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Educational Peacebuilding and the Limits of Post-Conflict Recovery in Cameroon's Bakassi Peninsula

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Abstract: The end of the five-year transitional period 2008-2013 as stipulated by the Green Tree Agreement (GTA) purportedly laid to rest the Bakassi conflict. Before the agreement, hostilities between Cameroonians and Nigerians in the Bakassi Peninsula were persistent and deadly. As part of measures for effective occupation, the Cameroon government created the Committee for Coordination and Monitoring of the implementation of Priority Projects to be executed in the Bakassi area in August 2007. The main thrust of this paper therefore, is to examine the peacebuilding initiative undertaken by the Cameroon government in the educational sector of the Bakassi peninsula after the GTA. Using a qualitative design, data was collected from both secondary and primary sources to situate education within the context of promoting peace and social cohesion. Results show that the Cameroon Government has been making substantial efforts to stimulate development through peacebuilding in the education sector in the Bakassi Peninsula. This can be seen in infrastructural development, rehabilitation, quality assurance in education, increase in school enrolment and the number of schools created, provision for teachers. The essence of these measures is to consolidate authority to avoid a relapse of the conflict. This paper recommends that the government of Cameroon should allocate sufficient funds within the Public Investment Budget (PIB) for the area to be fully integrated to the rest of Cameroon, and increase the provision of teachers in schools.

Keywords: Peacebuilding, Conflict, Education, Sustainable Peace, Development.



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Introduction

Boundaries are perceived as lines defined by man that mark the geographical limits of a state, as well as the extent of its sovereignty. This strategic importance explicates why nations protectively guard and defend their political frontiers and boundaries. The consequence of this protection within international relations explains the continual territorial disputes among nations all over the continents of the world. Territorial disputes continue to fuel contemporary conflict and can be found in all parts of the world. Cameroon and Nigeria muscled over territorial claims of the Bakassi Peninsula for several years. For long, the Bakassi peninsula has been in existence without appropriately delineated border until the detection of oil when both Nigeria and Cameroon started making claims and counter-claims which eventually led to the dispute that required multilateral intercession or interventions. Such claims were not uncommon due to straddling villages on the border of both countries. Infact, situating Bakassi Peninsula, it lies between the Cross River estuary near the city of Calabar which is located in Nigeria in the west and the Rio del Rey estuary on the East.

Each country wanted to have the riches of Bakassi Peninsula for herself because the wealth and revenue that exploitation and production of natural resource bring to countries is unimaginable Kpwa [1]. Interest over the ownership of Bakassi by Nigeria and Cameroon began to grow immediately it was discovered in the 1970's that the peninsula is located on reserves of crude oil along the basin of Rio del Rey.

importance Apart from oil, gas had also been discovered in commercial quantity in the region of Rio del Rey. With the discovery of oil therefore, Nigeria started showing strong interests and subsequently claimed ownership of the peninsula. Cameroon referred the matter to the International Court of Justice and in 2002 it got favourable ruling. The Green Tree Agreement (GTA) was signed by the two countries and a Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission was established to implement the ruling [2]. The process led to the transfer of authority in forty villages.

For over fifteen years since Cameroon took full control of Bakassi, sustainable peace is elusive. The population in the area still face several challenges despite the different initiative carried out by the government and other key stakeholders. Nwokolo [3] argues that boundary demarcation itself produced new structural violence. Many were forced to migrate and others lost the livelihood. The human scale of this settlement is easily lost within its diplomatic history. Bakassi's population was neither party to the negotiations that determined the territory's fate nor, in many cases, given a clear choice between resettlement in Nigeria and continued residence under Cameroonian sovereignty [4]. The Green Tree Agreement's transitional arrangements addressed this population primarily as a logistical and administrative problem. A group to be resettled, absorbed, or transitioned, rather than a community whose schools, livelihoods and civic status required reconstruction. The manner of that settlement sits within a much older pattern in Africa. Drawing and redrawing of borders has rarely been accompanied by the consent of affected populations [5]; [6]. This creates a gap between diplomatic resolution and local consent and the difference between an ended dispute and sustainable peace.

