Sustainable Management of Communal Violent Conflicts and Peaceful Co-Existence in Central Cross River State, Nigeria

Felix Onen Eteng, Ph.D
Department Of Public Administration
University Of Calabar, Nigeria

Uno Ijim Agbor, Ph.D
Department Of Public Administration
University Of Calabar, Nigeria

ABSTRACT
Communal conflicts in central Cross River State occur very frequently with attendant destruction of lives and property. At extreme cases, communities have been sacked with no hope of returning to start the process of rebuilding their ruins. Efforts put forward by the various governments along judicial and administrative panels of inquiry have merely been very temporary in dealing with the situations. The aim of this paper is to examine principally the profound cause(s) of the rampant communal conflict in central Cross River State, Nigeria and to suggest possible alternatives to reducing tension and bring about peaceful coexistence among warring communities in this area. The paper got data from the exploration of varied literature and participant observer narrations. The paper reveals that land is the principal factor in the escalation of communal conflict in central cross river state. The paper attributes this to the excessive dependence on land for economic survival. As a strategy for reducing violent communal conflict in this zone, the paper recommends among others, a diversification of the rural economy through engaging the youth in skill development programmes that would open a new window for survival and reduce their concentration and pressure on land for survival.

Keywords: Sustainable Management, Peaceful Co-existence, Communal Conflicts, Cross River State.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic clashes and violence are constantly occurring among communities around the world. Communal violence also referred to as non-state conflict, ethnic violence, violent civil unrest, inter communal violence, ethno-religious violence (Horowitz, 1985), have become common occurrence in Nigeria in general and constantly re-emerging in the central Cross River region of Nigeria.

Generally, communal violent conflict has a global human history and replete with incidences of violent communal conflicts. Medieval Europe's communal conflict wore more of religious identity. The 1516 Huguenots' procession in solidarity with the Protestants was resisted few days after by the Catholics who hunted down the leaders of the procession (Pierre-Jean, 2008). The same religious dimension resonated in the French society especially during the Catholics' procession with the statue of St Anthony. During this procession, the Protestants would haul stones at them precipitating into violent clashes (Ruff, 2001).The same played out in Switzerland between the reformation movement and Catholics (Gordon, 2002).

Communal conflict in Africa is a recurrent decimal. Nigeria in particular witnesses communal violent conflict in quick succession especially between different religious communities, mostly among Christians and Muslims groups (Huntington, 1993), famers and herdsmen and between tribal communities. Kenyans and Asians suffered much communal violence in Uganda in the late 1960s and early 1970 under the leadership of Idi Amin who justified the violence on the basis of his religious superiority(Kazozi,Musisi and sejjengo,1994), (Mutibwa,1992).In Egypt, there has been magnitude of violence against the Coptic Christians since the 1920s (Saleh,2013).The recent Cameroon violence which began in 2016 has recorded death and massive destruction of over 70 and killing of over two dozens of restorationists (separatists) in the town of Merka, in Cameroon Northwest Region in May 2018 (Cocks, 2018).

In Nigeria, communal conflict takes different dimensions, primarily manifested in ethnic conflicts and herder-famer conflicts. Ethnic conflicts in Nigeria are attributed to those opposed to each other along cultural or religious lines and identities. It has taken the form of clashes between neighboring contiguous communities as well as religious violence between Muslim and Christian communities. The herder-farmer conflicts involve altercation between cattle herders of mostly Fulani origin and crop famers of the Tiv and Tarok nationalities. The middle belt states of Benue, Plateau and Taraba are most affected by this kind of conflict. Between 2004 and 2011 and in 2015 specifically over 2,700 fatalities were recorded (ACLED, 2018). Beyond the herder-famer induced violence is the factor of land dispute as a veritable reason for communal conflicts. The violent conflict between the Ile-Ife and Modakeke in the 1990's, Aguleri and Amuleri in Enugu state and Ebonyi community crises in 2011 are typical examples (Abimboye, 2016 and the telegraph 2012).

No society replete with incessant violent conflicts progresses or develops meaningfully. Violent conflicts come with its attendant negative consequences. Akpenpoon (2013) argues that communal conflicts possess serious threat to human health. It increases widespread mental illness, fertilizes malnutrition especially among children because of limited access to the right kind of food and brings about common diseases such as Cholera and Diarrhoea. Wars and violent conflicts increase the prevalence of infectious diseases, STD's, damage to vaginal and urinal passages arising from traumatic rape (UNFRA, 2001).   Armed conflicts go beyond the number of death recorded in battlefields. It forces people to migrate unceremoniously to unfamiliar locations. It increases refugeeism with its attendant dehumanization and thus leads to the destruction of community infrastructure such as personal houses and private investments. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2015) summits that armed conflicts can permanently damage political, social, and economic institutions.

