

African Peacemaking Database

Theory & Design
A Primer for Our Partners



Pan-African
Dialogue Institute

Sharing African Wisdom with the World



UNITED RELIGIONS
INITIATIVE

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African Peacemaking Database
© October 2022

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Background

On Existing Databases

This global initiative developed from a simple realization: there is no database focused on individual or community peacemaking.

The academic focus on peace research, analysis, and ranking has gained considerable clout in the discipline of peace and conflict studies over the last ten years. These data-driven processes have focused on the institutionalization of peace-building and reached its height in the Global Peace Index, an impressive annual report published by the Institute for Economics and Peace, based in Sydney, Australia. Other examples include the Positive Peace Index, Fragile States Index, Human Development Index, and the World Happiness Report, to name a few.

These databases, without exception, focus on peace measuring, and not peace making or creating. It's an empirical approach to capturing peacefulness on the institutional and government levels of each country (there is even a Positive Peace Index, which has been in operation since 2009 by IEP. It is an evolution in the process, using an interdependent Systems Thinking and quantitatively derived Pillars of Peace to evaluate its database. Still, half of its indicators measure negative peace, and all of its data sources are based in Europe or the US). With ways of knowing formed in Western countries, these indices measure peace within western themes of analytics, reductionism, objectivity, positivism, scientific systems, observable phenomenon and linear thought. Actually, peacefulness is the wrong word, as the vast majority of these indicators focus on negative peace, that is, the absence of overt violence, and not positive peace, which, in an indigenous African perspective, is the presence of vibrant, healthy relationships. This aligns with the original definition of positive peace created by Johan Galtung (1964), later modified due to criticism from academics to refer to structural violence, as “the integration of human society.” So, these existing indexes could more accurately be called conflict databases.



Existing peace databases focuses on measurement and institutionalization



The grassroots application of peace on a local level, however, is opaque and not participatory



A database that's designed to inspire individual and community practice, and transform conflict through peacemaking, is an important complement



Peace is a local experience and requires a local approach. Universal, western metrics are inadequate in many regions of the world

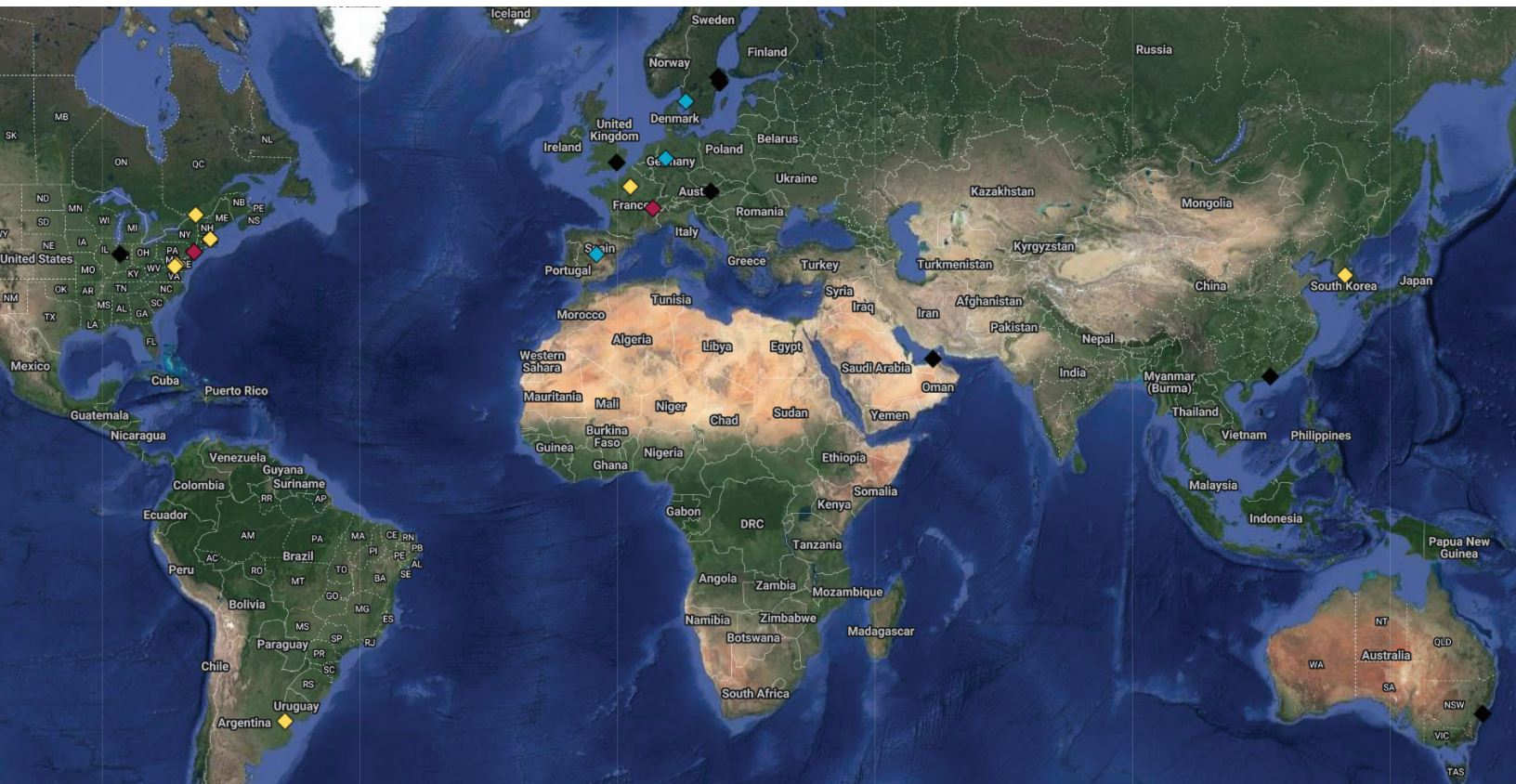


The academic research of peace is primarily the research of conflict. Where's the love?



