

Communal Imbroglia: the Challenge to Grassroot Development in Nigeria's Local Communities

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ABSTRACT

The spate of communal imbroglia or crisis in Nigeria's communities is fast becoming a permanent feature despite the several measures put in place to curb the menace by government. This is not to say that the phenomenon is limited to Nigeria alone, it has infested other countries of Africa, Asia and Europe. The study set to investigate the effect of communal crises on grassroots transformation and economic development of rural areas of Nigeria. The study was anchored on Systemic Oppression theory as theoretical framework of analysis. Content analytical technique was heavily relied on by the study as important data were obtained from secondary sources such as official publications, articles from reputable journals, textbooks, documentary evidences, etc. Findings indicate that social, political and economic reasons breed communal upheavals, which hinder not only grassroots transformation, but national development. On the basis of the foregoing findings, the following recommendations were adduced – there should be adequate peace and harmonious brotherly relationship between communities; rule of law should be strictly adhered to on issues that affect different communities and that problem of unemployment should be addressed by the government.

KEYWORDS: Communal Imbroglia, Grassroots, Development, Local Government, Nigerian Communities.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Communal crisis is a situation in which the relationship between members of one ethnic community and the other is characterized by lack of cordiality and mutual understanding which is usually the result of suspicion, fear, and tendency of confrontation (Agu, et al 2012). The nature and composition of the state are very important and central to the nature of the relationship that exists within it and most importantly, the disposition of the government in handling the unfriendly relationship (crisis) wherever it exists. Where communities exist or evolve on the platform of consensus and fair play, there is the tendency to have a serene domestic politics, but the opposite becomes the case on the contrary. The situation in Nigeria's communities is such which boycotted the due course of legitimization at formation and this posits serious consequences on its stability at the present political dispensation.

Communal restiveness has become a despicable act being perpetrated by a significant proportion of miscreants in various communities and seems no longer to be ignored. These unwholesome acts are usually the products of political influence where unworthy and underserved sons who are wealthy and highly placed Nigerians are made traditional custodians of the people. The concept of a traditional ruler has been a contentious issue, to some, a traditional ruler must be one who by the virtue of his ancestry, is appointed according to the custom and tradition of the people, to occupy the throne of the area which must have existed before the coming of the British Colonial masters. Apart from being the descendants of recognized founding fathers or lineage of the community, a line of conquerors or those traditionally connected with rulership should also exhibit peculiar ability and bravery, have wealth, quantified in terms of farm size, family size. A traditional ruler as the head of a community should have been selected or appointed in accordance with the laws of the community, but in recent time, the concept of a traditional ruler has no connotation of hereditary or other characteristics stipulated above (Onah, et al 2007). Other factors that could lead to the degeneration of communal conflicts (inter or intra) may include: disputes over ownership of land, issues of boundary disputes and adjustments, resources control and the killing of loved ones or a member of given community (Ibeogu, 2017). These mentioned factors breed inter and intra communal crises in most rural communities of Nigeria.

Communal imbrogio is a combination of any action or conduct that constitutes unwholesome and societal unacceptable. In other words, it implies unpalatable activities engaged in by the socially irresponsible persons (or their sponsors) in any community. It is a phenomenon which in practice has led to a near breakdown of law and order, low productivity due to disruption of productive activities, increase crime rate, intra and inter – ethnic hostility, harassment of genuine businesses and prospective developers and other criminal tendencies (Ibeogu, 2017, Chukuezi, 2009).

Chukuezi, (2009) attributed youth restiveness and communal impasse in Nigerian societies to the attitudes of disgruntled leaders, marginalization and domination by the privileged few, youthful exuberance and unemployment. The belief according to him is that some disgruntled leaders, elders and politicians in Nigerian communities resort to recruiting irresponsible societal failures for settling scores or using them against perceived enemies. With this, the society degenerates into outright criminality. On a serious note, the youth who are described as full of youthful exuberance, channels their raw energy into the unwholesome and socially unacceptable venture that threaten the peace of the community. Another notion that appears to have gained ground with respect to the level of community's social crisis by the rascals is the twin issues of unemployment and political domination by the selfish privileged few. The youths/community members in a bid to get their share of benefits accruing to the society and community resort to the display of hooliganism, culminating to restiveness that have engulfed most communities in Nigeria between 1999 – 2017. (Ibeogu, 2017, Chukuezi, 2009).