The driving force behind communal crises in the central area of Cross River State, Nigeria is the quest to control the increasingly shrinking land resource as a result of geometric increase in human population. Land as a major economic factor among agrarian population will continue to generate conflicting relationship among contiguous local communities. The consequences of violent communal conflicts underscore the need to avoid it. There is therefore the dire need for communities to coexist peacefully.

Central Cross River State, Nigeria is a geo-political zone comprising of six local government areas. These are: Yakurr, Abi, Obubra, Etung, Ikom, and Boki. The area consist of pockets of ethnic groups that lay claim to the Ekoi tribe (a Semi Bantu speaking people). Some of these ethnic groups include: Yakurr, Bahumonu, Agbo, Igbo, Mbembe,Ejagham and Yala-Nkum.All these are found in Cross River State which is located in the ancient oil river territory of the Niger Delta region which today is known as South-South geo-political zone. Predating 1960 which was the era of good will, central cross river state witnessed a high sense of friendliness

through trade and inter-communal marriages which promoted peace and freedom from suspicion (Forde, 1964). This oneness served as a bond of unity which was difficult to break as the people lived in harmony.

Unfortunately, over the years this spirit of friendliness, peace and unity became gradually eroded by the centrifugal forces of hatred, insecurity, communal conflict and wars in the area resulting in miserable socio-economic conditions among the people. This obnoxious condition promoted divisive tendencies which do not favour unity and peace. Drawing from Achebe's literary style, one may in a calmer literary manner describe the situation as one of "Things Fall Apart".

The main focus of this paper is to suggest ways to ensuring peaceful and sustainable coexistence in central Cross River State. The continuous communal violence witnessed in the area in quick succession with failed efforts to arrest it justifies this paper. How conflicts are managed would determine to a large extent whether peaceful coexistence of warring communities can be sustained or not. This is the problematique of this paper.

What then are the factors that continually threaten the peace and unity of the people of central Cross River? How can conflicts in the area be managed to bring about peaceful coexistence? The paper would attempt to provide answers to these questions.

DIALECTICS OF SUSTAINABLE COEXISTENCE

Peaceful coexistence is part of the desire of humanity. A continuous condition of violence and tension is inimical to human progress and society. The United Nations addresses unconditionally the principle of peaceful coexistence. They pursue this by respecting the sovereign equality of member states, cooperate to fight common problems e.g. terrorism, promote peace and security through dialogue as well as attempt the promotion of common development of the world economy. In our context, peaceful coexistence is built around mutual respect for each local community, the understanding of not interfering in the right and property of the other, the respect for one another, and common drives towards avoiding conflict.

Coexistence can be structural and subjective (Chrisberg, 1998). Structural coexistence is seen along the line of integration or separation between groups. These groups are inter-dependent. Their degrees of interaction could be equal and unequal. When local communities are inter dependent on themselves over a large period of time arising perhaps from land leasing for farming, attempt to free up that relationship often leads to tension and violent conflicts. Subjective coexistence reflects tolerance and respect for each other. At times this mutual respect could give way as communities place more respect and values on their natives than other communities. Prolong interactions and inter communal relationships likely brings tolerance between neighbouring communities.

The utility of peaceful coexistence is myriad. It fosters respect for humanity and reduces tension. It reduces wishful destruction of property arising from communal war. Human elements within communities can invest and nurture their businesses without fear. Izueke, Okoli and Nzekwe (2014) argue that peaceful coexistence is a veritable ingredient for human capital development and sustainable development.

Sustainable coexistence in common parlance means "you live, I live continually by our efforts and understanding". It is living continually along side with others in peace and unity. However, although there is no single way of achieving sustainable coexistence, it is believed that all

people must chart their part of progress taking its specific conditions into consideration. Most people will agree that sustainable coexistence is a process by which a society achieves improvement in all aspects of its existence. These development processes are usually expressed in the following areas:
- Social sustainability
- Economic sustainability
- Environmental sustainability
- Institutional sustainability

The development process of today tends to reflect the Marxist contention that sustainable coexistence process is a dialectical one. This shows that the process not only produces continuity but discontinuity, not only social and institutional harmony but also social conflict which affects institutional sustainability. A good version of this Marxist view is the idea that capitalist's accumulation process result in the production of not only wealth but poverty which tend to alienate people in the process because of excessive accumulation of misery.

