**The Impacts of Communal Clashes on the Development of the Society**

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**Abstract**

*Communal conflicts in Nigeria have significantly impeded rural development, leading to multidimensional poverty and hindering government interventions. These conflicts damage critical social amenities, affecting education, health, and social infrastructure in rural areas. The conflicts are often rooted in land dispute among clans, emphasizing the need for accurate land border delineation to prevent further escalation. The prevalence of communal conflict has caused a spiraling decline in development across different geopolitical zones, highlighting the urgent need for conflict resolution strategies to safeguard rural development and improve the well-being of rural dwellers. In summary, communal clashes in Nigeria have a detrimental impact on rural development by disrupting essential services and perpetuating poverty, necessitating proactive measures to address the root causes of these conflicts and promote sustainable development in affected regions.*

**Keywords:** Communal Clash, Communal Conflicts, Development, Society

**Introduction**

Communal conflict is defined as violent conflict between non-state groups organized along a shared communal identity it involves lethal violence to gam control over disputed issues like land or political power, with groups identifying based on common history, culture, or values. Communal conflicts are distinct from state based conflicts, due to their symmetrical nature, lower organization level, and lack of control over state resources. Across the world, people are fighting over issues that have nothing to do with religion or ethnicity. Communal violence is a form of violence across ethnic or communal lines. Where parties feel solidarity for their respective groups, choosing victims based on group membership. It includes conflicts between communities of different religious of ethnic background grounds, with historical instances seen in Europe, Africa, and other regions, communal violence often arises from a breakdown in the rule of law, leading to mass mobilization and violent escalation. Beyond massive civil wars, academics are increasingly investigating the origins, trends, and outcomes of other types of violent conflict. This include acts of sexual assault, electoral violence, and vigilantism. This broadening of the research field enables scholars to study the connections between different forms of political violence, it also opens up space for more meaningful engagement with feminist research on gendered experiences of insecurity struggle, and victimization. Feminist scholars have long argued that for many women, the experiences of physical and structural violence do not end with a peace agreement after civil war. A focus on communal violence demonstrates that these experiences also do not start with civil wars. Gary (2005) stated that communal violence is primarily carried out by armed actors such as gangs, vigilantes, and militias. These actors often police, protect and terrorize communities outside periods of communal conflict. They thus embed violence in the everyday social fabric of predominantly poor communities neglected by the state and deprived of government services. One important marker of this social fabric is gender relations. The impacts of communal clashes are multifaceted and severe, affecting various aspects of society. These conflicts hinder socio-economic development, human health, labour strength, and political stability. They can lead to societal breakdown, secession attempts, and Significant disruptions in economic activities. Communal conflicts often result in massive loss of lives, destruction of properties and psychosocial impacts on individuals, especially youths. Studies undertaken in Nigeria have shown that the psychological repercussions experienced by impacted communities include anxiety, sadness, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mental health difficulties. Additionally, communal conflicts can have detrimental effects on education, health, and social infrastructure in rural areas, exacerbating poverty and impending development efforts. Efforts to address communal conflicts require a holistic approach that includes conflict resolution, mechanisms, peace-building initiatives, and psychological interventions to mitigate the psychological consequences an individuals and communities.

**Development and Communal Development**

Development refers to the gradual growth of something, so that it becomes bigger or more advanced. Todaro and Smith (2009), defined development as a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and eradication of poverty. On their own part, national Economic Council in their earliest official statement on Nigeria National Development plan in 1959 said inter alia, at their tenth meeting that the objective of development is that achievement and the maintenance of the highest possible rate of increase in the standard of living and the creation of necessary conditions to this end.

Development signifies progress from a state of smallness to largeness, from adversity to prosperity, and from poverty to wealth, encompassing cultural, social, economic, and physical dimensions. According to Huntington (1965), development occurs when a traditional society undergoes modernization, discarding its traditional traits.

