

A CRITIQUE OF THE POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN WIREDU'S PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

The problem of human rights has been a controversial issue in the continent of Africa. There have been numerous cases of human rights abuses in many countries that are within the African Milieu. There were times in the history of the people in which these abuses were promoted externally through slave trade and colonialism, although there are new forms of slave trade and neocolonialism, it is not exactly the same with what obtained in the past. There are rights abuses that are induced by political leaders with their foreign cohorts. There are some that are internally induced by the political elites themselves against perceived political enemies and opponents. There are rights that are perpetuated to oppress the poor and the masses of the people. There are also others that are gender related and others are religious oriented. This paper addresses Wiredu's identification of the problem of human rights and the ills it causes in the continent of Africa and the possible ways to reduce its prevalence. Beyond Wiredu, what are the social, ethical, political and economic implications of human rights in Africa today and how can this best be curbed in the face of a renewed upsurge of human rights abuses globally and especially in Africa in our contemporary time today? What are the implications of human rights abuses on the security of a nation-state? There is always this consistent denial syndrome among many countries in Africa; but the reality on the ground is so obvious that it cannot but attract the attention of concerned academics, international human rights organizations, both local and international. The incessant conflict and uneasy state of insecurity is a cause for concern for all who are apprehensive about the impunities that go with the high rate of human rights abuses in Africa. The methodology of this paper will be critical and analytical.

Keywords: Wiredu, Philosophy, Human Rights, Security, Problems, Africa

Introduction

In contemporary social and political discourse, the concept of human rights has occupied a central stage due to the incessant conflicts, violence together with new waves of unrest in the continent of Africa. This is coupled with the level of intractable armed conflict, displacements, injuries and even frequent deaths of victims of these crimes against humanity. There is also the frequent wave of abuses of arms groups who continue with their brutal attacks and perpetuate a catalogue of abuses and crime in many countries in Africa and beyond. It is

interesting to note that the reason for these successive cycles of crimes in so many countries is the continuing failure to properly investigate and hold agents of these heinous crimes to account for gross violation and abuses including crime in the presence of international law and prohibitions. This has generated the interest of many philosophers, scholars, political activists and many international and regional human rights organizations.

A lot of books, conferences, seminars, symposia, workshops, colloquiums have been held to examine and analyze the issue of human rights and its role in democratic governance. Some authors consider respect for human rights to be a prerequisite for democracy, or the other way around. Varied issues on the nature of human rights and its effect on societal wellbeing have been raised. African philosophers and scholars are not exceptions to the above arguments. Many have argued that the preservation of human rights are entrenched in the African conception of a human person, in the norms, customs, beliefs and traditions of African societies though, on the other hand, some western philosophers have argued that there was nothing like the concept of human rights in Africa. It is true that traditional Africa ensured the rights of people are enjoyed and protected. Such rights include right to life, right to trial, the right to a child, right to land, prohibition of torture, right to equality, right of belief or religion and many others.

It is, therefore, not surprising that Wiredu, in his own unique manner considered human rights as one of the components of traditional Africa as enshrined in his traditional Ashanti societal values. Wiredu belongs to the professional school of philosophy in Africa who hold that philosophy should be logically consistent, critically speculative with rigorous reasoning. The philosophers in this orientation analyze the African tradition and reconstruct it as contemporary African Philosophy. Wiredu strongly advocates that African philosophers should explore their traditional background, to record, reconstruct, interpret and correct false interpretations in the traditions.

This paper examines the problem of human rights from an African perspective with Kwasi Wiredu's Ashanti traditional social and political background as the milieu from which he proposed his notion of human rights. The paper examines the topic in question under the following tripod approach: 1. Kwasi Wiredu's concept of human rights from a traditional African perspective, 2. Human formation in social and political development, 3. Ethical and religious prerequisites for good governance and development in Africa; thereafter a critical evaluation and conclusion.

