Civil Society Organisations and Conflict Management: The Nigerian Experience

Irene, Oseremen Felix, PhD
Department of Public Administration
Mountain Top University, Nigeria
E-mail: osereme1@gmail.com, ofirene@mtu.edu.ng
Phone: +2348026659958

Majekodunmi, Samuel
Department of Business Administration
Mountain Top University, Nigeria
E-mail: majekodunmisamuel@yahoo.com
Phone +23408033869215

Abstract

Intra-state violent conflicts have been on the rise in many states in recent years. Climate change has been negatively affecting available resources in many communities, and this contributes to the spate of unhealthy competitions and violent conflicts in many communities. This is further compounded by the increasing waves of terrorism. Nigeria is not spared of this experience. From North to South, East to West, violent conflicts have negatively impacted on public service delivery and business activities in the world largest community of blacks creating a drawback in the development stride in local communities and society at large. There have been attempts by successive governments to address the violent conflicts, but much of which have been through the use of government security agents, and since violence begets violence, the approach has not

really resulted in positive peace required to create the right business clime for the people. Following this, civil society organisations stepped in with a view to filling the gap occasioned by government's failure to effectively manage the situations. The various civil society organisations explored tools, from traditional religion, Christian religion and modern conflict resolution mechanism to intervene in the conflicts. This paper examined the roles of these organisations in conflict intervention in Nigeria.

Key words: Civil society organisations, conflict, intervention, Nigerian experience, implication, public service delivery, business activities

Introduction

The history of inter-ethnic relations has been quite discordant in Nigeria. Imobighe (2003, p.13) noted that, Nigeria witnessed outbreak of not less than forty violent communal or ethnic conflicts within the first three years of the country's return to democratic rule in 1999. Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (2013) further reported that communal violence constitutes only 13% of overall violence in Nigeria, and that this approximately double the average continental rate in Africa. Furthermore, in its report, Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (2013) added that communal violence involving communally-identified groups such as ethnic or religious militias, mobs or rioters, has the highest level of fatalities per event of all kinds of violent interaction in Nigeria', and went further to state that communal violence has an extremely high human cost, and that although it is only a small share of overall violence, it is typically extremely fatal.

Nigeria's political elites, both military and civilians have consistently manipulated the differences among the ethnic formations for their own selfish interest. These interests, is believed, are fuelled by greed. Since the dawn of a new democratic era in Nigeria in 1999, the democratic experience has been tainted with political and communal violence. Onwudiwe (2004) asserted that while democracy has not been economically kind to many Nigerians, the prevalence of communal violence since 1999 ranks among its most bitter disappointments.

A number of factors have been linked to the causes of conflicts. Horowitz (1990) pinned down communal conflict to revolve around politics, politicians, and their pursuit of group advantage. Albert (2001) identified indigene/settler problem, religious differences, ownership of land and its resources, goals and aspirations of people as some of the factors that can ignite communal conflict in the country. Hembe (2000) indicated that political struggle and colonization, while Lyam (2000) mentioned loss of soil fertility, soil erosion, deforestation, bush burning and flooding as some of the causes of communal conflict. Yecho (2006) pointed out that the fundamental causes of communal conflict are poor economic conditions, high level of illiteracy, the quest for, and fear of domination by other groups, land disputes, market ownership, chieftaincy tussle and party politics. Onwudiwe (2004) also listed social conditions as

population explosion, economic migration, and the anti-poor policies of the government as triggers of communal friction. Whilst Varvar (2000) opined that increased demand for land for agriculture, unemployment, rural hunger, poverty impoverishment as communal conflict triggers. Deprivation, exploitation and domination of minority groups by major ethnic groups and leadership problem were highlighted by Angya and Doki (2006) as factors that can exert communal crisis. Equally, religious differences, competition for livelihood resources and traditional chieftaincy tussles were enumerated by Oboh and Hyande (2006) as potential communal conflict triggers in the country.

Indeed, human insecurity factors such as poverty, unemployment among others including effect of climate change are known triggers of violent conflicts in communities. Grinding poverty creates alienation and socio-economic insecurity which impels people to seek solace in primary group identity including ethnic or religious identity..., and, self-seeking ethnic demagogues who package ethnicity as a panacea for the people economic woes readily capitalise on this to push for their selfish political motives even at the expense of peace. Poverty generates divisive socio-economic competitions. The effect of the competition is insecurity associated with limited job opportunities and social services.

