

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

An Eye for an Eye Vis-À-Vis the Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers' Vendetta in Nigeria: A Case for Social Reconciliation

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to realistically denounce violence as a means of resolving differences among persons, groups and societies. This is because the undulating effect of the use of violence to protect and defend inter – personal, inter – group and inter – societal whimpers is often a bazaar of bitter counts of losses. The acrimonious consequences of the persistent and seemingly increasing Fulani herdsmen – farmers feud on communities and economies in Nigeria is the basis for the non – violence campaign in this paper. Consequently, social reconciliation is projected as the most viable option for the restoration and sustenance of peace and cooperation between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. Social reconciliation, therefore, becomes a potent foundation for the success of policies, resolutions and laws aimed at lasting peace between Fulani herdsmen and farmers. Social reconciliation is also projected in this paper, as the most effective way of resolving conflicts in general since each conflict involves a unique set of actors and circumstances that produce distinct possibilities for the trajectory of future conflict.

Keywords: Fulani, herdsmen, farmers, vendetta, social reconciliation

1. Introduction

Experiences and reports on media indicate episodes of severe internal conflicts in Nigeria, especially in recent times. These conflicts range from insurgency in the North East, militancy in the Niger Delta region to Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers' vendetta across the country. The Fulani herdsmen feud is the major point of focus here.

Recently, there have been escalations of reported attacks by Fulani herdsmen who brutally kill natives of the invaded farming communities including women and children in various states across the country. The Fulani herdsmen armed with sophisticated weapons usually attack their target communities at the time they are most vulnerable such as mid-night or on Sundays when they are in their churches, killing people indiscriminately, burning houses and looting properties.

Benue, Kogi, Taraba, Nassarawa, Plateau, Kaduna, Katsina states have been the worst hit of late, having tasted the devastating attacks by the Fulani herdsmen with heavy toll in human lives and property and still counting their losses. Most worrisome is the brutality and impunity with which the assailants operate without regard for the law and the sanctity of life coupled with the inability of the Nigeria Police and even the military taskforce to defend the victims mercilessly slaughtered in their homeland (Falana, 2014).

The conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and the farmers usually arise when the former invades community farmland with their cattle and let them graze unrestricted both on cultivated and uncultivated land thereby destroying valuable food and cash crops which are the mainstay of the host communities. When the communities try to resist them and request their exit, the Fulani herdsmen become violent and attack the community sometimes with the aid of hired mercenaries from the neighbouring countries like Chad, Niger, Mali and Cameroon (Falana, 2014). In a similar manner, Okeke (2014) explained how the Fulani herdsmen and farmers conflicts arise thus:

The conflicts occur when Fulani herders move into non-Fulani homelands with their cattle. This usually leads to the destruction of farmers' crops. Thus, the herders provoke their victims to acts of resistance (preventing entry into farms, killing or stealing cattle, or poisoning fields) and in response, herders wage deadly attacks.

Considering the fatal effects of this hostile trend, affected persons and communities are obviously not finding it pleasant. The herders may have valid cases in favour of the wellbeing of their cattle. The farmers and communities may also have valid cases in favour of the security of their farmlands, agricultural activities and in fact, their economies. The questions, however, are: should the herders and farmers continue in this acrimonious vendetta because they both have valid cases? Can a common ground of peace and harmony be reached through vendetta and reprisal? What is the most resilient solution to this nightmare?

This paper attempts to proffer a lasting solution to this conflict by proposing social reconciliation between Fulani herdsman and farmers across the country. A brief look will be taken at the history and causes of this feud as well as its effects. The concept of social reconciliation will be highlighted in order to show how it can become the viable solution to this dangerous development between the Fulani herdsman and farmers and in fact, anywhere there is conflict.

1.1. History and Possible Causes of Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers' Feud in Nigeria

Just as there is no effect without a cause, the Fulani herdsman and farmers feud in Nigeria did not just begin without a cause traceable into history. In order to do this, it is important to begin by understanding who the Fulani people are, and what their philosophy is, in relation to their cattle.