Kwasi Wiredu's Concept of Human Rights in Africa

Wiredu observes that human rights violations may come from individuals or from governments and that the greatest number of violations comes from governments. This for him, may be as a result of the moral degeneration of some politicians or it may be due to problems in the majoritarian democracy recommended for all. Wiredu proposes the hypothesis: "A consensual form of democracy might be better able to forestall, if not all, then certainly many of the causes of violations of human rights. This rethinking of democracy, especially in connection with human rights, well befits philosophy".¹ This proposition, because of the particular existential basis of Wiredu's concerns, was illustrated using the African experience. In this regard, he gave particular consideration to denial of the political rights of citizens by governments. Many African governments, whether civilian or military, for the past thirty years have been guilty of this programme of human rights abuses. Some of these leaders have ascribed the problem to a cultural foundation. This observation by some leaders, for Wiredu, may be true indirectly or dialectically, but not completely.²

As a result, he dwelt on the all-important issue of representation, the emphasis here is on the nature of deliberation by representatives in the council and was informed by the two methodological aims: first, to elicit differences of opinion and second, to iron them out in search of consensus. To achieve these objectives, there was a free airing of opinions and there was a strong value given to solidarity which was aimed at reaching unanimity.³ But for Wiredu, unanimity can only be achieved if discussions take place in the spirit of mutual accommodation. On issues that may be controversial, there was a common effort by way of persuasion to achieve compromise and gain richer forms of consensus.⁴

Wiredu speaks of "opposition" and not "the opposition" because in his words: "in the traditional Akan system, there was no long-lasting polarity of government and opposition. Every member belonged to the basic mechanism of government".⁵ He reiterates that the system sought a consensus that transcends the majority principle for the simple reason that a mere majority was not an adequate basis for decisions and that there is no decision that cannot be settled by dialogue. The consent of all representatives, whether initially opposed or in favour, is important in the end is to make a decision. The nature of representation at the council, the use of deliberation and dialogue, the consideration of the opinions and consent of all representatives before decisions are made are all ways

¹ K. Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997, p. 172.

² Ibid. 171.

³ Ibid. 175.

⁴ Cf. Ibid., 175-176.

⁵ Ibid. 175

of upholding the peoples' right to representation. This is not only upheld by means of a representative but also "by having their consent factored into every decision, indirectly through their representatives". With this system, the minority have an equal chance to influence decisions in their own way. The rights of all are upheld because there is a lot of patience in considering opinions expressed so as to arrive at a common consensus.

This sensitivity to the human right of representation and the different processes involved, according to Wiredu, are lacking in the majoritarian democratic system. The opinion of minority representatives during voting and the position of those opposing are overridden by those of the majority. There is a deep sense of exclusion, alienation and hostility in the minds of Africans who lose political elections under a majority system because of the phenomenon of winner-takes-all. This has led many into frustrations and, because of the lack of sympathy for the system; some invite the military or foreign powers into dynamics of power, thereby drawing unnecessary attention to the inner dynamics of the internal affairs of a sovereign nation. This has been the situation in Africa. Wiredu observes that the divisiveness in multiparty system was very harmful to Africa and that it is likely to be so in the future.⁶ In fact the situation is becoming worst by the day, considering the high level of human rights abuses, orchestrated by the political elites and leaders, be them civilian or military in power.

Wiredu argued that the one-party system is not a better alternative because of its authoritarian tendencies and human-right abuses. According to Wiredu:

The authoritarianism was more harmful still. Apart from the notorious civil rights abuses that it visited upon the African populations (through the political iniquities of their own leaders) the system was, by definition, a violation of a fundamental human right,⁷ *which is the right to freedom and liberty.*

On the basis of the shortcomings of multi-party and one-party systems, Wiredu opines that a system, in which political parties are not the basis of power, will be a better option for Africa.⁸ The call for a non-party consensus system is not exclusive to Africa; a Yugoslav philosopher, Mihailo Markovic, has also worked this concept out in great detail. He argues in favour of decisional representation⁹.

⁶ Ibid., 175.

⁷ Ibid., 179. Emphasis is mine.

⁸ K. Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*, 180.

⁹ Mihailo Markovic, acknowledged by K. Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*, 180.

In the interest of human rights protection, it is the opinion of Wiredu that a non-party system with decisional representation must be devised for Africa.¹⁰

The foundation of a consensus non-party system with human rights is in conformity with the UN Universal Declaration for Human Rights and with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.¹¹ According to the Universal Declaration, Article 21, "Everyone has a right to take part in the government of his country directly or through freely chosen representatives".¹² The African Charter expresses this in almost the same language: "Every citizen shall have the right to participate freely in the government of his country either directly or indirectly through freely chosen representatives in accordance with the provisions of the law."¹³

The Universal Declaration and the African Charter both talk of freely chosen representatives, without any specific instructions on decisional representations.¹⁴ This omission is important because it is possible to have representatives whose representation has no necessary effect on decision-making. This is why the non-party consensus politics must be devised in a manner ensuring, as far as possible, the decisional representation of citizens through their representatives. Wiredu's understanding here was inspired by his appreciation of the historical origins of representation exemplified by the Akan tradition. As Wiredu puts it: "my own contemplation of the virtues of my historical tradition inspires a conception of human right of representation which is more stringent than that which is evident in either the UN declaration or the African Charter."¹⁵ Wiredu's concept of human right derived from his traditional Akan tradition may not be practicable, if certain values are not attached.