The factors above prompted the research to do an in-depth study to establish the effects of communal crisis on the development of rural communities in Nigeria, since it is a fundamental responsibilities of the government to ensure the security of life and properties of the citizens.

II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Communal Imbrogio – Imbrogio, conflict or Crisis arises where parties that are involved have incompatible interests, values or goals. The parties to crisis, see conflict from their own point of view, identify with own side and diminishes the concern of others (Galtung, 1996).

Therefore, imbrogio, conflict or crisis can be viewed from four dimensions as presented in a study by Onuoha et al (2014), they are the traditional, human relation, Marxist and Atavistic conflict school.

The traditionalists are of the belief that conflict anywhere is a negative development. It is bad and ought not to exist in the life of humans. This is because conflict transits to violence, destruction, irrationality and physical warfare (Elliot, 1988, Robbins, 2000) in Onuoha et al (2014).

The human relations view conflict as part of human existence and will ever remain present with man. It maintained that instead of seeing conflict or crisis only from the negative standpoint, it should be accepted as natural, innate and inevitable. Rather than people writing off conflict in their lives, they should develop means and weapons of self preservation and defense. Galtung (1990:3) then asserts that many group relations are marred by the development and readiness to use deadly weapons in the settlements of disputes.

According to Karl Marx, the proponent of Marxist conflict, he views conflict in all societies as inevitable, much as there is a continued exploitation of man by man. He argued that the society is divided into two classes of “the haves and the have nots”. The “haves”, not only control the means of production but also the political sphere, while the “have nots” are left with no other option than selling their labour to earn a living. This state of affairs creates conditions of inequality in the society.

The Atavistic school of thought views conflict from the point that the expansionist nature of man breeds conflict. In the view of Ake (1981) cited y Onuoha et al (2014), there is a natural tendency on the part of creatures to migrate, expand and dominate space or territory. It is this behaviour by man that more often than not brings about conflict and crisis among the people in many communities.

Therefore, the tendency of man in modern days to migrate to different areas has continued unabated and in most cases, these migrations brought about communal crisis and conflict situations. The most prevalent among them are: land disputes, boundary adjustments, resource control, territorial water or space (Ibeogu, 2017).

To Mercy (2009) cited by Usman (2013) communal imbrogio, violence or crisis denotes all forms of illegal acts perpetrated in different communities or social strata that are in existence. They include all forms of violent crimes in all the university campuses, various communities (Edda community, Enyigba community, Enyibichiri community, all in Ebonyi State, and Ogamana, Ofenacom, Idoro and Ojitumo communities of cross – River States), clashes among cult members, political clashes, land disputes, cultural violence, religious violence, tribal problems, school violence and market violence. It is noteworthy that majority of the youths in all parts of Nigerian State perpetrate these acts using dangerous weapons terrorizing people in rural and urban centres. The increased use of these weapons by the miscreants in Nigerian communities results in deaths of innocents citizens, such generates fear and insecurity for all and sundry (Usman, 2013, Ibeogu, 2017). Ibeogu (2017) argued that communal crisis or imbrogio denotes a situation in which social and economic environment

(family, church, school and markets) national and international conditions favourable to the protection of the social environments, states, nations and its citizens against existing and political threats are lacking, hence the communal uprising. Akintokunbo (2011) views communal imbroglia as the threats to the general peace which ranges from low level civil disorder, large scale violence or even an armed insurgency. Such crisis or threats may be directed at states, citizens, government organs or infrastructure. They range from petty crime, serious organized crime, political unrest and even domestic terrorism.

Grassroots Transformation

Grassroots development connotes advancement in the living conditions of the people at the rural areas. It also involves overall improvement in all aspects of their lives. It is known fact that grassroots development is always achievable in a participatory democracy where the local people are fully involved and actively participate in social and economic growth and development of the rural area (Ibeogu, 2015). This is made possible through a concept known as development from below where government at the grassroots fills the gap which the state and federal government are too remote to fill (Okoli, 2000, Okpata, 2004). In this circumstance, there is active participation of the people in local government administration and community governance.

Grassroots transformation implies positive change or progress in overall outlook of rural areas. It denotes significant and sustainable improvement in all ramifications of rural areas and this enhancement brings with it overall improvement in the living standard of the rural dwellers. The importance of grassroots transformation prompted the government of Dr Sam Egwu to create development centres in Ebonyi State in 2001 to enhance grassroots transformation. He stated that the essence of the creation of development centres was to complement the role of local government in rural development, to enhance participatory democracy and government by consultation which the local people should be part and parcel of. He maintained that it is a state where the local people would be part of solving local problems; hence their problem and interest would be better solved and protected, thereby bringing about social, economic and political development of rural area by local people (Ominyi, 2001).

