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# **Disarmament education: An imperative for effective management of education for sustainable development in Africa**

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**Africa's educational terrain is hostile to innovative ideas that can usher in development and consequently sustain it. This idea is motivated by the fact that the death, destruction and suffering which violent conflict have imposed on the African peoples through the excessive availability and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW) have negatively affected the productivity of the educational system. Due to poor security network, easy accessibility, easy to hide and operate, small arms have found their ways into the educational system in Africa, increasing the rate at which crimes are perpetuated. Arm robbery, rape, cultism, intimidations and harassment of students, most especially the female ones and staff have characterized the development of higher education in the last decade in Africa. This situation, to a large extent, has affected the level at which education can contribute to the developmental needs of the African people. Therefore, to reposition the system for efficient management in order to create a safe and an orderly environment that can promote high quality academic exercises and to ensure that students and staff have the opportunity to develop themselves and contribute to the development of their societies, calls for the adoption of disarmament education. Disarmament education focuses on controlling and preventing arms from falling into illegal hands. It is a form of programme that intends to encourage people to resolve their differences peacefully without the use of arms. Hence, disarmament education can create a safe environment for people to operation peacefully in a society. Based on this, the paper examined the goals of disarmament education, the causes and effects of excess availability of arms in educational system and the link between arms proliferation, disarmament education and sustainable development. Equally, how disarmament education can contribute to effective management of education for sustainable development in Africa was equally explored.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Education, world over, is considered as a life transforming activity, which empowers its receiver to make positive contributions to the development of a society. This consideration is based on the idea, that "education improves the productive capacity of societies and their political, economic and scientific institutions" (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1994). These facts revealed that education and the society are inextricably inter-woven. This link, referred to as bi-directional relationship (Akangbou, 1987), symbolizes that developments in the society, impact

considerably on the educational system and likewise the educational system on the society. Overtime, the violence conflicts that occurred and are reoccurring in Africa have manifested adversely, in various ways, in the educational system. Ogbogbo (1999) described the crisis in this form: Africa is imploding. This time the dimension and ramification of what has been stigmatized as the African crisis is indeed frightening. Plagued by socio-economic and political problems, most African states have either collapsed or the state system is at the verge of destruction (p.2). This development has made Africa of today to be described as a very good laboratory for the study of violence conflicts and its attendant effects (Nwolise, 2003; Alimba, 2004). Therefore, one way in which the bi-directional hypothesis has revealed itself in this case, is

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through the level of violence manifestations that have characterized African educational system and also, in turn the system serves as a recruiting ground for those involved in the act. Human Rights Watch (2001) reported that in North Kivu, Congo-an area renowned for its systematic abduction of children by the Congolese Rally for Democracy- Goma (RCD-Goma) and the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) for use against the government of Congo- children are often recruited for armed service directly from the schools, either through kidnappings or coercion.

This complicated role of education made Bush and Saltarelli (2000) to posit that in many conflicts around the world, education is part of the problem and not the solution. The major factor responsible for this ugly development is the excess availability of small arms in Africa. Abdel-Fatau (2001) observed that in Africa the sources of small arms and light weapons are many and varied. But “a major pipeline of small arms and light weapons (SALW) remains the stockpiles that were pumped into Africa in the 1970s and 1980s by the Ex-Soviet Union, the U.S.A and their Allies to fan proxy interstate wars”(p.1). Therefore, small arms proliferations have become a big problem in the developmental prospect of the African society. Their lethality have made them weapon of choice for perpetuating criminal acts around the world. The social impacts of small arms and light weapons (SALW) on Africa ranges from the incalculable damage wrought on civilians, most especially children and women; public facilities such as health, education and public utilities like roads etc; commercial and industrial centres; human rights, humanitarian relief and tourism. Fleshman (2001) reported that small arms, which include rifles, pistols and light machine guns, are filling African graves in ever-increasing numbers- from the killing fields of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the streets of Lagos and Johannesburg.

He stated further that the widespread abuse of weapons diverts scarce government resources from health and education to public security, discourages investment and economic growth and deprives developing countries of the skills and talents of the victims of small arms. Due to poor management method, easy accessibility, simple to operate, cheap to acquire and easy to hide, small arms have spread into the educational system of most African states and have been used to rain havoc on students, staff and school facilities.

