child health, relationship dynamics, fertility, domestic violence and accessibility to resources. The post COVID-19 period presents an opportunity to abandon "individual" programs and invest in "systems" that consolidate range of social assistance programs and social insurance components. An opportunity to shift from 'benefits' towards right-based 'entitlement'.

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# NEW TECHNOLOGY WAVE

**Drake Nkunda**

Public Relations and Tech Enthusiast

The new technology surge is driving rapid-fire global change. New technologies present not only opportunities but also new pitfalls to humans and their freedoms. While new technologies offer wide-ranging openings to ameliorate people's lives, they also present challenges, numerous of which bear multilateral, and multi-stakeholder results.

This has unequivocally been egregious especially in these pandemic and epidemic times. Peacebuilders have tapped into crucial online communities to rally and drive social change for peace in a time of social distancing<sup>4</sup>. For example, the “Black Lives Matter” movement. To ensure digital technology is immensely employed with purposes of ending violence, and not inflame it, We must prevent the spread of misinformation and inflammatory messages, while ensuring that individuals and their data are protected online. We must continue to advocate for bringing human rights and peacebuilding experts, into talks and exchanges around perfecting translucency and responsibility when regulating.

Additionally, for tech-grounded peacebuilding initiatives to reach their eventuality to demand cessation of myopic programs by actors, advocate for gender balance, and auspiciously resolve conflict, they must be supported.

4

<https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-backgrounder/2021/social-media-tool-peace-or-conflict>



More so, to reap the opportunities for peace handed by digital technologies, peacebuilders, policymakers and benefactors must recognize the eventuality of technology for peace, and the digital divides that may at the same time undermine these sweats. Investing in and supporting access and addition to technology for effective peacebuilding is vital now further than ever.

Digital technologies like platforms, systems, software, computer devices and other electronic tools that help induce, store and transfer data are playing an increasingly pivotal part in advancing peacebuilding activities around the world. Technological invention has been an important standardizing force which has opened new avenues, spaces for communal participation and collaborative action, empowering marginalized voices plus enhancing original responsibility<sup>5</sup>.

5

[https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tir2018\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tir2018_en.pdf)



Much as the use of technology for peace presents a great deal of challenges that can replicate power imbalances and conflict dynamics in digital space, precluding this requires testing hypotheticals and determining the felicitousness of introducing technology in a conflict and frame of referencesensitive manner. Social media platforms, podcasts, blogs, and online forums are being used to promote peace, through messaging and storytelling. This has erected mindfulness around peace in a methodical way by connecting users to relatable themes and individuals with lived conflict escapades.

The digital divide encompasses the specialized and fiscal capability to use available technology, along with access to the Internet.

These digital divides are disproportionately affecting marginalized groups such as women and nonages. Underpinning unsexed morals and power imbalances replicated in online spaces have restated into continued importunity and targeting by spoilers and trolls, further undermining these groups' representation in online platforms.

With the technology continually advancing, the issue of the “digital divide” cannot be ignored. In our society, where the distribution of wealth is indeed heavily unstable and unbalanced, access to computers and the Internet is deranging the situation even more<sup>6</sup>. Those with computers and access to the Internet are becoming even richer through the power of information, while those without them are becoming indeed poorer in comparison.

The digital divide will not close unless an action is taken to seal the gap. With socio-profitable divisions that are present in today's society, the digital divide is compounding the effects. It is not just the cost of computers that results in the digital divide, but also the presence of widespread ignorance among overlooked populations.

That being explained, we need to pave a way on how we can overcome the digital divide or what exactly needs to be done. The hindrance, however, is by no means insuperable if broken down into specific tasks that must be fulfilled. Away from the most egregious fiscal walls, the following would help constrict the gap:

Universal Access; as the use of computing devices and the Intranet increases, so does the necessity for access. In the public sector, policy makers and community members must recognize how imperative it is, to have these resources and take measures to ensure access for all.