African people are hungry to share peace cultures and rituals to the rest of the world, where individualism could learn from community healing

These peace, equality, and development databases operate by sourcing quantitative data from third party agencies, statistically weighing the indicators, giving a score to each country, and ranking them from highest to lowest. Figure A indicates the presence of data source headquarters for separate database archives. Africa is the only continent to be absent on the map. Peace, equality, and development are defined by a select slice of the world. Many data sources operate regional or subsidiary offices in African countries; however, these are often staffed by academic experts who did not grow up in the culture under investigation.



- ◆ Positive Peace Index sources
- ◆ Global Peace Index sources
- ◆ Gender Inequality Index / Gender Development Index sources
- ◆ Human Development Index sources

Figure A

[Redundant locations have been omitted. Multiple data sources house Geneva, New York, and DC as their headquarters]

Database Metric Headquarters

Both the Bertelsmann Transformation Index and Reporters Without Borders offer a promise of more locally relevant methods of gathering information. Although based in Germany and France, respectively, they focus more on experts who both live and are born in the countries of research. Still, there is no peace research agency headquartered in Africa.

Additionally, the sources focus on government and institutional metrics. Local people are missing from the worldview. By being institutionally and top-down oriented, the application of peace to the community and the individual is non-participatory. And yet, these statistical initiatives have tremendous power, as they inform UN, government policy, and public perception. There is currently no room in these databases for African strengths of community power, traditional forms of reconciliation, and healing rituals. It is time to move on from the “critical but sufficient work of gathering facts” and begin mainstreaming the implementation of traditional modalities of peacemaking into African cultures (Afigbo 21).



Theory

Research Has Power

Definitions of Peace

Rumi
Being free from the world of sorrow and the world of self.
Born 1207 Persia

Black Elk
Oneness with the universe and all its powers, and the realization at the center of the universe dwells the Great Spirit, and that its center is really everywhere, it is within each of us.
1883 Wyoming

Mahatma Gandhi
Truth & non-violence, via satyagraha ("holding firmly to truth").
1869 India

Mother Teresa
Works of love.
1910 Yugoslavia

Rosa Parks
Equality and love.
1913 Alabama

To study peace is to study conflict. But the way forward to peace is not through conflict, it is through restorative peace-making efforts. All too often, contemporary articles of peace studies focus on war, conflict, and negative peace. Jorgen Johansen (2003), former peace studies coordinator at the University of Tromsø, called this our “degeneration into violence research”. In a comprehensive study of the Journal of Peace Research (JPR), only a single article in the first 15 volumes focused on peaceful societies, and that in the context of the absence of violence (Wiberg 1981). Furthermore, a word cloud of JPR article titles from 1964-2012 illustrated that 70% of all titles focused on war or negative peace. Those with a positive peace element, such as human rights and interstate cooperation, were generally discussed in line with armed conflict and rights violations. Consequently, “articles on positive peace in the original sense now contribute to research on how to overcome negative peace.” Additionally, the citation rate of war, conflict and violence-themed articles came at a three-fold higher clip than articles with peace in the title. In many regards, war sells better than peace.

These methodologies reflect a deficit-focused mode of enquiry. Africa, via an economic lens, is home to immense poverty, an acceleration of civil warfare, and food insecurity. It frequently appears weak and vulnerable within these frameworks. “Most of the approaches are problem-focused, aiming at discovering communities’ resource constraints, deficiencies, and unmet needs...and may serve...to allow scientific vocabularies of deficit to establish the very conditions they seek to eliminate” (Mertens 2009).

Ironically, this methodology can establish as static the conditions we are yearning to change. Research is built upon the back of existing scholarship. Nearly all ‘researchers’ have higher education credentials, often up to the level of Ph.D. One major limitation of this elite culture is that the concepts, theories, and structures upon which existing scholarship rests was created by western colonizers through the form of historians,

Óscar Romero
The generous, tranquil contribution of all,
to the good of all.
1917 El Salvador

Nelson Mandela
The creation of an environment where all can
flourish, regardless of race, colour, creed,
religion, gender, class, caste, or any other
social markers of difference.
1918 South Africa

Martin Luther King Jr
Absolute commitment to the way of love and the
power of the kingdom of God.
1929 Georgia

Johan Galtung
The absence of structural violence.
1930 Norway

Desmond Tutu
Righteousness, justice, wholesomeness, fullness
of life, participation in decision making,
goodness, laughter, joy, compassion, sharing,
and reconciliation. In short, Ubuntu.
1931 South Africa

Wangari Maathai
The tree: it is a living symbol of peace and hope.
A tree has roots in the soil yet reaches to the sky.
It tells us that in order to aspire we need to be
grounded.
1940 Kenya

United Nations
Deep rooted commitment to the principles of
liberty, justice, equality and solidarity among all.
1945 New York

anthropologists, archeologists, philosophers, missionaries, and so forth, who have looked upon the researched as symbols of object with minimal effort to listen to their voices and learn from their personal experiences (Chilisa 59). To quote Māori decolonization professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith, “indigenous peoples have in many ways been oppressed by theories.” Knowledge has become legitimized by privileged researchers who do not represent all the peoples of the world. The ‘captive mind’ develops when local people do not own a description of the self. “The majority of the researched – 2/3 of the world population – are left out of the debate and do not therefore participate in legitimizing the very knowledge they are supposed to have produced.” To open up research to new ways of understanding reality, i.e.. ontological and epistemic freedom, we must open new windows that let in the light of alternative expressions of information, fundamental truths, and shared experiences of peace. This means moving beyond the written, academic article to include “language, cultural artifacts, legends, stories, practices, songs, rituals, poems, dances...” as acceptable forms of data (Chilisa 60). It also means moving beyond the academia to include grassroots leaders and local peacemakers as critical, qualified reflectors of peace and conflict studies.