In Africa, the arbitrary colonial drawing of borders often splitting ethnic groups and communities across new state lines. Griggs states that due to the arbitrary nature of the colonial boundaries, right after the end of colonialism, border disputes have become one of the causes for conflicts in Africa. It is also very common, especially in Africa, that territorial or boundary disagreement can quickly flare up into armed confrontation as it was the case of Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1998. In addition, the border dispute between Ethiopia and Sudan in 1972 is another example. Therefore, by creating smooth territorial or boundary relationships, among states, international law endeavors to play a significant role in global peacebuilding and peacekeeping Stellios (2011)

The Bakassi Peninsula illustrates this pattern. Long before colonial demarcation, the peoples of South West, Cameroon and Eastern Nigeria were bound by socio-political ties dating to the sixteenth century [7]; [8], in Anjoh; ties that colonial boundary-making would later cut across without regard for the populations it governed. The territory's status as part of Cameroon was fixed through a sequence of colonial and post-colonial instruments.

The Anglo-German Agreements of 1885 and 1913 and diplomatic negotiations between Cameroon and Nigeria from 1970 to 1975. This boundary, however, remained a matter of continued negotiation. Following the Nigerian civil war of 1967–1970, in which Cameroon played a supporting role that shaped its subsequent relations with Nigeria, Presidents Ahmadou Ahidjo and Yakubu Gowon met at Maroua in 1975 and produced the Maroua Declaration, through which Gowon made frontier concessions ceding Cameroonian sovereignty over the oil-rich seabed area around Rio-del-Rey known as the Bakassi Peninsula. Gowon's acceptance of the Declaration proved politically costly. From 1979, members of Nigeria's Supreme Military Council and other prominent Nigerians began criticizing the concession and by 1981 these tensions had produced the first Cameroon-Nigeria border crisis [9]; [10]. Although peacefully resolved, the episode left lasting resentment, compounded by a boundary in the Rio-del-Rey area that had never been clearly defined on the ground and had accordingly drawn Nigerian fishermen to settle there in the belief that the territory was Nigerian; Cameroonian efforts to enforce taxation and curb smuggling in the area subsequently deepened local resistance to Cameroonian authority.

Scholars have examined these issues of the Bakassi settlement, addressed resettlement, human security, gender, statelessness and citizenship in the territory. This study submits that the formal resolution of the boundary dispute has not fully translated into sustainable peacebuilding on the ground. A parallel and largely separate literature establishes education as a central pillar of post-conflict peacebuilding in other settings, including within Anglophone crisis and Far North contexts. What has not yet been done in either literature is an evaluation of the education sector as a distinct instrument of peacebuilding within Bakassi.

This paper approaches this gap. Following Galtung's [11] separation of negative peace (the absence of violence) from positive peace (the presence of structures that sustain it) and Lederach's [12] emphasis on relational transformation as the substance of durable peacebuilding, the paper treats education as a potential instrument of positive peace. One that either builds the structural and

relational conditions Lederach describes, or, if implemented as simple reconstruction, falls short of them. This framework guides how findings of this study have been evaluated. The question guiding the analysis is whether educational interventions in Bakassi since 2006 constitute peacebuilding in this sense. This paper appraises the peacebuilding initiatives undertaken by the Government of Cameroon in Basic and Secondary Education in the Bakassi Peninsula since the Green Tree Agreement of 2006. It is guided by three questions: (1) what educational interventions has the Cameroonian government undertaken in the territory since 2006; (2) to what extent do these interventions reflect positive peacebuilding, in Galtung and Lederach's sense; and (3) what structural obstacles continue to limit education's contribution to durable peace in the territory?

This focus matters for two reasons. First, while the broader literature establishes the importance of peacebuilding generally in Bakassi, it has not examined peace education as a distinct instrument of recovery. Second, there remains a need for empirical evidence on how Cameroon's educational reforms are contributing or failing to contribute to social cohesion within this specific border community, given Durkheim's [13] foundational observation that shared institutions, including schools, are central to social integration and cohesion.

The concept of peacebuilding has attracted multiple, sometimes competing definitions and the differences between them carry real implications for how a state's post-conflict obligations should be assessed. The most foundational of these distinctions comes from Galtung, who frames peacebuilding as a push toward core structural transformations that move post-conflict societies beyond the mere cessation of violence (what he terms negative peace) toward the harder achievement of positive peace. Central to this distinction is Galtung's broader concept of structural violence. He conceptualized this as harm that is embedded in social, political and economic arrangements and which can persist long after active conflict ends. On this view, ending hostilities and building peace are not the same achievement. A state's obligations do not end with the former.