Africa's educational environment is highly volatile because of easy flow of arms into the system and the abnormal ways they have been used to perpetuate different kinds of crime. Rape, intimidation, harassment, cultism, violent fight, maiming and killing of students, staff and destruction of school facilities have become a recurring phenomenon in the educational system, most especially in tertiary institutions in Africa. Okeke and Emenalo (2008) rightly noted that because of “the violent nature of youths in our higher institutions today, which manifest in the forms of cultism, armed robbery, rioting, killing, arson,

prostitution, vandalism, rape e.t.c., there is an urgent need for higher institutions to re-assess their commitment to the realization of goals of higher education”. In the same vein, Olaleye (2008) posited that because moral values are misplaced and decaying, youths are engaged in many vices; armed robbery, advance fee fraud, examination malpractices, drug addiction and cultism. The display of these social vices is facilitated, according to Vasudev (2001) by easy “accessibility to firearms”. Krishnapada (2001) asserted that the stream of violent armed robbery in the society is exacerbated by the ease with which average citizens, including youths, can arm themselves.

The manifestations of these behavioural tendencies are a reflection of happenings in the larger African society. Mwanasali (2006) indicated that “the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons constitutes a serious source of (in) security dilemma in many African sub regions”. This has equally caused an unusual flow of arms into the educational system. Hence, the reckless manner in which arms were used to carry out attacks in the system, most especially in tertiary institutions, made Agekameh (2001) to refer to them as “theatres of war” and that the “orgy of violence often witnessed on university campuses and other higher institutions” is due to the ways “students freely brandish pistols or revolvers and use them to unleash terror on fellow students”.

Tchombe (2006) stated that violence in school settings is an issue of national concerns as this reflects the health situation of the nation. In schools and communities in Africa today, violent and disorderly behaviours are rampant. Even the use of weapons such as guns and knives are associated with incidence of violence. The abnormal use of small arms in schools bring about the problems of insecurity, fear and tension which deprive the system of the opportunity of being effectively and efficiently managed, to contribute optimally to the developmental prospect of the continent. Therefore, to stimulate economic development in Africa, there is need to reposition the educational system, by creating enabling environment that will encourage and support academic activities. To achieve this, disarmament education is considered, in this paper, as one of the measures that can be adopted to improve the system.

Disarmament education is a programme that is oriented towards controlling and preventing the use of arms in resolving conflicts anywhere. Its approaches are both physical and mental and are geared towards the sensitization of people to resolve their differences peacefully instead of using force through arms. Some of the disarmament methods which are often adopted in schools, according to Juvonen (2001) are: the use of metal detectors, the presence of security guards on campus, rules and regulations regarding student conduct and dress, profiling of potentially violent students, anti-bullying instructional programmes and counseling and mediation.

It also involves the education of “people as to the legal

situation and the social and moral responsibilities involved in illegal weapons possession" (DeBeer, 2005). Therefore, due to the devastating and destabilizing effects of small arms in the world and particularly in Africa, with grave attendant implications on social institutions, the concerns of regional and international institutions have been heavily directed towards controlling them. Hence, on November 2000, the Secretary General of UN commissioned a report on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Education. The aims of the United Nations Study on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Education include; defining disarmament and non-proliferation education, assessing the current state of disarmament ways to promote education and training at all levels of formal and informal education, in particular educators, parliamentarians, municipal leaders, military officers and government officials (Peacematters, 2004). Based on this preliminary information, the writers consider disarmament education as highly imperative for the effective and efficient management of education to contribute optimally to sustainable development in Africa.

## **TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF DISARMAMENT EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Disarmament or arms control are words that have been used interchangeably or differently depending on the writer. Nwolise (1988) observed that "to disarm" means to reduce or limit the size of armament or to deprive of arms (tools of attack or defence). He said further that in disarmament talks between nations, the focus is on reduction of arms and not total removal or deprivation of arms, since all nations agree that self-protection is necessary as seen in Article 51 of the U.N.O charter.

Therefore, disarmament, according to Nwolise (1988) is the reduction or limitation of the size and equipment of armament possessed by nations. Disarmament education, according to U.N, report (2002) is the need to reduce armaments with a view to their complete elimination as a means of reducing both the likelihood and severity of armed. Non- proliferation Education is a significant subset of disarmament education and is oriented towards the prevention of the further proliferation of all weapons, in particular weapons of mass destruction. The report reiterated further that disarmament education is a life-long and multifaceted process, in which the family, schools, universities, media, community, NGOs, governments, parliaments and international organizations all participate, because it is "a base of theoretical and practical knowledge that allows individuals to choose for themselves values that reject violence, resolve conflicts peacefully and sustain a culture of peace". The wide-ranging substance relevant to the question of disarmament education is based on an understanding of disarmament as being "any form of action aimed at limiting, controlling or reducing arms,

including unilateral disarmament initiatives and ultimately, general and complete disarmament under effective international control (Haavelsrud, 2002).

