

Effects of Social Conflicts on the Sustainable Development of Ebonyi State, A Study of Ezillo-Ezza Ezillo Conflicts (2008-2014)

Dr. Onwe, Sunday O.¹ Nwogbaga, David M.E.² Nwakamma, Michael C.¹

1.Department of Public Administration, Ebonyi State University, P.M.B. 053;Abakaliki, Nigeria

2.Department of Political Science, Ebonyi State University, P.M.B. 053;Abakaliki, Nigeria
dnwogbaga504@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper focused on the “Effects of social conflicts on the sustainable development of Ebonyi State, a study of Ezillo-Ezza Ezillo conflicts. The study sought to ascertain how far the conflicts have affected socio-economic development parameters like level of poverty, provision and sustainability of infrastructure and social amenities; unemployment, peaceful co-existence, security of lives and properties among others. Extant literature were reviewed and there is a common understanding that conflict is inevitable in all human societies and that factors that result to conflicts are multi- dimensional. The Ezza- Ezillo conflict has been largely caused by indigene-settler conundrum and the natural tendency to gain material resources by man. This was further buttressed by the social atavistic conflict theory which maintained that there is a natural tendency on the part of creatures to migrate, expand and dominate space, or territory using a means possible – peace or through the use of force. It is therefore, the tendency to expand one’s territory that breeds resistance or clash of occupation. A descriptive survey design was adopted. Both primary and secondary data were utilized. The paper found out that the Ezillo-Ezza- Ezillo conflicts have affected the provision of infrastructure facilities in Ebonyi State, it has led to increase in the level of poverty and youth unemployment etc. The paper therefore recommends for a participatory or people driven approach to conflict resolution and management.

Keywords: Sustainable development, conflicts, poverty, unemployment, social amenities.

Methodology

This paper adopted descriptive survey design. This design enabled the researcher to ascertain the historical dimensions of the Ezza-Ezillo conflicts and what has been done by the state government and other relevant stakeholders to ensure a lasting peace in the community. It is a type of design in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. In this study a sample of the total population was used to make generalization.

The study covered the entire Ebonyi State with a particular focus on Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo all within the Ezillo community. Ezillo is one of the seven sub-ethnic communities in Ishielu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. The community is located at the north southern fringe of Ishielu local government and share borders with Ngbo, Iyome and Nkalagu communities in the north Ntezi and Okpoto in the east Inyaba in the south. Because of the strategic location of Ezillo across the Enugu-Abakaliki express way, it hosts both people and infrastructure facilities such as the Ezillo farm settlement and Ezillo regional water scheme etc (see Oji, et al, 2012).

The population of the study comprised all the citizens of the area. To ensure a more comprehensive population, the paper made use of the population of the entire local government. Ishielu local government area has a population of 151,048 (NPC, 2006). The sample size of the study was 399 respondents determined with the use of Taro Yameni formular.

Primary source of data was used. Primary data were collected through the instrument of questionnaire, personal interview with some of the officials of government and traditional rulers and other all firsthand information that was sourced through Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The primary data were corroborated with secondary documents from published bulletin, official gazette, newspapers, and the report of the Peace Committee on Ezillo Communal Crisis Oct, 2008.

Introduction

Human history is characterized with conflict. There is now consensus among scholars on the inevitability of conflict in relations among human being (Weeks 1992, Fraiser and Hipel 1984, Burton 1997, More 1987, Okoh and Ewhariemen 2001). What therefore differs is the approach or strategy adopted to resolve or manage a particular conflict situation. The effectiveness or otherwise of the management of conflict is itself largely dependent on how the causes of the conflict have been understood.

Conflict refers to contradictions arising from differences in the interests, ideas, ideologies, orientation and precipitous tendencies of the people concerned. These contradictions are inherent at all levels of social and economic interactions of human race. It may therefore exist at the individual, group, institutional, regional, national and international levels. Conflict is thus a pervasive phenomenon in human relationships and has been

seen as the “basic unit for understanding social existence (Nnoli, 1998:3-5). A social conflict occurs “when two or more actors appose each other in social interaction, reciprocally exerting social power in an effort to attain scarce or incompatible goals and prevent the opponent from attaining them”.

