



---

## **ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA THROUGH PEACE EDUCATION: RELIGIOUS EXAMPLE**

**BAMIDELE, OMOTAYO AYANLEKE**

*Christian Religious Department, Aminu Saleh College of Education, Azare,  
Bauchi State*

---

### **Abstract**

*Peace is an essential ingredient of development. In a society where there is no peace, certainly growth and development suffer. Therefore, to create the culture of peace, there is every need to impact culture of peace in the mind of the younger generation through teaching and learning peace. To this extent, this paper focuses on teaching peace education in the Nigerian schools using religious paradigm as a means of sustainable development in Nigeria. This paper overviews some of the factors that have been the sources of threat to peace in the contemporary Nigerian society. It also examines the relationships between peace and sustainable development. Again, it discourses the factors that have been promoting violence in Nigerian society; the importance of peace education to Nigerian society. The paper sees peace advocated by the major religions in the Nigerian society as an ideal example of peace education that needed to be inculcated as part of peace education in Nigerian school. The paper however recommended that emphasis should be placed on peace education at every level of our educational system. It also suggested that those delicate issues that can trigger violence in our society should be avoided*

***Keywords:*** *Achieving, Sustainable Development, peace, education, Religious*

---

### **Introduction**

Every human being are naturally peace loving. It is paramount to human sustainable existence. But, unfortunately, both human and environmental peace in every society of the world, particularly Nigerian society, suffers and remains

fragile today because of lack of much awareness on the need for peace education. In every part of Nigerian society today, there are threats to human and environmental peace. In the Niger delta area, there has been a long history of threat to both human and environmental peace such as youth restiveness over environmental degradation as a result of gas flaring and oil spill which has done a lot of damage to Niger Delta environment, and has even gone to the extent of threatening the sustainability of Nigerian existence as a whole. This however, had breed youth restiveness. Again, there are cases of kidnapping, arm-robbery and violence of various degrees in the South West, South East, North Central and North West of Nigeria. Also there have been cases of arm struggling between Boko Haram and the Nigerian army in some part of North Eastern Nigeria (Omilusi, 2015).

In a situation like this, sustainable development goals may be far from being achieved if awareness through peace education is not well taken care of. To this extent, the only way we can create, build and sustain peace in our contemporary society, most especially Nigeria, is to focus our attention on peace education because the minds of the people need a re-orientation towards peaceful co-existence with both fellow human being and the environment which surround them. This makes Olarewaju (2011) to suggest that “*since wars begin in the mind of men, it is in the mind that the defenses of peace must be found...*” The only way we can achieve this is through the entrenchment of peace education in our schools through religious education. It is only through this that we can build peace and nourish it so as to be sustained. Peace education is proactive in nature; it has the capacity to prevent a conflict ahead of its occurrence and can even douse the fire of existing one. Religious paradigm of peace education teaches and builds in all human being moral obligations that promote peace, such as love, justice, kindness, consideration for fellow human being, sympathy, peace, sensitivity, tolerance, loyalty, altruism, e.t.c. (Olarewaju, 2011).

Historically, every known societies have long developed different kinds of mechanism of building peace at a particular time or the through peace education that aims at curbing war, violence and hostility of any kind, which in any case , could be through formal or informal ways within the various communities. However, a pronounced peace education began with the enlightenment philosophers like Immanuel Kant, Jean Jacques’ Rousseau and others.

According to Henslin (2010) “These philosophers, as a matter of fact, did not refer to their work as peace education, but it did emphasized similar themes, such as humanitarian concerns, equal right, liberty, equality and social justice. Other historical figures who have engaged in overt peace education as a means of achieving the goals of harmonious living and non-violence in human society include: Gandhi, Mother Theresa and Martin Luther King jr. (Henslin, 2010). However, since the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century peace education programmes around the world has focused much on anti-unclearism, international understanding, environmental responsibility, non-violence, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, human right awareness, tolerance of diversity coexistence and gender equality than other areas (Wikipedia, 2015).

### **Conceptual Framework**

Recently, there have been efforts from everywhere in the world to ensure that human activities does not constitute danger to the smooth running and sustainable peace of the world to the extent of compromising the Sustainable Development Goals target towards 2030. Sustainable development is meant to solve problems or challenges that are facing human beings such as poverty, hunger, good health, quality education, gender equality, problem of violence and war e.t.c. (Olagoke, 2014). To this extent, the sustainable development goals are the series of measures to end human challenges, protection of the planet and to guarantee well-being of human beings and his society.(Olagoke,2014)

The term sustainable development was coined and introduced in a 1987 report commissioned by the United Nations, “our common future”. It is also known as the “Brundtland report” after the chairperson of organizing committee, Gro Harlem Brundtland, the then Prime Minister of Norway. The phrase “sustainable development” was adopted and became popular after the publication of Brundtland report. The cruise of the report is that, the way human being are relating with the resources of the earth may make it unsustainable in the future, therefore measures needed to be urgently taken to save the future. To Brundtland cited by Giddens, (2010).

