

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Peacebuilding in the Bawku Traditional Area of Ghana: Failure or Success?

Kaderi Noagah Bukari^{1*} Reginald Tang Guuroh²

1. PhD candidate at the Zentrum für Entwicklungsforschung, Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn.

2. PhD candidate at the Institute of Geography, University of Bonn. Email: guuroh@yahoo.co.uk.

*Email of corresponding author: bukarinoagah@yahoo.com.

Abstract

The role of CSOs in peace building is very unique since they are often seen by factions in conflicts as neutral and trustworthy. This paper is an empirical study which examines the roles of CSOs in the peace building process in the ethnic conflict in the Bawku Traditional Area of Ghana using views of 220 respondents. As part of this, the paper makes an assessment of CSOs' role in peace building in the Bawku Traditional area. The findings in the paper reveals that despite the important role of CSOs in mediation and curbing the spate of violence in the area, they are seen by some factions in the conflict as bias and their approaches to peace are not effective.

Key words: CSOs, NGOs, Bawku, Ghana, conflict, peace building, violence, role and assessment

1. Introduction

Conflicts are inevitable in human life and existence and are a necessary part of life. Conflicts are necessary for change in human society since they help to build relationships in groups, establish a group's identity, build internal cohesion in groups and can lead to balance of power in society as well as create new rules and laws (Coser, 1956). However, when conflicts are violent, and depending on the nature and type of intervention mechanisms used, they remain unresolved and can become protracted disrupting policy-making and development since attention is diverted from issues that will otherwise improve the lives of people to the conflict. Consequently, it is important to resolve violent conflicts to prevent these conflicts from diverting attention from issues of development. Historically, the first and second world wars resulted in massive destruction of property and human life and a decrease in levels of socio-economic development in poor nations and some developed countries (Blattman and Miguel, 2008). Violent conflicts pose serious threats to human security, peace, life, stability, social and economic activities; weakens institutions; breaks social cohesion; and causes humanitarian tragedies such as internal displacement, refugeeism and rape (Zezeza, 2008). Indeed, violent conflict is one main impediment to development because it can seriously hinder development efforts spilling over borders, reducing economic growth and prosperity (Ali, 2006). The examples of Bosnia, Burundi, Sudan and Somalia are worth noting as development in these states has been seriously curtailed because violent conflicts have endangered people's lives and continue to worsen the poverty situation in these countries. In the West African sub-region, countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, La Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea have had violent conflicts with their devastating consequences on stability, political and social development of these states (Adetula, 2006). More than 250,000 lives were lost in Liberia and millions worth of infrastructure destroyed (Adetula, 2006).

The resolution of violent conflicts in order to prevent their negative impact requires the support and involvement of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) (Galadima, 2006; Konteh, 2006; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall 2007). Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) including Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) are very instrumental in the resolution of conflicts. Their role is particularly unique since they are often seen by factions in a conflict as very neutral and trustworthy (Irobi, 2005). They mediate to end conflicts, build capacity for peace processes, provide funds for peace activities and help in conflict prevention (Marchetti and Tocci, 2009). Even in the aftermath of violent conflict, CSOs help in post conflict reconstruction and reconciliation and brokering peace deals. In Africa, CSOs have helped and played complimentary roles with sub-regional organisations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Union (AU) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) to end conflicts (Konteh, 2006). For instance, the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), Mano River Union Peace Network (MARWOPNET), West African Network on Small Arms (WANSAs), Women in Peace Network (WIPNET) among others have been active in mediation, reconciliation and post-conflict recovery in the wake of the conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Cote D'Ivoire (Konteh, 2006). Specifically, the almost fifteen year conflict in Liberia was resolved effectively through the active mediation efforts of CSOs together with ECOWAS which saw the peace agreement finally signed in Accra in 2003 and the formation of an all-inclusive transitional government (Itheme, 2006).

Ghana has often been described at both local and international levels as an oasis of peace and stability in a continent besieged by conflicts. The peaceful organization of the 2008 general elections has made Ghana a beacon of hope for democracy, good governance, stability and peace in Africa. The American Fund for Peace in 2009 described Ghana as the most peaceful and stable country in Africa (Myjoyonline, July 15, 2009). Unlike her neighbors, Ghana remains relatively peaceful and has not experienced any violent conflict of a national scale. However, Ghana's image as a beacon of peace in Africa is marred by some internecine ethnic, land and chieftaincy conflicts which sometimes result into violent ones with negative consequences for human lives and local level development (Gyimah, Kane and Oduro, 2009).