In short, a number of factors interconnect to push for conflicts in many communities, and like Yecho (2006) posited, the causes of communal conflicts are not static but rather dynamic and varied in nature depending on the socio-economic and geopolitical circumstances at the time. Otite (2002) however stated that the frequency, intensity and scale of conflict within a society is determined by the presence or absence of in-built anticipatory mechanism and the absorptive institutional capacity to cope with the manifestation of conflict tendencies at all levels of human interactions within the affected society.

The aim of this paper, therefore, is to examine the roles of civil society organisations in nonviolent intervention in violent conflict drawing upon traditional and Christian religion resources and tools as well as conflict resolution mechanisms within the rich cultural context of Nigeria.

1. Aguleri-Umuleri Conflict in Anambra State

According to Ekeh (1999) Aguleri and Umuleri communities in Anambra State have for decades lived and farmed side by side but with mutual distrust and enmity. Though conflicts between the two communities have existed prior to 1995, the 1995 and 1999 flare up were however the peak of the ten years' cycle of the conflict. The violent conflict brought business activities and public service delivery to its kneel in the affected communities.

The immediate and main cause of the conflict between Aguleri and Umuleri communities was the struggle for the ownership and control of Otuocha land. According to Tijani (2006, p.136), land is believed to have social psychological significance following its "attachment to history, social existence and ethno-geographical identity of each community". It was the struggle for the land located between Aguleri and Umuleri that turned the supposedly good neighbours to enemies for years in the south-eastern geopolitical region of Nigeria.

The activities of elites in the warring communities contributed in polarising and exacerbating the conflict. The unhealthy struggle among the elites culminated into a major clash between the Aguleri and Umuleri in 1995. The September 1995 conflict explosion between the two communities following issue relating to filling station siting, consumed public property including schools, banks, post offices, town halls and even churches including 200 private houses and a large number of people killed (Ekeh, 1999). Common good and business places were destroyed and the economy of the communities went down following fall in business activities.

Apart from the 1995 clash, there was another clash in 1999. The immediate cause of the 1999 violent conflict could be traced to the government White Paper on the 1995 clash, which berated the Aguleri Representative Council for its roles in fuelling the 1995 crisis. It was believed that the 1995 and 1999 violent conflict would have been avoided if the Aguleri Representative Council heeled to the order of the Anambra State Boundary Commission to among others stop the development project including the construction of Motor Park and Market in Agu-Akor.

Intervention

The post-colonial era witnessed the involvement of several town unions and community based civil society organisations in the intervention and management of violent conflicts. This was however prompted by the increasing need to ensure the facilitation of communities' development in addition to the failure of government to resolve the conflicts. Some of the associations such as Umuleri Youth Association, Aguleri Youth Association, Aguleri Welfare Association, and Umuleri General Assembly in Lagos (UGA). UGA earlier played roles in fuelling the conflict alongside some of the elites in the communities, but later turned around to also contribute to the resolution efforts. Other civil society organisations that played active roles in the resolution of the Aguleri-Umuleri conflict included the Ohanaeze Ndigbe, the Anambra East Peace Council, the Eri Brothers Associations, the Churches, elites and women organisations.

The Elites

Following the destruction of lives and property that accompanied the 1995 and 1999 violent conflicts between the Aguleri and Umuleri, the elites under the auspices of

Aguleri Representative Council and Umuleri General Assembly reached an accord at the end of the 1999 violent conflict on the modalities or ways to end the crisis between the warring communities. The accord which was christened Aguleri-Umuleri Peace Accord proposed the establishment or creation of new Anambra East Local Government Area and Aguleri Local Government Area. Whilst the headquarters of the new Anambra East Local Government Area was proposed to be located at Umuleri, that of Aguleri Local Government Area was to be located at Aguleri. It further proposed that Otuocha which was serving as the headquarters of Anambra East Local Government Area at the time should cease to be headquarters and be shared between Aguleri and Umuleri. The arrangement was expected to make it possible for the two warring communities to exist in separate local government areas. The request for the creation of the two local government areas was presented by the ARC and UGA to the State Government and State House of Assembly (Irene, 2006). However, following government delay in attending to the proposal and opposition to the creation of the proposed local government by a faction of the town union led by the Eze of Aguleri at the time, the ARC and UGA took to another option which involved the delineation and sharing of the controversial lands.

