



Community Media
for **Development**
and **Participation**

Experiences, Thoughts, and Forethoughts

IN HONOUR OF ALFRED ESIMATEMI OPUBOR

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CHAPTER SIX

Radio and Community Partnership for Mediation and Peacebuilding in Africa

Olusola Samuel Oyero, Segun Joshua and Remi R. Aduradola

Introduction

The word conflict originated from the Latin word- *conflictus*, which means struck together. This implies contention, confrontation, clash, controversy, and quarrel. According to *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, the term conflict means 'fight, battle, or struggle', that is, an overt confrontation between parties. The meaning has grown to include a 'sharp disagreement or opposition, as of interests, ideas, etc. Conflict is a phenomenon that has been part of human lives at every point and stage. Some scholars see conflict as natural occurrences in man, not necessarily in contest for resources, but still a difference of interest. Coser, cited in Otite (1999), sees the concept from the perspective of goal incompatibility. Wallensteen (2001:16) asserts that conflict has several meanings in everyday life. It could be referred to as behaviour or action, i.e. when two states are at war with each other; their relationship in this circumstance is determined by battlefield events. Such action(s) constitute conflict. He summed up his analysis on the concept of conflict by coming up with a holistic definition that sees conflict "as a social situation in which a minimum of two actors (parties) strive to acquire at the same moment in time, an available set of scarce resources".

In the same vein, Dougherty and Pfaltzgraf, cited in Nwolise (2004:1), conceptualise conflict as: "a condition in which one identifiable group of human beings . . . is engaged in conscious opposition to one or more other identifiable groups because these groups are pursuing what

are or appear to be incompatible goals". To Donohue and Kolt, cited in Akanji (2005), conflict can be described as situations in which interdependent people express their differences in the process of achieving their needs and goals. For the purpose of this paper, communal conflict will be defined as inter- or intra-group struggle within or between communities, over values which could be in form of status, political power, economic resources or any scarce resources, which cannot be mutually satisfied by both parties in conflict, and the parties in conflict aimed at not only to gain the values desired, but also to neutralise, injure or if need be, eliminate their rivals.

Much of the causes of under-development, poverty and diseases can be traced to conflict situations in most African states. Africa remains the continent that has been mostly bedeviled with local and internal tensions within the states, regions and communities. The diversity and heterogeneity of most African states has been identified as the major factor responsible for conflicts in African states. Unfortunately, conflict stifles. This places a task on African states, to either work out peace or remain perpetually in sorry state of under-development. Taking into cognisance the diversity factor of conflict, this paper develops a framework that can be applied to conflict resolution in Africa.

Types of Community Conflict

Community conflict may take the form of intra-group conflict, inter-group conflict, and inter-communal conflict. Intra-group conflict can be described as conflict(s) among people that share the same history, language, culture, geographical boundary and so on. The types of conflict often prevalent in this type of social organisation include contest for traditional rulership among royal families, and contest for political positions among different clans within this homogeneous community. Conflict in Ebira community in Kogi state of Nigeria is a good example; another example is conflict between Ilajo group and Aku-mejila group in Kabba, Kogi state.

Inter-group conflict is between two or more groups within a community. The various groups may share some similarities like language, history, geographical boundaries, etc. However, there must be one or more factors that differentiate them. It may be the period they

migrated and settled in the present place, like the case of Ife- Modakeke in Osun state, Tiv-Jukun in Taraba state, Itshekiri- Urhobos in Warri, all in Nigeria. This type of inter group conflict is often triggered by discrimination based on land acquisition and utilisation, fear of domination, location of local government headquarters, mutual claims of marginalisation arising from demographic factors of each group, or hegemonic control and utilisation of political apparatuses by the most politically dominant group to advance the parochial interest of one group, at the expense of the other group, to mention but a few.

Inter-communal conflict exists between two or more communities. It can be differentiated from the afore-mentioned types of community conflict based on geographical boundaries, especially if they have similar language and culture and religion, and also if they do not have similar religion, language and culture. A good example is 'settler' communities in Northern Nigeria (often referred to as Sabon-Gari) having a clash with any of the Hausa communities in the North; or Hausa settlements in the South. Conflict may erupt between these communities as a result of cultural, religious and ethnic differences.