*Over the course of the twentieth century the relationship between the human world and the planet that sustains it has undergone a profound change... major, unintended changes*

*are occurring in the atmosphere, in soils, in waters, among planets and animals and in the relationships among all of these... to keep options open for future generations, the present generation must begin now and begin together, nationally and internationally.*

To this extent, in the opinion of Brundtland commission, according to the Giddens (2010), sustainable development is the “development which meets the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development in the opinion of Olagoke (2014) must be able to guarantee the balance between economic growth and social well-being.

While peace education is the process of acquiring the values, the knowledge and developing the attitude, skills and behaviours to live in harmony with oneself and with the natural environment (Wikipedia, 2014). However, Jacob (2004) did not see peace as the absence of war alone, to him; peace is a situation that guarantees positive human conditions. To this regards, peace could be negative and positive in nature. In the opinion of Jacob (2004), negative peace seeks to eliminate direct violence but positive peace seeks to remove structural violence beyond the absence of direct violence.

### **Methodology**

Systematic review methods were adopted in carrying out this research. In the course of this, the relevant findings and views of individual studies over considerable period of time were meticulously examined so as to distill the evidence from these studies into actionable solutions and plans. To that regard the study identified some of the factors causing breach of peace in the Nigerian society and also suggested the ways of tackling them effectively and successfully.

### **An overview of the threat to peace situation in Nigeria**

Recently, Nigerian society has been witnessing a series of conflicts ranging from environmental to communal, religious conflicts, tribal, political conflicts, armed banditry, kidnapping, etc. The intensity of this conflict is so high that Gwamna (2010) raises an alarm that:

*Nigeria has been witnessing violent and ethno-religious crisis of various degree since the exit of the military in 1999. The democratic space seems to have provided the launching pad of these crises. Today, the term “ethno-religious conflicts’ and threat to peace have become popular due to its religious and ethnic underpinnings. We seem to be heading towards a precipice of unpleasant consequences.*

Thurston cited by Omilusi (2015) makes a graphic classification of these violence related breach of peace that Nigeria is experience recently into five categories:

*First, the Boko Haram uprising in the Northern States of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, which has exacerbated Muslim-Christian tensions at the National level. Second, localized cycles of Muslim-Christian violence in the Middle Belt, especially in Kaduna and Plateau State...Third, electoral violence at the Local, State and National levels, which subverts the integrity of electoral process and usually claims hundreds of lives. Fourth, militant groups, criminals, pirates in the oil rich States of the Niger Delta and offshore zones, which targets the government, private companies and ordinary citizens. In addition, to oil stealing and destruction of infrastructures is the strains on resources and environmental devastation, which sap Nigeria’s capacity to feed and care for its citizens*

Worthy of note currently is the activities of the kidnappers which are rife in Kaduna, Niger, Delta, Ondo, Osun and Ekiti recently. Again, armed banditry is the other of the day in Sokoto, Katsina, Zamfara and Niger States. In the same

vein, farmer-herders violence has killed thousands of people and displaced tens of thousands more, especially in the middle-belt, South-south and some parts of Western States of Nigeria. This violence has led most of the ethnic groups in Nigeria to create ethnic militias for self defense. Examples of these militias are the Movement for Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Arewa People's Congress (APC), Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Odua People's Congress (OPC), Bakassi Boys, Egbesu Boys, and Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND). Again, Ombatse, among Eggon ethnic group (Matthew, 2015.) to mention but a few out of these militia groups in Nigeria. The activities of these militia groups have contributed, in no small measure, to fragile peace in Nigeria today

### **Peace and Sustainable Development Goals**

Peace remains the backbone of sustainable development goals; it is the pillar on which other sustainable development rests because without peace in a particular society, nothing can thrive in such society. Conversely, peace cannot reign if the pillar of other sustainable development Goals are weak. The most unfortunate thing is that no society of the world can boast of total and sustainable peace and security today; particularly Nigeria. In Nigeria today, there have been high levels of armed violence and insecurity. This has majorly impacted destructively on the economic development of the affected societies, including Nigeria.

To this extent, the Sustainable Development Goal no 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) aims at improving peace in the society while reducing all forms of violence and work with governments and communities to find lasting solutions to conflicts and insecurity that is prevalent in the societies today including Nigeria.

To achieve these, sustainable development no 16 targets the following:

- i. Significantly reduce all forms of violence of violence and related death rates everywhere
- ii. End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
- iii. Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.