Social conflicts constitute one of the major recurring problems bedeviling the socio-economic and political landscape in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Achieving sustainable development has become a difficult task for developing nations, in spite of efforts by development experts to bring about desired development. The term “sustainable development was brought into common use by the world commission on Environment and development (WECD) in its 1987 seminar report entitled “our common future”. In a more broad and encompassing definition, sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Abah, 2005). Its scope covers economic, ecological social and political dimensions to development. The economic component consists of optimizing the use of limited resources and the management of material and energy saving technologies. It provides for the integrity of biological and physical sciences and oriented to human development, preserve stability of public and internal systems.

It has been argued that no meaningful development can take place in an atmosphere of disunity, rancor and conflicts.

Pre-colonial and colonial Nigeria experienced inter-kingdom dynastic feuds, and inter-community conflict (Ogban-Iyam, 2005). Many contemporary Nigeria communities have experienced several lots of conflicts. Some of the notable examples include the Zango-Kataf conflict in Kaduna State (1999-2001), Tiv – Jukun Wukari conflict in Taraba State (1999-2001), Aguleri – Umuleri conflict in Anambra State (1995-1999), (teskiri-Urhobo Warri Crisis, (1999-2000); Yelwa – Shendan conflict (2003 – 2005) Mangus-Bokoss crisis (1989-1999), the Ife-Modakeke crisis (1999-2000) (Otite, etal 1999: Imobighe et al, 2002; Ubi, 2001) Omatayo, 2005, Best 2007, Abada, 2004). One common feature of these conflicts has to do with their confrontational and violence dimension which led to loss of lives and property of people who hitherto lived together in relative harmony. The Ezillo – Ezza Ezillo communal conflict has shown how communal co-existence could be ruptured with attendant disastrous consequence on the social, cultural and political life of the people.

Ezillo is one of the seven sub-ethnic communities in Ishielu local government area located in Ebonyi central senatorial, zone of Ebonyi State. These sub-ethnic and dialectic groups are Agba, Ohofia Agba (Ntezi dialect) Nkalagu, Nkalaha, Iyionu (Nkalaha), Azuinyaba (Ezza dialect). Within some of these sub-ethnic communities are Ezza – Ezillo, Ezza – Nkalagu, Ezza Ogboji – in Azuinyaba. Due to the strategic location of Ezillo across the Enugu Abakaliki expressway, it hosts both people and infrastructural facilities such as the Ezillo farm settlement and Ezillo regional water scheme etc. There are several schools of thought on the origin of the Ezillo people. However, popular documented literature traced the origin of Ezillo to Mgbom Eze in Ishieke Izzi in the present Ebonyi local government area and Ikwo local government area. According to this thought, the Ezillos and their Ezzangbo/Ngbo brothers regard Mgbom Eze as the ancestral father of Amaleze village in Ezillo. This ancestral brotherhood accounts for the sacred relationship between Ezillo and Ngbo on one hand and Izzi people on the other hand. Hence, the abhorrence of bloodshed between these groups. (Enuke, 2010).

The Ezza – Ezillo people came from Ezza south and Ezza north local governments area of Ebonyi State on the invitation of the Ezillo people to settle a land dispute between them and their Ngbo neighbour at Egu-Echara in the early 1930s (Ugbo et al, 2008 and Memo to Peace committee, 2008). Ever since the end of the dispute, the Ezzas have continued to live amongst their host community, Ezillo. However, the relationships between the two groups have not been harmonious as it has degenerated to indigene – settler conundrum (Oji, et al, 2012). Even though, there have been several episodes of conflicts in Ezillo since 52 years, but the confrontational phase occurred on 10th of May 2008, following an altercation between one Ezillo boy and Ezza man over the erection of telephone booth at Isinkpuma motor park (Oji, et al 2012). Though the Ebonyi state government quickly intervened to resolve the conflict, the conflict claimed so many lives and properties worth millions of naira and equally affected the socio-economic development of the area in particular and Ebonyi State in general.

Social conflict is antithetical to sustainable development. The world commission on environment and development (1987) defined sustainable development as ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs’. Development can only be sustained in an environment free of rancour, disunity, killings destruction of lives and properties. The consequences of Ezza-Ezillo conflicts to the communities in particular and Ebonyi state in general is quite devastating and grievous.