Women Organisations

Women organisations were not left out in the effort at managing the conflicts. According to Fagbemi and Nwankwo (2002) and UNESCO (2003), civil disturbances such as ethnic and communal clashes greatly affect women. The confusion usually enthroned during and immediately after periods of violent crisis disrupts sources of livelihood, business and socio-economic activities of women. Their husbands, sons and brothers, who usually constitute the combative arm of the population during these periods, are often injured or killed. Some of the women themselves may lose their lives or be exposed to abuse including rape. There have also been finger pointing to the women for fuelling Aguleri and Umuleri conflict through the emotional ways they told the story of their harrowing experiences of violent conflicts to their children, and as Lingren (2005, vp.165) put it, "when people narrate experiences in the present, they do not only recall information, they engage in meaning-making practice where individual experiences are connected to larger political and economic process". These narrations often contribute in keeping the flow of hatred through generations.

Among the women organisations that worked towards restoring peace between Aguleri and Umuleri included, the Oluokala in Umuleri, Anglican Church Women Organisations in Aguleri and Umuleri (AWOA), Catholic Women Organisations in Aguleri and Umuleri and Umuada of Aguleri and Umuleri. These organisations used various ways especially traditional forms of conflict resolution to pursue their objectives (Irene, 2006). Besides, Oluokala and AWOA also employed the practice of fasting and praying in the search for peace between Aguleri and Umuleri. The

Umuada Association was another influential group that explored religion and traditional ways to achieve peace in the communities.

The Umuada Association is common among Igbo communities in the south-eastern part of Nigeria, and commands enormous respect in members' communities of birth. The influence of the group is such that even conflicts between individuals, couples, families, clans and villages are often referred to it for resolution. It decisions on any issue is final and binding on the stakeholders in conflicts. The intervention of the group prepared ground for ceasefire and negotiation for peace between the warring communities.

Ohanaeze Ndi-Igbo

This is a pan-Igbo cultural-political group founded by Igbo political, intellectual, business and cultural elites as a platform for re-defining the Igbo position in national affairs. As a way of responding to Aguleri-Umuleri conflict, Ohanaeze Ndigbo in April 1999 met in Enugu and on 20th April 1999 issued a communiqué calling for:

- A forthwith cessation of violence

- Criticism of government insensitivity and indecisive response aim at finding a lasting solution to the problem.

The group also criticised the Wing Commander Ukaegbu led government for its failure to implement the recommendations contained in 'its own White Paper' on the report of the Nweje Panel which was published in February 1997, nearly two years before the resurgence of violence.

The Ohanaeze also organised several peace meetings with communities in Awka and visited the communities. It also initiated move to secure a temporary truce in the fighting for about two weeks. Unfortunately, lack of consolidation of the process led to the resumed violence.

Anambra East Peace Council (AEPC)

The mid July 1999 inaugural meeting at the Onitsha North Local Government headquarters at the instance of chief (Dr) Kelly Nzekwesi, the traditional ruler (Igwe) of Igbariam and under the auspices of the Anambra East Council of traditional rulers and leaders of thought kicked of the process. The group regarded as the Anambra East Peace Council was also composed of the traditional rulers of Nando, Nsugbe, Aguleri, Umuleri and Umuoba and other prominent members of the three-feuding community and their neighbours. The aim of this group was to draw on traditional religion and utilise the traditional means of settling disputes.

Steps taking to ensure the return of peace by AEPC:

- The pledged co-operation with the Araka committee

- They called for immediate end to hostilities and return of persons displaced in the conflicts to their homes

- They set up a process of traditional Oath taking (nghu iyi) and covenant (iko mme) to end the feuding and shedding of blood. The traditional oath taking known in local language as 'nghu iyi' and covenant known in local language as 'iko mme' is part of traditional religion of the people.

The first involves swearing to community deities and pledging in a specific course of behaviour as Oath taking was a very powerful mechanism for behavioural changes in traditional Igbo society. Traditional structures of managing ethnic conflicts are not necessarily identified with specialized political institutions and offices. Rather elders, village heads, persons with transparent character and integrity, community and religious leaders play prominent roles in regulating conflicts (Otite, 1999; Olomola, 2002), and Oath taking is often considered an important means of regulating conflicts by local community elders.