Most conflicts in Ghana are localized inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic disputes that mainly result from disputes over chieftaincy, land, identity and resources and, in more recent years, political and economic connections (Kendie and Akudugu, 2010; Tsikata and Seini, 2004). Although some of these ethnic conflicts have always remained localized, they have often drawn national and international attention since their consequences have a toll on national resources and development (Agyeman, 2008). Resources such as financial allocations or revenue mobilizations which otherwise could be used for development are channelled into maintaining peace and security in these areas. Also, localized activities such as farming, industry, commerce, business investments and livelihoods are disrupted. The Konkomba and Nanumba/Dagomba conflict¹ in 1994/95, for instance, resulted in the loss of 2000 lives and 18,900 animals, over 500,000 tubers of yam destroyed, 60,000 acres of crops set on fire, 144 farming villages burnt, 78,000 people displaced and millions of property belonging to the state and indigenes destroyed (Mahama, 2003). Importantly, many of the conflicts in Ghana have often had to involve the mediation efforts of CSOs/NGOs to end them since the state (Ghanaian Government) is often perceived by factions not as neutral. NGOs, CBOs and FBOs are very important in local conflict resolution and peace building in Ghana. The joint efforts of the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team (PNI) which was made up of a consortium of NGOs and the Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) helped to resolve the long-standing ethnic conflicts between the Konkomba and Nanumba/Dagomba and Gonja and Nawari/Konkomba² in Ghana (Mahama, 2003). The state (Ghanaian Government) could not resolve the conflict but for the mediation efforts of the NGOs. Thus, the role of NGOs in conflict resolution and peacebuilding is important.

One such conflict in Ghana that has seen the involvement of CSOs/NGOs in its resolution and peace process is the Bawku conflict. The Bawku conflict is a deep-seated and longstanding ethno-political conflict between the Kusasis and Mamprusis³ in the Bawku Traditional Area of Ghana. The conflict is identity-based, and revolves around the claim for traditional political power (chieftaincy) between the Kusasis and Mamprusis. The contest between the Kusasis and Mamprusis over the Bawku chieftaincy has its roots in colonial times. Since the 1930s, the conflict has taken different twists and has remained intense and unresolved. The primary actors in the conflict - the Kusasis and Mamprusis - have taken entrenched positions making resolution efforts very difficult.

A number of CSOs /NGOs since 2001 have made efforts at mediating to end the conflict through peace building processes and conflict resolution mechanisms. These efforts include the Bawku Peace Accord reached between the stakeholders in the conflict at the Damongo Peace Agreement, which was spearheaded by a consortium of CSOs mediating in the conflict, including Action Aid Ghana, the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), Advocacy Peace Group - IBIS (Ghana), the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the Christian Council of Ghana and the Bawku East Women's Development Association (BEWDA). NGOs together with the National Peace Council (NPC)⁴ have also mediated and drawn up a roadmap to peace. In addition, NGOs with the factions in the conflict formed an Inter-ethnic Peace Committee in 2010 to help resolve the conflict (WANEP,

¹ This conflict took place in the Northern Region of Ghana between the chiefly tribes of Dagomba and Namuba against the acephalous tribe of the Konkomba who have hitherto been under the authority of these chiefly tribes. It was their demand for their own paramount chief and recognition that resulted in the conflict. It has often been described as the most deadly in the country since 2000 lives were lost. See Tsikata, D. & Seini, W. (2004). *Identities, inequalities and conflicts in Ghana*. *CRISE working paper*. Oxford: CRISE and Mahama, I. (2003). *Ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana*. Tamale: Cyber Systems.

² The Gonja/Nawari conflicts also took place in the Northern Region of Ghana between the chiefly tribes of Gonja against the acephalous tribe of the Nawara who were under the authority of this chiefly tribe. Their demand for recognition and the right to do things on their own resulted in the conflict. See Tsikata, D. & Seini, W. (2004). *Identities, inequalities and conflicts in Ghana*. *CRISE working paper*. Oxford: CRISE and Mahama, I. (2003). *Ethnic conflicts in Northern Ghana*. Tamale: Cyber Systems.

³ These are the two ethnic groups who are fighting for the chieftaincy in Bawku. They have also had a history of one being under the other's rule. The Mamprusis who are a chiefly tribe ruled the Kusasis, an acephalous tribe since the 13th century until 1973 when the Kusasis started making claims for the chieftaincy.

⁴ The National Peace Council (NPC) is a body established by the Government of Ghana to promote peace-building and provide mechanisms through which Ghanaians can seek peaceful, non-violent resolution of conflicts. It was established in August 2006 after many concerns about the upsurge of ethnic and communal violence in Ghana.

2010). The role of NGOs in the conflict has been to help in curbing the state of violence in the area and help in keeping mediation efforts on-going.

It is worth stating that attempts to resolve the conflict by government efforts have been through committees of enquiry, the law courts, decrees and peace enforcement. NGOs have also been using mediation, inter-ethnic peace dialogues and peace education and sensitization. Despite these significant efforts by NGOs at finding a lasting solution to the conflict, the desired results of sustainable peace and a final resolution to the protracted conflict between the two ethnic groups in Bawku still remain to be seen. In fact, there still remain frequent violent clashes in the area and the parties in the conflict are yet to come to a compromise. This apparent failure to resolve the conflict raises questions about the efforts and roles of the CSOs/NGOs involved in the resolution and peace process in the area. It is against this background that this paper seeks to examine the actual role of CSOs/NGOs in helping to resolve and build peace in the Bawku conflict and make an assessment of this role. The subsequent sections of the paper examine the methodology used and the empirical results and discussions and finally conclusion and recommendations.

2. Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative approach in both its analysis and data collection. A descriptive case study approach was used for the study to allow for a detailed description of topic. A total of 220 respondents were involved in the study. The purposive sampling method was used in selecting key informants comprising chiefs, community leaders, youth leaders, women groups, the Bawku Municipal Chief Executive (MCE), members of parliament, the security agencies, assembly members and heads of CSOs. This was to enable the selection of respondents who were relevant to the study and also had relevant information for the study. Fourteen communities in the area were purposively drawn, taking into consideration the fact that they had been the scenes of the conflict. These communities were mainly in the Bawku Municipality (BMA) because the conflict is mainly centered in the BMA. Zebilla and Garu in the Bawku West District (BWDA) and Garu-Tempuni District (GTDA) respectively were also purposively chosen because they did have occasional outbreak of violence. A random sampling of 110 residents in these communities was done using a list of the population of the communities within the traditional area. The distribution of the sampled population of 220 respondents involved in the study is shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Distribution of Sampled Population

Actor	Sampled Population	Percentage
Community Residents	110	50.0
Traditional Actors	42	19.1
Youth and Women Groups	40	18.2
Government Functionaries	20	9.1
CSOs	8	3.6
Total	220	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2010

The government functionaries were made up of the Bawku Municipal (BM) Chief Executive, assembly members, members of parliament and the security agencies. The traditional authorities were made up of chiefs, community leaders and opinion leaders and community elders while the youth and women groups included a Mamprusi Youth Group, a Kusasi Youth Group, a Mamprusi Women Association and a Kusasi Women Association. Six heads of CSOs involved in peace building activities in the area made up of one each from the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), the Bawku East Women's Development Association (BEWDA), the Presbyterian Church-Bawku, the Catholic Church-Bawku, the Muslim Community-Bawku and Actionaid Ghana and the two co-chairmen of the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (BIPC) were interviewed. The general respondents were made of 40 Kusasis, 40 Mamprusis and 30 from other tribes. These respondents were farmers, teachers, students, health personnel, market women and business men, all randomly selected. The main instruments used for the data collection were interview guides and focus group discussions. The data were analysed using transcribed interviews of respondents through descriptions and content analysis of the transcribed information.

3. The Bawku conflict

The ethnic conflict between the Kusasis and Mamprusis in the Bawku Traditional Area is perhaps one of the most protracted ethnic conflicts in Ghana having persisted for more than eight decades. Bawku remains the most important town in the three administrative districts that make up the Traditional Area (Bawku Municipality, Bawku West District and the Garu-Tempuni District) because of its commercial location and the paramountcy.

The area is divided into Agolle, east of the White Volta and Toende, west of the White Volta. According to the Kusasis, they were the first to settle in East Agolle, now the Bawku area which comprises all areas under the Bawku skin⁵ (Rattray, 1932). The Kusasis lived in the area for many years and became the *tindaanas*⁶ (earth priests) of the area (Awedoba, 2009). The Kusasis were traditionally farmers and deeply rooted in their traditions and worshipped the cult of the earth spirit and other gods (Rattray, 1932). The Kusasi population grew in the 1900s and they occupied many areas in Agolle and Toende ranging from Bawku to Zawse, Pusiga, Yaragungu, Tampilungu, Sapelliga, Nyokko, Binduri, Garu, Zebilla, Tempene⁷ and other places (Hilton, 1962). Bawku grew steadily as the centre and largest town and became the capital of the local council when the Northern Protectorate was formed in 1907⁸ (Hilton, 1962).

The Mamprusis also claim that Bawku, since pre-colonial days, has been under their rule and the Kusasis migrated to their present locations from Bugri, Yauga and Ayua, all in Burkina Faso (Awedoba, 2009). Mamprusi rule in Bawku was necessitated by the slave raids and invasions of the Mamprusis important trade routes which the Nayiri⁹ sought to protect. The Kusasis who did not initially resist the Mamprusi rule, started agitating for their own chiefs and the need to rule themselves in the 1930s.

The ethnic conflict between the Kusasis and Mamprusis in the Bawku Traditional Area dates back to 1931 with the Kusasis' claim over the Bawku skin (Bombande, 2007). The institution of chieftaincy which is the main source of conflict was introduced by the Mamprusis who mounted security posts to safeguard their important trade routes between Gambaga and Tenkudugu around the sixteenth century (Kusimi et al., 2006). Also, the Opoku-Afari Committee (1957) intimated that the Mamprusis presence in Bawku was necessitated by the constant raid of traders from Gambaga by Kusasi bandits. Among the first Mamprusi settlers in Bawku are Prince Ali, son of Naa Atabia, (the Nayiri of the Mamprusis) who was mandated by the Nayiri to establish a 'police post' at Bawku to safeguard their routes (Bombande, 2007). From this time, around the 1770s, the Bawku skin came directly under the Nayiri who had the authority to install the Bawku Naba¹⁰ and enskin¹¹ other chiefs at Binduri, Teshie, Tanga, Sinibaga, Warikambo and other places. The Kusasis did not initially resist the various Mamprusi successions to the Bawku skin (Lund, 2003). From 1731, only Mamprusis had ascended to the Bawku skin.

According to Bombande (2007), up till the 1930s, the Mamprusi jurisdiction did not extend to all the Kusasi settlements and the whole traditional area. Their authority was, however, consolidated to include all Kusasi areas following consultations with the colonial district commissioner in 1931 which made the Bawku Naba (paramount chief of the Traditional Area) the chief of the Bawku Traditional Area including Bawku, Zebila, Garu, Tempene, Binduri, Warikambo and Teshie¹². However, in 1957, competing claims between the Mamprusis and Kusasis over the Bawku skin resulted in the installation of two different chiefs for the same skin: Abugrago Azoka for the Kusasis and Mahama Yiremia for the Mamprusis (Opoku-Afari Committee, 1957). This led to some disturbances and intensified the claim over the Bawku skin.