The *Fula* people also known as *Fulani* in *Hausa* language, are a mass population widely dispersed and culturally diverse in all of Africa, but predominantly found in West Africa and northern parts of Central Africa, but also in Sudan and Egypt. The Fulani people generally speak the Fula language. A significant number of them are nomadic in nature, herding cattle, goats and sheep across the vast dry grass lands of their environment, making them the world's largest pastoral nomadic group. The main Fulani sub-groups in Nigeria are: Fulbe Adamawa, Fulbe Mbororo, Fulbe Sokoto, Fulbe Gombe, and the Fulbe Borgu (Omawumi, 2016).

It is common knowledge that the Fulani herdsman and his herds are very close, sharing an uncommon bond that is not easily explained. Elder statesman and Nigeria's former Ambassador to the United Nations, Alhaji Yusuf Maitama Sule, shed some light on this relationship in a recent interview as quoted in Tope (2016). His words:

The philosophy of the herdsman, you may have observed and may have seen, is that the Fulani herdsman is always in front of his cows, leading them. He is not behind them driving them from behind. He is in front leading his cattle. The Fulani herdsman hangs a stick over his shoulders. That stick is not for beating them. It is for guarding his cattle. That Fulani herdsman can make his cattle do everything he wants them to do. While he is leading them in front, if he stops anywhere, they all would stop. If he should jump into the water, they all would jump into the water. If he starts running, all of them would run after him. He names all of his cattle. If he calls any one of his cattle by their name, they would come to him. It would leave the herd and come to him. In those days when there was the cattle tax, if the tax man came to count the cattle in his herds, if he did not want his cattle to be counted, he would whistle or make a tune and the cows would all disperse into the forest. After the tax man had gone, he would make another whistle and they would all come back to him. During the rainstorm, the herdsman would take shelter under the tree and these animals would come and chase him away from under the tree and bring him to the open and make a circle around him, protecting him. They would not want him to sit under the tree for the fear that thunder may fall and crush their leader. Now, why do these cows behave like that? Why are they so obedient to their leader? The herdsman has sacrificed his life for his cattle, he has sacrificed his leisure for his cattle; he has sacrificed his health for his cattle. For the herdsman never leaves his cattle. He would sleep with the cows in the forest. If any one of them sleeps in the middle of the night, he would go out and get his herbs and leaves and treat this cow. If in the middle of the night he hears the cry of a leopard trying to take away a single calf, he would rather die than allow that wild animal to take away his calf.

The above quotation clearly manifests the kind of love the herdsman has for his cattle as well as the extent to which he can go to protect and give them comfort. The herdsman has zero tolerance for any person/thing that threatens the comfort or life of his cattle. This may account for a major reason why Fulani herdsman would not mind grazing their cattle through farmlands, destroy other farming properties (like irrigation equipment and infrastructures) and still be ready to confront the farmer even to the extent of brutally killing the farmer. In a

similar development, Fulani herdsmen believe they have the right to grazing routes and reserves for their herds, much of which have been usurped and cultivated by farmers.

Furthermore, migration from one place to another is a normal culture for the Fulani herdsman. He moves not only from Northern to Southern Nigeria, but migrate even beyond the shores of Nigeria to neighbouring countries, in search of food for his cattle. His movement from North to South during the dry season and from South to North during the rainy season is dictated by natural factors, such as rainfall and availability of grasses. Initially, they were seen as a group in search of pasture for their cows. Now, they are described more as terrorists out to perpetuate brigandage in any part of the country they come into. This perception aptly encapsulates the evolution of the 'herdsmen' in Nigeria.

Once upon a time, the Fulani herdsmen were held by Nigerians to be a peaceful group of nomads tending their cows and were largely not perceived as major threats. In those days, nomads were only armed with long staff, their kettle and sometime, a dagger hidden inside their clothes. But all that have changed as these herdsmen have evolved overtime.