These definitions revealed that disarmament education is that form of education that is geared towards the employment of various educational approaches aimed at disabusing the minds of people from using arms in resolving conflicts. It is the evolvement of methods and involvement of individuals and bodies on how to reduce, limit, or totally stop the acquisition and production of armament. Sustainable development, on the other hand is concerned with "the framework for our efforts to achieve a higher quality of life for all people" in which "economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing (The 1995 World Summit on Social Development).

The Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development actually popularized the concept in 1987. The Report simply defined sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. By implication, to achieve sustainable development will entail balancing the environmental, societal and economic activities in the pursuit of developmental projects of a country. This, probably informed S.H. Toh (n.d) to posit that achieving sustainable development rests on "three key pillars, namely society, environment and economy with culture as an underlying dimension". The point is that to achieve sustainable development, the conduciveness of the political, economic and social environments are imperative in a society. At this stage, it is important to emphasize that for development to be achieved through the educational system in Africa, disarmament education is highly essential because the various conflicts experienced in Africa have saturated the system and region with small arms in any unusual manner.

The above analysis points to the fact that there is a link between disarmament education and sustainable development. Vogt (1980) asserted that the discussions on the question of disarmament and development centred on the reduction of military budgets, first as a means of achieving arms limitation and only secondly to provide funds for development efforts. The argument, she continued, was that the reduction of the military budgets would help in limiting the escalation rate of armament.

The extension of this argument to the utilization of the resources released as a result of disarmament in forging a new international, social and economic order through greater investment of resources on social and economic as well as on development activities (Vogt, 1980). These statements give insight into the fact that to make impressive efforts towards the achievement of sustainable development, disarmament education is a necessary as well as a compulsory condition in Africa and generally in the world.

## THE GOALS OF DISARMAMENT EDUCATION

As we begin the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the world is awash with weapons, most especially small arms and light weapons (SALW) and they have used to commit various forms of criminal activities. Therefore, to create a peacefully environment where justice and harmony will reign calls for the implementation of disarmament education programmes to achieve it. This is because disarmament education aims at:

- i) Serving as a primary tool for fostering a culture of peace through the promotion of educational curricula on peaceful conflict-resolution, dialogue, consensus-building and active non-violence.
- ii) Reducing armament with a view to prevent further proliferation of all weapons, most especially, weapons of mass destruction.
- iii) Creating knowledge that allows individuals to choose for themselves values that reject violence, resolve conflict peacefully and sustain culture of peace.
- iv) Preparing educational materials that is sensitive to various audiences, cultures, customs and situations that will empower people to learn how to think about issues of disarmament rather than what to think.
- v) Imparting knowledge and skills to empower individuals to make their contributions, as national and world citizens, to the achievement of general and complete disarmament under the effective international control.

## SMALL ARMS PROLIFERATION AND AFRICA'S EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The environment is made up of various elements that aid mankind in effective operations. The environment is an important social phenomenon that influences the behaviour of people in a society. In the educational system, it determines what should germinate, how, when and what should not. The unconducive outlook of Africa's educational environment supports the proliferation of small arms in many ways. Small arms are described as weapons designed for individual use, such as pistols, sub-machine gun, assault rifles and light machine guns (The Department for International Development, 2002). Rana (1994) considered small arms as any means of lethality other than sheer use of physical force. Small arms, judging from the above definitions, represent anything used by an individual or two to injury or cause the death of a person or persons other than the use of physical strength (Alimba, 2008).

Therefore, small arms ranges from stick, stone and knife to the conventional weapons as contained in the Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arm (Alimba, 2008). The basic properties of these weapons, which include: easy to carry about by a person, easy to operate, its lethality efficiency, cheap to buy and

easy to hide, have made them easier to spread into the educational arena in Africa. These are some of the reasons why arms are excessively found in schools' environment in Africa. Apart from this, other factors responsible for the proliferation of small arms in Africa's educational environment are:

(i) Unconducive school environment: school environment is an important phenomenon in the determination of the kinds of behaviour that students will cultivate and exhibit at a time. Oguntimehin (2001) said that the school and its entire surroundings should be one of the most beautiful centres in the community, because of the remarkable influence they have upon the lives of both the teachers and learners. That is, the school environment can either serve as a motivation for effective teaching and learning behaviour or support the formation of anti social behaviours such as cultism, rape, etc. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988) posited that every educational organization has a climate that distinguishes it from other schools and influences behaviour and feelings of teachers and students for that school. It was equally reported that " the situation on our university campuses contributes to the depression in the quality of learning, as well as the display of anti-social behaviour among the students (The Punch, 2002) Therefore, the unconducive nature of Africa's educational environment contributed in no small measure to the proliferation of arms in the system. The system allows for easy harbour of arms and its excessive usage.