The resulting disturbances compelled the Governor General, Lord Listowel¹³, to set up the Opoku-Afari Committee of 1957 to inquire into the causes of the disturbances. The committee reported among other things that "the Nayiri's practice of selecting and installing a Mamprusi prince as chief of the Kusasi area is undemocratic and dictatorial" and consequently upheld the installation of Naba Abugrago Azoka as legitimate and in accordance with Kusasi traditions (Opoku-Afari Committee, 1957, p. 13). Following the committee's report, the Governor General recognized Abugrago Azoka as the Bawku Naba. Aggrieved by the decision, the Mamprusis filed a writ in the divisional court requesting the court to quash the proceedings and report of the committee of enquiry, as well as the decision of the Governor General. Though their request was granted, the Court of Appeal¹⁴ overturned the decision of the divisional court's ruling (Bombande, 2007).

⁵ This is used to refer to the title of the paramount chief in the area. Note that the skin (of an animal) is the symbol of authority of chiefs in Northern Ghana whilst the stool is for chiefs in Southern part of Ghana. Therefore there is the tendency to refer to the chieftaincy in a particular area as the area's skin or stool in Ghana. Hence, the name the Bawku Skin.

⁶ In Northern Ghana, the earth priest is the spiritual owner of the land and worships the spirit of the earth (earth god). In pre-colonial times, they were regarded as owners and keepers of the land. Note that the term *tindaana* is same for most of the Gur-speaking languages of Ghana.

⁷ These are all areas within the Bawku Traditional Area.

⁸ This was how the British colonizers referred to the Northern part of Ghana.

⁹ The Nayiri is the paramount chief of all Mamprusis in Ghana. He is headquartered in Nalerigu in the Northern Region of Ghana

¹⁰ The Bawku Naba is the paramount chief of the Bawku Traditional Area.

¹¹ This is the process of installing a chief in Northern Ghana.

¹² These are all areas within the Bawku Traditional Area.

¹³ He was the last representative of the Queen of Britain in Ghana.

¹⁴ This was the highest court of Ghana at the time.

Soon after independence in March 1957, the conflict took different twists as there were various alignments of the two ethnic groups to political parties in order to win favour. The Kusasis supposedly enjoyed the support of the Convention Peoples Party (CPP)¹⁵ Government whilst the Mamprusis enjoyed the support of the United Party (UP), the opposition party at the time. These alignments according to the two factions were for electioneering support for these two political parties (CPP and UP) (Adam, 2008). The CPP Government accepted the verdict of the Appeal Court's ruling which upheld Abugrago Azoka as the Bawku Naba. This was seen by the Mamprusis as support for the Kusasis by the Nkrumah and his CPP government because they believed the Kusasis had supported him during the 1957 election. After the court decisions, the conflict seems to have died down and resolved.

This seeming peace soon eroded in 1966 following the overthrow of the CPP Government by the military regime of the National Liberation Council (NLC). The chieftaincy Amendment Decree, NLCD 112 (1966), was passed by the military regime of the National Liberation Council (NLC). The Decree in effect placed all newly created paramountcies since 1957 under their former paramount chiefs (Bombande, 2007). Though the decree clearly sought to reverse the decision of Nkrumah and the CPP government, which the NLC and its functionaries felt were aimed at rendering certain chiefs powerless, its application in the case of the Bawku paramountcy renewed the tension between the Kusasis and Mamprusis. By the Decree, the Mamprusis became the paramount chief of Bawku once again, and the Nayiri regained the right to select and install the Bawku Naba and Adam Azangbeo, a Mamprusi, was enskinned¹⁶ Bawku Naba (Bombande, 2007).

The Progress Party (PP) which won the 1969 elections also pursued the line of political interference as most of the Mamprusis were key elements of the government. The PP Government apparently supported a number of structural changes in the Bawku chieftaincy case (Akwetey, 1996). The name of the district for example was subsequently changed from Kusasi District to Bawku District and the traditional council changed from Kusasi to Bawku Traditional Council (Akwetey, 1996) which were supported by Mamprusis and opposed by Kusasis.

From 1970 to 1980, Adam Azangbeo, a Mamprusi, ruled Bawku despite opposition from the Kusasis. However, following the military takeover by the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) in 1981, the Kusasis again found solace with the new government and petitioned it. In 1983, the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) passed the PNDC Law 75 (the Restoration of Status of Chiefs Law), which reversed the NLC Decree 112 and restored all the affected paramountcies to their former status as independent paramountcies. Consequently, Adam Azangbeo was deskinned¹⁷ with all the 18 sub-chiefs and Ninchema Abugrago Azoka II, son of the first Kusasi Bawku Naba (Abugrago Azoka), was enskinned making Bawku Kusasi paramountcy once again.