The nomads, known for migrating from one location to another in search of grazing lands for their cattle, are said to usually incur the wrath of locals who allege that herdsmen's cows cause a lot of damage in their farmlands by grazing on their crops. This and other consequent factors have led to tensions between Fulani communities and farmer communities in Nigeria, especially in the Middle Belt region with herdsmen upping their game in the form of the weaponry they use. They clutch bows and poisoned arrows with charms as they move into communities. Both sides have continued to nurse seething suspicion and hatred, which have led to various attacks, counter-attacks and reprisals. Owing to these unbridled violent clashes, these "herdsmen" in recent years further evolved. They became a deadlier group that wield automatic guns, brandish various weapons and even carry out coordinated onslaught on communities that are perceived as threats to their nomadic activities.

The tension between herdsmen and farmers have witnessed a dramatic and astronomical escalation in recent times. Bloody attacks, kidnappings, raping and killings carried out by the nomads continue to be prevalent across the country. It thus became apparent that herdsmen have metamorphosed into a very dangerous specie across the states of the federation especially in North central and southern states. The havoc wreaked by the cattle-grazers has gotten them to be named one of the deadliest terror groups in the world amongst Boko Haram, ISIS, Taliban and the Al-Shabab militants. According to global terrorism statistics, herdsmen are ranked as the fourth deadliest terror group in the world (Tope, 2016).

Beyond all of the above alleged causes of Fulani herdsmen and farmers conflict, a fundamental factor that may fuel this feud beyond control is the antagonistic mind-set that is been created, nurtured, exaggerated and transmitted from one community/generation to the other. Within this mind-set, the Fulani herdsmen conclude within them that farmers don't appreciate them and will never do. Furthermore, they feel that they are perceived and treated as staunch enemies by farmers because of the feud that has generated between them. In a similar manner, the farmers perceive the Fulani herdsmen as a dangerous, heartless and destructive group that must be avoided, discarded and even destroyed. Under this kind of mutual fatal mind-set, the vendetta can only become fiercer.

1.2. Consequences of Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers' Feud on Nigeria

Just like other cases of conflict between people, the Fulani herdsmen and farmers conflict are not without chains of consequences for both parties and the entire country. It is worthwhile to highlight some of such consequences in order to draw attention to the gravity of the feud as well as the urgent need for social reconciliation.

In the first instance, it is difficult to accurately ascertain the number of people who have lost their lives to this feud. But the number, if ascertained, will be definitely scandalous. Scores of herdsmen, farmers and even innocent people have lost their lives to this conflict while many others have been displaced from their communities for fear of being attacked. In a similar vein, lots of houses and other valuable properties have been razed, the statistic of which will also be definitely shocking.

Secondly, the feud has devastating spiralling effect on the economies of both the affected communities and the country at large owing to significant disruption in the agricultural life of the affected communities. Farm lands and crops of farmers are being continually destroyed and farmers get increasingly scared of going to their farms for fear of being pounce on by herdsmen. This definitely leads to poor crop production resulting in possible hunger and starvation for those who depend largely on the agricultural produce from the affected communities.

According to Mercy corps cited in Omawumi (2016), the incessant attacks have a drastic effect on food security and have caused a loss of \$14 billion in three years. This global humanitarian organization, funded by the British Department for International Development (BFID) carried out a research between 2013 and 2016 on the causes and effects of the perennial clashes between herdsman and farmers in Nigeria. The study also pointed out that the ongoing conflict is thwarting the country's economic development to an enormous extent, and if conflicts were resolved, the average household affected today could see income increase by at least 64 percent, and potentially 210 percent or higher. And also, states affected by Herdsmen-Farmers conflicts lost an average of 47% of taxes (Internally Generated Revenue) during these attacks.

The most fundamental consequence of the feud, nevertheless, is that an abysmal mental and even physical fissure has been created between Fulani herdsman and farmers, which makes it difficult for communities and farmers to accept and live together with Fulani people and vice versa. Any move at ensuring peace between these groups must begin from fixing this mental gap, if not; such peace move is bound to collapse. How then do we close down this mental gap? The answer is social reconciliation which is the case this paper is making.