Public attitude changes about Technology; people should change their perspective and attitude as regards technology. Instead of having internet and computing tools perceived as dispensable opulence, the general public should have them deemed pivotal and introductory musts. People should realize how incredibly important new technologies have become and embrace them as tools for their bright future.

In a nutshell, digital divide can be eliminated and technology can as well be used to promote peace but we need collective efforts from all stakeholders with different mandates as far as social, economic, political and religious well-being are concerned. Everyone should at least have a crystal of certain responsibility as regards this matter.



# COVID-19 PANDEMIC

## *A game changer for Peace and Security.*

**Uwase Munyaneza Cynthia.**  
Aspiring Human Rights Practitioner

In 2020, the world came to a standstill, and a whole new manner of living was adopted. Movements were prohibited, lockdowns and curfews were implemented and wearing of masks was enforced. All this was because of the outbreak of the corona virus, which was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organization [WHO] on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020 and on 11<sup>th</sup> March as a pandemic. Vaccines were later introduced to curb the spread of the virus and slowly go back to the pre COVID-19 lifestyle.

As the world is healing from the pandemic, there are numerous effects that have been felt in all spheres, the peace and security of countries internally and externally being one of them<sup>7</sup>. Though one cannot fully define peace and security, it can be understood as being free from any form of danger or violence and being in harmony with oneself and others.

It is thus the duty of governments to ensure that citizens are living in peaceful and secure conditions to maintain good standards of living. Hence the pandemic brought a significant shift in the state of peace and security globally due to policies adopted by world leaders to try and do what's best for their respective countries and the world at large.

### ***Changes on the state of peace and security***

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, movements were restricted, quarantines were issued and people had to retreat indoors. This increased losses, poverty levels, distress, depression and a number of protests and riots in some countries.

A few months later when vaccines were introduced, movements and access to some services such as educational institutions were eased. However, globally, the unvaccinated are still denied access to different services, with some losing or on the brink of losing their jobs. This has caused unrest within communities with anti-vaxxers or vaccine deniers starting up movements and demonstrations to have their voices heard against the vaccine mandates. This still points to a conflicting post-pandemic era.

COVID-19 impacts led to severe and widespread increases in global food insecurity, affecting vulnerable households in almost every country, with impacts expected to continue into 2022 and possibly beyond<sup>8</sup>. The primary risks to food insecurity are at the country level, with possibilities of higher retail prices, disrupted supply chains, combined with reduced incomes, which means that more and more households are having to cut down on the quantity and quality of their food consumption, with facing chronic and acute hunger. Food shortages deepen existing fault lines and fuel grievances, which increase the chances of unrest and violence.

COVID-19 also led to economic disruptions that are likely to slow down the global economy, which was already weakened by various tensions including trade tariffs<sup>9</sup>. It is still difficult to predict what the full economic impact of the outbreak will look like, but it has already led to demand and supply shocks, thrown companies into bankruptcy, led to factory closures etc. In early 2021, World Bank reported that the Rwandan economy had fallen into its first recession due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic and could potentially compromise years of gains in poverty reduction<sup>10</sup>. Many countries also reported dire economic effects with severe adverse implications on both the nations' revenues and the households' losses. With limited or no knowledge of how long the pandemic will last, studies and reports have indicated that the poor national economic performance will likely lead to higher incidence of conflicts in different societies and countries.

8 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/food-security-and-covid-19>

9 <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000113485/download/>

10 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/02/08/covid-19-pandemic-pushes-rwanda-into-recession-severely-impacts-human-capital>

There is no doubt that the pandemic has led to the decline of many sectors and registered many losses in general. However, as the world is slowly regaining a semblance of normalcy, with the number of the vaccinated people increasing, schools resuming and work places and movements gradually opening up, the hope is that governments and leaders will be deliberate in their post-pandemic responses. It is therefore, urgent that, efforts will be defended to ensure investment in upstream conflict prevention that addresses underlying vulnerabilities, particularly inequality and unemployment, as well as improving the existing local capacities to recover from crises, for peace and security to be a chance.