Causes of Community Conflict

Albert, cited in Lewu (2010), has given four sources of community conflicts. They are:

- (1) Competition for inadequate (real or imagined) resources. In the economist's view, human wants are generally insatiable; therefore, it is common to find groups within a community competing sometimes aggressively for local resources. The competition may result in destruction of properties and even lives, when resources are inadequate or when what is available is not judiciously distributed.
- (2) Contradicting value systems in terms of religious beliefs, ideological position and general worldview of those concerned.
- (3) Psychological needs of groups and individuals in terms of personal and group self actualisation.
- (4) Manipulation of information which may be used to build peace or incite people for conflict.

In addition, competition for political power may also fuel conflict between different groups of people. As postulated by Anifowose (2011), violence may be used to acquire power, to retain power by group at the verge of losing power, and also to perpetrate the incumbent in power. Many other causes of communal conflict also exist.

Community Radio

The concept of community in communication discourse is constructed as spatial or social parameters, or both. In the first case, community refers to a specific geographical territory of a particular political entity. This is defined as such to include a population under a particular political administration, traditional or otherwise, but certainly constituting only a small portion of the whole of the jurisdiction of a country. The spatial definition is often interchanged with the expression 'local'. Social conceptualisation sees community in terms of "shared interests, tastes and values," and even in "demographic or psychographic terms". This would mean that groups of people who identify themselves with particular social, economic, cultural or political-ideological interests, views and orientations, might constitute a community. They may or may not all reside in a particular geographical area such as a city, a county, or a district under a common political administrative jurisdiction. In this case, members of the community so defined could be found in different spatial locations, contiguous to each other or not (AMARC Africa and Panos Southern Africa, 1998). The former definition of community is more relevant to the discussion in this paper.

Ojebode (2009: 9) defines a community radio station as "a station owned, staffed and managed by and for members of a community, a non-profit station that pursues a development agenda". It does not belong to one person, though the person may be rich and possessing political influence. The community radio is the property of the community; that is why community members are not shareholders but stakeholders because everyone contributes to the funding of the station. Thus, it is established for the people, controlled by the people and jointly owned by them. The money sourced from different people within the community is used to keep the station running so as to serve its purpose as an all-inclusive station. It provides access of communication to the people; it

allows them to participate in the activities of the station. Participation is very central to the running of community radio. Community radio uses participatory methods in its activities (Akingbulu, 2008); members of the community participate by supplying information to the station, raising funds and serving as volunteer staff for the station.

Theoretical Discussion

This paper is based on the agenda-setting model and face negotiation theory. The agenda setting model of McCombs and Shaw (1972) posits that media have effects on the scope of public's thinking by presenting to them issues for that purpose. In other words, the public often comes to share an agenda similar to the one being presented to them by the media. Thereby the issues focused upon by the media become the issues that the public accepts as important for attention and discussion (McQuail, 2005). In other words, agenda setting makes the news media to lead the public in assigning relative importance to various public issues (Zhu and Blood, 1997). The media agenda influences public agenda not by saying 'this issue is important' in an overt way, but by giving more space and time to that issue and by giving it more prominent space and time.

Cohen's (1963:13) study of foreign policy has been a stimulant of the agenda setting research. Cohen notes that the press:

may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about. And it follows from this that the world looks different to different people, depending not only on their personal interests, but also on the map that is drawn for them by the writers, editors and publishers of the papers they read.

The implication of agenda setting to peacebuilding is that media mirror peace as their agenda in conflict environment, and maintain the same in peaceful communities by such creative, consistent and continuous presentations that would aid conflict resolution and endear peace in people's minds.

Face Negotiation Theory, postulated by Ting-Toomey (1988), explains how different cultures manage conflict and communicate. It posits that the root of conflict is based on identity management on an

individual and cultural level. The various aspects of individual and cultural identities are described as *faces* – the public image of an individual or group that their society sees and evaluates, based on cultural norms and values. When that group or individual has his face threatened, conflict occurs (Ting-Toomey, 2007).