1.3. Social Reconciliation: The Viable Route to Restoring Peace and Cooperation

Considering the immense suffering of so many people during and after internal war and genocide, it can seem out of place and even offensive to begin speaking of reconciliation. However, in recent years, there has been increasing discourses concerning reconciliation as a measure for the prevention of further conflict. Studies show that societies that have experienced war, develop a war-spiral, a vicious circle of repeating war (sometimes called the *conflict trap*), whereas countries that resolve conflicts peacefully are inclined to continue living in peace. Some scholars argue that war and human rights abuses become a self-perpetuating process if anger and hatred are not efficiently addressed (Sida, 2003). Helen Fein exemplifies this phenomenon with the occurrences of genocide in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, both of which, according to her, were preceded by strong polarisation between groups as well as by cycles of crime–revenge–crime (Fein, 1999).

With the foregoing consideration, speedy social reconciliation seems to be inevitable in order to end the Fulani herdsman and farmers' conflict in Nigeria as well as other feud – afflicted communities and societies. But what is social reconciliation?

1.4. Conceptualizing Social Reconciliation

The word *reconciliation* derives from the Latin expression *conciliatus*, which means "coming together." Strictly speaking, reconciliation implies a process, that of restoring the shattered relationship between two actors (Kumar, 1999). *Reconciliation is a societal process that involves mutual acknowledgment of past suffering and the changing of destructive attitudes and behavior into constructive relationships toward sustainable peace* (Sida, 2003). The adjective *social* simply indicates that the emphasis is on group, and not individual, reconciliation (Kumar, 1999).

Social reconciliation interventions are therefore specifically designed to foster intergroup understanding, strengthen nonviolent conflict resolution mechanisms, and heal the wounds of war. A social reconciliation intervention is supposed to achieve one or more of the following objectives:

- To prevent or resolve the occurrence of violent conflict by facilitating communication and by developing peace structures.
- To reduce deep-seated anger, prejudices, and misunderstandings among the conflicting groups through reciprocal dialog, cooperative action, and acknowledgment of the past.
- To establish or re-establish positive relationships among conflicting parties through communication and cooperative activities.

1.5. Perspectives of Reconciliation

In order to enlarge our concept of reconciliation, the following six different perspectives of reconciliation, which include religious, socio-cultural, psychological, economic, political, and juridical are emphasised here.

1.5.1. Religious Perspective

The term reconciliation has strong religious connotations. In Christianity, reconciliation between God and humanity through Jesus Christ is a fundamental theme. Historically, within Christianity, there has also been a division between Eastern and Western traditions regarding the view of sin and thus also of reconciliation. The Eastern Orthodox Church considered sin from a relational perspective, emphasizing the breaking of loving

relations between God and man or between human beings. Western Christian traditions (Catholicism and Protestantism) were in the past more influenced by the Roman legal tradition and focused thereby on the legal dimension of sin – seeing sin mainly as disobedience of the law of God. Today, however, the Western traditions have shifted from this preoccupation with normative moral rules to considering sin and reconciliation from a relational point of view (Harakas, 2001). In the Buddhist tradition, however, compassion rather than forgiveness is stressed. The fundamentals of the Buddhist Middle Path are acceptance, tolerance, and above all, compassion. There are no examples as yet of a Buddhist country officially working for reconciliation after internal conflict (Sida, 2003).

1.5.2. Socio-Cultural Perspective

Culture is the rich and complex blend of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour regarding everything from food to art to politics and religion in a certain society. Culture shapes how we perceive ourselves and others (Starcken, 1999: 78). Violence, fear and hatred during war result in the modernization of old myths and stereotypes to explain one's own or some other group's gruesome behaviour – and thereby justify whatever atrocities are committed. After the war, the societal and cultural fabric is drenched with these beliefs. They can be seen in how history is described, how the language is used, in education, the media, theatre etc. In order to live in peace, these beliefs must be questioned and transformed. Unfortunately, there is no universal technique for this.