## *Engaging the private sector to promote peace*

**Raphael Obonyo**

Public Policy Analyst and Author

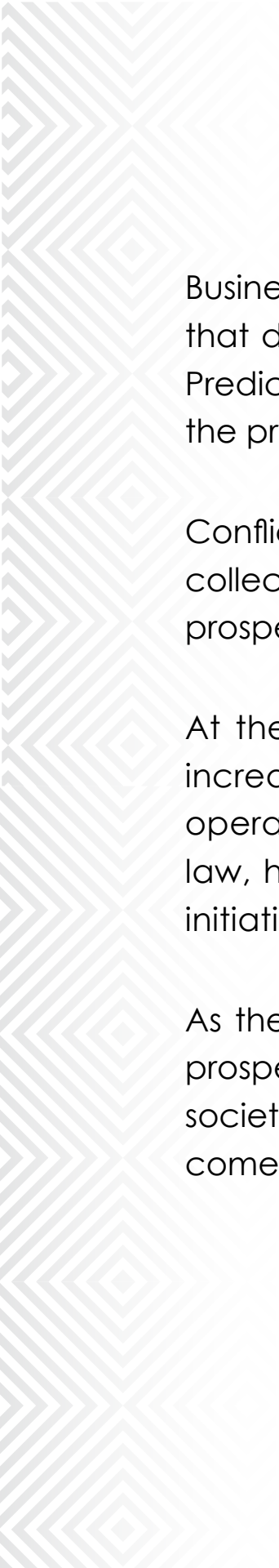
There is an inextricable link between the success of the private sector in any nation and the existence of a free of conflict environment. However, many actors in the private sector in Africa have failed to acknowledge this.

Operating in a conflict prone region creates an unpredictable environment, which is not sustainable for businesses in the long run. Peace and stability are generally associated with good investment decisions and market opportunities for businesses.

There is a growing trend worldwide where the private sector's role in contributions to economic development, infrastructure development, innovation, and the supply of goods and services has grown tremendously. In the same vein, the private sector has a significant role to play in conflict prevention and peace building.

Philanthropic concepts such as corporate social responsibility, which has gained huge importance in the developing world while complex and somewhat difficult to define, present evidence that the strict separation between the private and public sectors is no longer valid. It demonstrates that the private sector, apart from being driven by profit, has a role to play in improving the welfare of the society that helps the sector to thrive.

With its immense resources, private-sector engagement in peace-building has the potential to yield very impressive results if it works closely with the government. Without a properly coordinated approach, the current efforts are scattered and fail to maximize its huge potential.




Business requires a stable investment environment and an administration that delivers consistent policy, a key ingredient in success of any venture. Predictability in the policy and operating environment is critical in enabling the private sector to flourish and attract more new investment.

Conflict deters creation of institutions that can help the government to collect revenue that it needs to create an enabling environment to spur prosperity.

At the micro level, corporate responsibility initiatives can play a role in increasing the transparency, accountability, and inclusivity of a company's operations. At the macro level, businesses can champion the rule of law, human rights, labor rights, environmental issues, and anti-corruption initiatives.

As the former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, once remarked; shared prosperity means, shared responsibility. "All of us — the private sector, civil society, labor unions, NGOs, universities, foundations, and individuals — must come together in an alliance for progress," Annan said.



Private sector can catalyze collaborative action to advance peace by creating strong partnerships with organizations working on peace building, turning goals for peace into actionable projects at different levels. The private sector has the power of innovation and ability to create many of the solutions needed to address the challenges the world is facing today.

Corporates should not only be seen as a source of funding but a full partner in long-term commitment to the goals of a nation, in a mutually beneficial relationship. The private sector can be involved in production development, policy dialogue as a partner in the forming of models of development, investment, and job creation-private sector partnerships create opportunities for income generation and create production opportunities.

Ultimately, businesses must recognize that peace, justice and strong institutions are beneficial to the long-term viability of their organizations and are foundational for achieving sustainable development.