Ting-Toomey notes that culture has a significant impact on how people communicate and manage conflict with each other individually, and between groups. Culture provides the frame of reference for individual and group interaction because it consists of values, norms, beliefs, and traditions that play a large part in how a person or a group identifies himself or itself. He notes three issues that conflict will revolve around, namely: *content conflict goals*, which are external issues that an individual holds in high regard; *relational conflict goals*, which refer to how individuals define, or would ideally define their relationship with the other member in a conflict situation; and *identity based goals*, which involve issues of identity confirmation, respect, and approval of the conflict members. These goals have the deepest connection with culture and they are most directly related to face-saving issues.

The theory underscores the indispensability of facework competence: the communication skills one uses to uphold and manage face, in conflict situation. As Ting-Toomey (2009, 2010) stresses, intercultural facework competence is about the mindful and creative management of emotional frustrations arising primarily from cultural or ethnic group membership identity differences. It involves having the necessary culture-based knowledge and ethno-relative attitude, in making the commitment to interpreting the conflict communication process, from an alternative cultural viewfinder. It also entails paying adequate attention to identity-related back-and-forth negotiation and respect/disrespect issues.

Mindful facework transformation process refers to the incremental awakening process of being in touch with our filtered senses and realising that our reactive senses and cultural worldviews shape our gut-level conflict reactions. Besides, there must be willingness to take the time to step into the mindset and the heart-set of our conflict opponents and seeing and sensing things from their conflict lenses. Elastic conflict communication skills, such as cultural-decentring, mindful listening, empathetic resonance, mindful reframing, adaptive code-switching, and

mutual-face dialogue skills, are some of the face-sensitive behaviours that all administrators, staff members, faculty, and mediators can practise in order to arrive at a common-interest process and a common-interest conflict outcome.

Approaches to Conflict Resolution

In this section, we examine four approaches to conflict resolution, bringing out their weaknesses. These approaches are: avoidance, the use of law enforcement agencies, legal approach and mediation.

Avoidance

One of the non-confrontational approaches to managing conflict is the avoiding style. This necessitates passive behaviour, which is mostly employed when there is need to gather more information, so as to make good decision or when issues that are generating conflict are seen as trivial. It is however chagrin to discover that when issues generating conflicts are not nip in the bud quickly, they tend to degenerate to violent conflagration. Albert (2001) argues that generally, Nigerians are favourably disposed to avoidance as a style of conflict management; the complaints of a group that feels aggrieved about certain issues are hardly listened to, either by their adversaries or people that have the statutory responsibility to address such issues. Thus, the group that perceived itself to be ignored soon takes to violence, which *ipso facto* gives them recognition. Example includes the Ife-Modakeke crisis, the Takun and Wukari, the Zangokataf and Tafawa Balewa crises among others.

The Use of Law Enforcement Agencies

The use of law enforcement agencies to quell conflicts between feuding parties appear to be the dominant style and tactic of the Nigerian government. Albert (2001: 38) notes that once a community becomes violent in Nigeria, "the first thing government does, in line with its constitutional duty of maintaining law and order, is to deploy some policemen to keep the peace in the area". Once the violence dies out, the Police is withdrawn from the area based on the assumption that the conflict is over. In many cases, the conflict escalates few days, weeks or

months after the departure of the Police. In some desperate situations, the government permanently stations contingent of peace-keeping policemen and even soldiers in the conflict prone area. This method does not address the root causes of the conflict, and any available opportunity is used by the feuding parties to renew hostility in a greater dimension.

Legal Approach to Conflict Resolution

The most important formal mechanism for resolution of conflict is through the legal system of a country. During litigation, the parties to a conflict are heard by a court of law that decides upon the case after weighing evidences in the light of the existing laws in force in the country (Swatuk, Mengiste and Jembere, 2008). The problem with this approach is premised on the fact that, it may worsen adversarial relationship between the parties in conflict. This led credence to a popular adage in Yoruba speaking part of Nigeria that people cannot become friends after coming back from court litigation.