Such devastating impacts included general insecurity’s armed robbery, prolonged dislocation of families, poverty, more violent struggle for power low infrastructural development. There was and still general insecurity and suspense in Ezza – Ezillo community. Those that suffered more losses in the conflict would be always getting ready to revenge, while those who may have gained advantage would be preparing for any eventuality. This has actually created a perpetual atmosphere of insecurity in the area. The armed conflicts

resulted to dislocation of families. The areas were deserted and many members of the communities were helpless refugees in various part of the state, especially Abakaliki the state capital leading to congestion of the city and the attendant increase in criminal activities. The conflict led to loss of many lives and properties. This has negatively affected the socio-economic life of the people as many shops belonging to some members of the community were burnt and some were raised down. This constituted a cog in the wheel of developmental efforts of the state government. Poverty has been on the increase as the people can no longer go about their normal businesses especially farming. It is even more pitiable and unfortunate when considered the fact that agriculture, especially farming is the main source of income to the people. The entire economic life of the state was affected as business activities were brought to a halt; vehicular movement along the major road of Abakaliki Enugu express way was affected during the crisis. Movement of goods and services was also affected. The national Bureau of Statistics (2013) reports that 73.6 percent Ebonyians are poor. Women, children and the elderly are the worst hit. The state is yet to recover from the vandalisation of infrastructural and social amenities destroyed in the course of the conflict. According to Chukwu (2012) physical infrastructure (such as roads, portable water and electricity) and social services (such as education, health, recreation and security) are not adequately provided in the state. Some youths especially, from the two communities lost all they have laboured for years consequent upon the conflict and now idle without job.

It is against this backdrop that this study “ effects of social conflict and sustainable development in Ebonyi state: A study of Ezza – Ezillo and Ezillo conflicts became imperative to ascertain the root causes of the conflicts with a view to making recommendations to forestall violent conflicts in the area.

Theoretical Framework

The study combined social Atavistic conflict theory and pluralism. The social Atavistic conflict thought was first used by Lombroso (1863) when he did a study called the ‘criminal man’. The core idea according to Lombroso is that some people have biological and mental traits that make them crime prone. These traits are inherited and present at birth. Mental and physical degenerancies are the cause of crime and conflict in the society.

In theory of social atavism, there is a natural tendency on the part of creatures to migrate, expand and dominate space, or territory using a means possible – peaceful or the use of force. In conflict thought, it is the tendency to expand one’s territory that breeds resistance or clash of occupation. In the human context according Aja (2007:21) migration and territorial expansion leads to disputes over the control of either the landmass or territorial waters, or air space. In its corollary in space or environmental theory, claims and counter claims over any territory is rooted in the economics of the land, in terms of its fertility, including natural endowments in hydro – carbons. By extension in strategic theory, territorial expansion arises out the security or defence consideration to reposition a society or group in a position of environmental advantage over the adversaries.

Alluding to the above fact Isichei (1976) commenting on the causes of Aguleri-Umuleri conflict, posits that the role of land disputes is very marked in the history of these wars. Much value was not attached to Otuocha land by any of the two communities of Aguleri and Umuleri at the initial stage but as the 20th century progressed, each community began to value the area and efforts intensified to claim the ownership of the area. Claims and counter claims were made in various courts by the two communities and these disputes resulted in a combat in 1933.

In most cases in Nigeria and Africa generally several cases of communal feud or conflict arise from territorial expansionism and resource control struggles by claims and counter claims. It has led to several loses of lives and communal disputes over territorial lands have an enduring history.

In Nigeria, the Aguleri – Umueri and Ife-Modakeke struggles have lasted for many bloody decades. As above examples show, the communal disputes are between groups that share even common cultural characteristics but deny the confidence of employing traditional methods of peace and conflict resolutions.

The Ezillo and Ezza – Ezillo conflict is aptly captured by the philosophical and ideological underpinnings of the social Atavistic and pluralism theories. The Ezza-Ezillo conflicts manifested in the intense struggle for the ownership of Ezillo and the taciturn reaction of the Ezillo people that strangers should not disposes them of their ancestral home land. Not to be left out is the alleged marginalization.