# RELIGION AND PEACE

## *Opportunities for engaging religion and religious leaders in conflict prevention and peacebuilding*

**Debby Karemera.**

Peacebuilding Practitioner and Psychotherapist



Peacebuilding is often viewed from the contexts of war and conflict rather than along the lines of sustaining existing peace initiatives hence making it a complex subject. To extensively understand the concept of peace, in his article, “Life without War,” Fry discusses deeper about peace systems and compares inter-societal peace based on experiences from selected few sample societies in Europe, United States, Canada, Australia and India among others. He went on to note that war is something new that only begun happening in different societies around 10,000 years ago as a result of citizens feeling the need to claim individual territories.

He also suggested that most societies are likely to promote peace if individuals are aware of what it means to be peaceful and how to sustain peacebuilding initiatives<sup>11</sup>. Some of the important elements he mentions that contribute towards maintenance of peace include but are not limited to the need to: establish a social identity, fostering interconnections among groups as well as symbols and rituals that reinforce peace.

In the African context, religion is largely practiced and is considered as a fundamental element and basis of identity for most Africans, although its slowly fading away in the western countries. For instance, Catholic journalist Damian Thompson speculated that “Anglicanism will disappear from Britain in 2033”. He cited the Social Attitudes surveys, which indicated that there had been a decrease from 40% of the population in 1983 to 29% in 2004 to 17% last year. Furthermore, the percentage of Americans who consider themselves Christian had

11 Douglas P. Fry, (2012), Life Without War retrieved from <https://www.science.org/doi/full/10.1126/science.1217987>

dropped from 78.4% to 70.6% between 2007 and 2014<sup>12</sup>. Despite the decline of religious inclinations, religious perspectives still inform other aspects of the society in Africa and in many parts in the west, including myths, traditions, beliefs, individual actions as well as social relationships and to an extent, it is often considered absurd for one not to be affiliated to a religion<sup>13</sup>. This also means that a good number of people turn to religion as a component that influences identity, ideology and fosters resilience.

While the link between religion and peace is complex, given the fact that religion could be a source of conflict as well as a strategy to promote peacebuilding. A good indication of how religion can fuel conflict is the ongoing violence and extreme radicalization happening in the Middle East, to the persecutions of the Rohingya in Myanmar and emerging violence between Christians and Muslims across African nations<sup>14</sup>.

According to Rev. Dr. Antoine Rutayisire a senior pastor with vast experience in supporting unity and reconciliation processes in Rwanda's post-genocide context, the role of religious leaders goes beyond their prophetic role and trickles down to early warning signs of conflict rather than waiting for conflict to occur. This analysis is often done in form of analyzing communities and supporting these communities to heal from their ethnic, racial and regional barriers before a conflict occurs since in most cases, the early warning signs can be detected.

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Despite the complexities around the role of peacebuilding in conflict prevention, countless religious organizations have been involved in reconciliation work and supporting vulnerable and marginalized communities, in overcoming the after effects of an atrocity. Their work has gone beyond supporting communities to being part of mediation forums that have contributed to peace processes in different countries across the world.

Religious leaders/institutions can be a key strategic partner in both prevention and early warning and if paired with national and international agencies involved in development work, it would yield tremendous outcome and also inform the design of various peacebuilding initiatives. A good example can be drawn from Rwanda's former National Unity and Reconciliation Commission whose Council of Commissioners as well as board was comprised of prominent religious leaders.

Furthermore, religious leaders should be conversant with new approaches to peacebuilding such as embracing the use of both traditional and non-traditional media, which has gained a huge audience most especially among youth. In addition, purposive partnerships with key organizations/institutions such as government are vital to address the needs of a society while placing emphasis on sustaining existing peacebuilding activities and establishing new ones.

Lastly, fostering sustainable peacebuilding is a long-term process and requires collective efforts as well as resources to transform communities. Once a society attains peace, all other aspects that contribute towards sustainable development can be attained.