Mediation

Mediation is a process in which a trained impartial person, called a mediator, helps people in a dispute to communicate, understand each other, and reach agreement if possible. Mediation is voluntary, confidential, and let the people in the dispute decide what works best for them. The University for Peace describes mediation in long flowing words:

The voluntary, informal, non-binding process undertaken by an external party that fosters the settlement of differences or demands between directly invested parties. Mediators generally have a vested interest in the resolution of a given conflict or dispute, but they are able to operate neutrally and objectively. Lacking the authority to coerce or impose judgments, conditions, or resolutions, facilitators aim to transform the dynamics of the conflict situation by introducing new relevant knowledge or information, especially regarding the negotiation process between the disputants, by revealing common interests and suggesting possible directions towards settlements (Miller, 2003: 24).

Having given a vivid description of mediation, it will be necessary at this juncture to look at mediation process. The process of mediation,

according to Godongs (2006), encapsulates the following: initiation, preparation, introduction, problem statement, problem clarification, generation and evaluation of alternatives and agreement.

The mediation process begins at the **initiation** stage. The matter could be submitted to a "neutral" or dispute resolution organisation either by one or all the parties involved in a conflict. However, for the process to kick off, all parties must consent and be willing to seek settlement on the issues at stake through the assistance of an intermediary. The next stage is **preparation**. Parties in conflict should be educated about the background to the conflict, claims made, defences and remedies being sought. At preparation stage, there may be need to seek the advice of a legal practitioner on technical issues, although legal representation on such matters is excluded. In addition, the mediator is expected to be briefed about the parties in conflict and the major features of the dispute. Furthermore, the mediator also acquires knowledge about the balance of power between the parties; sources of pressure and pressures for and against agreement; the economic resources of the parties; political and personal differences between parties; the authority of delegates in negotiation; and cultural, religious and ideological differences. Then, convenient dates, time and venues are fixed for meetings.

The next step is to move into action of mediation beginning with **introduction**. This is a stage in which acceptability, integrity, credibility and neutrality of a mediator are established. The mediator is expected to use this ample opportunity to determine issues and positions of disputants for common participation in the mediation process. After this is **problem statement**. Parties to a conflict state their problems that generated conflicts, either by raising such issues one by one and discussion is made on each before going to the next issue, or by having exhaustive list of all relevant issues before detailed discussion on each commences. Closely related to this is **problem clarification**. The mediator carefully brings out the underlying issues causing the conflicts through questions and assessment of behaviour. He then makes a summary of areas of agreement and disagreement between the parties.

The next action is **generation and evaluation of alternatives**. This provides the platform for the mediator to encourage parties to a conflict to outline their priorities and suggest alternatives. Thus, the workability

and acceptability of new solutions as part of the general exploration for solutions is assessed. Following this is **selection of alternatives**, which is done through helping the parties in conflict to reduce their alternatives to a minimum that are essential for desirable results needed by all parties. The mediator could help make the final choice and adoption of alternatives if necessary. The last stage is **agreement**. Here, the disputants involved in conflict draft an agreement acceptable to all. However, the mediator makes sure that a clear summary of the terms of discussions and negotiated compromises are readily available to parties drafting the agreement.

Mediation Approaches

Mediation takes different approaches with the mediator taking different roles in each type.

Facilitative Mediation is based on the belief that, with neutral assistance, people can work through and resolve their own conflicts. In a facilitative mediation, the mediator will take an active role in controlling the “process”, such as setting the ground rules for how the problem will be solved. The mediator asks questions to identify the interests of the parties and the real issues in the disagreement. He/she helps the parties to explore solutions that benefit both parties (sometimes called “win/win” solutions). In a facilitative mediation, the mediator does not offer an opinion on the strengths and weaknesses of the parties’ cases. He/she does not suggest solutions (Touval and Zartman, 1985).

Transformative Mediation is premised on the belief that conflict tends to make parties feel weak and self-absorbed. Transformative mediators try to change the nature of the parties’ conflict interaction by helping them to appreciate each others’ viewpoints (“recognition”) and strengthening their ability to handle conflict in a productive manner (“empowerment”). He/she will intervene in the conversation between the parties in order to call attention to moments of recognition and empowerment. Ground rules for the mediation are set only if the parties set them. The mediator does not direct the parties to topics or issues. Instead, he/she follows the parties’ conversation and assist them to talk about what they think is important. The transformative mediator does not offer an opinion on the strengths or weaknesses of the parties’ cases

and does not suggest solutions.