Conflict is inevitable and there is a natural tendency on the part of human to strive to acquire resources with any means possible. Land is one of the scarcest resources. Undoubtedly, the struggle over who owns or occupy land has been the root causes of communal conflicts in African and Nigeria in particular. This singular fact has resulted to the conflicts between Ezillo and their Ezza – Ezillo neighbours. Conflict and development are two parallel lines that can never meet. Conflicts situation does not allow for any meaningful development. In Ebonyi state, the Ezillo-Ezza Ezillo conflict has resulted to destruction of government institution like schools, churches were burnt down and cultural heritage of the people were affected. It stalled the socio-economic development of the state and affected the general wellbeing of the people. Hence, the need for practical solution to prevent a reoccurrence of such violence conflict.

Remote and Immediate Causes of Ezza/Ezillo Crisis

Remote cause of Ezza/Ezillo crisis;

1. Boundary dispute.
2. Indigenes-settlers syndrome (son of the soil syndrome).
3. Politics.
4. Culture and tradition.
5. Biased historical information.

Boundary dispute: Oral tradition had it that the Ezillo community originally invited only 22 Ezza men to come and live in Ezillo. But as time went on, they started inviting their kits and kins from Onueke and other Ezza areas and thus began to occupy extra portions of the land which had resulted to the blurred boundary between the two tribes. However, problem ensued when the expansion of the Ezza people was exceedingly progressive such that the Ezillo people could no longer bear it and thus asked for the relocation of the Ezza people to Eguechara, which is a place Ezillo people maintained was the only place originally given to them. The matter was so serious such that it was taken to the Abakaliki colonial customary court in 1955 and the court ruled in favour of the Ezillo people, mandating the Ezza people to move backward to Eguechara. In reaction to the above court rulings, the Ezzas made an appeal before Abakaliki colonial district officer, Mr. Gunning who affirmed the judgment of the customary court. The Ezillo people claimed that both judgments are still in their possession till date, yet the Ezza remained in the land till May 10, 2008 when the dispute that led to the 19th February 2010 mass killings and as well the December 31 massacre of the Ezillo people by unidentified suspects.

Indigenes –settler’s syndrome: This is found to be one of the major causes of inter-communal crisis in Nigeria. According to Omemma (2006) there is crisis of citizenship and right in Nigeria both in constitutional evolution and theoretical framework. He pointed out that these problems have to do with the provisions of the constitution which relate to who can be recognized as an indigene of a state and local government or even a community. The problem arises as a result of the definition of who is an indigene and who is not or who is a settler and what right does one have which the other should not have. The settler (non-indigene) communities latch on the constitutional provisions on human rights and the problem of definition of status to assert their rights in their places of settlement. For instance, many National constitutions and universal declaration of human rights guarantees free movement, free association and ownership of property but at the same time enshrine the principles of federal character and Quota system (FRN, 1999). On the other hand, Mandami, (2001: 4-22) opines that the history of migration before slavery, during slavery and after slavery makes yesterday’s immigrants today’s indigenes and yesterday’s settlers today’s natives. Who qualifies as an indigene, a citizen or national of a particular place in Nigeria is an important debate especially in the spate of various violent conflicts which have affected thousands of live economic activities and human development.

The Nigerian Institute of advanced legal studies, NIALS (2011) defines an indigene as a person who is a native (first people) to a territory as opposed to a settler (latter comer). Indices such as length of time, settlement in that location, exercises of control over the land and other resources in that location; successful effort at forging a sense of separate distinguishing identity defined indigenship. On the other hand, citizenship refers to nationality, the possession of formal legal membership in specific nation recognized under both international and domestic laws (Gibney 2006). The nexus between citizenship and indigenship creates an identity dilemma which often breeds hostile relationship between host communities and settler-communities as has been demonstrated in the Ezillo-Ezza- conflict in Taraba state and the Ijaw and Itskeri crisis in Delta state, Aguleri and Umuleri in Anambra state (see Ebonyi state government white paper 2008: Best et al, 1991: Imobighe et al 2002, Abada, 2004, Oji et al 2014). These provisions are additional preconditions for having access to certain rights and privileges. Abah and Okwori (2003) argue that tension has been created between ethnicity and nationhood by the definition of citizenship in the Nigerian Constitution of 1999 which define and categorize citizenship in three ways: by birth, by registration and naturalization. He further states that the definition of citizenship by birth comprises fundamental factors like ancestral linkage and place of birth or origin. These ancestral linkages emphasized “indigenship” which determines citizenship. In the same vein, Momoh (2002) argues that in the post-colonial Nigeria, there are two contending definitions of citizenship... these are: citizenship by statism and citizenship by indigenship. He further maintains that indignity has deep socio-political and psychological implications. For instance, the Ezza/Ezillo experience shows that even if a person or group have lived in a certain place for most of his life, worked, married, had children and grand-children there, he/she will still be considered a non-indigene, or a settler.

