

Social Cohesion and Cote d'Ivoire's Peacebuilding Process: Content or Context

Omosefe Oyekanmi

Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER)

Abstract

This paper examined the peacebuilding programmes in Cote d'Ivoire, with a view to ascertaining how these programmes promoted social cohesion and addressed horizontal inequalities in Cote d'Ivoire. Existing literature on peacebuilding in Cote d'Ivoire and other post-conflict societies focused mainly on modern state institutions, peace negotiations, transitional justice, reconciliation and gender, with little attention paid to the issues of social cohesion. Adopting an exploratory research design, Cote d'Ivoire was purposively selected for its post-conflict status. Twenty-nine Key Informant Interviews (KII) were conducted with purposively selected respondents, comprising three UN officials, two Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) officials, three Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) officials, four university academics, four religious leaders (two each from the Christian and Muslim religions), four ex-combatants (two each from Laurent Gbagbo and Allasane Ouattara's camps), two youth leaders, five community leaders, and two government officials. Six Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with men, women and youth groups, from the northern and southern regions. Data were thematically analysed. It was revealed that the peacebuilding programmes adopted were a top-down approach, devoid of context but rather theoretical content. Hence, decision-making flowed from the UN and other institutions to the indigenous people. More so, measures aimed at promoting social cohesion and addressing horizontal inequalities were ineffective, because most programmes, such as, the transitional justice programme, targeted only a section of the society. Many of the social cohesion programmes were not structured for continuity and were not envisioned in a peace process that is enduring and self-supporting.

Keywords: Content, Context, Horizontal Inequality, Peacebuilding, Social Cohesion