A cursory look at Wiredu's notion of rights shows that there are lots of weaknesses of his views.

¹⁰ K. Wiredu, *Cultural Universal and Particulars*, 181. Decisional representation has to do with "the right of representation, not only by way of having a representative in council, but also by having their consent factored into every decision indirectly through their representatives" (Ibid. 175).

¹¹ H. Hamalenga, C. Flinterman, and E. V. O. Dankwa, eds., *International Law of Human Rights in Africa*, Martinus Nijhoff, Boston, 1988, 5-9, quoted by K. Wiredu, Ibid. 181. Cfr. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 21, 163-166.

¹² *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, art. 21, 163-166 quoted by K. Wiredu, Ibid, 181.

¹³ H. Hamalenga, C. Flinterman, and E.V.O. Dnakwa, eds., *International Law of Human Rights in Africa*, Martinus Nijhoff, Boston, 1988, 5.

¹⁴ Representation that is not just nominal, but also substantive in the council. It implies that the representative is not just there in the council technically, but has every opportunity to air his views and his peoples' aspirations, views, intentions and goals.

¹⁵ Ibid.

The Security Implications of Human Rights abuses on a Nation

It is glaring and expected that where there are human rights abuses, there are bound to be reactions from those who are being abused, which will also generate a counter reaction from those perpetuating these abuses in their various ramifications.

Human Formation in Social and Political Development

In contemporary African societies, political education is an essential requirement for social and political development. Education has a critical role to play in enabling Africans to respond to social and political development.¹⁶ It is important that people have the chance to understand the links between their own lives and those of others, locally, nationally, regionally and globally. There must be a renewed interest in education for citizenship and fundamental human rights and duties.

Providing both young and old with the appropriate tools with which they can make sense of local, national, regional and international developments is an enormous challenge for curriculum planners, school leaders, teachers, educationists and ministries of education everywhere in Africa. In this way, education will enable them to feel that they can make a difference and participate in shaping a common future.

Education is rightly viewed as a way of preparing people young and old to understand the society in which they live, how it functions, and how to contribute to it in various ways. In other words, it has long been about preparing the young for their future roles as citizens, and making the old aware of what to do and how to do what is required of them in order to participate in social and political life. All, without exception should be trained in how to exercise democratic rights, including the right to vote and be voted for, and to do so in a decent, orderly and responsible manner.

There have been courses on civic education in most African schools. Institutions and departments of governments; which were used and are still being used as a means to educate citizens on their duties as citizens including how to vote during elections. In the past, courses on civic enlightenment barely touched on the rights of the citizens as contained in the constitution. "The school subject of civics emphasized responsibilities and respect for those in power, and was designed to

¹⁶Cf. O. Oguiejofofor, ed., *Philosophy, Democracy and Responsible Governance in Africa*, Munster, Lit, 2003, pp. 296-305.

encourage a sense of uncritical patriotism.”¹⁷ Rather, this type of education of the young should lay greater emphasis on preparing them for their responsibilities as future leaders and discerning the aspirations of their respective societies. Education for citizens should be based on the premise that all, without exception, should contribute, starting from today, to shaping their societies for a better future.

Citizenship education can help to enhance the citizens’ response, involvement and participation in the life of the society with the awareness that their individual contribution is important. It should be the responsibility of the family,¹⁸ schools, departments of political education, the church and reliable social and voluntary organizations, and NGOs. Considering the complexity and multicultural nature of contemporary African societies, this social and political education will require that it be taught in appropriate languages, so that even illiterate people in the rural areas can understand the content of the programme, whose focus on their rights. It should not just be a theory, but practical teaching aids should be used to illustrate what is being taught so that it will make a difference to communal cooperation in the understanding of individual and civil rights, in the quest for a better society.