**Industrialization of the economy and Rationalization of the cult system.**

Development may be measured by the industrialization of the economy and the rationalization of cultural systems. Development is apparent in a well-structured society that has contemporary infrastructure, such as robust road networks, dependable water supply, power, high-quality medical facilities, and healthcare services, as well as an enhanced standard of life and respect to legal principles. Based on the perspectives of authors such as Huntington, we hold the belief that genuine community development is in accordance with these criteria. An exemplary manifestation of progress is a community that has gained a stage of systematic organization and modernization, whereby the majority of its individuals have acquired education and possess the ability to recognize and value the existing infrastructure. Community development is the process of improving cultural, social, economic, and infrastructural aspects of a community to achieve a desirable level of comfort and well-being for its residents. This stands in stark contrast to groups that continue to exist in the primitive circumstances as defined by Fred Riggs' concept of a prismatic society.

**Communal Conflicts as Site of Peace and Security**

Conflict as a phenomenon is promoted by certain factors and conditions. Conflicts of the highest sort occur between interest groups and individuals who are disagreeing over one thing or the other.

The study of communal violence has developed into a vibrant research field but its findings often remain isolated from broader conflict and peace building research. This is in part due to different terminologies used across research communities. In some fields, communal conflicts are referred to as “ethnic conflicts, religious violence, farmer-herder violence’ or ‘tribal clashes”. Such terms may describe one important dimension of such conflicts but also obscure their complexity. In election violence research, communal violence is commonly referred to as ‘riots’, but the term is problematic because it suggests small and spontaneous clashes linked to protests, even though much election-related violence is organized, premeditated and taps into long- standing communal tensions. In the peacekeeping and peace building literature, communal conflicts tend to be referred to as ‘local conflicts, despite the fact that they are linked to elite politics on the national level and state institutional structures. For example, ‘most of the protracted communal conflicts in eastern Congo and elsewhere in the country have been provoked. Instrumentalized or sustained by regional, national, or provincial political actors. In order to better understand and address the wide variety of communal conflicts, I distinguish such conflicts according to four key criteria: type, geography, armed actors and national context. The type of conflict can vary from one-sided communal conflicts or pogroms in which a majority attacks a minority, to dyadic conflicts fought between two groups of equal strength, such as two militias. Geographically, such conflicts can be either primarily urban or rural in character. A heavy deployment of mobile police and the military in urban areas can often bring communal violence under control. But in rural areas such as where much of Nigeria’s and South Sudan’s cattle- related fighting takes place, security forces are inevitably spread thin and can hardly protect civilians. It is crucial to consider the geography of such violence, as the dynamics of urban and rural conflict frequently intersect and may exacerbate one another. Additionally, communal conflicts exhibit substantial variation in the identity of the armed actors, which can range from neighbours who use kitchen knives to attack one another to urban gangs that engage in election-related violence and well-armed militias that have received extensive military training. On (2020) posits that the national context also influences conflicts and the risk of escalation. Large-scale communal violence is more likely in countries that are undergoing regime change, such as Indonesia in the late 1990s, in contested national or local elections, as repeatedly observed in India or Kenya, or in the context of ongoing civil war and regional insurgencies, such as Mali. Additionally, communal violence can exacerbate the likelihood of civil war and impede the establishment of peace in the aftermath of a war. For instance, communal conflicts in South Sudan preceded the civil war (2013-2018) and resurfaced in a significant manner in 2019, following the conclusion of hostilities in the civil war by the revitalized peace agreement. According to Krause (2020), Communal conflicts serve as crucial sites for peace and security efforts, often overlooked internationally. These conflicts involve non-state armed battle between social group and vary significantly in type and scale, from small clashes to communal wars with high death toils. Understanding the dynamics of communal conflicts is vital for tailored Intervention strategies. Women play essential roles in both fueling and mitigating communal conflicts, influencing male family members and participating in peace negotiations. Integrating the prevention of communal violence into peace building agendas in key to protecting communities and promoting gender-inclusive peace making. Despite challenges in female participation and the complexity of communal conflicts, addressing these conflicts is essential for sustainable peace and stability. It is important to recognize that communal conflicts, much like civil wars, are fundamentally political in nature. This means that they need to be addressed through policymaking and political change. Even though communal conflicts are defined as non-state conflicts, the state, its institutions, and the performance of governance shape their root causes and the risk of escalation. These causes include local-level competition among political elite, access to resources and land rights, and discrimination and marginalization of social groups. Apart from these factors gender Inequality may compound the risk of conflict escalation and hamper effective prevention and peace building. Communal wars are difficult to resolve because civilians arm themselves for community protection. Even when violence decline, systematic disarmament chin does not take place. In urban environments, the legacies of communal violence may lead to increased gang violence and armed crime, which results in other forms of female and male victimization. In rural areas such as South Sudan, efforts by the state and by peacekeepers to disarm communal militias have repeatedly backfired dramatically, at times killing thousands in the aftermath of forceful disarmament campaigns that have resulted in attacks on recently disarmed communities. More generally, research has established a connection between gender inequality and the likelihood of armed conflict and prospects for peacebuilding. Communal conflicts are one important form of armed conflict. This means that everyday gender relations shape the risk of communal conflict and the prospects for peace building, Jason (2017), states that, In civil wars, male and female combatants often leave their families and communities (or are forced to do so) and are, to varying extents, exposed to combatant training, socialization and armed group ideology. Thus, in rebel groups, these factors (re)shape notions of masculinity and femininity and may demand, encourage, tolerate or prohibit specific acts of violence. In contrast, those who fight in communal conflicts remain embedded within their families and communities, even if they fight within well-armed and organized militias. They remain husbands, sons, brothers and friends who kill in relatively close proximity and return home after hours or days of fighting

