

21770



ECA/OAU/PHSD/SDU/EGM/WD6



UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

ORGANIZATION OF
AFRICAN UNITY

Public Administration, Human Resources
and Social Development Division

**Ad-hoc Expert Group Meeting on the
Impact of Economic and Social Changes
on the African Family**

(Africa Hall, Addis Ababa, 13-17 December 1993)

**WARS, POLITICAL CONFLICTS AND INSTABILITY
AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE FAMILY**

(Agenda Item 6)



WARS, POLITICAL CONFLICTS AND INSTABILITY
AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE AFRICAN FAMILY

PAPER PREPARED BY THE OAU FOR PRESENTATION TO THE EXPERT GROUP
MEETING ON THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGES ON THE AFRICAN FAMILY
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, 13 - 17 DECEMBER 1993

WARS, POLITICAL CONFLICTS AND INSTABILITY
AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE AFRICAN FAMILY

Introduction and Background to the Paper

It will be recalled that this Expert Group Meeting on the Impact of Economic and Social Changes on the African Family is being convened in pursuance to the U.N. General Assembly Resolutions 44/82 of 8 December 1989 proclaiming 1994 as the International Year of the Family. It is also part of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Resolution CM/Res. 1466 (LVIII) of June 1993 and UN ECA Resolution 713 (XXVI) of May 1991 and 9 (XIV) of May 1993 adopted by the OAU Council of Ministers and UN ECA Conference of Ministers, respectively urging all concerned to prepare and observe the International Year of the Family and to develop long term strategies in support of African families.

2. The family is referred to as the basic unit of society and is appreciated for the important socio-economic functions that it performs. In spite of the many changes in society that have altered its role and functions, it continues to provide the natural framework of emotional, financial and material support essential to the growth of and development of its members, particularly infants and children, and for the care of other dependents, including the elderly, disabled and infirm. The family, thus, remains a vital means not only of preserving and transmitting socio-

cultural values but also educates, trains, motivates and supports its individual members, thereby investing in their future growth and acting as vital resources economically and socially for development^{_1/}

3. However, there are a number of serious obstacles that hinder the fulfilment of the expected role of the family in overall social and economic development and having negative impact on it.

4. In Africa, lack of peace and stability due to the endemic wars, political conflicts and instability have a serious impact on the family. Peace includes not only the absence of wars, violence and hostilities at the national and international levels but also the enjoyment of economics and social justice, equality and the freedoms within the society of which the African family is the smallest unit.

5. In spite of the above, it is now evident that for the past two decades peace in its true sense has continued to elude many countries in the Continent and the people who have borne the brunt for the absence of peace are members of the family in particular women, children and the youth. This political instability which is endemic in Africa is on the upsurge. Civil strife has been a main obstacle to

^{_1/} United Nations Programme for International Year
of the Family Page 11.

progress in such places as Angola, Chad, Somalia, Liberia, the Sudan and Mozambique. More recently armed struggle among ethnic groups has affected Djibouti, Mali, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Zaire and Burundi.

6. Thus, the scourge of armed conflict is the most urgent problem in Africa today. While increased cooperation between African States has resulted in the reduction of interstate tensions, conflicts within states along ethnic, religious, regional, economic and even along the clan lines have risen and multiplied, threatening not only social cohesion but the survival of members of families of many societies. In the period 1960 to 1993 there has been no less than 20 full-fledged wars in Africa, while currently there are 12 on-going civil conflicts on the Continent. As a result of these perpetual wars and conflicts, the number of refugees in Africa total some 6 million, while the internally displaced persons number 18.25 million. This is a measure of human destruction that stalks the African continent today._2/

7. The 1988-1989 Strategic Survey of the International Institute of Strategic Studies also observed that most states in African Continent suffered major economic and financial difficulties in 1988 which were compounded by

_2/ Introduction to the Chairman's Report of the Joint
OAU/International Peace Academy (IPA) Consultation,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 19 to 20 May 1993.

political turmoil or ethnic disputes in a number of others. A few others had to contend with agricultural and environmental crises while some had to contend with all these problems plus civil wars. Only two widely separated areas of the continent, the Maghreb in the far north and for southern Africa, were there improved prospects for peace._3/

Objective of the Paper

8. The objective of this paper is to outline the major issues and problems facing African families in times of wars, political conflicts and instability and the impact of such situation on family. The paper will also outline the role of the OAU and concrete activities of the Organization for conflict prevention, management and resolution.