Omemma (2006) states that this definition of citizenship does not permit exercise of universal rights and entitlement as they are restricted by a code. This implies that individuals who are not indigenes experience discrimination in terms of placing their children in school, employment opportunities, and access to resources such as land. Also, the provision of section 147 (3) of the 1999 Constitution mostly favoured those who belong

to the indigenous communities of the area (state) in which they are resident. The implications are:

- Indegenship has more explanatory power than citizenship in defining access to social, economic and political issues in Nigeria.
- It is difficult particularly for migrants in rural location to have access to farm lands because indengenship implies membership by descent or blood tie.
- It also creates tension between the formal provision of the Constitution (Chapter III and IV) on citizenship and fundamental rights on one hand, and the practical application of these rights because of the notion of indengenship and settlers relations, on the other hand.

Politics: Politics according to Elom (2006) is a persistent pattern of human relationship that involves, to a significant extent, power role or authority". It refers to the political activities of individuals and its consequences for political institutions. This covers issues such as participation, patterns of participation and non-participation in politics, and political organization like voting behaviour, political attitudes and public opinion. Politics, like religion, deals with human relationship. And any case where it is not well practiced, it can be a source of conflict among communities. Politics has been found to be one of the remote causes of Ezza/Ezillo crisis. It was gathered that during the period of political activities such as general election, the people of Ezza in Ishielu and their Ezillo counterpart are often at cold war over who to vote as the Ezzas would like to vote for their brothers even from another parts of Ishielu (Ezza egu) contrary to the political wish of the Ezillo aborigine who would maintain that since the Ezza in Ezillo is residing in their land, they should be part of their political population, and thus should dance to their political tune. The two parties have often alleged marginalization against one another. This is particularly the case whenever either party is in position of political authority. The Ezillos cited examples of such tendencies as the forceful acquisition of 12.3 hectares of land they donated for the construction of offices for federal agencies like the independent national electoral commission (INEC), National population commission (NPC) etc and the attempt to create Izzo community within Ezillo community, all of which were carried out when Ezza people were at the helm of affairs. On the other hand, the Ezza's alleged that they were being marginalized and denied infrastructural amenities because their Ezillo counterparts were occupying strategic positions in government.

Socio-Cultural factors: Culture, according to Olewe (2003), is the ideas, custom, skill, arts of a given people in a given period. Tradition, on the other hand, is a laid down custom and norms of a given society which is passed down from one generation to another. Tradition and culture have been discovered as major conflict triggers, and transformers. This has to do with the sociology of settlement and settlement pattern and cultural diffusion in many ethnic groups in Nigeria. In the study of the Tiv-Jukun conflict, Best, et al (2001: 825-117) revealed that the Tiv as the largest ethnic group in the middle Belt region were able to gain strong foothold in many communities in the zone because their language and culture permeated other culture thereby altering the sociology of those communities. Echiagu (1999) posits that the settlement pattern of the Ezza and their war-like behaviour led to the invasion of lands of neighbouring sub-ethnic groups.

The Ezillo attributes the denigration of their cultural and traditional heritage by the Ezzas as some of the causes of the dispute between them. This include: flouting of new yam festival rules – bringing new yam to Ezillo market by the Ezza before the cultural rites of new yam in Ezillo, looting of the peoples' artifacts and antiquities, killing of fish in sacred ponds and rivers, desecration of the chieftaincy institution as evident in the beating of the traditional ruler of Ezillo. Eze Chima Onyibe and his wife in 2008. In 1992, the Ezillo people also alleged that the Ezza people seized Nwafor Isimkpuma market and renamed it Eke – Ezza (see memo to the Ebonyi state peace committee on Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo conflicts, 2008, Oji et al, 2014).

It was gathered that some of the custom and tradition of the Ezza migrants tend to conflict with those of the Ezillo aborigines, and thus breed mutual suspicion and distrust, capable of triggering off inter-communal crisis.