The quantity of violence shaping modern culture is overwhelming, but the scope of the violence and its global reach is a recent phenomenon compared to longstanding indigenous mechanisms of dialogue, conflict resolution, community relations, and affirming social structures. This comparative view is often neglected, as we mistake the lack of economic development in communities with a void of internal peace. Richard Marcantonio (2017) of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at Notre Dame notes that the academic community needs to make the evolution from positive peace to quality peace. This means measurements are expanded to “include variables specified to measure human dignity and quality of life...drawn directly from those that are living and experiencing them.” This makes room for individual attitudes and the direct experience of those living about whom researchers invoke their analysis (p. 97).

Here we notice the second form of power developed by research. It creates external identities that become owned by local people, due to cultural perspectives framed by foreign actors. This information becomes passed down through the media, the government, institutions, and schools into the minds of the citizens.

Leymah Gbowee

The presence of conditions that dignify us all and build communities right where we find ourselves.
1972 Liberia

Malala Yousafzai

Educating our minds, our hearts, and our souls.
1997 Pakistan

African Union

The absence of war and civil conflict and the prevalence of security, especially in an environment that is conducive for sustained social and political stability.
2001 South Africa

In this paradigm, we neglect the generations of knowledge on transforming conflict and promoting community solidarity found throughout African identities. Moving from an economic to a social perspective, Africa has tremendous community technology available to share with the world on applying peacemaking to our daily lives.

Malidoma Patrice Somé (2009), who lived as both a traditional healer in Burkina Faso and as an academic with PhDs from Brandeis and Sorbonne University, summed up this wisdom well. “At this critical time in history, the earth’s people are awakening to a deep need for global healing. African wisdom, so long held secret, is being called on to provide tools to enable us to move into a more peaceful and empowered way of being, both within ourselves, and within our communities.” In Somé’s West African culture of the Daguro, this wisdom centers around the realms of healing, nature, ritual, and community. By using a strength-based approach to understanding harmony in the great plurality of African cultures, we can harvest this longstanding peace architecture.

The Researched as Researchers

The foundation of the indigenous research paradigm is to identify local phenomena, made context-sensitive with locally relevant structures, and is informed by a system of knowledge that is built on relationships. Indigenous knowledge is local knowledge, and is woven into the fabric of healing, community relationships, the living and the nonliving, and rituals. Much of this methodology has been meticulously developed by Dr. Chilisa Bagele PhD, professor of the University of Botswana, who has served as indigenous evaluation advisor for UNDP, UNESCO, and the World Bank. This locally driven, relationship-centric approach drives the entire cycle of research: theory, methods, data collection, analysis, and dissemination. “Existence-in-relation and being-for-self-and-others sum up the African conception of life and reality” (Onyewumi, 1988).

Dr. Chilisa encourages researchers to move through the assumed paradigms until finding a relational approach that speaks to their audience. This includes the positivist paradigm’s assumptions of objectivity, the interpretive paradigm’s methods of describing human nature, and the transformative

paradigm's well-intentioned technique of transitioning society through research (p. 25). Beyond a position of neutrality, we find that the role of the researcher reaches into the personal domain of relationships.

Peace is intensely personal, and this approach, where communities, as providers of knowledge, become co-collaborators, represents "respectful representation" in the journey to receive knowledge true to the community (p. 174).

A bottom-up framework enables a network where local knowledge becomes a steppingstone for both national policy and AU Continental Early Warning System (CEWS). Place-based strategies that are understood and shaped by local populaces have a greater impact when they are cycled up to governments and institutions, then back down to the people. Ownership is cemented, as programs are not created by dissociated actors, and the policies have an aspect of long-term community solidarity beyond short-term negative peace management.

Peace is a Local Experience

With this understanding, in concert with dozens of African scholars, traditional leaders, and grassroots peacemakers, we introduce the African Peacemaking Database (APD). It is an approach to cataloging and nourishing the myriad, existing personal and communal practices of peace throughout the continent for presentation to the wider public. In this booklet, a **peace practice** is defined as any exercise, philosophy, or tool that promotes harmony, safety, or strong relationships in an individual or collective. The APD intends to develop relationships with rural and urban centers during individual country Peace Mapping tours, and harvest the great surplus of peace practices, activities, and peacemaking rituals in each country. Through this process, we acknowledge and nourish individual communities' gifts, inspire a new generation of peacebuilders, complement the institutional work of existing databases, and introduce new ways of knowing to global consciousness.

Reimagining the Liberal Peace Paradigm

Peace Proverbs

The African Peacemaking Database is like a Palm tree, it grows its roots deep down first below the stem so as to withstand any scale of wind.

- Ms. Janet Kazimu

Chewa Women Cultural Elder, Malawi

Kafukufuku wa mtendele akuchitikayu akufanana ndi Mtengo wa mgwalangwa umene umazamitsa mizu pansi Kaye usanakulitse thunthu lake ndicholinga cholimbana ndi mphepo ya mphanvu (Chichewa)

The Database offers like a deep cool well water, When you face, you see yourself! When you drink, you don't comfort your mind but your soul, and its breeze comforts big animals and frogs together.