Conflicts and the Basic Human Needs

9. The effects of conflicts in Africa on progress towards meeting basic human needs has been predictably devastating. The famines and deprivations endured in recent years in such countries as Chad, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique, Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda have all been either caused or exacerbated by conflicts. Crops, roads, markets, schools and clinics have been destroyed; trade and

_3/ IISS: Strategic Survey 1988 - 1989 P. 183

commerce, and the very means of earning a living, have been distrupted; civil liberties have been crushed along with hopes of million of people for a minimally decent life._4/

10. The immediate impact of conflicts is destruction of agricultural production. People who are forced to migrate as refugees or desplaced from their land are denied access to their farms. In some cases there is total destruction of crops and livestock. In Angola for example, an estimated 9 million land mines deny access to land for farming.

Conflicts and Health

11. During conflicts health services are disrupted. For example according to Prospects for Africa Report by 1986 25% of primary health network was destroyed in Mozambique and an estimated 2 million people had lost access to health care due to closure of facilities or displacement. Between 1981 and 1986 320,000 children died. Most of these deaths were due to lack of medical services. Level of vaccination fell, crowded conditions in refugee camps raised levels of infectious diseases. As shown by the table below there is a sharp contrast between the countries with conflict and those without in the percentage of child immunization._5/

_4/ The State of Children, 1993 by UNICEF

_5/ The State of World Children 1993 by UNICEF

Comparison of Immunization among four African
Countries with or without Internal Conflicts
% fully immunized 1990-91

	DPT	Polio	Measles
*Angola	27	26	40
*Somalia	18	18	30
Zambia	79	78	76
Tanzania	89	78	76

*Affected by conflict.

12. Furthermore, conflicts result in the destruction of the infrastructure and total disrruption of school activities. As a result, members of families in particular the children are denied basic education. This means that when they grow up they will not be in a position to gain employment both for their livelihood and support for their families. In other words, conflicts contribute to poor family education and poverty.

Socio Economic Disintegration

13. The conflicts break down populations, cultures, families, socio-political structures and economic systems. By breaking clan ties that bind family and society together,

conflicts foster individualism that intensifies alienations. Conflicts destroy relationships, while former ties of kinship and friendship are rendered inoperative by the self centred instinct that conflict generates. People do not risk their lives for others no matter how close their ties were in the normal times. The tenor of social life, cultural expectation, practices and behavioral norms disintegrate. Most importantly, the living focus all their remaining energy on the faint hope that they will survive. Conflict also destroys hope and with it faith and love.

14. In conflict situations there are forced migrations of able bodied male household members including older boys. This leaves a strikingly high proportion of women, children and the old in refugee camps which normally create women headed households. This in turn puts enormous strain on women as they become the sole supporters of the family.

15. The most traumatic effects of conflict is the loss of life of any member of the family. Survivors are scarred psychologically by the experience of watching their loved one(s) die. Hundreds of thousands of families have lost their relatives due to wars. The personal emotional suffering involved in the loss of children is incalculable.

16. For example in 1986 alone 140,000 children were estimated to have died in Angola and Mozambique.

For many children, the physical effects of conflicts are compounded by the loss of one or both parents and sometimes all relatives. It is estimated that 200,000 children were orphaned in Mozambique in 1986._6/ This deprivation of parental love and guidance increases, the likelihood of creating a large poorly functioning social group. There are hundreds and sometimes thousands of such children ekeing out an existence and growing up alone in the streets in almost every town in war ravaged areas. These children have low expectation of mainstream society and will reject its values, having learned from bitter experience that there is no higher value than personal survival. They will almost certainly develop into anti social elements contributing to the escalating rate of crime, prostitution, drug abuse, among others.