Biased Historical Information: History is the past record of a society handed down to the modern generation either in written or in oral form. Biased historical information is one of the major causes of Ezza/Ezillo crisis. The people of modern Ezillo determined that the Ezzas must leave their land as a result of biased historical information handed down to them that the Ezza people are war mongers and land usurpers who have forcefully occupied other Ezillo lands other than the Eguechara that was originally given to only 22 Ezza men following their mutual agreement.

Immediate causes

1. Inter personal conflict
2. Abuse of power
3. Boundary adjustment

4. The state position on the matters
5. Self-determination by Ezillo tribes.

Inter-personal conflict: The key immediate cause of Ezza/Ezillo crisis is the inter-personal conflict between a commercial phone operators and commercial motorcycle operator (okada man) from Ezillo and Ezza tribes respectively on 10th May 2008 at Onunweke (camp-Aron) over erection of phone booth on a portion of land which both parties claimed “ownership”. The disagreement attracted crowd which increased the tempo of the disagreement and further led to the burning of motorcycles and consequent pulling down of the phone booth that belong to both parties. Source disclosed that these destructive actions at the scene of the disagreement were not taken by the parties in conflict, but by other hoodlums who saw the scene as an avenue for executing their long conceived satanic plan. The disagreement further escalated to a full blown war with both tribes burning houses that belonged to one another. The 19th February 2010 blood shed along Enugu- Abakaliki highway by a suspected hired militants fighting in the disputed land and the 31st December 2011 Ezillo Massacre were the most devastating aspect of the crisis (www.vanguardngr.com/2010/03).

Abuse of Power: When there is abuse of power such as dictatorship in governance, subjugation and oppressive tendencies, crisis is bound to occur. The Ezza/Ezillo crisis ensued when the people of Ezza could no longer contain the suppression, oppression and depressions meted against them by the Ezillo aborigines on the ground of not been indigenous to Ezillo clan. It was gathered, through oral interview, that at a point of their joint existence, the Ezillo people began to take undue advantage of the Ezza for not being true indigene. At point, the Ezzas could no longer freely cultivate most of the lands previously own by them without having serious quarrel with the Ezillo people who would delight to tell them that they are not from Ezillo and thus has neither land nor say in Ezillo Community. This selfish and authoritative exploitation did not go down well with the Ezzas who vowed to resist. An attempt by the Ezzas to resist some of this perceived or obvious inhuman treatment against them sparked off the Ezza/Ezillo crisis.

Boundary Adjustment: Boundary adjustment/dispute doubled as both remote and immediate cause of Ezza/Ezillo crisis due to the strategic role it plaid in relations to the crisis. It is the lack of clear boundary between the Ezza-Ezillo and Ezillo people that led to the disagreement over who will erect phone booth on a portion of land in Ezillo market at Onunweke (Camp-Aron) which both claimed belong to their different tribes. The disagreement later degenerated into full blown war (Ezza/Ezillo crisis) with many casualties on the side of both tribes.

State position on the matter: The interest of government in some communities can turn to be a point of crisis or opposition from the other community. The excerpts of the Ebonyi state government decision on two key recommendations of the Peace committee: (special broadcast by Governor Martin N. Elechi, of Ebonyi State Thursday the 2nd Day of October, 2008), buttressed the above assertion.

Ezillo people demanded that Ezza-Ezillo should completely vacate Ezillo land and the peace committee viewed such a request as unjustifiable on the ground that it was Ezillo people that invited the Ezzas to assist them fight their Ngbo rivals over a disputed parcel of land originally allocated to them by Ezillo people through the customary method of land allocation (imabe ogbu). The land originally ceded to Ezza-Ezillo for their settlement (“Egu Echara”) under the agreement with Ezillo is a narrow strip of land with a total area of 52.54 hectares. To make it sufficient for the settlement and use of Ezza-Ezillo people, government decided to substantially increase the size of land from the intersection of the old Enugu-Abakaliki road with the New Enugu – Abakaliki road at a point called PWD Camp (also in local parlance called Aaron Camp) at Latitude 06° 24’ 56.62” and longitude 07° 52’ 29.34” E and moving westward along the old road for a distance 910.106 metres, the boundary of the land begins at a culvert on Offia-Atu stream on latitude 06° 25’ 14.46”N and longitude 67° 50’40.32” making the land area being added to the old settlement area by this new demarcation is 253.75 hectares, bringing the total land mass to be occupied henceforth by Ezza-Ezillo to 306.29 hectares up from the original 52.54 hectares.

