

Book Review

Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa

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Daniel Ogbeifun is a priest of the Catholic Diocese of Buffalo, New York, USA. Prior to his ordination in 2015, he earned a Bachelor Degree in Philosophy from St. Joseph's Major Seminary, Ikot-Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State (in affiliation with the Urban University, Rome). He also studied Theology at the Seat of Wisdom Seminary, Owerri, Imo State. Furthermore, he obtained a degree in Pastoral Theology and Catechesis from the prestigious Institute of Lumen Vitae in Belgium via a scholarship awarded to him in 2010. He also holds a Master of Arts Degree in Pastoral Ministry from Christ the King Seminary, East Aurora, New York, USA.

The book is divided into nine chapters with each of the chapters beginning with a brief introduction of its specific subject matter. Ogbeifun's learning and passion for Peace and Sustainable Development evidenced in the many Peace Summits and Concerts he has attended both in Nigeria and abroad, as well as his engaging and impactful priestly ministry eminently qualify him to write this book.

Subject and Thesis statement:

First, the author notes that the notion of peace is complex and goes beyond the mere lack of physical confrontation. Fundamentally, peace is characterized as a condition of calmness that includes stability, harmony, and security being a state in which people live in harmony with one another and their communities, creating an atmosphere devoid of animosity, aggression, and strife. Peace is not an isolated reality. The idea of global peace emphasizes collaboration, diplomacy, and the peaceful settlement of disputes at both local and international levels. Addressing the underlying causes of conflicts, which frequently result from injustice, discrimination, and inequality, is necessary for

a sustainable peace. Similarly, sustainable development is crucial for the well-being of present and future generations. It aims at satisfying current demands without sacrificing the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own. Being that sustainable development is based on environmental sustainability, using eco-friendly techniques is as essential as worries about deforestation, climate change and the loss of biodiversity growth.

The social aspect of sustainable development places a strong emphasis on social justice, equity and inclusion, acknowledges the significance of advancing gender equality, guaranteeing access to healthcare and education, and ending poverty. The goal of sustainable development is to strengthen neglected communities by promoting resilience and social cohesiveness to lay the groundwork for a society that is more stable and equitable by tackling social challenges.

There is no one-size-fits-all strategy to sustainable development; instead, context-specific strategies that take into account the particular possibilities and problems faced by each community are needed. Encouraging local people to take active part in development initiatives is essential for ensuring that sustainable practices are implemented in ways that are sensitive to cultural differences and meet cultural standards.

Summary of Themes:

1. The Interconnections of Peace and Sustainable Development

One essential component of promoting a peaceful and prosperous global community is understanding the connection between sustainable development and peace. Sustainable development and peace create a symbiotic relationship that is essential to the health of the earth and humankind. Peaceful societies are more suited to invest in infrastructure, finance developmental projects and encourage innovation to achieve long-term economic success. Thus, sustainable development addresses the underlying causes of conflict which help to maintain peace. Social injustices, resource shortages, and poverty are frequently the causes of unrest and bloodshed. A more stable and secure society is created through sustainable development which reduces the variables that spark conflict by fostering economic growth, social inclusiveness and environmental stewardship.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) initiative demonstrates the connection between sustainable development and peace. From acknowledging their interdependence to integrating these principles into global frameworks, the Covid-19 pandemic emphasized the need for global cooperation and solidarity to achieve sustainable development and also brought attention to the fragility of progress in the absence of peace for the necessity of inclusive, equitable responses to crises. Good governance therefore is essential for promoting both peace and sustainable development.

2. Integrating Eco-Friendly Practices

To promote sustainable growth and solve environmental issues, development strategies must incorporate eco-friendly methods. It is critical to include renewable energy sources in growth plans while mitigating climate change may be achieved by shifting from fossil fuels to sustainable energy sources like hydro power, wind and solar. Societies can attain a healthy balance between economic development and environmental stewardship through the adoption of renewable energy, effective waste management, sustainable urban design, biodiversity protection, ethical industry practices and environmental education promotion to reduce conflict.

3. Conflict Prevention

Environmental degradation and resource scarcity exacerbate social tensions and trigger conflicts over land, water, or energy resources. By promoting sustainable resource management and equitable access to natural resources, peace building efforts can address the root causes of conflicts and prevent their escalation. Addressing environmental challenges requires collective action and international cooperation. Environmental degradation can weaken governments' ability to provide basic services, leading to political instability and potentially violent conflicts. For instance, deforestation and soil degradation in Haiti have contributed to political unrest and violence.

4. A Case Study on The Successful Integration of Sustainability and Peace building Efforts: The Colombian Peace Agreement

The Colombian Peace Agreement signed in 2016 represents a landmark example of integrating sustainability with peace building efforts. A key aspect of the agreement was the recognition of the inter linkages between environmental sustainability and peace. By addressing environmental issues such as deforestation, land degradation, and illegal mining, the agreement aimed at mitigating conflict drivers and promoting long-term peace and stability.