III. METHODOLOGY

Content analytical technique was heavily relied on by the researchers as vital data for the study were obtained from secondary sources such as official publications, articles from reputable journals, textbooks, documentary evidences, etc. The researchers selected some equal number of men, women and youths, who granted them interviews from selected communities in Abakaliki local government and Ikwo local government area of Ebonyi State and some communities of Obubra local government area of Cross River State of Nigeria.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopted the theory of Systemic Oppression as a theoretical framework of analysis. It was propounded by James Pearce-Smith (2000). The Systemic Oppression is endemic, pervasive and entrenched in all aspect of societal processes in Nigerian communities. Cultures, religion, politics, law, social and economic spheres of Nigerian societies contribute to oppression of some groups by others.

Systemic oppression in Nigerian Communities comes in the form of social exclusion, subtle and overt oppression policies, programmes and practices. Social exclusion refers to disadvantages in relation to certain norms of social, economic or political activity pertaining to individuals, households, spatial areas or population groups; the social, economic and institutional processes through which disadvantages comes about; and the customs or consequences for individual, groups or communities.

The European Commission refers to social exclusion as the multiple and changing factors (boundary issues) resulting in people being excluded from the normal exchanges, practices and rights of modern society. It pointed poverty as one of the most obvious factors, though social exclusion also refers to inadequate rights in land ownership, housing, education, health and access to essential services. It affects individual's family, group, particularly in rural areas and in some cases the urban areas, who are in some way subjected to discrimination or segregation. It emphasizes the weakness in the social infrastructure, thereby degenerating to communal crisis and social unrest. The most obvious manifestations of systemic oppression in Nigerian rural communities are the total neglect of the poor and minority and the exclusion of the women, the aged, physically impaired and the children. This neglect and exclusion of these groups of persons in the rural areas eventually ignite crisis by their loved ones arising from these humiliations meted out to them by denying them what ordinarily should be theirs.

Furthermore, social structural processes affect the whole society in ways which creates barriers which prevent particular groups from forming those kinds of social relationships with other groups which are essential to realizing full human potentials. It is not that some groups exclude other groups, but that processes affecting the whole of society mean that some groups experience social boundaries as barriers preventing their full participation in the economic, political and cultural life of the society within which they live (Madanipor, et al 1998).

The relevance of the theory lays in the fact that oppression of individuals or groups etc in the society gradually result in alienation which most likely lead to bottled up anger which in the long run result to frustration and subsequent aggression that manifest in full blown conflict or imbrolio. A society that allows social exclusion of any form should be ready to accommodate multitudes of aggressive behaviour which results in conflicts and other social unrests.

Empirical Review

Nwaorgu, and Nwankwo (2014) carried out a study entitled: "Illicit Arms Trade and Conflict in Africa: An Assessment of International Arms Control Measures". The study examined the causes and implications of arms trade in Africa. The study adopted content analytical method as a source of getting qualitative information required to do justice to the study. This was made possible by drawing data from documented materials such as textbooks, journal articles, magazines, newspapers and internet. Findings revealed that one significant cause of crisis (inter and intra-state conflicts) in African states, is the important role Africa plays in global economy through her abundant natural resources. The implications are that, not only will crisis and conflict keep re-occurring, but that there are bound to be constant flow of arms to warring parties. Recommendations were that democratic peace theory should be made to reflect internally through peace and good governance so as not to give the citizens any reason to take up arms against one another.

Onuoha and Chilaka (2014) undertook a study captioned "At the Mercy of Nature: Understanding Climate Conflicts between Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers in Northern Nigeria". The study set to establish the effect of nature (climate) on human existence, especially between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in the Northern part of Nigeria. Qualitative method of data collection was adopted to get adequate information from documentary evidence of secondary sources, while Eco-violence theory was adopted as a theoretical foundation. The study established that nature (climate change) through drought and desertification led to natural resources scarcity which subsequently results in Fulani herders/farmers' conflict and communal crisis across parts and communities of Nigerian state. Recommendations were that government at all levels should put more machineries on ground particularly in the north because over seventy percent (70%) of the nation's food crops comes from the region to encourage climate change adaptation.