Since that time (1983), this has degenerated into violent confrontations between the two ethnic groups and this keeps unending due to failure to resolve the conflict. This failure to resolve the conflict seems to have made it protracted. The two ethnic groups have had violent confrontations several times in 1983, 1984, 1985, 2000, 2001, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. The CPP and UP (PP) interferences in the conflict in recent times have metamorphosed into the NDC and NPP¹⁸ which enjoy the support of the Kusasis and Mamprusis respectively. The 2000 clash in Bawku, for instance, was necessitated by supposed clashes between supporters of the NDC and the NPP (Brukum, 2001).

Following the intensity of violence and the inability of the state to resolve the conflict, a number of CSOs/NGOs had to come in to help resolve the conflict. These include international and community based NGOs. WANEP and the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) have been particularly instrumental in bringing the parties and all other ethnic groups in the area to a round table discussion at Damango¹⁹ in 2001 and Kumasi²⁰ in 2010 for peace talks and mediation. Many CSOs/NGOs have still been involved in making attempts to resolve the conflict.

4. Empirical finding and discussions

This part of the paper discusses the views of respondents on NGOs and peacebuilding in the Bawku Traditional Area highlighting the peace building activities of CSOs/NGOs in Bawku, the roles of CSOs/NGOs in peace building and conflict resolution in Bawku and finally an assessment of the peace building activities of CSOs/NGOs in Bawku – failures and successes.

¹⁵ It is the party of Ghana's first president Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.

¹⁶ The past tense form of eskin (to install/crown a chief).

¹⁷ This means to dethrone a chief in Northern Ghana.

¹⁸ NDC is the National Democratic Congress (the ruling party in Ghana since 2009) and NPP is the New Patriotic Party (the main opposition party. This party has roots in the UP (PP)).

¹⁹ Damango is the capital of the West Gonja District Assembly of the Northern Region of Ghana.

²⁰ Kumasi is the capital of the Ashanti Region of Ghana and home to the Great Ashanti king.

4.1 CSOs/NGOs involved in peace building in Bawku

In discussing the typology of CSOs/NGOs that have been involved in peacebuilding in the area, respondents mentioned that international NGOs, national NGOs, Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) have been involved in ensuring peace in the area. All the community respondents were aware of the involvement of NGOs in attaining peace but the knowledge of types of NGOs and their involvement varied among respondents mainly influenced by their educational levels. This is important because the awareness of community members about the work of NGOs is important to ensure collaboration and cooperation. Some community respondents indicated that many NGOs were involved in peace building initiatives in the area but at different stages and with different strategies. The table below gives some examples of the NGOs and the main roles they played in the conflict resolution process:

Table 2: Roles of CSOs Involved in the Peace Process in Bawku

Full name of NGO	Acronym	Role
West African Network for Peacebuilding	WANEP	Facilitated the Damango Peace Talks in June 2001 which brought about the Bawku Peace Initiative; facilitated the Kumasi Peace Talks in 2010; provided funding for the peace process; currently coordinating peace of all CSOs in the conflict
Advocacy Peace Group	IBIS (West Africa)	Collaborated with WANEP to facilitate the Kumasi Peace Talks in 2010; provided funding for the peace process; helped to bring the Bawku Peace Initiative in 2001.
Bawku East Women's Development Association	BEWDA	The local CBO that mediates among all the feuding factions; organizes peace education and sensitization in local communities; coordinate the peacebuilding activities at the local level; part of the Inter-ethnic peace process (BIEPC); participated in the 2001 Damango peace talks and the Kumasi Peace Talks in 2010
Catholic Relief Services	CRS	Initiated the peace talks in 2001 that brought the Bawku Peace Initiative and hosted the peace talks; Collaborated with WANEP to facilitate the Kumasi Peace Talks in 2010; provides peace education through the Bawku Catholic Diocese
Centre for Conflict Transformations and Peace	CECOTAPS	Participated in the Damango Peace Talks in June 2001 which brought about the Bawku Peace Initiative; provided advocacy in the peace process
Catholic Diocese; Christian Council of Ghana; Muslim Council of Ghana; Presbyterian Church – Ghana	FBOs	Participated in the Damango Peace Talks in June 2001 which brought about the Bawku Peace Initiative and the Kumasi Peace Talks in 2010; provide peace education and sensitization in local communities and to congregants
United Nations Development Program	UNDP	Collaborated with WANEP to facilitate the Kumasi Peace Talks in 2010; provided funding for the peace process; helped to bring the Bawku Peace Initiative in 2001.
United Nations Children's Fund	UNICEF	Collaborated with WANEP to facilitate the Kumasi Peace Talks in 2010; provided funding for the peace process; helped to bring the Bawku Peace Initiative in 2001; advocates for the protection of children from the effects of the conflict
Ghana Network for Peacebuilding	GHANEP	Local representative of WANEP in Ghana which coordinates the peace activities at in the Bawku Peace Process
Northern Development Forum	NDF	Play advocacy role in demanding for peace between the two factions, serves as a pressure group for peace in the area; participated in the Kumasi Peace Talks in 2010
Actionaid – Ghana		Collaborated with WANEP to facilitate the Kumasi Peace Talks in 2010; helped to bring the Bawku Peace Initiative in 2001; provides peace education to feuding factions
World Vision- Ghana		Collaborated with WANEP to facilitate the Kumasi Peace Talks in 2010; helped to bring the Bawku Peace Initiative in 2001; provides peace education to feuding factions

The Bawku Literacy Society	BLS	provides peace education and sensitization to feuding factions and community members
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According to a community respondent some of these NGOs were involved at one point in time or the other in the peace process. A sub-chief asserted that:

During the Damango Peace Talks in June 2001 which brought about the Bawku Peace Initiative, WANEP coordinated and facilitated the process. In this peace talk, the NGOs that were present included the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Actionaid Ghana, World Vision-Ghana, Centre for Conflict Transformations and Peace (CECOTAPS), Presbyterian Church – Ghana, Muslim Council of Ghana and the Catholic Diocese. This was the first initiative by NGOs at ensuring peace in Bawku.