Another fact that corroborates the general views of the respondents sampled on the causes of the communal conflicts on who owns Ezillo land is that, apart from cases pending at Abakaliki high court, all cases relating to land dispute since 1959 were decided in favour of the Ezillos (Memo submitted by Ezillo people to the Ebonyi state peace committee on the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo communal conflicts 2008).

In the same memorandum the Ezillo people further alleged as follows:

It is common knowledge that the relationship between Ezillo people and the Ezza settlers in their midst has not been cordial for a long time now because of the land grabbing tendencies of the latter among other reasons. Had the Ezza settlers complied with the court judgements and quasi-judicial decision on these disputes which required them to vacate Ezillo land or approach Ezillo people for terms of their tenancy this unfortunate incident and other, before it could have been avoided. The then district officer Mr. O.P. Gunning intervened by withdrawing the Ezzas from Eguechara and settling them temporarily at Egu Iteodo pending the resolution of the dispute and warned them against erection of any permanent structure or planting economic trees at Egu Iteodo. It is unfortunate to note that the Ezzas instead of moving to Egu Echara as agreed between them and Ezillo started scrambling for and partitioning every available space of land in Ezillo to themselves and bringing in their kinsmen from all parts of Ezza land into Ezillo without recourse to Ezillo people.

Government authority's favouritism of Ezillo tribes against the Ezzas in Ezillo has been identified as one of the immediate causes of Ezza/Ezillo inter-tribal crisis. Primary source revealed that the government of Ebonyi State under the leadership of Chief Martin N. Elechi favoured the Ezillo people against the Ezza tribes in Ezillo. Besides, the State Government denied all Ezza victims and refugees of the crisis any relief package, this was further proved by the government position on the matter as contained in the government white paper of 2nd October 2008 on the report of the panel set up to investigate and recommend appropriate solutions to the matter (Usulor, 2015). The blue print/white paper directed the Ezzas to vacate substantial portion of the disputed land back to Egu echara, a position which the Ezza tribes defined as discriminatory and thus, swore never to relocate to the new land leaving their houses and cash crops. They contended that there were other people occupying the place allocated to them coupled with the fact that the government made no effort at providing any social amenities that could attract them to the new place. This resistance by the Ezzas to the acclaimed biased government blue points/white paper as well as the insistence of the Ezillo tribes that they could no longer cohabit with the Ezzas exacerbated the Ezza/Ezillo crisis as shown in the 19th February 2010 mass killings and the horrendous 31 December 2011 Ezillo massacre whose masterminds have not been identified till date.

Self-determination by Ezillo tribes which feels it has long been deprived by the Ezzas: According to Duru (2009:23), land dispute and self-determination by one community against another is one of the major/immediate causes of inter-communal crisis. In the case of Ezza/Ezillo crisis, self-determination is found to be among the immediate causes of the crisis. The crisis ensued following the determination of the Ezillo people that they could no longer co-habit with the Ezza community who they fictitiously described as cantankerous, war monger and land usurpers.

The above has shown that the causes of communal conflicts in Nigeria are multi-dimensional. There is this saying that problem known is half solved. The question then is why have there been continuous social conflicts when these factors that result to conflicts are known. Undoubtedly, the answer to the above question can be found in the kind of approaches adopted to resolve communal conflicts. It therefore behooves relevant stakeholders to adopt and apply right approach to resolving or managing a particular conflict situation.

Findings

In view of the analysis of the data collected in the course of the study, the following findings were made.

- i. The study has established that the Ezillo conflict has affected sustainability of developmental efforts of the state government. The conflict led to the destruction of lives and properties especially government institutions. Schools were affected and the Ezillo regional water scheme was affected. No meaningful sustainable development will take place when there are no schools and enabling environment.
- ii. The conflicts significantly resulted to low provision and sustainability of infrastructure facilities in the community. Funds meant for development were channeled for protection of lives and properties leading to misplacement of priorities.
- iii. The conflict did not only affected government institutions and projects but also led to increase in youth unemployment and high crime wave in the state.
- iv. The study equally revealed that government's approach to resolving the conflict was not welcomed by the both parties. This can trigger future conflicts between the conflicting groups if nothing is urgently done.
- v. The study equally found out that conflicts affected socio-economic development of the area in particular and Ebonyi State in general. It led to increase in poverty level which stood at 73.6% in 2013, (National Bureau of Statistics).