In a study carried out by Ngwama (2014) entitled "Kidnapping in Nigeria: An Emerging Social Crime and the Implications for the Labour Market", the study set to establish the implications and impacts of kidnapping and associated crimes in economic development of Nigeria. The study which adopted survey method was anchored on Economic Theory as a theoretical foundation. Economic theory views kidnapping in the words of Nseabasi (2009) citing (Tzanelli, 2006, Gerth and Mills 1948) as an economic concept of making ends meet: that kidnapping is regulated by the laws of demand and supply, and that is a type of social action that involves the culmination on the most efficient means to the desired ends. It established that the impact of kidnapping and other associated crimes is becoming worrisome and perplexed, not only to Nigerian community, but international communities, such that it has heightened the fear of foreigners, especially international investors, thereby threatening the foundation of economic development. While the overall implication of community and associated crisis is that, it has worsened the labour market situation resulting to thousands of unemployment and displacement of the workforce from the affected areas. Recommendations were made on how this wave of crimes and associated communal crisis should be tackled and labour market expanded to accommodate these restive youths who are the major culprits, such as applying appropriate sanction on the culprits; Fair Distribution of Resources; Diversifying the economy to create employment etc.

Community as a Communal Human Habitat

The community as a communal habitation of human beings has been variously seen by authors as captured by Nkwede (2009) as a group of people living together as a smaller social unit within a larger one and having interest or work in common. Suntherland and Maxwell (1961) see community as a local area over which people are using the same language, conforming to the same norms, feeling more or less the same sentiments and acting upon the same attitudes. Mgbemena and Obikeze (2002) opined that a community may be referred to as a group of people interacting among themselves in geographically defined space. They may share certain similar cultural attributes like norms, values, belief system. They may have similar socio-cultural institutions like religious, economic and political institutions. Talcott Persons in Olewe (1995) argued that a community as a collectivity, the members of which share a common territorial area as their base of operation for daily activities. In this sense, a person can belong to many and different associations but cannot belong to or become a member of all communities at the same time. As he resides in a particular locality, he should develop social likeness; have common social ideas, common traditions and the sense of belonging together.

It is important to note that community members should interact effectively among themselves so as to enhance the progress and development of their various communities. Interaction generates understanding and

initiative which are essential for the development of any community, but the absence of these proves communal imbroglia and the unhealthy societal insecurity of lives and property.

Why Communal Rift Thrives in Nigerian Rural and Urban communities

Communal rift, violence and crisis refers to chasms in institutions, cultural traits and behaviours that lead to misunderstanding which however, limit the development of peoples potentials and deny peoples aspiration to be in control of their bodies, their behaviour and their social environment (Galtung, 1969 in Segun et al, 2010).

The frequency of communal violence and its devastating consequences have brought it to a national lime light in Nigeria's political history. It was and is still being believed that it became worrisome since the beginning of this political dispensation (1999-2017). Prominent among them as it affects some parts of Nigeria according to Segun et al (2010) include; Zango-Kataf in Kaduna State; Tiv-Jukun in Wukari, Taraba State, Ogoni – Adoni in Rivers State; Chamba – Kuteb in Taraba State; Itshekiri – Ijaw and Urhobo in Delta State; Ife – Modakeke in Osun State; Aguleri – Umuleri in Anambra State; Yoruba – Hausa community in Shagamu, Ogun State, Ijaw – Illaje Conflict in Ondo, the intermittent clashes in Kano, Kano State, Basa – Egbira in Nasarawa State; Eleme – Okirika in River State; Hausa – Fulani – Sawaya in Bauchi State; Fulani – Irigwe and Yelwa – Shendam, both in Plateau State; and the Hausa – Yoruba in Idi – Araba Lagos, Igbeagu (Ebonyi) and Ukelle (Cross River), the Ezza – Ezillo, Ebonyi State and Most recently, the Edda – Ogamana – Ofenacom Idoro and Ojitumo (Ebonyi and Cross River State) crisis and the Enyigba – Enyibichiri, Ebonyi Sate Crisis.

However, violent conflict within communities in Nigeria federating units have assumed a frightening dimension with terrific frequency often involving the use of African Traditional Juju, cocaine, guns, machetes, and other dangerous and sophisticated weapons which has led to loss of lives and property, social tension, disruption of family and communal life and general atmosphere of mistrust (Tenuche, 2009). Some of the cases of crisis and violence between Igbeagu – Ukelle (2003-2006) and Ezza – Ezillo (2007-2010), Edda – Ogamana – Ofenacom (2017) and the Enyigba – Enyibuchiri (2017) with political and clannish dimensions have paralyzed economic activities and peaceful co-existence between these communities and states.