(ii) Proliferation of cult groups. The manner in which cultism and cult related activities are spreading in Africa's educational terrain is highly discouraging. Small arms are seen as weapons of choice for their operations. This is based on the lethality of these weapons. Okebukola (2006) stated that campus violence has manifested in various forms but those that readily come to mind include the now hydra-headed problem of cultism. Agekameh (2000) reported that cultists have in recent times become well armed with all types of sophisticated weapons, which they use to perpetrate atrocities on their campuses. Hence, the level of violence occurrence has increased in tertiary institutions, not only in Africa but also among the developed nations of the world. As cult groups increase, so also are arms. Infact, cultism is a major pipeline through which arms proliferate in higher institutions of learning in Africa.

(iii) Rising need to hold arms for self-protection: The levels of intimidation, harassment, rape, armed violence in schools in Africa have increased based on the need for self-protection. Therefore in a bid to protect self, holding of arms is now a priority. Mwanasali (2006) said that private individuals explain their desire to acquire firearms for the need to ensure their own protection in an environment that is increasingly violent. However, in so doing, they contribute to the proliferation of weapons in private hands and ultimately heightening insecurity for

themselves and for the state. Based on this, the drive for self-security on campuses has tactically increase arms acquisition by students.

(vi) Poor security networks on campuses. The security networks in higher institutions are highly unreliable and ineffective in protecting students. Therefore, poor security problems have increased the ways in which arms are smuggled into the system for protection.

### **SMALL ARMS PROLIFERATION, EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Quality education is directly related to sustainable development. Therefore, to achieve sustainable development depends on the nature of education provided in a country. The excessive availability of arms within and outside the school system has imperiled development in all aspect in Africa. That is, excess availability of arms in schools affects educational productivity, which in turn manifests in other social institutions of a country, affecting its overall development activities. Alimba (2008) stated that the inflow of small arms into our tertiary institutions is fast turning the place into a haven for training criminals rather than people that will possess sound minds and judgments.

In Kenya, researchers discovered that many primary and secondary schools have been abandoned and literacy and enrolment rates in armed-affected regions have seen below the national average (Berman and Muggah, 2001). According to Stohl (2002) children's opportunities to pursue an education are also inhibited by the proliferation of small arms. In Eastern Congo children attend school at irregular intervals due to frequent inter-ethnic cattle raids, an activity which has become all the more popular due to small arms proliferation (Oxfam, n.d). In some regions in Eastern Congo, schools have been displaced, looted and burned down. Even efforts to build schools have been thwarted by threats of warring cattle rustlers. In some areas of Congo, 30% of school age children do not attend schools (Oxfam, 2001). Stohl (2002) revealed that insecurity from the widespread proliferation of small arms may prevent schools from functioning, flood hospitals with wounded and overburden legal and judicial institutions. Thus, the review on small arms proliferation and education indicated that small arms in the educational system will:

- a) Make the educational environment to be highly uncondusive and unsecured for management, innovation, organization and administration.
- b) Frustrate teaching and learning process.
- c) Increase the use of arms in resolving conflicts.
- d) Lead to intermittent closure of schools.
- e) Increase the crime level.
- f) Create an atmosphere of fear, intimidation and harassment.

g) Increase the syndrome of school phobia.

h) Bring about poor attendance rate.

i) Lead to poor development of people.

j) Increase the rate at which school facilities are destroyed.

In the same way, the "accumulation of small arms and the presence of explosive remnants of war contribute to insecurity and hamper efforts to achieve sustainable development (UNIDIR, 2006). Lewis (2006) explained that, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons thus undermines development and exacerbates the vicious circle of poverty and insecurity. Based on this, it is clear that development efforts are often retarded, or even reversed, as a result of the impacts of the availability and misuse of small arms (Muggah and Batchelor, 2002). Small arms proliferations have emerged as a serious problem in Africa. These weapons have contributed in a large measure to the various violent conflicts that took place in Liberia, Mali, Somalia, Congo and Sierra Leone. The very political instability threatening economic and social growth in Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Tanzania and all other African countries is as a result of excessive availability and abnormal use of small arms. The overall effect of this development is the experience of a backward shift in the development prospect of most African countries.

### **DISARMAMENT EDUCATION AND MANAGING EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA**

To achieve sustainable development in Africa, there is need to revitalize the educational system. Education is a core activity that is essential to the issue of sustainable development anywhere in the world. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development that culminated in Rio Declaration set out 27 principles for achieving sustainable development. The Declaration identified education in Agenda 21, as an essential tool for achieving sustainable development and highlighted four areas of action for education, namely;

- (i) Improve the quality of basic education.
- (ii) Reorient existing education programmes to address sustainable development.
- (iii) Develop public awareness and understanding.
- (iv) Provide training for all sectors of private and civil society.

