

Perspective

Videos as problem-solvers: Collete Harris example

BY

JACOB ONJEWU DICKSON

FROM the early 90s when a spate of ethno-religious crisis gained ground in Nigeria especially the northern part of the country, several efforts have been made to bring about a lasting solution but to no avail.

Efforts made suddenly hit brickwalls and failed to make impact on those targeted, making as such efforts failed to make the people concerned to embrace peace, harmony and tolerance, which would then translate into economic growth and development.

Last year, however, a professor from the United Kingdom known as Collete Harris came to Nigeria to research last root causes of the crisis and proffer a lasting solution which will make such ugly incident a thing of the past.

The project which Professor Harris came up with is seeking to find out the relationship between Masculinity and violence, which aims to look at men and finding out what is it makes them prone to violence.

During the first phase, two groups from conflict hot spots within Kaduna metropolis, Alihsan Youth Development Forum Ungwan Mu'azu and Partnership for Development Youth Development Association Kabala West were brought together and split into several focus groups from which a lot was gathered as being responsible for the violent nature of the youths in those areas.

In the course of the research in the first phase of the Masculinity and violence project, Dr. Abubakar Aliyu Liman of the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria handled the focus groups discussions, from where it was discovered that those conflict hot spots came to being as a result of deprivation.

and make them have understanding among themselves, to prevent them from engaging in violence among themselves.

He explained that the second phase of the project is a participatory video training for the two groups-Alihsan Youth Development Forum and Partnership for Development Youth

problems showing bad roads, lack of amenities and others can be captured and presented to those in position to play and see the problems they are facing, for possible solutions," he stated.

He explained that since the violence in those communities comes about as a result of lack of amenities and poverty, if communities embrace

Partnership for Development Youth Development Association, Kabala West said that several things were learnt by youth from the all important project, which has empowered them to settle their differences peacefully.

"The project has given us rich knowledge on many things. The most important thing we learnt was on conflict management and how to calm conflicts," he said.

Yashim went on to say that they have also learnt the fact that conflicts are detrimental to the economic well being of the affected people.

"If there is crisis, it affects the economic development but when there is peace, it will definitely translate into development," he emphasized.

Leader of the Alihsan Youth Development Forum, Ungwan Mu'azu, Mansur Yahaya said that since the project started last year, it has succeeded in creating peace between Unwan Mu'azu and Kabala West.

"Since 1992 till when this project started, there was no peace between the two neighbouring communities. Now we are happy that the project has been successful because there is now peaceful co-existence," he said.

Yahaya challenged the government at all levels to create an enabling environment for others who wish to stage similar projects so that they can train youth on the importance of peaceful co-existence.

Speaking further, he said that the project has also had a far reaching effect on them and their lifestyles as they have embraced other religions, having tolerance as well as having a good relationship with those from other ethnic groups.

This project which happens to be the first of its kind was a brain-child of Collete Harris, a United Kingdom Professor and was headed by Professor Ogar Steve Abah of the ABU.



The findings revealed that youths in the two areas used as case study suffer from unemployment, drug addiction and alcoholism. It was also discovered that several underaged youths in the area impregnate underaged girls, which they end up marrying, but later divorce, after the birth of their babies, making the area swell with street children, who end up trying to fend for themselves.

According to Dr. Samuel Ayedime Kafewo also of the ABU who is one of the facilitators during the second phase of the project, the situation brings about uncertainty, which makes violence to be embraced by youths in those areas at the slightest provocation.

"There are under-aged boys impregnating under-aged girls, they marry, after the marriage, they end up divorcing. Also, they take all sorts of drugs and are ready to fight at the slightest provocation," he explained.

He said that at the end of the first phase, it was also discovered that such vices were thriving in those areas because the youths in these areas were more deprived than the youth in the other areas in the Petropolis like Ungwan Sanusi.

"We tried to find out and discovered that these are the most deprived areas in Kaduna. They don't have good roads and lack several basic amenities. There are only two bore-holes and sourcing water has led to several conflict."

"Due to long queues at the bore-holes, people end up fighting, searching for water and such fights usually spread to others in the community. If somebody's wife is beaten at the borehole, he comes from work and hears about it, the masculinity and male ego in him will prompt him to act, so that he is not perceived as a weak man," he explained.

Dr. Kafewo went on to explain that as a result of the findings of the first phase of the project, they were able to come up with different measures that could be used to check violence in the areas.

"Because the area is a hotbed of violence, and the valley after Kabala West before Hayin used to be the battle ground, we then knew that it could get across to the youth in the affected areas



PROFESSOR DORA AKUNYILI ... Information Minister

Development Association which is the last up phase of the project.

The participatory video training took place at Ungwan Mu'azu from August 26 to 29 and was aimed at using video as a means of communication in bringing about positive changes in the affected areas.

"The second phase of this project which is the final stage used drama by encouraging youth in the area to put in their problems into drama which were later on played back to the community in public and that brought about intervention, through questions raised by the audience.

"For instance, a teacher from a different religion chastises a child and simply because he is from a different religion, a conflict develops because the parents accuse the teacher of beating their child to discourage people from their religion from going to school."

Some of the youths also confirmed that they have been used by politicians in causing violence so all that was put into drama and the youth from both areas, invited each other and so youth from Kabala West attended the drama show of Ungwan Mua'azu and those from Ungwan Mu'azu also viewed that of Kabala West, he revealed.

He explained that this phase of the project was the final phase which involved the demonstration of videos which can be used in doing various things.

"It is like the demonstration of video has become cheap. We are looking at video as something that can be used by anybody in correcting several things."

"If you have a problem in your community, you might not have an opportunity of seeing the chairman of the local government area, councilor, governor or the senator, such video of the

the capacity of such images on video, then their problems are half way solved."

"The participatory video is a rough work which gives no room for editing and that is why we are training the youths on how to do such video, using story boards, so that they can capture the scenes in sequences, leaving them with no room for editing.

"They were trained on how to compose shots, using their story board and so the images are captured adequately," he revealed.

The youth who took part in the project could not hide their joy on the impact that it had on them, making them see things from a different viewpoint, which before now was to the contrary.

Darius A. Yashim, the group leader of

Professor Abah is the Director of the Institute of Development Research, ABU and also the Executive Director, Theatre for Development Centre, also at the ABU.

Professor Abah did not work alone in the project, as has facilitators, like Dr. Martins Ayegba, Dr. Samuel Kafewo, Miss Seun Odukoya and Dr. Abubakar Aliyu Liman all of the ABU, Zaria.

Seeing the impact that this project which is more like a pet project on the communities that were reached, it is indeed important for the government at all levels, to encourage genuine partners for peace in all the communities in Nigeria.

With the success recorded, it is also advisable that the government borrows a leaf from those who put in their time and resources into this project, so that it can be replicated in other parts of the country especially considering the fact that the participatory video experience is one that can actually transform communities for good, having a multiple effect on the society at large.

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