Recent reflection of sustainable coexistence of our time particularly in central cross river state supports the Marxist opinion because only few livelihood systems may qualify as sustainable process because of poverty and suspicion among the components units. Smaller and weaker communities may feel dominated or alienated by others and will want to pull out from such a coalition. This was certainly the situation that crystallized into the formation of the defunct EMIN (an acronym for Ekori, Mkpani, Idomi and Nko) as a socio-political coalition against Ugep with the exception of Assiga and Agoi communities. Nevertheless, sustainable coexistence is a fundamental goal which must be pursued with zeal, and its pursuit should be able to impact on all support activities. Progress made so far can be assessed periodically to see if full sustainable coexistence is achieved or not.

Social sustainability is achieved when there is equity and fair play, justice, and no discrimination in terms of gender or where you come from. However, in time past, particular group of people from the present Ebonyi State and some parts of Abi Local Government Area in Cross River State have been discriminated and stigmatized as inferior because of labour migration to other parts of central cross river state to make mounts for yam cultivation. Many other communities suffer this collapse of ego due to labour migration. Today, people migrate to Alisi in Ikom and Agoi area in Yakurr for labour and sustainable life process. The same applies to other neighbouring communities. All these people should be treated without stigmatization. In terms of residency, people should not be discriminated for settling in other communities.

Environmental sustainability can be achieved if the natural resources of a place are conserved or enhanced for the benefit of the unborn generation. Therefore, tree felling should be replaced with tree planting process especially palm trees for our traditional palm wine drinkers, timber and iroko trees. Economic sustainability is achieved when a baseline economic welfare is obtained. In line with the international development target, it is achieved when an individual cannot earn below the dollar-a-day target or below the bread level. Institutional sustainability requires well defined laws that can promote citizens participation in the decision making process.

From the foregoing, sustainable coexistence can only be brought about if the reasons for the pursuit of peace and unity are effectively implemented. For improvement to be made towards this, certain conditions must exist. These include the people's willingness to respect one another including the law of the land. Similarly, there must be a continuous capacity of the

various communities to pursue growth in the social, economic and political sectors (Ndiyo, 2008).

FACTORS AT THE CORE OF VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN CENTRAL CROSS RIVER STATE

The series of wars and communal conflicts in some parts of central Cross River State are traceable to a number of factors which are outlined below.

Land

Most of the conflicts that precipitated into war are traceable to land disputes. Land is an important asset which determines the sustainable life process of an individual or people. It is globally recognized as an important asset which determines all other means of production. All nations clamour for land. This was for sure why Europe in her civilizing mission to Africa became crazy for our land as a source of raw material for her industrial class. They came with the Bible and we had the land. Today, they took over our land and gave us the Bible. Among the African states, the clamour and agitation for freedom was tied to land. The Mau Mau warfare in Kenya, Maji Maji episode in Tanzania, and the freedom fighters in colonial South Africa were over the struggle for their land which was the hope for their existence. It is a major source of communal conflict among agrarian population. Table 1 captures communities engaged in violent conflicts arising from land struggle.

Table 1: Violent Communal Conflicts Attributed to Land Struggle

Communities	Local Government Area	Year of Violence
Ugep – Mkpani	Yakurr	1987
Ugep – Idomi	Yakurr	1982
Ugep – Adim	Yakurr-Biase	1996
Ebom – Ebijakara	Abi	2006
Ediba – Usumutong	Abi	2006, 2017
Ebom – Usumutong	Abi	1979
Okuni-Akam	Ikom	2006
Bendeghe-Akparabong	Etung/Ikom	2016
Mbembe-Ntansella	Obubra/Ikom	1993
Apiapum-Ofatura	Obubra	2002
Nko – Onyadama	Yakurr/Obubra	2009/2016/2017
Inyima-Onyadama	Yakurr/Obubra	2006, 2009, 2017, 2018, 2013
Inyima-Ekpeti	Yakurr	2018
Mkpani – Nko	Yakurr	2018