# WHY WOMEN SHOULD LEAD THE PEACE BUILDING EFFORTS

**Tricia Gatera.**

Feminist and Culture Enthusiast



Studies on women and post-conflict reconstruction focus primarily on women as victims and the inactive targets of aid, rather than understanding peacebuilding as a process by which more women's participation helps improve successful scenarios. One can argue that women's social status has quite the width of social capital that is largely independent of general economic development.

In societies where women hold remove high status and better reputations, have extra potentialities in successful peacebuilding, as cooperation by the grassroots communities for peacebuilding policies and activities increase.

For years, women's rights and feminist organizations around the world have relentlessly advocated for the recognition of women's contribution to conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and recovery. Twenty years ago, UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000)<sup>15</sup>, called on member states and other key actors to do just that. Since UNSCR 1325 (2000), the UN Security Council has passed nine additional resolutions, developing and expanding the focus, creating what is now known as the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.<sup>16</sup>

However, between 1992 and 2019, women constituted, on average, 13% of negotiators, 6% of mediators, and 6% of signatories in major peace processes worldwide. About seven out of every ten peace processes did not include women mediators or women signatories<sup>17</sup>. Worldwide, the proportion of peace agreements with gender equality provisions increased from 14 to 22% between 1995 and 2019<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> K. Zeynep. (2020). *Feminist Peace and Security in the Middle East and North Africa*. p. XX.

<sup>16</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1325. (2000). <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD-3CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/WPS%20SRES1325%20.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Data come from the Council on Foreign Relations, Women's participation in peace processes.

<sup>18</sup> United Nations Security Council (2020). *Report of the Secretary-General on women peace and security (S/2020/946)*, para. 22. Data come from the Peace Agreements Database (PA-X) maintained the University of Edinburgh.



So if you are still wondering, “Why women,” especially when you think of “Inclusive Security and Peaceful Societies” I would share my reasons;

- Women constitute half of the population in almost every community and the tasks of peacebuilding are enormous, thus women and men must be partners in the process.
- Women are the central caretakers of families in various cultures. Everyone suffers when women are oppressed, victimized, and excluded from peacebuilding. Their centrality to communal life makes their inclusion in peacebuilding vital.
- Women have the capacity for both violence and peace. Women must be encouraged and empowered to use their gifts in building peace.
- Women are often excluded from public decision making, leadership, and educational opportunities in many communities around the world, it is important to create special programs to empower women to use their gifts in the tasks of building peace.
- Women and men have different experiences of violence and peace, so women must be allowed and encouraged to bring their own insights into the peacebuilding process.
- Sexism, racism, classism, ethnic and religious discrimination stem from the same belief that some people are essentially “better” than others. Women's empowerment is should be considered a crucial part of the process of peacebuilding.

- Like other social structures that make some people better than others, the sexist belief that women's lives are less valuable than men's lives leads to violence against women. When women engage in peacebuilding, they often challenge these sexist beliefs along with other structures that discriminate against people.
- United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 created a mission to include women in peacebuilding, proving that women around the world are successful peacebuilders. More women should be encouraged to participate in the peacebuilding process.
- Women are half of every community and the tasks of peacebuilding are

They rebuild from the ruins. With the burned slops, they weave new structures in the community, the country, and inflict conflict wounds on the long road to healing. It is a transformational effort of peacebuilders, community leaders and activists to negotiate, deal, advise, maintain and rebuild peace. Engaging women in the peacebuilding process is essential to long-term success. This has been proven. Gender-fair participation contributes to longer lasting post-conflict peace.

**YOU ARE** *welcome*  
**TO JOIN THE MOVEMENT!!!!!!!!!!**

# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HUMAN DIGNITY IN THE CULTURE OF PEACE

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On 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021, for the 40<sup>th</sup> time, the world celebrated the *International Day of Peace*. It was an exceptional turn of the year when the entire world was battling to survive the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects.