The search for sustainable peace in a society after conflict must begin from its own roots, importing from outside whatever can be of use, but basing that society's transformation on its own unique set of traditions and cultural heritage. In the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the African notion of ubuntu held important meaning. Ubuntu means that humanity is intertwined, a person is a person through other people, we are human because we belong. Through this concept, Desmond Tutu argued that "even the supporters of apartheid were victims" and "the oppressor was dehumanised as much as, if not more than, the oppressed" (Tutu, 1999). The misconduct of one person reduces everyone's ubuntu while good deeds increase the ubuntu and well-being of all. Thus, reconciliation was part of restoring ubuntu in both victims and former perpetrators, for everyone is linked together.

In Caritas International's handbook – Working for Reconciliation a "Tool Box for Keeping a Cultural Perspective in Reconciliation Work" is proposed (Starcken, 1999: 78-84). The recommendations include the following: to identify cultural dimensions to the conflict (e.g. ideology, religion, social inequality), to identify cultural realities that impact negatively (prejudice, fear etc) or positively (shared values regarding cooperation, similar reconciliation customs) on the resolution of the conflict, and to explore traditional or cultural methods for reconciliation.

1.5.3. Economic Perspective

As mentioned above, studies show that post-civil war societies are significantly more likely to experience civil war again than societies with no prior experience of war. Barbara Walter argues that two factors are imperative for this vicious circle to reoccur, both being related to the individual citizen's incentives to go to war: 1) people feel that continuing life in the current condition is worse than the possibility of death in war, and 2) there is a closed political system that does not permit change (except by use of violence) (Walter, 2002).

Walter's study of civil wars suggests that improvement in economic wellbeing together with increased political openness significantly decreases the risk of experiencing war anew. Walter writes: "Conflict begets conflict not because violence makes poor countries poorer or undemocratic governments more autocratic, but because individuals in these countries fail to experience any improvement over time." On the same lines, Collier and Hoeffler (2008) argue that negative economic growth rates are the primary source of civil war. Furthermore, studies show that war greatly strains the economy, "so that there is the potential for a trap – a cycle of economic deterioration and repeat of conflict" (Collier and Hoeffler, 2008).

How then does economy relate to reconciliation? Economic development seems essential for peace, and peace is essential for reconciliation.

1.5.4. Political Perspective

In the first systematic attempt to study reconciliation on a national, political level, Long & Brecke (2003) have examined the presence or absence of 'reconciliation events' after civil conflict and subsequent relations between former adversaries. Reconciliation events are defined as including: 1) a meeting between senior representatives of the former opposing factions; 2) a public ceremony, covered by national media; and 3) ritualistic

or symbolic behaviour that indicates peace. Studying all countries that experienced civil war in the 20th century, Long and Brecke found that for countries in which a reconciliation event took place, 64% did not return to violent conflict. However, among countries that had not experienced a reconciliation event, only 9% did not return to war. This supports the notion that political attempts at reconciliation after internal conflict are essential in the quest for peace. An example of political, symbolic behaviour indicating peace is the official apology – an increasingly common phenomenon over the last years.

German Chancellor Willy Brandt was one of the first, who falling to his knees in the Old Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw in 1970, gestured an apology for Germany's atrocities during World War II. Pope John Paul II has apologized for the Catholic Church's past maltreatment of the Jewish people; the Irish Republican Army (IRA) has apologized for having killed civilians in its 30-year anti-British campaign, and in 2001 the Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi expressed remorse for the Korean suffering under Japanese rule during World War II. The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan apologized to Rwanda for the United Nations' inability to act and prevent the 1994 genocide; former United States of America's president – Bill Clinton did the same.

In Sweden, the government and the Church are working for reconciliation with the Swedish Saami, a minority living in northern Sweden who were subjected to discrimination for centuries. In Australia, *Bringing Them Home*, a best-selling official report published in 1997, described how aboriginal children up until the 1970s had been stolen from their families to be placed in and raised by white families for "assimilation." The Australian population was outraged by this knowledge. The government has not officially apologized for its past conduct, but an annual "Sorry Day" was established, held on May 26, and "sorry books" were distributed around the country for the public to sign. Within a year, hundreds of volumes were filled with signatures of over 100,000 Australians (Hayner, 2002: 17). Official acknowledgment of, and expression of remorse for, past wrongs has an entirely new role in today's world politics (Sida, 2003).