In Analytical Mediation, mediators with expertise in the issues causing conflict can help the parties to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their legal or other positions and work to achieve settlements. In evaluative mediation, the mediator controls the process and suggests solutions for resolving the conflict. Individual meetings between the mediator and one party at a time (called "caucuses") are a major component of evaluative mediation. The focus of an evaluative mediation is primarily upon settlement. The mediators will make their best efforts to get the parties to compromise, if necessary, to achieve a result.

Inclusive Mediation is based on the belief that, with support and guidance through a problem-solving process, the parties, not the mediators, will develop a solution that meets their needs. An inclusive mediation is always done with two mediators in a co-mediator model. Mediators focus on the ability to strategically listen for values, feelings and topics, and reflect these back to the participants using language that captures the intensity the participants expressed. Mediators follow a defined process that includes time for participants to talk about whatever they chose, build clarity as to what is important, identify topics participants want to resolve, identify the goals each participant has for each topic, brainstorm options, consider each of the generated options in terms of which would meet all participants' goals, and determine areas of agreement, if any.

Resort to Media for Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

While mediation approaches have been very useful in conflict resolution, the impact of these techniques in many cases has been short-lived. Most times, agreements reached through mediation are not well publicised among members of the communities, resulting in resurgence of pockets of conflicts from the main conflicting situations. Community radio partnership will not only create awareness about agreements reached, but also sustain peace deals through continuous presentations and creative repetitions of the subject of agreement. Besides, the nearness of community radio to the people can ensure that potentially disrupting issues are quickly brought to the attention of the public, thus enabling the local political and traditional leadership to curtail the situation from

degenerating into deep crisis.

The role that media play during conflict is underscored due to people's desire to seek information in such situation. As noted by Bractic (2006: 4), 'people are afraid, feel uncertain and vulnerable during conflict, thus leading to rapid increases in information needs.' In other words, the increase of uncertainties in the environment during conflict invariably increases audience needs for information; this consequently makes the audience more vulnerable to media influence. Information obtained at this moment can play a decisive role in influencing audience's thoughts in favour of desired ends. The media thus have the advantage of setting agenda for peace in such a situation given audience dependence on them to receive information.

Attention has also been drawn to the media as a forum where peace can be achieved through persuasion. John Dewey, also cited by Bractic (2006), argues that 'democracy was persuasion through public discussion carried on not only in legislative halls, but in the press, private conversations and assemblies'. The media can be an instrument of conflict resolution, when used to carry information that is reliable, when they respect human rights, and represent diverse views. It is the kind of media that 'enables a society to make well-informed choices, which is the precursor of democratic governance. It is the media that reduce conflict and foster human security' (Howard, 2002:1).

However, media and communication have been described as not a panacea for conflict, and in the absence of a genuine desire to resolve conflict, it is as likely to intensify the parties' disagreement as it is to moderate it (Krauss and Morsella, 2000). This is in line with Severin and Tankard's (1992) thoughts that media are almost never the sole agents of change, they are a prominent factor in complex social systems that give rise to change. Thus, the media can influence any process of social change, either by supporting the forces working in the desired direction, or by opposing the forces oriented in the opposite direction (Lewin, cited in Bractic, 2006). Similarly, the media may potentially have a positive impact if based upon basic professional standards, combined with diverse access to information, reasonable financial resources and adherence to ethical codes. Such media can contribute to societal reconciliation, alter misperceptions and broaden understanding of the causes and

consequences of conflict (The Institute for the Studies on Free Flow of Information (ISAI), 2004).

