Chapter 77
Population Growth, Governance and Urban Social Conflicts in Africa

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ABSTRACT

Many African countries are witnessing an increase in social conflicts with negative impacts on their development. Most conflicts are urban centered, with causes rooted in social, economic and political issues and fatalities, property destruction and displacement as outcomes. This chapter asserts that issues of growth and governance are at the heart of conflict, with growth challenging the ability of most governments to deliver services. The chapter undertakes a broad examination of social conflict in the African context with focus on understanding their cause and effects and the role that population growth, urbanization and governance play in country conflict situation. The chapter examined conflict in three countries; Algeria, Kenya and Nigeria, from a macro and micro level, along with the role that population growth, urbanization and governance play. The chapter concludes with findings and recommendations on ways to mitigate conflicts.

INTRODUCTION

There appears to be a growing number of conflict incidence in many developing countries resulting in violence, death and displacement, and the stifling of development potential. African countries are witnessing a disproportionate increase in the number of these conflicts with countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Liberia, Algeria, Sudan, Kenya, Burundi, and Congo having protracted conflicts of different types and forms with roots at the intersection of social, economic and political issues. While reports indicate that these conflicts occur over the national space of countries, the most severe and destructive conflicts usually occur in urban areas, and are associated with outcomes that include fatalities, destruction of property, displacement of large population, dislocation of social and economic life, and the exertion of stress on emergency infrastructure. The consequences of the conflicts and their negative impact creates the need to examine and find ways to reduce their incidence and effect. In many

societies, conflict is usually associated with diversity and difference which results in competition and friction, that ultimately leads to violence. In the African context, difference in ethnicity and values, along with competition for resources are generally advanced as the cause of most conflicts. There is, however, a growing perception suggesting deeper causative roots in patterns of community growth and state of governance. Many countries are witnessing a rapid process of growth that is challenging the ability of governments to effectively maintain social order, and deliver social opportunities and development goods. This has contributed to generating the frictions that has resulted in conflicts and points to the need for any meaningful examination of social conflict to be situated within the context of prevailing pattern of demographic change as well as the capacity and state of governance.

Available reports on social conflicts tend to focus on presenting particular episodes or country situation, along with their causes and suggestions for mitigation. There are few reports that examine conflict across national divides, particularly with focus on understanding how political context in terms of governance and its effectiveness impacts the state of conflict in different countries. This chapter seeks to fill this niche. The main thesis of the research is that cross country comparative examination of conflict will lead to a better understanding of their causes and to search for more effective ways of mitigation. Such examination would facilitate the understanding of local causes of conflicts, as well as the broad systemic cross country/community issues that generate conflicts. The focus of the research is on urban conflict in the African continent. The chapter's aim is to undertake a broad examination of urban conflict with a view to understanding the dynamics of the cause and effect of conflicts, and the particular role that population growth and state of governance play in country situation. The paper uses a case study approach, with focus on three countries; Algeria, Kenya, and Nigeria, reflecting differences in regional, social and national characteristics of the continent. The research adopts an empirical approach with focus on data collection, analysis and inference. Data for the research comes principally from the Social Conflict in Africa Dataset (SCAD), (Salehyan et al., 2012), and its follow up volume, the Social Conflict in analysis Database (Salehyan & Hendrix, 2014). The SCAD database identifies and reports on 10 different types of conflicts over a period from 1990 to 2013. Use of the SCAD database is complemented by other qualitative secondary sources. The next section of the chapter presents a review on urban social conflicts and an outline of the method of the study. This is followed by presentation of the state of social conflict in each country, along with an examination of population growth and state of governance. The third section present a comparatively analyses of the three countries. The chapter ends with a conclusion that summarizes the findings and proffers recommendations on ways to reduce and mitigate the effects of urban social conflicts.

Nature, Causes, and Dynamics of Urban Social Conflicts

Conflict, as Omenya & Lubaale (2012, p. 4) pointed out is generally associated with situations where individuals or groups have different and sometimes contradictory interest, creating potential for clash. Conflict is translated into violence when individuals or groups forcefully impose their wills on others. WHO (2002, p. 5) defines violence as the "intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in, or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation." Conflict is general accepted as a natural attribute of societies and social systems, and action is always focused on looking for ways to prevent its degeneration into violence (Best & Rokodi, 2011, p. 5). Cities are generally recognized as fostering conflicts because of the concentration of people in them

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