The group, family, communal, societal and national upheavals (crises) which are over whelming have been attributed to these factors among others:

I. Breakdown of Cultural Values of our Traditional Institutions – One factor worthy of mention in the persistent crisis in the communities and traditional institutions in Nigeria is the breakdown of cultural values. The evasion of these values due to increasing acculturation and negative external influences have contributed largely to the spate of violent crisis and general insecurity we have today (Anyadike, 2013). In his own opinion, Ngwama (2014) attributed social and societal crisis to loss of societal values; that in Nigeria, the people and citizens have mortgaged the culture of respect, love for human lives, hardwork, friendliness and receptions to strangers in exchange of the western culture and ostentatious orientation. These have given birth to the modern crime and social ills destroying the core values of our society. While Onovo (2010) attributed the rising crime rates, social and societal insecurity and communal crisis in different regions of Nigeria to the celebration of fraudsters by their communities and leaders. He frowned at appointment of individuals indicted of corruption, criminally related matters (killing and arson) as head of parastatals of various government ministries, and custodians of traditional institutions; adding that it is an aberration. This equally did not go down well with Okwara (2015) when he maintained that morality failure is one of the causes of communal crisis and imbroglia. According to him, morality is a principle, especially in man that guarantees the evaluation of mans action in terms of right or wrong, good or bad. It is a virtue that promotes good manners, respect, obedience to parents and elders, love for others, honesty and trustworthiness, maintenance of peace and being assiduous to responsibilities entrusted to. Saheed (2013) opined that leadership failure, unemployment, poor parenting (Home) individual nature, environmental factors, peer pressure, social status, cultural imperialism, inadequate orientation and coercion breeds moral decadence which undoubtedly lead to social and communal crisis.

II. Strangulation of the Traditional Stools – The local chiefs and the traditional rulers have been robbed of their authority to serve as the watch dogs and the chief security officers of their areas of jurisdiction such that they no longer have control and authority over their subjects (Ibeogu, 2017). The meddling into politics by traditional rulers, who ought to serve as the custodian of people's culture and whose offices are supposed to be non – partisan, generates tension and communal upheavals especially when they collude with the public authorities (government) to cart away public funds, install those who are to serve as traditional rulers, their cabinet members or committees to handle rural projects (Ibeogu, 2017). Sarah Pene (2013), stated that traditional institutions and local government councils as agents of grassroots mobilizations should view the present communal threats and crises and security problems as a wake-keep up call to their statutory duties and responsibilities. She therefore, encouraged and charged them to rise to their role as the chief security officers of their areas of jurisdiction.

In the same vein, the absence of role models, transparent leaders, honest parents and dedicated teachers in our communities once made a onetime Lagos based legal luminary, Gani Fawehinmi (S.A.N.) to say, "I will never respect any traditional ruler in Yoruba land because they have deposited their crowns in the shrine of money". The same can also be said of other traditional rulers in other parts of the country (the Ibo communities). If the traditional rulers, the custodians of the custom and values of the people are so morally deficient as not to deserve Gani Fawehinmi's respect, then the future is bleak. Where will the younger generation earn righteousness and upright living? If the leaders are morally bad, then from where will the led learn decent living? The Igbo aphorism says that, "an elder does not stay at home and watch a goat tied to a stake suffocate to death". The traditional rulers should eschew partisan politics in their duties of traditional and community governance; the traditional chiefs and the elders should guide the younger generations in the part of decent living, moral righteousness and upright living to avoid the society and community degenerating into communal mess.

III. Maltreatment of Members of a given Community by Others and Debase nature of the Nigeria's security Operatives – The Nigerian state and communities have been plagued with the persistent communal problems which had led to loss of many lives, properties and also threatened directly or indirectly the existence of foundation of our dear country. These communal crises and conflicts have resulted in hatred and suspicion among the ethnic and religious groups in the communities.