The electronic media especially are the most powerful tool of communication, and can play the following positive roles in peacebuilding:

- (1) Provision of information: Media can provide accurate and unbiased information to populations affected by conflicts, and proactively deliver programmes that aim to impart knowledge, attitude and behaviour of the population about different groups and issues related to peacebuilding.
- (2) Mediation: Media can mediate between rival groups or races through dissemination of information on the standpoints of each group.
- (3) Dialogue: Media can encourage dialogue between the rival groups and help find a peaceful way-out of misunderstanding among them.
- (4) Promotion of human rights: Media may focus on establishing human rights, i.e. child rights, women rights, labour rights and minority rights.
- (5) Promotion of gender equality: Effective media programmes may be produced on gender disparity, social inequality, and child and women trafficking, education and training, health and nutrition, population and reproductive health, water, sanitation, safer sex, and drug abuse, all issues usually absent in a conflict situation.
- (6) Breaking prejudices: Media should link the different groups through effective community radio and national radio programmes, which will help them to break their prejudice and intolerance, and foster mutual understanding to the path of peace and prosperity.
- (7) Benefits of peace: Media can emphasise the benefits that peace can bring and raise the legitimacy of groups or leaders working for peace. To promote peacebuilding at the community level, there is need for dialogue and debate on issues affecting communities.

Relevance of Community Radio in Peacebuilding

Radio by nature is the ideal medium for development in Africa. It is a veritable medium which has provided a good access to communication for large number of people, both literate and non-literate. Its advantage over other media lies in its relative simplicity, cheapness and ubiquity without dependence on electricity supply. FAO (1998) identifies the strengths of radio in development process. It states that radio is an important mechanism for rapid diffusion of development information in a diversity of languages and to widespread geographical areas; a channel for interactive communication, for dialogue and debate on the major issues of rural development; a platform for democratic and pluralistic expression of the opinions, needs and aspirations of rural communities, and a means of raising public awareness and motivation.

A community radio has enormous potential to introduce plural voices to the media sector, to deliver development messages, to empower communities to take charge of their own information needs and to develop appropriate formats for meeting them (Oyero, 2008). Community radio is better placed above other media variants to mediate and promote peace at community levels. The following are the merits of using community radio for peace building:

- (1) Community radio provides pluralised media that give access to community members to air their views.
- (2) It is able to focus on immediate local issues affecting the people instead of emphasis on images of top national political leaders as practised by national media.
- (3) Community radio is also more focused to serve local development and issues that concern peace through information, education and entertainment.
- (4) Community radio provides diversity of information due to access; thus allowing people to express themselves, thereby purging them of their complaints, rather than resorting to conflicts to express them.
- (5) Community radio provides a structure that ensures bottom-up communication that is free from monopolisation and political manipulation.

Community Radio, Mediation and Community Partnership

The model being presented here shows a partnership that will result in conflict resolution and further peacebuilding within a community. It is a cooperative task among the elements involved in fostering peace. The partnership which involves the community radio, peace workers and community members – parties involved in conflict or among which greater peace is sought – works through a combination of relevant peace-oriented programmes, mediation and indigenous communication channels.

The community radio works in partnership with peace workers to package programmes that are peace oriented using any of the media formats. The idea is that community radio engages in audience research in conjunction with other stakeholders to determine the issues of conflict and packages programmes that will address these issues. Thus, community radio engages in a campaign of sort towards conflict resolution and peace building. It is necessary to note that this kind of media practice is purposeful and does not sit on the fence, especially in conflict situation; neither does it speak of objectivity when human lives are at stake. What is important is truthful and purpose-driven programmes presentation, aimed at conflict resolution and sustenance of peace. Hence, community radio is used to “help build peace; by becoming the instrument of the makers, by striving to clarify the basis of conflict, by highlighting common ground and linking people of good will in the belligerent communities” (Opubor, 2012: 91). Through these, the radio is able to set agenda for peace among the members of a community.

The peace agents employed mediation techniques as described in face negotiation to intervene among opposing communities and groups towards conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It is equally important to note that mediators are expected to be culturally competent in handling their mediation assignments. Face negotiation requires that mediators possess necessary culture-based knowledge and ethno-relative attitude in making the commitment to interpreting the conflict communication process from an alternative cultural viewfinder. Part of the cultural competence is versatility in indigenous methods of conflict resolution.