The pandemic has cost the global humanity tremendously. Notwithstanding the loss of human life worldwide, the pandemic continued to present unprecedented challenges to public health, food systems, unemployment, economic and social disruption leading millions of people at risk of falling into extreme poverty. These are accompanied by surging social problems like stigma, discrimination, hatred and the like. COVID-19 is overwhelming to human dignity and a big threat to the culture of peace.

The interrelatedness of human dignity and culture of peace is incontestable, yet remains hypothetical due to growing inefficiencies of social, economic and political structures both at the global and national levels, which significantly continues to indent human dignity. The canons of human dignity-compassion, empathy, justice, solidarity, respect for diversity, dialogue and understanding among others are qualities and rights of life an individual deserves in the society<sup>19</sup>. It is a belief that all people hold a special value that's tied solely to their humanity and has nothing to do with their class, race, gender, religion, abilities, or any other factor other than being human<sup>20</sup>.

The Culture of peace has a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behaviors and ways of life that reject violence, prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation

<sup>19</sup> Iris Spellings Global Movement for the Culture of Peace, 2018; Culture of Peace: The role of human dignity in the culture of peace, <https://www.ashlandtidings.com/archive/2018/04/09/culture-of-peace>

<sup>20</sup> HUMAN RIGHTS CAREER; What is Human Dignity? Common Definitions, <https://www.humanrightscareers.com/issues/definitions-what-is-human-dignity/>

among individuals, groups and nations<sup>21</sup>. It is an integral approach to prevent violence and violent conflicts, and an alternative to the culture of war and violence based on education for peace, the promotion of sustainable economic and social development, respect for human rights, equality between women and men, democratic participation, tolerance, free flow of information and disarmament<sup>22</sup>.

The current world's uproars - poverty, inequality, resource conflict and injustices, unemployment, environmental degradation, religious and cultural fundamentalism, unemployment, racism, nationalism, pandemics, sexism, ageism etc,<sup>23</sup> continue to wear down intrinsic values of human dignity. The society can no longer provide love, sympathy, justice, solidarity, equality and respect, which a person deserves and needs from society.

### Who is accountable?

Essentially, in a society where doctrines of human dignity are not respected can sustain culture of peace. As the analysis goes, embracing human dignity so is enduring the culture of peace is a collective obligation for individuals, communities, and governments.

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21 UN General Assembly, 1991, "Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace" (A/RES/53/243), <https://sgi-ouna.org/about/culture-of-peace>

22 1998 UN resolution on the culture of peace: <https://www.culture-of-peace.info/copoj/definition.html>

23 John Galtung, Violence, Peace and Peace Research, Journal of Peace Research, Vol.6, No. 3, (1969), Pp. 167-191.

According to Kant's three elements, an individual person ought to proactively pursue behaviors which promote his or her dignity.<sup>24</sup> Human dignity, for that matter cannot be promoted unless an individual person in the community manifests behavioral character of integrity, respect and good will to others and more importantly remains relevant and useful to others<sup>25</sup>.

Equally important, social settings in the community – family, business, education, churches, health, sports, settlement etc, must be founded on principles of human dignity, that is building up social systems which promote, accept, recognize and respect human dignity. Lastly, human dignity is an obligation of the state to take lead in accepting, respecting and protecting dignity of all human beings by putting in place institutions and policies that would deliver social and economic empowerment, safety and security that safe guard human dignity in the country. Failure of either part undermines human dignity and subsequently diminishes the culture of peace.



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# COVID AND DEMOCRACY

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According to Freedom House, democracy and global freedom have been on the decline since 2006. 2020 marked fifteenth consecutive years of this trend in recession and witnessed the largest margin between countries that experienced improvement and deterioration within this trend. Impact of this decline was experienced globally, both by populations that have lived under tyrannical government and those under long-standing democracies.

The lethal pandemic has not only jeopardized public health and the global economy, it further led to withering of democracy already under threat and the expansion of authoritarian rule. On account of public health, governments widened executive powers and limited individual rights. The freedom of assembly and freedom to gather were severely curtailed while state of emergency was declared in many states worldwide. Due to the severity of the public health crisis, government resorted to extraordinary measures. However, these measures were enforced as emergency executive powers performed with no oversight or accountability.