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

The expanding population of communities within central Cross River increases pressure on available land. As agrarian communities, economic survival is largely dependent on land cultivation. Claim of trespassing and counter claims without a convincing conflict resolution mechanism has been the reason for communal war common in the central area of Cross River State. Table 1 shows that Yakurr communities witnessed land related communal war than the

other local governments in the zone. Ugep alone in this local government recorded three clashes. A lot of factors could explain this. The Yakurr communities are thickly populated with most of the farm lands closer to the settlements becoming residential layout. This of course has reduced the land space available for farming. Every community therefore guards his farm land with special dedication. Any slightest trespass provokes skirmishes of massive destruction of lives and property. This is common among agrarian communities with expanding population. Ujoh (2014) had submitted in the case of Tiv people of middle belt Nigeria, that inter and intra communal conflicts in Tiv communities have a causal relationship with the "declining per capita land ownership and scarcity of cultivable land". In a similar study, Oravee (2015) studying conflicts in Tiv land attributed it to struggle for farm land. The result of the study conducted by Abekunle (2011) on South western Nigeria revealed that land is the main cause of inter communal conflicts. This establishes clearly the position of land in communal conflicts in Nigeria.

In central cross river state communities, land determines the existence and progress of the people. With land food production in terms of garri, cassava and yams is made possible in order to sustain the teeming population. This makes the pursuit for land to be unavoidable. With high fertility rate and pressure on limited land, the tendency has always been for people to wrongfully claim land that does not belong to them or go beyond the land mark. Any opposition to this by the other group is seen as a threat to the survival of the individuals concerned. Protracted struggle for the ownership of land often resort to shedding of blood or murder as the case may be resulting in communal war.

Poverty

Poverty is often referred to as lack of basic needs of an individual which may be relative or absolute. Poverty is the bane of development in central Cross River State. Eteng, (2018) vividly described the poverty situation in the area as follows:

> You can see it on the walls of our streets. You can notice it in our kind of buildings and settlement pattern. You can see it on our farm roads within our communities. It is most noticeable in the clothes we wear; in our cooking utensils, in our diet, and the manner the youths address their elders. During rainy reason, you can notice poverty in the number of leaking roofs, insect bites, typhoid, and malaria infection.

Poverty is extremely humiliating. You can feel it in the sense of relying on others for your needs. You can also feel it in an attempt to seek help from others particularly those who may be friends or relatives. In poverty, you are forced to accept insult and abuses when you meet your brother or sister for assistance.

> From birth to death, the poor remain destitute in the society. Death and want haunt the poor always. Afflictions and distress stare at his face(Odumoso,1991)

In central Cross River State, the most agonizing component of poverty is mental poverty which results in lack of family planning. This situation has led to population increase without corresponding welfare schemes to cater for the teeming population. Consequently, miscreants are born and as they grow they resort to secret cult activities or armed robbery thereby creating social problems which threaten the peace and unity of the various communities. Mental poverty gives rise to mental problems. This has resulted in stressful condition triggered by the burden of training the increasing number of children in our families. When a family cannot provide basic education to the children, it creates a problem. Many who failed to educate their children merely spread misery in the society and when they die, they feel happier than those they left behind to mourn them (Odumoso, 1991). Others who survive the scourge of poverty often burst into a quarrelsome attitude at the slightest anger which brings conflict

while others resort to drunkenness as a way of escape from the heavily hearted depressive conditions of life.

Poverty has led to aggressive behaviour in central Cross River State. It stimulates aggressive instinct in man which forces him to fight, kill and destroy. Such people are dangerous to the society because with frustration due to poverty and inability to satisfy their needs, aggression becomes a means to achieve their goal. This condition precipitated into the Nko/Mkpani crisis of 2016 where violence became the order of the day.

Politics

Politics have divided the people rather than unite them. As a zero sum game in which losses of one is the gains of others, politics is a deadly virtue. A German scholar, Eugene Khorll views politics as the madness of many for the benefit of a few. Lasswell sees it as "Who gets what, when and how", while David Easton, an American political scientist defines it as "authoritative allocation of values".

Politics abhors kindness. Being kind to your political opponent is one of the worst political diseases. Therefore, in the opinion of Nicolo Machiavelli in his book titled *ThePRINCE*, all political opponents must completely be eradicated as the end justifies the means. The essence of politics is power to the exclusion of other considerations. This political interest has led to the emergence of patron/client relationship in which those who occupy political positions see it as largess for those who supported them during electioneering campaigns. Consequently, a crop of youths occasioned by unemployment preferred to fellow their master for benefits which they will get only and if only their master gets into power at all cost. Some of these people have been waiting for time to demonstrate their aggressive instinct as they belong to secret cult and other anti-social groups. They have for long been marginalized and frustrated. Therefore, with political activities leading toward achieving a fruitful goal, unreasonable emotional feelings begin to set high in their minds resulting in tension which only finds an outlet in communal conflict. In central Cross River State, this form of aggressive behavior demonstrated by blood thirsty and warlike individuals creates tension, insecurity and stress in the socio-political system of the area.

