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Application of Public Relations Strategies in the Resolution of Communal Conflict: Ezillo-EzzaEzillo Template

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Abstract- Conflict is perceived in most parts of the world including, Nigeria as something abnormal, dysfunctional and therefore detestable. Yet conflict is a fact of life and could be a precursor of positive change. Every plural society is bond to experience one form of conflict or the other. What makes a society an ideal polity is the extent to which the conflict, interest and needs in a society are constructively managed so that violence does not threaten its continued existence. Conflict challenges the rational man to think of alternative ways of meeting contesting human needs and interests. Conflicts refer to contradictions arising from differences in the interests, ideas, ideologies, orientation and precipitous tendencies of the people concerned. These contradictions are inherent in 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 relationship and has been seen as the "basic unit for understanding social existence".

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Application of Public Relations Strategies in the Resolution of Communal Conflict: The Ezillo-EzzaEzillo Template

Enyigwe C.[α], Udeajah R. A.[σ] & Ugwuanyi, U. S.[ρ]

Abstract- Conflict is perceived in most parts of the world including, Nigeria as something abnormal, dysfunctional and therefore detestable. Yet conflict is a fact of life and could be a precursor of positive change. Every plural society is bond to experience one form of conflict or the other. What makes a society an ideal polity is the extent to which the conflict, interest and needs in a society are constructively managed so that violence does not threaten its continued existence. Conflict challenges the rational man to think of alternative ways of meeting contesting human needs and interests. Conflicts refer to contradictions arising from differences in the interests, ideas, ideologies, orientation and precipitous tendencies of the people concerned. These contradictions are inherent in 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 relationship and has been seen as the "basic unit for understanding social existence".

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I. Introduction

Mankind has suffered from conflicts and crises the world over. From Europe to Asia, from Australia to America, from Caribbean to Africa the story is the same. In Africa today, many countries are engulfed in unprecedented armed conflicts, ethno-cultural, ideological and religious differences which have led most African countries into crises and conflicts since independence thereby making most of these African states seem perpetual war zones. Conflict constitutes one of the major recurring problems bedeviling the socio-economic and political landscape in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Achieving total conflict resolution has become a difficult task for developing nations, in spite of efforts by development experts to bring about desired development. The term "conflict resolution and sustainable development" was brought into common use by the World Commission on Environment Development (WECD) in its 1987 seminar report entitled "our common future".

Nigeria for instance, has witnessed numerous communal conflicts such as Zango-Kataf crisis in Kaduna state (1999-2001), Tiv-Jukun crisis in Taraba state (1999-2001), Ife-Modakeke in Osun state (1999-2000), Eleme-Okrika crisis, Itsekiri-Urhobo crisis (1999-2000), Itsekiri-Ijaw crisis, Aguleri-Umuleri conflict in Anambra state (1995-1999), Umuode-Oruku conflict, the Igbo-Ikom conflict in Cross-river state and the Ezillo-EzzaEzillo of Ebonyi state which this study seeks to look into.(Onwe, et al 2015).

These conflicts have caused irreparable, immeasurable and irreversible calamities, the cumulative negative effect of which are; loss of millions of human lives, wanton destruction of property worth millions of naira, displacement/dislocation of inhabitants making them homeless or refugees in other land, halting of commercial activities and developments, and creating permanent enemies. Besides, experience has shown that communal conflicts creates room for tension, hostility, lack of trust, overreactions and other problems associated with social frictions. The Ezillo and 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.

II. Ezillo - Ezzaezillo: an Overview

Ezillo is one of the seven sub-ethnic communities in Ishielu local government area located in Ebonyi central senatorial district of Ebonyi State. These sub-ethnic and dialectic groups are Agba, Ntezi (Okpoto dialect), Nkalagu, Nkalaha, Iyionu, Azuinyaba (Ezza dialect). Due to the strategic location of Ezillo across the Abakaliki-Enugu expressway, it hosts 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 MgbomEze in Ishiekelzzi in the present Ebonyi local government area and Ohaukwu local government area of Ebonyistate. According to this school, the Ezillos and their Ezzangbo/Ngbo brothers regard MgbomEze as the ancestral father of Amaleze village in Ezillo. This ancestral brotherhood accounts for the sacred relationship between Ezillo and Izzi on one hand and Ezillo and Ngbo on the other hand. Hence, the abhorrence of bloodshed between these groups Onwe, et al (2015).

