

Role of Religious Leaders in Post War Peacebuilding

(An Analysis of John Pol Lederarch's Peace Building Pyramid)

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Introduction

“No peace among the nations without peace among the religions.

No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions.

No dialogue between the religions without investigation of the foundations of the religions.”

-Hans Kung-

Religion, above all, is an influential ingredient of people's values because it addresses the issues of human life. Religion is deeply concerned about the individual and social origins of peace. Incorporating the spiritual aspect into the peacebuilding process can create access to the more deep-seated, affective base of the parties' behavior, enabling them to examine critically both their attitudes and actions. Religion has an important role to play in peace building. The moral principles and values enclosed in the knowledge of great religious teachers are critical to eliminate the root cause of conflicts.

The preamble to UNESCO's constitution states that “since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.” That is, if one wishes to have peace of mind, one must also construct defenses of peace in one's own mind. Therefore, religion is the best tool for peacebuilding. Religion not only inspires and guides people but also provides them with the necessary tools to behave with loving-kindness and to understand the true nature of beings.

In the context of today's spiritual need, religious leaders should work together with sincerity. They must work in harmony and lend their hand in the true spirit of service for the happiness of all. It is only then that they can successfully influence the opinions of the people and educate the people with some higher values of life, which are imperative for peaceful co-existence.

This paper discusses about the role of religious leaders in peacebuilding and the John Pol Lederarch's Peacebuilding pyramid which describes the role of social actors in a peacebuilding process.

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Research Problem / Objective

It is a well-known fact that religion can play a vital role in peace building as one's religion definitely influences his/her decisions. Accordingly John Pol Lederach who is a scholar in the peacebuilding approach presents a diagram call Peacebuilding pyramid. He has emphasized the role of religious leaders in peacebuilding in his diagram and this study aims to understand the role of religion in a post war context according to Ledearch's diagram.

Methodology

In order to achieve the above objective the research has been conducted in two ways; analyzing John Pol Lederach's Peace building pyramid and collecting public opinions from a selected sample. In order to gather the data, a sample consisting of 20 religious leaders was chosen. A simple random sampling approach was used to select the sample and both primary and secondary data were used in conducting the research. In order to collect the required primary data, the interview method was used and secondary data was collected through books, magazines and websites. Data has been analyzed qualitatively.

Peace Building

The term "peacebuilding" came into general use after 1992 when Boutros Boutros-Ghali, then United Nations Secretary-General, announced his *Agenda for Peace* (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Drawing the power of international concentration to peacebuilding, Boutros-Ghali associated it with post-war reconstruction. He defined post-conflict peacebuilding as "actions to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict." In subsequent years, Boutros-Ghali expanded his peacebuilding concept to comprise a development approach.

Peacebuilding involves a full range of processes and stages needed for revolution toward peaceful relationships. Peacebuilding includes building legal and human rights institutions as well as fair and successful governance. In order to be successful, peacebuilding processes need participatory planning and coordination among various efforts, and continued obligations by local and international contributors.

Post conflict peacebuilding is associated with peacekeeping, and it engages demobilization and reintegration programmes, as well as immediate reconstruction needs. Post conflict peacebuilding plays a decisive role in meeting immediate needs and managing catastrophes.