This kind of education should involve a pedagogy based on equality before the law for all citizens of the same nation without any discrimination.¹⁹ It is crucial to avoid discrimination in the implementation of this sort of programme on the basis of religion, class, race or gender. The issue of citizenship education has been the concern of many scholars for some time now. Audrey Osler and Hugh Starkey have done extensive researches on citizenship education in Britain²⁰ and France²¹. In the United States and the Nordic States, “the key role to play in educating

¹⁷ *Immanuel Kant*, translated by Robert E. Anchor, 9:92, 151, Cfr. J. Dewey, *The Public and its Problems*, 197-199, 206-208.

¹⁸ A. Osler and H. Starkey, *Changing Citizenship: Democracy and Inclusion in Education*, Open University Press, Maiden Head, Berkshire, 2005, 1.

¹⁹ Hence there is a need for re-orientation for adults. In this regard, centers for education of citizens on social and political responsibilities should be established.

²⁰ A. Osler and H. Starkey, *Changing Citizenship: Democracy and Inclusion in Education*, Open University in France and England”, in J. Adelaine, ed. *Citizenship and Political Education Today*, (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2004, 5).

²¹ In England, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we are witnessing a change in the preparation of young citizens for life in democracy. Whereas, until recently, education for citizenship as a school subject, which is both assessed and inspected, the processes of education for democracy is becoming explicit... as the rights and duties of individuals and governments towards each other become more explicit”. A Osler and H. Starkey, *Changing Citizenship: Democracy and Inclusion in Education*, 139.

young people for citizenship and democracy has become explicit right from the introduction of mass education.”²² There is also:

The statement of values and purposes underpinning the National Curriculum for England places greater emphasis on the spiritual, moral, social, cultural and physical development, and thus the well being of the individual, than of the well being of society.²³

The holistic approach, as it is offered in the National Curriculum in England, could also be offered in contemporary African societies with their own peculiar identities to construct an enlightened political and civic culture for the overall social, political and economic well-being of the continent. The high rate of moral decadence shows that an education that does not include the imparting of the necessary human and spiritual values is deficient. This will be evident as well in the life of the people. What then, is the best way to impart the appropriate moral and spiritual values which are so desperately needed in contemporary African societies?

Ethical and Religious Prerequisites for Good Governance and Development in Africa

Personal and collective morality is essential in Africa’s project of development. For this to occur there is a need for altruism, because altruism is a moral necessity that is universal to all human societies. In the case of Africa, Wiredu believes strongly that morality has a major role to play in fighting against social and political ills. It is an essential element in realizing authentic development. As earlier noted, for Wiredu, morality is social, because the communal experience of human existence and socialization is the true source of this morality. I concur with Wiredu on the need for morality in development. Moral education would make a considerable difference in the common quest for development. I disagree, however, with his view that “African ethics might be called humanistic, as opposed to supernaturalistics”²⁴. He acknowledges that, “this contradicts the

²² “Citizenship Education in France is thus crucial to the whole notion of state schooling. The school is the Republic’s primary institution for socializing its citizen’s. Indeed, it is the school, through its curriculum, that is entrusted with the mission of defining what it means to be a citizen and ensuring that there is a common understanding of the rights and obligations of citizenship. The basis of state education in France is initiation into a common culture through a single curriculum”, A. Osler and H. Starkey, “Citizenship Education and Cultural Diversity in France and England”, in J. Demanine, ed., 5.

²³ A. Osler and H. Starkey, *Changing Citizenship: Democracy and Inclusion in Education*, 139.

²⁴ K. Wiredu, “Introduction: African Philosophy in our time”, in K. WIREDU, ed. *A Companion to African Philosophy*, 18.

widely received notion that it Africa morality logically depends upon religion”.²⁵ The necessary distinction may be too scientific to be applied here. However, it is virtually impossible to draw a clear-cut line of distinction between morality and religion in African traditional societies.

Furthermore, according to Wiredu, the humanistic nature of African morality most likely derives from the communal way of life. It must be borne in mind, though, that the life of the African traditional communities involved not just humans but also the spirit world.²⁶ It is here that religion is an integral part of the people’s life. For John Mbiti, Africans are religious in all things²⁷ and for K. A. Opoku, “it is not easy to isolate what is purely religious from other aspects of life”.²⁸ E. Bolaji Idowu’s definition and structure of African traditional religion is another example of this idea.²⁹ Contrary to Wiredu’s view, African morality is not just humanistic; it is also supernaturalistic because both the cult of the living and those of the ancestors are always a tandem with each other. The African person does not act without being conscious of the reality of the spirit world.