- Group Village Headman Mwanyama

Monkey Bay, Malawi

Kafukufuku jikulandana ni chisime chesokoche cha mesi gakusisima, kugalora ukusaliona jika. Kumwa mesi gakwe nimba umasire njota pe nambo soni kusangalasa msimu soni kampepo kakwe kakusangalasa nyama sya misingu josope mpera Yiula ni Yine (Yao)

The articles underpinning this initiative have been characterized by themes of relational methodologies, indigenous knowledge, reflections on existing international peace databases, and land-based processes to combine these ideologies into a coherent framework. This database utilizes the conceptual shift that peaceful relationships is the norm, and it can be found to exist in pockets of both conflict and harmony. The output of the liberal peace paradigm, which requires normative, external, institutional responses to outbursts of violence, has consistently achieved unsatisfactory outcomes (Mahmoud 2). Theorizing peace as the opposite of conflict is a misconception, and there exists evidence to the contrary. A combination of local, regional, national, and international actors is necessary to work with the complex plurality of peace and transform division into a framework with ownership on all sides. The APD utilizes a strength-based, appreciative inquiry approach that understands the surplus of community capital available in areas that have also suffered from a lack of development. The value lies in listening and sharing.

The recent paradigm of intertwining peace and economics, while an important contribution, has consequently equated underdeveloped cultures with a lack of peacefulness. “Implicit in the notion of development is the notion of progress...as societies develop they become less primitive, more civilized, more rational, and their social structures become more complex and bureaucratic” (Smith 34). We forget that this perspective comes from a colonized view, and is an assumption taken as fact. The idea of reclaiming is an important part of research with historically marginalized groups. Is it possible that development looks differently to others than it looks to us, and that peace on a local level can be found to thrive in countries that historically score low on internationally recognized indices? Looking from the other direction, is it possible that, in a multidimensional understanding of peace, certain realms are still painfully absent from countries that consistently score at the top of international peace indices? (Finland is a great example: a nation at the top of the Global Peace and Human Development Index, but also the second highest country in the Global North in suicides/year). One of the aims of postcolonial research theory, posited by Catriona MacLeod and Sunil Bhatia (2008), is to have a liberatory transformative intent. In this context, we understand that the researcher has an obligation to maintain relationships with the community researched.

Based on the hadith "You are all responsible, and you will be asked for that responsibility", the database will help us as Somaliland/Somalia to easily discover other African traditional peacemaking systems. And the rest of the world can learn from Somaliland's way of making peace, which is based on a consultation led by traditional elders and started under a tree by looking and keeping in mind the Somali proverb that says,
 "In war sons are killed, but never borne."
 - Senator Mohamed Wali Warsome
 House of Elders (Golaha Guurtida), Somaliland

Iyadoo lagu Salaynayo xadiiska Nabi Mohamed SCW "Dhammaantiin waxaad tihiin mas'uul, waana laydin weydiin doonaa mas'uuliyaddaas", kaydku wuxuu naga caawinayaa Somaliland/Soomaaliya ahaan inaan si fudud u ogaanno ama u barano hababka kale ee nabad-dejinta ee Afrika. Caalamka intiisa kalena waxa ay wax ka baran karaan habka ay Somaliland nabada u samaysatay ee ku dhisan wada tashi ay madax dhaqameedku wadaan oo geed hoostii laga bilaabay iyaga oo eegaya oo maanka ku haya maahmaahda Soomaaliyeed ee tidhaahda "Dagaal wiil baa ku dhinta ee wiil kuma dhasho." (Somali)

The African database can be one of the best reliable data sources for state governments, researchers and partners who commit to contributing to the process of peacemaking in Africa. This is an inspiring invention, and I would like to congratulate Seth Jamie Roberts-Kinzie and friends for their tireless work for Africa.
 - Teshome Mengesha Marra
 PhD African Studies, Ethiopia

የአፍሪካ የሰላም ግንባታ የመረጃ ቋንቋ በአፍሪካ ሰላም በማስፈን ሂደት ላይ የበኩላቸውን አስተዋጽኦ ለሚያደርጉ ሃገራዎቻችን ለተመራማሪዎች እና አጋሮች አንዱ ምርጫ የመረጃ ምንጭ ሊሆን ይችላል። ይህ አገልግሎት ፈጠራ ነው! እናም ሴዝ ጄሚ ሮበርትስ-ኪንዥ ለአፍሪካ አህጉር ደከመች ሰላቸኝ ሳይል እያደረገ ላለው ሥራ ላመሰግንህ እፈልጋለሁ! እንኳን ደስ አለህ ለማለትም እውዳለሁ። (Amharic)

Furthermore, we see research necessarily leads to action within the social gaps discovered, and as provocateur, we begin the role of transformative healer. One reason this develops is due to the understanding of knowledge in local, African settings. In the analytic context, knowledge is information that can be categorized and typed into its appropriate stratum, for the purpose of grasping a particular topic. In the indigenous context, as defined by Ugandan Education professor Dr. Francis Adyanga Akena (2012), knowledge is that which can “detect and resist treatments of injustice”, and is best nourished in a transformative, holistic educational environment (p. 605). Healing is through relationships, which can take an inner or outer form, and not through isolating the problem as a separate entity to be fixed. These scholars do well to illustrate how knowledge can be grounded in liberatory elements. As academics, we have an obligation to allow this discovery to work its energy through culture and society to uproot outdated power structures and empower marginalized peoples. At the same time, we have to be careful not to idealize indigenous ways of ontology and axiology above all others. According to Tim Murithi, Director of the Institute for Justice & Reconciliation in South Africa (2006),

This is because, as with the rest of humanity, African indigenous structures were for the most part exclusionary on the basis of gender. The majority of indigenous women were not included in the primary structures of decision making. This is why we need to combine present notions of gender equality with progressive indigenous norms and principles to create something that is uniquely African (p. 14).