This argument was subsequently absorbed into international peacebuilding practice. Boutros-Ghali [14] advanced a more state-centric formulation of peacebuilding as actions to identify and support the structures that strengthen and solidify peace and prevent a relapse into conflict. The Brahimi [15] extended this and characterized peacebuilding as the work undertaken on the far side of conflict to rebuild the foundations of peace. The UN Secretary-General's 2005 framework later operationalized these ideas into three concrete dimensions. This includes stability to discourage a return to combat, restoration of state institutions and the socio-economic transformation needed to underpin durable development. Galtung's original concept of peacebuilding is preserved but reframed in increasingly operational, state-centric terms.

What unites these definitions is an institutional, largely state-centric orientation. Peacebuilding is something built and delivered through structures and state capacity. Lederach conceptualizes peacebuilding from another angle. To him institutional reform alone is insufficient without social transformation at the local level. This means peacebuilding as state-led institution-building and peacebuilding as bottom-up relational transformation. This argument is relevant to evaluating Cameroon's response in Bakassi, since government-led committees and infrastructure investment satisfy the institutional definition without necessarily addressing the relational and socio-economic concerns in the Bakassi case. This paper assesses Cameroon's educational interventions against the Boutros-Ghali peacebuilding arguments.

The contribution of education to peacebuilding centers on two distinct but related claims found in the literature. The first is that peace education is most commonly understood as a process of cultivating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to prevent both overt and conflict and to resolve disputes peacefully across interpersonal, intergroup and inter-state levels [16]. Reardon [17] narrows this to the level of the individual learner. To him, peace education as learning intended to prepare students to actively contribute to the achievement of peace, while Harris and Morrison [18] emphasize the cognitive and dispositional dimension; peace education as the process of building the specific thoughts and dispositions that translate into peaceful behaviour. These definitions share a behavioral and attitudinal core but differ in scope. Fountain's framing addresses societal and structural violence, whereas Reardon and Harris and Morrison focus more narrowly on individual preparedness and disposition.

The second claim concerns the institutional function schools serve in conflict-affected settings, independent of curricular content. Nicolai [19] and James [20] argue that schools operate as protective spaces, offering children physical safety and reducing their vulnerability to exploitation or recruitment into armed groups, a point Muggah [21] similarly raises in relation to demobilisation and the reintegration of at-risk youth. Beyond physical protection, schools are credited with

restoring a sense of stability and normalcy for children affected by conflict [22] and with carrying symbolic significance for communities by signaling the state's renewed presence and reliability [23] connect the dispositional and the protective to a broader claim that quality education restores public trust in state institutions. This is a strategy through which education arguably advances both peacebuilding and poverty reduction simultaneously. Comparative cases such as Rwanda's post-genocide educational reconstruction [24]; [25] illustrate how deliberate educational reform has been used elsewhere in Africa to pursue social cohesion after conflict, providing a useful point of comparison for Cameroon's own efforts in Bakassi.

International policy frameworks reinforce this consensus on the role of education in peacebuilding. UNESCO's [26] founding charter committed the organisation to contribute to peace and security through education as one of the pillars. This commitment was operationalised six decades later: the UN General Assembly's designation of 2005 - 2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. It embedded peace-related learning outcomes within a global development framework for the first time [27], while UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2014 - 2021 subsequently named the building of inclusive and peaceful as an objective [28]. This trajectory led to the inclusion of education Sustainable Development Goals. Education plays a foundational role in peacebuilding and carries international institutional backing. This sharpens the question of how this institutional consensus has translated into practice in a specific post-conflict setting like Bakassi.

This question has particular force within Cameroon itself, where the country's own conflict-affected regions offer a domestic comparison for how education systems perform under post-conflict or ongoing-conflict conditions. Fonka [29] find that peace education remains largely unintentional within Cameroonian curricula, with no dedicated subject devoted to it despite its recognized value, while Aretouyap [30] shows that initiatives combining peace education theory with indigenous knowledge systems can strengthen social cohesion where deliberately designed. The Anglophone crisis literature documents the costs of leaving this design work undone: conflict in Cameroon's North West and South West regions has damaged school infrastructure, displaced students, and undermined teacher quality and retention [31]; [32]; [33]. Comparable emergency-education responses have been documented in Cameroon's Far North amid Boko Haram-related insecurity [34], consistent with the minimum standards for education in emergencies set out by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies. This domestic literature suggests that Cameroon's record on education as a deliberate peacebuilding instrument is uneven even in its most closely studied conflict zones. This makes the near-total absence of comparable scrutiny in Bakassi a more striking gap than a simple oversight. It instead reflects a pattern in which the peacebuilding role of education goes unevaluated even where interventions exist.