Even in the area of development, if there was a new project to be executed in traditional times, there was always consultation with the spirit world as to whether the project would be successful, how it should be done and where it should be located, among others. Thus, the people’s conception of what is right and wrong may be the product of their own reflection, communal experience, “moral perception or understanding or knowledge”,³⁰ but there is hardly any thoughts or action that are not inspired or influenced by a religious aspect. The area of human rights is not an exception in this regard; while the individuals in

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ By this I mean that there was the sense of the sacred and the supernatural in the life of the people. There may have been a few skeptics in the community, but they were an insignificant number.

²⁷ J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Heinemann Educational Books, London, Ibadan, Nairobi, 1969, 1969, 2-4.

²⁸ K. A. Opoku, “Aspects of Akan Worship” in C. E. Lincoln, ed., *The Black Experience in religion*, Doubleday, 1974., 286. See O. P’BITEK, *African Cultural Revolution*, Macmillan Books for Africa, Nairobi, 1973. Kwame Gyekye re-echoes this view: “It would be correct to say that religion enters all aspect of African life so fully – determining practically every aspect of life, including moral behaviour – that it can hardly be isolated. African heritage is intensely religious. The African lives in a religious universe: all actions and thoughts have religious meaning and are inspired or influenced by a religious point of view” G. Gyekye, *African Cultural Values*, Sankofa Publishing Company, Accra, 1996, 3.

²⁹ Cfr. E. B. Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, SCM Press, Nairobi, 1973, 13-202 for details.

“For the Yoruba, morality is certainly a fruit of religion. They do not make any attempt to separate the two and it is impossible for them to do so without disastrous consequences”. (Ibid., 146).

³⁰ K. Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, 6.

the community have a duty to the community, the community has the prerogative to protect the rights of individuals within the community. This is mutually symbiotic and there are sanctions that attached to the nonfulfillment of these tasks. Many things may have been exaggerated in print but this phenomenon is a reality of everyday life. My reference to the influence of traditional religion on the pre-colonial social and political life is not an approval of the way and manner African traditional religion is practiced; but because Wiredu's consensus non-party politics is based on an African background which was obviously religious in nature.

Consequently, I strongly argue for a morality that has a solid religious foundation.³¹ It may be argued that earlier, it was easy to have a common rallying point for morality, because before the arrival of Christianity and other foreign religions in Africa, there was only the African traditional religion, though polytheistic, makes appropriate provision for the individual and social rights. With the advent of other religions, however, especially Christianity and Islam, the question can be asked as to which religious moral code is going to be taught in schools and other centers of moral education. On the part of major religions, there is always the fear of conversion from one faith to another, should their adherents be taught the moral codes of other religions.

This fear and tension has made many countries like United State of America, France, and also some African countries, abolish moral education in public schools. It is in the public schools that we have a majority of the population of children and the youth. To abolish moral education on the basis of differences in religious morality is dangerous for both the future of individuals, communities in Africa and the world. Since morality is universal, there is need for atheists, agonistics and humanists, religious people of each nation and all faiths to have a broad-based discussion on morals, in order to have a common universal moral code for schools at all levels. This will help to curb the relativism which has become the order of the day in recent times.³² If morality is left at the discretion of each person and group, there will be chaos. The focus of this kind of exercise is to

³¹ A religious foundation that is free of spiritism and superstition. A foundation based on the love of God and neighbor devoid of egoism with altruism as its hallmark.

³² "I would say that today relativism predominates. It seems that whoever is not a relativist is someone who is intolerant. To think that one can understand the essential truth is already seen as something intolerant". [Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, said this while he was advising young Theologians and pointing out the role of the Universities in our time, on the issue of "Relativism: the New Face of Intolerance", delivered on the 1st of December 2002 at Murcia, Spain.

identify universal moral principles³³ such as human dignity and the “Golden Rule” “There is no society or culture in the world encourages murder, stealing, rape, lying, etc., as virtues, nor is there any society or culture which prohibits kindness, honesty, justice, altruism, hospitality to mention but a few as vices”.³⁴

Moral education will help, in no small way in curbing the problem of corruption that has become a canker worm, which has eaten deeply into the fabric of the social, political and economic life of many countries in Africa. Corruption has become the bane of African politics and development and so there is a need for a polity with a high moral probity and fear of God. In this regard, there is a need for a selfless, accountable, open, sincere representative government that is sensitive to the yearnings and aspirations of the people.