While Abada (2004) maintained that the maltreatment and the denial of right of inheritance could spur communal crisis. Moreso, he averred that the maltreatment of members or a member of one community by the other and the excessive physical assault of the communities could be blamed for immediate past conflict between communities. For instance, he mentioned that land disputes have created almost a perpetual enmity among communities, notable is the communal crisis between Aguleri and Umuleri of Anambra State Nigeria over land dispute that began in 1933, and resurfaced again in 1993. In Ebonyi State, the communal crises between communities (Igbeagu and Ukelle, Ezza and Ezza-Ezillo, Edda and Ogamana, Ofenacom, Idoro and Ojitemo and the Enyigba and Enyibichiri) were more or less occasioned by land disputes, indigene-settlers dichotomy as well as intimidation, harassment, maltreatment, abduction and maiming of loved ones. Abada (2004) equally pointed out that the value attached to lands in the twentieth (20th) and twenty-first century (21st) have continued to ignite and fuel the crisis of communal imbrolio as efforts are intensified to claim the ownership of the area.

On the part of the organ to quell internal security challenges (the Nigerian Police Force) it has been argued that the rising level of criminality and communal crises in Nigeria's community is as a result of the lose and porous nature of the Nigerian Police. Tonwe et al (2014) stated that the capacity of the Nigeria Police to carry out criminal investigations is extremely lacking, considering the fact that corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of the agency and so lacks the sense of objectivity in carrying out its statutory duties. In the same vain, Ngwama (2014) pin pointed, that while there is the need to condemn these acts of criminality and social crises perpetrated in the communities, there is the need also to condemn the security agencies (N.P.F) for incompetence and complicity on their part. Egbedina et al (2014) in their own view maintained that corruption and corrupt related acts is affecting the efficiencies and performances of the security agencies and the police in particular such that the police is incapacitated in carrying out their statutory mandatory responsibility, hence the ever rising crime rate and social crises that have overwhelmed so many communities. They further stated that the people have developed lukewarm attitude towards reporting cases of criminal acts, corruption and social challenges to the security agencies and the police as a result of lack of faith and incompetency in the performance of their duty. Mudasiru (2010) stated that despite the litany of legislations and security institutions and agents, social crises and criminal acts still persist. This therefore, presupposes that efforts made by these agencies (EFCC, NCSDC, NPF) are not yielding expected results. While Utaz (2015) posited that it will be difficult for the law enforcement agencies (police) to develop a new mechanism to fight corrupt acts and social unrest when the leaders in Nigeria today (2017) are rapaciously and irredeemably corrupt, selfish, politically and financially destructive to a superlative degree. Ibeogu (2017) therefore, maintained that owing to the corrupt nature of the Nigerian leaders, it becomes apparently difficult for them (Nigerian leaders) to manage crisis as what has always occupied their minds and schedule of duties each time there is social unrest and communal crisis has always been how to cart away billions and millions of Naira in the name of security votes. In one of the local governments in South Eastern State in 2017 when there is communal crisis between Edda community and Ogamana, Ofenacom etc, the state chief executive (governor) asked the local government chairman to sign two million Naira (N2,000,000.00) out of the over one hundred and seventy million Naira (N170,000,000.00) which accrued to the local government as statutory allocation for that month and that the balance of over one hundred and sixty-eight million Naira (N168,000,000.00) has been channelled into the crisis ridden communities. Ngwama (2014) therefore, suggested that there is need for the federal government which has exclusive power over security matters to immediately put in place a mechanism for ending the booming

kidnapping, hostage taking racketeering, social unrest and communal crisis particularly in some parts of the country as anything short of ending the prevailing tension, regime of fear and general insecurity is unacceptable to the Nigerians who have waited in vain for the realization of the promises of democratic governance since 1999.

IV. Socio-Economic status of One Community Over Others – The exhibitions of superior socio-economic status by one group over the others breed conflict between communities in Nigeria. A typical example is the communal crises between Enyibichiri community in Ikwo Local Government Area, Ebonyi State where the current deputy governor (2015-2019) comes from and the Enyigba community in Abakaliki Local Government Area Ebonyi State which has no strong political representatives in the current political dispensation (2015 – 2019) in the state. This dimension of the source of conflict is justified by Goodes conviction that when two or more readily identified groups inhabit the same area, they will start competing for scarce resources. These resources include land, money, power etc which each group would want to acquire and exhibit at all times (Goodes, 1981:17). Acquisition of land, wealth and power could be dangerous among communities with mutual habit such as the one that engulfed Enyigba and Enyibichiri or the Edda, Ogamana, Ofenacom, Idoro and Ojitumo communities in Ebonyi and Cross River States. Where economic, political, social or ethno religious crisis sharply divide communities, bloody crisis resulting from prejudice will be inevitable.