The second often arose in a situation where there has been shedding of blood. This second step involved appeasing the Ana deity which abhors the spilling of blood. 'Iko mme' involves sacrifices and may also involves reparations taking in the form of exchange of human beings to replace the dead (nkechi mmadu) or mere exchange of valuables and/or services. During the first attempt in the year 2000 which involved oath taking and covenant, the communities namely the Agulere, Umulere, Igbariam, Nando and Nsugbe involved in the conflict came with their deities who included Aro olome nkilisi (Aguleri), Mkpume (Umulere), Udude Onu Ogwu (Igbariam), Isi Ogbwugwu (Nando) and Iyi Oji (Nsugbe). Petition from Umuoba community as well as faction of the Aguleri community led to the failure of the first attempt. Aguleri faction arose out of conflict over the traditional stool of the communities following the death of Igwe Idigbo.

The exclusion of Umuoba was partly at the instance of Umuleri. They argued that the process could not begin between Umuleri and Umuoba because the attack of Umuoba by Umuleri violated an Oath between the two communities in the dry season of 1910. Also, unlike Aguleri, Umuleri, Igbariam, Nsugbe and Nando, the Umuoba are not regarded as descendants of Eri. Again, there was also the issue of participation of Christians in the process, as the view that their non-participation could pose threat to the legitimacy of the process was strong, especially considering their large numbers (Irene, 2006). It took three months to resolve these problems.

In April 2000, the resolution ceremony occurred at Otuocha, as all the communities came with their deities whilst the Christians invited the Priest to pray and also swore with the Bible whilst the traditional swore to the deities. The representatives of the

communities on behalf of their communities swore never to wage war against each other but rather use dialogue to resolve discrepancies. The traditionalist asked the deities to punish violators of the oath while Christian did the same with Anglican and Catholic priests presiding.

Eri Brothers Association

This group exploited the cross-community bond that existed between the Aguleri and Umuleri as it is believed that they are of common descent, to play influential role in the oath taking process. The Aguleri, Umuleri, Nsugbe, Nando and Igbariam were active in the first oath taking in 2000. The problem was however the divisions within the Aguleri community. The rift between the Udedibia group and the Obukezia group was not unconnected with the struggle for the vacant stool of the traditional ruler of the Aguleri sequel to the demise of Igwe Idigbo. The exclusion of Umuoba Anam from the oath taking at the beginning of 2000 led to a walkout by the Obukezie group. At the cancellation of the oath taking following the petition forwarded to the state government, the Umuoba Anam community regarded the processes as a conspiracy under the guise of Eri Brotherhood and threatened to disregard the earlier cease-fire agreement.

The Church

The Churches such as the Catholic, Anglican and Pentecostal churches were widely involved in resolving the conflict between the Aguleri and Umuleri. The role of the church was particularly intense in the 1999 crisis and its aftermath as they consistently offered prayers for the safety of the people and many displaced people also took refuge in churches. Even in the aftermath, the churches were actively involved in peace-making processes. Priests of both the Anglican and Catholic churches prayed for Christians during the anti-war oath taking in April, 2000. Crusades were also organised at Otuocha by churches to pray for an end to the conflict and for a lasting peace (Irene, 2006).

These various interventions by the said civil society organisations contributed immensely to the effective management and resolution of the violent conflict between the two communities. This gave room for business and economic activities as well as public service delivery to pick up again in the communities.

2. Urhobo-Itsekiri Conflict in Delta State

The Itsekiri, Ijaw and Urhoboa are neighbouring communities that also got engulfed in inter-communal conflicts, and according to Agbegbedin (2014, p. 346), the conflict has historical origin. The original basis of the conflict between the Urhobos and Itsekiris was the quest and tussle over the ownership of Warri. However, other issues such as the title of the Olu of Warri and relocation of local government headquarters from Ogidibenan to Ogbe-Ijoh also contributed to the violent conflicts experienced in Warri. With the increasing activities of oil companies, the Ijaws began to agitate against the

marginalisation of their ethnic group, and thus, demanded for their own local government council where they could be heard and recognised. However, the controversy over the siting of the Warri South Local Government Area headquarters at Ogbe-Ijoh, eventually led to the conflict between the Ijaws and the Itsekiri.

Intervention

There have been a number of attempts aimed at resolving the conflicts, and according to Eguavoen (2003, p. 247), over twenty court rulings have been given in the Warri land conflict. However, Imobighe (2002, p. 56) affirmed that earlier efforts at resolving the conflicts were not holistic and integrated. This necessitated the need for civil society organisations to step in. The first known active civil society intervention in the conflict was the Academic Associates Peace Works (AAPW) – a nongovernmental organisation.