Heads of NGOs stated that following the escalation of violence from 2007, another peace initiative was signed in May 2010 at the Kumasi consultations through the Coalition of CSOs in the Bawku Peace Initiative. This Coalition of CSOs in the Bawku Peace Initiative included WANEP, UNDP, GHANEP, UNICEF, Actionaid Ghana, World Vision- Ghana, Presbyterian Church – Ghana, Muslim Council of Ghana, the Catholic Diocese, Advocacy Peace Group - IBIS (West Africa), the Christian Council of Ghana, the Bawku East Women’s Development Association (BEWDA) and Northern Development Forum (NDF).

Some community respondents and opinion leaders claimed that there were some local NGOs in the area which were involved in peace negotiations but were never in the limelight. They mentioned for instance, the Bawku Ambassadors for Peace and activities of youth groups that have been involved in peace education and sensitization in the area. When asked whether these were NGOs, youth group respondents argued that these NGOs were organized at the youth and community level to reconcile the feuding factions through peace education. However, some heads of NGOs believed that these groups could not be considered NGOs because they have biased interest in the conflicts due to their affiliations with one of the factions. They, however, indicated that the Bawku Ambassadors for Peace was a CBO that is making efforts at resolving the conflict through peace educational campaigns and advocacy. We found that most of the CSOs involved in peacebuilding in the area coordinated their works and were very cooperative in working together to ensure peace in the area. WANEP was particularly found to be spearheading most of the peace process in the area.

4.2 Peace building approaches of CSOs/NGOs and their roles in the peace process in Bawku

Usually, achieving peace involves mediation by third party intervention. Third party intervention in conflict resolution is very important because getting factions to negotiate especially ethnic groups in conflict situations is very difficult (Richardson and Wang, 1993). This is because the issues involved in ethnic conflicts are always uncompromising and non-negotiable until a neutral party who is trusted by both feuding parties steps in to mediate for a compromise. Mostly, third parties are NGOs which have capacity in mediating to end a conflict and continue to pursue peace building even after conflict resolution. Lipchitz and Crawford (1995) maintain that using local NGOs to help in mediation efforts is normally the best solution to effective conflict resolution. This, according to them, is because NGOs are able to set up early warning systems and get to the underlying issues of the conflict. Also, Irobi (2005) reckons that civil society groups and NGOs are very important in resolving ethnic conflicts since they are often trusted by conflicting parties to mediate. This trust gives NGOs the urge over state institutions to achieve the successful resolution of conflict.

Agyeman (2008) states that since the fourth republic in the early 1990s, NGOs have helped Ghana in managing and resolving ethnic diversity and conflicts. He mentions for example the Permanent Peace Negotiation Team (PNI) made up of NGOs and the Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) in resolving the Konkomba and Nanumba/Dagomba and Gonja and Nawari/Konkomba conflicts. Agyeman (2008) further argues that the use and involvement of local NGOs in conflict resolution is necessary in Ghana and other African countries since they understand the local dynamics and roots of the conflicts and are therefore in good positions to mediate a conflict successfully. Basically, respondents stated that the roles of CSOs/NGOs in peacebuilding in Bawku are: First and foremost, CSOs/NGOs play mediation roles. The CSOs have helped through their mediation efforts to reduce escalation of violence in the area. This involves bringing conflicting factions to talk and reach a compromise or deal to end fighting and hostilities. This mediation is done through dialogue and negotiations. A head of one of the NGOs noted that: “It was because of our efforts that ended the rate of violence after the 2001 Damango mediation talks and again in 2010 after the Kumasi talks.” Another head of a CBO said that:

Our mediation efforts are very effective even than the peacekeeping operations of the army and police. There are a lot of security personnel in Bawku and yet the people still fight and kill each other. But our continuous mediation is now bringing the two factions to sit and talk for peace. This was actually corroborated by personnel of the security agencies who said that:

The political interferences of politicians in this conflict make our work difficult. We are not trusted by the factions due to this. But the NGOs are trusted and when they talk to the factions, they listen. What we do is to enforce the curfews.