This sensitivity, adjusted to the peculiar circumstances, conditions and most especially the environment of each political system, will serve to enhance developmental programmes and strategies. The role of culture, which is the totality of the people’s way of life, cannot be understated. It means that all that is good about a particular culture should be put into consideration and preserved for its good and its progress. To preserve the cultural heritage of a people, there is a need to preserve traditional institutions that can serve as custodians of the rich heritage of the people and their customs. However, there is the need to redefine the role of traditional rulers in the constitution of various modern African states, especially in the area of their appointment, role and relevance in the polity.

Each society should be free to determine the structure of government depending on their own particular situation. After all, each of the advanced democracies has its own idiosyncrasies, and with these, they are able to organize themselves into developed nations. Consensus is important in the reality of achieving proper representative government, so that there are representatives with valid mandates and a polity that is open and transparent to all especially as it pertains to their rights.

Development that is environment-friendly also demands a government that is environment-friendly. This will help in averting the incessant conflicts that have plagued nations in Africa who possess enormous natural resources.³⁵ The

³³ “This is the case because morality is based on human nature, and since human nature is universal, morality is also universal. Indeed, the universalists are right. For the moral law is the same for all mankind, irrespective of historical, geographical or cultural differences among people”, J. OMOREGBE, *Ethics A Systematic and Historical Study*, Joja Educational Research and Publishers, Lagos 1993, 13.

³⁴ J. Omoregbe, *Ethics A Systematic and Historical Study*, 14.

³⁵ Limpopo residents were on Tuesday 22 May 2007 protesting against their relocation to make way for mining operations in South-Africa (Mail & Guardian)

exploration of these resources without a concomitant commitment to the physical and social environment leads to violence and degradation. This is the challenge of sustainable development,³⁶ as human development (including freedom from conflict and violence) continues to be linked closely to the sensible development of natural resources.

Moreover, there has been growing concern over the plight of women in recent times. The ratio of women in political positions is still very low. There are a lot of constraints from cultural, religious and gender points of view. This derives from societies which discriminate and marginalize women. Major constraints include the poor economic capacity of women, poor education and unemployment along with religious beliefs and practices which can, with some justification, be seen as going against the basic principles of human dignity.

Indications from some conflict zones are that women and their groupings constitute the main formation of moderation and peace building.³⁷ Women can moderate conflicts in their localities through advocacy for peace, appeals, persuasion and mediation. This is the case, effective because women, in general, prefer peaceful and consensus-driven methods of resolving conflicts. Proper attention should be paid to women's rights, beginning from the home. In this respect, domestic violence and all forms of injustices against women should be

www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=309813&area=/breaking_news_business/, accessed on May 5, 2020, document: on-line; the case of enormous damage that has been caused to the Niger-Delta region in Nigeria is fresh in our memories. The social and environmental costs of oil production have been extensive. They include destruction of wildlife and biodiversity, loss of fertile soil, pollution of air and drinking water, degradation of farmland and damage to aquatic ecosystems, all of which have caused serious health problems for the inhabitants of areas surrounding oil production. Pollution is caused by gas flaring, above ground pipeline leakage; oil waste dumping and oil spills. Approximately 75% of gas produced is flared annually causing considerable ecological and physical damage to other resources such as land/soil, water, Cfr. "Conflicts" in UNDP, *Niger-Delta Development Report, 2006*. 57-311; See also <http://www.american.edu/projects/mandala/TED/ice/ogonioil.htm>, document: on-line, accessed on 19 May, 2007); the discovery of oil in Sudan has also been one of the causes of the conflict in that region, such that oil exploration leads to the displacement of many people from their original settlements (Cfr. T. M. Ali and R. O. Mathews, *Durable Peace: Challenges for Peace building in Africa*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 285-300); on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo over diamond mining, document: on-line, accessed on May 5, 2020. <http://www.american.edu/TED/ice/congo.html>.

³⁶ J. A. Elliot, *An Introduction to Sustainable Development*, 3rd Edition, Routledge/Taylor and Francis London, 2006, 1-2.

³⁷ The role of women as mothers, wives, aunts played are effective role in traditional peace building and conflict resolutions in traditional African societies. They could and still do play such roles in modern African societies. (Cfr. UNESCO, *Women and Peace in Africa, Case Studies on Traditional Conflict Resolution Practices*, UNESCO, Paris 2003).

eradicated. This is important in order to build up confidence, trust and leadership capability at the level of the family and at any level of leadership in society.