Above all many lives were lost which is not a welcome development.

Conclusion

The study x-rayed the effects of social conflicts on sustainable development in Ebonyi State with focus on Ezillo-Ezza conflicts. Social conflict is inevitable. Our theoretical framework of analysis has shown that there is a natural tendency on the part of creature to migrate, expand and dominate space, or territory using any means possible-peaceful or through the use of force. The study has established that the immediate cause of the Ezillo conflict was the struggle between an Ezza man and one Ezillo boy over who is the rightful owner of, and who should occupy a small portion of land in Isimkpuma Park, indigene-settler problems and competition for resources has been responsible for the conflict. The above factors have been the major causes of communal conflict in Africa and Nigeria in particular. One common feature of these conflicts has to do with their confrontational and violence dimension which led to loss of lives and property of people who hitherto lived in relative harmony.

It is not however, the emergence of conflict that matters most but the approach taken to resolve any given conflict situation since conflict is a common feature of modern societies. Sometimes the approach taken to resolve a particular conflict can escalate the conflict instead of resolving it. One of the recommendations by the peace committee which seems to reflect bias and partiality is the relocation of the Ezza-Ezillo people to another piece of land called Egu-Echara, which is not only small, according Ezza-Ezillo people but presently occupied by the Ezillo and Ngbo people. The decision of the government did not augur well with the Ezza-Ezillo people. There is clear suspicion on the part of both parties. One can rightly say that peace has not fully returned to the warring community.

This is why government should not renege in her efforts to ensure peaceful co-existence among communities in Ebonyi state. Invariably, the recommendations of the committee set up by the government ended up providing a palliative measures which cannot guarantee lasting peace in the area. This had made the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo to continue to live in suspense and fear. No Meaningful development can be achieved in an environment where people cannot sleep with their two eyes closed. Government cannot comfortably administer development in such an environment. It has a debilitating effect on the life of the entire Ebonyians and even visitors since Ezillo is the major gate way to the heart of Ebonyi State. This is even the more reason why government and other relevant stakeholders should rally round and hearken to the recommendations of this paper and other contributions made by conflict experts in order to ensure a lasting peace in Ezillo community.

Recommendations

From the various findings made so far, the paper recommends as follows:

- 1) First and foremost those who lost lives and properties in the conflict should be compensated. Though no amount of money or other resources can replace life but it should serve as a commitment to building a lasting peace in the area. Public properties such as primary and secondary schools medical centers, markets should be rebuilt and scholarship and employment provided for the youths.
- 2) Government should review her decision on relocation of the Ezza- Ezillo people to Egu-Achara. With the dislocation of the Ezza- Ezillo people from their present base they would have to abandon four(4) primary schools, one(1) Health centre, one (1) secondary school and a good number of churches for a verging land void of any social amenities. When these basic infrastructure and social amenities are not provided, the people will find it difficult to relocate to the area.
- 3) Participatory or people driven approach to conflict management should be adopted. The participatory approach to conflict management is no doubt an invaluable tool which would enable a wide cross-section of people share information and opinion about their lives and environment. People (the youth, the church, women and Elder councils) who under normal circumstances are voiceless and powerless in the community, are empowered to gain confidence and to speak out. The face-to-face interaction which it provides, creates the opportunity for policy makers to gain an understanding of the issue at stake and to develop community trust and confidence for the government and its interventions. A situation where by few persons will be selected like the case of Ezza-Ezillo where 30-man peace committee of persons made up of mainly traditional rulers and leaders of thought without regard to gender is unacceptable.
- 4) Enlightenment campaign should be encouraged and extended to the Ezillo-Ezza-Ezillo communities on the need to embrace peace at all times and why the rule of law must be observed in dealing with certain issues. The campaign team will constitute representatives of the governments, and the communities especially those who have been adequately counseled to accept the realities of the situations.
- 5) Robust, vibrant social communication and dialogue model should be put in place to bridge the current socio—cultural gaps noticeable in the area. This could be through the activation of social networks such as clubs membership, sports, work place ties, alma matter ties.
- 6) All outstanding court cases and those in detention on account of the conflict should be withdrawn/ released for meaningful dialogue to the place.

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