The Academic Associates Peace Works (AAPW) Approach

The approach took a social dimension appearing more holistic. The main idea was to bring the warring factions together on a neutral ground created friendly atmosphere and brought them into dialogue outside the influence and reach of the elites of warring communities (Irene, 2006). Hence, AAPW organised training and seminars programmes for different categories of persons. According to Imobighe (2002), these included:

- Training of mediators, training of Warri Youth Leaders (the Youth of all parties in dispute), training for community leaders, peace education training, training of elders and training of local government officials.

- The need to embrace peace and to emphasis more those things that bind them (warring group) together rather than those things that separate them was the central focus/theme in the training exercise

- The concept of 'Warri our land' was created during the training programmes. The idea was to offer a sense of belonging to the parties in the conflict and was also expected to help reduce the fears and anxiety expressed by some youth leaders. It reduced fears of marginalisation, negative images of extinction, domination, exclusion, oppression etc. which were exploited by the elites in the communities to serve their selfish ends.

- There was a general change in the mind-set of the trainees as they collectively accepted the concept of Warri our land. After training programme there were various follow-up and enlightened visit made by AAPW. The concept of Warri our land eliminated the old dilemma of settlers versus indigenes.

Other seven points' proposals were:

- Establishment of Warri Peace Forum

- Education of other youth about fears and needs of each other and the need to work together. The youth leaders in each faction should speak to their own people.

- The various factions should work together on enlightenment campaigns on the common ground discovered.

- They should also jointly hold rallies at Primary, Secondary Schools and at the grassroots, e.g. Markets.

- They should also organise sports and cultural festivals which bring the various group together in peaceful and enjoyable ways.

- Use of the media jingles, etc. to highlight the peace effort (funding from oil companies, government, donor agencies, etc.

- Attendance at cultural festivals of other ethnic groups, and for security of guest to be guaranteed by host youths.

International civil society groups such as USAID, USIP, OTI, etc. were also involved in finding the peace process in Warri. In their point of action AAPW conducted a case study plan in May 1999 and the findings were analysed on the basis of needs and fears.

The table below therefore captures the needs and fears of the major conflict parties in the Warri conflict.

MAJOR PARTIES	NEEDS	FEARS
Ijaws	Land, political relevance, local government, security, recognition, development	Disrespect of traditional ruler, marginalisation, oppression, exclusion, negative image
Urhobo	Freedom, respect, land, political relevance, local government, recognition of traditional ruler	Marginalisation, oppression, exclusion, negative image, disrespect for traditional rulers
Itsekiri	Land, respect for traditional ruler, security, development freedom	Extinction, domination, exclusion, marginalisation, disrespect for traditional rulers & for court orders

State Government	Political stability & peace, revenue	Economic sabotage, national fragmentation
Multinational companies	Profit, security	Insecurity, economic sabotage
Common ground	Local, political relevance	Marginalisation, oppression, disrespect, insecurity

Source: Imobighe, 2002

It was from the outcome of the intervention that the mediators according to Imobighe (2002) developed the concept 'our land'. To that sense, the land in questions was not to be described from ethnic personalised perspective but rather from a collective perspective, in such a way that promotes collective ownership. Also, workshop was organised for the youths. It was held at Gordon Hotel, Ibusa, Asaba. 30 youths and ten from each ethnic group were trained with the mind-set that when the youth are oriented, the fighting would stop. The youth leaders were trained in conflict management skills, and were opportune to analyse their own conflicts and look for mutually agreeable solutions, as well as assist the youth leaders in developing an action plan to implement solution (Imobighe, 2002, p. 100). At the Petroleum Training Institute (PTI) in Warri, similar workshop was organised for the community leaders.

Religion: The Diocese of Ughelli Peace Committee on Evwreni Crisis

Evwreni crisis erupted on 8th December, 1999 and the Peace Committee was set up on 19th April, 2000 at the end of the Diocesan Synod held at Uwheru and Peace Committee was set up (Irene, 2006).

The first meeting of the Peace Committee was in 19th August, 2000. The Church's willingness to intervene in the conflict was declared to the stakeholders earlier and the church was seen as a neutral and credible body to intervene at the crisis. At the end of the meeting some resolutions were reached to allow durable peace into the kingdom.

The Chairman of the peace committee at another occasion brought the statue of Jesus Christ to Evweri and erected it in front of the town hall. This resulted in the gathering of crowd in a moving jubilation. Prince J.O.C Mosheshe gave speech and asked that all war weapons be surrendered to Christ. In response to this, different war weapons - gun, pick-axes and gun powder were brought and surrendered to Jesus Christ (Imobighe, 2002). This approach essentially drew on Christian religion resources.