The literature on Bakassi suggests that Cameroon's response, while real, has only partially satisfied the conditions that peacebuilding and peace education theory identify as necessary for durable peace. Nwoko finds that the settlement process itself excluded Bakassi inhabitants from negotiation, producing exactly the kind of unaddressed grievance that Galtung's positive-peace framework warns against. Ngalim [35] shows that a decade after resettlement, affected populations remained focused on economic survival. Corruption and state insensitivity leaves the relational and socio-economic aspects of peacebuilding unresolved. Anjoh extends this critique by highlighting the continued exclusion of women from peacebuilding processes despite their disproportionate exposure to conflict's effects, a gap unaccounted for in the largely institution-focused definitions of Boutros-Ghali and the Brahimi Report. Security-oriented accounts add a further dimension. Kpwa finds that post-conflict Bakassi remains militarised by piracy and militancy, arguing for the substitution of military presence with civilian administrative, medical and judicial personnel. This is the institutional transition the UN Secretary-General's "restoration of state institutions" dimension calls for, but one that the literature suggests remains incomplete. Bamidele [36] offers the most recent and most critical assessment, characterising post-handover Bakassi as an ongoing human security crisis defined by statelessness, identity erasure, and weak institutional protection.

Cameroon's response to these obligations merits close attention as evidence for this study. Following the final transfer of Bakassi to Cameroon in 2013, Article 3 of the 2006 Green Tree Agreement placed sole responsibility for the territory's development on the Cameroonian state. In response, the Cameroonian Prime Minister established the Committee for Coordination and Monitoring the Implementation of Priority Projects in Bakassi by decree in August 2007, tasked with extending public services to the territory, designing a development programme, and building a data bank of development projects. Through a series of evaluation workshops and validation sessions held between 2008 and 2009, the committee elaborated a guiding programme of priority

interventions in which the education sector was explicitly included. This institutional effort was subsequently supported by a development partnership with the European Union worth 2.3 billion CFA francs [37]. These measures demonstrate state commitment to development in Bakassi. Nonetheless, they have not themselves been the subject of independent educational evaluation and it is this committee's own documentation that forms one of the primary data sources for this study. Peacebuilding theory establishes that durable peace requires reconstruction and socio-economic transformation as well as reconciliation between affected communities and the state [38]; Lederach. Peace education theory positions schools as central instruments for delivering precisely this kind of transformation, through both their dispositional curriculum and their protective, trust-restoring institutional presence, a function that Cameroon's own Anglophone crisis and Far North experience shows is neither automatic nor guaranteed. Yet the Bakassi-specific literature shows that resettlement, security, and statelessness concerns remain unresolved more than a decade after the territory's transfer, even as Cameroon's government has documented institutional commitments that explicitly include the education sector. What remains absent from this literature is any direct evaluation of whether, and how, these educational commitments have functioned as peacebuilding instruments in Bakassi specifically. This paper addresses that evaluative gap. Gender is a recurring concern in the broader Bakassi peacebuilding literature but falls outside this paper's direct focus. Anjoh captures the continued exclusion of women from formal peacebuilding structures in the territory despite their disproportionate exposure to effects of the conflict. Comparable patterns within the education sector in terms of teacher deployment, school leadership, or the enrolment of girls and retention probed by this study and remains an open question for future research.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach. The approach was selected because the paper captures the lived experience of displacement and resettlement, stakeholder perceptions of government peacebuilding initiatives and the social meaning attached to educational access in a post-conflict Bakassi. Data collection focused on Isengele, Kumbo Abedimo, Kumbo Itindi, Idabato, and Bamusso. These are subdivisions with history of conflict-related disruption and population displacement. These subdivisions were selected because they represent the range of resettlement and security conditions documented in the existing literature.

The target population comprised primary and secondary schools across the Bakassi subdivisions and stakeholders responsible for, or directly engaged with, the educational peacebuilding process in the area. Purposive sampling was used to select interview participants, on the basis of role relevance to the education sector, direct professional or lived experience of the post-2006 peacebuilding process. For community-based participants, a minimum of twenty years' residence in Bakassi was set to capture their long-term familiarity with conditions before and after the settlement. This non-probability approach was appropriate given aim of this paper to capture informed, role-specific perspectives on educational peacebuilding.