A fundamental factor in indigenous communication channels is the centrality of culture or an espousal of cultural values. African societies

derive their essence for living, relationship with one another and peacebuilding efforts, from their cultural values which give a sense of meaning to the stability and continuous existence of their societies. African indigenous communication channels espouse moral virtues of generosity, forgiveness, friendliness, openness, compassion, hospitality or care for others among other factors. As noted by Murithi (2006: 16-19), indigenous healing and reconciliation methods promoted the re-integration of combatants especially child-soldiers into their communities in Mozambique. The *gacaca* justice and reconciliation system, largely based on local participation and involvement, has strengthened solidarity and restoration of peace to genocide occurrence in Rwanda. Moreover, the “*ubuntu* worldwide” project in the southern African region focuses on the idea of ‘others being human’, which made individuals to recognise and promote the sense of belonging to others; thus strengthening the bond of relationship and essence of humanity.

Peculiar to most African societies is the use of traditional institutions (Kings, Council of elders or Opinion leaders) to establish institutional forum for peacebuilding. The collective wisdom, experience and respect accorded them make them relevant to peacebuilding process. For example, among the Yoruba people of Nigeria; the *olori-ebi* (family head) or *Agba-ile* (most elderly man/woman in the family) are saddled with the responsibility of mediating into conflict between husbands and wives, between wives (in a polygamous setting) or parents and children. At *agbo-ile* (compound level) or *adugbo* (in the neighbourhood), elders at the extended family level assemble to wade into family disputes, while at the village or community level, council of elders engage in dialogue, to promote cohesion, unity and solidarity in the society. The indigenous methods of communication, while being employed in the mediation and peacebuilding process, are adapted to fit into community radio programme.

Case Studies

An example of peacebuilding and media interactions is that of “Peace Radio.” The case studies employed offer insights into such efforts. Peace radio promotes peacebuilding in the following ways:

- (1) Reaches out to illiterate populations to disseminate information, generate public dialogue and debate, advocate for specific issues, provide civic education and mobilise public support for particular actions or events.
- (2) Conducts needs assessment of rural communities.
- (3) Educates individuals about appropriate roles for leaders and other citizens to play during times of conflict.
- (4) Publicises border harmonisation meetings in rural areas.
- (5) Airs live strategic meetings between elders and other political leaders.
- (6) Informs communities about the plight of other conflict-ridden areas, including the adverse effects and destruction that arise from conflicts.
- (7) Propagates early warning information and current cease-fire status information (Beyna *et al* 2001: 24).

Partnership Model for Peacebuilding



Another study sponsored by the USAID about media consumption and perceptions in Northern Uganda revealed that the main source of

information in the area was radio (Panos Eastern Africa, 2010). The survey investigated whether the population was aware of the donor's sponsored Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) for Northern Uganda. Of the respondents interviewed, 61 percent cited radio as their main source of information for the peace recovery programme. Although this survey was conducted for a different purpose, it gives us a general appreciation of the role of the media in creating and furthering awareness in Northern Uganda. PANOS is currently partnering with 10 local radio stations to boost community debates.

The debates focus on problems afflicting the people of Northern Uganda as they resume normal life twenty four years after a deadly conflict. The diverse viewpoints the debates are likely to generate will help in the identification of solutions to many common problems.

Public debates provide a mechanism for a two-way communication between the communities and their leaders. People are accorded an opportunity to participate in the decision making process. Stephen Holmes argues in his essay, "Liberal Constraints on Private Power", that "even if publicity does not guarantee the triumph of truth, it may still be the best means known for correcting mistakes and discovering untried solutions".

Public debates on radio through talk shows are a common feature of many radio stations in the north in particular, and in the country as a whole. The trouble is that talk shows are dominated by the same figures. Ordinary people have very limited access to radios; theirs is a job of listening.

Conclusion

The writers have presented a model in conflict resolution and peace building approach, showing the possibility of partnership among the community radio, peace workers and the community members. Greater progress in peace building will be achieved where partnership exists among the stakeholders, rather than reliance on one single medium. Since most communal conflicts are rooted in diversity and heterogeneity of the people, face negotiation techniques, working through the process of mediation, will greatly assist in resolving the conflicts. At the same time, the community radio will serve as the oil that lubricates the process by

setting peace agenda for members of the communities. The media partnership therefore does not only serve the purpose of conflict resolution but also that of peacebuilding and maintenance.

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