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The recognition of the rights of youth is a positive development in Botswana. The continued enforcement of such rights is vital to ensure that the Policy achieves the desired objectives. The Ministry of Labor and Home Affairs has been designated with the responsibilities for coordinating youth affairs in the country as well as the implementation of youth programs and services.

The role of the University of Botswana

The University of Botswana played a prominent role in the Celebration of the UNESCO Culture of Peace 2000, through various activities. To promote the culture of peace itself is based on the principles established in the Charter of the United Nations and on respect for human rights, democracy and tolerance, the promotion of development, education for peace, the free flow of information and the wider participation of women as an integral approach to preventing violence and conflicts and efforts aimed at the creation of conflicts for peace and its consideration (UNESCO, 1998).

With particular reference to children, the UNESCO (2000) "Declaration on a Culture of Peace" emphasized rights of children. Ensuring that children from early age benefit from education on the values, attributes, modes of behavior and ways of life to enable them to resolve any dispute peacefully and in a spirit of respect for human dignity and of tolerance and non-discrimination. The Declaration also called for the involvement of children in activities for instilling in them, the values and goals of a culture of peace. It was also emphasized that development strategies should include special measures that focus on the needs of women and children as well as groups with special needs.

Early in February 2000 the writer was mandated to chair the Committee that planned the Celebration of UNESCO International Year of the Culture of Peace 2000. A joint University of Botswana and Botswana College of Agriculture (an affiliated institution), was formed to oversee the planning of the various activities for the celebration. The activities organised by the Committee in which staff and students of the University included the following:

- 1) *Signing of the Manifesto 2000:* One of the ways of celebrating the International Year of the Culture of Peace 2000 was the signing of the manifesto 2000 drafted by a group of Nobel Prize Peace laureates. The manifesto was meant to express in a very simple way that the Culture of Peace is relevant to everyday life. Consequently, some staff and students of the University participated in the signing of the manifesto.
- 2) *Seminar for Student Leaders:* It was strongly felt that student leaders as representatives of students need to understand the relevance of the Culture of Peace as it relates to their interaction with one another, the management of the University and the country as a whole. It was also felt that the support and participation of student leaders was important towards getting the entire student community interested in the participation of activities relating to the Culture of Peace. Consequently, a seminar was organized for this group on the role of student leaders in fostering peace within the University.
- 3) *Launch:* An official launch of the Culture of Peace was later held. This involved the participation of University management, students and guest speakers from outside the University.
- 4) *Commemoration of Woven Tapestry:* Two woven tapestries were subsequently made for display in both participating institutions. The tapestry is to serve as symbolic representations and reminder of the Culture of Peace.

Most importantly, the University of Botswana intends to participate in the Decade for Culture Non-violence for the children of the world 2001-2010. The decade is to highlight the physical, psychological, socio-economic, environmental and political violence faced by children, and the effects and consequences of such violence. It is anticipated that the University of Botswana through various

activities would provide opportunities to enable children in the country to discover themselves, offer hope to them and help to build a new Culture of Non-violence in the country. It is also anticipated that the Department of Culture Sport and Recreation in the Division of Student Affairs would coordinate these activities in the University.

Other Activities being proposed by the University

The African Child Institute Pilot Committee in Botswana, in which the writer is a member, has met on a number of occasions to explore the possibility of forming a link age with the Institute of African Child at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, whose objective is to promote the interests of the world's most marginalized population, the children of Africa. The Botswana African Child Institute Pilot Committee is pursuing the housing of the African Child Institute, Botswana Chapter, at the University of Botswana Careers and Counselling Center.

The African Child Institute in Ohio University has interacted with many in Botswana citizens, who attended Ohio University in the past. Some of them are also familiar with the concept of the "African Child". Consequently, the African Child Institute based in Ohio University is of the strong view that this group of Ohio graduates, and others in Botswana with similar interest, could form the nucleus of the African Child Institute in Botswana. The anticipated services to be provided by the African Child Institute when it becomes operational would include:

- 1) Promotion of welfare of youth in the University and in the country at large.
- 2) Provision of resources to children/youth organizations in the country in terms of providing leadership in delivery of services.
- 3) Placement of the African Child in institutions of learning and or exchange programs.
- 4) Provision of mentoring services to youths and promotion of positive attitudes and all the empowerment of youths through seminars, workshops and research.

The Botswana Situation

Botswana, unlike most other African countries, is peaceful and that is in absence of war evident in most African countries. The economic situation in the country and the relative stability in the country due to good governance have prevented the abuse of children through child labor or participation in wars. However, the country has been concerned with the plight of orphans as a result of HIV/AIDS. The premature deaths of mothers due to AIDS leave behind orphans in many households and communities.

The Ministry of Health in Botswana (1997) projected that by the year 2000; there would be approximately 65,000 orphans under the age of 15 years as a result of AIDS-related deaths in the country. To address this issue, Botswana in collaboration with other agencies, have explored ways to care for orphans. The Government of Sweden through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the UNICEF, and the Botswana Government embarked on a project, one of the aspects is orphan care. The aim of the project was to develop models for care of orphans. Some other Non-Governmental Organizations have also assisted in the care of orphans. These organizations provide a variety of services to meet the physical, social and educational needs of orphans.

Amos A. A. Alao

Summary

The plight of children in Africa varies from one country to another, depending on the prevailing condition in each country. While the plight of these children was mainly due to instability and war in some countries, the economic situation and disease seem to be the precipitating factor in other countries. It is imperative that each country in Africa strives to cater to the needs of children. Children in each country would be the adults in later years. Each country needs to provide appropriate conditions for development, so that they can become what we expect them to be. Perhaps one could propose the type of individuals recommended in the Report on the White House Conference on Children (1970, p.75), which states:

"We would have him be a man with a strong sense of himself and his own humanness, with awareness of his thoughts and feelings, with the capacity to feel and express love and joy and to recognize tragedy and grief. We would have him be a man, who with a strong realistic sense of his own worth, is able to relate openly with others, to cooperate effectively with them toward common ends, and to view mankind as one while young, somehow senses that he has it within himself to become more than he is now, that he has the capacity for life-long spiritual and intellectual growth. We would want him to cherish that vision of the man he is capable of becoming and to cherish the development of the same for others".

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