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The Ezza-Ezillo people came from Ezza south and Ezza north local government areas of Ebonyi state on the invitation of the Ezillo people to settle a land dispute between them and their Ngbo neighborhood at Egu-Echara in the early 1930s (Memo to Peace Committee 2008, 2017). Ever since the end of 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 many years ago but the confrontational phase occurred on the 10th of May 2008, following an altercation between one Ezillo boy and Ezza man over the erection of phone booth at Ishimkpuma motor park, Ojiet al (2012). The Ebonyi state government quickly intervened to resolve the conflict in a fire-brigade approach; the conflict claimed 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.

Such devastating impacts included general insecurity, 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 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 refuges in various parts 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 so 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 clog 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; vehicular movement along the major road of Abakaliki-Enugu expressway was affected during the crisis. Movement of goods and services was also affected. The National Bureau of Statistics (2013) reports that 73.6 per cent of the Ebonyi state population are poor. Women, children and the elderly are the worst hit. The state is yet to recover from the vandalism of infrastructural and social amenities destroyed in the course of the conflict.

Conflict therefore, assumes enormous, complex and dynamic dimensions so much that are not usually susceptible to easy solution by applying rule of the thumb. Human history is characterized with conflict. There is no consensus among scholars on the inevitability of conflict in relationships among human beings. What therefore differs is the approach or strategy adopted to resolve or manage a particular conflict situation. It has been argued that no meaningful development can take place in an atmosphere of rancor, disunity and conflicts.

III. Theoretical Framework

The study is hinged on the Social Atavistic Conflict theory. The Social Atavistic Conflict thought was first used by Lombroso in 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 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 to Aja (2007, p.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 and environmental theory, claims and counter-claims over any territory is rooted in the economics of land, in terms of its fertility, including natural endowments in hydro-carbons. By extension in strategic theory, territorial expansion arises out of the security or defense consideration to reposition a society or a group in a position of environmental advantage over the adversaries.

Alluding to the above fact,Isichei (1976), commenting on the causes of the Umuleri-Aguleri conflicts, posit that the role 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 Umuleri and Aguleri 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.

In Nigeria, the Umuleri-Aguleri 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 its Ezzaaborigne conflict is aptly captured by the philosophical and ideological underpinnings of the social Atavistic theory. The Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo conflict manifested in the intense struggle for the ownership of Ezillo and the taciturnity of

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the Ezillo people that strangers should not disposes them of their ancestral homeland.

Conflict is inevitable and there is 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 conflict in Nigeria and Africa in general. This singular fact has resulted to the conflicts between Ezillo and Ezza-Ezilloneighbours. Conflicts are two parallel lines that can never meet. Conflict situation does not allow for any meaningful development.

IV. Methodology

The study adopted survey method of research as opinions, views, interviews and preferences of respondents were sampled. In this research, the whole of Ishielu local government area of Ebonyi state where Ezillo community is located is the population of the study. The population of Ishielu local government area as at the 2006 head count is 128,720 (NPC 2006) but this figure is too old and does not reflect the actual population of the community. The United Nations Population Fund stated that Nigeria has an annual growth rate of 3.2% (http://profiles.unfpa.org/nigeria) using this projection, this researcher got the 2015 population estimate over 9years that is 3.2% of 128,720. The researcher used the scientific calculator developed by the National Statistical Service of Australia to determine the sample size for the study.

Public Relations Strategies that can be Usedin Resolving the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo Conflict

There are various Public Relations strategies that can be used in resolving the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo conflict and they are discussed below:

a) Negotiation

Negotiation is the simplest and the most effective Public Relations strategy used in resolving communal conflicts. It consists basically of discussions between both the parties in a dispute and their allies with a view to reconciling divergent opinions or views or at least, understanding the differing positions of the stakeholders. It does not involve any third party. Those concerned decide among themselves how best to resolve their differences. The eminent leaders of the communities concerned do come together to discuss on the best way to resolve the conflict. They therefore arrange on the day the parties concerned will meet to discuss the matter. One the meeting day, each party will be given opportunity to explain, interpret and clarify issues at stake. Some members of the community who have no proper knowledge on the fundamental causes of the conflict will now be in a better position to understand more about the conflict. Negotiation involves discussions, arguments and counter-arguments though with the hope of resolving the conflict. It is by mutual discussions and understanding that the remote causes of the differences will be revealed and the opposing contentions elucidated. Negotiation is the most satisfactory public relations strategies used in resolving communal conflicts because the parties are directly involved. They discuss continually on the issue until the conflict is resolved. Once the conflict is resolved, public relations strategies will be used to make the parties concerned to forgive and forget. They are also encouraged to cultivate mutual understanding and live in harmonious relationship with each other.

