

<b>Institution:</b> King's College London		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 19 Politics and International Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Re-framing Peacebuilding: Building Inclusive African Leadership for Peace		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> Jan 2009 – Dec 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Professor 'Funmi Olonisakin	Professor of Security, Leadership & Development	From 01/09/2007
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> Nov 2013 – Aug 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		

### 1. Summary of the impact

Recent civil wars across Africa have devastated the lives of many. Despite global efforts to stem the rise of violent conflict, relapse of civil wars in Africa remains a significant reality. Seeking to understand and break the cyclical nature of conflict, King's research has had multi-level transformational impact on approaches to building durable peace in Africa. Conceptually re-framing peacebuilding around the notion of 'societal conversation' and the role of inclusive leadership, King's research has shaped UN resolutions and policy, and the perspectives, policy and programming of African governments and major donors. At the same time, through the African Leadership Centre (ALC), King's research has shaped a unique training programme which builds the careers, networks and influence of a new generation of female African leaders who are forging peace and security on the continent through NGOs, positions in government, and in institutions impacting communities, education, transitional justice and policy throughout the continent.

### 2. Underpinning research

According to the World Bank, every civil war in Africa that has begun since 2003 has been the resumption of a previous civil war. To understand and overcome this cyclical nature of conflict in Africa, over the last 15 years Professor 'Funmi Olonisakin has undertaken numerous, multi-layered research projects across 12 African countries. This body of work has pioneered inclusive research and a dynamic methodological approach that ensures key, yet previously excluded voices directly inform peacebuilding efforts.

#### Building peace

King's research has shown that systems created to build peace fail when they do not speak to the lived realities of the people most affected by conflict [1]. It posits that the current dominant narrative that constructs the building of institutions and infrastructure as a prerequisite to peace is flawed, because it does not work to re-build fractured societal relationships. This leads to the exclusion of significant groups within conflict-affected communities.

In particular, King's research found that in conflict-affected communities, youth and women have typically been routinely and disproportionately excluded from policy decisions [2,3], with the result that peacebuilding programmes do not speak to their practical realities. Research showed that this leads to alternative non-state structures emerging, such as, in the case of vulnerable youth: armed groups, religious organisations, or informal economies [1,2]. These exist outside of the formal peacebuilding processes. They compete with them, making formal processes ineffective and, both knowingly and inadvertently, re-enforce the recurrent patterns of insecurity in society. As a consequence, the conflict cycle is repeated.

#### 'Societal Conversation' as a framework for understanding peacebuilding

King's research has reframed the notion of conversation as central to the processes of building peace [4]. It highlights how conversations between those in power, and between them and society more widely, give rise to and/or fail to bring about particular ensembles of institutions and policy outcomes, and it identifies the 'missing links' in conversations about peace and security. It

proposes that peacebuilding needs to be understood as being about the opening-up and shifting of these conversations in non-violent directions. This entails facilitating conversations that minimise what a society itself (not external peacebuilders) considers as violent, and building what a society itself agrees to be peace [4,3].

This research articulates a new way of building peace centred around charting conversations among contending actors and society in non-violent ways. In particular, it recommends an expanded notion of conversation that extends beyond formal dialogue to include wide-ranging forms of interaction with a variety of groups within society, many of which were previously marginalised or excluded from peacebuilding efforts. From this perspective, individuals and organisations engage in talk and respond to issues through a range of actions including music, artefacts, theatre, protests and through inaction - even silence is part of the conversation about peace and conflict [4]. King's research proposes that tracking how people are talking and talking back to powerful actors enables a more inclusive national conversation about peace and security that is central to building lasting peace.

### **The role of leadership in peacebuilding**

Building and developing leadership for peacebuilding has traditionally been narrowly defined and person-focused, either assigned to individuals and experts in positions of authority in peace operations and conflict affected societies, or understood as a by-product of institution building. In stark contrast, King's research argues for the systematic inclusion of a re-conceptualised form of process-based, inclusive leadership to be part of the core focus of peacebuilding, insisting that investment in African leadership is vital to breaking the cycle of conflict [5,6].