Primary data were collected through ten key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted in November 2025 with a purposively selected range of stakeholders, including Sub-Divisional Inspectors of Basic Education, head teachers and school principals, classroom teachers, government officials and community members who have lived in Bakassi for over twenty years. This broad stakeholder base was designed to capture not only the administrative and institutional perspective on educational peacebuilding, but also the community-level perspective of those who have lived through the territory's post-conflict transition directly. Interviews followed a semi-structured guide comprising open-ended questions organized around stakeholder awareness of government peacebuilding initiatives in education; perceived changes in school infrastructure, enrolment, and learning conditions since the 2006 settlement Stakeholder assessment of remaining gaps in educational peacebuilding. Interviews lasted approximately 40 - 50 minutes and were conducted in Pidgin English. Where participants consented to recording, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed; where recording was declined, detailed handwritten notes were taken in real time.

In addition, official documentary data were obtained from a former member of the Committee for Coordination and Monitoring the Implementation of Priority Projects in Bakassi, providing internal reports on the committee's education-sector activities. Secondary data were drawn from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, book chapter and reports of NGOs that have carried out peacebuilding in the peninsular. Data collection continued until saturation was attained. This means no new themes emerged across interviews with the sampled key informants. Interview transcripts

and documentary data were analysed using thematic content analysis, in which codes were derived from themes emerging from stakeholder accounts. This approach allowed the analysis to test existing peacebuilding theory against the specific, situated experience of educational stakeholders in Bakassi. All the key informants were briefed on the purpose of the study and informed consent obtained. They were informed of the voluntary nature of the exercise and their right to withdraw at any time. To ensure confidentiality and protect the identities of key informants, their identities are anonymised and unique codes used in the presentation and discussion of findings. Interviews conducted in Pidgin English were translated into English during transcription. While the authors that are fluent in English, no independent translation was performed, which may introduce minor interpretive variance in direct quotations.

Findings

Within the framework of the peacebuilding measures in the Education Sector in the Bakassi area, the government has made tremendous effort to promote and stabilize Basic and Secondary Education in the area in order for the pupils or students to cultivate a culture of peace. Findings revealed that 2007 marked the departure point when Cameroonian public authorities, supported by development partners, assumed full control of the education sector in Bakassi. This was evident in the development of school infrastructure in the Bakassi area in 2007, the increase in investments via the public investment budget and the support of development partners from the year 2008; the consolidation of investments through more intense international cooperation in 2009. The rehabilitation of structures left by the Nigerian Administration in the domain of basic education. The situational analysis of each subdivision is presented below. It will take the following sequence; first it will indicate what existed until 2007 and secondly the current situation in 2025/26 academic year. It should be noted that this varied from one locality (sub division) to another during the conflict.

Infrastructural Development

Government investment in physical infrastructure and administrative presence was the most consistently reported measure across all subdivisions since 2007. In Idabato, one Government School was constructed and equipped in Kombo a Munjia II by the Military Engineering Corps for a total of CFAF 45 million, financed through special presidential funding to reinforce basic education. A key informant (KI01) explained that “because of sensitization and the zeal for effective occupation by the Cameroon Government, the 2008/2009 academic year had an improvement in the enrolment comparatively with 2007/2008.” Enrolment in Idabato rose from 298 pupils in 2007/2008 to 1,023 in 2008/2009. Another participant (KI02) noted that there are twelve Primary Schools in this sub division as of 2025/2026 academic year which are functioning with a total of 2,310 pupils with 42 teachers, including two inclusive schools serving vulnerable cases, in Jabana and Come-Cross. A participant also revealed that “the Government equally created the Government Secondary School (GSS) in Idabato II, as part of measures of peacebuilding in education” (KI01).

Similar investment is evident in Kombo Abedimo, where presidential financing of CFAF 32 million was used in 2007 to rehabilitate and equip government schools in Akwa, Mbengmon, and Wanyo with support from the Military Engineering Corps. An informant indicated that there are 6 government schools in the basic sector; including two practicing schools, while the Nursery section has three primary schools, with enrolment standing at 680 pupils in the 2025/26 academic year (KI05). According to KI03, “the government created a Government Teachers’ Training College (GTTC) in Akwa. [such colleges] are created in the Regional and Divisional headquarters only, but this was an exceptional case and for strategic reasons.” In Isangele, special presidential financing of CFAF 10 million rehabilitated and equipped G.S. Isobo, a structure built during Nigerian occupation and damaged at the time of Nigeria’s departure. A participant (KI04) reported that “there are 8 functional primary schools with a population of 1,245 pupils with a total number of 20 teachers and 6 administrative staff.” In Kombo Itindi KI07 explained that “several schools were constructed and rehabilitated for example GS Gold Coast and GS Ngosso,” and that “the Government also embarked on building residential houses for teachers and civil servants [to retain staff].”