b) Mediation

Mediation is another public relations strategy used in resolving communal conflicts. Mediation involves the use of third party in settling of the conflict. The public relations expert encourages the contending parties to come to settlement. The public relations expert will make frantic efforts to influence and persuade the opposing sides to enter into negotiation. Through efficient application of public relations by the mediating parties which usually comprise of the public relations experts and the influential community or religious leaders from both communities, the conflict will come to an end. This worked successfully in the conflict between Umuode and Oruku in Enugu state when the leaders of Catholic Church waded into the settlement of the conflict in 1995.

c) Inquiry

Inquiry is one of the public relations strategies used in resolving community conflicts. Where differences in opinion on factual matters underline a conflict between parties, the logical solution is to institute a commission of inquiry to be conducted by reputable observers such as public relations experts and other experts from other disciplines to ascertain precisely the facts in contention. The commission will probe deeply the cause of the conflict and make concrete recommendations on how to terminate the conflicts and through such process, community conflict can be resolved.

d) Conciliation

Conciliation is also a public relations strategy used in resolving community conflicts. It involves a third party investigation of the causes of the dispute and the submission of report embodying suggestions on how to resolve the conflict.

Conciliation involves elements of both inquiry and mediation and in fact, the process of conciliation emerged from treaties providing for permanent inquiry commissions. The report of conciliation may stimulate negotiations between the parties concerned. The Public Relations consultant serves the third party. They carry out research by investigating on the causes of the

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conflict. They also make recommendations which can stimulate negotiation between the parties involved.

e) Arbitration

Arbitration is one of the public relations strategies used in resolving community conflicts. It involves resolving a conflict between two parties by a neutral body, panel or tribunal. This body is usually composed of legal luminaries and public relations expert who know how to handle proceedings.

Public relations is used to appeal and persuade the opposing parties to cooperate by attending to the proceedings of the arbitration. Through this process, a decision is reached which is binding on the both parties concerned.

f) Mass Media

Use of the media is another public relations strategy used in resolving communal conflict. Mass media consist of Newspapers, Magazines, Radio, Television, Films etc. According to Ogbuoshi (2002) "Film is the effective medium of passing important information to the target audience, the audience hear and see facts being discussed." When the media report conflict resolution, they leave serious impact for good or for ill, directly or indirectly. The media can resolve conflict situation by avoiding inflammatory reports, sensation captions or playing to the gallery by maintaining a neutral position and reporting conflict as it is without allowing emotion to be judged.

The media either print or electronic or both can be used to create a conducive atmosphere for effective persuasion of the conflicting communities to see reason on why they should resolve their differences. The Ife-Modakeke experiences present a good case in point. While the crisis rages, the mass media in the country were awash objective, interpretative and investigative reports of the crisis. These reports created room for proper understanding of the remote and immediate causes, nature and dimensions of the crisis which by extension motivated some concerned citizens to wade into the matter and broker lasting peace in the area.

g) Public Opinion

Public opinion is one of the public relations strategies used in resolving communal conflicts. Public opinion is expression of views held in common by members of the community on controversial or salient issues. Public relations are used to monitor public opinions in a community so as to know their feelings and views on the matter under dispute. Knowing the views or feelings of the parties disputing will help immediately in resolving any communal conflict.

h) Propaganda Devices

Propaganda is one of the public relations strategies used in resolving communal conflicts. Propaganda is a conscious effort on the part of persons, pressure groups or government to influence the formation of attitudes. It is an organized effort to spread a particular doctrine or information to change people's attitudes or opinions. The public relations expert uses various propaganda techniques such as glittering generalities, plain folk device, bandwagon effects and name calling to achieve their motive.