The police in many countries resorted to excessive use of force in implementing the restriction on movement and gatherings. In Kenya, human rights groups lamented on the use of arbitrary force by security forces. Countries like China, Jordan, Ecuador, Italy and Peru, the military was called upon to assist the police in enforcement of curfews and lockdowns. In Indonesia, the military was prominent in its pandemic response. Several military personalities are at the helm of its COVID-19 task force. The armed services played a critical role in setting-up emergency hospitals and securing medical supplies where required. Military leaders in Iran have become the most dominant in handling management of the COVID crisis. In Pakistan, where there is already a delicate civil-military relationship, the military and

civilian leaders were engrossed in a struggle over crisis response. The security forces overlooked the Prime Ministers and worked directly with sub-national authorities. Military involvement in domestic affairs risks strengthening its influence on governance if powers are not ceded back to civilian authorities' post pandemic. In states with already struggling civilian-military balance, the imbalance could be further entrenched.

Political leaders have used the pandemic as an excuse to crush dissenting voices in the form of opponents and anti-government protests. Laws have been passed that ban rallies, protests and demonstrations indefinitely with no clear date for review.

In the name of a public health emergency, governments heightened censorship efforts and unleashed disinformation campaigns. Governments targeted citizens and journalists who have called them out on their responses towards the COVID pandemic. China censored any reporting on its handling of the crisis and have detained journalists who shared information on the outbreak. Leaders used the pandemic as an excuse to limit the freedom of media and expression claiming 'countenance of misinformation'. Journalists have faced threats, intimidation, litigation in Thailand; pressure to maintain positive coverage of affairs and expulsion from countries like Egypt.

States including those of liberal democracies resorted to surveillance technology. Surveillance ranged from phone tracking, facial recognition and being monitored on social media. In South Korea, to track people who may have possibly been exposed to the virus using smartphone location data. People arriving in Hong Kong are required to wear wrist-bands that electronically tracks their location.

Extensive contact-tracing is done in Singapore. Detailed information of any known cases of the virus is then published. When enforced with no transparency and accountability, these surveillance measures risk being used for political purposes.

The global health crisis has threatened the right to vote by taking a toll on electoral processes around the world. According to the International Institute for Democratic and Electoral Assistance, elections (national and subnational) in at least 67 territories were postponed. Although necessary, postponement in some cases were done without a broad consensus. It has caused division with opposition groups claiming that incumbent governments are instrumentalizing electoral calendars as a political strategy. Countries that went ahead with elections, did so with no much consideration of the risks thereby putting citizens in danger. In Burundi, elections went on as planned in May 2020. Election campaigns and public gatherings for political reasons went on with no regard for social distancing rules. The government downplayed the threats posed by the pandemic. Following WHO's (World Health Organization) concern on the Corona situation in the country, the government expelled all WHO officials.

COVID-19 has brought about a collision of rights. A conflict between right to health and to life and civil and political rights such as right to vote, right to privacy, freedom of movement and assembly. At critical moments like during the corona crisis, political leaders are forced to take emergency measures. The International Centre for Not-For-Profit Law has emphasized three tests that restrictions by governments should meet: *conformity with law, legitimacy and necessity and proportionality*. Furthermore, restrictions should be subjected to a *time limit* and *periodically be reviewed*.

According to the Carnegie Foundation, while the pandemic has posed serious challenge to democracy, it has encouraged innovation. Although not free from curtailment, mobilization and activism have moved on-line. It has also led to some electoral reforms in the form of early and remote voting. Non-state actors working alone or in tandem with government officials have stood out in helping with crisis response. This has strengthened support and legitimacy for non-state actors such as community organizations.