Secondly, all respondents agreed that CSOs also play a peace building role through peace education and sensitization. CBOs and local NGOs were mentioned as major actors in this role. Respondents stated that the peace building roles of the NGOs included organizing peace talks through peace education for the feuding factions such as the Damango Peace Talks in June 2001 and the Kumasi consultations in 2010. Both fora were mediations that resulted in peace initiatives. Also, an assembly man stated that peace talks were organized occasionally by NGOs at the community level to educate them on the need to end the conflict. Such community level activities were usually done in collaboration with CBOs and FBOs. Youth and women group respondents mentioned particularly the Bawku East Women's Development Association (BEWDA), Bawku Ambassadors for Peace, Presbyterian Church of Ghana- Bawku, Muslim Council of Bawku and the Catholic Diocese-Bawku. A reverend father with the Bawku Catholic Parish and head pastor of the Bawku Presbyterian Church stated that their churches have been organizing peace sensitizations for members of their congregation on the need to embrace peace. The Catholic Church had a youth wing that organizes peace education around communities in the area. They organized talks for the various ethnic groups on the effects of the conflict and the need to embrace peace. The head of BEWDA also stated that his CBO has been involved in organizing peace sensitizations for youth and women groups in communities in Bawku. Also, inter-ethnic games especially football competitions were occasionally organized in a bid to unite factions. A respondent mentioned that the Bawku Literary Society had organized football competitions for youth of the area in a bid to foster coexistence.

Besides, some heads of the NGOs stated that the CSOs/NGOs are also involved in arms control through education on the dangers of arms and thus helping warring factions to give out arms voluntarily for peace. This, they do through education and sensitization. A head of an NGO said that through their efforts, some people in Bawku have voluntarily laid down their arms and given them to the security agencies. Some of the heads of the NGOs said that they provide funds, capacity building and other material support for the resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding activities. They argued that they support and fund the activities of CBOs involved in the peacebuilding activities in the area to enable them undertake their activities. WANEP and the UNDP provided funds for the peace activities of CBOs. In a nutshell, the NGOs are involved in peace building and conflict resolution in conflicts at all levels – from control of violence to mediatory efforts to peace education. UNICEF has been very instrumental in openly condemning the involvement and killing of children and women in the conflict and advocating for protection of children from the effects of the conflict.

Another important peace approach undertaken by CSOs was the formation of an Inter-ethnic Peace Committee in 2010 to help resolve the conflict (WANEP, 2010). The committee known as the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (BIEPC) is made up of 20 members comprising all ethnic groups within the area. These groups are Kusasis, Mamprusis, Mossis, Busangas, Hausas, and Dagombas. The BIEPC is co-chaired by a Mamprusi and a Kusasi. The BIEPC was formed in 2010 by the efforts of the coalition of CSOs working for peace in Bawku and government through the National Peace Council (NPC) and reinforced following the Kumasi Peace Talks in 2010 facilitated by the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), which was attended by all stakeholders comprising chiefs, tribal leaders and political leaders. The head of the BEWDA said that the BIEPC was part of the roadmap to peace drawn up by CSOs/NGOs together with the ethnic groups and the National Peace Council (NPC).

Generally, the main peace building approach adopted by CSOs in the peace process has been mediation efforts involving signing or reaching peace deals meant to end the conflict. Other peacebuilding approaches of the CSOs include peace education and sensitization and the organisation of inter-ethnic games to create peaceful co-existence among the factions in the conflict.

4.3 Assessment of the peace building activities of CSOs/NGOs in Bawku

The role of the NGOs in the conflict has been very helpful in stemming the spate of violence in the area. For instance, as a result of the persistent violence, the total number of deaths recorded from 2007 to 2009 was 78 (Bawku Police Intelligence Report²¹, 2009). Despite the imposition of a 22 hour curfew²² from May 5 to 7, 2008 by the security agencies, the violence still persisted (Bukari, 2011). However, the involvement of NGOs in mediation talks with the feuding parties helped to reduce the spate of violence in the area. The NGOs

²¹ This is an annual report by the Ghana Police Service (Bawku Divisional Police Command) on Bawku on the state of security in the area.

²² See Modernghana.com. (May 5, 2008). Bawku burns again - four dead, 22-hour curfew imposed. <http://www.modernghana.com/news/164304/1/bawku-burns-again-four-dead-22-hour-curfew-imposed.html>

interviewed in the study insisted that their direct mediation efforts have culminated in the reduction of violence in the area. A WANEP noted:

Assuming we (NGOs) were not involved in mediation, how would Bawku have been? It would have been a different situation. So our efforts have provided respite for cessation of violence in Bawku. Members of the security agencies and most respondents also believed that the efforts of the CBOs/NGOs are very helpful in the peace process in Bawku. A sub-chief stated that the NGOs were playing a much better role than the government in ensuring peace in the area. He maintained that the government does not have the political will and trust by the parties to mediate in bringing the conflict to an end because of its perceived alignment with one faction. Similarly, the efforts of the CBOs/NGOs in forming an inter-ethnic peace committee (The BIEPC) are laudable since it supports the assertion by Agyeman (2008) that establishing joint consultative committees comprising representatives from the warring factions is one effective way of resolving ethnic conflicts and achieving peace. The BIEPC is one attempt that can ensure facilitated negotiation for the parties to resolve the conflict on their own.

Notwithstanding the important role played by the NGOs in attempting to resolve the conflict, some respondents believed that the mediation efforts have not helped in bringing the conflict to an end because they have not addressed the underlying issues in the conflict. Eighty percent (80%) of the general respondents (community residents) believed that the resolution methods used by the NGOs have not been effective in resolving the conflict hence the recurrence of violence. A Mamprusi opinion leader stated that:

The methods are not effective because there is lack of honesty, commitment and fairness in the approach to attaining peace in the area. They are also not all-inclusive, broad-based and there is lack of commitment for peace by some groups who want to see the conflict continue. This was why we withdrew from the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (BIEPC) initially, since there was no transparency and fairness in the work of the committee.