Other academics, like Frances Owusu-Ansah (2013) from the University of Science and Technology in Ghana, note that other indigenous limitations include the “tenacious continuity of practices and beliefs that lack openness and flexibility to necessary or constructive changes” (p. 2). It is important to take knowledge systems as they are and understand their history, utility, and application, while allowing for healthy critiques and shifts as necessitated by their environment. Culture changes, and that change can be facilitated by respectful dialogue among its stakeholders. The research community is also increasingly aware that the scope of research and literature has been predominantly performed within Western modes of framing – analytic, categorical, linear, and focused on top-level nation-building. Levelling the playing field would allow the researched to see themselves in the study with greater clarity.

Process Matters

The systems of community co-creation, relational ontology, local knowledge, and positive peace form the foundation of the African Peacemaking Database.

Community co-creation is an idea posited by Makerere University professors Charles Masembe & Vincent Muwanika, and by Myles Horton of the Highlander Research & Education Center in Appalachia. It is based on the no-methods approach, where the researcher abandons old roles and follows the guidance of the researched in understanding both the problem and the solutions. We must understand the lived experience of the participants before we can move forward with our data collection. In this context, researchers are learners and the researched are co-researchers. The community are the catalysts for identifying, prioritizing, and responding to challenges using their strengths and human capital, leading to the praxis of the participatory action research mechanism. This catalytic understanding of research allows the researched to co-create the agenda, offers allowances for community involvement in desired social programs, and considers the agency of the participants to be an ultimate consideration of the work (Jackson 4). In our multi-day Peace Mapping workshops, for example, the Malawi villages, of their own volition, often danced, sang, and showcased community farms on day one to set the tone for the culture of peace they wanted to share during our week together.

Professor Owusu-Ansah further corroborates this point by positing how this participatory methodology, “strengthens African values of collective responsibility and affirms the centrality of African indigenous ideals and values as legitimate frames for conducting research” (p. 3). Because Afrocentric methods and qualitative methods are complementary, it was natural to incorporate small groups, talking circles, and art presentations, like theater and dance, into the framework of data collection. The five Afrocentric research criteria, proposed by Ruth Dedier (2001), also form an important lens upon which the strategies and credibility of data collection must be rooted: *ukweli* (truth), *kujitolea* (commitment), *utulivu* (peacefulness), *uhaki* (justice), and *ujamaa* (community). Myles Horton (1998), the founder of the civil rights and social justice institution, the Highlander Center in Tennessee, complemented this approach with his workshops from the 50s, 60s, and 70s. Horton would gather African American activists or labor rights unionists together for workshops on securing equal rights. However, once together, he would dismiss academic experts from any leadership roles and tell the people affected

by the conflict, who were often uneducated, to create the structure and the content of the workshop from scratch. In this paradigm, students become teachers. Through their lived experience, they understood their cultural strengths and the gaps of injustice best.

Instead of thinking that you put pieces together that will add up to a whole, I think you have to start with the premise that they're already together and you try to keep from destroying life by segmenting it, over-organizing it and dehumanizing it. You try to keep things together. The educative process must be organic, and not an assortment of unrelated methods and ideas (p 107).

In other words, the answers are already here! And they can be found by talking to the people directly affected by the issues. Here we see a strength-based approach, where the concept of wholeness is inferred. It is the role of the researcher to uncover and nourish it. Horton imagined this format would spread to other centers in America, but it never caught on beyond the South. Its liberatory educational elements did, however, successfully spread to educational workshops in Latin America and Africa, which shared some cultural similarities. He attributed this to heightened academic cultures in western and eastern US, where a hyper-rationalist society made it difficult for 'experts' to accept that activists with little formal education had as much to teach as themselves. He also attributed it to the third world-like conditions of Appalachian America, where poverty was rampant, but community power was still strong.

Finally, a culture of relational awareness is preeminent in the methodology, since Africanity centers around values and relationships. "Relationships as opposed to individual form an integral part of identity," where the community takes the lead in identifying the individual. Furthermore, this identity includes both the living and the non-living, so spirituality and cosmological awareness have to be accepted as forms of data in African contexts (Chilisa 319). Because this community spirit is paramount in African knowledge, it also needs to be present in the theory and methodology of the African Peace-making Database. This includes envisioning, relational accountability, prolonged engagement through the credibility of building community rapport, member checks, the triangulation of peace images / Peace Mapping daily practices / Peace Exploration indigenous rituals, and catalytic authenticities between youth, elder, and women leaders. Additionally, the research process must reflect the "African logic of circularity as opposed to the linear logic of traditional Western evaluation

methods. The circular nature of African logic represents the interdependence... between the universe and nature” (323). This circular nature is institutionalized into the organizational structure by continuously recycling research, analysis, and sharing back to the local level.

Deimperialization

Deimperialization reforms in socio-cultural, political and religious environments in meaningful African contexts require commitment and action amongst all stakeholders, e.g. political leaders, religious leaders, cultural leaders, planners, policy makers and the grassroot indigenous leaders. This is not a singular movement, as there is no singular, romanticized African culture. Instead, this is a local, dynamic process that recognizes the harm done in various contexts on the African continent due to the subjugation of local knowledge and cultural wisdom. We revitalize this knowledge by promoting appreciation of its utility, value, and beauty with respect to both the African people and world at large.

The reforms should be those that promote political, cultural and political diversity and that consider all religions and cultures as equals by their own merits. The process should include deliberate efforts and policy changes in re-defining them to ensure their suitability in the individual countries, with a nation-by-nation research approach. It should be a process that guarantees equal representation of all stakeholders from the grass root, including non-religion and secular representation and should be dialogue based. It also requires the mainstreaming of marginalized ways of thinking into top-level institutions, so structures are focused on healthy relationships instead of power.