OAU'S EARLY RESPONSE TO THE ESCALATION OF
CONFLICTS IN AFRICA

17. Currently, there is indeed no subject of more topical and serious concern to Africa than the multiplication of conflicts on the African Continent, especially those of intra-state character which continue to have deleterious effects on African countries. A direct result of the deep concern about this type of conflict is

_6/ ECA/OAU Report on the Critical Social Situation
in Africa for 5th Conference of African Ministers
of Social Affairs.

the prevalent thinking among Africans themselves that concrete action should be taken promptly and effectively about the destabilizing and unwelcome phenomenon of conflicts.

18.. It is pertinent to recall that three years ago on 11 July, 1990, the Twenty-Sixth Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU adopted a historic and landmark Declaration on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World. In that Declaration, the African Leaders renewed their "determination to work together towards the peaceful and speedy resolution of all the conflicts on our Continent". In adopting the Declaration, the African Leaders ushered in the evolution of a new way of thinking to the effect that necessary action of whatever kind can and should be taken not only with regard to interstate conflicts, but also with regard to intra-state conflicts which, in fact, are currently on the upsurge.

19. Since then, and in line with the seriousness with which Africa has been seized with the issue(s) and problems of conflicts, there has been much focus on the Continent in general, and in the OAU in particular, as to what can and should be done to anticipate, prevent, avert, manage and resolve conflicts. This concern emanates, on the one hand, from the immensity and extremity of human misery that armed

conflict engenders. On the other hand, the concern stems from the impact of such armed conflict on the socio-economic development of the countries affected and the Continent as a whole. Indeed, it is pertinent to recall what the African Heads of State and Government stated in the Declaration of 1990: "The resolution of conflicts will be conducive to the creation of peace and stability on the Continent.... It is only through the creation of stable conditions that Africa can fully harness its human and material resources and direct them to development."

THE OAU AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA IN THE 1990S

AND BEYOND

20. It should be recalled that in the Charter, the Founding Fathers were determined to rekindle the aspirations of African people for brotherhood and solidarity, in a larger unity transcending linguistic, ideological, ethnic and national differences.

21. It was with this overriding conviction, and also guided by the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, that African countries began on the arduous task of meeting the triple challenge of decolonization, economic development and maintenance of peace and security. In their 29th Summit, Heads of State and Government noted with concern that "no single internal factor has contributed more to the present

socio-economic problems on the continent than the scourge of conflicts within and between our countries. They have brought about death and human suffering engendered hate and divided nations and families. Conflicts have forced millions of our people into a drifting life as refugees and internally displaced persons depriving them of the means of livelihood, human dignity and hope. Conflicts have gobbled up scarce resources, and undermined the ability of our countries to address the many compelling needs of our people." _7/

22. In addition to the Declaration of the Heads of State and Government on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World, the African Leaders recommitted themselves to seeking a peaceful solution of the conflicts raging in the continent and to promoting an environment of peace, security and stability in conformity with the principles enshrined in the OAU Charter. As a follow up to the decision of the Dakar Summit of July, 1992, the 27th Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in Cairo, Egypt from 28 to 30 June, 1993 adopted a Declaration on the Establishment within the OAU of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

_7/ Paragraph 9 of the Declaration of the Twenty Ninth Assembly of Heads of State and Government, Document: AHG/DECL.3 (XXIV) Rev.1

23. The Mechanism is built around a Central Organ with the Secretary-General and the Secretariat as its operational arm. The Central Organ of the Mechanism is composed of the States members of the Bureau of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government elected annually, bearing in mind the principles of equitable regional representation and rotation. In order to ensure continuity, the States of the outgoing Chairman and (where known) the incoming Chairman also become members of the Central Organ. In between Ordinary Sessions of the Assembly, it will assume overall direction and co-ordinate the activities of the Mechanism.

24. The Central Organ functions at the level of Heads of State as well as that of Ministers and Ambassadors accredited to the OAU or duly authorized representatives. It may, where necessary, seek the participation of other OAU Member States in its deliberations particularly the neighbouring countries. It may also seek, from within the continent, such military, legal and other forms of expertise as it may require in the performance of its functions.

25. A Special Fund governed by the relevant OAU Financial Rules and Regulations, also known as the "OAU Peace Fund" was established for the purpose of providing financial resources to support exclusively the OAU operational activities relating to conflict management and resolution.