In Nigeria, hegemonic masculinity-i.e., expectations for being a respected man-includes holding a job with a steady income that allows one to get married. Such expectations are very difficult to fulfil when high youth unemployment prevails even among high school and university graduates Men who cannot achieve this ideal can either choose violent masculine identities to assert dominance and control or alternative forms of nonviolent and non-hegemonic masculinities. In other words, men who cannot access social status through education, legal income and decent housing are vulnerable to joining gangs and using their physical capacity to enact violence as a means to generate social status and income. The display of violent masculine strength is a means of making a living from the margins of society that can be more attractive than choosing nonviolent menial work, such as agriculture of petty trade, which remain professions dominated by women. Communal conflicts are also important, yet often internationally neglected sites of peace negotiations that require women’s participation, In Jos, peace negotiations repeatedly took place between ethnic and religious leaders, as well as government officials. One such local peace process was supported by the HD Centre and brought women representatives of ethnic and religious groups into the negotiation. However, as in many peace processes, female participants found themselves expected to only address ‘women’s issues and struggled to influence the negotiations among male representatives. In many other local peace processes that ended major communal conflicts-such as, for example, the Malino It peace agreement for the Maluku conflict in Indonesia-women were completely absent from the negotiations, despite having formed an interfaith women’s peace movement that contributed to paving the way for the high-level peace negotiations. Communal conflicts are also important-yet often internationally neglected-sites of peace negotiations that require women’s participation. In Jos, peace negotiations repeatedly took place between ethnic and religious leaders, as well as government officials. One such local peace process was supported by the HD Centre and brought women representatives of ethnic and religious groups into the negotiations. Nevertheless, in several peace processes, female participants often encountered the expectation to exclusively address women's concerns and encountered obstacles in exerting influence over discussions that were mostly controlled by male representatives. Women were completely excluded from the discussions in some local peace processes that successfully settled significant communal disputes, such as the Malino II peace accord for the Maluku war in Indonesia. Despite the major contributions of an ecumenical women's peace movement in setting the necessary circumstances for these important peace discussions, they were nevertheless excluded from the process.