Across the peninsula, the Government created and opened nineteen primary and nursery schools between 2010 and 2019 (see Table 1), in addition to secondary and post-primary institutions such as the Government Secondary School in Idabato II and the Government Teachers’ Training College in Akwa. A key informant linked this expansion directly to the state’s effort “to effectively exercise control over the territory” and to the Head of State’s 31 December 2008 end-of-year address, which highlighted the necessity of basic and secondary education in Bakassi. Development partners

reinforced this consolidation: KI06 explained that “there was consolidation of investments via more intense International Cooperation,” and in Idabato a full-cycle primary school with three service houses was constructed for CFAF 115,712,780, funded externally inserted of the Ministry of Basic Education’s (MINEDUB) public investment budget.

Table 1: Schools Created in the Bakassi Peninsula by Subdivision and Year

S/N	School	Sub Division	Year Created
1	GS Idabato Inonso	Idabato	2010
2	Government School Ikeya	Idabato	2010
3	GBPS Jabana I	Idabato	2010
4	Government School Shell Greek	Idabato	2010
5	Government Nursery School Isangele	Isengele	2010
6	Government School Idibanyanga	Isengelle	2010
7	Government School Itanyanyang	Isengele	2012
8	Government School Jabana II	Idabato	2011
9	Government School John New Fishing Port	Kumbo Itindi	2011
10	Government School Gold Coast	Kombo Itindi	2011
11	GBNS Bamusso	Bamusso	2012
12	Government Nursery School Ekombe Liongo	Bamusso	2012
13	GBNS Bekumu	Bamusso	2012
14	GBNS Boa Balondo	Bamusso	2012
15	GBNS Baba Ekombe	Bamusso	2012
16	GBNS Bamusso Town	Bamusso	2012
17	Government School Iborefe	Kombo Itindi	2013
18	Government School Kombo Adibo	Kombo Itindi	2015
19	Government School New Jerusalem	Kombo Itindi	2019

Source: Field Data, 2025

Access and Retention Measures

Beyond infrastructure, government measures targeted the socio-economic conditions of access and staff retention. Education is free at both the primary and secondary level across Bakassi, with textbooks distributed for primary schools at no cost. A participant observed that “parents believed that it is their right and privilege to receive free gifts from the government.” To retain qualified staff in a historically under-resourced and insecure territory, the government introduced the “Bakassi Allowance,” intended, in the words of a participant, to make teachers “comfortable considering the challenges of the area” and to “Cameroonise the territory so that people will like to go and work there.”

Vocational and technical training also featured as an access measure. In Kombo Abedimo, KI05 participant indicated that “the government created a Technical College in Akwa with 6 specialties,” which by 2025/26 had expanded to nine specialties serving 58 students. In Isangele, KI04 noted that the government created SAR/SM in Isangele to empower the youths through training of skills acquisition, though the same participant acknowledged the facility has had no enrolled students since its creation and now stands abandoned. Enrolment growth was substantial relative to 2007 baselines across subdivisions; in Bamusso, the most populous subdivision, KI08 reported that by 2025/26 there were “twenty-five primary schools, with 2,850 pupils and 69 teachers, alongside five operating private primary schools.”

Peace Education in Classroom Practice

Distinct from infrastructure and access, participants described a deliberate, ongoing effort to embed peace education within everyday teaching. Key informants explained that “peace education has always been drummed up in the Bakassi Peninsula, teachers continue in the trend by promoting

peace education in classrooms to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create an enabling environment conducive to peace.” Participants reported that pupils are taught to avoid war and embrace a culture of peace for social cohesion, reinforced on national commemorative dates such as 11 February and 20 May, when, as one participant put it, “the importance of peace is strongly highlighted in most speeches.”

This emphasis is supported by structured oversight. A participant (KI10) indicated that “lesson plans, notes and the states of the classrooms are always evaluated by a team of experts from the government” as part of pedagogical mentorship. The government further introduced five-year contractual bonding for teachers transferred to Bakassi, a measure KI10 linked directly to sustaining “continuity in education” in the territory.