1.5.5. Psychological Perspective

On an individual level, traumatic experiences do not disappear through silence. As Hamber (1998) writes: "...psychologically, sleeping dogs do not lie; past traumas do not simply pass or disappear with the passage of time." Psychological trauma research has shown that it is of great importance to heal traumatic wounds in order for life to continue without the trauma becoming cemented in physical and/or mental disorder. Victims of torture and other human rights violations often have a feeling that no-one would believe them if they told their story – just as they often have been told by their perpetrators (Lone & Montgomery, 1998). Official acknowledgement of past atrocity and injustice is important for working with individual traumatic experience because it validates past experiences and helps restore dignity and self-esteem. Telling one's story to someone who listens is thus of greater importance than one might first imagine. However, to speak of traumatic wounds, which often have left feelings of deep humiliation, shame, and guilt, is difficult and painful. Therefore, it is of great importance how the talking and listening is done (Hamber, 1998b).

1.5.6. Juridical Perspective

The question of how to deal with the atrocities of the past in a country emerging from internal conflict is critical and enormously complex. Should there be tribunals to punish perpetrators? Should amnesty be granted in order to avoid disturbing a fragile peace? Or should a truth commission be established to ensure that the past will be acknowledged and not repeated, and dignity restored in victims and survivors? What does the justice versus stability equation look like and what is best for the process of reconciliation?

Firstly, Rama Mani states that there are three dimensions of justice that must be taken into account in peacebuilding after internal conflict:

- The rule of law: the apparatus of the justice system must be restored as it has usually broken down and lost all legitimacy during the war. The rebuilding of the rule of law also "may serve as an indication to combatants and civilians in war-torn societies of a return to security, order, and stability."
- Rectificatory justice: addressing the injustice and pain that has been suffered by people during conflict. This is important from three distinct perspectives: by international law, countries are bound to prosecute past abuses; politically, it is needed to establish legitimacy and stabilize peace and psychosocially it aids to understand and heal trauma.
- Distributive justice: "addressing the underlying causes of conflict, which often lie in real or perceived socio-economic, political or cultural injustice" in order to prevent further violence (Rama, 2002:88). In this process of building a new justice system, adhering to the dimensions above, a country must then also decide in what way it

shall deal with the crimes of the past. This decision is central in the discussion of reconciliation: what kind of justice should be used? There is strong consensus that, as Professor Daniel Bar-Tal puts it, "justice is indispensable for reconciliation."

2. Social Reconciliation Strategies and Activities: Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers' Context

To achieve the objectives of social reconciliation, Kurma (1999) maintained that conflict theorists and practitioners have proposed several basic strategies around which a wide array of social reconciliation interventions can be devised and implemented. They include: uncovering the past, promoting dialogue, promoting understanding through media, developing grass – roots structure for peace and advancing collaborative activities. These will now be discussed within the context of the Fulani herdsmen and farmers' feud in Nigeria.

2.1. Uncovering The Past

A consensus exists among conflict theorists that uncovering the past is an essential step in the social reconciliation process. Without a comprehensive examination of the violations experienced on all sides, mutual acceptance remains illusive at best. It is important to bring to light those traumas, acts of violence, human rights abuses, disappearances, and loss of property, sustained during the conflict and often hidden from the general populace. While uncovering the past, intergroup tension may heighten in the short run, but conflict theorists contend that it is necessary to address the fragmented relationships and to initiate psychological healing. Furthermore, disclosing the past helps establish a social climate that condones neither repression nor violence.

In the case of the feud between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria, this means that a medium should be created where the Fulani herdsmen and the farmers come to uncover their respective grievances and recount the evils, losses and bitterness of the past with social reconciliation in view.