5(a). Social Justice

Chapter three of the book addresses another important index of peace and sustainable development which is social justice that addresses structural injustices and promotes inclusive communities as the basis for long-lasting peace exists in communities where social fairness is upheld and such communities are more likely to cohabit peacefully when they feel heard, respected, and fairly treated. Thus, sustainable development is inextricably related to social justice. Achieving social justice as a stimulus for sustainable development and peace calls for collaborative efforts. Governments, civil society organizations, and all people need to make concerted efforts to tear down institutional obstacles, confront discriminatory behaviours and advance inclusive policies. Education is essential to this process because it gives people the understanding and information they need to fight for social justice because it addresses the underlying causes of societal problems and serves as a powerful driver for both sustainable development and peace.

5(b). Strategies for Addressing Social Disparities

Sustainable development is inextricably related to social justice. Social justice addresses structural injustices and promotes inclusive communities. A basis for long-lasting peace exists in communities where social fairness is upheld. Communities are more likely to cohabit peacefully when they feel heard, respected, and fairly treated.

- a. Policy Interventions
- b. Education and Awareness
- c. Community Empowerment
- d. Corporate Social Responsibility

6. Family Life and Sustainable Development

Family is a basic social unit with a significant impact on how people behave, value, and perceive the world. A caring environment provides for education, emotional health and personal growth via strong and supportive family structures. Families are the main channels through which social standards, cultural traditions, and inter-generational knowledge are transferred from one generation to another. Family well-being and sustainable development go hand in hand because strong, resilient families are necessary to create thriving, long-lasting communities. Sustainable development programs enable families to escape the cycle of poverty and attain a better quality of life via access to necessities like clean water, housing, healthcare, and education. Thus, an inclusive and peaceful community is the foundation for sustainable growth and the well-being of society. Research has repeatedly shown that supportive family environments enhance mental health and reduce the likelihoods of violent or antisocial behaviour which underscores the indispensable roles of the family in peace building and sustainable development for which there is need to teach conflict Resolution Skills in the Family using the following strategies:

- a) Leading by example
- b) Creating a safe environment
- c) Encouraging empathy
- d) Focusing practising communication skills
- e) Setting clear expectations
- f) Acknowledging and validating feelings

7. The Role of Education and Awareness-Creation in Fostering Peace Within Societies

Promoting peace both domestically and internationally requires a strong emphasis on awareness and education. Education is a potent instrument for conflict prevention because it provides people with information, critical thinking abilities and a deeper awareness of other views thus fostering understanding and tolerance. A key component of peace-building and sustainable development is education.

Critical Analysis

A critical aspect of intellectual engagement whether in books or journals is an analytical tradition that helps the reader think beyond mere information to penetrate the analysis of the information presented in a way that makes the information amenable to implementation which perhaps can be described as the indispensable nexus between theory and praxis.

The book under review contains a treasure trove of information and uncommon ideas regarding the necessary interplay between peace and sustainable development in African communities that are ravaged by war and crises with those on the precipice of war due to the struggle for scarce resources. Despite its commendable strides in the sphere of information presentation, a great lacuna is obvious from the reading of the book that borders on the dearth of a critical analytical approach, such that the book is rather more descriptive than analytical as a large portion of the book is dedicated to simply providing information with no attempt at a deeper analysis of the thoughts and ideas presented. For example, when the author says, "...to promote sustainable growth and solve environmental issues, development strategies must incorporate eco-friendly methods." "It is critical to include renewable energy sources in growth plans." In both cases, as in other statements made throughout the book, the author does not suggest how which leaves the book at a rudimentary level that may very well be both a merit and a demerit. Merit in the sense that the book will appeal and serve the purpose of both the initiated and the uninitiated, of both professionals and non-professionals, practitioners and amateurs alike; demerit in the sense that it may not pass a peer review test.

Conclusion

Resolving conflicts is essential to achieving global peace and sustainable development. In the intricate web of global connections, interpersonal, inter group, or international conflicts are unavoidable. Nevertheless, the way forward for peace and advancement depends on how the disputes are resolved. The book makes recommendations on how such conflicts can be resolved. Peace and sustainable development have come to be reckoned as perhaps, two sides of the same coin – one which you can't have without the other. In the book under review, the author examines the relationship between peace and sustainable development, showing how addressing one advances the other to ultimately advances the well-being of humanity which is what makes this book suitable for scholars, practitioners, analysts, public servants, and policy makers alike. I recommend the book, *Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa* to scholars, students of peace studies, practitioners, analysts, public servants, policy makers, all Nigerians and indeed, all lovers of peace because of its unique contribution to knowledge.