V. Political Economy of the Rural Communities; Land Boundary Dispute and Institutional oppression of the Less Privileged Tribes – Political economy of the rural community crisis continues to dominate discussions on the current Nigerian political economy. Absence of true federation contributes to injustice in Nigeria, which denied so many communities fair share of the national resources to finance community development projects. The inequality in resource allocation and systemic injustice subjected the people to economic hardship and misery and then prompted the agitation for resource control, especially land and economic trees. This Abada (2004) stated that the struggle for the exclusive ownership of land in Anambra State (Otuocha, Aguleri, Umuleri and Umuoba Anam) led to the violent clashes between the various communities affected. In Ebonyi State, the story is not different as the struggle for the acquisition of land, economic trees and other valuables led the communities of Igbeagu and Ukelle, Enyigba and Enyibichiri, and the Edda, Ogamana, Ofenacom, Idoro and Ojitumo into communal crises for between one and twenty years (1-20 yrs) now. According to Abada (2004) much value was not attached to land by most communities in Ibo land, at the initial stages, but as the 20th century progressed, each community began to value land and the economic importance, so efforts intensified to claim the ownership of the area. Ugiagbe et al (2014) maintained that institutional oppression could trigger communal war. He sees institutions as fairly stable social arrangement and practices through which collective actions are taken while institutional oppression results to the mistreatment of people within a social identity group. It occurs when established laws, customs, and practices systematically reflect and produce inequities based on ones membership in targeted social identity group. This institutional oppression creates a system of invisible barriers limiting people based on their membership of unfavoured social identity groups. It is in this line that social tension has and had been created in public service whereby a section of the country (majority tribe), dominate and marginalize the minority tribe, hence the institution of federal character principle in the 1979 Constitution to take care of the marginalization issue and ensure equitable distribution of the gains of good governance (Udegbe, 2013). According to him, in Nigeria, the problem lies not in the nature of ethnicity, but in the minds and hearts of those who use and abuse ethnicity for their own selfish gains. Ethnicity has been used as an instrument of oppression of the minority in Nigeria. This singular act of oppression and marginalization brought about the tension that has engulfed Nigeria by the militant acts and actions of the Niger Delta militia groups (Ngwama, 2014).

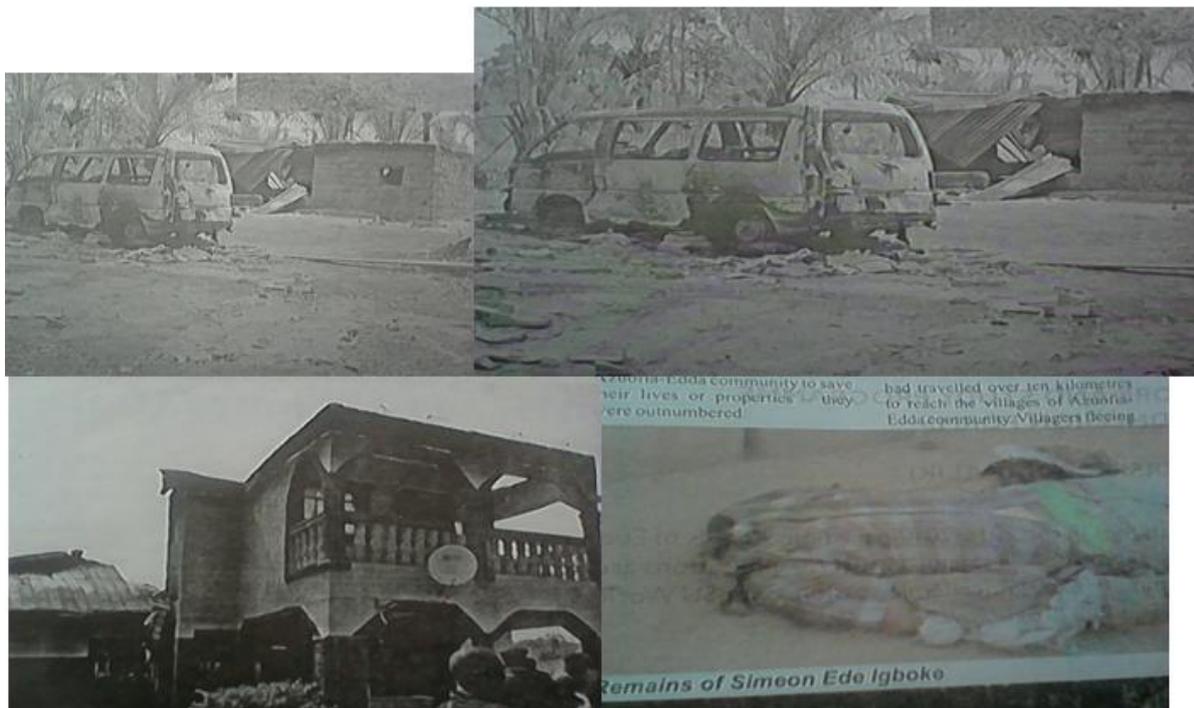
VI. Problem of Unemployment and Total Neglect of economic empowerment of the People by the Government – A common saying that “an idle mind is the devils workshop” is and should not be ruled out from the social unrest, communal upheavals and turbulent state that Nigeria's local communities found itself. The unbridled unemployment issue resulting from the millions of university graduates every year without job opportunities pose a great communal insecurity in our local communities. Some individuals are special creatures, such that they are creative but lack the economic base (startup capital) to start up a business, and there is no form of encouragement or incentives from government to empower them. If people are empowered to start up businesses and enhance their livelihood, if people are given jobs to do, most of the social unrests, communal crises and crimes committed on daily basis will be reduced. It is along this sense that Okoro(2010) states that it is no longer news that unemployment problem in Nigeria with its alarming rate is one of the greatest challenges she is going through. The unemployment monster has succeeded in pouring into the minds of its victims, bright but negative thoughts and ideas on how to make and commit social abominable things.