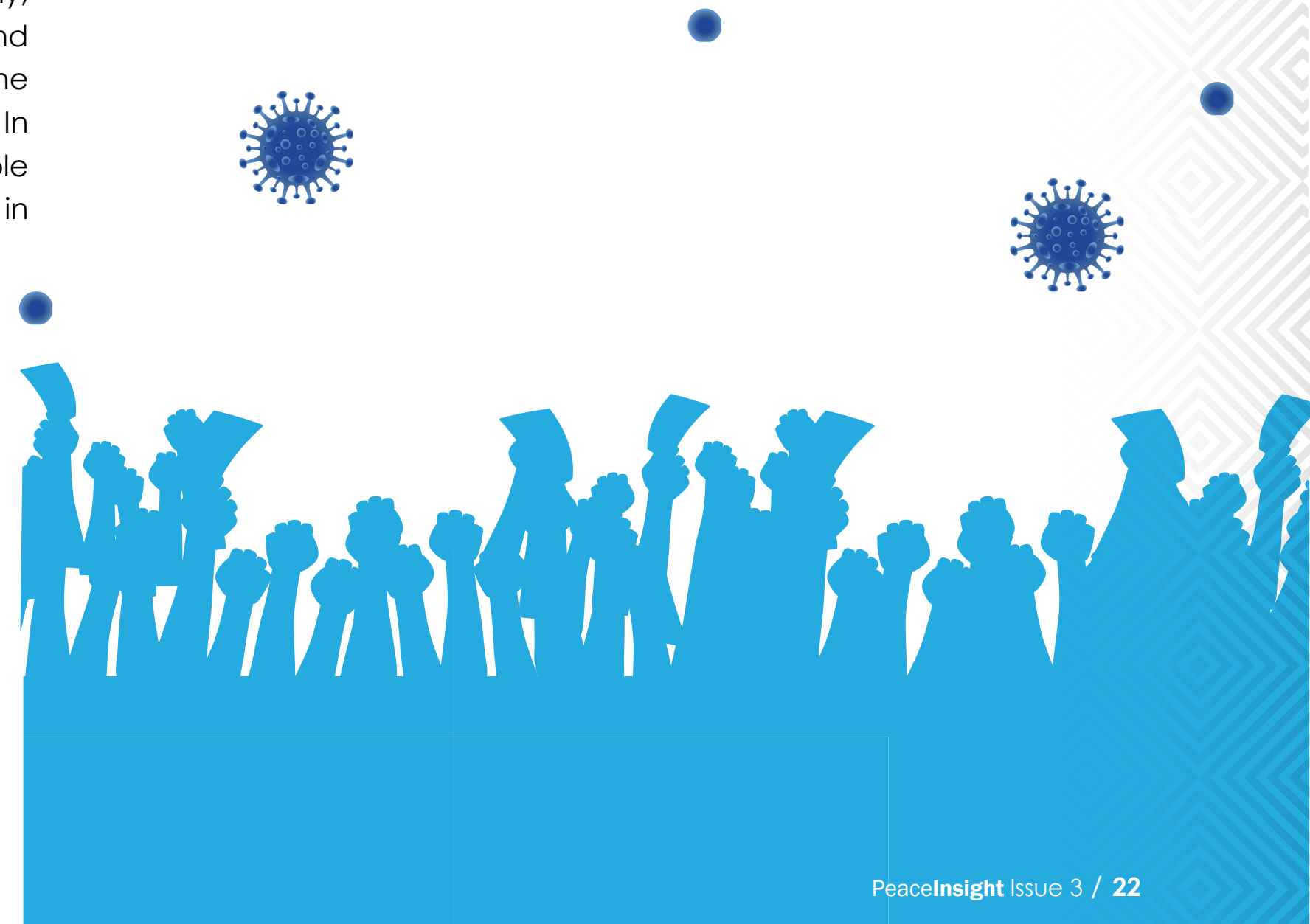
As COVID continues to have devastating implications on economies globally, it is bound to cause further political disruptions particularly in low-income and fragile states. The international community must work together in assisting the confrontation of the crisis and its impacts especially in vulnerable states. In Addition, democratic states need to work together in creating a formidable presence in the international arena. Democratic states need to also work in solidarity with democratic movements globally.

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