The peace committee in consonant with the Lord Bishop of Ughelli Anglican Diocese reasoned that the two parties in conflict should be made to issue a joint communiqué to officially end the conflict. As a result of that, they had two consecutive meetings at the Bishop's Court at Ovwodowanre, Ughelli. The signing and issuing of the joint

communiqué was witnessed by the Nigerian Police, State Security Service (SSS) and the local government chairman of Ughelli North (Irene, 2006).

A communiqué was issued at the end of the final reconciliatory meeting presided over by Rt. Rev. V. O. Muogheroe, Bishop of Ughelli Anglican Diocese/Evwreni Peace Committee, and Evangelist Prince J.O.C Mosheshe JP. All parties involved in the Evwreni crisis unreservedly resolved and agreed according to Imobighe (2002) that:

- they have resolved to live in peace and harmony and to forgive one another our wrong deeds of the past, so that we can move forward as a people.

- anyone found in possession of arms and ammunition without government license will be handed over to the law enforcement agencies.

- any Evwreni indigenes both home and outside who takes up arms against anybody in Evwreni will be handed over to the law enforcement agencies as a criminal to be dealt with accordingly.

- the Evwreni Clan improvement union should liaise with the family of the late Ovie to make arrangement for the burial of the late Royal Father. The exercise should be completed by the end of the January 2001.

- after the burial of the Royal Father, Royal family will meet to choose a successor to the late Ovie.

- it is hereby resolved that all Evwreni indigenes are free to return to Evwreni without any molestation from anybody and that the law enforcement agencies are free to go to Evwreni at any time to make sure that lives and properties are safe pending the establishment of a Police post in Evwreni.

- A committee was to be set up for the development and rehabilitation of Evwreni community.

It is important to emphasis here that all parties aforementioned signed the communiqué except the King's faction. Even the Police and the State Security Service (SSS) were part of it. The reason for the King's faction refusal emerged during the meeting of the traditional rulers on 17th December at the palace of the Orodje of Okpe when they requested that, the eldest son of the late king should succeed his father. The King's faction established that this was the only condition that would make them sign the communiqué. This was however endorsed by the royal fathers and the Peace Committee Chairman, Evangelist Mosheshe. The endorsement of the communiqué was thus carried out on the 21st of January 2001 at the palace of the Orodje of Okpe. 23 kings witnessed the signing of the peace accord from the Southern Delta Traditional Rulers' Forum. The meeting at the place of the Orodje created a gateway for the installation of the eldest son of the slain King in strict adherence to the resolution

contained in the communique. After the burial of the late King, his son became the new King of Evwreni (Odenema, 2003, pp. 64-91).

The eventual resolution of the said violent conflicts led to the restoration of normalcy to the area as business activities kicked-off including creating the right atmosphere for public service delivery and provision of common good.

3. Ife-Modakeke Conflicts

Ife and Modakeke are neighbouring communities in Osun State, Nigeria. The relationship that existed between the Madakekes and the Ifes people was at the beginning very cordial (Asiyanbola, 2007). As posited by Agbe (2001, p.15), the people of Modakeke migrated at one point in time or the other to Ile-Ife from different locations especially Ibadan. Since then, the two ethnic groups have been leaving together as neighbours.

The conflict between the two neighbouring communities –Ife and Modakeke, is one of the oldest ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. It has been going on for more than a century (Aguda, 1994; Albert, 1999; Agbe, 2001; Toriola, 2001). According to Augsburger, (1992) and Omotayo (2005), it has assumed its own raisons deter, its own self-empowered, and self- fulfilling, haven detached itself from its original cause. It started in the 19th century, and according to Albert (1999, p. 143) "the nineteenth century was a watershed in the history of Yorubaland. This was a period when several powerful Yoruba kingdoms collapsed leading to the founding of several new ones". The Ife-Modakeke conflicts continued through 20th century to the 21st century. There have been seven major violent conflicts since it first occurred in the 19th century with the first one occurring in 1835 to 1849 (Albert, 1999) and (Oladoyin, 2001). Others were 1882 – 1909, 1946 – 1949, 1981, 1983, 1997, 1998, and 2000.

Various studies have examined Ife-Modakeke crisis, such as Albert (1999), Aguda, (2001); Oladoyin (2001), Agbe (2001), Toriola (2001), and Babajimi (2003) as well as Asanyibola (2010), all with a view to generating deeper understanding of the dimensions of the conflict and proffer a lasting solution to the age-long conflict. The studies linked several interconnected and varied causes of the violent conflicts ranging from economic, political and identity issues which revolved around land ownership. The violent conflicts negatively affected business activities, provision and utility of common good in the area in addition to loss of lives and destruction of properties.