- iv. By 2030, to significantly reduce illicit financial and arm flow, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime
- v. Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all other forms
- vi. Develop effective accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
- vii. Ensure responsive, inclusive participatory and representative decision making at all levels
- viii. To broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance
- ix. Strengthen relevant national institutions including through international cooperation for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries to prevent and combat terrorism and crime
- x. By 2030, to provide legal identity for all including birth registration
- xi. Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements
- xii. Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development (Sustainable Development Goal Fund, 2015)

### **Factors that Promote Violence in Nigeria**

One of the reasons why there are perennial breaches of peace in Nigeria is the plurality nature of Nigeria. Nigeria is a nation of multi-religious, multi-language, multi-ethnic groups and multi-cultural groups. There are over 350 ethno-political groups and over 500 languages in Nigeria (Jacob, 2004). These difference in language, religion and culture in many occasions, serves as source of division and conflict than cohesive agent. This informs the reason why De viliers cited by Matthew (2011) to describe plural society as “‘divided society’, indigenes who are perceived to ‘mix but do not combine’. Quite often than not, difference in language religion and culture has, for long has been a source of mutual suspect that usually cause break of peace among Nigeria society. Pattern of our democratic system also encourages breach of peace. Nigerian democracy is so weak, all permissive and violence prone to the extent that every

known politician in Nigeria are always willing to win an election through every means possible. To this extent, when they hold their campaign rallies, it is usually held with armies of thugs, armed to the highest level. It is also a common place in Nigerian politics for a politician to assassinate his/her political opponent so as to have a smooth ride to the seat of power. These patterns of political system, which gives unlimited power to our politician to exercise, can be best described as “autocratic democracy”; which has a long time adverse effects on the peace and security of the nation, because every thugs used during the election are dumped after electioneering periods have capacity of constituting threat to peace threat to the nation. To this extent, these thugs are potential armed robbers, banditry and kidnappers because they have been trained and equipped for the job by our politicians.

High rate of unemployment also contributes to constant breach of peace in Nigeria. it is truism that a society where unemployment thrive is always chaotic society. Unemployment in Nigeria has been on the galloping side, recently in 2016; unemployment rate was 12.3% but later rose to 22.70% in the second quarter of 2018 and 23.10% in the third quarter of 2018. Importantly, the Nigeria unemployment rate is projected to trend around 24.30% in 2020, (tradingeconomics.com, 2018). Since large numbers of the students turned out from the Nigerian tertiary institutions every year are not gainfully employed, this has forced large percentage of them to armed robbery, kidnapping, armed banditry, and several other social vices.

By extension, high level of unemployment also contributes to high poverty rate in Nigeria. Today, Nigeria has more people living in extreme poverty than any country in the world. Poverty rate in Nigeria is so high to the extent that so many Nigeria citizens are living under one dollar per day. This is the reasons why Theresa May, the Prime Minister of Britain, during her last visitation to Nigeria concluded that Nigeria is the headquarters of poverty. Since a hungry mob is an angry mob, under slightest provocation, people normally see breach of peace as an option.

Again, religious extremism is another factor. Nigeria as a secular state is quite permissive in term of religious worship. Different types of religious groups exist and they usually scout for membership through any means available to them; without minding the implication of most actions they take. This informs the reason why Nigeria is known as a religious country but not godly in their



actions. The extremist members of some religious groups, who in most cases misinterpret their religious tenets, always take cover under religion to breach the peace of society. More than any other conflicts and breach of peace Nigerian has experienced, religious violence, most especially among the three dominant religions, had taken the lead.

More than any factor, illiteracy serves as one of the reasons why Nigerian always experience constant breach of peace. Today, Nigeria is heavily populated with illiterates and out-of-school children. As a matter fact, Nigeria is ranked as one of leading countries in out-of-the-school rating with the huge population of 10.5 million out-of-school children ( Nwagwu, 2011). These little innocent children who are supposed to be enrolled in the schools, so as to start their carrier in life, are usually standby recruits anytime there is need for recruitment to cause trouble.

### **The Importance of Peace Education to Nigeria Society**

Creating awareness for peace through inculcating culture of peace through teaching and learning in Nigeria society has a lot of advantages which, according to Jacob (2004) includes the follow:

- a. Peace education teaches peace how to manage conflict or violence situation and ways to minimize it
- b. It is the best method of settling dispute before it escalates
- c. It can serve as veritable means of resolving existing conflicts
- d. By extension, it has an advantage of replacing or supplementing the conventional method of settling of disputes by way of going to court
- e. With peace education in Nigerian schools, gullibility of the youths will reduce
- f. Peace education can serve as a last long and genuine way of preventing breach of peace than other means because it is meant to disabuse people's mind against violation of peace.
- g. It helps people to understand the roots of a problem and also teach alternatives to violence.

### **Religious Example**

As a matter of fact, every religion preaches peace and believes in peace. The Hebrew word *shalom*, which means peace, refers to the state of no conflict, it also denotes a situation in which one is free from wars. It also means a good state of health, safety, soundness of mind and body.