Politics creates a vicious cycle of poverty in which the poor are denied any form of empowerment until they become powerless to resist the continuous oppression of the rich. In politics, the rich rely on the votes of the poor. Most often, the poor are used as "security tools" to protect the rich while the rich merely slightly provide money and other largess in exchange for their services. This type of relationship between the rich and the poor in the various communities have resulted in conflict which the rich takes advantage of by supplying ammunitions and weapons to the poor against their opponents. In most cases, these dangerous weapons are used against neighbouring communities at any slightest provocation or land dispute. Youth took over the entire locality in violent attack over political patronages which some groups felt shortchanged. Political disagreement on candidate choices has led to series of conflict in central Cross River State.

Leadership

Leadership is the life blood of any community. Leadership requires intuition, wisdom and focus. A good leader must have the capacity to see far beyond his followers or his contemporaries. These leadership examples have been demonstrated by African leaders like Nkrumah of Ghana, Nyerere of Tanzania, Mandela of South Africa and Wilson Churchill of Europe. A leader needs coherence for adequate coordination among the various segments of his domain. To succeed in leadership, one needs complete application and full utilization of

wisdom in the selection of words at a given situation, emotional control and being aware of the psychology of the followers.

In central Cross River State, there is a problem of providing the kind of leadership needed. Each and all of the leaders have tremendous charisma. Each potentially possessed good qualification to emerge as a leader in his territorial jurisdiction. Unfortunately, local leaders are not usually accorded the respect and value required in some quarters and this limits their capacity to implement decisions. In some cases, their followers usually become arrogant and aggressive shunning directives from leaders rather than accepting what the leadership suggests.

Although there is need for a Ghandi or a Washington in the area, that need is never met. The failure to satisfy this basic need meant one thing. It meant there is leadership vacuum which need to be occupied. Because nature abhors a vacuum, the vacancy in the management of the various community enterprise came to be filled not by leaders but by politicians whose inordinate ambitions and discretions is to create confusion and division among the people by subjecting the leaders to be under their whims and caprice.

Traditional institutions are gradually eroded as a result of political influence on traditional rulers who now see politics as a source of livelihood or welfare for themselves and their families. These palliative treatments of traditional rulers have consequently changed their well known orientation into world class political leaders in their respective domains. However, these sudden shifts have caused the various youths in their domain to see traditional institutions as not capable of maintaining peace and unity. This makes the youths to be deeply engulfed in the agitation crisis which currently have set villages into perpetual communal crises.

COMMUNAL CONFLICTS AND THE LOSSES IN CENTRAL CROSS RIVER STATE

In this section, the paper attempts to present the losses incurred in the captured communal crises in central Cross River State. The result is presented in both human and material losses. Although there is no readymade data on the rate and direction of losses witnessed in all these clashes, efforts have been made to retrieve the relevant information from available written sources and from participant observers.

Table 2: Warring Communities And The Nature Of Losses

COMMUNITIES	LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA	NATURE OF LOSSES	
		HUMAN	MATERIAL
Mkpani-Nko	Yakurr	7	2 Fuel stations, 1 Private clinic, 2 Private houses, 1 welder's shop, 1 school building, Destruction of farmland and yambarns
Inyima-Onyadama	Yakurr-Obubra	9	10 Houses destroyed
Boje-Nsadop	Boki	400	2000 Houses razed down, 230million Naira in property damaged (Wikipedia)
Boje-Isobendeghe	Boki	3	
Beebo-Okwabang	Boki	2	
Ugep-Idomi	Yakurr	5	Idomi Secondary School razed
Ugep-Mkpani	Yakurr	NA	NA
Ugep-Adim	Yakurr/Biase		Health Centre razed down in Adim, Fuel station razed down in Adim
Ebom-Ebijakara	Abi	235	All the houses and economic trees in Ebijakara brought down,250 houses of Ebom razed down
Nta Nselle-Mbembe	Ikom-Obubra	6	Ofonokpan-Mbembe sacked from their homes.
Akparabong-BendegheEkim (2016)	Ikom – Etung		Houses were razed down.
Ajasor-Efraya	Etung	3	Houses and domestic animals destroyed
Ediba - Usumutong	Abi	NA	NA
Okuni - Akam	Ikom	NA	NA
Iyamitet-Adun	Obubra	10	Several houses destroyed
Total		691	