Propaganda is effectively used in conflict resolution. It is used to change beliefs or views of the parties making them to change their mind or agree to negotiate their differences. For instance, propaganda was maximally used during the June 12, 1993 political crisis which nearly tore Nigeria apart. The Yoruba interpreted the annulment as Yoruba affairs based on tribalism. This led to serious crisis. This made the then federal military government to appoint UcheChukwumerije as the Information minister and he used propaganda to preserve the unity of the country.

Remote Causes of the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo Conflict

i) 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 kit and kin from Onueke and Ezza areas and thus began to occupy extra portions of the land which led to the blurring of boundary between the two tribes. However, problem ensued when the expansion of the Ezza people was exceedingly progressive such that the Ezillo people could not bear it and asked for the relocation of the Ezza people to Egu-Echara, which is the 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 it was ruled in favour of the Ezillo people, mandating the Ezza people to move towards Egu-Echara. In reaction to the above court rulings, the Ezzas made an appeal before Abakaliki colonial district officer, Mr. O. P. 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.

j) Indigenes-Settlers' 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 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

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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 status to asset 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 same time enshrine the principles of Federal Character and Quota System (FRN, 1999). On the other hand, Seers (1969) opines that the history of migration before slavery, during slavery and after slavery makes yesterday 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 defineindigenship. 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 the host community and settler-communities as has been demonstrated the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo conflict in Ebonyi state and the Ijaw and Itsekiri crisis in Delta state, Umuleri and Aguleri in Anambra state (see Ebonyi state government white paper 2008).

These provisions are additional preconditions for having access to certain rights and privileges. Abah & Okwori (2002) argue that tension has been created between ethnicity and nationhood by the definition of citizenship in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 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, Oji et al (2012) argues that in the post-colonial Nigeria, there are two contending definitions of citizenship… these are: citizenship by statism and citizenship by indigenship. They further maintained that indignity has deep socio-political and psychological implications. For instance, the Ezillo and 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 provisions of section 147 (3) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria mostly favored those who belong to the indigenous communities of the area (state) in which they are resident.

k) 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 behavior, 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 the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo conflict. It was gathered that during the period of political activities such as general elections, the people of Ezza in Ishielu and their Ezillo counterparts are often at cold war over who to vote as the Ezzas would like to vote their brothers even from other parts of Ishielu (Ezza-Egu) contrary to the political wish of the Ezillo aborigine who would maintain that since the Ezza in Ezillo are 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 Ezilloscited 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 the Ezza people were at the helm of affairs. On the other hand, the Ezzas alleged that they were being marginalized and denied infrastructural amenities because their Ezillo counterparts were occupying strategic positions in government.

l) Social-Cultural Factors

Culture, according to Isichei (1976), is the ideas, customs, skills, arts of a given people in a given period. Tradition, on the other hand, is a laid down

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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 (2004) 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 cultures thereby altering the sociology of those communities. Echiagu (1999) posits that the settlement pattern of the Ezza and their war-like behavior 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 one 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 the people's 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, EzeChimaOnyibe and his wife in 2008. In 1992, the Ezillo people also alleged that the Ezza people seized NwaforIsimkpuma market and renamed it Eke-Ezza (see memo to the Ebonyi state peace committee on Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo conflicts, 2008).

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 bred mutual suspicion and distrust, capable of triggering off inter-communal crisis.

Immediate Causes of the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo Crisis

m) Inter-personal conflict

The key immediate cause of the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo crisis is the inter-personal conflict between a commercial phone operators and commercial motorcycle operator (okada man) from Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo respectively on 10th May 2008 at Onunweke (camp-Aaron) 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 booths that belong to both parties. Source disclosed that these destructive actions at the scene of the disagreement were not taken by the parties in the conflict, but by other hoodlums who saw the scene as an avenue for executing their long-conceived satanic plans. The disagreement further escalated to a full blown war with both tribes burning houses that belonged to each other. The 19th February, 2010 bloodshed along Abakaliki-Enugu expressway by 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).

n) Abuse of Power

When there is abuse of power such as dictatorship in governance, subjugation and oppressive tendencies, crisis is bound to occur. The Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo crisis ensued when the people of Ezza could no longer contain the suppression, oppression and depression meted against them by the Ezillo aborigines on the ground of not being 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 a point, the Ezzas could no longer freely cultivate most of the lands previously owned 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 Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo crisis.

o) Boundary Adjustment

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

p) State government position on the Matter

The interest of the 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 NwanchorElechi, 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 (imabeogbu). The land originally ceded to Ezza-Ezillo for their settlement ("Egu-Echara") under Ezillo is a narrow strip

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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 the land from the intersection of the old Abakaliki-Enugu expressway with the new Abakaliki-Enugu expressway at a point called PWD Camp (also inlocalparlance called camp Aaron).