The approach ensures that the freedom of belief is respected. Secondly, it encourages tolerance of other people’s beliefs. Thirdly, it facilitates informed debates, including debates on controversial issues.

However, it must be noted that the success of the program will depend not only on how it factors in all these complex issues but also on the will of government to see through its creation and implementation.

The program should take the following steps in imperialization:

- 1) People should **Recover** their lost culture and identity.
- 2) **Mourning** – lamenting the continued assault on peoples’ identities and social realities.
- 3) People should **Imagine** alternative ways of recovering peoples’ histories and indigenous knowledge systems.
- 4) **Commitment** – activists demanding willful effort to ensure that the voice of the marginalized is heard and sustained.
- 5) And finally, **Action** – dreams and commitments that translate into strategies for transformation.

By ‘dreams’, Indigenous Peoples can begin to draw on their rich history, heritage, and culture so that they are able to theorize and imagine alternative possibilities on how best they can deal with issues confronting them, for instance, drawing a different school curriculum that encompasses politics, culture and religion. This in turn will, in its approach and reclaiming of the value of indigenous/local spiritual and cultural identities, allow the commitment to embrace each other.

The approach to deimperializing knowledge comes from an indigenous methodology. We now realize, as researchers and peace practitioners, that the dominant knowledge paradigm fails to capture the experiences of Colonized peoples. We must use methods of communication that speak to those who have information hidden from dominant knowledge sets. This knowledge includes our ontological relationship with the living and the nonliving, respect for elders, methods of community healing through reconciliation, and rituals of song and dance. The main purpose of cataloguing African wisdom is not to help, solve, fix, or provide a quantifiable outcome. These become secondary to the goal of fostering relationships and understanding.



Creating the Database

Two Branches

Our transformational initiative believes that local people understand their power best. The APD utilizes the strength of experienced peace ambassadors in each country to facilitate the Peace Mapping of their nation's cultures. **Peace Mapping** is the process of listening and learning to communities on how peace is practiced by individuals, families, and cultures, via multi-day workshops facilitated throughout a country. Our peace researchers have expertise in the fields of transformational dialogue and peace and conflict studies, but their real strength lies in building relationships and being accountable in respectfully representing and harvesting the knowledge systems that local communities want to share with other Africans. Further, our national peace ambassadors are responsible for beginning the process of Peace Exploration, the 2nd branch of the database. **Peace Exploration** is the cultural research about a community's traditional peace roots via dialogue and relationship between youth and elders. It involves peace rituals, linguistics, proverbs, stories, music and dance, roles, and other longstanding topics that each culture feels are important to include. By letting youth and elders lead the research, we resurface African indigenous wisdom to integrate with modern knowledge in our changing world.

Our methodology focuses on rural areas, which has been underrepresented in peace and conflict research. Of course, we cannot forget the wisdom and energy of urban centers. For each, we connect through Rotary International Peacebuilder clubs, United Religious Initiative (the interfaith branch of the UN) interfaith cooperation circles, local NGOs, and grassroots peace organizations via the country coordinator.

Peace Mapping Design

Urban Partner – Rotary International Peacebuilder Clubs

Rural Partner – United Religious Initiative (URI) Cooperation Circles

- Day 1** Introductions and sharing of cultural traditions. African communities, led by women, traditional chiefs, and the youth, decide what they want to share to begin their involvement with the APD. We spend time in an envisioning process, where individuals share their images of peace with one another. We also work with the youth to encourage them to share art by the end of the workshop, which they create themselves on the topic of peace and conflict in their community. This can result in theatre, visual art, music, and so forth. It is a day of relationships and imagining.
- Day 2** APD researchers understand there are longstanding issues in individual African communities that must be addressed before we can holistically move onto nourishing daily peace processes. Today we discuss conflicts in the community that are having an effect on their daily lives. Throughout this listening process, we encourage the concept of community capital. Indigenous communities have high levels of human capital built into their cultural architecture. As transformative catalysts, this relational strength can be nourished to find solutions to existing issues of injustice and inequity. This is discussed alongside traditional methods of capital, such as economic, environmental, and social.
- Day 3** On our last day, we gather existing, daily peace practices from individuals. We return to the images and concepts shared in the envisioning process. This is often in the form of animals, natural elements, spirituality, family, and proverbs. Peace is a multi-dimensional experience. There is not one peace, but many peaces that exist around the world and in our personal lives which must be watered for peace to grow (Dietrich 2012). To provide structure to the sharing process, we shape the envisioning images into the different worlds of peace. This can include the worlds of the environment, personal, spiritual, family, ritual, love, and so forth, depending on what words arise. From within the context of the worlds found, the community gathers into circles of women, youth, and elders, and share daily peace practices. We then return to existing conflicts mentioned the previous day, and, using peacemaking ideas that have been generated, gather into mixed-gender, inter-generational groups and ask: is it possible for these conflicts to find transformation through our own personal peacemaking strengths?

It's important to end our time together with a celebration, and to maintain the relationships formed. We utilize local leaders to connect our national leaders to the holders of knowledge. These

relationships are enriched by sending our Peace Mapping fellows back to the sites of research, one year later, with the database findings. We ask the community for input in how to embed what we have discovered with regional and national policy. This process is called Recentring.

Peace Exploration Design

Whereas Peace Mapping often turns to the personal and functions on a daily level. Peace Exploration is communal and asks how peace has been built into the culture through the generations. Through these two branches, a visualization of multi-dimensional peace in a culture can be comprehended.