Truth commissions are undoubtedly the most visible example of this strategy. Such commissions uncover the past and fix responsibility. Argentina was one of the first countries to experiment with the idea, followed by El Salvador and Haiti. The Truth and Reconciliation

Commission in South Africa was probably the most comprehensive attempt to examine and expose the gross human right violations perpetuated during the apartheid regime. Its avowed purpose was restitution, not revenge.

Traditional societies often have indigenous mechanisms for acknowledging past misdeeds. Examples include public confession of guilt; reconstructing the past through storytelling; public feasts signifying that the past is, if not completely forgotten, then nonetheless forgiven; and public ceremonies attended by conflicting parties (Kurma, 1999).

2.2. Promoting Dialogue

Another strategy promotes dialogue among the conflicting parties. The implicit premise is that dialogue entails a willingness to listen to opposing viewpoints and helps in acknowledging mutual needs, rights, and obligations. The primary object of dialogue is the process itself, rather than the specific outcomes. The international community has supported four types of activities to promote dialogue in post-conflict societies and communities like those affected by the Fulani herdsmen and farmers' clash in Nigeria. The first is, problem-solving workshops, usually convened by third parties, bring representatives of conflicting groups together to seek solutions to shared difficulties. Participants generally include academics, professionals, social leaders, and religious leaders. The second popular activity is the high-profile conference usually organized by religious, academic, philanthropic, or intergovernmental organizations. Regional representatives, high-level government officials, faction leaders, and religious figures, as well as potential donors, participate in them. The third activity, which is conflict management training, has gained support in recent years. The goal of such training is teaching the methods and skills necessary to limit or avoid intragroup conflicts. Conducted by nongovernmental organizations, professional institutions, and private foundations, it entails information exchange, skills learning and rehearsal, collective reflection, and possibly conflict analysis. The last category includes "sustained dialogues." Unlike conferences and workshops, these efforts attempt to redefine the relationship between the conflicting parties and work through the underlying issues of contention. Generally, participation begins with interested individuals and expands to include civil servants or government officials.

2.3. Promoting Understanding through Media

The third strategy establishes and strengthens responsible, professional media—both print and electronic. The premise is that such a strategy can promote social reconciliation in several ways. It helps dissipate the rumours and propaganda disseminated by extremists, which feed social and political tensions. It also creates a space for articulating diverse viewpoints, approaches, and opinions. Above all, it contributes to both transparency and accountability in public affairs, exerting pressure on political and social leaders to behave in a responsible way. Within the context of the Fulani herdsmen and farmers' vendetta in Nigeria, it means that television and radio stations, newspapers and other social media in Nigeria should be utilized to achieve the above results towards social reconciliation.

The international community has supported a wide range of media interventions during conflict and post-conflict situations. These range from preparing documentaries for mass consumption, broadcasting peace education programs, establishing radio stations and newspapers committed to peace and democracy, and assisting independent media. Peace radios were established in Burundi, Rwanda, and Somalia during the conflict. In Rwanda, for example, Swiss-supported Radio Agatashya, established in August 1994, was instrumental in correcting the Hutu extremists' propaganda. In early 1994, World Vision supported a radio program produced by local church groups in Burundi. The program covered issues such as alternatives to the ongoing ethnic violence, interethnic harmony, and conflict resolution. An international nongovernmental organization (NGO) called Search for Common Ground has promoted a studio that produces radio programs to encourage reconciliation. Low cost is one attraction of radio in these countries. With little investment, peace messages can be disseminated to millions of people, even those in remote areas. This can also be adapted to the situation of the Fulani herdsmen and farmers feud under focus.

2.4. Developing Grass-Roots Structures for Peace

The fourth strategy creates grass-roots structures to maintain peace. Various known as peace committees, peace commissions, or citizens groups, these grass-roots organizations mobilize local leaders and community members to prevent eruptions of violence and to foster tolerance. This may involve a number of tasks, such as countering rumour and exaggeration, advocating nonviolent solutions to conflicts, offering peace education through community programs, and mediating between contentious groups or between groups and the government.