This innovative approach takes, as its starting point, the contextual situation and identifies key actors that are working to address the common issues identified. It then posits that these relationships are studied and the capacities of these emerging leaders are built and that they become co-producers and agents of peacebuilding conceptual innovation, policies and programming.

### **3. References to the research**

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- [1] Olonisakin, F. (2016) 'Crises of War to Peace Transitions and Civil War Recurrences' in Aall, P. and Crocker, C.A. (Eds), *Minding the Gap: African Conflict Management in a Time of Change*, Centre for International Governance and Innovation. CIGI: Canada.
- [2] Olonisakin, F. and Tofa, M. (2020) 'Appropriating African agency in international relations' in Munyi, Nyaga, E., Mwambari, D. and Ylönen, A. *Beyond History: African Agency in Development, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution*. Rowman & Littlefield
- [3] Olonisakin, F. (2020) Measuring Peace: 'Beholders' versus 'Owners' of Peace? *Ethnopolitics* DOI:10.1080/17449057.2020.1754018
- [4] Olonisakin, F., Kifle, A.A. and Muteru, A. (2021) Shifting ideas of sustainable peace towards conversation in state-building. *Conflict, Security & Development* [delayed output]. DOI:10.1080/14678802.2020.1862495
- [5] Olonisakin, F. (2018) Towards Re-conceptualising Leadership for Sustainable Peace. *Leadership & Developing Societies*, 2(1), 1-30. DOI:10.47697/lds.3435001
- [6] Olonisakin, F. (2015) Reconceptualising Leadership for Effective Peacemaking and Human Security in Africa. *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 37(1)

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### **4. Details of the impact**

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Prof. Olonisakin's cumulative body of research and engagement work has underpinned a wide variety of peacebuilding activities at the highest level. UN bodies, donors, governments, and influential fora have sought out her research, expertise and commitment to transformational leadership, making her a respected and influential agent of change. She was also ranked in the

top 10 of the UK's 'Powerlist' of the most influential people of African or African Caribbean heritage in the UK in 2019 (and included in the 2020 and 2021 editions).

Her work has resulted in extensive and substantive impact in four main areas:

### **Shaping UN resolutions on the peacebuilding agenda**

Through Prof. Olonisakin's extensive engagement work, King's research has become an integral part of UN discussions on peace and security in Africa. Consistently called upon to share research and evidence relating to women, youth, peace and security in a variety of UN settings, Prof. Olonisakin has created a clear network of influence and contributed to several UN Resolutions (the formal expressions of the opinion or will of the United Nations, providing guidance to member states and giving direction to all policy and practice related to these areas). This sustained engagement culminated in Prof. Olonisakin being appointed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon as one of seven experts on the UN Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of UN Peacebuilding Architecture (2015) and the UN Secretary General's Advisory Group of Experts for the UN Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security (2016) [A].

Most notably, Prof. Olonisakin's extensive body of research has helped to shape the UN peacebuilding policy. The UN Charter has a vision of "*sav[ing] succeeding generations from the scourge of war*" [B p.7]. However, for many UN Member States and UN entities, peacebuilding has been an afterthought. The 2015 Review of UN Peacebuilding Architecture explored the challenge of sustaining peace, assessing both the evolving global context for peacebuilding and compiling an assessment of UN peacebuilding activities. As a member of the Advisory Group, Prof. Olonisakin included her extensive research knowledge of this area in the assessment. Based on detailed consideration of her proposal to move away from elite and imported peace, the recommendations from the 2015 Review stated that: "*The UN, with its partners, should consider a new emphasis on building national leadership as an integral part of a reconciliation and nation-building agenda, working to shift the focus away from the personal ambitions of protagonists to engaging in a common vision for the country*" [B p.56]. The final report includes the concepts of 'leadership and broadening inclusion' [B p.9] developed by King's research [6] as a way to build coherence in the delivery of the 'sustaining peace' agenda, stating that leadership (at the national level) is something that must be based on a mutually held goal/ vision between elite and society rather than an inter-elite peace [B p.33]. Following this report, in 2016 a new UN Resolution (2282 [C]) was unanimously adopted by the UN Security Council, formally expressing the adjusted opinions of the UN, shifting the framing of leadership away from a focus on individuals towards understanding it as a process that must involve sectors of society.