Sources: Wikipedia (2018), Okoro (2016), Una (2016), Yakurr Online (2016), Uchechukwu (2018), Eribake (2010), Edem (2010), Otuson (2018), Okoi (2012), Affe(2018)
NA: Not Available

Available sources as indicated on the table shows that human lives in excess of 690 (six hundred and ninety) have been lost to communal clashes in the central area of Cross River state. Material losses have been very monumental in the case of NSadop - Boje clash. Property worth 230 million naira were destroyed (Wikipedia).The clash also witnessed the highest loss of human lives.
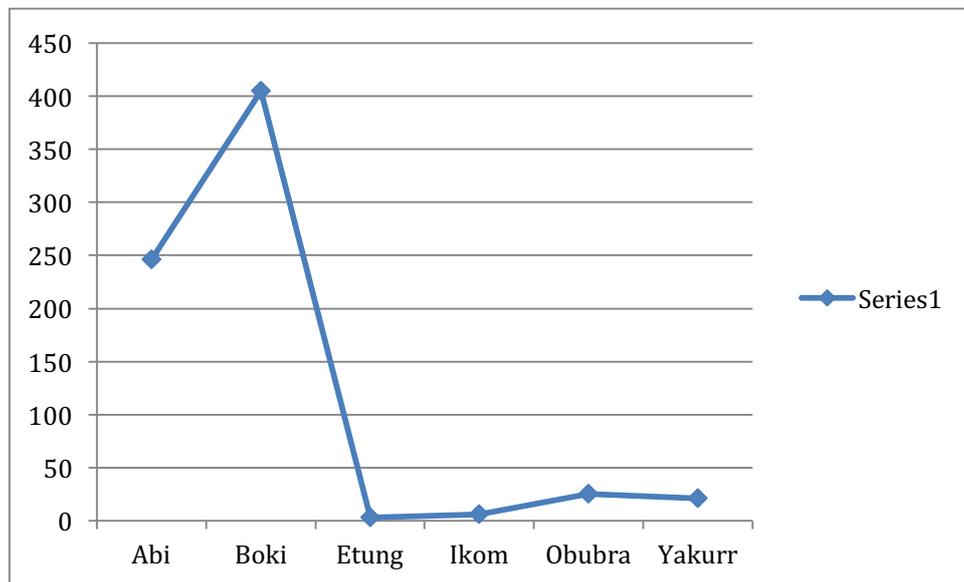

Figure 1: Chart showing the degree of human losses by local government areas

The figure above shows that Boki local government area recorded the highest human losses from the communal clashes among its communities. This is followed by Abi local government area and Etung local government area recording the least human losses. In terms of frequency of occurrence of communal clashes, Yakurr local government is uppermost followed by Abi, Obubra and Boki.

The general impact assessment of this communal conflict reveals that the various communities suffer economic hardship, loose of lives, and most times destruction of property which is usually suffered by the weaker community as was observed in the burning of Ekpeti in Yakurr Local Government Area, Nta Nselle in Ikom Local Government Area and some parts of Mkpani in Yakurr during communal wars. Some communities have been extinct. These are Ebijakara in Abi Local Government and Ofonokpan in Obubra where the natives have been displaced from their original ancestral homes and are now scattered "Insitu" in many areas of cross river state. The effect of these wars on the education of their children, peace and economic welfare is inestimable and cannot be quantified in terms of monetary and emotional values.

THE NECESSITY OF THE ETHNO-CULTURAL PROCEDURE FOR MANAGING COMMUNAL CONFLICTS IN CENTRAL CROSS RIVER

Although the government and nongovernmental stakeholders have in the past tried to handle this situation, yet the various efforts of the people and the various administrative panels established by government to settle this problem proved ineffective (Eteng & Eja, 2017).

The management of communal conflict requires wisdom and tact. This is because communal conflict may involve more than two parties as most people usually view it. There may be other parties or groups with diverse shades of interest and opinion that can escalate the situation and make it difficult to handle. An agreement at only one level will not necessarily bring

solution to the existing problem. It is therefore essential to identify the relevant parties involved and their interests as this is the first step in communal conflict management.