The Intervention

Ooni Abeweila first attempted in 1847 to resolve the crisis by settling the Modakeke in separate settlement did not work, because according to Albert, (1999) segregation, rather than solve the problem of plural society often compounds it. The Modakeke leaders also dissociated themselves from the 1886 Anglo-Yoruba Treaty, because they felt cheated and neglected by the 1886 peace treaty, as the clause 5 of the peace treaty

stated the relocation of Modakeke town to a land lying between Osun and the Oba rivers (Balogun, 1985).

A significant attempt to resolve the conflict was also carried out by USAID/OTI between 1999 and 2000. According to Albert (2001) the intervention processes adopted were in three folds: media campaign activity; separate community training activity; and joint training on forgiveness, reconciliation and transformative leadership of the two communities.

Media Campaigns

This started on 15th May, 2000 with radio and television jingles, and was aimed at sensitizing members of the two communities to the need for the cessation of the hostilities. It re-orientated them to peaceful co-existence and the negotiated settlement of disputes. It included:

- A 2-day workshop on conflict reporting for 50 Journalists in Osun state. The training exposed them to the sensitivity and ethics of conflict reporting. Participants were taught to understand factors that either escalate or de-escalate conflicts of which conflict reporting is crucial.

The aim of the training activity according to Albert (2001) was to expose the two sides to the best methods for handling the Ife-Modakeke crisis and also to imparts conflict mitigation and mediation skills to critical stakeholder groups in the two communities, create awareness and sensitise stakeholders to the consequences of violent communal conflicts, generate a corps of conflict mediators.

Some other intervention methods include:

- A thirty-week radio and TV jingles (six slots per day) on peaceful co-existence, tolerance and communal;

- Essay competitions for Ife and Modakeke secondary school pupils with the theme 'the role of the youths in conflict prevention';

- Thirteen weekly television and radio talk show.

After the first intervention, there was also a follow up intervention. The stages of the second intervention involved:

(b) Separate advocacy and sensitisation visits to critical leaders (market, transport, youth and village) in the two communities as well as the Ooni of Ife, Ife chiefs and Ife Baales (on Ife side) and the Ogunsua of Modakeke and Modakeke chiefs (Modakeke side)

(c) Four separate training programmes on both sides:

- The first for village head

- The second for youth leaders especially those that served as 'foot soldiers' during the conflict.

- The third for the professional groups and artisans who participated in and whose business was often interrupted by the violence.

- The fourth for the community leaders who were behind most of the problems and who were expected to play significant roles in ending the conflict.

The two training programmes were held simultaneously.

The Ife Development Board (IDB) facilitated the Ifewara training while the Modakeke Progressive Union (MPU) was in charge of the Osogbo training. Hence, the Ife Development Board and the Modakeke Progressive Union played important roles in the Ife-Modakeke crisis as such remained potent element in the transformation of the problem (Albert, 2001).

Joint training on forgiveness, reconciliation and transformative leadership was organised, and the project created the basis for bringing the Ife and the Modakeke people together for the first time since the violent hostility that started between 1999 and early 2000. The workshop that was held in Ibadan was built on the achievement of the Ifewara and Osogbo workshop. It was designed to bring the two people together to work through the conflict in their communities as well as to introduce the people to the leadership styles that could support a positive and peaceful transformation in IIe-Ife. The project was facilitated by Conflict Resolution Stakeholders Network (CRESNET) South West zone (Irene, 2006). The workshops which took place at the Green Springs Hotel, Ibadan, from 27th August to 9th September 2000, were in the following order:

Group 1: The youth leaders from Ife and Modakeke, 27-28 August

Group 2: The professional group from Ife and Modakeke, 31st August- 1st September

Group 3: The village heads from Ife and Modakeke

Group 4: The community leader from Ife and Modakeke

At the commencement of the meeting, the Ife was to introduce the Modakeke and vice-versa. At the end of the whole exercise, the peace advocacy and monitory committee was saddled with the huge task of consolidating the gains of the intervention and keeping faith with the agreement (Albert, 2001).

The successful management of the conflict has led to a drop in the level of suspiciousness among the Ife and the Modakeke people as well as helped to restore business and economy activities in the area including public service delivery.