Therefore, to revitalize the educational system in Africa to respond appropriately to the attainment of sustainable development, disarmament education has become necessary as well as a compulsory condition, to create

the social environment that will foster effective and efficient management of education to achieve this goal. Disarmament education will create a secured and stable environment in the educational system that will promote its effective and efficient management to enhance its productivity. Disarmament education can be adopted in Africa's educational environment in two ways. We have physical and mental disarmament education.

Physical disarmament education deals with the best practices that can be adopted to withdraw weapons from the educational system. One of the ways of implementing this approach is to determine the reasons why students bring arms to school. Understanding the reasons will inform the nature of provision that will be made in schools to prevent arms inflow. Some of the reasons are security problems, cultism, self protection, fear, intimidation and harassment. Improving the Security networks in tertiary institutions and making the environment attractive and conducive for teaching and learning will naturally reduce the degree of arms flowing into the system. Apart from this, other programmes such as "guns for goods" or "buy back" can be employed in the educational system.

School authorities will have to offer something in exchange for arms. A kind of reward package is provided as inducement to make students surrender their guns to the school authorities. The mental disarmament education involves the use academic programmes to development students to understand the need to live harmoniously and resolve their differences peacefully instead of employing violence means. This involves the introduction of educational programmes such as peace education, conflict resolution education, SALW Risk Education e.t.c. These educational programmes are based on the philosophy that promotes the adoption of safer behaviours, promoting peaceful living among peers and employing dialogue as a means of interaction in dealing with disagreements. A notable programme, among these programmes is peace education. Peace education is a holistic education that takes into consideration the transformation of people in totality for personal development and the good of a society (Alimba, 2008). Fountain (1999) posited that peace education is the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, intergroup, national or international level. Therefore, the skills, knowledge and attitudes which peace education promotes can solve a wide range of problems for a better and peacefully living, wherever we found ourselves. Akpuru-Aja (2007) stated that peace education is helping people appreciate how appealing cooperation or peaceful co-existence is; how to analyse conflict and its dynamics; how to make, resolve and manage conflict situations; the relationship between all the processes involved in promoting transnational peace and security. Based on this, the introduction and

implementation of educational programmes that can promote disarmament education like peace education will go a long way in stimulating peace and security in Africa's educational system, which will usher in the desired environment

Africa's educational system, which will usher in the desired environment required for the optimum productivity.

It is important to allow mental disarmament education to collaborate the physical one. The essence of this argument is that mental disarmament education will empower students to understand how to think about disarmament rather than what to think about it.

In an atmosphere of peace, justice and security, managing education to achieve set goals become much easier than in a hostile environment. Therefore, the development of ideas, innovative strategies and reforms that are anchored on sustainable development in Africa are social phenomena that have bearing on the conduciveness and productivity of the educational system. Therefore, introducing disarmament education programmes in tertiary institutions in Africa is fundamentally an avenue to utilize education effectively in realizing development goals in Africa and consequently creating an environment for their sustainability.

## Conclusion

The complex environment in which educational managers in Africa are operating has affected their capacity to discharge their responsibility as expected in this globalize world. This has equally affected the productivity of the system. The major factor responsible for this development is the incessant conflicts that have plagued Africans for a very long time. These violent conflicts circulated small arms and light weapons in the continent with abandoned recklessness, thereby making the educational system less effective and efficient in responding to the developmental needs of the African people. Therefore, to achieve sustainable development, there is need to make the educational system more responsive and productive. To revitalize the educational system in Africa for efficient service delivery, demands the adoption of disarmament education programmes.

These programmes, most especially peace education when introduced into schools will promote effectiveness and efficiency in the management of the system for optimum productivity. It is believed that disarmament education will create a conducive atmosphere that will support the development of the African society and its sustenance.

The issue is that, disarmament education will stimulate a democratic atmosphere that will give room for effective organization and administration of the system, in such a way that a safe and an orderly environment will be enthroned in schools in Africa for the promotion of high standards of learning and ensuring that students and staff have the opportunity to develop themselves to the fullest

for adequate contributions to the development of their societies.

Therefore in this paper, the goals of disarmament education and its necessity to make the educational system in Africa productive were analyzed. The destabilizing roles of small arms in the educational system and development were considered for adequate knowledge and the need for educational managers to rise to the challenges of handling the small arms menace through disarmament education in tertiary institutions in Africa.

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