On the other hand, Islam means submission. It has the same root meaning with the *salam*, which means peace. Therefore, peace is the nature, the basic meaning, the emblem, the watch word and the objective of Islam (Saleh, 2006). To this extent, Islam, Christianity and the Traditional religion of African(African Religions) in particular did not support conflicts, violence or anything that can bring about breach of peace, the scripture of these religions (Islam and Christianity) even warned against any argument that can lead to the breach of peace. Matthew 3:37 explicitly states that; ‘but let your communication be, yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh evil’. In the same vein, Quran chapter 16:25 also advises that, “I write all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious”. In addition, Matthew 5:44 admonishes that one should love everyone including his enemies so as to foster peace in the society. *“But I say unto you, love your enemies Bless them that curse you, do good to Them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you...”*

Again, the Christians Scriptures also recommended tolerance in the face of provocation in a situation while it tends to bring about breach of peace. Matthew 5:39ff recommends thus:

*But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain ...*

As a matter of fact, prophet Mohammed (SAW) lived a peaceful life and even, encouraged his follower to do the same by restraining them from all acts that can cause breach of peace during his 13 year in Mekka (Saleh, 2006,). It is this system of peace building that Halleman (2006) describes as “active non-violence” or pacifism, a form of non-violence that is truly compatible with biblical teaching.

## **Conclusion**

The paper has identified peace as an indispensable ingredient to growth and development of every nation. To this extent, peace education using religion paradigm will go a long way in creating culture of peace in the mind the youths and society as a whole; most especially giving the differences in our tongues,

culture, religion and tribe, the only means through which better understanding could be created is through peace education. This effort will go a long way to re-orient the mind of the Nigerian youths. This, no doubt, will guarantee sustainable development for Nigerian nations.

### **Recommendations**

- Nigerian Government should place more emphasis on Peace Education right from primary school level to tertiary education level
- Nigerian National Orientation Agency should be made to create awareness in the Nigeria towns and villages on the relationship between Development and Peace
- Religious centers in Nigeria should refrain from provocative preaching that can breach peace in Nigerian society
- Nigerian political classes should desist from the habit of violence campaign of using thugs to cause breach of peace in the society
- The Nigerian youths should be empowered economically so as not to them recruited by the people who may want to cause mayhem.
- The Nigerian education stake holders should try as much as possible to factor in peace values encouraged by the Nigerian major religions while designing peace education curriculum

### **References**

- Giddens, A (2010). *Sociology*. New Delhi: Kay Kay printers
- Gwamna, D.J (2010). Sliding Towards Armageddon. Revisiting Ethno-Religious Crisis in Nigeria. *Journal of Theological College of Northern Nigeria* Vol 53 PP 30-44
- Hellenma A.A (2006) Active nonviolence. The Only Viable Alternative. *A Journal of Department of Religious Studies University of Jos*. Vol 3(2) PP 83-102
- Henslin J.M (2010). *Sociology. A Down -to-Earth Approach*. New York: Pearson Publication Ltd.
- Jacob S, (2004). Peace Education. in Bozimo, G Golep, G Zwahir, R & Obanya, O.A (eds) *current trends in Social Studies Education*. Jos: Academic Trust Fund.
- Matthew, N (2015). Integrating Peace and Conflict Studies into Secondary School Curriculum. In Njoku, MGCs Anieke, CC & MC Devit C. M (eds) *Frontiers Issues and New Perspective*.
- Nwagwu, N. A (2011) Private Participation in Primary and Secondary Education in Nigeria. In Ivowu, U.MO & Ogunleye A.O (eds). *The Growth and Development of Education in Nigeria*. Ibadan: HEBN Publishing Plc.
- Olagoke S.A (2014). *Nigeria Democracy and Sustainable Development: The Journey So Far*. Ibadan: SAO Multi-ventures

- Olarewaju, I (2011). *Adult Moral Education: An Imperative for Global Peace*. Ibadan: Harmonious Publications
- Omilusi M. (2015) *Insurgency and Terrorism in Nigeria; Perspectives, Phases and Consequences*: Ado-Ekiti: Olugbenga Press.
- Saleh, O (2006). Active Nonviolence from Mushin Perspective. *A Journal of Repentment of Religious Studies, University Jos*. VOL. 3 (2) PP105-126
- Sustainable Development Goals Fund: <https://Sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/partners/?i=10757> retrieved on 10/6/2018
- The Life Application Bible (1996). Wheaton : Tadale House Publication
- Trade Economics (2018). Unemployment in Nigeria. [tradingeconomics.com](http://tradingeconomics.com) retrieved on 11/7/2018
- Wikipedia (2018). Peace Education: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/peae-education> retrieved 07/6/2018
- Yusuf, A. (1432). *English Translation of the Meaning and Commentary of Quran*. Medina: King Fahd Glorious Printing Complex