This is why Kendie and Akudugu (2010, p. 6), believe that “conflict resolution is only possible through cooperation and negotiation and the elimination of suspicion through transparent negotiations where all actors are seen as equal partners.”

Also, some general respondents and key informants (4 assembly members and 6 opinion leaders) mentioned that there is high suspicion and mistrust among some factions of the mediation and negotiation efforts of some CSOs / NGOs due to bias. They alleged that some of the NGOs had strong ties with the other faction. A Mamprusi opinion leader stated that “our withdrawal from the 2001 Damango Peace Initiative was due to bias and lack of confidence/trust in some of the NGOs and the way things were being handled.” This supports Richardson and Wang (1993) argument that without effective communication and trust, conflict resolution is not possible. As a result, some respondents from both factions believed that the bodies within the country do not have the capacity to find a solution to the conflict and therefore think there should be neutral parties from other countries and international bodies such as the UN, AU and ECOWAS to do the mediation. A Mamprusi opinion leader commented that: “I don’t think that Ghana has the capability to help solve the conflict since the state has soiled its hands in the issue and lacks neutrality to resolve the conflict. The CSOs/NGOs have failed several times to resolve the conflict. Neutral bodies outside Ghana should be allowed to resolve the conflict for us.” An MP respondent added that the CSOs/NGOs do not often involve the ‘true forerunners’ (stakeholders) in this conflict during mediation processes. He said that identifying the actual frontrunners (influential people) like the ‘actual’ influential youth leaders and actively involving them in the negotiation process is one way to ensure peace.

However, some heads of CSOs / NGOs argued that the non-implementation of peace agreements and the lack of political will by government is the reason for the non-resolution of the conflict. According to them, peace agreements and mediation pacts made have all not been implemented to the fullest. One of the heads stated that:

Our role is mediatory to help build peace. We do not have the power to enforce peace agreements reached. It is up to the parties and the political authorities to ensure that the peace agreements are fully implemented. It is not us who are not doing our work. Think of all the peace deals reached, how many have actually been fully implemented?

5.0 Conclusion and recommendations

The role of NGOs in achieving peace in Bawku remains very important. NGOs continue to mediate and help to bring the parties to many roundtable discussions on how to achieve peace in Bawku and eventually resolve the conflict. Their role is particularly very crucial considering the fact that they have always helped to curb the spate of violence in the area. However, considering the number of CSOs involved in mediation efforts and the amount of funds being spent in peace activities in Bawku raise questions as to why their approaches are not helping to end the conflict. It is clear that the approaches of the CSOs are not working and therefore they will need to change and refocus more pragmatic methods that can help to end the conflict. This is even confirmed by 80% of

the general residents and some opinion leaders in the study. It is worth noting that mediation is only possible when there is trust and confidence in a mediator. The fact that a number of the respondents stated that they lack trust in some CSOs is something that will surely derail the attainment of peace and an end to the conflict. With these, CSOs efforts at attaining peace in the Bawku Traditional Area are not only difficult, but failing to achieve peace.

5.1 Recommendations

We recommend the following for ensuring that the efforts of CSOs at peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the Bawku Traditional Area are attained. First of all, there is the need for the CSOs to do a thorough evaluation and assessment of their current approaches at achieving peace in the area. The evaluation will enable them to repackage their approaches on how best to achieve peace. The current approaches are just temporary measures that help to curb the spate of violence just for a short time since violence keeps recurring. Even as of the time of writing this paper, two people were shot dead and violence still continues in the area and there seems no end to the conflict.

Also, resolution efforts of the CSOs/NGOs must be more participatory, multi-faceted, inclusive, all-embracing and acceptable to all the parties. CSOs/NGOs must make all the conflicting parties trust their resolution efforts to enable them corporate fully with mediation efforts by being more open, transparent and frank with all parties. CSOs/NGOs mediation efforts must also deal with the underlying issues in the conflict. Thus their efforts must get to the roots of the conflict by not only focusing on chieftaincy only. In doing this, CSOs/NGOs need to build the capacities of the parties in the conflict towards self-negotiation to help resolve the conflict and build peace. This should involve both needs-based and interest-based negotiations. The inter-ethnic peace committee (BIEPC) is one bold step that has been taken in this direction. However, issues that have been raised particularly by the Mamprusis about the way the activities of the BIEPC are being carried need to be looked at and the BIEPC must be more inclusive to enable the Mamprusis have trust in the BIEPC and cooperate with all agreements reached. Finally, CSOs/NGOs peacebuilding efforts must take into consideration hidden and shadow parties /stakeholders in the conflict who are not only influential but powerful in ensuring the attainment of peace in Bawku. For instance, involving the Nayira in all future mediations is very crucial because of the power and recognition he wields among the Mamprusis. In addition, CSOs/NGOs must target politicians and political parties by involving them in mediation efforts so as commit (political parties) to the peace process by openly withdrawing both overt and covert support for factions in the conflict. Youth and women groups must also feature prominently in mediation efforts. In all, resolution of the Bawku conflict will need a more participatory and multi-faceted approach.

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