Challenges

Despite these measures, findings revealed significant gaps that qualify the picture above. Several government-created schools remain non-functional due to insecurity. Participant (KI06; KI08; KI103) indicated that some teachers are irregular and others have abandoned duty, some of the schools that were created by the government are not functioning because of insecurity these include; Government schools of Iborefe, Kombo Adibo and John New Fishing Port in Kumbo Itindi Sub Division. Within Isangele sub division GS Affiasong and Itayanyang are not functioning. Still on the non-functionality of schools, in the Bamusso area GS) Bobidgo, Medie, Baba Ekombe and Ekombe Waterfall, also, frequent withdrawal of children from schools by parents for fishing activities at times exceeding for weeks or months. This was pointed out by all participants and refusal to register children for official examinations by some Nigerians. Insufficient structure and equipment in some of the schools making it difficult to effectively carry out the teaching learning process. Consistent kidnapped activities and timid execution of contracts by some contractors in the construction of classrooms and residences for teachers.

Participants consistently identified the suspension of the Bakassi Allowance since 2017 as a major grievance. A key informant stated that teachers “have made several attempts to follow-up, yet nothing has been done, and they have even addressed a letter to the Head of State on this problem and [remain without a response].”. Several participants additionally cited lack of text books, limited desks, persistent kidnapping incidents, and slow contract execution as ongoing constraints. Schools in Idabato are reported to be composed entirely of pupils of Nigerian origin and the original Idabato II primary school constructed by the Lekunze Commission was subsequently lost to coastal erosion.

Result and Discussion

Findings on infrastructural and institutional development indicate a sustained state effort to rebuild educational presence in Bakassi since 2007. The scale of investment; from Military Engineering Corps rehabilitation projects to the creation of a Government Teachers’ Training College and the steady expansion of school infrastructure through 2025/26 extends Ondo’s account of socio-economic reconstruction in the territory. pattern of investment corresponds closely to what Galtung terms positive peace: the construction of structures intended to sustain peace over time. It also satisfies the institutional restoration dimension of the UN Secretary-General’s [39] model. This pattern of state-led school construction and staffing bears comparison with Rwanda’s post-genocide educational reconstruction, where infrastructural rebuilding was similarly used as a visible signal of state recommitment to affected communities. The Bakassi case diverges, however, in one important respect: Rwanda’s reforms were accompanied by an explicit, curriculum-embedded reconciliation agenda, whereas peace education in Bakassi remains an informal, teacher-driven practice. This distinction is consistent with Fonka finding that peace education is rarely formalised within Cameroonian curricula.

The access and retention measures that followed; free education, the Bakassi Allowance, and vocational training initiatives such as the Technical College in Akwa extend this institutional effort into the socio-economic domain and addressed the third of the UN Secretary-General’s dimensions directly. These measures correspond to what Smith identified as one of education’s central peacebuilding functions: restoring public trust in state institutions by making that presence tangible and beneficial to residents. The underused SAR/SM facility in Isangele is a useful counterpoint here, however: its creation without subsequent enrolment suggests that infrastructural and administrative commitment does not automatically translate into functional, trusted institutions on the ground; a gap between state intention and lived outcome that recurs throughout these findings and one that lends empirical weight to Lederach’s broader caution that institutional measures alone do not guarantee genuine social transformation.

The classroom-level peace education findings reinforce this logic at the classroom level. Teachers' framing of conflict avoidance and social cohesion during instruction, reinforced through national commemorative events and pedagogical oversight, aligns closely with the dispositional and attitudinal goals peace education scholarship assigns to schools. That this messaging is actively monitored through lesson plan evaluation and teacher seminars. The government treats peace education as instrument of post-conflict policy, which is itself a notable finding given that peace education is not always embedded so intentionally in Cameroonian curricula more broadly.

