



**CENTRE FOR AFRICAN
RESEARCH**



MANIFESTO

RE-ENVISIONING SECURITY AND RULE OF LAW RESPONSES IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION IN EAST AFRICA: LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS AS PATHWAYS TO IMPROVED PROGRAMMING

INTRODUCTION

The Centre for African Research based in Gulu, Northern Uganda, in partnership with the Catholic University of Bukavu, conducted a virtual workshop for leaders from selected communities in Northern Uganda (Gulu and Adjumani); South Sudan (Juba); and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Bukavu). The workshop brought together 17 community leaders to engender a rebalancing of local agency into the asymmetric power and relationships in security, the rule of law, and partnerships in these communities in the context of pandemics.

The regional workshop was particularly important because, unlike the rest of the world, these communities have not only had to respond to Covid-19 related crises but have gained experience over the years handling other public pandemics, including Ebola outbreaks in the context of insecurity.

The workshop was a move at strengthening collaborations between local and regional actors and potentially provide new evidence to inform a paradigm shift in programming for pandemics, particularly in areas affected by insecurity and break down in the rule of law.

SOUTHERN BASED NETWORK

Arising from the workshop, there were several concerns lending evidence to asymmetries of power in interventions towards mitigating the devastating effects of Covid-19 especially in conflict and post conflict settings. We, the under below resolved to constitute ourselves into a Southern-based network to further these issues with both state and non-state actors working in these regions. The formation of a Southern-based network on whose experience local, national, and international actors can leverage their responses to pandemics will be a key outcome. The network will remain open to like minded individuals and organisations who share the same aspirations and vision. The network will use both virtual and physical means to ensure continuous engagement among member.

The whatsapp group will be kept active while a twitter account will be opened to strengthen communication and coordination among members.

OUR APPEAL /CALL

Following up on concerns from conflict and post conflict contexts as was raised in the symposium, we now move to propose the following recommendations to development partners, donors, local, regional and national governments, Non-Governmental Organisations, traditional and local authority as well as religious leaders and security actors in volatile situations.

- i. There is urgent need to de-hierarchize conflict and post conflict programmes. Ideas, views and aspirations of communities in these contexts should be brought respectfully harnessed and integrated in programming and implementation during crisis interventions.
- ii. In rebel held territories, the neutrality of actors is standard that should be maintained. Traditional and religious leaders continue to play an immense role in addressing fear and suspicion of the locals towards development and relief aid.
- iii. Donors should rethink their funding strategies during emergencies to take care of leakages and profiteering by a section of actors from NGOs and government. There is a common perception that NGO and government staff often take advantage of pandemics and epidemics to amass wealth.
- iv. Voices and practices from below (bottom-up approach) ought to be implemented in interventions in times of crises. The symposium revealed that more often than not, the tendency to relegate and sometimes to dismiss local ideas and local actors abounds.
- v. Development agencies and local leaders should embrace participatory planning and budgeting in times of crises like during the Covid-19 pandemic. Such an approach is important in enhancing buy-in and participation of the locals.
- vi. Collaboration should not only be in programming of post conflict and conflict interventions, but should be encouraged and practiced in the entire programme or project cycle.
- vii. Unnecessary generalizations and assumptions that a ‘one size fits all’ model works in all crisis situations. In some cases, there is need address crises in specific contexts.
- viii. Security and rule of law contexts have their own unique set of challenges. Authorities and power in certain contexts is in the hands of local defence forces working with more regular forces. In some cases, rebel leaders are in control of some territories. In such situations, our study demonstrated that the use of radio is effective and that religious and traditional leaders play a key role in mediating the status quo with regard to epidemics and pandemics. The framework of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) in Northern Uganda for example provides a good example.
- ix. It is important to ensure composition of pandemic and epidemic response mechanisms reflect societal diversity including representation from persons with disabilities,

- women, various religious sects, private sector, the media, traditional leaders, technical persons including health practitioners. In Uganda, the Covid-19 task forces (initiative of the Government of Uganda) suffered backlash. Concerns arose from the composition of these task forces with communities perceiving them as ‘elitist’ and arguing that their agenda and interests were driven by powerful political elite and the Non-Governmental Organisations as well as private sector actors who often funded operations of the Covid-19 taskforces.
- x. NGOs continue to provide necessary gap filling services in areas ridden by insecurity. However, some of them have been implicated in hijacking the agenda of response mechanisms to pandemics like Covid-19 and epidemics like ebola. This is done at the expense of intended project and programme beneficiaries in whose names donor financing was secured.

OUR COMMITMENT

We therefore commit to further these concerns with the view of addressing hierarchical imbalances in project interventions in conflict and post conflict situations in the Great Lakes Region and fostering South to South dialogue and engagement with relevant actors. We affirm our faith in locally driven and community-centered initiatives of security and the rule of law and note that these initiatives and innovations complement outsider-driven interventions. Our aspirations are enriched by lived experiences to create solutions that when transmitted to other stakeholders will allow for conversation and action that contribute to rebalancing the asymmetry and affirm the role of local actors. We therefore recommend meaningful collaboration to respond to such crises as was discussed by the network of leaders across the two regions of East Africa and the African Great Lakes Region in the symposium.

WE ARE:

1. Arthur Owor-Director Centre for African Research, Gulu Uganda
2. Irene Bahati-Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo
3. Josaphat Musamba-Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo
4. Jimmy Awany, Bengui/Juba, South Sudan
5. Margaret Lowilla, Juba, South Sudan
6. Judith Hope Awino -Adjumani, Uganda