Another fact that corroborates the general views of the respondents sampled on the causes of the communal conflicts on who owns the 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 the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo conflict 2008).

In the same memorandum, the Ezillo people further allege 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 judgments and quasi-judicial decision on these disputes which required them to vacate Ezillo land or approach Ezillo for terms of their tenancy, this unfortunate incident and others, before it could have been avoided? The then district officer Mr. O.P. Gunning intervened by withdrawing the Ezzas from Egu-Echara 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 tribe against the Ezzas in Ezillo has been identified as one of the immediate causes of the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo inter-tribal crisis. Sources revealed that the government of Ebonyi state under the leadership of Chief Martin NwanchorElechi 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 Duru (2009). 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 they were other people occupying the place allocated to them coupled with the fact that the government made no effort at providing any social amenity that could attract them to the new place. This resistance by the Ezza people to the said biased government blue print/white paper as well as the insistence of the Ezillo tribes that they could no longer cohabit with the Ezzas exacerbated the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo crisis as shown in the 19th February, 2010 mass killings and the horrendous 31st December, 2011 Ezillo massacre whose masterminds have not been identified till date.

q) Self-determination by Ezillo tribe

Self-determination by Ezillo tribe which feels it has long been deprived by the Ezzas. According to Duru (2009, p.23), land dispute and self-determination by one community against another community is one of the major and immediate causes of inter-communal conflicts. In the case of Ezillo and 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 cohabit with the Ezza community who they described as cantankerous, war monger and land usurpers.

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

V. Summary of Findings

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

1. The study has established that Public Relations strategies like negotiation, mediation, inquiry, conciliation, arbitration, mass media, public opinion, propaganda devices can be effective in the resolution of the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo communal conflict compared to the fire-brigade approach by the previous government of Ebonyi state and security agents.
2. The state government under the leadership of Chief Engr. David Umahi has made effective use of these PR strategies in restoring peace and tranquility in the volatileEzillo community, through the peace committee inaugurated by his administration led by Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Abraham Nwali to see that peace is

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restored in Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo, and the committee's work is commendable.

3. The conflict 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 also affected. No meaningful sustainable development can take place when there are no schools and an enabling environment.

VI. Conclusion

The study has x-rayed the application of public relations strategies in the resolution of communal conflicts with Ezillo and its Ezzaaborigine conflict in Ebonyi state in focus. Despite clarion calls by different individuals, groups and government for cessation of communal conflicts in Nigeria, it is rather becoming endemic. Public relations strategies should therefore be used to resolve conflicts quickly and appropriately so that it will not result in ugly consequences. It can therefore be said that conflict is inherent in man. That is why the researcher's 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-peace or through the use of force. The study has established that the immediate cause of the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo conflict was the struggle between an Ezza man and one Ezillo boy over who is the rightful owner of and should occupy small portion of land in Ishimkpuma Park, indigene-settler problems and competition for resources has been responsible for the conflict. The above factors have been the major causes of communal conflicts in Africa in general 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 properties of people who hitherto lived in relative harmony. 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 area. With all these, there will be promotion of peace and harmonious coexistence among Nigerian communities and by extension usher in healthy development and progress in the country in particular and the world in general.

VII. Recommendations

1. Public relations strategies that is, participatory or people-driven approach to conflict resolution should be adopted. The participatory approach to conflict resolution 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 elders) who under normal circumstances are voiceless and powerless in the community are powered to gain confidence and to speak out. The face-to-face 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.
2. Those who lost lives and properties in the conflict should be compensated. Though no amount of money or other resources can equate life but it should serve as commitment to building a lasting peace in the area. Public properties such as primary and secondary schools, medical centers, markets should be rebuilt and employment and scholarship be provided for the youths.
3. Enlightenment campaign should be encouraged and extended to the Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo communities on the need to embrace peace at all times and why the rule of law should be observed in dealing with contentiousissues. 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.
4. Robust and vibrant social communication model should be put in place to bridge the current socio-cultural and communication gaps noticeable in the area. This could be through the activation of social networks such as clubs membership, sports etc.

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