In addition, Prof. Olonisakin presented her findings [1,2] at the Global Study to the Youth, Peace and Security, Advisory Group of Experts in Nairobi 2016, contributing towards the UN Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security. This led to youth exclusion and vulnerability challenges being introduced into the study and Prof. Olonisakin's work being referenced throughout the resulting Report [D], specifically calling attention to the violence of exclusion and the meaningful inclusion of youth. As a result, in 2018 UN Resolution 2419 [E] called on relevant actors to recognise youth marginalisation as being detrimental to building sustainable peace and to consider ways to increase the inclusive representation of youth in peacebuilding.

### **Shaping national level policy and youth programmes**

As a result of work to shape international level UN policy, Prof. Olonisakin has been in demand to help develop the thinking and policy of a number of national governments. For example, she was invited to advise the Nigerian Vice-President at the 2017 National Economic Council Security Summit. He stated that Prof. Olonisakin's research shaped discussions, clarifying root causes of conflict and possible solutions, and said "*we have taken note of your various recommendations. We assure you that they will be useful in fine-tuning the various reforms of our security architecture*" [F].

King's research on youth peace-building [2] has also had a substantial impact on Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), a Canadian Crown corporation that funds research in developing countries to advance knowledge and solutions for a more inclusive and sustainable world. As attested by the IDRC's Regional Director [G], "*King's research has had a substantial impact on IDRC, informing and shaping our strategy and programming especially in*

*relation to the importance of youth voices and perspectives in promoting inclusive development".* King's research on youth economic vulnerability and exclusion [2] also informed an IDRC consultative workshop, engaging youth researchers to set a research agenda which subsequently funded an important cohort of youth-led projects across the continent. For example, in Zimbabwe over 300 youths were supported to foster peace through capacity-building and the creation of spaces that enable youth participation in civil and policy processes, and in South Africa over 200 young people formerly involved in gangs were supported to transition to different lifestyles [G].

### **Shaping conversations and driving action on security and peacebuilding in Africa**

King's research has had substantial impact on the development of fora which open new lines of conversation and shape action across a variety of security and peacebuilding issues in Africa. For example, the Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa is a network that brings together African heads of state, former heads of state, policy practitioners, academics and other stakeholders to engage and explore African-led security solutions. From its conception, King's research has shaped the Forum's core topics, particularly relating to the impact of conflict and state fragility on security and state-building. With Prof. Olonisakin appointed to its Board in 2013, King's research into the critical role of leadership in peacebuilding [5,6] has led to the systematic integration of leadership analysis into the Forum. In particular, as a result of King's research analysing dominant trends and the shifts needed to enable peacebuilding solutions, meetings now have a standing item of 'The State of Peace and Security in Africa'. Furthermore, King's work on youth, peace and security underpins the Forum's inclusion of youth voices, where previously the next generation of African scholars and leaders were uncommon contributors to such high-level conversations. H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo, Former President of Nigeria and Chairperson of Tana Forum Board recognised this shift, stating that *"without Prof. Olonisakin's work we would not have been able to shape aspects of Tana Forum's agenda in the ways that we did. We are extremely grateful to her for helping us to bring the best voices together to discuss the best topics in the right moments"* [H].