Communal conflict management for peace may be through government intervention by the use of force or by the traditional method of managing conflict situations. Government may utilize force to impose its will upon the warring groups in order to suppress opposition or resistance. The government may also use other means like arbitration or adjudication (use of court) to reach an agreement for peace as a compulsory settlement procedure. In most cases, government may require to provide negotiating procedure as a voluntary settlement process only if the warring groups are willing to abide by the rule of the settlement. It may also require the use of "specialist mediators" to try to convince both parties on the need to come to terms with each other by adjusting their behavior for the realization of their expectations. This type of conflict management procedure is usually applicable to an industrial dispute involving workers and their employers.

Unfortunately, despite the various conflict management techniques by the government, communal crisis culminating in war situations continue to escalate unabated in alarming proportion as society becomes "out of joint". Generally people no longer express confidence in government settlement procedure because of bureaucratic oppression or bottleneck. This lamentable condition has resulted in the outbreak of series of crises that could otherwise have been averted. Take for instance, the 1964 Supreme Court judgment on Ebom/Ebijakara land disputes and the government white paper report on Ugep/Idomi land problem were never implemented by the government. Consequently, the various warring parties refused to honour the agreement and government could do nothing about it.

This worrisome situation had led to people to clamour for the reinvigoration of the traditional method of settling communal conflicts. This method is most acceptable because it is founded on truth and consistency. It has the capacity to stabilize the system and reintegrate the people back into their original communal relationship. It involves the traditional role of clan heads and village heads. This peace conciliation or movement is designed to help the conflicting parties come to agreement. When the warring parties agree for peace settlement, they are usually expected with items listed as required by cultural tradition for presentation at the peace conference venue. This step is then followed by what is customarily described as the "washing of hands" which symbolizes agreement for peaceful coexistence. This is the general prevailing conflict management procedure among the Ekoi people in central cross river state.

WAY FORWARD TO PEACEFUL & SUSTAINABLE COEXISTENCE IN CENTRAL CROSS RIVER STATE

 True and indivisible peace and unity in central cross river state is only in buying and selling in market places. All other grounds for peace and unity are merely enduring grounds which like time bomb only wait for time to explode at the slightest provocation. Therefore, due to this precarious condition in the area, the following are the strategic framework which should serve as a panacea to conflict management in central cross river state.

Diversification Of The Rural Economy
The dominant peasant farming system in central cross river state heavily depends on the availability of scarce and limited land. Some of these lands have been over used and have lost fertility value. In some cases due to population pressure what goes for land cannot sustain a family livelihood. Therefore, to escape from this vicious cycle of limited land with loss of fertility, there is need for the diversification of the economy. This involves people going into different productive ventures or businesses for wealth creation. This will reduce pressure on

land thereby reducing communal conflict due to land. Although many of the youths are currently engaged in the riding of commercial motor cycles for wealth creation, yet many are still left without jobs to cater for their families. Some have driver's licenses without vehicles to drive. Others have skills without tools for empowerment. It is therefore necessary to equip these youths with necessary tools to empower them for a better tomorrow. Elites, Civil Society, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders should come to the rescue of the people. This call to duty can be achieved through instituting welfare schemes or establishing skill development centers sponsored especially by central Cross River State elites and the local government councils.

Poverty Reduction

As already indicated, the absence of resources to cushion the harsh effect of poverty causes men and women in all societies to be aggressive. In central cross river state, this situation has led to series of communal conflicts which make peace and unity difficult to maintain. In order to promote peace and unity, people need to be happy and be sure of tomorrow. To achieve this, a target approach in which poverty reduction programme is directed specifically at the poor need to be put in place. This involves social safety nets, micro credits and ward meal programme to assist the poor. Targeting should involve local land contingent targeting, ward or geographical targeting, household-size targeting or age group targeting.

Providing basic needs such as food, shelter, health facilities, rural water supply, mass transit are approaches to reduce poverty. This calls for a bottom-up approach where the poor are assisted to participate in the development process or projects in their area thereby ensuring the hospitality of the projects. Employment or job creation approach is also required in poverty reduction. This implies providing useful employment opportunities for the teeming unemployed in our communities. Job creation through elites assisted programmes helps to sustain the livelihood of the poor. This can be achieved through providing vocational training centres, youth empowerment and skill acquisition programmes. It is imperative therefore for the elites to provide these people with tools or basic structure of sustaining the apprentice when they finally complete learning their job.