**The causes of communal conflicts**

Researchers have shown that the following factors are most prominent in bringing situations of conflict in our communities.

1. Boundary Disputes: Many communal conflicts in our society have been caused by the disagreement between neighboring communities on where their boundaries would start and end. This confusion usually comes up as result of the quest of the communities to have extensive area of land as their own. In the attempt to achieve this feat, they encroach on the rights of their neighbours. As negotiation by both parties and even the intervening third parties break down, conflict would ensue.
2. Quarrels over land ownership: Closely related to the above, is the disagreement of a section of a community or even an individual in a specific community over an area of land with another community or individual from that other community. This kind of disagreement is replete in our communities and has indeed wrecked untold havoc. Those in this category are so numerous to mention.
3. Struggle over traditional stools: The struggle over who would get the traditional stools of Igweship or Eze in Igboland or Obaship in Yoruba land had constituted a fertile ground for community conflicts. In the case of Igbo land, the incidence of chieftaincy wrangling reached its crescendo after the Nigeria civil war. Many communities were affected by this wrangling that conflict became rife and for many years some communities in Igboland did not experience peaceful atmosphere as a result. Abagana community in Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State is an example. The most recent protracted Obaship struggle in Yorubaland was the case of who would succeed to the stool of Olowo of Owo; OlagbegiOlateru, the son of the demised Olowo or another person from a different family. This caused so much tense situation for several years in Owo.
4. The struggle for supremacy of authority in our towns by the town unions and the incumbent traditional rulers: The struggle for supremacy between some town unions and their traditional rulers over whose authority would prevail in the affairs of the towns in question had caused enormous quarrels and conflicts in our communities this situation has driven peace away from many communities for so many years. One example is Enugwu-Ukwu, during the reign of OsitaAgwuna the III.
5. Struggle for the location of government projects: Many of our communities have entered into conflict with each other as a result of struggle to get one government project in the other located in their community struggle to get local government headquarters located in their towns:

Some of the communal conflicts in our country have been caused by the struggle between two or more communities to have the local government headquarters located in their towns. As a result of this struggle, conflict would occur and some of the communities had resorted to arms to get this facility. The strained struggle by Modakeke in the present Osun state to get the headquarters of Ifitedunu local government is a case in point.

1. Local Politics: With the advent of multiparty system in Nigeria so many communities have clashed as a result of differing political parties and interests. The local people in our communities, because a prominent citizen from their village or town, belong to a political party at times develop antagonistic relationship with the neighboring community whose members belong to different political party. This causes conflict and rivalry.

**Conclusion**

Communal disputes are becoming more widespread, exerting a substantial influence on development. These disagreements often lead to significant harm to essential social infrastructure, worsening developmental difficulties. In order to alleviate these harmful consequences, it is crucial to adopt efficient solutions that tackle the underlying reasons and reduce the frequency of community disputes. It is crucial to acknowledge that community disputes serve as major areas for peace and security initiatives. By understanding the intricacies of their interactions and incorporating measures to avert conflicts into more comprehensive efforts to promote peace, it is possible to cultivate an inclusive and long-lasting state of peace within communities. Although the task is intricate, it is essential to develop customised tactics and all-encompassing methods to foster peace, security, and stability at both the local and global scales.

**Recommendations**

This paper recommends among others things:

* that the land-owning clans must carefully ensure that land borders between clans are accurately established, delimited, and recorded as soon as possible. This is central, since communal conflicts in Nigeria are largely caused by land disputes.
* So also, the arbiters of these conflicts and government should work together to ensure that the communities live in harmony with their neighbours in order to minimize the occurrence of these conflicts and enable development to take root in these areas.
* Peaceful resolutions should quickly be put in place whenever there is land dispute in a community.
* Strategies should focus on good governance, resolving indigene-settler dichotomies, and ensuring public confidence in justice systems4.
* Additionally, efforts should involve traditional conflict resolution methods, engage relevant stakeholders, and prioritize sustainable peace initiatives

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