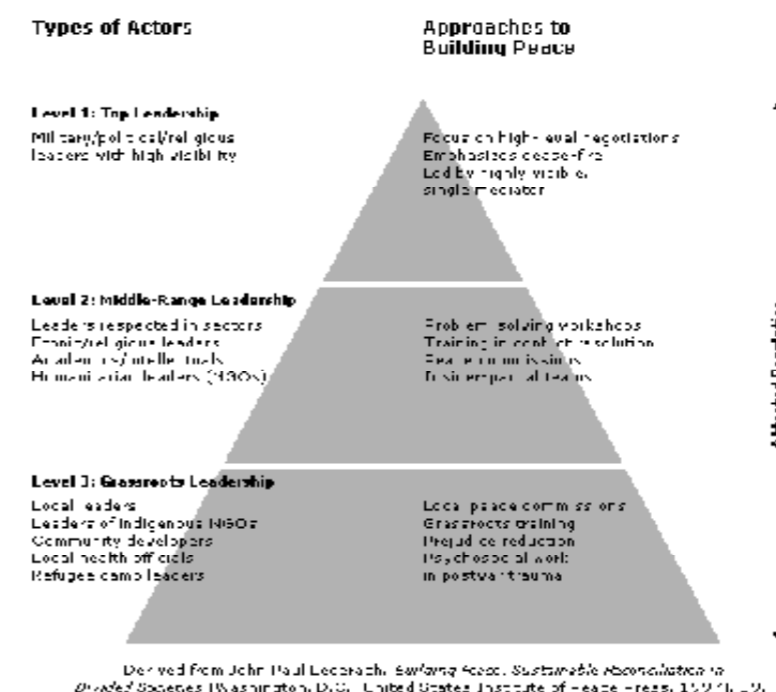
John Pol Lederach who is an expert in peacebuilding emphasizes that it centrally involves the transformation of relationships and that the process should be inclusive. In addition to Lederach most academics and policy makers have the same opinion that peacebuilding requires a multi-layered approach connecting many sectors including local, national, regional, and international actors.

John Pol Lederach's Peace building pyramid

John Paul Lederach defines the pyramid in his book, "*Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*". This pyramid describes three social levels and according

to the description all three levels play a unique role in peacebuilding. Different conflict-handling processes and various activities are integrated into these social levels as well.

The top-level comprises of the key political, military, and religious leaders in a society. They are the primary representatives of their population and they are highly visible. Top-level approaches to peace building aim to realize a negotiated arrangement between the high-level leaders. Peacebuilding at this level often involves an issue-oriented achievement process. However, it demonstrates that any significant peace process will have to move beyond top-level negotiations and peacebuilding efforts among the top-level must be implemented at mid- level and grassroots level.



The middle level includes non-government organizations and government organizations and involves those who occupy leadership positions but are not associated with the formal government. The ratio of middle level actors are far more than the top level and their status is obtained from their relationships with others. In addition the middle level has lower visibility and has more freedom and flexibility to function than the top-level. Leaders in education sector, business, agriculture, and health are mostly known by the top-level. They serve as an important link between the top and grassroots levels. The middle level is the key to creating an infrastructure for achieving long lasting peace. Three important middle level approaches to building peace are problem solving workshops, conflict-resolution training, and the development of peace commissions.

The grassroots level includes local communities, health officials, and refugee camp leaders. Grassroots leaders represent the majority, those who live a hand- to -mouth existence and struggle to access food, water, shelter, and safety. People at the grassroots level witness and personally experience deep rooted conflicts. The peacebuilding plans at middle level are all

the more successful in supporting of efforts undertaken at the grassroots level. Leaders at this level can be concerned in local peace conferences, peace programs, and local seminars which form part of a broader society. Public health programmes are also organised to deal with post war trauma and workshops are conducted to reduce prejudice and enhance community decision making. These grassroots level programmes are essential in helping people deal with the cruelty associated with war and rebuilding broken relationships.

Research Findings

Among the conclusions that were formed, the major factors can be extracted accordingly; John Pol Lederach's Peace building pyramid has given better practical and effective community based interventions that can be recommended to rebuild strengths, adaptation, coping strategies and resilience and in that context religious leaders play a significant role. The values contained in great religious teachings are essential to address and eradicate root causes of conflicts and attributes of religions including reliability as a trusted institution, a respected set of values, moral warrants for opposing injustice on the part of governments, unique leverage for promoting reconciliation among conflicting parties, a capability to mobilize communities are important in promoting peace and reconciliation.

Conclusion

Religion plays a crucial role in modern conflicts through creating a powerful impact on peacebuilding. Though there are considerable challenges that must be addressed, religious leaders can play a significant role in peacebuilding efforts.

References

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