Culture

Culture describes the way of life of a people in terms of their dressing, food habit, songs, dance, greetings, technology and poetry. Culture is associated with behavioural patterns which gives identity. Bad culture establishes bad values which stigmatizes the individuals who come from such a society. A Nigerian in some parts of Europe is stigmatized as a cheat. In Ghana, a Nigerian is known by his bogus lifestyle and his ability to shunt queue. People generally feel so proud of their culture and most often look upon themselves as civilized and intelligent individuals. This ego gives them pride and arrogance over others in the society. It is high time to approach life with humility and righteousness.

In terms of culture, there are certain discernable elements that need to be filtered out or be completely eradicated. These discernable elements find expression in songs and dance groups which stir up aggressive spirit that stimulate people to war. Some of these dance groups like Etangala, Obam and Ukwa war dances in Yakurr need to be restructured or modified to suit modernization trends which is common in other parts of Europe. There is a spirit behind every life process. If the peoples' cosmological orientation is for peace and unity, then there is need to modify the cultural values of the people. This is because the spirit of war dances is capable of stirring others to want to possess human skull against the tenets of modern civilization. Therefore, development processes that require people to be like other advanced nations calls for a modification of primitive cultures.

Leadership/Politics

It is sometimes difficult to divorce leadership from politics. This is because leadership involves political influence in order to mould, direct and guide people towards goal achievement. Since separating politics from leadership is a difficult task, it is necessary to treat it as such. Therefore, to achieve peace and unity in central cross river state, traditional rulers should see themselves as institutions that are saddled with the responsibility of ensuring that their well known ancestral obligations and heritage are carefully preserved. As the custodians of tradition and customs in their domain, they should set the limit for political influence so as to preserve native political organizations.

This spirit of preserving the traditions of the people without political influence will however create a new feeling of awareness among indigenes that will now begin to see them as a sacred instrument for peace and conflict resolution. As Royal Fathers, traditional rulers should ensure that political activities especially during electioneering campaigns within their domains are carried out in line with the laws and regulations governing such events. They should not be given to the whims and caprice of the politicians rather they should be strong enough and be in full control of their territorial jurisdictions so as to resist prebendalism.

Property Ownership In Other Communities

Owning property such as houses or land in other communities is an integral tool for continuous coexistence in central cross river state. Several central cross river state communities do not see the need to own property in other people's land because of the fear that in crisis situation such property will be destroyed. The same is true in terms of being resident in other communities. Most villages see themselves as autonomous and completely different from others. This quality of life is antithetical to peace and unity. Although people have the right to take decisions about where to own property, having houses or land in other villages help to minimize if not eradicate war. This is because individuals who own property will not want to lose their property. Therefore, when tension is high that may likely degenerate to war, it is such property owners who will strongly stand as intermediaries to avert the impending war situation. This paper therefore encourages inter community property ownership especially by elites.

Security

Security is an indispensable instrument for peace and unity in central cross river state. It involves the protection of lives, property and that of strangers resident or sojourning in the land. When it is lacking, society becomes lawless resulting in hostage taking (kidnapping), ritual killing, social unrest, armed robbery, intra-ethnic tension and domestic terrorism (Eteng&Eja, 2017).

In central cross river state, outsiders regard the area as a reserve place at territorial blood sucking demons that stir people to war when they are thirsty for blood which causes conflict among the people. This negative impression of the area affects tourists' attraction to the area. Consequently, security should be taken serious. The Royal Fathers, politicians, elites, and other stakeholders should co-operate to promote lasting peace and unity in the area.

CONCLUSION

Communal conflict is common in Africa and occurs frequently when communities disagree over matters of interest affecting them. Central Cross River State witnesses communal conflicts in quick succession. Each of these clashes records wanton destruction of lives and property. Some extreme cases have seen communities sacked completely and going extinct without any hope of going back to their ancestral homes as can be seen in the case of Ebijakara. The

Nsadop-Boje communal clash recorded one of the worst crises in the area. These clashes have been attributed largely to struggle over land. This is commonly so because as agrarian communities, survival is largely driven by land. Land ownership struggle therefore, leads tremendously to communal clashes in this area.

The paper concludes that communal conflict will continue in a higher scale in this area so long as the only major source of survival remains land. The paper recommends a rescue, among others, in the diversification of the rural economies by instituting a robust skill development and acquisition programmes for the youth by the local government councils and the rich elites of these rural communities. This will likely reduce so much attention on land as a major means of survival.

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