This three-month process is begun on day 3 of our Peace Mapping workshops, where we invite women leaders, traditional authorities, village headmen and headwomen, and interested youth together to connect and learn from one another. We invite youth to spearhead the project and become lead researchers. They will write a report detailing cultural peace traditions, as dictated by elders, with particular detail to traditional forms of reconciliation. This report is not limited to written research, and may include music, dances, folklore, proverbs, a linguistics tree, and any other form of data that depicts traditional peacemaking. Youth are also invited to share their ideas on the way forward to peace within their own, unique perspectives. The outcome of this methodology is stronger ties between the generations and an increased understanding of local, African wisdom.

Presentation

The African Peacemaking Database will be presented publicly on the Pan-African Dialogue Center's website, updated yearly based on the African countries explored. Peace Mapping practices will be categorized and presented in each country's unique database. Peace Exploration cultures will be summarized, with opportunities to look in-depth at research papers as desired. There is not one, idealized mode of African peacemaking. Nor will there be an exhaustive look at every culture of Africa. Instead, the database will show the great depth of styles and methods of peacemaking found through the tour in each country, along with themes and suggestions encouraged by the findings.

Each country's APD database will be available in English and one local language, and each database is free to look different in design and content from each other. Additionally, as the internet is not an appropriate dissemination format for many rural populations of Africa, there will be multimedia videos and print forms published and distributed to the local communities who were involved in the research.

Early Warning Systems

Privately, the database will be interpreted by African Union Peace & Security CEWS to begin the integration of positive peace elements, from the grassroots, into Early Action. This is for the sake of mitigating impending violence in at-risk countries and institutionalizing community dialogue and healing through traditional forms of solving conflict. For context, the CEWS divides its AU departments on the continent into Regional Economic Communities (REC). Three RECs, such as the Arab Maghrib Union in North Africa, continue to have no working Early Warning system. Others, such as ECOWAS in West Africa and IGAD in the Horn of Africa, have a robust system in place for its members (Gnanguenon 2021). The situation is fluid and there is reason to expect that it is open to deepening its capacity.



*AU Regional Early Warning Communities
Image © Amandine Gnanguenon*

To quote conflict prevention expert Dr. Ashad Sentongo, from the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation in Uganda, "It's never too early for Early Warning." To expand this, it's also never too early for Early Action. The international community generally considers Early Action a crucial emergency effort to offer communities at risk of violence alternative pathways before escalating to prolonged conflict. By institutionalizing positive peace community rituals and practices, there is a unique opportunity to transform conflict issues at the root of self and community before it takes on external actors and threats of armed struggle.

This impact can address two critiques of the current model. One, the lack of clarity among the division of labor between the RECs and the Situation Room does not clearly define roles or present a definition of providing data. With clearly delineated data upon which to draw quality peace, Early Action information would be a benefit. Two, "it is difficult for African regional organizations to gain local credibility...this is all the more problematic given that organizations...have stated that they want to become 'people-centered', as opposed to 'state-centered'" (pg. 8). Providing data that is locally created and locally owned may provide an important, civic opportunity for Early Warning in Africa.

Initial Findings

Design-Stage Research

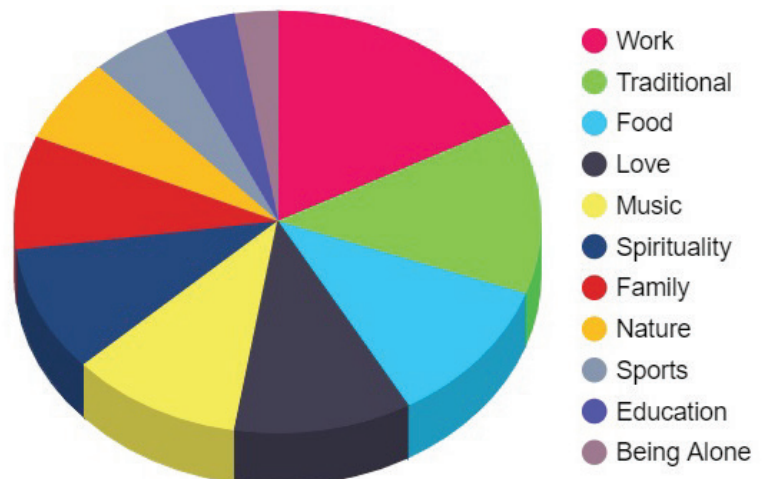
From 2021-2022, APD conducted Peace Mapping investigation in Ethiopia, Malawi, and Somalia to ask academics, peace educators, local leaders, NGO partners, religious leaders, artists, and youth organizers how they wanted a catalogue of peace practices to look.

Additionally, we experimented with the form until we felt comfortable of a method that was respectful, relationally minded, and could be recontextualized depending on the environment and needs of the communities. The purpose of this experimentation was to harmonize the methodology and design until it was ready to be scaled globally.

In **Malawi**, the importance of ritual dances, hospitality, local food, access to work, spiritual connections via nature and trees, celebrating, and we-not-I beliefs were all widespread peacemaking practices, in spite of poverty, cultures at risk of erosion of rituals, and much ancestral wisdom dying out with the elders.