4. The Kaduna Conflict

A number of conflicts have occurred in Kaduna state like most other states in Nigeria including Bauchi state. Ethnic claims over new headquarters and new markets are a source of some of the conflicts, for example, Zangon Kataf and Tafawa Balewa town in Kaduna and Bauchi States respectively (Otite 1999, pp. 20-21), whilst some other conflicts have been traced to the issue of sharia and political matters.

Whilst Abdu (2002, p. 2) noted that "Kaduna state has since the 1980s become an epicenter of ethno-religious violence", the sharia question is one of such violent conflicts that developed into a major political confrontation following Ahmed Sani Yerima, (while serving as Governor of Zamfara state) inauguration and adoption of sharia legal system on the 27th October 1999, which eventually took effect on 27th January, 2001. The Zamfara law extended the application of Sharia from personal law to criminal law. Following the Zamfara example, some other states in the North, such as Kano, Sokoto, Niger, Yobe, Kebbi and Borno announced their intentions to adopt similar measures. The attempt by the Kaduna State House of Assembly to pass a Sharia bill led to a series of demonstrations, first by Muslim supporters and then by Christian opponents. The anti-sharia demonstrated by Christian on 21st February 2000 led to a major hostility between the two groups resulting in massive killing of people on both sides, the destruction of religious buildings, general arson and the destruction of property. February – May 2002 again experienced Sharia mayhem in Kaduna.

Intervention

Among those whose activities have imparted positively on the reconciliatory is USAID/OTI in conjunction with Strategic Empowerment and Mediation Agency (SEMA). Even Development Project (EDP) and Inter-Faith Mediation Centres (IMC), etc. They organised seminars, workshops, symposia and jingles on radio and television (both English and Hausa). Other interest groups like the British Council, Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), Inuwar Kano, Dutse Emirate Council, the Catholic Diocese and EDP contributed immensely to the restoration of peace in the state. In their respective ways, the group provided relief materials, mediation services and training for different levels of stakeholders.

The USAID/OTI Nigeria, Kano regional office provided support for training a wide segment of the society including politicians and policy-makers in collaboration with some local NGOs, particularly the even development projects. USAID/OTI also organised an elaborate retreat programme for the appointed Emirs and Chiefs in the state in collaboration with EDP.

Even Development Project (EDP)

EDP organised conflict management workshops and skill acquisition training. All the parties were involved in the project cutting across language, religion, ethnic and other

consideration. EDP sourced and distributed relief materials directly to the victims and used the occasion to suppress the ill-feelings of the people towards one another (Irene, 2006). The special training workshops were conducted in neutral venue in Kano, thereby creating conducive ground to deliberate and negotiate ways out of the social conflict. EDP disseminated the outcome of the intervention programmes, paid adverts and radio programmes as such opening up for the wider section of the society to be involved in the peace-building process.

The intervention achieved a greater involvement of decision-makers in the resolution of the conflict and crisis (Irene, 2006). The EDP-USAID/OTI workshop for peace and reconciliation advised the government to set up a peace and reconciliation commission for dialogue and enlightenment, improve security network in the state, restructures the civil service to remove apparent imbalance in the system and reform the judicial system to guarantee equity and fairness.

The effective management of the violent conflicts by the said civil society organisations helped to restore liveliness to the community and thus promoted business activities including creating conducive atmosphere for public service delivery in the area.

Conclusion

Civil society played vital roles in the entrenchment of the country's democratisation project, and since the inception of the fourth republic, there has been ample of civil society in the form of NGOs, ethnic and religious organisations which have shifted their roles from democratic advocacy to that of agitation against marginalisation and the clamour for resource control. Despite the apparent limitations of civil society groups in terms of administrative capacity, poor resource base and dependence on foreign donors, etc., it has been found that civil society could be creatively mobilised to move from a confliction antagonistic relationship with the state into playing a positive role in efforts to solve the country's numerous conflicts that threatened to tear the country apart.

The present constraint of civil society in conflict intervention in the country is predicated on some weaknesses afflicting civil society groups in the country. Their urban location, lack of administrative capacity and their dwindling resource base are factors influencing the performance of civil society in conflict intervention. By and large, a lot has been done by civil society organisations in conflict intervention in Nigeria. However, despite the achievement recorded in violent conflicts intervention, a lot still have to be done to promote a culture of peace and ensure social change for peace in Nigeria. The religious organisations and the deployment of robust values and resources inherent in the religions in Nigeria such as the Christian, Muslim and traditional religions are critical to the attainment of sustainable peace in the country.

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