26. It is to be financed by appropriations from the regular budget of the OAU, voluntary contributions from Member States as well as from other sources within Africa. The Secretary General may, with the consent of the Central Organ, and in conformity with the principles and objectives of the OAU Charter, also accept voluntary contributions from sources outside Africa. Disbursement from the Special Fund shall be subject to the approval of the Central Organ.

27. It is pertinent to recall that in order to deal effectively and systematically with conflicts, a Conflict Management Division was established in the OAU Secretariat in March 1992, in the wake of the Council of Ministers' approval in February, in order to build up in the Secretariat, crucially needed expertise.

A GLOBAL COMPACT FOR PEACE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

228. According to the Human Development Report 1992, the 1990s could be the decade of the peace dividend probably in the industrial world, and possible in the Third World. The opportunity must be fully exploited, not just to establish the world on a more peaceful path, but also to pave the way to new levels of human development. The end of the Cold War has opened the possibility for new structures of peace and security based not just on reduced military expenditure but

also on building economic and ecological security for the whole of humanity. Global military spending is already falling. Industrial countries reduced their total military spending from a peak of \$838 billion in 1987 to \$762 billion in 1990. Developing countries have achieved a similar reduction from a peak of \$155 billion in 1984 to \$123 billion in 1990. After decades of military buildup, a refreshing new trend has emerged._8/

29. This means there is a large immediate peace dividend. Indeed, considering what might have been spent in 1990 if the previous increasing trend had continued, the possible dividend is large - around \$200 billion for the industrial countries and \$125 billion for the developing countries. Unfortunately, the only regions where military spending has not yet started to decline also happen to be the poorest - south Asia and Africa south of Sahara._9/

30. According to the latest Human Development Report (1993), now that the cold war is over, the challenge is to rebuild societies around people's genuine needs. The world has already made a positive start. For the first time since the Second World War, global military expenditures are

_8/ Human Development Report 1992, Published by the UNDP in New York, P. 85.

_9/ Ibid.

beginning to decline. Between 1987 and 1990, they fell cumulatively by some US\$240 billion. Most of this reduction has been by the USA and the former USSR. Although the developing countries also cut expenditure, with a cumulative reduction of US\$11 billion, chiefly in the Arab States and Asia, the poorest nations in Africa South of Sahara have yet to reduce military spending since for many of them the ratio of military to social spending remains far too high._10/

CONCLUSION

31. The family as the basic unit of society remains a vital means not only for preserving and transmitting socio-cultural values but it also educates, trains, motivates and supports its individual members thereby investing in their future growth and acting as vital resources economically and socially for development.

32. However, the problem of wars, conflicts and instability in Africa have continued to cause negative impacts on the family rendering its members to suffer

_10/ Human Development Report 1993,

Published by the UNDP in New York, P.9.

particularly as refugees, displaced persons, poor, hungry, sick, unemployed and uneducated among other things.

33. The peace dividend opens a window of opportunity for both rich and poor nations. For the nations of Africa now living in abject poverty, it is a chance for the rich nations to direct more resources to the Africa's lengthening agenda.

34. The decision by the Heads of State and Government of the OAU to establish a mechanism to deal with the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, has given an impetus to the serious commitment of the Member States to the fact that Africa should be in the fore front in solving its own problems individually and collectively in pursuit of self-reliance and development of its peoples.

35. Further, the official launching last month of the Peace Keeping Fund is a recognition by Africa that while warmly welcoming the sympathy, understanding and assistance of others, here lies the primary responsibility to act before all others to tackle the ever-growing phenomenon of conflicts.

36. It should be the duty of the OAU and its partners the UN ECA and other interested organizations to seek means for assisting the African countries to bring about an

awareness at all levels, of the need to create or strengthen mechanisms aimed at preventing, managing and resolving conflicts such may include among others:

- Bring about the awareness on the obligation of families to uphold the socio-cultural values through reviving the traditional institutions for prevention, management and resolving of the conflict at both family and community levels.
- encourage family awareness through education on the peaceful democratization process.

37. The forthcoming observance of the International Year of the Family should enable the African Family concerns to feature on the agenda of all forums related to the conflict, prevention and resolution in view of its serious negative impact on the members of this basic unit of society.