Challenges of Communal Crises to the Development of Nigeria's Local Communities

Oguamanam et al (2014) outlined the following issues as possible impediments to the society and Nigerian communities resulting from communal crisis thus:

- I. **Financial Waste:** In order to prosecute war or communal crisis, a huge amount of money is spent not only by the war ravaged community by procuring arms and ammunitions but also by the government in trying to curb or quell the crisis;
- II. **Destruction of Social Infrastructure:** In the time of social unrest and communal war, infrastructural developments are stifled while the existing ones are destroyed. This has a negative effect on the political, social and economic development of the country. These infrastructures include; roads, vehicles, homes, schools, hospitals, markets, offices, broadcasting houses etc. Even after the crisis or war, huge amount of money are required to rebuild all that has been destroyed;
- III. **Destruction of Lives and Property:** During the war, there is always loss of human and material resources. It brings about the under-development of the economy. This is because young men and women who are the vibrant sectors of the economy who would have helped in nation building are killed and wasted. Individual and community owned property are destroyed. War is characterized by hunger, malnutrition, diseases, starvation, going on exile, and all forms of sufferings. See attached evidences;
- IV. **Destruction of Family Bonds:** In war periods, family bonds are destroyed. Husbands are separated from their wives, sons, and daughters. Under-aged children are carried away to fight in battle fields. Family relations are lost, families are scattered and displace;
- V. **Rape or Physical Assault:** In time of war, communal crisis or social unrest, women are usually victims of rape or physical assault. They may not be killed, but are molested sexually, hence seen as booties of war;
- VI. **General Insecurity in Affected Communities** – There was and still a general insecurity in communities that have been affected by war. This is because the environment and communities that suffered more losses during war would always get ready to revenge, while those who may have gained more advantage would be preparing for any eventuality. This has actually created a perpetual atmosphere of insecurity in areas that have experienced communal wars.

The Untold story of Gruesome Attack on Azuoffia – Edda Community of Abakaliki, Ebonyi State by Communities of Obubra people of Cross – River State, and the Ikwo and Abakaliki L.G.A's land dispute





Source: Ibeogu's Field work, 2017.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Communal crises have become serious problem to various administrations. It has made it impossible for development to take place as resources are wasted from time to time trying to quell such crises. To avert economic loss and unhealthy political development resulting from communal crises, the following recommendations are advocated:

- I. Adequate peace and harmonious brotherly relationship between communities;
- II. Rule of law should be strictly adhered to in issues that affect all;
- III. Unemployment problems should be addressed by the government and economic empowerment encouraged to avoid dependency by able and vibrant young ones with special talents on their parents;
- IV. The society at large should eschew institutional oppression of the less privileged and the minority in the society;
- V. The cultural values of the people should not be desecrated;
- VI. The appointment of the traditional rulers must adhere strictly to the laid down rules and regulations of the community;
- VII. The disgruntled leaders, elders and politicians in various Nigeria's local communities should avoid recruiting irresponsible societal failures for settling scores or using them against perceived enemies;
- VIII. The issue of boundary adjustments should be amicably settled to ensure harmonious co-existence between and among border communities.

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