The challenges reported by participants complicate the picture considerably. The persistence of non-functional schools and the suspension of the Bakassi Allowance since 2017 lend support to Ngalim's finding that resettlement and development in Bakassi remain unfinished more than a decade on, while recurring insecurity affecting school operation echoes Kpwa's observation that civilian institution-building in the territory remains constrained by ongoing militarisation and instability. Participants attributed some school closures in Bamusso to the Anglophone crisis; a conflict distinct from, but geographically and administratively overlapping with, the Bakassi settlement itself. This finding situates Bakassi's educational peacebuilding within the Anglophone crisis literature, where conflict has been shown to damage infrastructure, displace students, and undermine teacher retention elsewhere in the country. Bakassi's educational recovery is not insulated from conflict in the North West and South West regions. Some challenges reported by participants is better understood as spillover from the ongoing Anglophone conflict. This overlap informs how Cameroon's peacebuilding initiatives in Bakassi should be understood. The school closures in Bamusso as a result stem from Anglophone-crisis in the North West and South West region, holding the Bakassi Priority Projects Committee accountable for their resolution risks misdiagnosing the problem. The relevant policy lever is Cameroon's national response to the Anglophone crisis, not further investment through Bakassi-specific development channels. Disentangling these two conflicts is a precondition for targeting future intervention effectively, a distinction the existing literature has not examined.

The most sensitive finding concerns the citizenship composition of schools in Idabato, where enrolment is reported to be entirely Nigerian in origin, alongside reported refusals by some residents to register children for official examinations. Bamidele's characterisation of post-handover Bakassi as a continuing site of statelessness and weak institutional protection, and against Nwoko's earlier finding that Bakassi inhabitants were largely excluded from the negotiations that determined their territory's fate, this finding indicate an emerging threat to peace and an outstanding question of citizenship and belonging that the education sector has absorbed without resolving. Schools in this subdivision are, in effect, administering education to a population whose formal relationship to the Cameroonian state remains ambiguous. This is a burden the education sector cannot be expected to carry on its own. This points to a clear limit on what educational peacebuilding alone can achieve: durable peace in Bakassi require citizenship and identity questions to be addressed directly, through administrative and diplomatic channels, alongside continued investment in schools.

These findings suggest answers to the three questions guiding this study. Cameroon has undertaken educational interventions in Bakassi since 2006; these interventions largely satisfy the institutional and structural dimensions of positive peacebuilding in Galtung's and the UN Secretary-General's terms, extending well beyond mere restoration of pre-conflict schooling, though the underused SAR/SM facility and the unresolved allowance dispute show that institutional commitment does not uniformly translate into consolidated, trusted outcomes; and the principal structural obstacle limiting education's contribution to durable peace is not primarily educational at all, but the unresolved citizenship status of long-settled residents, compounded by spillover effects from the ongoing Anglophone crisis. This distinction provides the basis for the recommendations that follow, which distinguish near-term measures to consolidate the education sector's own gains from the longer-term political engagement that the citizenship question requires.

Conclusion

The main objective of this research was to appraise the peacebuilding initiative in the Bakassi Peninsula within the education sector. The government has made significant contributions after the official handover of the territory despite some short comings. They have imparted positively, each sub division with regard to education. There are proven records or evidence of the government positive actions in the educational sector in the Bakassi Peninsula such as, improvement in enrolment of pupils/students, increase in staff strength, infrastructural development in schools,

distribution of books, housing facilities, free education, Bakassi Allowance. All these are good indicators to foster sustainable development.

This paper has appraised post-conflict peacebuilding in the education sector of the Bakassi Peninsula and addressed the knowledge gap identified in the literature. This appraisal found that institutional and infrastructural gains have not been matched by consistent follow-through. Non-functional schools, the unresolved suspension of the Bakassi Allowance since 2017, and recurring insecurity indicate that Cameroon's peacebuilding effort in Bakassi remains incomplete. This study found that the citizenship composition of some subdivisions' schools points to an unresolved question of statelessness and belonging that education alone cannot address. This suggests a broader conclusion for the peacebuilding literature. Educational investment can advance the institutional and socio-economic dimensions of post-conflict recovery, but durable peace in a contested border territory ultimately depends on resolving the underlying questions of identity and citizenship that education cannot settle on its own.

These findings point to several priorities for the Cameroonian government. The suspended Bakassi Allowance should be reinstated as a matter of urgency, given its documented effect on teacher morale and retention; non-functional schools in Kombo Itindi, Isangele, and Bamusso should be restored to operation; and the citizenship and registration status of long-settled residents in subdivisions such as Idabato should be addressed through direct administrative and diplomatic engagement. Given that fishing remains the principal income activity in the area, the government should further consider establishing a Rural Artisanal Centre to build local capacity in this sector, complementing existing vocational training and helping to reduce the risk that unemployed or disengaged youth return to conflict-prone behavior. Continued deployment and periodic retraining of teachers in the territory would also help sustain the gains documented in this study.

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