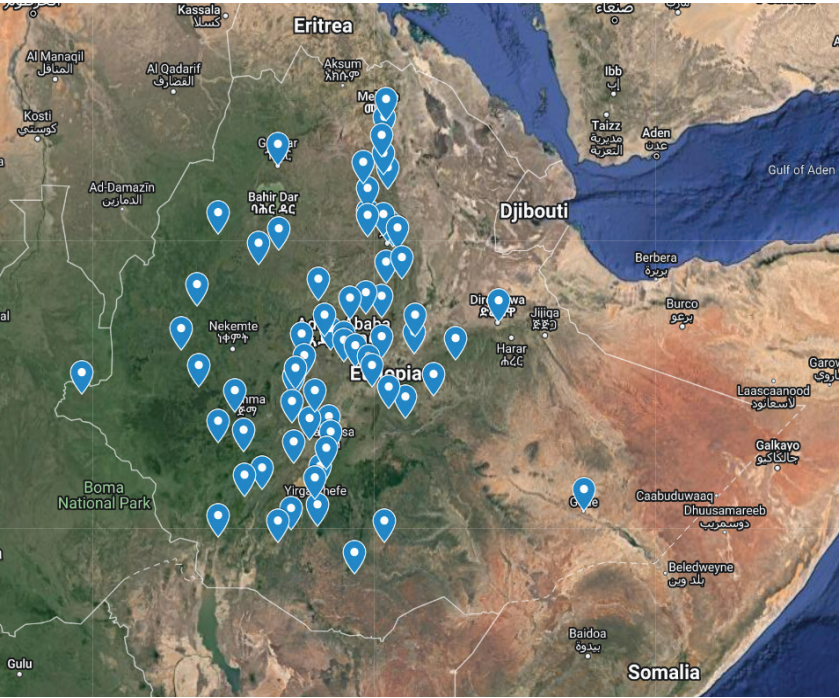
Our research involved qualitative methods with 265 individuals from six communities throughout the Northern, Central, and Southern states of Malawi. Our time in Malawi crystallized the research form to implement and scale in other countries.

Malawi Peacemaking Practices



In **Ethiopia**, we partnered with Positive Peace for Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Reconciliation Commission to analyze and disseminate over 200 papers written by youth about traditional forms of solving conflict, in a project called, “I Have a Reconciliation Idea.” This categorization work, in conjunction with the youth leaders, is ongoing. This process is particularly relevant, as ethnic tension and the ethnification of media is very high between the diverse cultures of Ethiopia. Cultural methods of solving conflict can be shared and implemented to bring healing to areas of deep pain between the Oromo, Tigrayans, Amharas, and other peoples.

In **Somalia**, we spent time talking to peacemakers in Puntland and Somaliland. Of particular interest was the mapping of traditional state-building reconciliation methods for the creation of Somaliland back in 1991, which can teach Africa a lot about creating a peaceful, indigenous system without external actors. Other NGOs, such as Interpeace, have spent considerable time trying to catalogue this successful history of unification. As in Ethiopia, this work is ongoing.



200 Ethiopian Peace Exploration paper locations, in partnership with the Ethiopian Reconciliation Commission

Our Future

The APD does not rely on singular data sources or academic experts to conduct the research throughout the continent. The data sources, as the holders of knowledge, are always the local, African people. The research leads will be trained, intercultural ambassadors with a passion for peacebuilding, who are both born and living in the country of inquiry.

APD will host annual, week-long training retreats, led by Indigenous Research Lead Dr. Bagele Chilisa, with alumni from the prestigious **African Leadership Centre** of Nairobi, alongside the KAICIID Intercultural Fellowship Program, available to apply for paid research roles. We will accept 5-6 Peace Mapping fellows each year. Our first retreat will take place at the beautiful University of Uyo in southern Nigeria. This is a 10-year vision, and each year will focus on a specific region of Africa, so we can continue conversations with AU CEWS directors alongside AU Peace & Security about the synthesis of positive peace with external intervention.

Impact

- 1) Inform research from Afro-centric perspectives
- 2) Nourish traditional peacemaking
- 3) Connect elders & youth: enhance old wisdom with new wisdom
- 4) Create national peace policy from local frameworks
- 5) Inspire a new generation of peacebuilders
- 6) Create a catalogue that encourages the integration of peace, healing, and harmony into our personal lives
- 7) Enhance AU Continental Early Warning System with positive peace elements as Early Action
- 8) Share African strengths of community ritual and harmony with the Western world, i.e. help Africa enrich the global system of knowing, being, and doing

Long-term Outcomes

1) Produce detailed information, data and viewpoints to African peacebuilders, who historically have challenges accessing accurate data that inform peacemaking developments, which aid informed decisions in the local communities.

2) Build capacity for conflicts to be resolved peacefully within communities by promoting mediation, negotiation and facilitation skills as daily effective peacemaking tools.

3) Promote gender equality and increase the inclusion of women and youth in indigenous peace making processes. They are the ones who suffer most when violent conflicts erupts and yet they are rarely included in peacekeeping mediations.

4) Appreciate the role of culture, religious and faith leaders and institutions play in the promotion of African local peace. Build trust and mutual understanding in conflict and post-conflict situations as these roles are held in high esteem in the society. Cultural leaders in Africa are regarded as agents for conflict transformation and peacebuilding, providing early warnings of conflict and ably contribute to advocacy, mediation and reconciliation when conflict erupts.

5) Establish peacemaking centers within communities. They would play an important role of providing and coordinating mediation support, thereby preventing violent conflict and promoting dialogue and peaceful resolution of conflicts within the community.

6) Devise African indigenous ways and strategies of ending ongoing violent conflicts and addressing identified internal and external factors that trigger and sustain violent conflicts, including preparing teaching materials and curricula to transmit indigenous approaches.

7) Prevent violent conflict, promote dialogue and peaceful resolution and provide African solutions to our conflicts rather than depending on outside interventions by creating structures for conflict prevention, policy frameworks, mediation guidelines, mediation structures, and timely and effective peace operations that support our cultures and beliefs.


8) Encourage other regions to begin their own peacemaking databases and archives, with Africa as a model for the world.

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