Prof. Olonisakin is also co-chair of a partnership between Wilton Park (an executive agency of the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office) and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Convening key actors who would not ordinarily be in the same room, this forum links policy and government decision-makers with academics, practitioners, activists, civil society, youth ambassadors and emerging African leaders. Resulting in greater inter-generational collaboration and learning, the first 'Peacebuilding in Africa' conference was held in 2015, with annual meetings occurring across Africa, UK, US and Canada. The Carnegie Corporation's Peacebuilding in Africa Programme Officer highlights how King's research has provided *"foundational inputs"* to developing this forum and has *"remained central to the conference's success and its intellectual and policy framing"* [I]. For example, in 2015 King's research resulted in the conference report's recommendation that peacebuilding be redefined as an activity that encapsulates the whole cycle of conflict and that includes leadership building in ways that focus on mutually held goals between elite/ protagonists and the wider society to include marginalised constituencies, such as youth and women [J].

### **Transforming a new generation of African leaders**

The King's-based African Leadership Centre (ALC) has developed a model through which King's knowledge and understanding around leadership [5,6] are brought to life. By seeking to build and empower a critical mass of young African leaders, the centre tackles the lack of representation of young, especially female Africans in positions of influence, taking a long-term approach to invest in a new generation. Attempting to disrupt participants' worldviews, unpick hierarchy and leadership, and change perspectives, ALC courses prepare individuals to challenge accepted norms and take on positions of leadership, creating a new narrative about Africa.

The ALC provides a unique portfolio curriculum that has developed from the King's research acknowledgement that leadership should be inclusive, process-based and inter-generational [5,6]. As identified by alumni, the ALC experience is 'life-changing', and provides an education that reaches beyond the classroom to help individuals forge life-long networks and support systems that are 'invaluable' 'enriching', 'transformative' and 'redefining' [K1]. In addition, an independent evaluation by the Carnegie Corporation (a repeated funder of the ALC) noted that the ALC has *"had an excellent and unmatched track record of results"* [L]. Since August 2013 the ALC has successfully mentored 57 young African leaders from 18 African countries, particularly women,

who have gone on to successfully shape policy and practice in Africa. Taking up jobs as analysts, officials, educators and practitioners, all are forging knowledge production, policy and practice in African organisations, governments, NGOs and civil society. Examples include Ebenezer Ofosu Asiedu, who became Head of Mediation Facilitation Division, Economic Community of West African States Commission in 2016 and has proffered recommendations that have informed policy change which has resulted in several violent conflicts having been either prevented or their impacts mitigated [K2]. In addition, the Hon. Abratha P. Doe, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, Liberia, 2014-17 represented Liberia at the 2014 African Union Arms Trade Treaty. Ms Doe stated that her ALC Fellowship provided her with *“both the theoretical and practical knowledge that strategically positioned me to both win and successfully carry out my ministerial position”* [K3].

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

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- [A] Report containing UN press releases and invitation letters for Prof. Olonisakin's appointment to the two UN Review panels
- [B] 'The Challenge of Sustaining Peace' (29 June 2015) Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture.
- [C] United Nations Resolution 2282 (Sustainable Peace), 27 April 2016
- [D] United Nations Fund for Population Activities (2018) 'The Missing Peace: independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security'
- [E] United Nations Resolution 2419 (Youth and Peace), 6 June 2018
- [F] Testimonial from Vice-President of Nigeria, 29 August 2017
- [G] Testimonial from International Dispute Resolution Centre Regional Director, Nairobi, Kenya, 6 Oct 2020
- [H] Testimonial from former president of Nigeria and Chairperson of the Tana Forum Board, 12 August 2020
- [I] Testimonial from Program Officer, Peacebuilding in Africa, Carnegie Corporation of New York, 31 March 2020
- [J] Peacebuilding in Africa Conferences (2015) 'Peacebuilding in Africa: evolving Challenges, responses and new African thinking', 23 - 25 February 2015 / WP1358
- [K] Report containing details of the impact of ALC Alumni: [K1] ALC Alumni Data and Feedback [K2] Testimonial letter from Ebenezer Ofosu Asiedu, Head of Mediation Facilitation Division, ECOWAS Commission, 30 March 2020 [K3] Hon. Abratha P. Doe radio interview
- [L] Katherine Namuddu (2017) 'The African Leadership Centre: A Review Report'. Independent review commissioned by The Carnegie Foundation