In 1947, peace committees in the major cities of India attempted to control the outbreak of interethnic conflict engulfing the country at the time. Their membership consisted of prominent citizens, such as the leaders of ethnic groups, political parties, academic institutions, and religious and social organizations. The committees played a major role in subduing the conflict and restoring peace. In both Nicaragua and South Africa, peace committees have been credited with reducing the level of conflict and promoting mutual understanding. Ethnic reconciliation commissions have also been established in Poland, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic. Peace committees function as well in the former Yugoslavia. Receiving only minimal support from the international community, these bodies continue to rely on local funding. In many countries, grass-roots researching and training institutions have been established to promote communal harmony and understanding. This can also be adapted to the situation of the Fulani herdsmen and farmers feud in Nigeria with the cooperation of traditional rulers and leaders.

2.5. Advancing Collaborative Activities

The last strategy promotes collaborative activities for members of conflicting groups on the assumption that such activities help foster positive attitudes among the participants. Once they start working together, members of antagonistic groups gradually move beyond bitterness, anger, and resentment. Through collaboration, they eventually come to see each other as human beings, not as old enemies.

Unlike other interventions, collaborative activities often have an important secondary objective—promoting development. The international community has funded such collaborative projects in trade, extension, agriculture, infrastructure, and small-scale industry. Most of these programs were modest, implemented by private voluntary organizations. In addition to economic development projects, collaborative activities have provided local communities with much-needed social services such as child care, recreation, and primary education. Since these efforts bring positive benefits to the participants, they help develop constituencies in support of collaborative development activities, contributing to social reconciliation. This can also be adapted to the situation of the Fulani

herdsmen and farmers feud in Nigeria with the cooperation of government and traditional rulers and leaders at all levels.

It is worth noting that social reconciliation is distinct from conflict settlement and resolution. Central to social reconciliation is the removal of the negation of "the other" in people's identities (Kelman, 2008: 24-27). As such, social reconciliation goes beyond conflict settlement, which concerns the interests at stake in a conflict, and conflict resolution, which concerns pragmatic changes in the relationship between former adversaries (Bakke, et al. 2006). But social reconciliation is about internalizing and integrating the changed relationships into one's identity. More generally, social psychologists define inter-group reconciliation as "a process that leads to a stable end to conflict and is predicated on changes in the nature of adversarial relations between the adversaries and each of the parties' conflict-related needs, emotions, and cognitions" (Nadler, et al. 2008: 4). While reaching and implementing a settlement are critical for lasting peace in conflict-affected societies, such formal steps may not be sufficient in the absence of empathy, trust, understanding and forgiveness among the former adversaries.

As noted earlier, a critical step towards reconciliation is inter-group forgiveness, which is not about forgetting the past, but about trying to come to terms with the past and creating a shared vision of the future by learning new aspects about oneself and one's own group and exploring the world from other group's points of view (Noor, et al. 2008: 101). Forgiveness can help prevent collective memories of violent events feeding into a recurring cycle of violence. While forgiveness is often thought about in terms of inter-personal relationships, in societies where members of different ethnic groups have fought one another (like the case of the Fulani herdsmen and farmers feud in Nigeria under study), a growing body of research in social psychology suggests that forgiveness is conceptualized as a group concern (Hewstone, et al. 2008).

3. Conclusion

Conflict and violence has never been a palatable experience for any society, community or group. Similarly, the feud between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers in various communities across Nigeria has created extremely bitter memories, which the victims and even the actors may not forget in a hurry. Thus, if nothing is speedily done to halt the situation and restore peace and cooperation, there is bound to be further chains of vendetta and reprisals between the groups which may take more precarious extents. And each time there are such feuds and retaliations, heavy losses are counted and hostile impressions are deepened for even further violence. Consequently, this paper has stressed the urgent need for peace and cooperation in order to avert the looming vicious circle of conflict, which can only be successfully achieved through social reconciliation as the sure foundation. Social reconciliation is suitable, not just for the restoration of peace and cooperation between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria, but also for restoring peace and cooperation between people of other conflict – afflicted societies, communities and groups.

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